The scholarship of teaching and learning: its relevance in the current higher education context in England

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Abstract

In 1990 Boyer published his *Scholarship reconsidered: priorities of the professoriate* report, which laid the foundations for the development of the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL). SoTL foregrounds research into teaching and learning and re-designates higher education (HE) teaching as a developmental activity requiring purposeful experimentation, investigation and exploration. SoTL aims to foster significant, long lasting learning for all students and to advance the practice and profession of HE teaching.

A paradox appears to exist within the SoTL literature that my research has sought to address: whilst some scholars view the dominating features of the HE system, e.g. more students and less resources, to necessitate and require SoTL-based investigations, those features and the current agendas shaping HE make it harder for academics to engage in SoTL activities. Further, critics argue that the HE sector in England is being fundamentally transformed by the most recent White Paper (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), 2011), which, along with introducing higher tuition fees, reinforced neo-liberal principles such as marketisation and consumerism, and continued to promote business and economic needs over educational values and priorities.

My research sought to examine the relevance of SoTL within this current HE context in England. Using a case study approach I conducted semi-structured interviews with 19 academics in one institution. My findings expand the existing knowledge about SoTL by indicating that SoTL appears both practically and ideologically threatened by the current English HE context. Perceived workload and management pressures make SoTL difficult for academics to engage in, and its central elements, i.e. researching and innovating teaching practices, seem virtually redundant in an environment where consumerist and utilitarian ideologies dominate. Additionally, my findings contribute to current literature-based arguments about SoTL supporting academics to critically investigate the wider HE context they work in. Importantly, SoTL scholars offer little guidance about how a critically-focused SoTL might be realised. My research addresses this limitation by identifying critical discourse analysis as the framework through which a critically-focused SoTL could develop.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the context that informs my PhD and outlines the contribution the study makes to the body of knowledge about the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL). It begins by briefly describing SoTL in relation to the current higher education (HE) context in England and in doing so highlights a paradox apparent within the SoTL literature: whilst some scholars view SoTL as the responsibility of all professional educators and required by dominating features of the HE system, e.g. more students and less resources, those features and the current agendas shaping HE make it harder for academics to engage in SoTL activities. I explain how my study addresses this paradox and then discuss the specific nature of my research. I set out the structure of the thesis and report briefly the key arguments and/or findings from each analysis chapter. Finally, I describe how my research seeks to expand the knowledge base within which SoTL is located.

1.2 PhD context and goals

> At the very moment that the Prime Minister argues for the need to reverse a 'slow-motion moral decline', his government is responsible for pushing forward rapid changes to higher education that will put the market at the heart of the system. These changes will encourage students to think of themselves as consumers, investing in their own human capital with a view to reaping high financial rewards, and discourage graduates to think of their university education as anything other than something purchased at a high price for private benefit (Campaign for the Public University (CfPU), 2011, p.3).

This CfPU quote powerfully captures the fundamental change and transformation occurring to the HE framework at the time of this PhD study. The White Paper titled *Higher education: students at the heart of the system* (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS)) was published in 2011 and to some degree reinforced the trends occurring in HE policy over recent decades. Scholars argue that these trends, resting on neo-liberal principles, increasing centralised control, and promoting business and economic needs, have resulted in a sector in which the academic appears less visible (Sabri, 2010) and the student more passive than before (Naidoo and Jamieson, 2005; Lomas, 2007; Barnett, 2011). From another perspective, the paper also marked an explicit and fundamental shift in the purpose and ideological basis of the university. As the quote above identifies, critics like the CfPU (2011) argued that the university is no longer viewed as a public good benefitting society and

humanity as much as the economy. Instead, it is linked primarily to individual benefit and the 'rewards' that the student, as a consumer of HE, will presumably obtain.

This context formed the backdrop to my PhD study. My study sought to examine whether the scholarship of teaching and learning, a concept promoted originally by Boyer (1990), still has meaning and relevance within the current HE context in England. Many SoTL proponents also propose it as a method to help academics effect change within the HE system (e.g. Kreber and Cranton, 2000; Atkinson, 2001; Schroeder, 2007). Consequently, an important secondary goal was to consider if SoTL could support academics' efforts in this way. My four specific research aims were:

1. to explore the extent to which the underpinning values of SoTL (established by the Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (CASTL) as the aims of SoTL) are perceived of by academics in this study as an important part of their role as teachers;
2. to explore how the perceptions of academics committed to teaching and learning are located/shaped within the current HE context in which market principles and economic objectives are dominating policy strategies;
3. to examine the extent to which the values of SoTL can be followed within the current HE context;
4. to consider if SoTL could support academics' efforts to critically explore the wider HE context which shapes their teaching and learning practices, and so resist, or imagine alternatives, to dominant political agendas.

It may be useful here to briefly describe SoTL before I discuss the full nature of my particular research.

1.2.1 The scholarship of teaching and learning

In 1990 Boyer published his *Scholarship reconsidered: priorities of the professoriate* report. Boyer's aims were to reaffirm teaching as a central task of HE and see it accorded with the same status as other scholarly activities, such as research. He argued that academic work is underpinned by four interacting functions of scholarship, one of which is the scholarship of teaching (which later became of learning too). Other scholars developed Boyer's ideas further and Shulman (1998; 1999; 2000; 2002) in particular focused on the need for scholars of teaching to not only engage in the practice of teaching but to conduct research into the nature and effectiveness of that teaching. The results of this research should then be made

public so that firstly, they can be used and further developed by the wider teaching community, and secondly, a body of knowledge about HE teaching and learning can be built. Research into teaching and learning has since become the defining feature of SoTL and, as such, is central to scholars' definitions of the concept. McKinney (2006, p.38) succinctly described SoTL as the 'systematic reflection and study on teaching and learning made public', which is the definition of SoTL used within this study (discussed further in chapter two, section 2.2.4). Kreber and Cranton (2000, p.478) also suggested SoTL is a process of 'ongoing learning about teaching and the demonstration of teaching knowledge'. Ultimately, SoTL's focus on research and the 'ongoing learning' of HE teachers re-designates HE teaching as a developmental activity that requires purposeful experimentation, investigation and exploration. Additionally, Hutchings and Shulman (1999) shared its underpinning aims, which are:

- to foster significant, long lasting learning for all students;
- to advance the practice and profession of teaching;
- to bring to teaching the recognition afforded to other forms of scholarly work.

1.2.2 SoTL and the current HE context in England

The above section briefly summarised the nature of SoTL, which I review to a much greater depth through the SoTL literature in chapter two. In that chapter I also highlight a paradox for SoTL caused by the English HE context that appears largely unaddressed within the SoTL literature. Whilst SoTL proponents emphasise teaching as a developmental activity in which academics should innovate and experiment with their teaching practices, other scholars characterise the current HE context as one that potentially constrains teaching and the attention academics can give to teaching practice. Studies have found, for example, that factors such as the increasing, and more diverse, student population considerably impact on academics' workloads, making them heavier and more stressful, and reducing time for teaching preparation (e.g. Kinman and Jones, 2003; Fowler, 2005). Scholars also argue that the managerialist and neo-liberal principles now dominating HE, which emphasise market-based and corporate values and external accountability, potentially re-order universities' priorities (Naidoo and Jamieson, 2005). Business values, for example, like 'value for money' gain prominence over educational and pedagogical values (Churchman and King, 2009), and the increasing administration required by a managerialist culture adds another burden to academics' already overstretched workloads (Cheng, 2010). This paradox grows with the most recent developments in HE. I highlighted at the beginning of this chapter the publication of the White Paper (BIS) in 2011. However, HE policy had been thrust into the spotlight in the preceding year following the release of the Browne Report (An Independent

Review of Higher Education Funding & Student Finance, 2010 - hereafter referred to as the Browne Report) and subsequent Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) (Great Britain, HM Treasury, 2010). The Browne Report (2010) was commissioned by the Labour government in 2009. Lord Browne of Madingley, chairman of the panel that produced the report, stated that his task was to:

> review the funding of higher education and make recommendations to ensure that teaching at our HEIs [higher education institutions] is sustainably financed, that the quality of that teaching is world class and that our HEIs remain accessible to anyone who has the talent to succeed (Browne Report, 2010, p.2).

The report framed its recommendations around six key principles and it is the first two that are most relevant to my study:

> *Principle 1:* There should be more investment in higher education – but institutions will have to convince students of the benefits of investing more
> *Principle 2:* Student choice should increase
> (Browne Report, 2010, p.24).

To achieve these two principles the report recommended cutting the government funded teaching budget for all subjects except those deemed a priority for the economy[1]. Student fees of up to £9,000 per year were proposed to replace the funding withdrawn by the government[2]. The Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition government, which came into power in May 2010, confirmed these recommendations in the CSR (Great Britain, HM Treasury, 2010).

The reduction in public funding reinforced HE as a market-based system with student choice dictating the direction in which monies flow. It also embedded competition for students firmly into the system. Critics viewed the Browne Report as signalling the death of the university (Couldry and McRobbie, 2010), and others affirmed that, at the very least, it represented a significant attack on the prior social role and purposes of HE (Collini, 2010; McQuillan, 2010). The White Paper (BIS, 2011) published the following year confirmed critics' fears that the recommendations in the Browne Report would become translated into HE policy. The

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[1] The report stated that these subjects include Medicine, Science and Engineering. Chapter two (section 2.3.4) shows that the CSR designated the STEM subjects (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) as those the government would continue to fund, though even these subjects would receive around 80% less funding.
[2] The report acknowledged that the income from student fees would be less than the public funding previously received and argued that the shortfall should ensure universities review the efficiency of their operating processes.

paper reinforced tuition fees and a competitive market-based system[3] as drivers of quality within the sector. Critics argued that the student viewed as a participant at university was replaced by the student viewed as a consumer of an objectified and commodified HE experience (Freedman and Fenton, 2011; Hall, 2011). Whilst the White Paper explicitly stated its intention to 'restore teaching to its proper position, at the centre of every higher education institution's mission' (BIS, 2011, p.27), which resonated with Boyer's (1990) original aim, the paper's focus only on the economic necessity of HE belied its rhetoric and conveyed a more utilitarian approach to teaching centred on 'training for employment' (CfPU, 2011, p.3). The paper also stressed the increased power of students to 'trigger quality reviews' (BIS, 2011, p.6) and required universities to continuously publish surveys and evaluations of teaching. I argue in chapter two that these aspects potentially constrain HE teaching further rather than put it back 'at the heart' (BIS, 2011, p.32) of students' university experiences. The paper marked a fundamental shift in HE by opening the sector to private providers and encouraging 'alternative providers' (p.46), such as Further Education colleges, to increase their HE provision. Freedman and Fenton (2011) believed the paper aimed to facilitate a whole scale cultural shift with HE becoming a commodity (Hall, 2011) to be bought and sold in a competitive market place.

Of course, as I stated above and as I further demonstrate in chapter two, consumerist and economic agendas are not new to HE policy but have been growing over recent decades. However, they are powerfully reinforced within this particular White Paper (BIS, 2011). I explore more fully in chapter two the dangers these agendas pose to SoTL. To briefly summarise them here: the potential passivity promoted by the student-as-consumer position could undermine academics' abilities to foster significant, long lasting learning; and the utilitarian teaching that might arise when economic, or employer, needs take precedence in HE over broader learning goals would reduce teaching as a profession rather than enhance it. The paradox for SoTL then is that while some view it as the responsibility of all academics as professional educators (Shulman, 2000), the current agendas shaping HE appear to threaten it in numerous ways.

1.2.3 Addressing the paradox for SoTL through my research

My review of the relevant literature in chapter two suggests that the SoTL literature is not yet sufficiently and explicitly addressing the threats presented to SoTL by current HE agendas, and the challenges academics face in their daily working lives. It is apparent from my review

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[3] Critics have highlighted certain contradictions within the government's rhetoric of a HE market place. These are beyond the scope of this review, but are discussed further by Collini (2011) and the CfPU (2011).

that tensions between HE agendas, like managerialism and consumerism, and academics' scholarly activities are being debated, interrogated and explored across the more general HE literature. However, relating these tensions directly to SoTL is less evident. I do not suggest that the SoTL literature is completely lacking in work that expresses concerns over the impact of aspects of the HE context on SoTL. This work, though, is far from widespread and does not appear to address the larger agendas that are transforming the framework of HE. Consequently, there are significant limitations within the SoTL literature. My research addresses this limitation by exploring the relevance and values of SoTL with academics in one institution *with reference specifically* to the HE context they work in. As such, my study builds the knowledge-base about SoTL in relation to the present HE environment. I also review in chapter two scholars' arguments that SoTL should be infused with critical theory so that it might become a catalyst for change and empower academics to question and/or challenge the context they work within. My research then also expands that knowledge by investigating its potential as a critical process that could help academics enforce change within the sector. Additionally, the literature to date has largely discussed SoTL imbued with critical theory mainly from a theoretical perspective. My study broadens the literature by exploring, from the research data gained, the potential of this critically-focused SoTL and its practical capabilities. Importantly, my research is also the first to investigate SoTL in relation to the 2011 White Paper (BIS). Consequently, my research seeks to broaden and expand SoTL's knowledge base.

1.3 The nature of my research

Chapter three describes in detail the methodology for this study. I conducted semi-structured interviews with 19 academics in one HE institution and sought their views, opinions and perceptions about teaching in the current HE context. In particular, I asked academics about their teaching values to examine how closely they relate to SoTL's focus on fostering significant, long lasting learning for all students. I also asked them about the market and consumer-based agendas shaping HE and how processes such as managerialism might impact on teaching and teaching related activities, and on academics' perceptions of their roles and identities.

The research is a case study of one institution. I chose this approach specifically because of scholars' consensus that case studies focus on investigating a phenomenon within its real-life context and so support the researcher in gaining an in-depth understanding of participants' lived experiences (Yin, 1994; Merriam, 1998; Cohen et al., 2007). I sought to

glean this deeper understanding of how academics perceive the HE context and thus *experience* its impact on their roles and teaching practices. To further support this aim, the research was conducted in the interpretive paradigm using a qualitative research method (semi-structured interviews). Like case studies, scholars stress that interpretive research is concerned with understanding participants' perspectives of their lived experiences (e.g. Schwandt, 1994; Merriam, 1998) and that qualitative methods are the most authentic way to gain those perspectives (e.g. Silverman, 2001). In my data analysis I followed the example of other interpretivist researchers and used a 'quasi grounded theory approach' (Arthur, 2009, p.445). I also employed elements of critical discourse analysis (CDA) to consider how academics may be reproducing and/or reinforcing through their discursive practices the ideologies currently dominant in HE and whether these practices reveal any potential for academic critique or challenge.

1.4 What did my research find?

Chapters' four to eight examine my research findings. Chapter four focuses on the teaching and learning values of the academics I studied. I explore these values first within my analysis to understand how the interviewees perceive their teaching role. I then begin to assess in this chapter, and continue in the following chapters, the extent to which their values appear threatened in the current HE context. Specifically, this first analysis chapter identifies that fostering significant, long lasting learning is central to most interviewees' values. However, the data suggest that academics' values are being increasingly undermined by consumerist pressures they perceive coming from the institution, management and students. Many interviewees also believe management are shifting responsibility for learning away from students and towards academics, further eroding the possibilities for significant learning to occur through the lessening role students may play in their learning.

Chapter five builds on chapter four by exploring in more depth interviewees' perceptions of their relationship with management. In particular, I discuss the various ways in which these perceptions convey a sense of academics being exploited by management. I explore firstly some academics' explicit views that management exploits their inner dedication to their work as HE teachers. I then examine other interviewees' greater implicit sense of exploitation, which manifests itself through their apparent distrust of management. I also discuss the 'top-down' management style that many interviewees perceive within the institution and how this management style reinforces both implicit and explicit perceptions of exploitation.

Furthermore, the chapter considers interviewees' potential exploitation by workload intensification that leads some academics to view administration rather than teaching as their core activity. Additionally, interviewees commonly report working evenings and weekends to cope with workload demands, with negative effects on their health and personal lives. Consequently, I argue that exploitation of academics' health and well-being may also be occurring.

Chapter six continues the discussion of academic professionalism specifically assessing the extent to which the data suggest academics are being de-professionalised and re-professionalised. Many interviewees reported feeling that their academic professionalism is being eroded, and a few even explicitly said they felt de-professionalised. Various interviewees believed management seeks and values academics' professional judgements less, and concomitantly views academics as less important than students. The data also indicate that academic re-professionalisation could also be occurring whereby academics become less higher education lecturers and more teachers enhancing students' employment prospects. Additionally, most interviewees' responses to the employability agenda show an almost unquestioning support for it, with little critical thought given to its tensions and/or limitations. As a result, I argue that most academics I interviewed do not seem to sufficiently recognise the dangers posed by the agenda, such as utilitarian teaching and instrumentalising higher level thinking skills.

In chapter seven I explore how academics may reinforce the threats posed to their professionalism by examining some of the linguistic expressions used in their interviews. I utilise a CDA perspective here to show that many elements of neo-liberal language appear naturalised in interviewees' comments. I review some institutional texts and show a similar naturalising of neo-liberal language occurring, which could account to some extent for academics' use of the language in their interviews. I acknowledge in this chapter that the naturalised use of this language could support scholars' views about the strength of neo-liberal discourse and its capacity to colonise academics (Davies, 2005; Archer 2008a). However, I draw on CDA again to show points in the data where academics recognise their use of the neo-liberal discourse, which could potentially lead to its 'naturalness' being challenged.

I continue using a CDA perspective in chapter eight to further explore the potential for the academics in my study to begin to critique the HE context. The data taken at first glance could suggest some academics are experiencing 'reflexive impotence' (Fisher, 2009, p.53) whereby they feel they cannot do anything to change what they do not like in the institution

and/or system. Yet a closer examination of the data suggests a more dynamic process may be occurring with some interviewees finding subtle ways to challenge and resist what they may initially say they can do nothing to change. Utilising CDA again, I draw on Gee's (2011) concept of figured worlds, or 'stories [we use] about how the world works' (ibid, p.76), and show various figured worlds competing and conflicting in interviewees' comments. For example, some academics espouse views against the consumerist agenda in HE in some parts of their interviews whilst elsewhere their comments suggest their behaviour may at times promote and be more dominantly shaped by the agenda, or at least its underpinning principles. I suggest these conflicts again imply potential for academics to recognise their different figured worlds and so critique and question them. Consequently, whilst my data do not indicate that the academics in my study are currently critiquing or resisting the present HE context to any significant degree, it suggests there is potential for these activities to occur. At the end of each analysis chapter I discuss the most significant implications for SoTL from the data presented.

1.4.1 What do my findings add to the existing knowledge about SoTL?

I have described very briefly above the structure of this thesis and the key findings in each analysis chapter. I highlighted in section 1.2.3 the limitations in the SoTL literature that my research addresses and argue that my study expands and broadens the knowledge base about SoTL. Specifically, my research expands the present knowledge about SoTL by demonstrating the threats the current HE context in England present to it. Chapter's four to six highlight that SoTL's aims are being undermined and potentially obscured by the consumerist and employability agendas currently pervading HE. In particular, these chapters show *how* the SoTL aims are undermined. Chapter two, for example, presents scholars' views that consumerism encourages student passivity. I identify in chapter four how some interviewees perceive pressure from the institution, management and students themselves to shape learning more towards consumerist principles, which challenges their abilities to foster significant, long lasting learning. Additionally, chapter six presents evidence of some academics becoming more utilitarian in their teaching to address the increasing policy and institutional focus on employability, which I argue is not advancing the HE teaching profession but reducing it. My data in these chapters also show how research into teaching and learning, the central defining feature of SoTL, is threatened by the current environment. In chapter six I identify academics potentially being re-professionalised from HE lecturers to teachers enhancing students' employment prospects. If academics are reduced simply to employment trainers, then the need for research to make teaching practices more effective is also reduced. Similarly, if the institution, management and

students are driving a more consumerist view of learning that promotes student passivity, there appears little need for academics to research and try out new practices that encourage, for example, active student learning. The data in these chapters then show how the current HE environment challenges SoTL from an ideological perspective by rendering its values increasingly unnecessary within a consumerist and employability-focused system.

Importantly, chapters four and five also identify the very real incentives the current HE environment presents to academics to *not* become involved in SoTL. Chapter five, for example, presents data in which academics suggest they do not trust management and fear management could make them redundant at a moment's notice. Redundancies were indeed occurring in large measure across the sector at the time of interviewing and many interviewees referred to rounds of redundancies taking place within the institution. Consequently, innovating with teaching practices could seem a risky activity if academics fear standing out as a bad employee if innovations are not immediately successful. Additionally, the data in chapter five supports the potential exploitation of academics by workload. At the very least, it shows all interviewees feeling overburdened and strained by their workload demands. It is unlikely then that they will find extra time to engage in SoTL activities.

My data therefore addresses the limitations in the SoTL literature by providing evidence of *how* the features and values of SoTL are threatened in one institution by the current HE context on both an ideological and practical level. Yet importantly, my study also broadens the SoTL knowledge base by suggesting that SoTL should incorporate CDA so that its framework can more critically approach the HE system. I indicate that SoTL investigations conducted within a CDA framework could help academics begin their critical inquiries by directing these inquiries firstly towards their own experiences. These investigations could build academics' critical awareness and understanding of the HE context, and so increase their sense of empowerment within the system. I highlight in chapter two scholars' views that academics should change HE not politicians (e.g. Laurillard, 2002; Hall, 2011). I suggest CDA as a framework SoTL could incorporate, which would not only help to ensure SoTL's own survival in the current context but could help academics begin to feel more empowered to at least investigate the context they are in. These investigations could be the necessary first step to academics challenging and/or changing the wider agendas currently dominating and shaping HE. Of course, whilst I argue for CDA as a potentially beneficial framework for a critically-based SoTL, the challenge for academics to find time to engage in this type of activity remains.

1.5 Chapter summary

In this introductory chapter I have begun to describe the context to my study, the research methodology and the key research findings. I have also explained the contribution my study makes to the current field of knowledge about SoTL. Specifically, my research adds to the body of knowledge about SoTL by addressing limitations in SoTL's literature. Importantly, it also expands the knowledge base by identifying a potential way for SoTL to develop so it can achieve its aims, maintain its own survival, and become a process that supports academics' efforts to critically explore the wider context that shapes their teaching and learning practices. These critical explorations of the wider context could then help empower academics to effect changes within it.

The thesis will now review the literature that informs my study.

Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I review the literature on the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL), focusing on its origins and arguments by its advocates that it is a necessity in higher education (HE) today. SoTL proponents argue, for example, that the systematic and public study of HE teaching will help academics ensure effective learning environments as the student population increases and resources decline. I then explore the HE context and argue that although the SoTL literature views SoTL as a requirement in HE today, it does not sufficiently address the challenges that the context presents to academics engaging in it. For example, increased numbers of students may call for investigation into how to teach them effectively, but the concomitant rise in work and marking loads does not make undertaking such activity easy for academics. Following this, I examine recent HE policy documents, concentrating particularly on the Browne Report (2010) and latest White Paper (BIS, 2011). This examination addresses the policy context over the last three decades to show that many of the changes currently occurring are the extension of agendas and organising principles that have dominated HE policy since the 1980s. I will argue that these agendas create an environment antithetical to SoTL's values and so threaten its existence and the possibilities that it offers to academics and students. Finally, I will investigate the potential of a critically-focused SoTL that could help academics resist the dominating agendas. Specifically, various SoTL practitioners argue that a SoTL imbued with critical theory and critical pedagogy may help to empower academics to critique and change the current HE framework.

In this chapter I will demonstrate that there is a gap in the SoTL literature currently. However worthwhile and logical SoTL's aims may be, the literature does not take account of the inherent difficulties of the context SoTL is located within. I will therefore address this gap and locate SoTL in the HE context to show not only the practical challenges existing, but also the threats that are increasingly being posed to its underlying values. I will also illustrate that while this gap currently exists, there is growing awareness of its critical potential. I will expand the current literature concerning a critically-focused SoTL by considering the types of critical investigations academics could conduct about the present HE context.

2.2 The scholarship of teaching and learning

This section will discuss the origins of SoTL and how it has been developed and extended as a concept. I will identify the values ingrained within SoTL and scholars' views about its importance to the progression of HE today.

2.2.1 The scholarship of teaching origins

I highlighted in chapter one (section 1.2.1) that the scholarship of teaching (which later became of learning too) first gained significance in North America following the *Scholarship reconsidered: priorities of the professoriate* report by Ernest Boyer in 1990. In this report Boyer was eager to 'move beyond the tired old "teaching versus research" debate' (p.16) and 'rethink what it means to be a scholar' (p.16). Boyer was responding to the growing domination of research and publication as the primary means of achieving and defining academic status. Yet, he acknowledged, 'many academics are, in fact, drawn to the profession precisely because of their love for teaching or for service – even for making the world a better place' (p.xii). Boyer claimed it was time to give teaching the recognition it deserved and reaffirm it as a central task of HE. The report aimed to counter the narrowing of the academic role around research specifically and recognise instead 'the full range of [academic] talent and the great diversity of functions higher education must perform' (p.xiii). Healey (2000) claimed Boyer intended to widen the concept of academic scholarship so as to enrich, rather than restrict, the quality of the education that students received. For Boyer, redefining scholarship meant giving it a 'richer, more vital meaning' (1990, p.78) that acknowledges the full scope of academic work. This work includes not only teaching, but being instrumental in education policy development and responding to 'today's urgent…social mandates' (p.13). Dees (2008) argued that Boyer wanted to broaden the vision of HE to enable it to tackle the problems threatening society. Ultimately, Boyer maintained that academic work is underpinned by four separate but interacting and overlapping functions of scholarship: scholarship of discovery, scholarship of integration, scholarship of application and the scholarship of teaching.

The scholarship of discovery relates closely to what is usually meant by traditional research (Haigh, 2010). Boyer (1990) recognised research as central to the work of higher learning, and argued it involves the 'commitment to knowledge for its own sake, to freedom of inquiry and to following, in a disciplined fashion, an investigation wherever it may lead' (p.17). The scholarship of integration is closely related to discovery and involves giving meaning to

isolated facts, making connections across disciplines and placing research into 'larger intellectual patterns' (p.19). As Boyer noted, 'those engaged in discovery ask, "What is to be known, what is yet to be found?" Those engaged in integration ask, "What do the findings *mean*?"' (p.19, emphasis in original). The scholarship of application[4] goes beyond just applying the knowledge gained through research. It refers instead to a more dynamic and interactive process (Trigwell et al., 2000) in which new understandings may arise from the act of application and so direct further investigative work. Thus, theory and practice vitally interact, 'and one may renew the other' (Boyer, 1990, p.23). Finally, the scholarship of teaching relates to the academic's understanding of knowledge (discovery, integrated and applied) and the communicating of it to students. For Boyer, an academics' work becomes 'consequential only as it is understood by others' (p.23). He argued that pedagogical understanding and the use of pedagogy with discipline-based knowledge is essential to ensure that bridges can be built 'between the teacher's understanding and the student's learning' (p.23). Additionally, Boyer considered teaching a 'dynamic endeavour' (p.23) in which academics are learners too. Rather than just transmitting knowledge, he believed teaching should extend and transform that knowledge through classroom discussions. From this scholarship of teaching perspective then, both student *and* teacher are stimulated to be critical and creative thinkers. Boyer concluded that it is inspired teaching that 'keeps the flame of scholarship alive' (p.24), and when defined as scholarship, serves both to educate and entice future scholars.

2.2.2 Scholarly or scholarship?

Boyer's work is regarded as a significant attempt to redress the unequal status of teaching and research (Trigwell and Shale, 2004) by increasing the perceived value and status of teaching (Haigh, 2010). Though Boyer emphasised the equality of all academic work (Gurm, 2009), he aimed to characterise teaching as requiring the same habits of mind that are needed for other forms of scholarly work (Hutchings and Shulman, 1999). Boyer's work then framed excellent teaching as a scholarly enterprise. However, Boyer is criticised for not distinguishing sharply enough between excellent teaching and the scholarship *of* teaching (Hutchings and Shulman, 1999). Within his definitions, the role of research does not feature in the scholarship of teaching to the same extent that it does within the other three types of scholarship. Consequently, Trigwell et al. (2000) argued that his description of the scholarship of teaching is limited to the academic being well informed about one's discipline and appropriate pedagogical practices. In contrast, Trigwell et al. (2000, p.156) stated that

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[4] Some scholars also refer to it as the scholarship of service (Healey, 2000).

the scholarship of teaching should aim to 'make transparent how we have made learning possible'. Whilst Boyer's well informed approach may be a pre-requisite for excellent teaching, or scholarly teaching (McKinney, 2006), it does not convey Trigwell et al's. (2000, p.156) belief that learning should be made 'transparent' by investigating, evaluating and documenting teaching practices. Additionally, within Boyer's definition, any knowledge gained about teaching does not appear to extend beyond the particular academic's classroom. In contrast, the results gained from activities conforming to the scholarship of discovery or integration are usually disseminated and communicated widely to advance the various knowledge bases. Thus, critics suggest Boyer's scholarship of teaching concept is somewhat limited. They argue instead that to equate to discovery, integration and application, as Boyer intended, the scholarship of teaching must also impact upon and improve practice beyond one's own classroom (Hutchings and Shulman, 1999) and add to the body of knowledge about teaching and learning in HE (Richlin, 2001). By doing so it lifts teaching beyond the realms of individual practice to a field in its own right that requires scholarly investigation and communication to grow.

2.2.3 Extending the concept of the scholarship of teaching

Though a significant report, Kreber (2002) noted that Boyer's lack of distinction between scholarly teaching and the scholarship of teaching led to ambiguities with the latter term. Subsequently, the scholarship of teaching has been defined more precisely by scholars in America, Britain and Australia. It is Shulman, an American scholar, who has perhaps most usefully extended Boyer's original concept (1998; 1999; 2000; 2002)[5]. For Shulman (2000), scholars of teaching have dual roles: they must not only engage in the practice of teaching within their particular disciplines but also conduct *research* into the nature and efficacy of that teaching. In line with 'traditional' research activities, the findings must then be made public, open to critical review and evaluation by peers, and used and further developed by the wider community. Similarly, Bender and Gray (1999) stated that teaching should be an

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[5] Throughout this chapter I do not generally distinguish SoTL scholars by the countries they are from. SoTL proponents have increasingly positioned their community as an international one with shared concerns about educational priorities in HE (see for example Huber and Hutchings (2005)). A number of international societies and journals have been established to help this sharing, most notably the International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (ISSOTL) and the *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning* (IJ-SoTL). ISSOTL particularly notes that one of its organising principles is to facilitate 'the collaboration of scholars in *different countries* and the flow of new findings and applications *across national boundaries*' (ISSOTL, 2009, italics my emphasis). In the UK, the 8th annual London SoTL conference in 2010, which itself had been created as a bi-national forum between UK and US scholars, was reportedly attended by many international academics with presentations given 'from SoTL scholars across the world' (Fanghanel, 2011, p.8). For its proponents then, SoTL is not limited by national boarders but rather extends across them. This point is evident in other UK (e.g. Nicholls, 2004) and international scholars' (e.g. Trigwell et al., 2000; Prosser, 2008) work. I have, for the most part, followed these scholars' examples by not differentiating SoTL scholars by the countries they are from.

object of 'ceaseless and generative inquiry', which is reflective, systematic, replicable, and made public. Building on Boyer, they described the teacher *and* student becoming engaged in a mutual learning process. Many scholars support the ceaseless nature of the scholarship of teaching.   Bass (1999), for example, described such scholarship as an on-going intellectually focused activity. Similarly, Kreber and Cranton (2000, p.478) argued that it entails 'on-going learning about teaching and the demonstration of teaching knowledge'. Others view the scholarship of teaching as transforming the classroom into a site of inquiry where questions are posed about student learning to improve individual practice and advance the teaching profession (Huber and Hutchings, 2005). Furthermore, both Bass (1999) and Hutchings (2000) believed this type of scholarship re-defines teaching as a developmental activity that requires purposeful experimentation and allows 'problems' to be redesignated as opportunities for investigation.

As well as inquiry and investigation, most definitions of the scholarship of teaching convey the importance of advancing both the profession and practice of teaching. Shulman (1999) described the need for knowledge about teaching and learning to become public and communal. Once established as 'community property' (Shulman, 2011, p.2), this knowledge can be tested, examined, challenged and, ultimately, improved. Both Smith (2001) and Badley (2003) support the need for a community of practice within HE teaching in which knowledge gained through the scholarship of teaching is evaluated, critiqued, used and further developed. This communal knowledge is proposed to help build the knowledge base of HE teaching and learning, and to put teaching on a par with research by subjecting it to the same level of critical scrutiny (Shulman, 2011). Accordingly, Shulman (1999; 2011) ascribed three essential characteristics of the scholarship of teaching: it becomes public; it is subject to critical peer review and evaluation; and it is used and developed further by members of the wider community. These characteristics can be seen in Richlin's (2001) diagram in Appendix 1 which details the on-going cycle of the scholarship of teaching and how this extends from scholarly teaching.

2.2.4 The scholarship of teaching <u>and</u> *learning*

Section 2.2.3 demonstrated that a significant feature of the scholarship of teaching is making pedagogy a legitimate area of research (Gray, 2006) and thereby building the body of literature and field of knowledge around HE teaching (Shulman, 1998). However, Hutchings and Shulman (1999) acknowledged that the original scholarship of teaching term did not convey the interconnected importance of learning. Scholarship of teaching advocates consistently viewed improved student learning as the reason for researching and developing

teaching practices (e.g. Shulman, 2000; Huber and Hutchings, 2005). McKinney (2006) stressed that enhancing and improving student learning is the ultimate goal of this type of scholarship, which Cottrell and Jones (2003) noted was also argued by Boyer (1990). It is Shulman (1999) again who succinctly stated that the profession of teaching must be taken seriously to ensure learning is taken seriously too. As a result, Hutchings and Shulman (1999) renamed the scholarship of teaching to the scholarship of teaching *and* learning (SoTL). SoTL, as a term, has since become firmly established[6].

It must be acknowledged though, as this and the previous section have begun to illuminate, that there is no one specific definition of SoTL. The ambiguities with the term that Kreber (2002) noted have also been identified by others. Trigwell and Shale (2004), for example, suggested that there are different ways that SoTL has been conceptualised within the academic community, with many viewing it as a scholarly activity to be engaged in and others seeing it more in terms of the outcomes of that activity, e.g. journal publications or conference presentations. These conceptual variations have also been reported by Nicholls (2004), Lygo-Baker (2005) and Boshier (2009). Despite this situation, SoTL, as a movement, has continued to develop, which is evidenced by the growth of journals and conferences dedicated to this form of scholarship (noted in section 2.2.3). The lack of a unified term, then, does not appear to be holding the SoTL movement back to any significant extent. However, it does place an onus on a SoTL researcher to define the interpretation of SoTL that they are using. As I indicated in chapter one (section 1.2.1), I am using McKinney's (2006, p.38) definition, which is that SoTL is 'systematic reflection and study on teaching and learning made public'. This concise definition incorporates the elements central to most other scholars' interpretations of SoTL as discussed in this and the previous section. The emphasis on *systematic* reflection and study conveys the importance of aligning these activities towards traditional research processes. Also apparent in the definition is the focus on both teaching *and* learning, and the need to communicate the findings of the systematic study to the wider community. Consequently, it is this definition of SoTL that is utilised within my study.

Whilst not establishing a definitive account of the term 'SoTL' in 1999, Hutchings and Shulman did share the underpinning aims of SoTL as created by the Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (CASTL). They are:

- to foster significant, long lasting learning for all students;

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[6] There are some critics who suggest SoTL should be SoLT, i.e. the scholarship of learning and teaching (see for example Boshier and Huang (2008)).

- to advance the practice and profession of teaching;
- to bring to teaching the recognition afforded to other forms of scholarly work.

2.2.5 The importance of SoTL

The discussion above describes the importance of SoTL. Shulman (2000) further suggested three reasons why SoTL is required in HE today. He called these reasons the 3 Ps: professionalism, pragmatism, and policy.

<u>Professionalism</u>

Shulman (2000) argued that academics are members of two professions. They are both discipline-based as well as professional educators. He therefore considered SoTL, with its emphasis on improving student learning, part of the professional role and responsibility of all academics[7]. He further viewed all professional educators as having the duty to share knowledge with their peers, i.e. the wider HE community, and contribute to the improvement of teaching and learning. Evidently for Shulman then, SoTL is concerned with developing the professionalism of academics as educators *and* developing HE teaching itself as a profession.

The dual professional role of academics is a view supported by others. Laurillard (2002), for example, asserted that academics need to know more than just their subject. They also 'need to know the ways it can come to be understood, the ways it can be misunderstood, what counts as understanding: they need to know how individuals experience the subject' (p.3). In other words, as Boyer (1990) argued, academics need disciplinary knowledge *and* pedagogical knowledge to support and develop student understanding of the subject[8]. The development of pedagogical knowledge through SoTL is what Kreber (2007, p.3) called 'authentic practice'. This authenticity occurs when the academic as scholar 'is geared towards building vital bridges between themselves, their students and the subject matter' (p.3).

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[7] Hutchings (2000) and Huber and Morreale (2002) support the view that SoTL should be a core responsibility of all academics.
[8] These two types of knowledge are also referred to as pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) (Paulsen, 2001).

Pragmatism

Shulman (2000) claimed that SoTL is pragmatic in that it can guide the design and adaptation of teaching methods to specifically support student learning. After being researched or evaluated, these methods can then be publicly disseminated and used by others to help guide their own teaching. The significant changes occurring within HE in England mean that the pragmatic nature of SoTL is hard to overlook. I discuss these changes more in section 2.3 but a brief example may be useful here. Ramsden (2009) showed that undergraduate enrolments within the UK as a whole have increased by 25 per cent in the 10 year period from 1998/99 to 2007/08[9]. This growth presents considerable challenges for academics whose numbers have not concomitantly risen (Fowler, 2005; University and College Union (UCU), 2010) and who must continue to create effective learning environments for all. Huber and Hutchings (2005, p.2) believed SoTL activities conducted by academics can help to ensure student learning improves rather than suffers in this context.

Policy

Policy, the last of Shulman's (2000) 3 Ps, relates to the need for SoTL to more directly influence policy concerns. Shulman particularly noted the increasing accountability that accrediting agencies 'are insisting on' (p.52). He argued that quality indicators should be established from studies designed and carried out by those who are 'qualified to pursue them', i.e. the teaching and learning scholars themselves. Echoing Power (1994), Shulman in 1998 argued for qualitative, rather than quantitative, methods of accountability that address teaching effectiveness and encourage peer dialogue or a 'discourse community' (p.8) so that more attention is focused on 'creating quality rather than just…policing it' (Power, 1994, p.49). Readings (1996, p.133) had similarly asserted that evaluating 'value' or 'quality' should be a discursive act, not a statistical or quantifiable one. Evaluation, he argued, is an act of judgement that cannot be validly reduced to numbers. Boyer (1990, p.xiii) maintained that establishing evaluation criteria to measure teaching should be the central role of academics being evaluated to end the 'suffocating practice' of universities measuring themselves against externally imposed standards. Cheng's (2010) study of UK HE found that external auditing processes, such as those imposed by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), had little beneficial effect on academics' teaching practices despite the large

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[9] Figures released by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) (2012) lend further weight to Ramsden's (2009) claim. They indicated (provisionally) that the HE participation rate in England for those aged 17-30 in 2010/11 was 47%, which translated to 323,000 initial entrants. This figure has increased from the 2006/07 academic year in which there were 285,000 initial entrants.

amounts of money, time and energy invested to comply with them. Consequently Cheng asked '[i]s it possible to revise the audit system into one where academics can take the lead and feel ownership and engagement with this process?' (2010, p.270). Shulman's (2000) argument 10 years earlier proposed SoTL as a method by which academics themselves develop and establish criteria that qualitatively measures their teaching practices, so making accountability an internally owned process rather than an externally imposed one.

SoTL proponents also suggest that SoTL can and should influence institutional policies too. McKinney (2006, p.47) argued that SoTL should be used at department and program levels so that decision making on topics such as curricular or pedagogical reforms 'have a base in appropriate SoTL literature'. Similarly, Schroeder (2007, p.8) asserted that establishing the 'connective tissue' between SoTL and institutional priorities will help to advance practice by ensuring that all decisions that 'intersect with learning and teaching' (p.8) are either grounded in inquiry-based evidence or subject to being the focus of a SoTL investigation.

2.2.6 Summary of SoTL

The discussion of SoTL shows that, overall, it is concerned to build and expand the literature about teaching and learning in HE through researching one's own teaching practice and disseminating the findings to the wider HE community. Its ultimate goal is to enhance both student learning and the profession of HE teaching. Shulman's 3 Ps demonstrate why many view SoTL as important and necessitated by HE systems today. From a pragmatic level it can help with the design and development of teaching methods. It can also support an institution's focus on teaching and learning by ensuring all policy decisions are informed by SoTL literature and/or inquiries. Moreover, proponents' views suggest SoTL has the potential to progress the HE teaching profession by encouraging the sharing and building of knowledge within a community of peers, and presenting this task as the duty of all academics with teaching responsibilities. SoTL appears, therefore, to be a process with much potential for academics and institutions, and for student learning and the HE teaching profession as a whole.

2.3 Practical challenges to SoTL presented by the HE context in England

Chapter one (sections 1.2 and 1.2.2) identified some of the most recent changes occurring in HE in England through the latest White Paper (BIS, 2011). I discuss in section 2.4 the White Paper (BIS, 2011) and preceding Browne Report (2010) and argue that they threaten the

values and ideological basis of SoTL by promoting a utilitarian approach to teaching and explicitly positioning the student as a consumer of HE. In this section I will briefly examine the HE context over the last decade or so prior to the White Paper to stress the *practical* challenges that have been, and are still being, presented to SoTL. I will further argue that the SoTL literature to date does not acknowledge or address these challenges sufficiently.

2.3.1 Characterising the higher education context

HE in England during the last decade has been consistently described as an environment characterised by increasing competition, a diverse and rapidly growing student population, declining resources, and heavier, more stressful, workloads for academics (Kinman and Jones, 2003; Fowler, 2005; Greenbank, 2006; Boezerooij et al., 2007).   The government has given small amounts of funding with the intention to improve HE teaching and learning (see Skelton, 2004 or Gosling and Hannan, 2007), yet critics view the environment as one that undermines rather than enhances the practices and professionalism of teaching (Lueddeke, 2003).   This undermining would appear to have considerable implications for SoTL given its aims to improve both the status and professionalism of HE teaching. Before considering these implications, I will briefly explore the HE context in light of the above characterisations.

2.3.2 A large and diverse student population

Section 2.2.5 noted the significant increase in student numbers that has occurred over the last decade or so.   The desire to increase the numbers of students attending university extends back to the Robbins Report (Committee on Higher Education - hereafter referred to as the Robbins Report) in 1963.   However, governments from the 1990s onwards have made concerted efforts to increase numbers to a far greater extent than ever attempted before, particularly through the widening participation agenda[10]. The aim of this agenda was to increase the participation of students in HE from 'non-traditional' backgrounds, and scholars suggest it has not only increased numbers but led to greater diversity of the student population.   This diversity may range through maturity, class and ethnicity, (Read et al., 2003) and also previous educational experiences and preparedness to study at HE level. (Crozier et al., 2008). The increasing diversity of HE students' abilities led Wingate (2007) to argue that greater numbers are encountering difficulties with their learning at university.

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[10] In 2003 the government set a target of 50% participation rate in HE for those aged between 18 and 30 (Department for Education and Skills (DfES), 2003). In 2010 the coalition government branded this target 'misguided' (Cable, 2010) and emphasised other options for 18 year olds, such as vocational apprenticeships.

Consequently more support is needed for students to learn successfully in HE (Fowler, 2005) and academics have to work harder to ensure all students' have their needs met and remain engaged in their learning. Barrington (2004), for example, suggested academics may need to rethink teaching methods such as lectures to cater more for students whose first language is not English. Similarly, Hockings et al. (2008) claimed that diverse teaching strategies are needed to create inclusive environments that are meaningful and relevant to all students.

The rethinking of teaching strategies may offer opportunities for academics to invigorate their teaching (Lea and Street, 2006). However, studies suggest that the growing student population and the diverse needs, abilities, and experiences they bring may also have negative consequences for academics. Kinman and Jones (2003) observed that 70% of over 780 UK academics surveyed found their jobs stressful. The main source of stress was the escalating numbers of students and the resulting heavier workloads, increased pace of work and lack of preparation time. Fowler (2005) claimed that stress arises for academics because more students need learning support, but increasing student numbers makes it harder for academics to provide as their numbers have not risen accordingly[11]. Fanghanel (2007) connected the experience of continual stress to academics feeling disempowered in their abilities to do their work properly. This disempowerment may arise, as Robson and Turner (2007) concluded, from the lack of time academics feel they have to reflect on and adapt their pedagogical practices to meet the growing diversity of their students' needs. Moreover, they may feel pressured to adopt approaches primarily because they reduce workloads, such as multiple choice tests, rather than for their educational benefits (Hockings, 2005). Consequently, the research literature suggests a large and diverse student body unaccompanied by rising academic numbers leads to an environment for academics characterised by increasing stress and workload levels.

2.3.3 Managerialist culture

As well as developing the widening participation agenda, in the early 1990s government was also changing the funding model for HE. It aimed to expose the sector to greater market forces in order to let competition direct expansion of the system[12]. Canaan (2008) identified

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[11] Fowler (2005) highlighted that the student to staff ratio has been increasing considerably in the UK since 1980 when it stood at 9:1. By 1998 this figure had risen to 17:1. Data from the UCU (2010) showed the ratio declined slightly to 16.3:1 in 2008/09. Despite this slight decline, these figures were consistently higher than the averages for other OECD countries (UCU, 2010).

[12] In the early 1990s the model of funding in HE changed from a block grant based system to a more competitive process centred on numbers of students and research outputs (Lu and Zhang, 2008). This competitive funding

that marketisation is the central tenet of a neo-liberal agenda in which free market ideals are assumed to produce the best outcomes and most effective organising principles for the economy, society and even the individual. According to Brenner et al. (2010, p.329-330), neo-liberalism 'prioritises market-based, market-oriented, or market-disciplinary responses to regulatory problems' and 'strives to intensify commodification in all realms of social life'. Critics argue neo-liberalism in HE also promotes managerialist approaches, such as New Public Management (NPM), which emphasise external accountability and scrutiny through regulatory and auditory processes (Shattock, 2008). Within a managerialist culture business terms such as 'efficiency', 'effectiveness', and 'value for money' are seen to pervade not only the language in HE, but its fundamental values as well (Churchman and King, 2009). Many studies have found that this culture leads to academics suffering increased stress and job dissatisfaction levels (Kinman and Jones, 2003; Fowler, 2005; Findlow, 2008). Much of this stress arises not just from the changing values that academics have to work towards (discussed more in section 2.4), but from the practical effect these values may have on their workloads and working priorities. The increasing administrative paperwork required by regulatory bodies for accountability purposes for example has been found to significantly reduce the time some academics can dedicate to preparing for teaching and supporting students (Cheng, 2010; Harland et al., 2010). Findlow (2008, p.318) observed the alienation expressed by junior academics as they struggled to 'negotiate a system that both demands high quality performance, yet simultaneously undermines this'. Similarly, older academics in Churchman and King's (2009, p.511) study conveyed feelings of 'trauma' and 'complexity' as the demands of the corporate university reduced opportunities to focus on their core teaching activities.

The reduction of time for teaching reflects a possible re-ordering of priorities taking place within universities. Naidoo and Jamieson (2005, p.274) asserted that the requirements of a consumerist and managerialist framework of HE prioritises 'second order functions' such as accounting for and reporting on professional activity, over 'first order functions', such as teaching or supporting student learning. Power (1994) previously observed that audit, a central neo-liberal accountability tool (Canaan, 2008), is not a passive process but actively constructs the contexts in which it operates. He also argued that it is quantifiable aspects that audit prioritises, such as efficiency, economy, and measures of output. Other more ambiguous concepts, such as teaching quality, have to be reduced to standardised measures to become sufficiently auditable. Consequently, academic behaviour shifts to comply with the requirements of audit, rather than the primary purpose of teaching. Findlow

was identified in the 1991 White Paper (Department of Education and Science (DES)) as the key to effective expansion of the HE system

(2008) claimed that setting *a priori* standards leaves academics feeling restrained and inhibited in their ability to innovate and be creative in their teaching practices. HE audit, she stated, 'eats away…at academic autonomy' (p.325).

2.3.4 Turbulent environment

Boezerooij et al. (2007) described the HE environment in the last few decades as becoming more turbulent and uncertain than ever before. Thorpe (2008, p.108) even asserted that uncertainty is now 'the driving force' in academic life. Much of this uncertainty relates to job security as the continual decline in public funding leads to increased risks of redundancies (Fowler, 2005). The Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) (Great Britain, HM Treasury) in 2010 intensified these risks by cutting the teaching budget for all non-STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) subjects, which led to department closures in some institutions (chapter three, section 3.5.2 gives more detail). This situation confirmed Thorpe's (2008) assertion that fear and anxiety have become ingrained in academics' day to day working lives. Findlow's (2008) study found that this type of insecurity reduces the desire of academics to innovate and experiment with their teaching and learning practices due to the perceived career risks that may ensue if innovations are not immediately successful. Indeed, academics in Churchman and King's (2009) study viewed isolation and anonymity as the safest option in a turbulent HE environment. However, this 'safety' may result in academics feeling unable to develop more satisfying and supportive teaching and learning practices for fear of drawing attention to themselves.

I would argue that the characterisation of HE given in section 2.3.1 as an expanding, diverse and stressful system in which to work appears correct. Academics do indeed seem presented with considerable challenges and pressures in regard to their teaching practices and teaching roles, for example through increasing student numbers and the growth of managerialist values. There is, however, some support in the literature for the use of SoTL-type activities to respond to these challenges. Biggs (2003) advocated re-examining teaching methods and learning opportunities to ensure all students have the chance to succeed. Hutchings et al. (2011) believed these re-examinations stand the greatest chance of being successful if based on scholarly inquiry and investigation. Laurillard (2008) also viewed research into HE teaching as the only way the teaching community can effectively manage the numerous demands currently made of it. It would appear for some then, that the changes occurring in HE necessitate academic engagement in the scholarship of teaching and learning.

2.3.5 An unaddressed paradox for SoTL

The need for SoTL in today's HE context leads to a paradox that appears largely unaddressed in the literature to date. This paradox is apparent when SoTL is viewed against a HE system characterised by stressful and heavier workloads, corporate auditing practices, and job insecurity. Ceaseless and generative investigations and explorations into teaching and learning practices undoubtedly require a lot of time, effort and energy from academics to carry them out. Though many studies emphasise the commitment of academics to develop and enhance their teaching practices (e.g. Findlow, 2008; Fitzmaurice, 2010), others demonstrate that this commitment is undermined by the increasing workloads and reprioritising of values that leave academics feeling they have little agency 'to focus on teaching…at periods that suit their own intellectual availability' (Fanghanel, 2007, p.12). The many student diversities seem to actively call for academics to keep investigating and exploring how to support differing types of students. However, the HE environment appears far from conducive for such investigation due to academics' lessening teaching preparation time, increasing administrative and auditing activities, and the emphasis on managerial rather than educational values. SoTL investigations appear more likely to be restricted in this type of HE environment rather than freely engaged in.

These significant challenges to SoTL do not appear adequately addressed by its proponents within the literature to date. For example, Huber and Hutchings (2005) acknowledged many aspects of the current HE climate as discussed above[13], but only to argue that they further require and necessitate SoTL. They did not consider that this climate may constrain academics' ability to engage in SoTL practices. Lueddeke (2003) has highlighted that increasing workloads, uncertainty in the HE environment, and insecurity about job prospects may be obstacles to involvement in SoTL. Yet, the later writings of the most enthusiastic advocates of SoTL still do not recognise these issues (e.g. Prosser, 2008; Hutchings et al., 2011; Shulman, 2011). Indeed, Shulman in 2011 merely reiterated Huber and Hutchings (2005) view that the on-going challenges to teaching and learning simply renew the need for SoTL. Davis and Chandler asserted in 1998 that the broader contextual concerns of HE are given 'short shrift by Boyer and others' (p.40), and it seems this argument still stands today.

The lack of attention to contextual matters means SoTL proponents are potentially disregarding other significant concerns about the changing nature of teaching and learning in HE. For example, SoTL focuses on teaching and learning, and particularly on fostering

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[13] Though commenting on HE in the US, they were still referring to aspects such as increasing student numbers and declining resources.

significant and long-lasting learning (Hutchings and Shulman, 1999). However, as I argued above, the SoTL literature does not connect sufficiently with the wider HE climate. Consequently, there also appears no consideration within the SoTL literature about what conceptions of teaching and learning are being promoted within the current HE environment. Shulman (1998, p.8) described teaching as an isolated activity in which teachers experience 'pedagogical solitude'. Yet this activity is not isolated from the political environment that continues to influence and shape the HE system. If SoTL advocates continue to ignore governmental influences within their discussions, SoTL may not only be isolated further from the context HE is situated within, but the various agendas organising the system that appear threatening to SoTL's existence could also be left unchallenged (these agendas are discussed further in the following section).

It is clear that while some believe SoTL is required by the changes occurring in HE, the challenges the environment presents to engaging in it appear very difficult for academics to overcome. I argue SoTL advocates do not yet acknowledge the extent of these challenges and the threats they present to the fuller realisation of SoTL's goals. Furthermore, this situation illuminates a potentially far greater problem for SoTL. By not taking significant account of contextual concerns, the possibility of SoTL ignoring the external forces shaping HE teaching seems greatly increased. These forces may prove harder for academics to surmount due to the ideological changes to HE they have swiftly ushered in.

2.4 Higher education policies and agendas

The review will now turn from characterising the HE context to discussing more fully the political landscape. It will suggest that government policy and related reports are re-conceptualising the nature of teaching and learning. I will also argue that government agendas have had a detrimental impact on teaching and learning, and are presenting further risks to the status and value of SoTL. I contend that, as with the contextual concerns, the SoTL literature does not take adequate account of the governmental influences on teaching and learning, which extends the threat the HE context presents to this type of scholarship.

2.4.1 The Browne Report (2010) and White Paper (BIS, 2011)

In chapter one (section 1.2.2) I highlighted that the Browne Report in 2010 recommended cutting the publicly funded teaching budget and replacing it with student fees of up to £9,000 per year. These recommendations were translated into HE policy through the White Paper (BIS, 2011) published the following year. I reported in chapter one critics' arguments that

the directives in the White Paper (BIS, 2011) reinforced a commodified vision of HE in which students become consumers and market-based values dominate (Freedman and Fenton, 2011; Hall, 2011). I also observed the White Paper stressing a more utilitarian approach to teaching despite its rhetoric of restoring teaching to the 'centre of every higher education institution's mission' (BIS, 2011, p.27). This utilitarianism led the CfPU (2011, p.3) to argue that the White Paper effectively reduced teaching to 'training for employment'. Finally, as noted in chapter one, the White Paper opened the sector to private providers at the same time as encouraging 'alternative providers' (BIS, 2011, p.46) to increase their HE provision.

Privatisation of HE and tuition fees replacing public funding represent radical changes to the sector. They promote HE as a private, rather than public, good in which students are asked to think of education only in terms of future individual benefit (Rustin, 2010). However, the White Paper also reinforces trends and agendas that have been promoted in HE policy over recent decades. These include the dominance of economic and employer needs, the increase of external accountability, and the role of the student as a passive consumer of an educationally-based product or service. In this part of the chapter I will focus on these agendas to demonstrate the continued subordination of educational values to government imperatives and objectives. Indeed, this subordination may account for how the recent radical changes to HE have been able to occur. I will explore HE policy since the 1960s to show how government has taken increasing control of the sector to further its own needs and agendas. The decline in trust of the academic and their professional role will also be discussed to account for their seeming passiveness and lack of resistance to the government's domination. A final examination of the student as a consumer of HE will be given. The implications of all these features for SoTL will be considered throughout.

2.4.2 Centralising control of higher education

Policy literature relevant to this discussion begins in 1963 with the Robbins Report. This report dealt with the need to expand the HE system to ensure greater accessibility for young people who had the capabilities and potential to benefit from higher level learning. It is by comparing this report with the reports and government White Papers that followed that changes in HE can be most clearly observed. One of the key changes occurring from 1963 onwards is how the system as a whole is governed.

In 1963 the government funded HE to a much greater extent than in recent years. The funds were passed through a block grant to the University Grants Committee (UGC), which then

distributed the grant between the existing university institutions[14]. The academic majority of this committee led Shattock (2006, p.134) to describe the UGC as an 'expert, insider body'. The 'expertness' of this body was recognised by government through its lack of specification or conditions as to how the grant was to be used or distributed[15]. Shattock (2006, p.135) viewed this as the climax of 'inside-out' policy, in which the university sector rather than the government was allowed to drive the direction in which it progressed. The Robbins Report (1963, p.236) saw the UGC as an essential mechanism for ensuring HE's immunity to political intervention and the 'normal obligation of public accountability'. Without a safeguard such as the UGC, the report feared HE co-ordination could more easily become subject to political considerations and pressures, and 'forces quite foreign either to education or to the advancement of knowledge' (Robbins Report, 1963, p.235). That the government of the day allowed such autonomous control suggests that it viewed the purposes of HE more widely than is occurring today.

The Robbins Report (1963) recognised that the government of the day could not restrict its successors from intervening in HE and in the 1980s the UGC was replaced by the Universities Funding Council (UFC). In contrast to the UGC, the UFC was subject to ministerial direction in relation to policy matters (Shattock, 2008). The government White Paper introducing these measures (DES, 1987) clearly showed that the era of immunity was over and the era of accountability had begun. For example, 'quality and efficiency' in HE would be improved by the development and use of performance indicators, and better 'value for money from the public funds' (DES, 1987, p.9) was required. Additionally, the paper described an 'urgent need' (p.1) for the HE sector to take increasing account of the country's economic requirements. With this in mind the government stated its desire to bring HE and business closer. The elements of neo-liberalism and NPM described in section 2.3.3, such as accountability, efficiency and 'value for money', are clearly visible here. Increased government control continued in policy through the 1990s onwards and is most evident in the drive to introduce competition within the sector.

The 1991 White Paper (DES), which outlined the features to be contained in the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act, identified competition as the main reason for breaking the binary divide between universities and polytechnics. Creating a unified system would encourage competition between all HE institutions for students and funds, which, the government believed, were 'the real key to achieving cost effective expansion' (DES, 1991,

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[14] The HE sector at this time was divided into universities, and polytechnics and colleges. It was the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act that unified the sector by allowing polytechnics to become universities.
[15] The terms of reference of the UGC required it to make allocations 'in the light of national needs' (Robbins Report, 1963, p.236), but in practice this was left to the committee to interpret (Shattock, 2006).

p.12). Additionally, accountability measures were reinforced, with emphasis again on the need for 'proper accountability' (ibid, p.24) for the use of public funds. This need for accountability demonstrated a significant shift in logic occurring towards HE organisation. Shattock (2008) argued the government had ceased to view HE as an autonomous sector directing its own strategy, and instead regarded it in the same light as other publicly funded services. Therefore, in return for public funding, features such as cost efficiency, quality and performance were demanded.

Significantly, the White Paper (DES, 1991) stressed that 'quality assessments' would be developed through two elements: 'quantifiable outcomes' (p.29), i.e. increasing use of performance indicators, and *external* judgements. Units were to be established in each funding council[16] with the responsibility to develop these 'quality assessment' elements. Importantly, these units would be 'subject to guidance from the Secretaries of State' (p.29). Filmer (1997, p.55) associated this externality as the replacing of traditional 'insider' structures, such as the UGC, with abstract systems, which 'interact with actual environments to construct and reconstruct values'. This view links to Power's (1994) assertion that accountability and auditing measures are not neutral processes, but actively construct the environment in which they operate. The emphasis on external judgements as central to accountability seems to suggest that the views and values of those who work *inside* the institutions are less important and, perhaps, less trustworthy than those who work outside it. It appears then that the system has been reconfigured towards the measures and values of accountability. Additionally, these values are not defined by those within the HE system, but are more directly imposed from government.

The 1991 White Paper (DES) set the tone for things to come. Reports that followed emphasised the need for external scrutiny in relation to quality assurance and standards and increasing HE's responsiveness to economic needs (e.g. National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education (NCIHE), 1997; Department for Education and Employment (DfEE), 1998; DfES, 2003). Shattock (2006) referred to this situation as moving from 'inside out' policy making, in which policy is internally generated, to 'outside in', in which the state takes over all policy making decisions and introduces tightly controlled accountability processes to guarantee compliance. There are many who argue that the rhetoric of marketisation and competition within HE both hides and enables an agenda of increasing centralised control of the system (e.g. Tasker and Packham, 1994; Readings, 1996; Thorpe, 2008). Shattock (2008) further argued that whilst HE may once have been a good example of 'the private

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[16] The UFC was replaced in 1992 by the Higher Education Funding Councils for England, Wales and Scotland (Shattock, 2008).

government of public money' (Heclo and Wildavsky, 1981, cited in Shattock, 2008, p.199), i.e. institutions privately managing the public money they received, it is now what the Robbins Report hoped to avoid – a sector tightly controlled by centralised government[17].

2.4.3 The economic agenda and meeting business needs

As well as arguing against public accountability in HE, the Robbins Report in 1963 was keen to stress that HE should not just be viewed as a tool to serve economic needs. Instead, a balanced perspective needed to recognise that HE also helps create the cultured and civilised society in which the economy operates. In the 1970s this balanced approach still appeared to be held, though the argument was building for improved relations between education and businesses (see for example James Callaghan's speech at Ruskin College (Callaghan, 1976)). As the 1980s proceeded, linking education with business began to take greater prominence to the extent that Tasker and Packham (1994) declared that the values of business were promoted alongside educational ones. The 1987 White Paper (DES) positioned economic requirements as the 'urgent need' (p.1) HE had to address. It also placed these requirements as essential to HE's planning framework so that the economy would be served more effectively. For example, it argued to maintain the shifting balance of HE provision towards subjects for which 'future employer demand is strongest' (p.10). By the 1991 White Paper (DES), there was no mention of cultural or societal needs that HE could fulfil. The emphasis lay instead on HE increasing its links with business and commerce, and the general economic and commercial relevance of its educational provision. Jones and Thomas (2005, p.618) labelled this emphasis as utilitarian, in which the primary focus is on the relationship between HE and the economy and ensuring the former becomes 'increasingly receptive to developments in the latter'. In a utilitarian approach, the purpose of HE is reduced simply to meeting economic needs. This purpose seemingly ignores the societal needs and benefits of HE, and the advancement of knowledge for its own sake. It also potentially leads to a utilitarian focus in teaching (this is discussed further in section 2.4.8). Regardless, the utilitarian focus gained in strength from the 1990s into the millennium with HE being urged to increase 'its contribution to the economy and its responsiveness to the needs of business' (DfEE, 1998, p.3; DfES 2003).

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[17] Barnett (2011) has contrastingly argued that by encouraging marketisation, the government 'stands back' (p.87) from detailed control of universities and allows them 'room to prosper in their own ways' (p.88). I propose though that this 'room to prosper' occurs only at the micro level and that the very imposition of a market-based framework and competitive ideals demonstrates that universities are tightly controlled by government at the macro level of their organisation.

Thorpe (2008) extended Tasker and Packham's (1994) view that business values are promoted as much as educational ones to argue that any value frameworks within HE that do not relate to economic values have been delegitimised. Specifically, he suggested education as an intrinsic good has been replaced by education for vocational purposes. The Browne Report (2010) appears to have reinforced this argument. The report suggested firstly that the HE system is still not responsive enough to the skills the economy requires. A large focus of its recommendations then related to ensuring a 'closer fit between what is taught in higher education and the skills needed in the economy' (p.23). The White Paper (BIS, 2011) confirmed employment outcomes as essential criteria for judging a course's quality and attracting prospective students. The paper required each institution to produce a Key Information Set (KIS) for each course for potential applicants to view. Employment and earning outcomes feature predominantly in this KIS. This approach is in line with the paper's overall aim to attract more people to study at HE level to increase 'the national economic gain' (p.8) through the jobs they will get once graduated. Accordingly, the paper's proposals stressed the government's intentions to make universities 'become even more responsive to the changing demands of students and employers for high level skills and employability' (BIS, 2011, p.3). The values of vocationally-based education dominated in this White Paper (BIS, 2011). Only the mere mention was made of education for its own sake: 'Higher education is a good thing in itself. Students may study a subject because they love it regardless of what it means for their earnings' (p.38). However, this sentence began the section in the paper titled 'Employer engagement' which largely argued that preparing students for a 'rewarding career' (p.38) is actually the main purpose of HE. It appears then that educational values, whilst not completely delegitimised, are significantly de-prioritised in this White Paper.

Section 2.4.2 discussed the way in which government tightened its control of HE and enforced greater accountability measures through the bodies and processes it established. These actions can be seen as arising from the same economic values that were directing course provision. Tasker and Packham (1994) noted that whilst a business-focused curriculum in HE was being promoted in the 1980s[18], the language and values of business were also permeating HE management and governance. Terms such as 'quality assurance', 'quality audit', 'value for money', 'efficiency', all originating from commercial and business contexts, emerged in academic policy from the 1980s and achieved greater significance as the years proceeded (DES, 1987; DES 1991; DfEE, 1998; DfES, 2003; BIS, 2009). I highlighted in section 2.3.3 that these terms are linked to New Public Management (NPM),

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[18] They gave the example of the 'Enterprise in Higher Education Initiative'.

which Shattock (2008, p.191) described as an approach emerging from the government belief that 'the public sector had to be "managed" and subjected to economic disciplines' for the economy to survive. According to Tasker and Packham (1994), the language of business and commerce that filtered into HE symbolised a shift in education towards the specific values of these contexts, i.e. assuring products are fit for purpose in order to be bought and sold. Graham (2005, p.121) argued that policy is almost entirely an 'achievement of language' in that the language used can legitimate particular value systems. McKenna (2005, p.46) further asserted that as HE language has been dominated by the discourse of economics and commerce, academics have had to adopt the same discourse in order 'simply to be heard'. This view reinforces the claims of Strathern (2000) and Archer (2008a) that the language of policy dominates in HE and academics have, as yet, no common language with which to argue against it. Consequently, the economic agenda may have influenced not just what HE provides, but also the way it has come to be managed and defined. Indeed, I would suggest that without this re-definition it is unlikely the 2011 White Paper (BIS) could have conveyed such an explicit utilitarian and economic focus. The very explicitness of the paper demonstrates the extent to which NPM and business values have succeeded in re-defining the purpose of HE.

The discussion so far illustrates that the increasing centralised control of HE, the emphasis on accountability and the drive towards economic and business-focused provision has been evident since the 1980s and growing in strength ever since. A question emerges then as to how these features have continued to proceed so steadily. Smith and Webster (1997) claimed that the university has become a passive entity. Similarly, Thorpe (2008, p.115) reported a sense of inevitability within the system and a failure 'in the British academic community' to imagine alternatives to the government's agendas. A further analysis of HE policy indicates several reasons why this seeming passivity may have occurred. The first, and perhaps most significant, reason relates to the apparent erosion of both academics' identity within policy documents and of the trust placed in them as professionals.

2.4.4 The absence of the academic

Sabri (2010, p.204) noted the increasing 'absence of the academic in higher education policy', which she suggested is occurring in two ways: firstly, by denying their identity as academics and referring to them more generically as 'staff', and secondly, by focusing solely on the 'student experience', which effectively obscures the academic, and the 'academic experience' from view.

Beck and Young (2005, p.184) had previously claimed that academics have suffered an 'assault on their professionalism' through the undermining of their identities. This undermining is evident in policy discourse, and again more observable when comparing the Robbins Report with more recent policy documents. The Robbins Report (1963) has an entire chapter devoted to academic freedom, which also gives a broad view of academic identity. As well as teaching, the report acknowledged that an academic's role is to pursue their own research studies and continue building and extending the knowledge base in their own particular research area. It appears the 'academic experience' is just as important as the 'student experience' at this point in time. The terms 'academic' or 'teacher' are also used continually throughout the report. However, from the late 1980s onwards, the recognition of the academic's place in HE seems to become lost in government documents beneath the need for academics to ensure that national economic requirements are met and greater external accountability is established. By the Dearing Report in 1997 (see National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education (NCIHE) – hereafter referred to as the Dearing Report) academics, as a significant group of people within HE, had been subsumed into the generic 'members of staff' group (e.g. p.8 and p.117) that included support, administrative and technical staff. In the 2003 White Paper (DfES, p.48) academics disappeared altogether as robust ways of measuring student achievement were described as helpful to 'the student, to institutions, to employers, and to other stakeholders.' Are academics situated here within 'institutions' or as 'other stakeholders'? Whatever the answer, it appears they are no longer a distinct group themselves in this White Paper at least.

At the same time as the academic seemingly disappeared from policy discourse, the identity of students and the importance of the 'student experience' became more prominent. The 2003 White Paper (DfES) obscured academics from view by positioning employers, the economy and students as HE's main stakeholders. This positioning of students is not surprising when viewed against the increasing marketisation of the sector in which competition between institutions for students is emphasised. The government stated in 2009 (BIS) that universities are 'competing to attract students' through offering 'the best possible student experience' (p.17). The affirmation of this view by the 2011 White Paper (BIS) could not be missed – its title was *Higher education: students at the heart of the system*. The Robbins Report (1963) saw the relationship between academics and students as central. In contrast, the 2011 White Paper (BIS) appeared to effectively ignore any significant relationship between the two. Whilst the White Paper may not have been denying this relationship, it appeared to define academics largely in terms of, and so subordinate them to, their capacity to support students. The paper only fleetingly used the term 'academic' in reference to this group of people, and it gave no recognition of the wider scope of the

academic role as given in the Robbins Report (1963). Instead, all the emphasis was placed on institutions delivering a 'better student experience' (p.4), made critical by the lack of public funding. Sabri (2010) argued that the 'student experience' is a discourse now privileged in HE over any other possible alternatives. Similarly, Beck and Young (2005) claimed that academics have suffered a continual loss of autonomy and authority, and their once stable identities have been replaced by identities constructed by and for market principles. It is evident from this discussion that as HE policy proceeded after the Robbins Report (1963), the presence of the academic and the 'academic experience' as a central feature of HE has steadily eroded and been replaced almost totally by the 'student experience'.

2.4.5 The absence of academic trust

The increasing absence of academics as a distinct group in HE not only renders the 'academic experience' less visible but also appears to reduce them as professionals. Sabri (2010, p.201) noted that viewing academics as generic 'members of staff' limits their power and 'knowledgeability' (p.202), and instead sustains policymakers' 'own credibility and professional expertise' (p.201). Furthermore, she argued that this limited position then allows politicians and other agencies to appropriate academics' professional responsibilities, or, as Harris (2005) claimed, colonise the professional discourse. I would argue this undermining of the academic professional role allows for the undermining of the trust placed in them as professionals. If academics are considered to be just 'members of staff' within HE who support student learning rather than professional experts, it follows that they may not be the best group of people to judge and direct the development of HE itself. Though the Robbins Report (1963) espoused the benefits of the UGC as a body governed largely by academics, this level of trust in academic professionals has since been steadily and continually eroded. The changing language of policy and the positioning of academics within policy has played a part in this: however there is one other factor that can be seen to have fundamentally altered the balance of trust – the neo-liberal, or NPM, accountability regime.

Both Strathern (2000) and Harris (2005) argued that the language of accountability has taken over the language of trust with regard to educational governance. This alteration can be seen as policy has proceeded from the 1980s with increasing emphasis placed on institutions to demonstrate the quality and efficiency of their educational provision in return for the government funding they receive. For example, the government stated in the early 1990s that 'proper accountability' is needed for the 'substantial' public funds invested in HE (DES, 1991, p.24). However, it appears the academic community was not trusted to ensure

this 'proper accountability' would take place. Instead external bodies created by government were given this mission. With regard to funding, the DfEE (1998, p.26) claimed: 'The Funding Councils will retain a statutory duty to ensure that public funds are well spent, and that the quality of teaching and learning is maintained and improved'. This statement demonstrates not only a perceived need for external accountability, but also that these external bodies are required to ensure good standards of teaching and learning. Beck and Young (2005) asserted that displacing responsibility for improving standards erodes the inner dedication of professionals as they are no longer responsible for the quality of the service they provide. Implied also by external accountability is that the professionals cannot be trusted to ensure and provide good 'quality' without being policed (Power, 1994).

The absence of trust in academics seemed clearly established as policy continued into the new millennium. The 2003 White Paper (DfES, p.49) declared that guaranteeing good quality teaching for everyone

> means being clearer about the teaching and learning practices and standards that students and government, as the principal funders, have *a right to expect* from all higher education providers (italics my emphasis).

The absence of academics from this statement is significant: they appear subsumed into the 'higher education providers' group and this group seems subservient to what its 'principal funders' (i.e. students and government) have a 'right to expect'. The term 'a right to expect' also seems to imply that academics do not naturally want to provide the best teaching and learning experience that they can. Instead the 'principal funders' have to make it clear that they are expecting good quality. The statement could also suggest that the government views academics as important only insofar as they meet the rights of others. Either way, the White Paper goes on to credit the QAA, an *external* body, for ensuring academic quality and standards in HE.

The 2003 White Paper also required institutions to publish 'far more information than ever before' (DfES, p.48) about the quality of their courses. This publishing requirement is extended in the 2011 White Paper (BIS) to include what will be learnt on the course, the teaching and learning practices used, and students' consequent employment prospects. All this information is required under the guise of greater 'transparency' (see, for example, pages 4 and 79) and ensuring students are able to make informed choices about which university to attend. Tsoukas (1997) stressed that the process of trying to achieve transparency actually undermines the trust that is necessary for an expert system to function

effectively. The result is what he termed a 'more information, less trust' (p.835) paradox in which the more information that is sought by observers, the less inclined they will be to trust the practitioners rendered more observable. Similarly, Strathern (2000) argued that the desire for transparent accountability effectively points to an absence of trust in those being held to account. This distrust seems intensified when the mechanisms to ensure accountability are placed in the hands of external, government created bodies (see section 2.4.2).

It seems evident therefore that over recent decades academics have been subject to a continual undermining of their distinct identity and place within HE, and of the trust placed in them as professionals to ensure students experience good standards of teaching and learning. This situation may begin to account for the seeming passivity of universities in resisting government policy and control. Shattock (2006, p.138) asserted that the state has taken over policy making because the 'insider organs [such as the UGC] that once generated policies have been weakened or no longer exist'. My analysis of HE policy here has shown that the strength of academics as a collective body in institutions and the sector itself has been weakened and their identities as professionals rendered less visible. From this perspective, arguments that the academic community has been unable to offer any significant resistance to dominating HE agendas become less surprising – how can one resist something one has little or no presence within?

2.4.6 Implications for SoTL

The weakening of the academic appears to have serious implications for SoTL; in effect, the academic is being rendered less visible and trustworthy in HE at the same time that the environment appears to require greater engagement in SoTL. For example, Huber and Hutchings (2005, p.2) noted that the 'new educational priorities', such as increasing student numbers and diversity of student needs, require investigation and inquiry through SoTL to ensure effective educational environments for all students. Indeed, although it is not mentioned by name, the need for SoTL in the changing HE environment runs throughout government policy too. For example, the 1987 White Paper (DES) asserted that widening access to HE will require teaching methods to be adapted to accommodate the new types of students entering HE. The Dearing Report in 1997 insisted that the challenge over the following two decades should be to enhance teaching and improve students' learning, and ensure that innovative teaching strategies become widespread. The government's response to this report confirmed that institutions should give a 'high priority to developing and implementing learning and teaching strategies which focus on the promotion of students'

learning' (DfEE, 1998, p.19). Furthermore, the 2003 White Paper (DfES, p.53) asserted that 'we need to foster an environment of continuous improvement in the development of learning and teaching in institutions'. Taken together with the increasing economic and business agenda in HE, it is evident that the 'new educational priorities' being faced by those working within HE have become immense: the requirements of the economy must be met and students must be sufficiently prepared to work within it; employability outcomes for students must be more fully realisable; greater diversity and numbers of students must be accommodated; and teaching and learning methods must be continuously improved to ensure these 'priorities' are achieved successfully. The paradox for SoTL appears to continue: its features are consistently called for within policy documents and reports, but at the same time that the academic, who would be carrying it out, is rendered less visible and trustworthy. It would seem impossible to over exaggerate the paradoxical nature of this situation.

The discussion of HE policy so far has begun to identify some of the possible reasons for universities' apparent passivity in resisting government agendas. Additionally, these reasons may explain why academics have not yet, as Nicholls (2005) described, embraced the potential of SoTL to turn from a more mechanistic approach to teaching and learning to one based on purposeful development and educative change. There is however one other important feature to address that has gained in prominence in HE policy as the role of the academic has declined: that is the positioning of the student as consumer.

2.4.7 The student as consumer

Section 2.4.4 described the erosion of the 'academic experience' and its replacement by the 'student experience'. Though the student does take prominence in policy documents, his or her positioning has altered significantly as the competitive and economic agenda of HE has grown. In the 1960s the Robbins Report (1963, p.181) emphasised teachers and students as being partners engaged 'in a common pursuit of knowledge and understanding'. The student was required to 'play their part' (p.181) and be 'actuated by a…sense of the obligation to work' (p.198). The report positioned the student as one who should actively engage in and take as much responsibility as the academic for shaping and developing their learning experience. This sense of obligation on the students' part is missing in later documents that focus largely on the obligation of HE to respond more to economic requirements and on developing competition within the sector to increase 'quality' and 'cost efficiency'.

The discussion in section 2.4.2 highlighted that government policy had firmly established a competitive market-based framework of HE by the 1990s, which has been reconfirmed and intensified in later documents. As the emphasis on competition increased, so did the notion of the student as a consumer of HE whose money (whether given as funding by the government or in the form of tuition fees) institutions would have to compete to attract. The 2003 White Paper (DfES) explicitly referred to students as 'customers' (p.47) and talked of competitor countries that are 'looking to *sell* higher education overseas, into the *markets* we have traditionally seen as ours' (p.13, italics my emphasis). In a later document the government emphasised a service provider role for HE by stating that institutions will attract students on the basis of 'the excellent *service* they provide' (BIS, 2009, p.17, italics my emphasis). Implicit within this statement is the transformation of academic to service provider: it is academics that will largely provide the 'service' to students that the institution offers. This point suggests that whilst academics as a distinct expert group in HE have been rendered less visible, their role concomitantly has been significantly changed by the growing consumerist agenda. The 2009 (BIS) document also required universities to publish more information about the 'quality' of the courses that will be undertaken. Section 2.4.5 highlighted policy's increasing requirement for institutions to publish more and more information. This requirement implies 'quality' is decided at the beginning of a course rather than achieved through academic and student working together. The Browne Report (2010) then suggested that courses will have to '*deliver* improved employability' (p.31, italics my emphasis) to prosper, and as students will be paying more fees, they will be able to '*demand* more in return' (p.29, italics my emphasis).

The positioning of the student has evidently changed considerably since the Robbins Report (1963). Instead of reinforcing an active partnership role with academics, students are consistently placed as consumers who should expect, or even demand, a quality service to be delivered to them. The Robbins Report (1963) emphasised a reciprocal academic/student relationship in which the student plays a part in constructing and shaping their HE learning experience. In contrast, recent government policy appears to have constructed a more passive role for students in which their obligation to work has been replaced by their right to expect a service to be provided for them. The implications of this on the student role are significant, but beyond the scope of this review[19]. It is the consequences for the student teacher relationship that must be addressed here.

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[19] Implications include denying education as a negotiated process of growth (see Strathern (2000) for further discussion) and diminishing the transformational nature of the students' learning journey (see arguments made by Power (1994) and Scott (1997)).

As the economic agenda was taking hold in HE in England, Lyotard (1984) hypothesised that a utilitarian stance towards knowledge and education would lead to 'producer – consumer' relationships. This relationship seems taken one step further in HE when the 'quality' of what is produced is to be judged largely by the consumer, i.e. the student. The 2011 White Paper (BIS) appeared to firmly place the student as one of the main judges of quality within the system. Its stated aim was to 'put more power into the hands of students' (p.15) to 'hold universities to account' (p.10). Students therefore are given the power to trigger quality reviews, and their evaluations of courses are to be published online to aid the choices of prospective students[20]. The paper did highlight other centralised mechanisms for ensuring quality, such as the QAA, but the student, placed 'at the heart of the system' (p.4), is explicitly given a key evaluative role. This positioning of the student appears to underscore government's lack of trust in the motivation of academics to ensure the quality of their teaching (Power, 1997). It also potentially narrows the scope of teaching by prioritising students' immediate assimilation of knowledge to ensure good course evaluations (Strathern, 2000). However, as Power (1997) argued, there are many approaches to teaching that go beyond merely the delivery of information, such as exploratory teaching or critical pedagogy, and the effects of these may not be easily measured whilst students are still students. Jones (2007), for example, stated that though critical thinking may be ultimately valued, at the time of studying students may find it quite an uncomfortable and challenging process to go through. Imbuing students with such evaluative power potentially leads teaching away from 'risky' (Jones, 2007, p.213) methods like critical pedagogy[21] towards mainly delivery-based approaches, which would subsequently transform the relationship between the student and academic into one that is based on transaction rather than partnership. For example, students may be more negative towards a course that obliges them to 'play their part', as envisioned in the Robbins Report (1963, p.181), than one that immediately gives them the information they need to know. At the very least, the fear of this for academics may be enough to ensure they do the latter. Consequently, innovation and experimentation in teaching practices may be deemed too dangerous to engage in. Hannan et al. (1999) identified that teaching innovations may not always be immediately successful. Unanticipated results may occur that require further fine tuning of the innovation. Indeed, being unsure of the outcome is the very definition of experimentation (Oxford University Press, 2011). However, the 2011 White Paper (BIS), through its emphasis on institutional competition for students and their accompanying tuition fees, enforced a climate

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[20] Of course, publishing student evaluations is not a new concept. The National Student Survey (NSS) has been running since 2005. This survey is used to 'gather feedback from final-year university students about their satisfaction with their course' (Cheng and Marsh, 2010, p694). The results are used to rank universities and create league tables which are published each year online and in sources like The Times Good University Guide.
[21] A more detailed discussion of critical pedagogy is given in section 2.5.3.

in which immediate success and good evaluations appear essential. Consequently Freedman and Fenton (2011) argued the pressure on academics to 'play it safe' and avoid being adventurous are high.

Though the student has consistently had a prominent place within HE policy since the 1960s, their positioning has changed from that of an active participant 'taking his [*sic*] part…in the task of making experience intelligible and illuminating areas of ignorance' (Robbins Report, 1963, p.182), to that of a consumer demanding more from the system in return for their rising tuition fees (Browne Report, 2010). This re-positioning of the student as consumer has arisen due to the competitive and market-based HE framework that government policy has driven forward and its potential effects are considerable. It may not only encourage greater passivity in students by denying their role in their own educational experience, it might also constrain the development of teaching and learning practices by reducing teaching to a transactional process and making experimentation and innovation a risky practice to engage in.

2.4.8 Summary of the implications for SoTL

A critical exploration of HE policy over preceeding decades highlights the system's changing framework and the altering of its values. Marketisation and competition have provided a basis for re-orienting HE and an agenda in which economic imperatives dominate over educational objectives now appears to define the significance of higher education institutions. Though accusations of passivity in resisting these changes have been levelled at universities (Smith and Webster, 1997) and the British academic community (Thorpe, 2008), my analysis of policy identifies some probable explanations for this apparent passiveness. At the same time that government has tightened its control of HE through increasing external accountability of teaching 'quality', it has also succeeded in reducing the significance of and trust in academics as a distinct, professional group whilst additionally transforming their relationship with students towards a more consumerist basis. Changing the status of the student to that of a consumer and judge of 'quality' potentially unbalances the student teacher relationship to the extent that the student has significant evaluative power over the academic but a lessening responsibility to play an active role in their own learning experience. The possible reasons for a seeming lack of resistance to the government's agenda within HE start to become clear, as do the implications for teaching and learning, and specifically for the *scholarship* of teaching and learning.

As section 2.2 showed, the overall aim of SoTL is to foster significant, long lasting learning for students and advance the profession and practice of HE teaching. This aim appears under threat in the economic and consumer-focused HE system that I have argued is dominant today. An increasingly utilitarian perspective of HE, in which HE must become receptive to the needs and developments of the economy, may inevitably filter through to the teaching and learning that takes place so that they also become utilitarian in focus. This focus is apparent in both the Browne Report (2010) and 2011 White Paper (BIS), which emphasised employment skills as the main aim that courses should achieve. Subsequently, it is hard not to agree that teaching has become 'training for employment' (CfPU, 2011, p.3). The utilitarianism of HE is further promoted in the 2011 White Paper (BIS) through employers being encouraged to kite mark the degrees they respect. Freedman and Fenton (2011) and the CfPU (2011) both argued this kite marking would undermine teaching as fostering critical thinking in students becomes replaced by covering employer approved material. This environment therefore appears almost entirely antithetical to SoTL's last two aims: to advance the practice and profession of teaching; and to bring to teaching the recognition afforded to other forms of scholarly work (Hutchings and Shulman, 1999). I have suggested that the professionalism of HE teaching has been increasingly eroded in HE policy. I also argue that positioning the student as a consumer considerably weakens the learning experience. Therefore, SoTL's first aim, which is to foster significant, long lasting learning for all students, also appears under threat as passive learning focused on employment skills is promoted. Ultimately, SoTL endeavors to build and develop the practice of and knowledge about teaching to enhance and promote meaningful learning for students. Yet I have shown that the climate of HE over the last three decades is one that appears to constrict, restrain and reshape teaching, which consequently has similar results on students' learning.

2.5 The scholarship of teaching and learning – a method of effecting change?

Discussion of English HE policy since the 1980s shows that it has consistently promoted economic imperatives, competition, marketisation and accountability, which has significant potential implications for the identity and role of academics, and the nature of teaching and learning. Academics seem increasingly invisible and secondary to the overwhelming importance of the 'student experience', and trusted less to ensure the 'quality' of their provision. Similarly, teaching appears tied more explicitly to the economy's needs than to knowledge or learning for its own sake, and re-oriented from a process of growth to a primarily utilitarian product to be delivered. I will now turn to the scholarship of teaching and

learning and explore its potential as a method of challenging and resisting the utilitarian trends and government agendas now dominating HE. SoTL is increasingly affirmed as a process with transformational potential (Atkinson, 2001) and one that can inspire the academic community to challenge the market values, corporate ideals and accountability practices constraining the HE system today (Lygo-Baker, 2005). In the final part of the chapter, I will consider SoTL as a potentially critical and transformational activity. Arguments will be explored that SoTL should include elements of critical theory and critical pedagogy to help emancipate and empower academics currently working within HE. I will also examine the questions that a critical-focused SoTL might ask.

2.5.1 The potential of SoTL

Two scholars recently argued that SoTL supports the neo-liberal agenda that so evidently pervades government policy. These claims by Boshier (2009) and Servage (2009) can be easily repudiated[22] yet they do make one significant point. Whilst both Boshier (2009) and Servage (2009) did not acknowledge the growing support in the literature for SoTL's potential to help effect transformation within the academy, and even in society itself (e.g. Atkinson, 2001; Brew and Ginns, 2008), they did acknowledge that SoTL *has* this potential, but only if it widens its critical perspective to include in its investigations the social, economic and political contexts in which universities operate. This acknowledgement supports other scholars' views that SoTL may not be yet fulfilling its full capabilities and that it is time for it to 'go meta' (Schroeder, 2007, p.3) and engage in 'broader agendas' (Kreber, 2007, p.1).

2.5.2 SoTL as a 'rallying cry'

This chapter highlights some of the challenges facing teaching and learning, and consequently SoTL, through government agendas and their impact on academics' working lives. Scholars have acknowledged the need for change within current HE systems and structures (e.g. Atkinson, 2001; Nicholls, 2005) but there is increasing recognition that it should take place through 'pressure from within' (Laurillard, 2002, p.3) HE and be the task of

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[22] Boshier (2009) and Servage (2009) claimed that SoTL reinforces neo-liberal principles by conceiving of education as a product that emphasises demonstrable outcomes. These claims appear to arise from the central tenet of SoTL that the work undertaken becomes public. However, rather than being a neo-liberal requirement for evidence of performance, I highlighted in section 2.2.3 that the focus on the public nature of SoTL work is concerned with building and developing a shared body of knowledge about teaching and learning in HE. Kreber (2000) and Vardi (2011) acknowledged that Boyer's original conception of the scholarship of teaching may have focused attention more on the outcomes, rather than process, of teaching, thus emphasising a product-based conception of SoTL. However, Vardi (2011, p1) stated that the change from the scholarship of teaching to the scholarship of teaching *and learning* signalled a shift to a 'more intense focus on the *process* of teaching and learning' (emphasis in original). Section 2.2.3 demonstrated the consensus in the literature about SoTL as an on-going *process* in which inquiries into teaching are 'ceaseless and generative' (Bender and Gray, 1999).

professional educators and not politicians. To fulfil this task, critics argue academics need to recognise and liberate themselves as actors (Davis and Chandler, 1998) with the potential for 'collective agency' (Harris, 2005, p.431). This agency to foster change may then be directed against, for example, the 'pernicious' (Archer, 2008a, p.283) aspects of neo-liberalism and the economic agenda in which bureaucracy, external accountability, and competition dominate. In this way, academics could help to shape HE's direction by adding their voices to debates that have consistently undermined and ignored them. Additionally, scholars suggest that, as collective agents, academics may be in a stronger position to generate debates that encourage wider critique, evaluation and reflection on the purposes and values of HE within society (Bath and Smith, 2004; Harris, 2005).

Importantly, the scholarship of teaching and learning has been hailed by some as a process that may support academics in establishing this collective agency and effecting changes. Hutchings (2000) regarded SoTL as a transformational process undertaken purely in the name of change. While for many SoTL proponents this change may relate mainly to improving the learning experience for students (e.g. Bender and Gray, 1999; Huber and Hutchings, 2005), others believe it needs to be taken to the next level and impact upon 'the broader landscape of…initiatives that intersect with learning and teaching' (Schroeder, 2007, p.8). This next level implies a more critiquing characteristic of SoTL towards the HE system and universities within it. Indeed, Shulman (2011) argued that academics should be just as intent on investigating universities as sites for teaching, learning and research, as they are for investigating other questions that lie outside of the institution. In this way he appears to be addressing Barnett's (2011, p.62) lament that 'universities' interests in studying the world seldom extend *in this manner* to trying to understand themselves' (emphasis in original). It is this critical aspect that leads Atkinson (2001, p.1227) to view SoTL as representing a 'rallying cry' for reform within the academy. Similarly, Brew and Ginns (2008, p.543) argued that SoTL can help bring into the light 'aspects of thinking and action in relation to teaching and student learning that otherwise would lie hidden'. Some of this thinking brought into the light may relate, as Kreber and Cranton (2000) claimed, to understanding fully the nature and constraints of the HE system, and identifying alternatives to aspects of it. Such alternatives could include, for example, a liberal education agenda as opposed to an economically-based one. Kenny's (2008, p.7) proposals for a 'Fifth Scholarship' echo this extended vision of SoTL. He argued that within this 'fifth' scholarship academics would be expected to 'become more aware of the overall political and organisational contexts in which they work' (p.7) and develop a more united and collaborate academic voice to 'positively influence policy and strategic directions' (p.7). These scholars then, whether arguing for SoTL to be taken to the next level or incorporate a 'fifth' scholarship, suggest that SoTL may

be a process that could help academics both explore teaching and learning in more fundamental ways (Nicholls, 2004) and gain empowerment within an increasingly constraining HE system.

2.5.3 A critical-focused SoTL

The liberating view of SoTL can also be found in arguments in which it is directly linked to critical theory (Kreber, 2005; Cranton, 2011). A key text influencing some scholars' views about a critical-focused SoTL is Freire's *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (2000)[23] (e.g. Grant and Hurd, 2010; Cranton, 2011). Freire described the common practices of education as mirroring an oppressive society in which people are reduced to adaptable, manageable and passive beings. This passivity limits the development of a critical consciousness, which results in the acceptance of the world as it is rather than a sense of agency in people to be 'transformers of that world' (p.73). Freire argued instead for pedagogy in education to enable people to

> develop their power to perceive critically *the way they exist* in the world *with which* and *in which* they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation (p.83, emphasis in original).

He further argued that transformation can only occur through praxis; that is '*reflection* and *action* directed at the structures to be transformed' (p.126, emphasis in original). Giroux (2010, p.191) described this pedagogy as a 'practice for freedom' in which, through critical reflection, dominant ideologies that oppress and marginalise people are identified, challenged and changed (Cranton, 2011). Importantly, it is the empowerment of people to resist oppressive structures that is essential to critical theorists (Kreber, 2005), and this can only be achieved when fundamental questions are asked and assumptions challenged about the social, political and economic 'realities' of our time (Brown, K.M. 2005). Through critical pedagogy, education becomes 'a practice of freedom – as opposed to…the practice of domination' (Freire, 2000, p.81). Giroux (2010) asserted that HE has the vital responsibility of educating students to understand their power as critically engaged citizens, and to cultivate their capacity to question authority and hold it politically and morally accountable. Critical pedagogy, he claimed, ensures HE's central purpose is 'the unconditional freedom to question' (p.193). Furthermore, this questioning should provide students

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[23] Originally published in 1970.

with the skills and knowledge necessary for them to expand their capacities both to question deep-seated assumptions and myths that legitimate the most archaic and disempowering social practices that structure every aspect of society and then to take responsibility for intervening in the world they inhabit (p.194).

Freire (2000) and Giroux (2010) are of course referring to students and the capacities they should be developing. However, there appear clear parallels to the apparent subordination of academics and 'the practice of domination' (Freire, 2000, p.81) over them by government. To date, there is general consensus that SoTL has lacked the criticality central to critical theory and pedagogy. Kreber (2005) claimed that critical questions about teaching in universities, and HE's overall purposes and goals, are often asked *outside* of the SoTL discourse. Similarly, Grant and Hurd (2010) argued that a *critical* SoTL has yet to be fully realised. However, they stated that this situation would be rectified by including critical pedagogical assumptions into SoTL, which would potentially enable it to affect 'transformation in higher education' (ibid, p.2). Cranton (2011) further asserted that a critical-focused SoTL would lead to emancipatory knowledge. This knowledge would not just relate to an individual's practice, but include also the context within which teaching occurs. Furthermore, it would be gained through critically questioning the beliefs, values and ideologies embedded within both the discipline and the institution, and also, more importantly, the state. Consequently, an 'emancipatory SoTL' would address 'the underlying assumptions and premises of teaching' (Cranton, 2011, p.84) and investigate the factors that constrain teaching or are uncritically assimilated into it. Kreber (2005) expanded the critical paradigm in SoTL to involve questioning why HE prioritises certain goals, and why particular forms of knowledge, skills and attitudes are promoted through the curricula over others. These sorts of questions echo Foucault's (2002)[24] notion that changes, transformations, or simply just ways of being, are choices and alternative choices do exist but are excluded by the strength of particular discourses. Thus, a critical or emancipatory SoTL promoted by Kreber (2005) and Cranton (2011) may enable a particular discourse in HE to be analysed in such a way that one can

determine its conditions of existence, fix at least its limits, establish its correlations with other statements that may be connected with it, and show what other forms of statement it excludes (Foucault, 2002, p.30-31).

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[24] First published in 1969.

Applied to the economic discourse in HE, this type of analysis could help to identify, for example, the types of knowledge it excludes or devalues, the purposes of HE that it refutes, the identity of academics that it ignores, and nature of teaching that it constrains.

2.5.4 A catalyst for change

It is the potential of SoTL to infuse critical practice into teaching and learning in HE that led Kreber (2005) to argue that it may yet recognise its capacity to be a catalyst for change. Gilpin and Liston (2009) claimed that those pursuing SoTL through a critical lens will engage in *praxis*, i.e. critical reflection leading to action, which is the cornerstone of critical pedagogy (Lambert et al., 2007). Through *praxis*, teaching and learning in HE will be subjected firstly to explicit and critical interrogation (Kreber, 2005). Secondly, and most importantly, action would then be taken effecting changes that 'reflect the garnered understanding' from the first stage (Gilpin and Liston, 2009, p.5). Cranton (2011) asserted that emancipatory knowledge has to be acted upon for it to be emancipatory. When done so, it can lead to freedom from oppression. She argued that in a teaching context, this type of knowledge can 'help [academics] develop a sense of free agency in their practice' (p.79). This freedom is achieved by challenging the status quo through a critical awareness of the context that shapes teaching and learning practices, i.e. government policies, institutional processes, and even social expectations. Consequently, the way in which educational inquiries are contextualised and problematised may be fundamentally changed (Gilpin and Liston, 2009). Instead of the classroom as the site of inquiry, the HE system itself becomes the object of investigation. As such, the examination of teaching methods can be broadened to examining the re-orienting of teaching currently occurring. In this way, Kreber's (2007) 'broader agendas', such as whether the present goals of HE are the most desirable (Kreber, 2005), will be addressed.

At an individual level, the sense of agency achieved through an emancipatory SoTL may result in a more authentic rather than alienated working experience by enabling academics to 'engage in a deeper, more critical look at what we do and care about on a daily basis' (Cranton, 2011, p.82). For Giroux (2007; 2010), this widened nature of SoTL would be progress towards academics reclaiming higher education as a democratic public sphere in which moral and political practices are subject to critical dialogue and analysis. However, he maintained that a democratic HE can only be achieved if educators take their critical responsibilities seriously and use them to seek to resist the onslaught of corporate and neo-liberal values within the university. Hall (2011) echoed this argument in his response to the 2011 White Paper (BIS). Calling for academic activism, he declared:

[A]cademics have to understand, realise and use the power we have. We must refuse to act as the self-interested egoists…the neo-liberals would have us all become; refuse to compete with one another within and across institutions, or with other groups of workers; and make a new reality of what was once known as solidarity (Hall, 2011).

Like Laurillard (2002) and Harris (2005), it is academics Hall (2011) argued who have the power to change and transform the system, but only if they recognise this potential in themselves. SoTL is proposed by many as a process to help academics realise their strength to challenge and resist the different agendas re-shaping and re-orientating teaching in HE today. I have already suggested its capacity for critically analysing the economic discourse (section 2.5.3). Applied to the consumerisation of HE, critical investigation might also bring to the fore the passivity of the student role that consumerism implies and the transformation of teaching from a developmental process to a product or service to be delivered. Additionally, a widened SoTL that enquires into the assumptions conveyed by government policies should, as Brew and Ginns (2008) claimed, bring to light the practices that undermine the academic role and subsequently drive academics into passivity and universities into crisis (Readings, 1996; Thorpe, 2008). The radical changes recently occurring in HE seem to call ever more strongly for some method to empower academics to publicly and collectively question and challenge the current HE framework. As Hall (2011) argued, 'transformation demands alternative ideas framed by critique'. Campaign groups, such as the Campaign for the Public University (CfPU) are beginning to offer a public level of critique into the re-orienting of HE from a public to a private good. A start has therefore been made, but it might not continue unless each academic recognises their own power and the on-going need to challenge, critique and ultimately transform. Scholars maintain a critically imbued SoTL, with an emphasis on *praxis*, has empowerment and emancipation at its heart. It may therefore be the catalyst for change that many believe is so desperately needed.

2.6 Chapter summary

I have asserted in this chapter that recent trends occurring in HE have resulted in the erosion of the academic's identity and experience, and the growing passivity of the student role. Conveyed through government policies and reports, these trends include the adherence to neo-liberal principles, increasing centralised control of the sector, and the promotion of business and economic needs over societal or educational values. The 2011 White Paper (BIS) marked not only an explicit move to tie HE's purpose to economic and employability requirements, but also directly reinforced the re-orientation of the student from

a participant at university to a market-based consumer. I argue this HE context threatens the values of SoTL, which promotes ceaseless inquiry and investigation into teaching to foster significant, long lasting learning for students and to advance the practice and profession of HE teaching. I would contend that SoTL risks becoming obsolete in an environment in which 'significant' learning is tied largely to acquiring appropriate employment skills. This employment, or utilitarian focus, may also actively undermine the HE teaching profession by reducing teaching to a largely delivery-based approach. Such an approach would clearly not raise the status of HE teaching to that of research, which was Boyer's (1990) original intention.

I contend in section 2.3 that, to date, insufficient attention has been given to situating SoTL within the realities of the current HE context, which is a serious limitation in the body of knowledge about it. This lack of attention extends to the paradox I highlighted that SoTL finds itself within. On the one hand scholars call for investigation of and experimentation with teaching methods to ensure effective learning in light of growing student numbers and increasing diversity of the population. On the other hand, managerialist practices and stressful work environments make SoTL very challenging for academics to engage in. As I highlighted in chapter one (section 1.2.3), my research addresses this limitation in the SoTL literature and as such, begins to lessen the significant gap that currently exists in the knowledge about SoTL.

Section 2.4 described the direction of HE policy over the last few decades. I argued here that economic and business values increasingly espoused in government policy since the 1980s have shifted the purpose of HE away from traditional educational values. Furthermore, I contend the identity of academics as a distinct professional group has been increasingly ignored and the trust in their professional status eroded to the extent that they appear to have passively accepted the changes occurring. Section 2.5 examined the growing calls for SoTL to be a catalyst for change and empower academics to relinquish their passivity and challenge the agendas and forces shaping HE teaching. It is interesting that SoTL is imbued with this catalytic potential at the same time that the bulk of its literature does not adequately locate this type of scholarship within the broader context(s) of HE. As I highlighted in chapter one (section 1.2.3), my research expands the knowledge of SoTL by locating it firstly within the current HE context and then investigating its potential as a critical process to help enforce change. The methodology for this research is discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The methodology for this research project was informed by the insights gained through researching the literature discussed in the previous chapter. That chapter explored the literature regarding the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) and the government agendas shaping teaching in higher education (HE) over recent decades. It suggested that these agendas frame HE as a market-based, consumerist and utilitarian system in which the academic is rendered less visible and the student is made passive. I argued that the SoTL literature to date has not taken sufficient account of the HE context and the challenges it poses to SoTL activities. Furthermore, I showed that the government agendas framing HE appear antithetical to SoTL's values and threaten its existence given the reshaping of teaching from a developmental activity towards a transaction-based process centred largely on employability outcomes. The chapter also outlined the state of the present HE context and the threats that it poses both to teaching and to SoTL.

It was both the perceived threats to SoTL and the renewed possibilities for a broader, critically-focused SoTL that empowers academics to critique and challenge the dominating HE agendas that provided the context for my research. I asked academics in my study about their teaching values to examine how closely they relate to SoTL's aim to foster significant, long lasting learning for all students. Their views on teaching were also explored in relation to the market and consumer-based agendas shaping HE that critics such as Beck and Young (2005) argued re-shape and re-orient the roles and identities of HE teachers. I also sought views on issues such as managerialism and student evaluations to assess the impact these may have on academics' teaching and teaching related activities.

The research was carried out using a case study approach and semi-structured interviews. In this chapter I will discuss the research methodology in detail. I will firstly explain the methods chosen, emphasising their appropriateness for the topic under investigation. Following this, a description and justification of the research location is given. I then discuss the interviewees who took part in the study, focusing on the demographics of the sample and how they were initially approached. The chapter then turns to the data discussing the analytical approach I took and the issue of generalisation. I also review here the turbulent state of the HE sector at the time of interviewing to provide a contextual frame for my analysis that is as complete and accurate as possible. I include this review as part of my

overall intention to provide 'thick description' (Cohen et al., 2007, p.254) of all aspects of my methodology so that readers may be able to compare and/or contrast my findings to their own particular situations. In the final part of the chapter I discuss the ethical considerations underpinning the study.

3.2 The research methods

The first section of this chapter discusses the research methods used. I will begin by explaining and justifying my case study approach. The alignment of this approach to an interpretive paradigm will then be discussed moving finally to an examination of the appropriateness of semi-structured interviews as the research method. I will show that the methods and paradigms chosen share similar ontological foundations. Previous SoTL and teaching related studies will be referred to throughout to support the choices made.

3.2.1 A case study approach

Much literature has been devoted to discussing the specific characteristics and features of case study research (e.g. Stake, 1995; Merriam, 1998; Cousin, 2005; Flyvbjerg, 2006; Elliott and Lukeš, 2008). However, this literature highlights that consensus about these issues is somewhat lacking[25]. I will not rehearse here the general views about case studies, but will focus on establishing the appropriateness of this approach for my research.

My research was a case study because it was bounded by one institution. Both Merriam (1998) and Stake (2000) emphasised the bounded nature of case studies in which borders are drawn around the case, or cases, of interest (Cohen et al., 2007). A bounded system may refer, for example, to an institution, a programme, an initiative or a population. A number of studies about SoTL illuminate the different boundaries that may be drawn around a case. For example, Higgs' (2009) case study explored the impact of a *particular project* – the Irish Integrative Learning Project – and its success in promoting integrative learning through SoTL. In contrast, Huber's (2001) cases referred to *people* actively involved in SoTL so that she could investigate how their careers have been influenced by this activity. Contrasting again, Maurer et al. (2010) explored a *faculty initiative* – the Faculty Learning Community for the SoTL – in one institution and the experiences of its members in

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[25] Cousin (2005) argued that there is no settled view on the parameters of this type of research. Additionally, Elliott and Lukeš (2008, p.101) claimed that case study, as a research approach, suffers from 'conceptual conflations both in the collective discourse and the individual practices in educational research'.

conducting its work. The cases in these three studies related to projects, people and specific initiatives. For my study, the institution formed the bounded system.

A case study approach was also chosen as my overall aim was to *understand* in greater depth how some academics experience the HE context in relation to their teaching roles and SoTL aims. Again, the general research literature stresses the value of case study research for this aim. Merriam (1998, p.19), for example, stated that case study design is 'employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved'. Enlivening this statement, Cohen et al. (2007, p.254) asserted that case study research 'strives' to portray descriptions of the participants' 'lived experiences of, thoughts about and feelings for a situation'. These views support Stake's (1995, p.8) assertion that the 'real business' of case study is particularisation, i.e. knowing and understanding a particular case very well. Previous SoTL studies support the merits of case study research when seeking particularised understanding. Martensson et al. (2011) employed a case study design when investigating a university's strategy to embed SoTL and cultivate cultural change. Their focus was to understand all the different features of the strategy to evaluate its success. Additionally, a case study by Cottrell and Jones (2003) focused on understanding how teachers at selected universities implemented SoTL activities within their own courses. They characterised their study as an 'exploratory analysis' (p.180), a description which also appears to match case studies by Fitzmaurice (2010) and Greenbank (2006) whose research went beyond SoTL and addressed how university teachers and policy makers made sense of the contexts and realities they work in. This particularisation, as Stake (1995) argued, means that case studies are not concerned with testing hypotheses or generating theories, but with understanding 'the particularity and complexity of a single case' (p.xi) at a deeper level than might be achieved by looking at many cases. Flyvbjerg (2006) asserted that it is both the strength and purpose of case studies to obtain the detail, specificities and small minutia that make up the case so that the full complexity of real-life situations can be seen. Fitzmaurice (2010) affirmed this stance in her research of university teacher experiences in HE. She stated that her case study should not be taken as an extensive description of teachers' work, but as an 'authentic account of practice' (p.53) highlighting the specificities, complexities and particularities of lecturers in one institution which might ultimately provoke discussion in the wider community. Implications for generalisability begin to surface here and this issue is discussed in section 3.5.3. In line with Fitzmaurice (2010) and the other studies discussed, my research was intended as a particular study that aimed to understand and present the authentic experiences of a sample of academics at one university.

The studies by Fitzmaurice (2010) and Greenbank (2006) also draw attention to the importance of context within case study research. Indeed, context is central to this type of research because of its impact on the phenomenon under study. Yin (1994) asserted that case studies are used when the focus of the study cannot be separated from its real-life context. In other words, case studies recognise that phenomena are not context-free, and to treat them as such would render an investigation incomplete. By taking context into account, case studies enable a 'proximity to reality' (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p.236) through anchoring topics in their real-life situations (Merriam, 1998). Fanghanel (2007) provided a good example of this anchoring. Like me, she attached significant relevance to the HE context when investigating academics and their practices. Her study

> examined teaching practice in context, with reference to the structures, policies, and environments in which UK university lecturers operate. It identified what elements of this context impact on higher education lecturers' approaches and conceptualisations of teaching and learning (p.2).

For Fanghanel (2007) focusing on the HE context was important because 'the significant contribution of [many] studies still confines teaching and learning outside the reality of practice and abstracted from the broader context of practice' (p.5). She chose a case study design for its emphasis on providing 'rich context-related depictions' (p.7) that would then allow investigation into the impact of context on lecturers' approaches and conceptualisations. The HE context had the same relevance to my research as it did to Fanghanel's, thus supporting my use of a case study approach.

A final justification for my use of case study research rests on the view that academics will experience the HE context *through* the institution they work in. Lea and Stierer (2009) argued that universities are workplaces comprised of distinctive practices and identities[26]. Academic identities, they stated, are situated in the 'workplace' (p.421) and formed through its social practices and social relations. A case study approach to my research ensured that the institutional context was not ignored, and acknowledged that this context potentially influences how academics perceive the wider HE context[27].

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[26] They acknowledged that a university workplace may differ to a traditional 'blue collar' workplace in the degree of authority and autonomy that the 'workers' may display.

[27] A further argument could be made that the institution as a distinctive workplace reinforces the particularistic nature (Stake, 1995) of case studies. By focusing my research on one institution instead of many, I ensured particularisation at the same time as removing the institution as a variable that may alter how academics view the HE context.

3.2.2 Interpretive paradigm

Some scholars view case study research as synonymous with research conducted in a subjective, interpretive paradigm because of its emphasis on depth of information and the role of context in shaping meaning (e.g. Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Alternatively, others do not align it to any particular paradigm and argue that either quantitative or qualitative research methods can be used within it (e.g. Robson, 1993; Merriam, 1998). I did not automatically equate case study research with an interpretive[28] paradigm, but I did consider them both to have a similar ontological basis. Consequently, my research was conducted in the interpretive paradigm. This section will review the similarities between interpretivism and case study research, consider existing studies utilising the same approach and present the appropriateness of the interpretive paradigm for this particular study.

The research literature emphasises the subjectivity of interpretive research. For Schwandt (1994, p.118), interpretive researchers 'share the goal of understanding the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it'. Similarly, Ferguson (1993, p.36) defined interpretivism as the belief that

> 'facts' are not things out in some objective world waiting to be discovered, but, rather, are the social constructions of humans who apprehend the world through interpretive activity.

Ontologically, these views stress the lack of a static objective reality that all people share, and reinforce instead the notion of individual constructions of reality, leading inevitably to multiple and differing perspectives. In contrast, Wells (2010) highlighted certain sociological arguments that present society as a human product that people shape and are also shaped by. These arguments suggest that individual perspectives may be influenced by social expectations and may be socially determined. Therefore, reality may not be totally individual but shared collectively to some extent by members of the same society. Wells (2010) also went on to argue that 'while society is a human product, it is not homogenous' (p.40). Due to their different experiences, individual members will still 'construe society and its values in different ways' (p.40). Beliefs strongly held by some will be actively rejected by others. These views suggest then that reality will always be subjective in nature to a lesser or greater extent and based on individual experiences. Interpretive research recognises this subjectivity. For such research the site of investigation is 'a lived experience' (Merriam,

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[28] 'Interpre*ta*tive' and 'interpretive' are both used in the research literature to refer to this paradigm (see Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Cohen et al., 2007; Denzin, 2009 for examples). 'Interpretive' appears to be used more commonly so it is this term that the thesis uses throughout.

1998, p.4) for the people within it and understanding these different experiences is all important. Cohen et al. (2007, p.21) affirmed that the 'central endeavour' in the interpretive paradigm is to 'understand the subjective world of human experience'. Accordingly, the interpretive researcher will 'begin with individuals and set out to understand their interpretations of the world around them' (p.22). My study focused explicitly on the *perceptions* of academics about teaching in the current HE context. It was how academics perceived the world of HE around them that was important to this study because these perceptions might impact on the way they approach their teaching practices. The study, therefore, could only be located within an interpretive paradigm[29].

Research literature endorses the alignment of interpretivism with case study research. Cousin (2005, p.426) stated that case studies are located 'squarely within an interpretive tradition', echoing Lincoln and Guba's (1985, p.189) opinion that this type of study is 'primarily an interpretive instrument'. The reasons for these views come back again to subjectivity. Schwandt (1994) observed that interpretive researchers have historically argued for the uniqueness of human inquiry. This uniqueness resonates with the concept of particularisation in case study research in which knowing a particular case well means understanding it from the perspectives of those involved. Both Denzin (1994) and Holstein and Gubrium (1994) also asserted that interpretive practice takes primary account of local knowledge, local circumstances and local generalisations. These local aspects form the real life contexts that case study research is 'anchored in' (Merriam, 1998, p.41). Many of the studies referred to in section 3.2.1 also appear to have been conducted in an interpretive paradigm (Greenbank, 2006; Fanghanel, 2007; Fitzmaurice, 2010; Martensson et al., 2011). Whilst Greenbank (2006) is the only one to specifically state his interpretive position, discussion within the other studies imply a similar stance. Fitzmaurice (2010, p.50), for example, carefully framed her analysis in the following way:

> The observations and *interpretations* which follow, are a result of my own deliberations about the issues raised, conversations with the lecturers involved to ensure that their views were captured and reference to relevant literature (italics my emphasis).

Fanghanel (2007, p.7) also alluded to an interpretive analytical framework:

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[29] Another major research paradigm is positivism. However, researchers in this paradigm view reality as objective and external to the individual. As such, they use predominantly quantitative research methods such as surveys and experiments to measure and identify themes 'in search for universal laws that explain and govern that which is being observed' (Cohen et al., 2007, p.8).

> The data were analysed through iterative cycles of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing in which the *researcher imposes meaning* on the data in an open-minded and tentative way (italics my emphasis).

These studies strengthen the view that interpretivism and case study research are closely aligned. Fitzmaurice (2010) and Fanghanel (2007) also highlight another important point – that data analysis is itself an act of interpretation by the researcher.

Other studies, whilst not specifically case study research, also support an interpretive position when conducting research based on academics in HE. Clegg (2008, p.329) investigated the 'lived experience' of academics in one institution in her study on academic identities. She did not label the paradigm she used, but an interpretive stance is suggested in her aim to 'theorise some of the *possible* ways in which the life-world of academics is being experienced' (p.332, italics my emphasis). In line with the uniqueness of human inquiry, Clegg (2008) treated each interview transcript as unique so that the themes emerging were not 'common categories so much as areas of concern and the spaces in which individual projects *appeared* to be being framed' (p.333, italics my emphasis). Clegg (2008, p.330) described her approach as not 'foreclosing on the issue' but rather presenting a moment of reflexive engagement on the part of the respondents that the researcher seeks to engage with and understand. Analogous to interpretivism, her approach reinforces fluid and individually constructed realities that are open to change at different times and in different contexts. This is an important point to make in relation to my study as it took place in a specific HE context that was continuing to change rapidly during the research process. Therefore, the study sought not to fix the perceptions that academics have in that context as static and unchangeable, but to identify and explore academics' perceptions during the time and in the context in which the research was carried out. In this way, the research is presented as an interpretive snap shot of a particular space at a particular time.

3.2.3 Interpretivism and qualitative research

The discussion so far has identified the essential beliefs about interpretive research and its ontological alignment to case study research. It has also presented the reasons for conducting my study within an interpretive paradigm. A final point remains to be made about the specific research methods appropriate to this paradigm. Lincoln and Guba (1985) declared that interpretive-based research[30] emphasises the 'human-as-[research]instrument' (p.199) because this approach allows the researcher to build their tacit knowledge as the

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[30] They referred to this type of research as naturalistic inquiry.

inquiry progresses. Methods that are suitable for 'humanly implemented inquiry' (p.187) should therefore be used. These methods, they argued, will be qualitative in nature and based primarily around interviews and observations as these enable the researcher to become the data collection instrument. In support, Corbetta (2003, p.24) claimed that interpretivist research techniques 'cannot be anything but qualitative and subjective'. Ontological similarities again come into play here. Merriam (1998, p.6) described qualitative researchers as interested in understanding how people 'make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world'. This type of research has also been defined as 'the study of human experience' (Marshall and Rossman, 1999, p.60) concerned with gathering 'an authentic understanding of people's experiences' (Silverman, 2001, p.13). As discussed in relation to interpretivism, it was the concern with how academics perceive their experiences in the HE context that characterised my study. My research therefore was both interpretive and qualitative in nature.

Importantly, qualitative research is viewed by some as a paradigm in its own right and by others as the method by which other paradigmatic research, such as naturalism and ethnography, should be carried out (see for example Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Stake, 1995; Merriam, 1998; Cohen et al., 2007)[31]. Denzin (2009) highlighted the paradigmatic wars of qualitative and quantitative research in the 1980s and the subsequent growing consensus on the effectiveness of mixed methods approaches. However, he still argued that the 'natural home' (ibid, p.18) of qualitative methods is in the interpretive framework because qualitative researchers aim to 'make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, p.3). In light of this view, I followed Ferguson's (1993) position of being an interpretive researcher using qualitative methods.

3.2.4 Semi-structured interviews

Marshall and Rossman (1999, p.110) argued that if interviews are to be the prime research method, the researcher must have demonstrated in their conceptual framework that their study's purpose is to 'uncover and describe the participants' perspective on events – that is, that the subjective view is what matters.' Sections 3.2.1 and 3.2.2 demonstrated that the focus of my study was the subjective views of some academics regarding the HE context and its impact on teaching. Section 3.2.2 also showed that interpretivism is characterised by the view that realities are individually constructed. In agreement with this view, Stake (1995,

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[31] Some argue both simultaneously, e.g. Cohen et al. (2007).

p.64) contended that the interview is the 'main road' that will lead to the capturing of these individual and multiple realities. Two reasons can be put forward to support Stake's contention. Firstly, interviews ensure that respondents' own words are used to understand situations from their unique perspective (Ely, 1991). For Marshall and Rossman (1999, p.108), the fundamental assumption of qualitative research is that 'the participant's perspective on the phenomenon of interest should unfold as the *participant* views it, not as the researcher views it' (italics my emphasis). Although, as recognised in section 3.2.2, analysis by the researcher always involves interpretation, interviews ensure the researcher can 'understand the meanings that people hold for their everyday activities' (ibid, p.110) because it is the participant's own words that are heard.

The second reason that interviews are the 'main road' to gleaning multiple realities relates to the human-as-[research]instrument argument. Interviews allow the researcher, as the data collection tool, the time to probe and explore responses given to uncover individual perceptions, views, motives and experiences (May, 2001; Gerson and Horowitz, 2002). They do not automatically offer these opportunities as, in a quantitative study, interviews may be tightly structured. However, my study acknowledged that academics may experience the HE context in different ways, and therefore may require different probing questions to effectively explore their particular perceptions. Consequently, a semi-structured approach was taken to enable certain pre-defined questions to be asked of all participants whilst also ensuring freedom and flexibility to develop each interview as appropriate to the particular participant.

In using interviews as the main research method, I have followed the trend established in other SoTL studies. Trigwell et al. (2000) and Nicholls (2004) have conducted two significant studies investigating academic opinions of the scholarship of teaching. Both were qualitative in nature and used interviews as their main research method. Similarly, Kerr and Kulski (2009), whilst explicitly stating their interpretive approach, used semi-structured interviews to elicit academic opinions about a project designed to foster SoTL and reward quality teaching. Other studies focused on academic perceptions of the HE context have also utilised interviews as the predominant research method. Young (2006) and Ramsden (2009) investigated academics' perceptions of the status of teaching, and the recognition and reward of teaching respectively. More noteworthy, Fanghanel (2007), Archer (2008a) and Clegg (2008) focused specifically on the impact of the HE context on academics' identity

and pedagogical constructs and used interviews within an, albeit implicitly conveyed, interpretive framework[32].

Returning to Marshall and Rossman's (1999) statement at the beginning of this section, interviews categorically fit the conceptual framework of this study in that they enable the participants' subjective view to be captured. Accordingly, they were the most appropriate method to use to gain the subjective perceptions of some academics at my chosen research location. Other studies relating to academic perceptions of either SoTL or the HE context using the same methodology further support my research framework.

3.3 The research location

Section 3.2 described and justified the research methods used for this study. I will now discuss the location in which the research took place. This section will present firstly a contextual background to the institution before justifying my decision to use it as the research site.

3.3.1 The institutional context

The institution is a former polytechnic and became a university following the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act. At the time of interviewing, the university had over 25,000 registered students. Over 14,000 of these were full-time UK domiciled undergraduate level students. A large proportion of these full-time students came from households with an income of less than £25k. Further, approximately 40% of this group were from Black or Minority Ethnic backgrounds (B&ME), with the remaining 60% from a White background. These particular figures are higher than those reported for the overall UK HE sector in 2011/12: 20% from B&ME backgrounds and 80% from a White background (Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), 2013). National rankings for the 2011/12 academic year saw the university maintaining its place around the lower middle of the league table positions.

During the time of the study the university was committed particularly to its focus on employability and achieving high levels of graduate employment. This focus will be further explored and discussed in chapter six. The university stated its desire to enhance the

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[32] The interpretive approach of Fanghanel (2007) and Clegg (2008) is demonstrated in section 3.2.2. Similarly, Archer's (2008a) treatment of her interview data supports an interpretive position.

prospects of all its stakeholders (i.e. students, employers, society), most especially through the practice-related education it offers. Public facing documents created by the institution expressed its commitment to students as active partners in the learning experience. Indeed, the university has been active in recent years establishing various schemes and initiatives that encourage and promote student involvement in the curriculum and curriculum-related projects. It has been recognised nationally for its work in this area. In relation to research, in its latest research strategy the university classified itself as a 'research-active' institution. The university acknowledged that whilst greater attention has been given to research in recent years, it is still seen as a secondary activity at the institution. Consequently, its current aim is to develop into a 'research-engaged' university. Finally, in response to the reduction of public funding, the university was preparing to charge variable tuition fees from September 2012, with courses costing £7,500, £8,200 and £9,000.

3.3.2 Justification of the research location

I identified above that the institution in which the research was conducted is a post-1992 university. There is evidence that these universities experience the impact of the changes occurring within HE to a greater extent than the 'traditional' pre-1992 universities. Both Beck and Young (2005) and Clegg (2008) argued that newer universities are more dependent on commercial interests and market demand because they do not have traditional or historic reputations. Their success is instead tied largely to taking close account of external considerations. A large-scale survey conducted by Kok et al. (2008) found that academic and administrative staff at new universities perceived their institutions to be operating in a more business-like, private sector manner, which included enforcing increased accountability and management scrutiny. Clegg (2008) argued that newer universities are essential sites to investigate academic identities because of their orientation towards business and commercial interests, which may also re-orient the academic role.

A further justification for using this particular university is its polytechnic origins. Many universities established after the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act were originally polytechnics, which were primarily teaching institutions. Some scholars argue that teaching, rather than research, is still central to the purpose of these institutions and the identity of academics within them (e.g. Kok et al., 2008; Macfarlane and Hughes, 2009). As the focus of my study was teaching, it was logical and more valid to investigate it within the type of institution that has historically been focused on this activity. For example, the re-orientation of teaching towards a more utilitarian approach in which employment skills are the main

objective may be experienced to a greater degree in a teaching-focused university than a research-intensive one.

Discussion of different types of universities leads to my final justification for locating my research in the chosen university. If this research was conducted in a 'traditional' research-focused university[33], it is possible the findings would not be as relevant to a newer, post-1992 university because of the difference in their histories and cultures, and their different orientations to research and teaching. However, whilst post-1992 universities may not be able to relate to the historical cultures of the more 'traditional' universities, the latter increasingly have to relate to the commercial interests and market demands shaping the HE context today that newer universities experience in greater force[34]. Consequently, the more traditional universities may be able to glean certain insights about teaching in the current HE climate from this case study in a way that might not be possible for newer universities if the research was conducted in their older counterparts.

3.4 The interviewees

Now that I have justified the research location I will turn to the research participants. In particular, I will detail the demographics of the interview sample and explain how participants were recruited.

3.4.1 The sample

In total I interviewed 19 academics for this study. Due to the study's focus on SoTL, my only criterion for the sample was that all included should have an interest in teaching and learning issues. I did not seek to be representative of the university's academic population but rather to obtain participants who would 'represent the best opportunity for developing an understanding of the issues being studied' (Greenbank, 2006, p.201). Eight (42%) of the sample were female and 11 (58%) male. These percentages closely reflected the academic population of the university around the time of interviewing. In terms of positions held, the sample consisted of the following: six Lecturers; eight Senior Lecturers; one Professor; one Assistant Course Director; one Course Director; one Associate Head of School; and one Head of School. Interviewees were drawn from three faculties in the university and one central support department.

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[33] Also referred to as 'red brick' universities, such as the University of Birmingham and the University of Leeds.
[34] Kok et al. (2008) support this point.

To preserve the participants' anonymity I give no further demographic information here. In the following analysis chapters I refer to all interviewees as 'academics' and only distinguish between their roles when it is relevant to the point being discussed. Additionally, I do not disclose gender information in the analysis chapters. At certain points I may provide extra demographic information, but, again, only when it is relevant and could not lead to their identification. In the following analysis chapters I refer to interviewees only by their relevant interviewee code. The three faculties and central support department (four different areas in total) were coded as U, X, Y and Z and interviewees in each faculty or department were then assigned a number to become, for example, U1 or X2. It is these codes that are used throughout the analysis chapters (see section 3.6 for further discussion about ethics and anonymity).

3.4.2 Recruiting the interviewees

To recruit the interviewees for my study I primarily used a snowball sampling method. Robson (1993, p.142) highlighted that this method 'can be seen as a particular type of purposive sampl[ing]', which, he argued, is an approach commonly used in case studies. I identified an initial academic in a central support department at the university who I knew to be interested in teaching and learning issues. In a meeting with this academic I explained my research and asked if s/he could identify any colleagues across the university who might be interested in participating in such a study. This academic (who became one of my research participants) gave me a number of names, who I then emailed to explain my research and ask if they would like to meet me initially to discuss potentially taking part (see Appendix 2 for a brief review of the benefits to the research that evolved from these initial meetings). At each of these initial meetings I would ask the academics if they could identify any colleagues they knew who might also be interested in participating in my study. I would send an email to the people they suggested, and so on (see Appendix 3 for the template email used). If I had not been given any names for a particular school, department or faculty from which I wanted participants, I used the staff information pages on the university website. As well as listing the modules or courses academics taught on, these pages contained information about their particular research or academic interests. I would target from these pages academics with stated interests in teaching and learning matters and email them requesting an initial meeting. At any initial meetings that followed, I would begin the snowball sampling method again. With one exception, all academics I initially met with agreed to take part in the study. Most interview dates were arranged by email shortly after

the initial meeting, and with this correspondence I would attach an electronic copy of the participant information sheet (see Appendix 4).

3.4.3 The interviews

The interviews for this study took place between October 2011 and January 2012. I deliberately planned the interviews to occur during this time because of the importance of 'real-life' context to case study research (see section 3.2.1). My aim was to gain academics' perspectives about teaching in the current HE context, therefore the interviews had to be held during a teaching term when they would be engaged in the actual activities I was asking about, i.e. teaching, preparing for teaching, and supporting students.

When arranging the interviews I asked each participant if they would prefer me to come to their office or book a meeting room elsewhere within the university. Most participants preferred to be interviewed in their offices. A small number did ask for their interviews to take place in a meeting room, particularly those who shared their offices with other colleagues. Two interviews were conducted off the university campus: one in a café, another in a pub. These locations were chosen more for convenience rather than from the participants' desire to be off-campus[35]. Arguments could be made that as most interviews were conducted on campus, some participants may have felt less comfortable in talking freely about their working experiences. In acknowledgement of this potential situation, I emphasised to each participant that their anonymity would be maintained throughout the study and I would use no information or data from their interviews that could lead to their identification.

All interviews lasted around 50 minutes to one hour and all interviewees consented to being voice-recorded. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and I emailed a copy of the transcript to each participant for their verification. Just over half of the sample verified their transcripts (see Appendix 5 for the question schedule used to guide the interviews).

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[35] One academic, for example, lived in the same city as me and it was more convenient for us to meet in a café close to our homes rather than on campus. At another time the participant and I struggled to find a quiet place in a university building to conduct the interview and so went to a nearby pub.

3.5 The data

Section 3.4 described the research participants and how the interviews were carried out. In this section I will discuss the data gathered, focusing primarily on reviewing the analytical approach taken. I will also explain the stance I have taken to generalisation.

3.5.1 Data analysis

My data analysis was guided by Ely's (1991, p.140) expressive viewpoint:

> To analyse is to find some way or ways to tease out what we consider to be essential meaning in the raw data; to reduce and reorganise and combine so that the readers share the researcher's findings in the most economical, interesting fashion. The product of analysis is a creation that speaks to the heart of what was learned.

In order to find what I believed to be the 'essential meaning[s]' in my raw data I followed elements of the analysis procedures used by other interpretivist researchers. Like Kerr and Kulski (2009, p.270), the aim of my analysis was to identify 'the clusters of responses that illuminated the participants' perceptions…rather than recording the frequency of responses'. This aim accords with my use of a more purposive than representational sampling method. To achieve this illumination I initially followed Clegg's (2008, p.332) example and treated each interview transcript as unique so that the themes emerging were not 'common categories so much as areas of concern and…spaces' in which the individual interviewees appeared to be framing their experiences. Of course, I wanted to reflect not only individual's experiences but also explore whether participants were framing their perspectives in similar or dissimilar ways. To do this, I utilised Arthur's (2009, p.445) 'quasi grounded theory approach'. Strauss and Corbin (1990, p.24) highlighted that in a full grounded theory approach a systematic set of procedures is used 'to develop an inductively derived grounded theory about a phenomenon'. However, like Arthur (2009), I did not rigidly adhere to these procedures as my intention was to develop an understanding of my participants' experiences rather than generate theory. I therefore used elements from the approach that focused on iterative cycles of data interrogation, comparison and inductive coding 'with reference to the themes and patterns emerging' (Fanghanel, 2007, p.7). In this way, my analysis process echoed Fanghanel's (2007) of drawing 'analytical connections across the sample' (p.7) at the same time as identifying 'conflict, contradictions and positionings' (p.7) within individual experiences.

I also employed elements of discourse analysis at various points in my analysis process. Discourse analysis, as 'a theory and a method' (Rogers, 2004) has continued to evolve over recent decades. In 1983, for example, Brown and Yule stated that 'the analysis of discourse is, necessarily, the analysis of language in use' (p.1, cited in Rogers, 2004, p.5). A decade later Fairclough (1993) emphasised a critical approach to discourse analysis which centred on exploring the relationships between discursive practices and wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes. Particularly, he argued for investigation into how discursive practices may be shaped by 'relations of power and struggles over power' (p.135). Since then, researchers note that discourse analysis, particularly *critical* discourse analysis (CDA), has not become a unified method but 'continues to grow in directions plotted by several influential…scholars' (Suspitsyna, 2012, p.53). In my own analysis of participants' language I described and interpreted particular elements of their discourse (Rogers, 2004). I also considered how the language they used may be reproducing and/or reinforcing particular ideologies promoted by government and whether their language revealed any possibilities for critique of those ideologies to occur. In this way, I employed a CDA approach by taking account of relationships between discursive practices and wider social or cultural structures. I also considered the potential for academics to effect changes in HE through analysis of their language use[36]. In chapters seven and eight I discuss Fairclough (1993) and other scholars' views of language more fully and explain which particular aspects of participants' discourse was analysed.

3.5.2 Contextual analytical frame

A case study approach was chosen for this study for a number of reasons outlined in section 3.2.1. As I identified, one of the most significant reasons was the importance of context within this particular research approach. Yin (1994) argued that case studies should be used when the focus of the study and its real-life context cannot be separated. My case study approach was chosen because of the relevance of the broader HE context on SoTL's values and academics' practices and perceptions. Due to this contextual importance, chapter two devoted much attention to describing the changing context of the HE sector over recent decades through to the latest White Paper (BIS) in 2011. It is this changing context that provides the frame through which the perceptions of academics interviewed in this study are analysed. However, to ensure that the contextual frame is as accurate and complete as it can be attention must be given to the time period in which the interviews were conducted. For my study, this attention is particularly important given that the interviews took place in

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[36] Saarinen (2008) reported that effecting change in society is a central element of *critical* language studies.

the first academic year following the publication of the White Paper (BIS, 2011) and its contentious policy directives. The HE sector at this time was tumultuous and uncertain (as will be evidenced below), and it is this environment that my interviewees were working within. Consequently, before presenting the analysis of my findings in the following chapters, I will briefly describe the HE environment at the time of interviewing so that my analytical frame is as contextually accurate as possible.

The interviews for this study were conducted in the first academic year after the publication of the White Paper (BIS, 2011). This year was rife with the fallout from the policy decisions that had been taken. However, tensions had been brewing in the HE sector following publication of the Browne Report in October 2010. Though not yet translated into policy, the recommendations made by this report were received by many as an unequivocal attack on the ideological basis of the university (Brown, 2010; Hayes, 2010; McQuillan, 2010). Increased tuition fees, declining public funding and support for greater privatisation of the sector were viewed by scholars as destroying the traditional notions of HE as a public good functioning to broaden research and knowledge boundaries (Collini, 2010; Couldry and McRobbie, 2010; CfPU, 2011). Importantly, many students and academics across the country shared these views and large-scale demonstrations were organised to protest against the planned changes to the system. One of the largest and earliest of these was jointly co-ordinated by the National Union of Students (NUS) and the University and College Union (UCU) in London on 10th November 2010 with an estimated 52,000 people joining the protest (NUS, 2010). Other national and local demonstrations occurred through the rest of 2010 and into 2011. Many local protests took the form of occupations in which students occupied university buildings or rooms to demonstrate against rising tuition fees, course closures and academic job losses (the national press provided many examples of occupations occurring across the country – see for example Pattison, 2010; Garner, 2011; Pidd, 2011).

These demonstrations were not always successful in saving courses or jobs as institutions began to react to the anticipated financial constraints that the Browne recommendations would bring in. The UCU (2012a) showed that many course closures were beginning to take effect in early 2011. It further highlighted that by 2012 the number of full time undergraduate courses offered in England had dropped by 31%[37].

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[37] UCU (2012a) stated that this drop had occurred during the period from 2006 to 2012.

By translating much of Browne's recommendations into policy, the publication of the White Paper (BIS) in June 2011 did nothing to calm the unrest being felt within the sector. Demonstrations and protests continued across the country[38] and courses that were deemed too small to be economically viable within the marketised HE framework continued to close (UCU, 2012a). Job losses followed as closures occurred and as the drive for greater 'efficiency savings' (BIS, 2011, p.19) began to take hold. Many press stories highlighted that in 2011/2012 academic staff were bearing the brunt of redundancy measures across many universities (Batty, 2011; Gill, 2011; Paton, 2011). This situation confirmed the UCU General Secretary's fear that 'shifting the burden of funding from the state to the student means nervous universities will look to axe even more courses that they worry won't make a profit' (UCU, 2012a). The institution in which I conducted my research was experiencing one such closure as the interviews took place. The interviewee who taught on the course described the closure occurring because of 'market decisions' (Y4), resulting in a number of academics facing uncertain futures.

Overall, the White Paper (BIS, 2011) was seen as continuing the attack on the ideals and purposes of HE. Its reforms were despised as 'virus-like destroyers of the idea of a university' (Szreter, cited in Reisz, 2011) and even led to some universities passing a vote of no confidence in David Willetts, the Minister of State for Universities and Science (Cunnane, 2011). Conferences were convened at various institutions with meaningful titles such as 'Universities under attack' and 'At the heart of a heartless system, the new student experience?'[39]. The UCU argued that the government plans were a 'recipe for disaster' (Rossiter, 2011) and had been successful only in creating a 'climate of fear' across the sector (ibid, 2011). This fear was more palpable at the time my interviews were conducted given that the full impact of increased tuition fees was yet to be known. Payment of higher fees was not due to begin until the 2012/2013 academic year so the effect it would have on student recruitment (and hence funding for the institution) was very uncertain. Predictions though were not promising. Research conducted by the London School of Economics' Centre for the Economics of Education predicted that if fees reached £9,000 (the highest level of fees an institution could charge), the university entrance rate would decrease by 7.51% for males and 4.92% for females (Dolton and Lin, 2011). Almost all the academics I interviewed indicated their uncertainty about what their recruitment figures would be for 2012/2013 and their fear that the figures would in fact decrease.

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[38] Another mass protest, organised by the National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts (NCAFC), took place on 9th November 2011 (NCAFC, 2011)

[39] These conferences took place on 26th November 2011 at Kings College London and 23rd February 2012 at the Society for Research into Higher Education, London, respectively.

In addition to fear and uncertainty, turmoil was also created in the sector in 2011/2012 due to government changes to teachers' and academics' pension schemes. Strike action was taken at various times throughout the year to oppose 'government plans to make teachers and lecturers pay more and work longer for their pensions and get less in retirement' (UCU 2012b). The UCU was so incensed that it called its members to strike to 'help stop the great pensions robbery' (2011). Academics then were not only fearful of being made redundant, but the government was proposing to change their pension schemes requiring them to work more for less money in retirement.

It becomes evident from the information presented here that for many academics the year in which the interviews for this study were conducted was one characterised by turmoil, fear, uncertainty, anger and resentment. The Browne Report (2010) and the White Paper (2011, BIS) had resulted in a very unstable environment and the full impact on the sector of the changes brought in was yet to be known. It was within this particular context that I carried out my interviews and the effect of it on academics' perceptions will be assessed throughout the analysis chapters.

3.5.3 Generalisation

A brief point must be made about the issue of generalisation due to it often being viewed as a weakness of case study research (Rose, 1991; Merriam, 1998). Lincoln and Guba (2000) observed that this weakness in case studies is perceived mainly when the logic of quantitative research, such as gaining statistically reliable data representative of a larger population, is applied. As discussed in section 3.2.1, case study research focuses on particularity and intends, through in-depth exploration, to illuminate the specifics of a particular case. I have already noted that my case study was bounded by one institution and that I used purposive rather than representational sampling. The focus of the study therefore was to explore how the particular academics interviewed in one particular institution perceived the impact of the HE context on teaching generally and the values of SoTL.

Given the emphasis on specificity rather than representativeness in case study research, I approached generalisation from a 'naturalistic' perspective. 'Naturalistic generalisation' (Stake, 1995; Lincoln and Guba, 2000) emphasises the role of the user or reader of the research and the intuitive conclusions they will draw from the findings based on their own 'personal engagement in life's affairs or by vicarious experience' (Stake, 1995, p.85). Merriam (1998) claimed that concrete universals will be apparent in a particular case that

readers of the research may recognise from their own personal experience and so be able to transfer to their own contexts. In teaching, she argued, some aspects will be generic to all teaching situations and so transferable to different contexts. Similarly, Robson (1993) suggested that readers may be able to see parallels and/or contrasts in research between the site studied and their particular situation through their own implicit and informal understandings. Indeed, these parallels and/or contrasts may be easier to see through case study research because of its focus on illuminating the particularities and specificities of a particular case. For my research, naturalistic generalisation will occur through scholars in other universities relating the findings to their own situations in light of their knowledge of their institutional particularities and specificities.

The emphasis then is on the user of the research, rather than the original researcher, to demonstrate how findings may apply to other contexts. The researcher though must provide sufficient description for others to compare to their own situations (Merriam, 1998). For Stake (1995, p.88), the researcher is obliged to supply 'high quality input' for the reader that relates to all aspects of the research process. To enable naturalistic generalisation to occur for my readers, I have given in this chapter 'thick description' (Cohen et al., 2007, p.254) of the methods chosen, the type of university and participants selected, the specific context of the institution and the circumstances occurring in the HE sector at the time the research was conducted. This input should allow readers to consider my findings in relation to their own situations.

3.6 Ethical framework

The tumultuous nature of the HE sector at the time of my study reinforced the importance of undertaking a detailed consideration of ethical procedures to follow. These considerations were guided largely by the British Sociological Association's (BSA) (2002) statement of ethical practice and the institutional ethical frameworks of both Birmingham City University (the institution in which I was undertaking the PhD programme of study) and the institution in which I conducted the research.

The most obvious initial ethical step to take was to anonymise both the institution and the participants involved in the study. This step conforms to the BSA's guidelines that 'methods for preserving anonymity should be used [to ensure] breaking the link between data and identifiable individuals' (2002, p.5). I have already discussed in section 3.4.1 how I anonymised the participants in this study. A brief point should be made here about

anonymising the institution itself. It appears common practice within the literature to anonymise educational institutions that are the focus of case study research (e.g. Cottrell and Jones, 2003; Tuchman, 2009; Fitzmaurice, 2010). The reasons for this anonymisation are perhaps obvious: it may encourage managers, or gatekeepers, of the institutions to allow the research to be conducted and it further protects the anonymity of participants resulting hopefully in them being more open, honest and candid about their experiences and/or views with the researcher. It can then appear that this process is a straightforward and fairly automatic one. However, it is worth noting that there can be complexities and nuances within it. Tickle (2002, p.46), for example, observed from his own experiences of educational case study research that invoking anonymity (as well as confidentiality) may 'in its own way both open windows and close doors'. He expressed feeling powerless in certain research situations in response to gaining worrying data from his participants (newly qualified teachers) about how they were being treated by the management within the school that was the site of the study. As an action researcher, Tickle's desire was to act on the data 'to change the situation' (2002, p.51). Yet his promise of anonymity and confidentiality to participants and the school left him struggling to decide how, or whether he could, disclose in reports certain information that he believed would safeguard others and help the school to develop professionally. The issue of anonymity (and confidentiality in Tickle's (2002) case) can then appear at times to create a certain tension between how much and how little to reveal about the educational institution that has been the research location in order to remain ethical.

Other researchers have also grappled with case-context anonymity within their research. Stake (1995) described anonymising one of his case studies 'after long deliberation' (p.116) following a particular teacher's request for his classroom not to be identified. Whilst Stake believed his report had cast the teacher 'in a favourable light' (p.115), the teacher himself felt 'my words embarrassed him and the school' (p.115). This incident indicates that the researcher and participants (including the institution itself) can hold differing opinions about what they would like to be publicly known.

I highlight these issues of case-context anonymity to illuminate 'the complex nature [of] and nuances' (Tickle, 2002, p.44) within a decision that could otherwise appear straightforward and problem free. In my own study, I could relate to Tickle's (2002) desire for the data gained to be purposively used to effect changes. Whilst not an action researcher, I did to some extent want to help the institution learn more about how some of its academics perceive their experiences both within the current context of HE and within their particular institutional context. The data in chapter five will show some academics expressing negative

perceptions about the management/academic relationship. This sort of data could be useful for the institution to know so that it could take relevant action to work towards improving those perceptions. However, the institution itself might not appreciate such public exposure within the thesis and recognising this, it would have been unethical to the institution to impose my desire for the data to be acted on by naming it. In this instance, a more ethical process to follow is to find alternative means of making the data useful for the institution, e.g. by providing it with internal reports or presentations of findings.

Of course, there are other benefits that could be gained by not anonymising the institution(s) in which case study research is carried out. In particular, the researcher would not be hindered by struggles of 'enclosure and disclosure' (Tickle, 2002, p.52), i.e. presenting enough information so that the context of the case is as complete for the reader as possible but not so complete that the case can be identified. This point is even more pertinent when the researcher intends naturalistic generalisation to occur (as discussed in the previous section). Yet whilst the lack of institutional anonymity may remove certain challenges for the researcher, it may not be the most ethical stance to take to the institution that has allowed access for the researcher. Further, it could act as an inhibitor for the individual research participants who may feel that their own identity is not as well protected as a result.

Whilst anonymising the institution that has been the location of my case study, I have shown here that it is not always an automatic decision, but one that can give rise to certain considerations for the researcher. Ultimately, though, the key consideration must be for the protection and well-being of those involved in the study. I will now summarise the other steps taken to ensure a sound ethical framework for this study.

As highlighted in this section above, this study took place during a very turbulent time within the HE sector. Consequently, it was important that my research did not cause any further stress or anxiety to the interview participants. This consideration corresponds to the BSA's (2002) guidance that the researcher should guard against any harmful or distressing consequences for research participants. To limit the potential of these consequences arising I took a number of steps. Section 3.4.2 indicates that I met with potential participants prior to conducting interviews to explain the research and what their participation would involve. These meetings ensured participants were made fully aware of the nature and purpose of the study. The participant information sheet (see Appendix 4) was either given at this meeting or emailed to them immediately afterwards. This sheet informed participants that they could withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason. I also ensured that I had the details of a confidential telephone counselling service ready to give to any

participants that wished to talk further about issues that may have been raised in the interviews. Finally, the interviews only began once participants has signed a consent form (see Appendix 6) indicating that they had received sufficient information to make their decision to participate.

One other aspect of my ethical framework involved giving the transcripts of the interviews to participants for their verification. I encouraged participants to read the transcript and to inform me if they wished to expand, amend, clarify or remove any of their comments. Mero-Jaffe (2011, p.236) indicated that this verification process has increasingly been adopted by qualitative researchers to 'uphold research ethics[,]…validate what was said during the interviews and to ensure that the written words in the transcript were those said by the interviewees'. He also suggested that, like the issue of anonymity, participant verification for ethical purposes is not as straightforward as it appears and could raise further ethical issues. Referring to his own research and other studies, Mero-Jaffe (2011) indicated that participants may feel embarrassed or anxious about reading their interview transcripts. These feelings may arise through, for example, seeing their errors in 'black and white' (p.240) or their use of spoken language as opposed to the more refined written discourse through which they may be more used to expressing their opinions. Whilst acknowledging these reservations, it was important for my ethical framework to give participants the opportunity to review their transcripts and potentially clarify or remove any comments that they felt uncomfortable with or wished they had not made. I concede Mero-Jaffe's (2011) caution about interviewees possibly refining their transcripts to accord more with written conventions rather than spoken language. However, in my research only one interviewee amended their transcript and these amendments amounted to what Mero-Jaffe (2011, p.240) would consider as 'slight corrections'. In practice, only around half the sample responded to my request for verification (a response rate Stake (1995) suggested is not uncommon), and these responses (except in the case referred to above) were that they were happy with the transcript and did not wish to change anything.

3.7 Chapter summary

In this chapter I have described in detail the methodology chosen for my study. In section 3.2 I identified a case study approach as the most appropriate for my research largely because of its emphasis on particularisation, i.e. knowing and understanding a particular case well, especially in relation to the broader context it is situated within. I also justified my decision to conduct this study in the interpretive paradigm using a qualitative research

method, i.e. semi-structured interviews. I showed in the discussion here the ontological similarities between interpretivism and case study research, and I highlighted scholars' views that qualitative methods are 'naturally' aligned to interpretivist research. The research location was then described and justified, before I explained in detail my interview sample, how participants were recruited, and when and where interviews were conducted. In the following part of the chapter I reviewed the analytical approach I took to my data, reporting fully on the state of the HE sector at the time of interviewing, which provided the contextual frame to my analysis. I then explained the 'naturalistic' perspective I have taken to the issue of generalisation. In taking this perspective I have provided 'thick description' (Cohen et al., 2007, p.254) throughout this chapter to aid readers in comparing and/or contrasting my findings to their own particular situations. Finally, the ethical framework of this study was discussed.

I will now present the findings from my research in the following five chapters.

Chapter 4: Challenges to academics' teaching and learning values

4.1 Introduction

This first analysis chapter examines the teaching and learning values held by the academics in this study. I identified in chapter one (section 1.2) that my overarching research goal was to investigate whether the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) still has meaning and relevance within the current higher education (HE) context in England. By examining the interviewees' teaching and learning values, I can begin to explore the extent to which they relate to any or all of SoTL's underpinning values. I also present this discussion first within my analysis as my study, in order to address my research goal and specific research questions, is focused on examining the impact of the current HE context on academics' views of their role and teaching and learning practices. Therefore, it is appropriate to explore initially how academics perceive their teaching role, focusing particularly here on their teaching and learning values. I will then begin in this chapter, and continue in the following chapters, to examine the extent to which academics perceive their values to be challenged, constrained and/or undermined by the present HE environment.

This chapter starts by relating the teaching and learning values expressed by the academics in this study to the significant learning taxonomy developed by Fink (2003). In doing so, I show that fostering significant, long lasting learning, one of the three aims of SoTL, is central to most interviewees. However, I argue that prominent values held by many academics, such as developing students' skills and abilities to become autonomous and independent learners, appear challenged by consumerist pressures exerted by the institution, management and students. Specifically, many academics perceive an institutional ethos centred on promoting the student-as-consumer position, which encourages student dependency and passivity, and re-orients the academic role more towards customer satisfaction. Numerous interviewees also felt management to be shifting responsibility for learning more directly towards academics and away from students. Some further believe management is focused only on ensuring academics achieve their module/course pass rate targets. As a result, interviewees suggest that the potential for grade inflation and/or lower standards increases, which undermines their nobler values regarding HE teaching and student learning. In the third part of this chapter I explore more fully the student-as-consumer notion and highlight that many interviewees believe students are increasingly aligning themselves to this position. However, I question if Ramsden's (2008) idea of a self-

fulfilling prophecy could be occurring in which the institutional ethos engenders consumerist expectations in students.

At the end of each analysis chapter I will identify the potential implications for SoTL from the data presented. There are three such implications that will be discussed at the end of this chapter: the undermining, and potential obscuring, of one of its central aims (i.e. to foster significant, long lasting learning for all students) by the current consumerist HE framework; the lack of incentive for academics to innovate or experiment with teaching practices in an environment where students take less responsibility for their learning; and the possible favouring of 'safe' teaching to ensure good customer evaluations.

4.2 Interviewees' values regarding teaching and learning

Chapter two (section 2.4) demonstrated that HE policy has reinforced a consumerist agenda from the 1990s onwards. Lomas argued in 2007 that consumerism and marketisation 'is a reality in United Kingdom universities' (p.33) but that this situation is often at odds with academics' values and the nobler motives with which many of them at least originally entered HE. As my data analysis progressed, a tension did indeed become apparent to me between the values interviewees espoused and the values promoted by a consumerist HE framework. The tension can best be explored by considering firstly the values interviewees expressed.

I asked each interviewee about their teaching values and the type or types of learning they want to develop with their students to assess how closely their values related to those of the scholarship of teaching and learning. I highlighted in chapter two (section 2.2.4) that SoTL ultimately aims to enhance student learning. Scholars such as Shulman (1999) and Huber and Hutchings (2005) agree that no amount of researching and developing teaching practices can advance the teaching profession unless student learning is being advanced too. As such, one of the three underpinning aims of SoTL is to foster significant, long lasting learning for all students. These aims were established by the Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (CASTL) and conveyed to the wider scholarly community by Hutchings and Shulman (1999). Importantly though, neither CASTL nor Hutchings and Shulman (1999) defined what 'significant' learning means or looks like. Common sense assumptions could of course be drawn upon, such as learning that is meaningful and relevant to students, which encourages deep intellectual engagement with the subject matter and ideas presented rather than a shallow or superficial rote-type learning

experience, which research suggests results in poorer academic performance (e.g. Fyrenius et al., 2005; Marton and Saljo, 2005; Malie and Akir, 2012). However, in 2003 Fink developed a taxonomy of significant learning to respond to some of the challenges he saw affecting the US higher education system, such as lack of student engagement. Fink (2003, p.6) suggested that the quality of higher education would only be improved if 'we can find ways to identify and create learning experiences that students and others can agree are truly significant'. As such he created his taxonomy of significant learning in which the significance arises from the change that occurs to the learner: 'significant learning requires that there be some kind of lasting change that is important in terms of the learner's life' (p.30). According to Fink then, if learning is significant it will inevitably be long lasting too.

Below are the components of Fink's taxonomy Fink (2003, p.30) and their descriptions. Though presented linearly, Fink stressed that the taxonomy should not be viewed as hierarchical but relational and interactive (see appendix 7 for further information about what the learner gains from each learning component):

Component	*Description*
Foundational knowledge	Understanding and remembering information and ideas.
Application	Developing skills (such as managing complex projects) and engaging in critical, creative, and practical thinking.
Integration	Connecting ideas, people, and realms of life.
Human dimension	Learning about oneself and others.
Caring	Developing new feelings, interests, and values.
Learning how to learn	Becoming a better inquirer about a subject and better self-directed learner.

I refer to this taxonomy because, as Fink (2003) stated, it offers a language and set of concepts for thinking about learning that take it beyond a purely instrumental or utilitarian process. The responses I gained from academics about their values towards their students' learning echoed the deeper and more significant construct of learning that the taxonomy relates. It became apparent to me in the process of analysing the data that their comments

closely related to the components within it, and specifically supported its interactive and relational nature. In particular, the responses from over half the sample indicated values connected to the human dimension, caring and learning how to learn components. One academic, for example, saw his/her role as split between developing students' subject specific knowledge and skills, and also helping them to:

> step back and reflect and help them to feel better about themselves and their identity with respect to their relationship with the subject (Z2).

The guiding philosophy of two other interviewees was to try to help develop students' life chances through the subject being studied:

> It's also about helping people to take chances and opportunities that they've never had before and learning is often the key to that (Y4).

> To support them in gaining confidence, in having the…idea that they can achieve and that they are going to have skills that they are going to take into the workplace…It's about [raising their] self-esteem as well so that yes they can do it (Y1).

Another academic was keen to ensure that his/her students could think critically and creatively, but more importantly that they could apply these skills to the society they live in:

> To make them more critical socially engaged citizens in the world, so to make them stop and think about what's happening, which they don't do. To make them question what they're being taught (Y6).

Encouraging students to care about the subject was also important to two academics, e.g:

> I try to have them develop a certain passion for [the subject][40] (U7).

One interviewee believed this 'passion' should also be a springboard for students becoming better learners in their subject:

> On a fundamental level we regard it as a failure if a student at the end of the [degree] thought that they knew [subject]. What we're trying to teach them is how much there is to know and some idea of how to discover that for themselves...And the kinds of students that we might

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[40] I have removed interviewees' references to their courses or modules in quotes to further protect their anonymity.

get frustrated with are not people who come along not knowing [example] or [example]…but it's the ones who don't seem to realise why they ought to know or aren't wanting to do something about it. So it's basically trying to cultivate that curiosity and that sense of learning (U1).

At least nine interviewees stressed their central value as helping students to develop self-discovery and self-responsibility in learning. In connection to Fink's (2003) learning how to learn component, the academics were concerned that their students should develop the skills and abilities to become autonomous and independent learners:

Also [important to me is] strengthening and supporting the students in becoming independent learners who, because they are highly motivated and enthusiastic, want to and are motivated to carry out personal independent study and be less dependent on what we have to offer (Y1).

Awakening that sense of an independent drive and curiosity…is at the heart of it all (U6).

It's almost like a child learning to walk…you need to hold them for a certain extent and you need them to go off and fall over and cry a little bit…as a teacher, part of me is wanting to help them make that start, but the rest of it is hopefully them going off and flying by themselves (Y3).

In this last quote, Y3 captures through the analogy of a 'child learning to walk' the *process* of learning that the other interviewees allude to in their comments. S/he indicates that learning may begin with academics perhaps giving students a lot of initial support – 'you need to hold them for a certain extent', but that this support lessens as the students build and develop their skills to the point that they can '[fly] by themselves'. This process is also captured in Y1 and U6's quotes. These interviewees intimate that they do not expect students when they start HE to already be independent learners or filled with an 'independent drive and curiosity' (U6). It is instead their role to support students through the process of 'becoming' (Y1) these types of learner and 'awakening' (U6) these particular faculties. It is not surprising then that given this focus on independence and self-direction, many interviewees' saw their relationship with students based more on supporting and facilitating their learning rather than offering all the answers:

Our relationship is not the sage on the stage, our relationship is how can we help support you in you becoming that autonomous learner, you taking things forward, you applying what

you're learning to the workplace and putting it into context that way. So it's not 'we are the experts, listen to what we say', it's explore, debate, discuss, try out, reflect (Y4).

[I don't see myself as a teacher], the only word I can think of is like a facilitator, just to help them think things through and to make use of what they know and to add to what they know and to use what they know (Y6).

The links to Fink's (2003) taxonomy here are numerous. As well as emphasising autonomous and independent learning, both interviewees stress helping students to move beyond simply gaining foundational knowledge to using and applying that knowledge, integrating it with what they already know and reflecting on what they have learnt. Overall, my analysis shows that fostering significant, long lasting learning, as defined by Fink (2003), is a value held in varying degrees by all interviewees. Even if Fink's taxonomy (2003) is not viewed as a definitive explanation of significant learning, it is clear that the academics' values in teaching go beyond the simple transmission of knowledge. Within all the quotes presented, subject knowledge appears the foundation from which deeper, more meaningful and more significant experiences occur. Like SoTL, student learning is at the heart of the academics' values and particularly central is the learning that the students will do for themselves. The Robbins Report (1963, p.181) is evoked here and its sentiment that students should 'play their part' and take as much responsibility as the academic for shaping and developing their learning experience[41]. The values stated by the interviewees indicate that they see higher education as a process that students should be able to facilitate in part by themselves and further expand if they develop strategies of engagement, self-direction, and autonomy. As such, the learning experience is not defined by academics but through the students' independent learning. Trigwell and Shale (2004) described this type of learning as the essence of the HE experience. Teaching at this level, they stated, should be dynamic and fluid because of the reciprocal relationship between academics and students whereby 'each party brings [something] to the encounter' (p.531).

Due to this focus on responsibility, autonomy and independence in learning, which at least half the sample identified as a central value held, the student-as-consumer concept was widely criticised in most interviews. Chapter two (section 2.4.7) described how government policy centred on a consumerist vision of HE has constructed a more passive role for students. For all 19 academics interviewed, this promotion of student passivity highlighted the 'ridiculous' (Z1) and 'irrelevant' (U5) nature of the student-as-consumer position. The

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[41] The Robbins Report (1963) is discussed in chapter two (section 2.4.7).

three quotes below capture the essence of many interviewees' comments in response to my question about their views of the consumerist agenda in HE:

> I think we have to be really robust about this and kick that notion into place because to me it's a ridiculous one really. If you want to buy a degree, well it's unlawful any way but that's not what we are about. It's about…a self-realisation and discovery process (U6).

> In my personal opinion students are students, if they're customers then…where does that take you?...They've [students] still got to do something…and I think if we're not careful we are going to be using a language and creating a culture where it's almost as if students can come in and just buy a degree, [which is] a bit ridiculous (Z1).

> Students aren't shopping at John Lewis, they aren't shopping at British Home Stores, if that's the metaphor to use. In other words they're not in all senses customers…there is a relationship between the tutor and the student that is a little different from the provider of a service and customer it seems to me (Y5).

The three interviewees here evidently perceive the consumer concept as one that actually undermines and obscures students' engagement and interaction in their own learning process. U6, Z1, and Y5 indicate that a consumerist orientation implies education is a product to be bought rather than a process to be engaged in. Chapter two (section 2.4.7) discussed consumerism re-positioning education as a product to be delivered, which diminishes it simply to being 'a thing…an object' (Hall, 2011). Like Y5, critics have continuously argued that the relationship between a student and tutor is fundamentally different to that of a salesperson and customer due to the active engagement academics require of students to shape the education they are receiving (Clayson and Haley, 2005; Potts, 2005; Hussey and Smith, 2010; Barnett, 2011). It is here that the tension between the academics' values and those of a consumerist HE framework become apparent. The nobler values of inspiring 'passion' (U7) and motivation for a subject that encourage students to '[fly] by themselves' (Y3) sit uneasily within a framework that promotes passivity and a product-based vision of education. This tension created by consumerism indicates certain challenges that some academics may be experiencing – the challenge to promote and adhere to their personal teaching values. But how far are these challenges being realised? It is to this question that the chapter now turns.

4.3 The institutional level

Naidoo and Jamieson (2005, p.278) stated that the 'internal culture of the university is likely to form a crucial mediating context' through which consumerist forces are experienced. They argued that the university context may help to displace, restructure or even subvert these forces and so lessen their potentially negative effects on teaching and learning. My data support this view that the university may act as a 'mediating context', but not in the way Naidoo and Jamieson (2005) envisaged. Eight interviewees felt that instead of displacing the consumerist forces the university is pivotal in reinforcing them. Specifically, these academics perceive the ethos adopted by the university to be one that actively promotes the student-as-consumer concept both to academics *and* students. Comments from two academics are particularly powerful:

> In the old days in car factories you would have a big banner saying 'quality is important', we almost have…a virtual sign in the office saying 'student satisfaction is paramount'…I think we are now saying 'whatever you want, we'll try and provide it'.
> *[KD] And is there any recognition of what's expected of the students?*[42]
> Increasingly less so. This kind of idea of meeting students half way, I think we're way over that half way now so we meet students 75% of the way (X3).

> Now the message [from the institution] is that we should always be available [to students], all the time, and we must reply to emails within 24 hours…it's really difficult if you need to get work done you can't always be there at the drop of a hat to deal with students…my feeling is that [the institution] is in this headlong rush to meet what it sees as being the 'student experience'…If we carry on [like this] then we could be needing to be there a lot more and then it really does become like a service sector job and that's not what it should be and it's not what I got into it for (Y6).

The academics' belief here is that the university's strategic direction is one of increasingly viewing students as customers of the institution. As such, the academics feel their role shifting to be more customer oriented. Within this orientation, student wants and needs must be catered to and academics must be constantly available to address any 'customer queries' immediately. Consider also the analogy that X3 makes to 'car factories'. S/he compares the institution's emphasis on student satisfaction to the focus car factories had on product quality, which may be indicative of the direction s/he feels HE has taken and the way that his/her role has changed. The use of the analogy suggests s/he may feel academics have

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[42] Questions asked or comments made by me to interview participants are italicised and preceded with [KD] within the quotes presented throughout the thesis.

been reduced to a position similar to that of workers on a production line producing satisfied graduates in a more mechanistic and potentially less engaging way.

Another academic further expounded on the 'headlong rush' (Y6) to constantly be there and provide for the student:

> We've been told if the student has a problem, you accompany that student until it's sorted out; it's now your problem with them. And I think that's a bit of a sea change for some people. I hope it's not too much of a sea change for me, but it certainly will be for some people (Y3).

Y3 seems to suggest here that academics just have to make the 'sea change': they must accept and assent to all that comes along. This acceptance underscores other academics' comments such as 'that's the way it is' (Y1) and 'what can one do?' (Y5). However, some interviewees recognised a tension building between the values academics are trying to promote and the behaviours or attitudes that a consumerist ethos encourages:

> We get e-mails from the highest authorities saying the student comes first… because the marketing strategy at the moment is that the student comes first…it's a slogan that appears in so many e-mails especially now before next year [when higher fees are introduced]…here it is very very prominent…but...I think that students should develop into independent adults by doing a university degree and by always pampering them and taking them by the hand and taking them to the next module and telling them 'okay you now have to go to this room' and so on its like we take that away and they are more dependent on us (U7).

> I've just been looking at the student satisfaction survey and the idea of students wanting more and more contact time…I think there is a misunderstanding… of what contact time is …but…the university is asking us to put in more direct contact hours for next year...but it's not a school. We are trying to support students in being [independent]…we're not feeding them, we're trying to enable them and facilitate them to be independent learners and you can't do that if you have a college or school approach where it's all time in taught sessions, that's just you and them, they're not building up (Y1).

The interviewees here feel the university is promoting a consumerist ethos that encourages student dependency and lack of self-responsibility in learning. Student behaviour of this kind is directly at odds with the values of autonomy and independence expressed by most interviewees. Certainly, students 'flying by themselves' (Y3) appears unlikely to happen in an environment where all their wants should be met, where academics are not only on-call to deal with their problems but have to take on those problems themselves, and where

students' self-direction is increasingly eroded. This situation clearly seems challenging to the academics' teaching values. Section 4.2 showed all interviewees held strong values about developing students both personally and academically. However, the academics discussed in this section describe how these values are undermined by the strategic direction or ethos that they perceive the university to be taking. They have their own values but appear to be finding it more difficult to promote them in the way they work with their students. All academics confirmed their antipathy for the student-as-consumer notion, but their comments also suggest that they believe the university is increasingly reinforcing it.

The findings presented here are similar to those reported by Lomas (2007). The academics in his study were also uncomfortable with the notion of consumerism in HE, but felt it was promoted and supported by those at or near the top of the institution. This gap between academics' values and institutional direction is further endorsed by discussions I heard at a national education conference in 2011 attended by many academics from across the country. The final session of the conference was a panel/audience debate about HE's future following the White Paper (BIS, 2011) publication. After attending the session I noted the following in my reflective diary:

> Expressed in the final panel debate session was a kind of despair and disdain that university management, i.e. vice chancellors, just goes along with whatever the government says, giving no resistance whatsoever. The academics in the audience seemed to feel let down by that. One person even described the university managers as 'sycophants' (6/9/11, p.38).

This extract supports my data by showing that other academics across the sector also perceive their institutional managers to support government agendas in HE, potentially at the expense of academics' values. Indeed, I doubt I would have sensed such 'despair and disdain' if the academics in the session did not feel their own values were being threatened. Potts (2005, p.63) unequivocally argued that when a university operates within a consumerist model, it is betraying and corrupting higher education and cheating the students 'of the education they should be obtaining'. In agreement, Clayson and Haley (2005) stated that an institutions' integrity is put at stake when it adopts a consumer orientation. Yet they also point out that some universities have no other option than to treat students as customers. They labelled these universities as 'The Desperates':

> These [universities] are completely, or largely, dependent upon enrolment, and have been referred to as 'mass markets'…[they] are dependent almost exclusively upon government

funding, or student tuition to survive. They cannot afford to treat students as anything other than customers…' (p.5).

Clayson and Haley (2005) were referring to US HE institutions, but their description is virtually identical to many newer post-1992 universities circumstances. As discussed in chapter three (section 3.3.2), these universities are often more dependent on commercial interests and market demand because they do not have a historical or traditional reputation. They are also more closely connected to teaching than to research and, as such, have been reliant on government for the bulk of their funding. The recent withdrawal of public funding and its replacement by tuition fees means that these universities may indeed be desperate for students to enrol to secure their own financial survival. Y5 believed that this is the situation his/her institution faces:

> I think this university will be reliant on the revenue that flows from the student intake (Y5).

Clayson and Haley (2005) indicated that treating students as anything but customers in this type of environment would be extremely dangerous. A 'desperate' institution needs to keep its students (customers) happy to ensure they stay on their course (and so pay their full fees) and also to entice other potential fee-paying students.

This discussion of 'The Desperates' (Clayson and Haley, 2005, p.5) indicates that a consumerist route may not be one that an institution particularly wants to follow, but may essentially be forced into through the pressures impacting on it from government policy. Y4 did indeed perceive this situation occurring at the university:

> *[KD] Is consumerism and focusing on monetary concerns above educational concerns something that you feel is prominent here at this institution?*
> It is but I think it's more government policy. I don't think it's a philosophy the university has deliberately wanted to go for. I think it's more they're being pragmatic; they want the money, they need the money from government and once we've got top up fees [that money from government] is going to reduce even more (Y4).

Y4 then believes the university has effectively been forced into adopting a consumerist focus, which suggests s/he views it as a 'desperate' institution. Whilst acknowledging that 'desperate' universities may feel forced in this way, I would argue this situation only increases the challenges to the academics working within these types of institutions. If a university is dependent upon consumerism, it will not be able to change its strategic direction without serious risk to its survival, especially whilst HE policy continues to reinforce the

agenda. The university then will continue promoting a consumerist ethos, which will persist in undermining and threatening many of the academics' values. A consumerist focus in a 'desperate' university then could result in a potentially inescapable situation for academics whereby the institutional ethos supports and continues the undermining of their teaching values.

4.4 The management level

The section above explores the perceived challenges the institutional ethos appears to present to interviewees' teaching and learning values. Jones (2007) argued that academics are further challenged by managerial pressures from above and by student demands below. Before exploring student demands, this section will focus on the managerial pressures that interviewees perceive, particularly in relation to responsibility for learning.

At least 10 interviewees felt management[43] to be shifting the responsibility for learning more squarely onto their shoulders and away from students. This shift manifested itself particularly in relation to students' grades and subsequent pass and failure rates. Four academics spoke of explicitly experiencing this shift, for example:

> At undergraduate level we are under pressure, so for all of the saying that it's the responsibility of the students [it still comes back to us]…we try and put as much as we can in place to support them and guide them [but] if we get less of a pass rate than we are required to do so then it's us that get looked at in terms of 'why haven't you met your pass rate?' (X4).

> If progression rates are poor then you've got to go see the Dean and you're going to have to explain to him yourself why people have failed, you know, and it is a massive thing (X2).

> [Regarding] progression…the government will pay us according to students who progress. If a student doesn't progress into their second or third year, we don't get paid for that, so the pressure is, the unspoken pressure, I mean it's kind of 'oh no, you've got to keep standards' but actually the subtext is 'but don't fail anybody'…literally at the end of modules there will be statistics about how many people have passed that module and if it dips to 60s or 70s questions are asked (X3).

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[43] For the most part interviewees did not distinguish between management levels, e.g. middle management, institutional management, etc. Mostly they appeared to view 'management' as one distinct group and representing any person with managerial responsibilities greater than their own.

X3's quote highlights an important point. There is pressure on recruitment and retention of students because the university needs to secure the funding they bring. In this way X3 is describing the situation of a 'desperate' university (Clayson and Haley, 2005), as discussed in the section above. The university is dependent on the money brought in through student funding for its financial survival. However, for the interviewees above, this situation has resulted in them perceiving pressure from management to assume the responsibility for ensuring their students pass. All three interviewees suggest that the 'questions' asked if pass rates reduce are directed largely at the academics.

Six other interviewees were not as explicit about this pressure, but it implicitly ran throughout their comments, as the following two quotes demonstrate:

> *[KD] Do you have targets regarding grades, like a certain percentage to achieve a certain grade?*
> Well we certainly are asked to explain why less than, I can't remember the figures now but let's say 85%, if your pass mark is below that (Y2).

> I think there is a pressure if people see progression or issues, even if you can provide them [management] with an answer there's still the sense of pressure of 'it needs improvement', and that's kind of where the buck stops if there's a progression issue. I think there is some space for discussion but I think ultimately that's the bottom line, it needs improving (U4).

Again, the quotes highlight academics believing that the questions come back to them; they are the ones who have to explain themselves: the 'buck stops' (U4) with them. The repercussions regarding progression or pass rates appear to 'come back to individual members of staff' (X4). Any issues then to do with the students themselves, such as their attendance, motivation or engagement, would seem to be ignored. From the interviewees perspective at least, there is no recognition from management of the students' role in the learning experience. There is no acknowledgement of students shaping and developing the process, or 'play[ing] their part' (Robbins Report, 1963, p.181). More strikingly, it appears to these academics that there is a complete lack of responsibility attached to the student for achieving a passing mark. Instead, the responsibility has shifted to sit increasingly with academics themselves.

Other studies confirm this shifting sense of responsibility that is arising in direct response to greater consumerist forces (e.g. Clayson and Haley, 2005; Lomas, 2007). Naidoo and Jamieson (2005, p.274) argued the greater focus on 'market currencies' that newer (or 'desperate') universities have to give means a greater pressure to ensure pass rates to

secure students' funding. My interviewees highlight that they feel this pressure then cascades onto them from management above, which shifts the responsibility for passing from students and onto themselves. A further danger arises with this shift in responsibility. As previously highlighted, universities need to secure current student funding *and* also market themselves effectively to potential students. Murphy (2011, p.511) claimed that this situation may lead to a 'downward pressure' in which academic standards are lowered and/or grades inflated to bolster pass rates. Scholars like Williams (2013) and Naidoo and Jamieson (2005) argued that market philosophies create a pressure for higher grades so that universities can move up in the rankings and obtain greater competitive advantage over others. Six interviewees felt they were experiencing this 'downward pressure' for inflated grades, which subsequently reduces standards:

> We're under a lot of pressure now not to fail students, so inevitably standards are being driven down because of that (X3).

> …but that [raising student self-esteem] sometimes can be a conflict with what the university or what HE now is demanding with progression and what students leave universities with, when we're sort of encouraged to have more and more 2:1s and firsts (Y1).

> …what it [grade inflation] does is it takes responsibility for firsts and 2:1s away from the students and puts it all on the staff and that can't be right.
> *[KD] Is grade inflation something that you feel is already happening or just something that's a concern?*
> I think it has crept in already actually. I'd say there has been a pressure on inflating grades (U6).

These three illuminating quotes come from academics across each of the three faculties in which interviews were conducted, suggesting that this pressure on bolstering grades and pass rates is being felt more widely across the institution. Importantly, Y1 attributes some of this pressure to the wider HE context that institutions have to operate in. U4 made a similar connection:

> I imagine that in courses that are under pressure in terms of getting numbers and…that their course may disappear…they may feel that a little more about 'how do we make sure students get through?'… So it's frustrating because I think the focus in education generally has become…about numbers and achievement and how many are getting through, and if they're not getting through it's not necessarily why aren't they, are there any patterns here in relation to background or race or gender that we can look at, it's 'well just sort it out, define what it is and sort it out', you know, because budgets and finances matter (U4).

This quote distinctly captures the conflict many academics seem to feel they are in. Whilst the academics' focus is on the students and their relationship to the learning process, they believe management's focus to be directed predominantly to finances. As such, the perception of some academics is that management just wants pass targets met, which cascades a 'downward pressure' (Murphy, 2011, p.511) to inflate grades and lower standards. The HE context may be creating this particular management focus but the pressure academics feel arising from it makes adhering to their teaching values even more difficult. If academics feel that they cannot increasingly devolve the responsibility for learning to their students, or even share it with them, then student skills of autonomy and independence would seem likely to flounder. Additionally, academics may feel it is difficult to develop students' personal and emotional connections to subjects if they believe passing the module is more the academics' responsibility. X3 suggests in the quote above that standards reduce as the perceived pressure for grades becomes greater, which potentially means a retreat to less academically rigorous levels of education. In Fink's (2003) taxonomy terms, academics may feel they have to focus on the foundational knowledge component, at the expense of the caring and human dimension elements. There is literature indicating that the power of academics to define their own curriculum is reducing (Naidoo and Jamieson, 2005; Jones, 2007; Campaign for the Public University (CfPU), 2011; Freedman and Fenton, 2011). My data suggest that this declining power may be a result of a pressure to ensure progression and pass rates are met. At the very least, the data clearly demonstrate that they academics in this study perceive further difficulty in following their own teaching values when the responsibility for learning appears to shift away from students and more directly towards them.

4.4.1 Blaming academics

The sense of a shifting responsibility for learning is clearly described above. There is further evidence within the data that the greater responsibility being devolved onto academics from management is leading also to interviewees increasingly perceiving management to blame them for aspects occurring within the student's experience as a whole. Clayson and Haley (2005, p.4) argued that a consumerist framework makes this attachment of blame virtually inevitable:

> When disagreements occur in a student-customer orientation, the educational institution should logically look to the [academic] (as a provider of an essential service) for redress. It

makes sense in a customer-oriented environment for [managers] to assume the [academic] is wrong in any dispute with a student, unless proven otherwise.

The discussion above shows many interviewees are beginning to feel the blame being attached to them for low pass rates or progression figures. Academics variously feel that they have to explain themselves to the Dean if pass rates are low and that only they will be 'looked at in terms of "why haven't you met your pass rate?"' (X4). However, eight academics also felt that management is increasingly holding them responsible for *all* aspects of the 'student experience'[44]. This responsibility, they suggest, turns to blame from management when problems arise within that experience. Interviewees' comments about the National Student Survey (NSS) make this point clearly. All spoke of the importance of the NSS, and particularly its significance to management:

> The NSS is viewed as absolutely critically important because the Vice Chancellor views it as absolutely critically important (U1).

> The student satisfaction survey drives virtually everything (Y1).

Cheng (2010) also found management focusing great attention on the NSS. X1 explained the reason for this focus:

> It is what we get judged on and slaughtered on and we only have to drop 5% in the NSS overall and we can drop 20 points down the league table (X1).

The 'we' in this sentence could refer to the university itself and X1's course. Both get ranked in league tables and a drop in ranking points would be equally damaging to either. It could also, when first used, refer specifically to academics themselves. If this is the case then the use of the word 'slaughtered' is striking. Academics are not just 'judged' by the NSS, they are 'slaughtered' by it. This word powerfully conveys the sense that ultimately blame for low scores will lay with the academics and that low scores can only lead to negative consequences. Eight interviewees expressed their belief that blame is directed solely at them, as these two illustrative quotes show:

> And they [management] say 'why, why did you suffer this 10% drop?' and when you actually look at the detail it's because 10 staff left or 17 staff left…and you don't have staff to supervise final year projects so students can't do the projects that they want to do because

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[44] A critical discussion of this term is given in chapter eight.

we don't have the staff here anymore to do it. And you think 'well you got rid of the staff and then the students complain about it'.

[KD] And then it's all kind of down on your head?

Yes, it's all our fault because the student satisfaction is poor (X2).

Last year was the first year where we had enough students to respond to [the NSS] and the overall satisfaction was lower than expected, it was 68%, which I thought was quite good but no, they [management] said 'what are you going to do about it?' (Y1).

These quotes highlight two ways in which these two interviewees at least feel the blame for low NSS scores is being directed at them. X2's comments convey his/her explicit belief that management will take no responsibility for the part it may have played in lowering students' satisfaction, for example through not replacing academics who leave which then puts further pressure on those remaining. Instead, all the responsibility, and consequently the blame, appears to fall on the academics themselves. Three other interviewees supported this view. Y1's comment on the other hand is slightly different. S/he does not explicitly state that management will shirk their responsibilities, but the sentiment is implicit in his/her remark that the question asked was 'what are *you* going to do about it?' (my emphasis). This question evokes both an attachment of blame and an attribution of responsibility for improvement – with both being directed at Y1. It is his/her fault and s/he must be the one to improve the situation. For X3, the attachment of blame and responsibility was felt much more powerfully:

We are literally held to account as if, you know, back to the wall with a gun pointing to us: your national student survey *will* improve year on (X3 – interviewee's emphasis).

X1's concept of academics being 'slaughtered' by the NSS is carried through in X3's metaphor here of a gun being pointed at them to make them improve their scores. Clearly, for these two academics, the sense of being judged by and blamed for the NSS scores has been (and is being) strongly felt and is in turn producing some very strong feelings in themselves about the whole process. This strength of feeling continued in X3's comment that the survey process is 'used *against* us' (my emphasis). Six other interviewees supported this view. These academics noted the way they felt the survey was used to blame them for aspects they in fact had no control over, for example:

And the things which they write in [the NSS], which they have grievances about are things which can't be managed at a course level, things like 'I couldn't get in the car park', which obviously colour their perception of their university experience as a whole, but which you can't

do anything about at a course level, but they affect your rating but you can't do anything about it. I can't build a bigger car park or I can't do anything about how many library books they can have out on loan, those are the things which they type in (Y6).

…students were unhappy with software availability and that's come to us as a school as our problem that students have problems with software availability. But actually that's nothing to do with us, that's what [Corporate ICT] are supposed to be sorting out… it's nothing the academics can do anything about, and they're [management] saying…'well you've got to take ownership of the problem', and it's like 'how am I supposed to own that problem?' That's way beyond any point where I could have any influence in any decision making or anything that's going on (X2).

Quotes such as these came from academics across all three faculties in which I conducted interviews suggesting that this is a situation felt across the university. There has been much questioning in the research literature about the validity of the NSS as an evaluation tool (e.g. Williams and Cappuccini-Ansfield, 2007; Yorke, 2009; Cheng, 2010; Cheng and Marsh, 2010) and at least nine interviewees spoke of its methodological flaws[45]. It is beyond the scope of this analysis to fully critique the NSS. What is important to note here is the attachment of blame some academics perceive as developing from it. Over a third of interviewees also felt they were being blamed, or 'held to account' (X3), for wider aspects of the university experience that are beyond their control. Arthur (2009) claimed this situation is an inherent danger of student evaluations; issues will be raised that academics cannot do anything about. However, my interviewees believe management still hold these issues against them. So there is both a sense of a shift in responsibility for learning from students to academics *and* also in responsibility for the whole 'student experience'. The interviewees experienced this latter shift in responsibility as a shift in blame being increasingly attached by management directly to them.

Consumerism may play a role in management's perceived attachment of blame to academics for low NSS scores as these scores translate into league table positions. As X1 highlighted, a drop in scores can mean the university and/or the course takes a drop in their ranked positions. In an environment where institutions need to market themselves as effectively as possible, such a slip down the league table would not send the most positive message to potential students:

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[45] The critiques in the literature centre on the unreliability of the league tables produced by NSS scores and the limited nature of the questions asked. Interviewees commented on statistical flaws in the way the survey data is used, the greater likelihood of respondents being 'vexed' students, and the lack of question clarity.

You don't want [low NSS scores] when students are choosing which university to go to, to say only 50% of our students are satisfied, why on earth would you choose to go there? You wouldn't (X4).

Good NSS scores then, as Williams (2013) attested, are a powerful marketing tool. Indeed, other scholars indicated that as HE became more fee-based, the league tables produced by the NSS would gain prominence as 'short cut indicators of status' (Williams and Cappuccini-Ansfield, 2007, p.21). But what are the implications for academics' teaching and learning values? A comment by X4 highlights one particular danger of such prominence on the NSS:

The NSS is something we're really really aware of. It's the whole league table thing, it's something that we're judged on and…we have to strive to keep our final year students happy, you know, the final year, the ones that really matter…I've got 207 on [module] this year and…the pressure that they have a good experience [is considerable]... putting alright [on the NSS] for everything [is] not enough, we need them to put good or very good (X4).

The danger presented here is that a greater focus is given to ensuring students have a good experience rather than undertaking any kind of significant learning. X4 states the NSS is something they are 'really really' aware of, and s/he evokes the pressure that then translates into making sure the final year students have a 'good experience'. They are not just trying to keep these students 'happy', they are *striving* for it. Note also his/her comment that the final year students are 'the ones that really matter'. This comment most likely refers to the fact that this group of students will be the ones evaluating the module. Does this mean they will get more effort and attention focused on them? If so, it confirms Power's (1994) assertion that audit can shape the practices and performances of those being audited. Specifically, greater attention is given to complying with audit processes than to the organisations'/individuals' primary purpose. This situation is alluded to in X4's comment. Rather than all students 'really matter[ing]', the final year students have gained significance because they are the 'auditors' of the academic's module. This significance may also have an impact on the teaching approaches used, particularly in this final year. Chapter two (section 2.4.7) discussed the potential impact of students' evaluative power on teaching approaches like critical pedagogy. Jones (2007) highlighted that this type of approach, which is based on developing critical thinking skills, may be ultimately valued by students but at the time of studying may be quite 'uncomfortable' (p.213) for them in that they are being challenged to think for themselves rather than simply being given what they need to know. Section 4.2 noted that over a third of academics stressed the importance of developing students' critical thinking skills. However, the importance of 'happy' students having a 'good experience' so that they will then give 'good' NSS scores may become a pressure too hard

to avoid and thus make 'uncomfortable' learning, regardless of how significant it may be, too risky to engage in. The risk is of course intensified when the blame for low NSS scores is perceived as being attached more directly to individual academics. Studies by Lomas (2007) and Arthur (2009) demonstrate that subordinating quality learning for good experiences, and therefore good evaluation scores, is a pressure being experienced by academics at other institutions. This need then for good, marketable NSS results presents further evidence of potential threats to academics' teaching and learning values.

4.5 The student level

The prior sections demonstrate a variety of perceived institutional and managerial pressures challenging many fundamental values held by most academics in this study. Data also suggest that academics experience pressure from students, particularly as their demands, expectations and behaviours become more consumer orientated. At least nine interviewees believed that growing numbers of students now explicitly see themselves as consumers, as the following two quotes illustrate:

> Their [the students] expectations are massively different [than before]; they think they're paying customers which is a big difference (X1).

> I think inevitably students now most definitely see themselves as customers…they're paying a lot of money to be here…so they are more demanding of the service (X3).

X3's quote echoes the sentiments expressed by many other interviewees that introducing higher tuition fees will encourage students to adopt a more consumerist orientation. Three academics described situations that demonstrate how students may experience this orientation:

> *[KD] Have you noticed any consumerist tendencies with your students?*
> Yes, definitely with the students. From one student when they've been working in the workshop and using files and stuff and saying 'I've got blisters' and all the rest of it. [I said] 'well you're doing [subject], what do you expect? Of course you're going to get the odd blister along the way', and then [another student said] '£3,000 I paid for this'. [I said] 'yes, but you've achieved something today, when was the last time you achieved something at the end of the session?' (X2).

I remember a situation a couple of years ago where a student came into a class really late and kind of disturbed it and another student berated them because they'd worked out how much they were paying for that class (U4).

Where I've seen one thing that might be slightly consumer orientated is…two students [were] whispering…while we were talking and I asked them what it was about and they were trying to work out whether doing a project or doing a placement would get them a better mark, so they're doing this calculation about what's the most expeditious route to be doing well and would one route harm them versus the other. I think that's the kind of calculation that you're seeing students start to make now, which may be slightly consumerist. May be it will get worse, I don't know. (Y6).

The situations related by X2 and U4 demonstrate students focusing on the monetary aspect of their degree: what they have paid and what they are getting for that money. Williams (2013) also related examples of students doing similar calculations. This kind of behaviour suggests the potential for consumerism to reduce teaching to a transactional process has been (or is being) realised. Y6 highlights a slightly different experience. His/her students are trying to work out their most 'expeditious route' to good grades. In this instance the two students do not appear to be using money in their calculation. Their effort seems to be the currency and they are wondering where to invest it to achieve the best outcome: better marks. Investment to them then may be more metaphorical than literal (Canaan, 2004). It is Y6 who considers the behaviour 'may be slightly consumerist' and his/her comment that 'may be it will get worse' suggests that money may become increasingly important in this calculation. Investment becomes more literal as fees increase, meaning that some students may want the best return for both their effort *and* their money. The calculation may then centre more on how much money has been paid and what is the best route to take to get full value for that money. Potts (2005) argued that a customer model encourages such behaviour. Student inquiry and exploration, he stated, are foregone in favour of 'doing what it takes' to 'succeed' (p.62), with success defined solely in terms of getting the degree rather than undertaking enhanced learning experiences. In support, Clayson and Haley (2005) remarked that in a consumer environment, taking the easier route for higher grades is the most sensible option. In fact, students are not 'smart customers' if they do not do this (p.2). Even if not using money as the currency, Y6's students are being 'smart customers' and consequently valuing learning less over what will get them a better mark. Power's (1994) assertion may be correct then that through reduced exploration and 'risk taking' in learning (Naidoo and Jamieson, 2005, p.275), consumerism serves at least in part to impoverish students' experiences rather than enhance them.

A more strategic approach to learning is obviously at odds with many interviewees' teaching and learning values. Section 4.2 showed most interviewees believe that it is just as important for students to develop impassioned emotional connections to a subject as it is to build foundational knowledge of it. However, a concern only for 'doing what it takes' (Potts, 2005, p.62) to get better grades may reduce the likelihood that students will engage in more transformational learning experiences (Scott, 1997; Barnett, 2011; Williams, 2013). Significant learning, as Fink (2003) described and as many interviewees alluded to, is potentially cast aside by some students in favour of instrumentality and doing the minimum amount of work for the maximum benefit.

Importantly, interviewees did comment on the positive implications that could arise from a consumerist agenda. At least seven stated that paying higher tuition fees could lead to students thinking harder about their future study and/or career choices and working harder once they are in HE, as these two quotes show:

> One of the things I'm hopeful for with the new fees structure coming in is that perhaps it will make students think twice before coming to university, do they want to come for the right reasons (X4).

> I think hopefully it [higher tuition fees] will make students realise actually what they need to put in to their degrees…hopefully it will make them more conscientious to work harder and to actually think 'right well I'm paying all this money or will be paying all this money in the future, I'd better make sure it's worth my while' (U2).

Note in both quotes the use of the word 'hopeful' or 'hopefully'. All seven academics framed their comments in this way, rather than in any assured sense that these positive effects would occur. Even if they do, aspects such as risk taking and exploration in learning could continue to be challenged in this situation. If students 'want to get the most out of [their study]' (U4) in return for their fees, they most likely will not want to do anything to threaten that outcome. In the same way that some academics may engage in 'safe' teaching to ensure good NSS scores, some students may prefer 'safe' learning to try to guarantee as high grades as possible. The students' calculations about the 'most expeditious route to…doing well' in Y6's quote above appear to support the potential for this 'safe' learning to occur.

Students' adopting a consumer orientation may challenge academics' values in other ways. If, as suggested in section 4.4, over half the sample believe that management is shifting

responsibility for learning away from students to academics, students concomitantly were perceived as having a greater sense of their entitlement to a high degree classification given the increasing amount of money they pay relative to earlier cohorts:

> I think…they [students] sometimes feel that they've paid their money and therefore that entitles them to a 2:1 degree when actually if they carry on as they are they'll be lucky to get a pass never mind a 2:1 and I think it's that understanding that we will do so much but then they have to have put in a certain amount of effort and that responsibility lies with them (X4).

> …there are some students that do, in the back of their mind, have the sense that it guarantees them a degree and why should they have to be doing this reading in their own time, shouldn't there be time allocated and they have this expectation you will lead them individually in a tutorial through each reading (U4).

These two quotes illustrate the shifting responsibility for learning that half the interviewees believe to be occurring between themselves and their students. X4 has the perception that at least some students feel entitled to a good degree given their financial investment. Both Lomas (2007) and Murphy (2011) similarly found that some students no longer ask 'what should I do?' but 'what can I get?'. Chapter two (section 2.4.7) explored how consumerism encourages student passivity with regard to learning. X4's quote evokes this passivity as, for him/her, a sense of entitlement in some students appears to be eroding and replacing their own self-responsibility in the learning process. Of course, students must do some work to pass their degree so the responsibility for learning can never be *totally* with the academic. What X4 and U4 allude to is a growing sense in some students that paying fees guarantees gaining a degree, with this 'guarantee' coming from academics being viewed as having *greater* responsibility for their success than perhaps in previous cohorts. X4 maintained that many students are 'more demanding' than previously:

> They [the students] are a lot more demanding and a lot less independent, they don't seem to have the independence to get on with their own learning, they expect much more, [like] to be spoon fed, and are quick to make it your fault if you like, you know, 'I don't know that because you didn't tell me' and actually what we deliver in lectures is a starting point for them to then go away and do private study and a lot of the learning is also their responsibility (X4).

Lomas (2007) similarly found academics feeling students increasingly desired to be 'spoon fed'. He concluded that in a consumerist environment 'the role of the lecturer in the lecturer-student relationship is overstated and that of the student is underplayed' (p.40). Many interviewees did recognise that it is not just consumerism encouraging student passivity in

learning. Over half the participants commented on students' previous schooling experiences helping to foster their dependency on the teacher and expectations of being 'spoon fed':

> [I] talk to them about…when they were at school and a lot of students say there can be four or five opportunities for handing in assessed work before the mark gets taken through towards your A-level results, and they go 'why won't you do that for me?' and it's just like, that's not the way it works. And…they've been taught to pass exams without having looked at anything else, and so this whole experience of [higher level] education, they just haven't had it (X2).

Much has been written about many students no longer being as well prepared to enter HE as in previous years[46]. The academics here confirm that many students appear inexperienced in being, or not aware how to be, independent or pro-active in their learning. The danger is that even if students are arriving in HE with passive learning behaviours, a consumerist ethos within the university may help to entrench those behaviours further by encouraging education to be viewed as a product to be bought and delivered by the academic. A consumerist HE framework may make it increasingly difficult for academics to challenge previous schooling experiences and promote student autonomy and self-responsibility. So even if the overstating of the academics role is a consequence of prior school experiences, consumerism may help to further entrench it. One interviewee indicated that the emphasis on teaching in the 2011 White Paper (BIS) may exacerbate this entrenchment:

> *[KD] What do you think of this government's views that the changes it is bringing in put teaching at the heart of the system?*
> But surely learning should be at the heart of it, it's not about just teaching it's about learning and that puts a responsibility then with the learner to make the best use of what is offered them (Y1).

As chapter two (section 2.4.1) described, the 2011 White Paper (BIS) explicitly positioned students as consumers of higher education. The paper then focused on teaching rather than learning in order perhaps to emphasise what the consumers will receive for the money they are paying. The government's rhetoric was one of improving teaching, but Y1 highlights that its focus further obscures and ignores the importance of learning and students taking on the responsibility for their learning.

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[46] See, for example, Lowe and Cook (2003), Byrne and Flood (2005), Smith and Hopkins (2005) and Murtagh (2010) who comment on differences between learning experiences at school and those expected in HE. Other scholars discuss the massification of HE through the widening participation agenda and the growth of 'non-traditional' students. These students may not be as well prepared for HE due to lengthy periods away from study (Bowl and Whitelaw, 2010) or a lack of 'cultural capital' between the home and university environment (Cree at al., 2009; Leese, 2010).

There are numerous ways then that consumerist identification by students challenges and undermines academics' teaching and learning values. As the preceding section discussed, if responsibility for learning shifts from students to academics, fostering autonomy, independence and self-direction in learning seems more likely to falter than flourish. Additionally, as lessening student self-responsibility becomes coupled with a potentially more instrumental approach to obtaining good grades, significant learning experiences seem less likely to occur or be sought by at least some students. Though academics may want to nurture personal and emotional connections to their subjects, it is questionable whether students can come to care about a topic, develop their own thoughts and feelings about it and be moved by the issues raised when they take less responsibility for learning. Just as the prior section suggests that academics feel pressured by management's increasing attributions of blame and responsibility, so does this section suggest academics are experiencing increasing consumerist demands from at least some students. The effect is to continue to squeeze academics from both above and below more intensively and somewhat differently than previously.

4.5.1 Students as consumers - a self-fulfilling prophecy?

The analysis to date suggests many interviewees perceive that at least some students are beginning to view learning within a consumerist perspective. However, Ramsden argued in 2008 that the evidence for students becoming more 'demanding consumers' (p.3) was in fact very limited. More recently Williams (2013) asserted that some students actively reject that positioning. Importantly, both scholars suggest the possibility of a 'self-fulfilling prophecy' occurring in which students are treated as consumers because the institution/academics believe that students expect this treatment. I observed support for this view when I conducted a seminar at the university in which I discussed some findings from my study. I noted in my reflective diary:

> [Audience member] commented that academics/institutions could be in danger of creating a self-fulfilling prophecy. Three [audience members] said they were not sure if students do really see themselves as consumers but the literature and many academics believe that they do (8/5/12, p.112).

Ramsden (2008, p.3) remarked that 'universities…do not simply react to student expectations. They shape them as well'. If, as I have argued, universities are increasingly adopting a consumerist ethos, this ethos then filters down to, or is imposed on, both

academics *and* students. As my interviewees suggest, they feel that they are being made more responsible for student learning, which at the very least questions their belief that developing student autonomy and self-responsibility is viewed by the institution as central to their teaching role. Some academics further believe that students share a similar ethos. Yet, one interviewee confirmed his/her sense that a self-fulfilling prophecy may be occurring:

> It's almost as if the university has this mindset that it thinks that students have a mindset and therefore it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy because they offer it so the students go 'alright I'll have that' (Y6).

Almost half the sample perceived students to regard themselves as consumers. However, it may be that the institutional ethos, which is itself created by government policy agendas and pressures, is shaping consumerist expectations in students rather than students themselves initially wanting to take that position. Again, there is support in the data for this view. At least seven academics claimed that it would be possible to manage students' expectations *away* from the consumerist model when they first arrive at the university. However, as section 4.3 identified, the ethos some interviewees believe the university conveys to the students via its emphasis, for example, on academics concerning themselves mainly with student satisfaction undermines this approach and instead supports students' identification as consumers. Consequently, an inescapable situation may be transpiring for academics. I have represented this situation visually in the diagram below (Figure 1) which expands on Jones' (2007) argument that academics are challenged from above by managerial pressures and below by student demands. The diagram shows a self-fulfilling consumerism cycle occurring. Consumerist forces are experienced across the sector from government policy, which impact on the ethos of the university (promoted by management). These forces then have a downward pressure on the academics working within it. The consumerist ethos (from the university and government) also shapes students' expectations, which places an upward pressure on academics to respond to those expectations. As student expectations are shaped more to a consumer-type role, they reinforce the institutional perception that students do want to be treated in this way. A self-fulfilling prophecy cycle has occurred then in that the institutional ethos has shaped students' expectations which then confirm the institutional ethos. The cycle then continues as the confirmed ethos further shapes expectations, which confirms again the institutional ethos and so on and so on. The academic is in the middle of this cycle with the prophecy creating and then reinforcing both the downward pressure on them from the institution and management, and the upward pressure from the students (shaped) expectations. Tellingly, interviewees did not suggest through their comments that this cycle could be broken. Instead, remarks such as those by

X3, Y6 and Y3 in section 4.3 indicate concern that it would get worse as fees and consumerist policy directives increase. Of course, further research is needed to investigate whether students do regard themselves more as consumers. If not, it would suggest a self-fulfilling prophecy has come to pass. Academics' sentiments in this study clearly indicate that either situation presents the same challenges to their teaching and learning values.

4.6 Chapter summary

This chapter began by discussing the values that interviewees identified as guiding them within their teaching role. These values were related to Fink's (2003) taxonomy of significant learning, with most academics confirming their desire to help students develop passion for the subject, and independence and autonomy within the learning process. The chapter then demonstrated the apparent undermining of these values by the institution, management, and students. Specifically, many academics perceive an institutional ethos that promotes consumerist expectations in students. Furthermore, nearly half the sample believe that students do now see themselves as consumers. The data presented here also demonstrate that HE's increasingly consumerist framework is leading to some academics feeling specific pressures coming down on them from management levels. These pressures shift the responsibility for learning from the students as academics increasingly feel required to ensure progression rates are met and pass targets achieved. Additionally, as academics feel management increasingly blames them for low NSS scores, some feel a greater onus to make sure students have a 'good' university experience which is defined largely in terms of keeping them happy. Academics' teaching values are increasingly undermined as many perceive the overplaying of their own role in the learning process and the downplaying of the student role. Implicit within the data to some extent is a sense of inescapability from this situation. This inescapability is particularly evoked through some academics' perceptions that the situation will only get worse. What then can be said about the implications arising for the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL)?

4.7 Implications for SoTL

Chapter two (section 2.2.4) highlighted scholars' wide agreement that SoTL is a process ultimately engaged in to improve student learning (Shulman, 2000; Cottrell and Jones, 2003; Huber and Hutchings, 2005; McKinney, 2006; Kreber, 2007). Consequently, one of SoTL's aims is to 'foster significant, long lasting learning for all students' (Hutchings and Shulman, 1999). If Fink's (2003) taxonomy is taken as a guide to what constitutes significant learning,

this chapter shows that fostering this type of learning is a value held to differing degrees by all academics interviewed. However, the data also demonstrate the very real threat that consumerism presents to this value by shifting the responsibility for learning from the student to academics. An initial implication for SoTL then is that one of its central aims is seriously undermined, if not potentially obscured, by the current consumerist framework of higher education.

The research also suggests a much greater implication for the future of SoTL. The data presented in this chapter indicate that values such as significant learning are becoming increasingly out of place in a consumerist vision of HE. Institutions may instead focus on good pass rates and good NSS scores to increase their marketing potential to future customers. I showed in sections 4.4 and 4.4.1 this situation could result in reduced teaching quality by lowering standards or inflating grades, and by focusing on giving students a 'good' experience that will keep them 'happy'. This situation appears to give little incentive for pedagogical innovation or experimentation. If academics have greater responsibility for achievement than students, where is the need to innovate to enhance students learning? If students are required less to 'play their part' (Robbins Report, 1963, p.181), why experiment with approaches that will make them more active learners? The research and innovation that is so central to the SoTL process (see chapter two, sections 2.2.3 and 2.2.4) seems to become irrelevant in an environment where students take less responsibility in the learning process.

Additionally, as well as a lack of incentive to innovate in teaching, there may be very good reasons for avoiding it altogether. Chapter two (section 2.4.7) highlighted 'safe' teaching may be encouraged as students gain more evaluative power. Section 4.4.1 showed the perceived importance of the NSS and the blame that many academics feel management increasingly attributes to them for low NSS scores. If I add the job insecurity felt within the sector at the time of interviewing (see chapter three, section 3.5.2) to this situation, it becomes apparent why 'safe' teaching, i.e. sticking with what works in teaching practices and not trying anything new, may indeed be the favoured option. Many interviewees feel personally blamed for low NSS scores; therefore feel pressured, as X4 indicated, to keep students happy to ensure they will in turn give the course a good score. This good score then has positive benefits for league table positions, but also means academics do not stand out as underperforming or failing to keep their students satisfied. With redundancies and course closures being an ever present threat across the sector, standing out in this way could be very risky. Indeed, chapter two (section 2.4.7) highlighted that innovation and experimentation do not guarantee immediate success. Yet it is evident from their sense of

being blamed that many academics in this study believe immediate success in their teaching *is* required. As such, they may feel very hesitant to turn their classroom into a site of inquiry (Huber and Hutchings, 2005); maintaining one instead that keeps their students 'happy'. The interplay then of consumerism and insecurity within the sector appears an effective deterrent to engagement with the SoTL process. Consequently, I would suggest that its future within the current HE context begins to look very uncertain.

4.8 Moving on…

This chapter has focused on the extent to which academics' teaching and learning values appear challenged and/or undermined by consumerist pressures interviewees perceive from the institution, management and students. The pressures from management in particular have featured heavily in interviewees' perceptions here. Consequently, the following chapter further examines interviewees' perceptions of management, focusing particularly on their views of their relationship with management. The data in chapter five suggest that some academics not only feel pressurised and blamed by management but actively exploited by management too. The various ways in which interviewees perceive management to exploit them, or in which the data suggest this exploitation is occurring, further constrain academics' abilities to adhere to their teaching and learning values. More significantly, this exploitation appears to have serious potential consequences for the professionalism of the academic role.

Figure 1. The self-fulfilling consumerism cycle
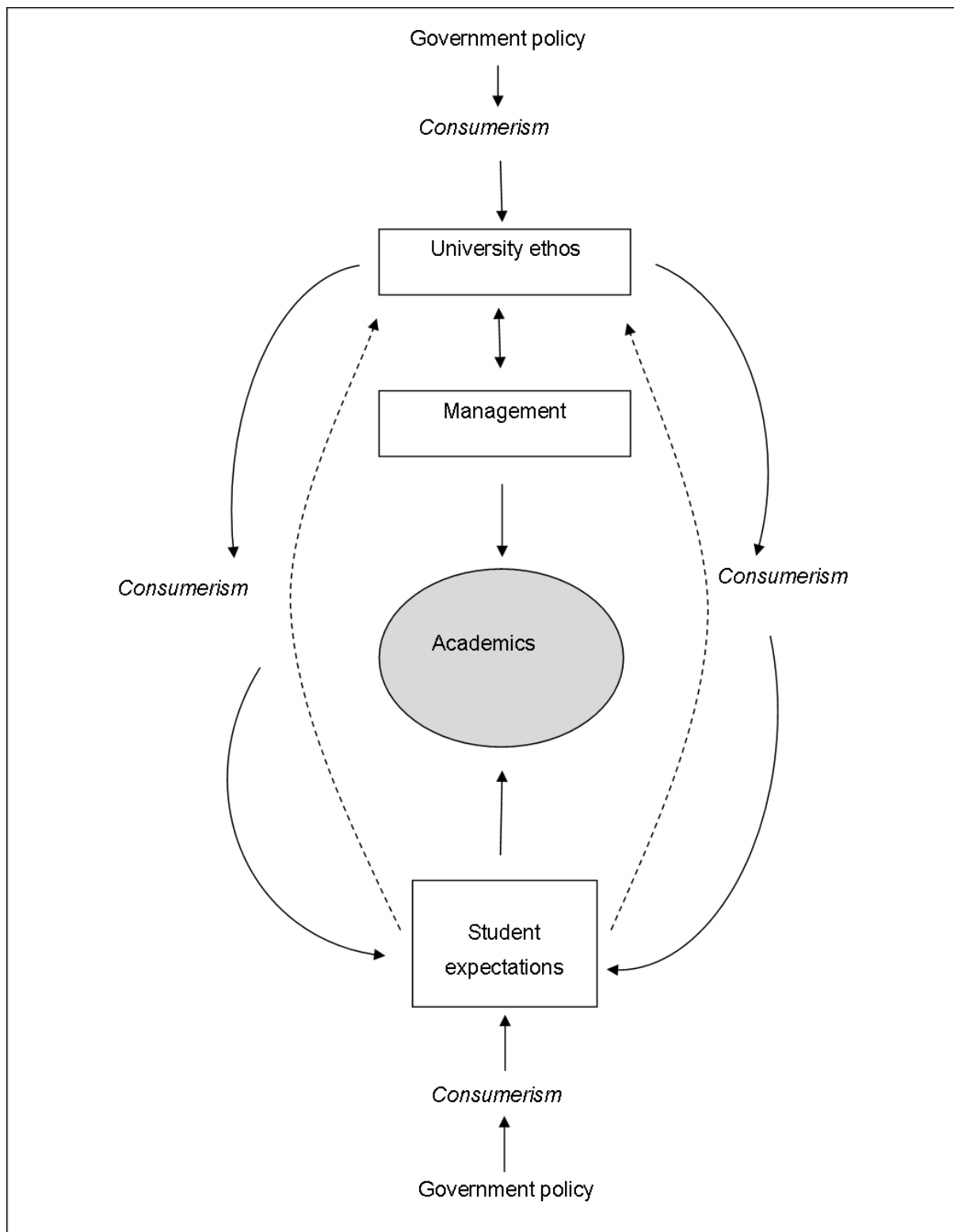
Chapter 5: Academic exploitation

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed interviewees' expressed teaching and learning values and examined how these values appear challenged and/or undermined by various consumerist pressures academics perceive from the institution, management and students. The data suggest many interviewees feel particularly pressured by management and perceive management to specifically blame academics for low pass rates or any problems arising within the 'student experience' as a whole. This chapter builds on the data presented in chapter four by examining more closely interviewees' perceptions of their relationship with management. This closer examination is necessary as it appears that the way in which interviewees perceive the academic/management relationship has considerable impact on how academics view their status as teaching professionals within the current higher education (HE) context.

Specifically, this chapter explores the various ways in which interviewees' perceptions of their working environment convey a sense of their exploitation. I argue initially that there is an explicit sense from some academics that university management is exploiting what they describe as their inner dedication to their teaching role. I then demonstrate that an implicit sense of exploitation is more prevalent amongst interviewees and manifests itself through an apparent distrust of management, which current insecurities within the wider HE climate may exacerbate. The chapter moves on to consider the 'top-down', imposition management style that most interviewees believe is dominant, and suggests this style may reinforce academics' implicit and explicit perceptions of exploitation by management. At the very least it appears to confirm to some that their professional opinions are less sought and little valued by management. After examining the academic/management relationship more closely, the final part of the chapter considers how academic exploitation may also be occurring through workload intensification. All interviewees confirmed they were experiencing this intensification, particularly due to increasing administrative responsibilities. The data suggest these responsibilities are increasing to such an extent that some no longer view teaching as their core activity. Many interviewees also report regularly working evenings and weekends to cope with their workload demands. Over half of the sample indicated suffering stress as a result of this workload intensification, suggesting that exploitation of academics' health and well-being may also be occurring. However, some academics appear to frame the problem of their heavy workloads within an individualistic discourse. I highlight

that this individualistic framing is a characteristic of neo-liberal thinking, and further suggest that it may prevent them from recognising the extent to which they believe that management exploits them in part through the workloads they are given. Finally, considering the prevalence of explicit or implicit perceptions of exploitation, I question whether the inner dedication expressed by so many interviewees is a key reason why academics can keep working within such a negatively perceived environment.

At the end of the chapter I identify two potential implications for the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) from the data presented: firstly, perceived overwhelming workloads may deter academics from engaging in SoTL work, or simply leave them no extra time to do so; and secondly, insecurity created by the wider HE climate and academics' distrust of management may make academics less willing to innovate with their teaching practices for fear of looking like a bad employee if their activities are not immediately successful.

5.2 Exploitation of inner dedication

Chapter two (section 2.4.4) referred to Beck and Young's (2005, p.184) argument that academics have suffered an 'assault on their professionalism' through the undermining of their identities. They cited Basil Bernstein's work about scholars' 'inner dedication' (p.184) to knowledge being eroded by external forces such as marketisation and the audit culture. Beck and Young (2005, p.185) argued that this inner dedication is 'central to traditional conceptions of both the scholar and the professional'. Many interviewees' comments in this study evoked the concept of 'inner dedication' and its centrality to their work as professionals. Instead of referring to knowledge though, the academics here conveyed an overwhelming sense of dedication to their students that emerged from their values and identity as HE teachers. Whilst Beck and Young (2005, p.184) focused on inner dedication in relation to the 'humane relationship' that academics have with knowledge generally, the data I gained demonstrate that the concept also applies to the vocational stance that some academics take to their work as teachers:

> I'm very vocational about what I do, vocational in the nursing sense…because it's to do with my own personal values (Y3).

'Vocational' is used by Y3 in the sense of HE teaching being a calling. Weber's thoughts on science as a vocation, as an '*inward* calling' (Weber, n.d., p.5, italics in original)[47] may be useful to the discussion here. For Weber, this calling related to having inner devotion to one's task in which one serves their work and *only* their work. Likening it to a 'strange intoxication' (ibid), Weber argued that if 'you have no calling for science...you should do something else. For nothing is worthy of man [*sic*] as man unless he can pursue it with passionate devotion' (ibid). Whilst only Y3 used the term 'vocational' to describe his/her stance to his/her work, an inner devotion to the task of HE teaching was alluded to by over a third of interviewees, particularly as they spoke about their dedication to students:

> [My commitment to the students] is paramount and they...deserve and will get [the best] from us, from all of us (Y4).

> I would be there to listen to the students and help the students whether I had time set aside for it or not (U2).

However, two interviewees believed that management knows about this inner dedication and takes steps to exploit it. X1 most powerfully illustrated this belief:

> ...the university is constantly going on about student satisfaction and the student experience but then they're [management] cutting us [the school] to the bone [making staff redundant] and it is almost taking advantage. It's like nurses, you can put upon a nurse as much as you want, they'll still turn up for work because they care and I think we're pretty much the same.
> *[KD] Every academic I have spoken to, no matter what's been going on, has had that attitude of being there for the students...*
> Yes that's what we do and somebody upstairs understands that and they know full well that we won't just say 'well sod it, I ain't doing that' because students will suffer, not the bosses, not the infrastructure, it's the students and we're here for them (X1).

X1's sense of exploitation appears to come from the university cutting his/her school 'to the bone' staff wise but still expecting remaining staff to keep students satisfied. His/her metaphor of being cut 'to the bone' is interesting here. It conveys a perception of quite a savage process occurring in which any apparently extraneous members of staff have been cut away[48]. His/her positioning of management being 'somebody upstairs' also implies a

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[47] The source referenced here is an online document containing the text of a speech originally delivered by Weber at Munich University in 1918.
[48] According to Dictionary.com (2012a), 'cut to the bone' means in effect that 'everything extraneous has been cut away so that only bone remains'.

power relationship in which management are the most powerful[49].   Management are 'upstairs' and consequently above the academics. X1's sense of exploitation then could be further reinforced by his/her perception that academics are below management and so less powerful. It is also interesting to note that X1 at first describes the university as 'almost' taking advantage, whereas s/he seems fairly sure in his/her last sentence that 'somebody upstairs' *is* taking advantage. This difference in views could be suggestive of two things. It could indicate that s/he has not thought much about these issues before and as such his/her opinions change as s/he vocalises them in the interview. There is some evidence to support this point as comments from at least four participants suggest they had not consciously given a lot of thought to some topics I questioned them on prior to the interview. However, it is possible that others, like X1, have thought about these issues before the interview and perhaps even discussed them to some extent with colleagues. Therefore, the difference in views that is evident in X1's comments could result from interviewees expanding their thoughts as the interview progressed in response to my further questioning or probing for clarification. Either way, the interview process itself might be responsible for these different views. For some participants it could have been a process through which certain opinions developed as they began to talk about them for the first time. It could also have been a process through which interviewees expanded their opinions as they talked about them at length with me. Indeed, data to be presented in section 5.4 regarding perceived workload intensity suggest that time to either think or talk about the issues covered in the interviews to any significant degree during normal working hours may be very difficult for many interviewees to obtain.

A number of factors may reinforce the two interviewees' belief that management are exploiting their inner dedication. Increasingly heavy workloads that begin to erode a work/life balance are one such factor to be discussed in-depth in section 5.4. Another is the apparent re-orienting of administrative work as academics' responsibility.   Seven interviewees believed they are becoming increasingly responsible for 'purely administrative tasks' (Y1), such as data inputting, that administrative staff would previously have carried out. Z2 particularly felt this shift in his/her centralised support department:

> We're having to cover our front desk[50] here, as academics, so we're acting as secretaries (Z2).

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[49] It is interesting to note that X1 has certain managerial responsibilities within his/her particular role. His/her positioning of management here supports my comment in chapter four (section 4.4) that interviewees generally did not distinguish between different management levels but saw management as representing a distinct group of people with managerial responsibilities greater than their own.

[50] 'Front desk' refers to the reception point of Z2's centralised department.

It is significant that many academics across all three faculties and the central department where interviews were conducted perceived an increase of 'purely administrative tasks' (Y1). This point supports findings from other studies that the growing administrative tasks of academics are a sector-wide issue (e.g. Kinman and Jones, 2003; Findlow, 2008; Harland et al., 2010). X3 perceived this situation to be exploitative:

> …our admin team has been reduced considerably…after Christmas [it will have] gone from seven to one.
>
> *[KD] Why do think that's happened?*
>
> Money...it can only be down to money. It's just saving of salaries. And…there is an element of mission creep in that if admin tasks aren't done then we as Course Directors will start doing them, so we will now start putting together all the mark sheets and we will do all the tracking of the course work...we do that.
>
> *[KD] And management know that you will do it?*
>
> Oh yeah…it is classic mission creep. It's not 'ok everybody, we've got to reduce our admin therefore these tasks you will now have to do' and it being explicit, it's kind of you suddenly realise there is no one left, no one available to do these tasks and if they're not done the system will fall down, students will bang on the door, so we do them. So it is very much underhand, they know that a conscientious Course Director will start doing these things because it has to be done (X3).

X3's feeling of exploitation is conveyed in his/her affirmation that 'oh yeah', management knows academics pick up the slack. His/her sense of exploitation may be explicit, but s/he believes how management achieves it is not. S/he perceives management to be acting 'underhand[edly]' by allowing administrative tasks to 'creep' into academics' roles. X3 suggests this underhanded 'creep' is so effective that 'you suddenly realise there is no one left' rather than being aware of the process as it happens. Other interviewees' comments support X3's perception of administration 'creep'. U6, for example, described the 'insidious nature' of administrative systems that 'creep around your own activities'. The 'creep' was so pervasive for Z2 that when I asked about administrative activities s/he had to do, s/he found it difficult to answer:

> Well I suppose I've got used to it now, you just get used to the systems…I don't think about it so much now because it's part of life… I just get on with it really. I don't feel I'm really answering your question (Z2).

U6 and Z2 did not speak of management underhandedness in relation to their administrative activities. Both comments were made when I asked questions about HE's growing bureaucracy. However, they reinforce the administration 'creep' and particularly Z2's comment suggests some academics may integrate these activities into their roles without realising or questioning it. Common also to all four academics' (X1, X3, U6 and Z2) remarks is a sense of there being no alternative to the situation. X1 and X3's comments indicate their sense of exploitation occurring but they do not speak of having agency to challenge it. U6 and Z2's acceptance of the 'creep' suggest that academics just have to 'get on with it' (Z2). Chapter four (section 4.3) also highlighted certain interviewees' (Y3, Y1 and Y5) implicit assumptions that they must accept each situation that comes along. There is growing evidence then that some academics at least seem unable to imagine alternatives (Thorpe, 2008) within their environment.

Chapter three (section 3.5.2) described the insecurity and uncertainty within the HE sector generally at the time of interviewing. Course and department closures were being experienced nationally, resulting in both actual redundancies and continued threats of further job losses. Y6 suspected that this uncertainty strengthens management's ability to exploit at least some academics' inner dedication:

> …I feel an obligation [to go to work when I feel ill]…and…yeah, maybe they [management] do play on that a little bit, and I do feel like sometimes as well that they go 'oh it doesn't matter what we pay them because there are no other jobs so what are they going to do, they're not going to go anywhere' (Y6).

Y6's suspicion that management may 'play…a little bit' on the obligation s/he feels to work reinforces X1 and X3's sense of underhandedness. Y6 also points to a sense of possible financial exploitation as well as vocational.

I did not ask any direct questions in the interviews about management exploitation. The flexibility of my semi-structured interview method meant I could question X3 and Y6 on the topic when their comments reminded me of X1's views. However, I could see in the data many participants alluding to the negative consequences arising when they perceive their relationship with management to be based on exploitation. One particular expressed consequence was an increasing distrust in management. The extent to which this distrust was felt suggests that, even if not explicitly stated, an implicit perception of exploitation may in fact be prevalent amongst the interviewees.

5.2.1 Declining trust in management

At least nine interviewees across the three faculties indicated that their loss of trust in management took many forms. There appeared little faith from these academics that management would take account of the practical implications of new policies or processes on academic staff. This concern ran deeper for some who felt that they had become like a resource to be hired and fired at will:

> Now most definitely there's a tier of management...[that] appear to be lacking in any emotional intelligence…We could be cars on a production line, there's no recognition of us as people, as individuals with families and children and trying to juggle stuff and being ill…we're just a resource to be managed and they'll pick and drop us as they feel free…You get the feeling they'll hire and fire us as [if] they couldn't care less…It is faceless and it is managerial and it creates a lot of distrust (X3).

X3 continues his/her car factory analogy here discussed in chapter four (section 4.3). In this case, it is academics, not students that s/he likens to 'cars on a production line'. Using the analogy here conveys his/her sense of academics as objects and 'resource[s] to be managed'. Some of the university's public facing documents could appear to confirm this perception. One such document that focused on learning and teaching stated that staff who teach are 'our *core resource*' (Document A - italics my emphasis)[51]. This sentence seems offered in the strategy as a positive statement in that it is acknowledging the importance of those who teach and support learning. However, it could be seen to support the reduction of academics to generic members of staff (Sabri, 2010) and reinforce their neo-liberal recasting as 'human capital' (Harland et al., 2010, p.85). Barnett (2011) highlighted the downgrading of academics to human resources whose time must be constantly accounted. Shore and Wright (1999, p.559) had also previously argued that the audit process re-invents academics as 'units of resource whose performance and productivity must constantly be audited so that it can be enhanced'. Both O'Sullivan and Palaskas (2007) and Harland et al. (2010) connected this downgrading, or 're-invention' (Shore and Wright, 1999, p.559), to the essentially dehumanising discourse and practice of neo-liberalism in which people (or workers) become resources to be used as appropriate for the benefit of the academic marketplace. This sense of dehumanisation runs through X3's quote: 'there's no recognition of us as people…we're just a resource to be managed'. X3 appears to distinctly lack trust that management will recognise 'us as people, as individuals'; leading consequently to

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[51] The actual documents are not referenced in the thesis to preserve institutional anonymity. They have been coded to show when quotes or statements came from the same document or from a document already referred to.

his/her 'feeling' that management will 'hire and fire us' at will. Y6 echoed the same 'feeling' that at any time management might say 'there you go, that's you gone'. The context at the time of interviewing may have reinforced these perceptions of their own dehumanisation. As chapter three (section 3.5.2) described, academics were losing their jobs across the sector specifically because they or their courses had been made economically unviable by the reconstitution of HE as a marketplace.

The concern that academics are seen more as units of resource may also help to explain the second area in which some academics' expressed their lack trust and faith in management. Five interviewees, again across the three faculties in which I conducted interviews, perceived an absence of support from management with regard to maintaining their health and well-being. This point was particularly pertinent given the workload stress that many interviewees feel they and their colleagues are under (discussed more in section 5.4). Several interviewees felt management is not concerned to ensure academics take their lunch breaks or entitled annual leave. After admitting s/he had not taken a lunch break for a year, Y3 asked 'who's keeping an eye…on how the staff are doing?' (Y3). Two academics commented that they had filled out stress surveys, but their remarks suggest a lack of faith that this was anything but a tokenistic process. One even observed that management seemed to manipulate the data collected:

> I recently completed a stress survey and I found that quite a frustrating survey because it's just [tick the box] and there's no way [to] pass on information about what is causing the stress levels...And whether anything will happen about it [I don't know]. [The university] did a [staff] satisfaction survey a few years ago…and when the results were published it was skewed. You think 'yeah I can see how you've interpreted that survey'. They [management] must think we're idiots, we all do research in some form or another, we all know how you can skew results and that's what they did…I suppose because it's being published to outsiders (Y1).

Y1's doubt that management will act on any information academics provide in the stress survey conveys his/her lack of trust in management. S/he believes that management 'skewed' the results of a previous survey so as to give a presumably positive public impression of the university. That incident appears to have left Y1 with some hostile feelings towards management: '[t]hey must think we're idiots'. This comment could also indicate Y1 potentially feeling de-professionalised by management if s/he feels treated more as an idiot than an academic with sound research knowledge. X3's use of the production line analogy to describe his/her work environment (see chapter four, section 4.3) suggests s/he too may sense some degree of academic de-professionalisation.

Two interviewees also indicated their lack of trust in management to support them in 'maintaining…and growing' (X2) their standards of work with students.   X1 conveyed particularly strong emotions on this topic:

> [KD] Do you think management has connected having [less] staff [because of redundancies] and losing scores on the [student] satisfaction survey?
>
> Well I don't think it has. No, of course it bloody has, they're not stupid, you know, they're not thick but they're not going to say 'well we understand it's because [of these reasons]', they're waiting for us to say, but we can't say 'it's because [of these reasons]' because they'll say 'well that's the way it is'.
>
> [KD] So it all falls down on you?
>
> Yeah, me and my staff (X1).

Note again X1's changing opinion as s/he begins to answer the question. This change supports my argument above (section 5.2) that the interview may have been a process through which some academics developed or expanded their views as they talked (and thought) about them with me. Perhaps it was only in saying out loud '[w]ell I don't think it has' that X1 realised s/he did not believe that at all and could not continue to give management the benefit of the doubt. The emphatic 'of course it bloody has' suggests s/he may have thought all along that management is aware of the connection, but had not consciously acknowledged it until I directly asked. X1 also reinforces X3 and Y6's sense that management acts in an underhanded manner (see section 5.2 above). '[T]hey're not stupid' suggests s/he believes management understands the situation but is not going to say, or do, anything about it. X1's lack of trust in management then is twofold. Firstly, s/he does not trust that management will acknowledge its role in creating the problem of low satisfaction survey results through its redundancy strategies, and secondly s/he does not trust that it will provide any assistance in resolving it. It is interesting that X1 says 'we can't say' because s/he believes management's response will be 'that's the way it is'. This anticipated response effectively closes down an argument by presenting the situation as fixed and with no possible alternatives. By putting this response into management's mouth, X1 appears to be accepting that 'that's the way it is'. S/he is most definitely angry, but seems to have no response as yet to what s/he believes management will say. This point reiterates my argument above (section 5.2) that some academics may be currently finding it difficult to challenge 'the way it is'.   Further, X1's comments begin to illuminate the importance of exploring wider social processes that may be reflected in interviewees' speech.   Fairclough (1993), a critical discourse analyst, stated that language is a social

process and is both socially and ideologically shaped by relations of power[52]. In X1's comment above it is possible to see the wider process of managerialism and its power over academics being reflected. Chapters seven and eight further explore interviewees' language through a critical discourse perspective.

I have shown thus far that running through X1, X3 and Y6's comments is a belief that management may act in an underhanded manner. Four other interviewees evoked this belief through comments on work or targets that seemed at times to be 'invented' by management:

> I think there is an issue at faculty level that it does feel sometimes that they're inventing stuff for us to do (X4).

U3 recounted a particularly unsettling incident:

> I bumped into [the faculty finance controller] in the canteen [and] he was asking about the distance learning we're doing for the MA [course]…and I said 'it's going quite well, we're going to…review it in January, which is why I'm not really pushed about getting more recruits for the February intake' and he said 'oh, but there are some [recruitment] targets against you, do you realise that?' and I said 'oh, are there?' and then I got a bit uptight because I was saying to my colleagues they [management] invent targets, clearly they invent targets and then they don't tell us (U3).

That U3 feels 'uptight' is easy to understand here. Through a chance encounter in the canteen s/he finds out about recruitment targets for his/her course of which s/he had been completely unaware. S/he clearly feels that management has invented these targets, but his/her sense of being personally judged by them is also apparent: his/her recollection is the finance controller saying the targets are 'against you'. U3's 'I got a bit uptight' suggests s/he may also have felt slightly insecure following this chance encounter. S/he was, after all, suddenly made aware of important information about his/her course only after randomly 'bump[ing] into' the finance controller, and his/her perception was that s/he would be held personally responsible if the targets that management did not communicate previously were not met. It may be worth considering whether it is a management strategy to create these feelings of insecurity. Shore and Wright (1999, p.569) argued that there is an undeclared policy in UK HE to keep systems of accountability 'volatile, slippery and opaque' to, in effect, keep academics on their toes. Similarly, Davies (2005) asserted that worker insecurity, or

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[52] Importantly, he also stressed that language can be socially *shaping* as well as socially shaped.

vulnerability, is essential within neo-liberal regimes. Vulnerability, she argued, is 'central to neo-liberal subjectivity' (p.9) as it works to ensure compliance to 'rules and regulations, which in turn press towards conformity to the group' (p12). Whilst 'uptight', U3 does not speak at any point of challenging management about the 'invent[ed] targets'. One could also draw out from U3's comment that what is perceived to be held 'against you' as a lecturer and academic (i.e. recruitment targets) is related more to managerialist, rather than teaching and learning, criteria. This point supports Naidoo and Jamieson's (2005, p.274) argument that 'first order functions', like teaching, are being de-prioritised with managerial values, like accountability, taking precedence.

Significantly, Allen (2003) found that academics' feelings of insecurity grew when they perceived a lack of openness and communication from senior managers, which culminated in their increasing distrust of those at management levels. U3's lack of trust in management is evident in his/her immediate belief that the course recruitment targets were invented. His/her comments also hint at an erosion of power the academics may be feeling: U3 perceives the targets to be held 'against' him/her and does not appear to believe there is much s/he can do about it. X4 also conveys this belief in a lack of academics' power:

> [There is a] gap between the faculty level management and then actually us on the ground in the school, the teaching staff actually having to deliver what's *been done to us* (X4, italics my emphasis).

X4's last words give a particular version of reality in which academics have virtually no power in their relationship with management: they just have to accept and 'deliver' whatever management has 'done to us'. Those three words convey the agency s/he believes management has. S/he does not say 'teaching staff [have] to deliver what management has decided' or 'what management wants', it's what management has actively 'done' to them. There is implicit negativity about academics' relationship with management in X4's comment here in the same way that there is implicit hostility within some of X1's comments presented above: 'of course it bloody has, they're not stupid'; 'somebody upstairs understands that'. This hostility may arise to some extent from the interviewees' sense that they have little power in their relationship with management.

The data here suggest that an implicit perception of management exploitation is prevalent among many interviewees and emerges through their lack of trust in management. Their distrust centres particularly on their perception of management's lack of consideration of sustaining a supportive, open and honest relationship with them. Other research indicates

that academics' perceptions of distrust and exploitation have grown as managerialism in HE has increased (e.g. Fowler, 2005; Churchman and King, 2009; Kenny, 2009). It is to academics' experiences of managerialism that the chapter now turns.

5.3 Managerialism

Chapter two (section 2.3.3) described the growth of managerialist approaches, such as New Public Management, and neo-liberal values within the HE sector. It also demonstrated that both agendas sat firmly within the government's strategy from the 1980s onwards to take increasing centralised control of the sector (section 2.4.2). Allen (2003) emphasised a distinction between management values in HE and managerialism. Management values, he stated, are not intrinsically adverse to academic endeavours. They can in fact support such endeavours through, for example, their emphasis on organisation. Managerialism, on the other hand, is a 'particular brand of management' that has been used 'to re-order power within the HEI' (p.86). Scholars agree that this management 'brand' is now prevalent in HE and promotes corporate values over academic ones. Furthermore, it emphasises 'top-down' management, which erodes academic collegiality and autonomy (e.g. Kinman and Jones, 2003; Deem and Brehony, 2005; Thorpe, 2008; Churchman and King, 2009). Allen's (2003) distinction between management values and managerialism is supported in the literature more widely. Barnett (2011, p.48) claimed that management values, such as organisation, regulation and increased bureaucratic procedures/systems, are 'rational device[s]' to use to cope with 'the extraordinary complexity that is the contemporary university'. Similarly, Hussey and Smith (2010, p.52) described an institution's understandable adoption of these values to carry out such diverse tasks as:

> …hiring and firing staff, complying with health and safety and employment legislation, the need to manage land, buildings and other assets, negotiate with trade unions and so forth…

They stated that academics are experts in their disciplines rather than in organisational matters and so to some degree 'managerial assistance is an inevitable and beneficial part of any institution' (p.19/20). At least five interviewees noted the benefits of this type of assistance, which ranged from tightening up accountability and academic procedures to assigning specific responsibilities to particular roles. Y3, for example, stated:

> We have the luxury of an Associate Dean in this faculty taking care of student experience and a lot has happened [recently], [s/he's] able to look at things from that bird's eye view whereas we can't, we just don't have time (Y3).

Y3 suggests that greater progress has recently been made in the faculty regarding 'student experience' because of the specific appointment of an Associate Dean to 'tak[e] care' of it. Whilst Y3 views this development as positive, it could also be indicative of the ways in which universities are creating extra levels of management and thus becoming more 'top-heavy'. Indeed, 13 interviewees commented that the management structure has become much heavier than previously, and most perceived it to be more managerialist. X4 most explicitly described his/her feeling of working in a more monitored and controlled environment:

> We now have got a more rigid management structure than we had before and I think that the nature of HE has changed and the nature of the school has changed and I think we've become more business-like. I imagine…that being a lecturer in the 60s and 70s must have been quite good fun in that you had a lot more flexibility and we're quite rigidly controlled, although the specific content of what we do with the students in class is obviously up to us but then [we have to meet] the requirements of learning outcomes on the module [and] targets for each individual module…We're more rigidly controlled I think (X4).

X4's perception that his/her school has become more 'business-like' was echoed by other interviewees' feelings about the institutions' general focus. U4, for example, felt that the university prioritised 'budgets and finances' over addressing educational issues such as why certain groups of students may be underperforming. Similarly, Y4 perceived the university's managerial approach to put 'scale and money' before quality of the teaching and learning experience. X4's repetition of 'rigid/rigidly' also indicates how strongly s/he has felt 'the nature of HE' and his/her school become more 'controlled'. Note his/her emphasis that 'we' are more 'rigidly controlled'. His/her comments about the requirements academics have to meet suggest that s/he is referring to academics with this 'we' rather than his/her school. Kolsaker (2008) argued that managerialism reduces academic freedom by imposing a more structured, monitored and managed regime. X4 evokes a loss of freedom through his/her emphasis on being controlled and his/her belief that previous lecturers may have had more flexibility. S/he does indicate some autonomy over the 'specific content' of what is taught, but at the same time s/he appears to feel constrained by 'performative' (Ball, 2003, p.221) measures such as meeting targets and the requirements of learning outcomes.

X4's use of the word 'controlled' is interesting. S/he does not say 'we are more rigidly *managed*', instead s/he says 'controlled' and by doing so conveys a much stronger image of being constrained and even dominated. No other interviewee specifically said they felt controlled, but there are allusions to it running through some comments. Z1, for example, evoked a sense of feeling constrained by 'strictures' management bring in on length of

tutorial times. These strictures seemed to make Z1 feel that management has reduced his/her flexibility to manage his/her own workload and respond to students on a human level:

> …you can't be in a tutorial looking at your clock [because] there is a [student with a] human need there (Z1).

Z1's comment suggests that this is an example of managerialism at work because management's 'strictures' on tutorial lengths appear prioritised over students whose problems may need longer time to resolve than that allocated by management. It is perhaps also possible to view this managerialist example in relation to Ball's (2003) comments about the pivotal role calculation plays in neo-liberalism. Ball (2003, p.217) argued that 'neo-liberal professionals' are encouraged in such a regime to 'live an existence of calculation'. He stated that 'teachers are represented and encouraged to think about themselves as individuals who calculate about themselves, "add value" to themselves, [and] improve their productivity…' (p.217). Yet it is management's calculations that seem evident in Z1's comment above regarding, potentially, the most 'effective' way to use academics' time for tutorials.   However, throughout his/her interview Z1 expressed feelings of being more controlled by this managerialism and its potential calculations, which limited his/her ability to relate to students as s/he saw fit:

> I think…managerialism is something that…stifles human activity…you're bringing what a manager requires way before what might be the best way to relate to a student (Z1).

Ball (2003, p.217) also stated that the re-orienting of teachers as 'neo-liberal professionals' leads to the 're-forming of relationships and subjectivities'. This 're-forming of relationships' is apparent in Z1's quote above.   His/her comment suggests academics' primary relationships are shifting more towards managerialism than to students because 'you're bringing what a manager requires way before' the potential needs of a student. Z1 then again supports Naidoo and Jamieson's (2005, p.274) argument (see chapter two, section 2.3.3) that 'first order functions', like teaching or supporting learning, are being de-prioritised over managerialist needs. Further, the relationships within these 'first order functions' are also potentially de-prioritised, or 'stifle[d]' (Z1), as the focus becomes what managerialism requires.

Like Z1, other interviewees alluded to feeling more controlled by management. These allusions were especially evident in their perceptions of an increasingly imposing 'top-down' management style. This 'top-down' style relates to the particular 'brand' of management

Allen (2003, p.86) referred to that has been used to re-order power within institutions. Eight academics across two of the faculties and the central support department perceived this particular style of management, as the indicative quotes below show:

> I think there's a lot more top-down [management], which it's like no negotiation after that and I think…it de-motivates people more that it's imposed from high above…it's 'that's it, there's no negotiation on that, this is what's going to happen' (Y1).

> There is discussion, there is an exchange of views but at the end of the day it's still 'because daddy says so' (X1).

> …over the last year or so…we're having all of these kind of edicts from on high but there's no forum for discussion or argument or disagreement with anything that's being pushed down from on high (X2).

> My feeling is that there are people higher up who make decisions and then we get told to enact them lower down…these decisions are taken by people far beyond and you just have to deal with them when they come along…[like the requirement for academics to type all feedback to students], one of the emails [from the Dean] basically said 'it's been decided, I will not have any more discussion about this, the end' (Y6).

The 'top-down' style is not only explicitly stated by Y1, but evoked by the others through the spatial positioning I noted X1 using in section 5.2. Decisions come 'from *high* above' (Y1) or are 'pushed down from on *high*' (X2) by 'people *higher* up' (Y6). Evident also is their sense of management imposing its will: 'no negotiation' (Y1), 'no forum for discussion' (X2), 'we get told to enact them' (Y6). This imposition style of management could be further evidence of management de-professionalising academics. Y1, X2 and Y6 all believe that management does not want their professional views or to engage in any kind of discussion with academics. Consequently, their perception is that academics 'just have to deal with [the decisions] when they come along' (Y6). X1 believes that discussion may occur, 'but at the end of the day it's still 'because daddy says so''. This choice of words is interesting. They evoke a sense of X1 feeling patronised or infantilised by the 'top-down' style. Y1 conveyed a similar sense through his/her comment that management 'must think we're idiots' (see section 5.2.1). S/he underscored this feeling when s/he commented on the relationship s/he believed management *should* have with academics:

> You can't ignore the people that are working for you, they're the ones who deliver it for you so you've got to get them on your side [and] working with you and therefore that means

consulting and having them working with you and not [just telling them to do something]. We are grown-ups; treat us as grown-ups (Y1).

His/her last sentence sounds like an entreaty to management, and suggests that s/he does not currently feel treated as a 'grown up'. A power relationship is again implied here. Y1, X2 and Y6 reinforce management as more powerful than academics by positioning it as 'on high' and therefore above the level of the academics. X1 and Y1 further emphasise this power by evoking an adult/child relationship between management and academics. For some academics then a consequence of a 'top-down' management style may be a deepening sense of academic de-professionalisation through their perceived infantilisation and their belief that their professional views are not wanted, and hence not valued. Further, comments such as 'edicts…pushed down' (X2) and 'you just have to deal with them' (Y6) suggest that this style of management could also reinforce some interviewees' feelings of exploitation.

Interestingly, specific comments about a 'top-down' management style were not made by interviewees in the faculty coded as faculty U. Yet many interviewees here did still perceive managerialism to be increasing and several pointed to greater pressures they feel coming from management to, for example, treat students more like customers (U7) and focus on targets rather than address educational problems (U4). U6 also commented on the 'strangulation effect' managerialism creates, particularly for new initiatives, and s/he highlighted that this effect results in academics sensing 'a lack of [their own] power'. That those in faculty U did not specifically refer to 'top-down' management may indicate that faculties in the same university can operate and exercise their power in somewhat different ways. If this is the case, it may be that faculty U is exercising its own power to a slightly lesser extent than the other two, so creating a difference in the extent to which some academics perceive a 'top-down' style of management.

5.4 Workload intensification

This section will explore the intensification of academic workloads and identify the exploitative effects that may occur as a consequence.

5.4.1 The increase in administrative responsibilities

Chapter two (sections 2.3.2 and 2.3.3) noted the heavier workloads academics are experiencing due to increasing student numbers without rising staff levels, and the amount of

administrative paperwork required by a managerialist culture. The research literature from the millennium onwards demonstrates that academic workloads in England have intensified with teaching loads becoming increasingly heavier and administrative tasks growing significantly (Kinman and Jones, 2003; Lueddeke, 2003; Fowler, 2005; Canaan, 2008; Gill, 2009; Cheng, 2010). All my interviewees confirmed this intensification, with 16 noting specifically an increase in their administrative work. This increase was particularly felt by Course Directors like X4:

> I'm Course Director for [degree] and the amount of admin…that comes with it, it's a huge amount and just dealing with applications and chasing up enquiries and trying to get people to sign up for the next year of the programme plus reports, responses to external examiners, creating marketing information, making sure the website is up to date, tweaking and changing the programme to make sure it stays up to date, it's a huge job. So the admin side of things is a big task and not really what I expected…and there's a lot of the admin side of things in terms of the marking and input of marks, there's a lot of admin type activities that you do that takes a long time (X4).

X4 repeats 'admin' four times in this quote, which may indicate the impact s/he feels it is having on his/her role. S/he believes the added administration is a 'huge job' and this appears to be confirmed by the eight or nine different administrative tasks s/he describes as now his/her responsibility. Other Course Directors interviewed, like X3, support X4's perceptions:

> I would say a lot of what I do is just old fashioned admin (X3).

Y4 noted that academics should expect certain increases in administrative tasks as they advance into roles like Course or Program Director. However, s/he also felt that many academics now have to take on more tasks previously done by administrative staff, evoking X3's belief in academics being exploited by the 'creep' of administration (section 5.2). Two interviewees indicated significant implications of growing administrative workloads on their perceptions of their role:

> A purely administrative task [to do with marking] that was being done by administration has now come back to academics to arrange….At certain times when I'm dealing with hundreds of scripts [to be marked] and I've got to do this particular activity [I think] that I'm a highly paid administrator…There are lots of administrative things that we are asked to do and really that's not a good use of my time and my expertise (Y1).

> Admin always…tends to be the priority…other things do get elbowed out, there's no doubt
> about that, which is a shame…
>
> *[KD] How do you cope with that when the core of your activity is teaching?*
>
> But I don't see it as that anymore. I actually don't see it as that [teaching as core
> activity]…you do think 'hang on, I'm spending most of my time putting people into seminar
> groups and that kind of thing', that's not the best use of academics' time (Y3).

Both Y1 and Y3 feel that their administrative tasks have grown to such an extent that they
are now more closely aligned to administrators than academics. Y3 in particular does not
see teaching as his/her core role anymore. X3 and Y6 also hinted at a similar re-alignment
occurring. After stating that 'a lot of what I do is…old fashioned admin', I asked X3:

> *[KD] Does it demotivate you at all?*
>
> It does because I would have stayed in [previous job] if I'd wanted to be an administrator, if I'd
> wanted to sit doing spread sheets and reports I would have stayed in [previous job] and
> earned three times what I earn now. But I moved from [previous job] because I wanted a
> more fulfilling career, which I found in teaching but it is being eroded (X3).

X3's comment that s/he would have stayed in his/her previous job 'if I'd wanted to be an
administrator' indicates his/her feeling that administration has overtaken his/her teaching
role. Alluding to inner dedication, s/he also states it was not money that drew him/her to
teaching, but the desire for a 'more fulfilling career'. Yet, s/he indicates that this fulfilment is
being eroded by having 'to sit doing spread sheets and reports'. Y6 evoked in a slightly
different way the sense of his/her core role changing:

> …I've got a baby but I don't stick her in nursery four days a week and feel guilty about that to
> then sit at home and just do admin the whole time. I would like to spend some of that time
> doing academic things. Because god knows I do feel guilty about sticking her in nursery (Y6).

Y6 firstly supports here the growth of administrative tasks that many academics reported:
s/he puts his/her daughter in a nursery to then 'sit at home and just do admin the whole
time'. Secondly, Y6 suggests that s/he might feel less guilty about this situation if s/he was
spending at least some of that time doing 'academic things', i.e. his/her core role. Both Y6
and X3 support then Y1 and Y3's views that administration is taking over their core activities,
and further highlight some potentially negative effects such as lack of career fulfilment and
increased guilt over childcare choices. These interviewees perceptions support scholars'
arguments that managerialism and its ensuing bureaucracy re-orders priorities in HE with
'second order functions' such as accounting for and reporting on professional activity, taking

priority over 'first order functions', such as teaching or supporting student learning (Naidoo and Jamieson, 2005).

Note also Y1 and Y3's comments that administrative tasks are not the best use of academics' time (Y3) or expertise (Y1). X3 made a similar remark:

> It's just admin, and I'm not saying…that that's beneath an academic, it's just not the right use of our skills and knowledge and abilities (X3).

These comments point again to the potential de-professionalisation of academics occurring. Section 5.3 presented many interviewees' perceptions that management does not seek or value their professional views, and there is a sense from these academics here that their role is being devalued through their time, effort and 'expertise' being re-directed to 'purely administrative task[s]' (Y1). Six interviewees believed increasing administrative work negatively affects their teaching role by reducing time available for teaching preparation. These beliefs are captured most powerfully in the following quotes:

> Undoubtedly if you talk to any colleague, anyone who's involved in course management, you're having to go in [to teaching sessions] with less preparation than you'd done before (Y3).

> We…teach but we don't have the time really to prepare material and put the care and love into the material and our teaching…Quite typically now it will be the day before and we're putting a lecture together (X3).

> I'm the only person that teaches [a course with around 85 students and administration of it is very difficult, which means] it's hard trying to find…time to re-invigorate [your teaching] and I think any academic who says 'I never use the same PowerPoint from year to year' is lying, absolutely, because some weeks you just have to…I've been there at two in the morning with a lecture on at 10[am] going through the PowerPoint trying to get new examples in there (U4).

These quotes suggest that managerialism's re-prioritising of second order functions, like 'spread sheets and reports' (X3), over first order functions, like teaching, could have a double undermining effect on some academics' sense of professionalism. Firstly, they feel their academic expertise is devalued by the role becoming more aligned to administration. Then, through time and effort directed more towards administrative tasks, they have less time to prepare for their core activity of teaching, which may result in their sense of their own professionalism being challenged even further. Y3 confirmed that entering a teaching

session having done less preparation than previously 'doesn't feel good, it doesn't feel that that's what it's about'. S/he further stated:

> In terms of professionalism I think it really does impact on what you think you're doing, why you think you're there (Y3).

Chapter two (section 2.3.3) discussed the growth of administration through managerialism. The data here suggest that this administration may not just add to and re-prioritise academics' workloads, but encourage some to perceive devaluing of the academic role.

5.4.2 Overburdening workloads

All interviewees indicated that as well as administrative tasks increasing, their teaching loads have also got heavier. This intensification appeared to be worse in one particular faculty where I conducted interviews (coded as faculty X). The academics here indicated that at least one or two rounds of redundancies had recently occurred in the faculty prior to my interviews and had reduced lecturing staff numbers. One school in particular had lost over 20% of its full time teaching staff:

> We were a school of about 40 staff 18 months ago and with voluntary severance nine full time staff went, so down to 31 (X3).

Teaching loads in this faculty were described as 'horrendous' (X1) and 'ridiculous' (X2). Chapter three (section 3.5.2) highlighted that redundancies were occurring in institutions across the sector during the year in which I conducted the interviews due to course closures and/or financial pressures brought about in preparation for the decreased public funding in 2012/2013. Interviewees in faculty X highlighted that the workloads of redundant staff, if their courses were still running, fell to remaining academics who were already trying to cope with their own heavy teaching loads. To make matters worse, the interviewees were also anticipating the reduction of funding for visiting tutors (VTs), which, for X1 appeared to be creating the prospect of an impossible situation:

> …my colleagues now have to start succession planning [planning to cover the VTs work]. But we can't give the teaching to anybody else on the team because they're up to their necks anyway (X1).

Two points can be drawn out here. Firstly, less lecturing staff means more work for those left, but those left believe that their current teaching loads are overburdened. Secondly, administrative work is increasing and adding extra responsibilities at the same time that teaching loads are getting heavier and staff numbers are reducing, or at least not rising. The research literature shows that the intensification of work has been an ongoing problem for academics for a number of years (Kinman and Jones, 2003; Lueddeke, 2003; Fowler, 2005; Gill, 2009; Cheng, 2010). However, the experience in faculty X suggests that the particular context created by the White Paper (BIS, 2011), i.e. less public funding resulting in course closures and job losses, may exacerbate the situation to almost impossible proportions.

All 19 interviewees believed workloads have become overwhelmingly heavy. The most prominent strategy academics used to cope with this situation appeared to be working evenings and weekends, thereby far exceeding their weekly contracted hours. This strategy seems common in other universities too, according to Kinman and Jones (2003) and Gill (2009), as academic workloads increase sector-wide. Over a quarter of my interviewees further demonstrated the impact of these extended working hours on their personal life:

> I want to do research and I need to find time to do my marking and all this preparation for these different modules and so I work in the evenings instead. So they get more than their 35 hours a week out of me, I can safely say…and it has an impact beyond just like me on a personal level, of course it affects my [spouse] and it affects when I can see my daughter and it affects the amount of time we have available to see friends and family (Y6).

> …you do [research] at home, there is no other time to do it. And that's quite difficult if you have a young family, it's very very difficult to do that (X3).

> *[KD] And is there enough time to do all your teaching prep?*
> No not really. I wake up very early and I stay at work late…I make time, so I steal time from my family who are getting older now (Y5).

These three quotes distinctly portray the impact that working long hours can have on academics' family life. It is interesting that Y5 describes his/her actions as 'steal[ing] time' from his/her family. This phrase conveys the image of him/her taking something that s/he should not, and the word 'steal' particularly suggests that whatever s/he is taking is precious. Implicit within the quotes is also a sense that they have no other choice but to extend their working hours. Y5 did go on to say 'what can one do?', but it remained simply a rhetorical question. The sense of no other choice is perhaps understandable given the uncertainties and insecurity of the HE context at the time I conducted the interviews. With job losses a

very real threat, it is unlikely that academics would want to stand out as being unable to manage their increasingly heavy workloads. It further evokes the sense of acceptance conveyed by other interviewees, as I discussed in section 5.2. They must, it seems, assume these long working hours because 'that's the way it is' (Y1), which suggests again some academics at least may not yet be able to imagine any possible alternatives.

The ramifications of long working hours continue beyond the erosion of personal or family time. Five interviewees indicated that their workloads were damaging both their physical and emotional health. At least three academics at the time of interviewing had been suffering from persistent viruses, coughs and colds that they put down to continual work pressure and the lack of opportunity to rest and recuperate. U7's continued ill health made him/her question his/her future within the academic profession:

> It rather affects my way of thinking about my profession in terms of do I have a work/life balance and for how long can I survive in the profession like this because a lot of people are working like this all the time and they develop health problems and all kinds of different diseases and they don't have a life any more, especially when you reach the professor level because there are so many more duties that you have, and being a lecturer you start thinking about how long will this go on like this or how long will I be able to do that (U7).

This quote is particularly interesting given that U7 is young (early 30s) and, at the time of interviewing, only in his/her second year of full time lecturing. Even at this early stage in his/her career s/he is thinking about how long s/he can physically 'survive' within the profession. The use of this word seems to indicate the strength of the problem U7 feels s/he is facing. It is not how long s/he can cope or deal with it but how long s/he can 'survive'. This word suggests that at some point s/he thinks the situation may break him/her and cause, at the very least, some kind of metaphorical death. Again, the implication running throughout the quote is that things will not change; workloads will not get easier and in fact will only get worse as his/her career advances towards professorship.

U7 further highlighted how his/her perceived heavy workload takes a toll on his/her emotional health too:

> I put more work in in between [my normal working hours]. That can result in me working till 11pm for weeks and weeks or working all weekends…but it's just the stress level, that is sometimes terrible because you just work all the time without any breaks but you feel like you have to (U7).

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U7 indicates that feeling 'terrible' stress is a consequence of working long hours in the week and then into the weekend too. Yet, his/her last words again evoke that sense that there is no other option: 'you feel like you have to'. Who or what makes him/her feel like s/he has to work these long hours? His/her heavy workload may make him/her feel s/he has to work in this way to stay on top of it, but could management also play a role in creating these feelings? I interviewed the Head of U7's school (U5) and s/he did not believe that heavy workloads were a significant issue for academics in their particular school. S/he did not perceive a growth in academics' administrative responsibilities and felt that allowing academics to work at home one day per week gave sufficient time for them to 'pursue research and find more time for teaching preparation' (U5). U5's views clearly do not correlate to the workload pressures perceived by U7. When I asked U5's views about academics who did feel their administrative work had increased and consequently reduced time for teaching preparation and research, s/he responded that academics should 'knuckle down and get on with it'. This response could suggest that some managers may not fully understand the extent of the workload pressures many academics feel they are experiencing. U5's response could also be indicative of a management strategy to suggest academics are the cause of their workload problems, e.g. by not 'knuckl[ing] down and get[ting] on with it'. This point is explored in the following section.

Like U7, X1 also described adverse effects on his/her emotional health:

> I used to spring out of bed in the morning [thinking] 'I've got this class [today]…fantastic'…But now some mornings…I think 'I don't want to do this today'…I'm astonished that given the pressures and the increased workload that we're all under [that more staff] aren't off sick with stress and anxiety, honestly, really, the number of times I've thought 'you know, I could just do a week off' and say 'stuff it I'm going down the pub…I'm going to go ride my motorbike, just stay in bed or whatever, I just want to get all of this crap out of my head'. But you don't, you soldier on. Of course that way depression lies (X1).

U7 and X1 highlight the double impact of overburdening workloads on both their physical *and* emotional health. Ilies et al. (2010) found similar results in their study of academics' workload in a United States university.   They concluded that high daily workloads led to negative psychological and physiological reactions, which most commonly included stress, anxiety, fatigue and high blood pressure. Like U7 and X1, eight other interviewees reported feeling stress due particularly to workload demands. Four of these also referred to colleagues they knew who had 'cracked under stress' (Y3). In all, 10 interviewees indicated they had suffered or were suffering from stress in response largely to demanding workloads.

It appears then that the workload intensification occurring across the HE sector in England may not just be exploitative of academics' time, but of their health and well-being too.

Significantly, only one interviewee conveyed any explicit sense of being exploited by workload:

> I work three days and [colleagues] say 'are you going to increase your hours?' No, because I'm paid to work three days and then my Mondays and Fridays…are the days that I can catch up with [admin and teaching prep] so I don't end up [working] weekends as well. But I am only paid for three days and they go 'oh you might as well get paid for four days then'. But if I got paid for four days then they'd [management] increase my workload again (X2).

X2 works three days a week but s/he identifies here that s/he has to do at least two days overtime to keep up with the demands of his/her 'three day' workload. His/her belief is that management will not acknowledge the two extra days s/he has to work and that any increase in payment would only occur if his/her workload is increased as well. This increase would result in his/her two unpaid days being extended into weekends. Yet whilst s/he recognises that s/he is doing more work than s/he is paid for and that this situation will not change, his/her lack of comments about challenging the situation suggests s/he is willing to maintain the status quo.   Again there is the sense that there is no alternative. This belief in no alternative could help to explain why most interviewees did not link workload intensification to exploitation. They see no other choice so they do indeed just 'get on with it' (U5). Furthermore, the extent of their workloads could actually inhibit them from spending any length of time contemplating this possibly exploitative situation.

5.4.3 Individualising the problem of heavy workloads

Another reason may also be suggested for why most interviewees did not link workload intensification to exploitation. I noted in the previous section U5's comment that academics should 'knuckle down and get on' with their work. U5 indicates with this comment a belief that academics may be creating to some extent their own workload pressures; they are obviously not 'knuckl[ing] down' enough. It is significant that no interviewee made any remark about management needing to deal with workload problems. Instead, many interviewees appeared to put the onus on themselves to cope with their demanding work. Over a third of academics framed their workload pressures within an individualistic discourse, which suggests their internalisation of either the pressures as their own fault or as

a problem they need to manage. The three quotes below highlight the different ways that this individual framing is occurring:

> I can't manage it [workload], I just seem incapable of managing it…I have a really mixed bag of stuff, I have a [project] that I supervise but I don't devote enough time for it…I fail at dedicating the right amount of time for that. And then the teaching stuff seems to vary each week in how much it takes of my time… it's bad [self] management, it's really bad management…I'm bad at managing it and every time I sit and do something like write a to do list it just never gets done (U3).

> …you [think]…'I should be doing research, it's important for my career and it's important that I produce papers' but ear marking that time to say '[I am] at home doing research today, please don't disturb [me]' is quite difficult. And then you can see emails coming in and 'I'll just write a quick response to this' and I think it's being stricter with your own time and being more willing to say 'no, today I'm having a research day because I really want to get stuck into this paper I've been trying to write for three years' (X4).

> I can just about do the amount of work I need to do in a week but then I've had all this marking which is like another hundred things, so it's been like 'how am I going to do a hundred extra things on top of what I've got to do already?' because I can barely fit in what I've got to do at the moment (Y6).

In the first quote U3 castigates him/herself seven times for being 'bad at managing' his/her workload. These castigations are quite strong: s/he 'fails' at dedicating sufficient time for tasks and is 'incapable' of managing his/her time well. S/he clearly seems to have taken sole blame and responsibility for his/her workload problems. Similarly, X4's quote suggests an internalisation of the problem being down to how academics themselves manage their work. Echoing U3's belief in bad self-management, s/he suggests that more work could be achieved if you are 'stricter with your own time' and more willing to say no to colleagues. Two other interviewees also framed their workload issues in similar ways to U3 and X4. In the final quote, Y6 alludes to feeling overwhelmed by extra marking to do. Yet, s/he appears to ask only to him/herself 'how am I going to do [it]?', indicating that s/he sees it only as his/her problem. Again, two other interviewees suggest that questions of 'how do you manage it?' (Z1) are not asked to anyone but themselves. Gill (2009) found a similar trend occurring amongst her academic colleagues. She argued that anxieties about intensive workloads were 'privatised' and understood to reflect upon 'the value and worth of the

individual' rather than the values of the institution making such 'intolerable demands'[53]. The academics discussed here appear to have 'privatised' their problems, which is supported by none referring to management in relation to this issue. Indeed, only X2 referred to management when talking about heavy workloads, but his/her comment suggests that management may reinforce academics' 'privatised' anxieties:

> [At] our school meeting this morning…there was this big list of issues and issues and issues and issues and issues and the one at the very bottom was staff workload. And it was literally at the bottom [and we were] saying 'what are you [management] doing about it…we can't do all these things that you've said, how are you going to prioritise?' And they said 'well that's up to you to do it, you're a professional, you deal with it' (X2).

X2's comment highlights two important points. Firstly, according to X2, staff workload was placed 'at the very bottom' of the long list of issues to be discussed in the school meeting. For X2, placing it 'literally at the bottom' seems to convey management's lack of concern for it as an issue to be dealt with. Secondly, in response to academics' queries about work overload, X2 reports management directing the problem back to the academics and telling them to 'deal with it'. The implication in management's reported response is that if the academics cannot 'deal' with their workloads then they are not professionals. Gill's (2009) findings are evoked here. If this was management's response, then management appear to deflect any questions about the values of the institution in promoting overburdening workloads by questioning the professional worth of the individual academics if they are not able to cope.

The interviewees' individualised framing of their workload problems here and management's reported deflection of the issue back to academics can also be seen as a neo-liberal characteristic. Davies (2005, p.9) argued that a 'major shift in neo-liberal discourse is towards survival being an individual responsibility'. As such, neo-liberal systems are marked by 'heightened individualism' (Davies and Bansel, 2007, p.251). Davies (2005, p.9) further asserted that this individualism is 'a crucial element of the neo-liberal order' because it ensures the removal of dependence on society. However, if one was to put this assertion another way, this 'major shift' (Davies, 2005, p.9) also ensures the removal of society's responsibilities towards individuals. It is this removal of responsibility from management to individual academics that appears to be occurring within X2's comment above. I have shown previously in chapter four (section 4.4.1) many interviewees perceiving management

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[53] Ball (2003) had previously highlighted school teachers using a similar strategy. He observed that much reflection on the increasing performativity elements of teachers' day to day practices 'is internalised. These things become matters of self-doubt and personal anxiety rather than public debate' (p.220).

to increasingly blame academics for aspects of the 'student experience' they feel they cannot control. This perception could also be viewed in light of the neo-liberal shifting of responsibility from the social (in this case management) to individuals. The shift towards individual responsibility played out in this section is through heavy workloads or workload management seen to be the responsibility of individual academics. Reiterating U5, heavy workloads may be the result of academics not 'knuckl[ing] down' enough rather than that they have increasing administrative activities and potentially less staff members, with consequently less time for teaching preparation and/or research work. Importantly, as the quotes presented show, many interviewees, apart from X2, appear to have internalised this shift towards 'heightened individualism' (Davies and Bansel, 2007, p.251).

This internalisation may not only help to ensure academics do not connect workload intensification to exploitation, but may also support the continuation of such workload burdens. Gill (2009) claimed that academics' overwhelming workloads are an 'open secret' within the sector and universities are 'actively refusing any 'reality check'' on their sustainability. The data from my study support the intensification of academics' work and suggest its sustainability may be very questionable. At least some interviewees are already indicating serious ramifications of heavy workloads on their personal lives, and physical and emotional well-being. However, the individualistic discourse within which some are framing their experiences may help to maintain the 'open secret'. If academics believe they are the main ones who have caused, and can solve, their workload problems, they may be less likely to challenge university management about them.

5.5 Working within exploitation

I have argued throughout the chapter so far that many interviewees' perceptions convey both an explicit and implicit sense of their exploitation by management. I also suggest that intense workloads may be further evidence of this exploitation, and potentially damaging to academics' health and well-being. An obvious question to ask is why academics stay in such a situation that appears so exploitative. I suggest in the section above that certain neo-liberal characteristics may have been internalised by some, thus possibly limiting the extent to which they perceive exploitation occurring. The HE context at the time of interviewing could also play a significant role in interviewees remaining in potentially exploitative situations. Section 3.5.2 described the uncertainty and insecurity occurring across the sector as institutions prepared for the new funding arrangements, which for many universities resulted in course closures and job losses. It would seem unsurprising if this

situation did not make academics prefer to stay in their current jobs rather than risk leaving and not being able to find another. However, it could appear that academics' inner dedication may also be a factor in helping them to at least work within, if not against, an exploitative environment. In section 5.2 I identified that many interviewees evoked the concept of 'inner dedication' to their work and the sense of HE teaching being their vocation or 'calling'. Importantly, whilst I argue that their perceptions suggest management may be exploiting this sense of vocationalism, no interviewee said that their inner dedication had been eroded. Certainly chapter four indicated that interviewees' values about teaching appear harder for them to maintain and are increasingly undermined in a variety of ways, but academics did not say that their own dedication had lessened. Instead, the 'calling' to work with students and do the best for them was still evident in many comments, such as:

> *[KD] What are your students like here?*
> My students are amazing…and I take a very proprietal [*sic*] air there (Y4).

> *[KD] What are the values you have that guide you in your role?*
> …I like to think of it as the broader picture as well as supporting [students] in being able to be successful. A lot of the students who enter this course are from non-traditional routes…many of them are first [from their families] into higher education…so that means we're able to support them in gaining confidence, in having the idea that they can achieve and that they are going to have skills that they are going to take into the workplace and in their own families to raise their aspirations as well (Y1).

> What I'm interested in in HE [is]…looking [at] how we can facilitate students through HE, particularly in this university because 90% of the students I teach and interact with [have not always] got the academic tools. They've got the academic skill but that needs honing and building and I don't think you can do that by just walking into a lecture theatre and being an expert and telling them things and then walking away…I know that works for some students but [it] didn't really work for me and I don't think it works for a large proportion of students in particular sorts of universities, particularly new universities (U4).

These three quotes quite distinctly capture the inner dedication interviewees evoked about their work as HE professionals. Y4 conveys the sense of commitment s/he feels towards students by positioning them as *his/her* students. This 'proprietal air' suggests that s/he feels responsible for them, or their learning experience at least, which is supported by his/her comment that students 'deserve and will get [the best] from us' (see section 5.2). Y1 identifies the 'broader' impact s/he believes s/he and his/her colleagues can have on a students' life. As well as helping students complete the degree, Y1 sees his/her role as

developing the confidence of students, particularly those from 'non-traditional routes', to raise not only their aspirations but potentially their families' aspirations too. U4 also speaks of wanting to change students experiences for the better, particularly their higher education experiences. Like Y1, s/he recognises the background of many students at this university may not be the traditionally 'academic' one and as such, s/he wants to explore approaches that may 'work' more effectively in building academic skills for the 'large proportion of students in…new universities'.

All of these interviewees show a dedication to their role that goes beyond just teaching their subject. Whilst they may not have put it in terms of their 'inner dedication', this concept seems to be echoed in their words through either their passionate commitment to students or the desire to change students' lives or educational experiences for the better. Significantly, as I have identified at various points in this chapter, Y1, Y4 and U4 perceived many negative elements of their current working experiences, including increasing managerialism that prioritises 'budgets and finances' (U4) over educational issues and potentially de-professionalises academics. Yet these perceptions, whilst certainly appearing to detrimentally impact on morale and beliefs about management's regard for academics as professionals, did not seem to detract from the inner dedication, or 'devotion' (Weber, n.d., p.5), they had to HE teaching. Therefore, whilst interviewees may perceive either an explicit or implicit sense of management exploiting their inner dedication, it may be this dedication that, for the time being at least, sustains them to some degree and maintains their ability to keep working within such a negatively perceived environment. Whilst interviewees' values regarding teaching and learning can be undermined (as chapter four demonstrated), inner dedication is perhaps the part of academics that can certainly be put under strain by management and/or agendas within HE, but not eroded - or at least, not yet. There are links here to Foucault's (1980) arguments regarding power relationships. I have highlighted at various points in the chapter the lack of power evoked in many interviewees' comments about their relationships with management (see sections 5.2, 5.2.1 and 5.3). Indeed, it is unlikely interviewees could perceive management to be exploiting them if they felt they had equal power within the management/academic relationship. Yet, Foucault (1980, p.142) argued that 'there are no relations of power without resistances', which effectively means that, like hegemony (discussed in chapters seven and eight), power is never exercised completely; there are always possibilities for resistance. Whilst it may be stretching the data too far to suggest that the apparent inability of management's perceived exploitation to detract from academics' inner dedication is a sign of academic *resistance*, it could at least be seen as an indicator of the limitations to this seeming exploitation. Kolsaker (2008, p.517) noted Foucault's assertion that individuals retain agency to utilise strategies of power 'to

manage and affect their constitution as subjects'. Though some interviewees might currently feel constituted as subjects exploited by management, they still seem able to 'manage and affect' this constitution in such a way as to, at least for the moment, maintain their inner dedication.

5.6 Chapter summary

This chapter has shown the various ways in which and degrees to which interviewees believe they are being exploited. It demonstrated that there is both an explicit and implicit sense from some academics of management exploiting their inner dedication, which has significant negative consequences for the academic/management relationship. Many interviewees appear to distrust management; with some believing management will act in an underhand manner towards them. A top-down, imposing style of management appears to reinforce implicit and explicit perceptions of exploitation and also a sense of academic de-professionalisation. I suggest within the chapter that workload intensification may also be exploitative of academics' health and well-being, but the individualistic discourse some academics use may prevent them from seeing it as such. Finally, I proposed that academics' inner dedication, despite some interviewees perceiving that management exploit it, may be a central factor in sustaining their abilities to work within such a negatively perceived environment.

5.7 Implications for SoTL

Chapter two (section 2.2.5) highlighted that SoTL proponents consider SoTL to be an essential part of the professional academic role and consequently engaging with it should be an aspect of everyday practice. They acknowledge that time is needed to participate in SoTL but argue (as section 2.3 identified) that it should be viewed as a ceaseless process. I argued in chapter two (section 2.3.5) that the SoTL literature does not sufficiently account for the constraining effect of increasingly heavy workloads[54], and this argument is supported by the data presented in this chapter. All academics in my study feel their workloads are expanding significantly, and particularly including more administrative activities. As a result, many report persistently working evenings and weekends to maintain a grip on their regular workload demands. Critics have already noted the detrimental effects of overburdening workloads on academics' time and energy for teaching preparation and student support

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[54] This literature includes Huber and Hutchings (2005), Prosser (2008), Hutchings et al. (2011) and Shulman (2011).

(Coffield, 2008; Findlow; 2008; Fitzmaurice, 2010). If these activities are being constrained, then the outlook for SoTL appears inevitably bleak too. Would academics who are struggling simply to do their teaching preparation feel they have the time and capacity to approach their practice from the critical, investigative and reflective stance that SoTL requires? Both Lueddeke (2003) and McKinney (2006) argued that work overload is a significant barrier to SoTL engagement. I would further argue that the negative psychological effects of intense, seemingly exploitative workloads, such as stress and anxiety, could effectively deter academics from engaging in a new kind of activity. Though Shulman (2000) would like SoTL to be part of everyday practice, there is evidence that it is not yet part of many academics' practice at all (Kreber, 2002; Nicholls, 2004; McKinney and Chick, 2010). Consequently, for those who feel they are 'up to their necks' (X3) already with work, it would seem unlikely that they would they choose to add to their stress levels by doing new SoTL work.

SoTL scholars report that innovating with teaching practices and activities is central to the SoTL process (e.g. Kreber, 2002; Hutchings et al., 2011). However, this view needs to be juxtaposed with comments like those from Y6 and U3 (in sections 5.2 and 5.2.1) which convey a certain fear of standing out or looking like a bad employee to management, particularly at a time of such insecurity within the sector. Other data suggest academics' lack of trust in management, which I argue is a consequence of the exploitative basis of their relationship, compounds and reinforces these feelings of fear and insecurity. Is it likely then that within this type of environment academics would feel comfortable in exploring and innovating with their teaching practices? According to Findlow (2008) the answer would be no. In her study, academics' perceptions of insecurity within their working environment inhibited innovation because they were reluctant to work on anything deemed risky or potentially career damaging. I noted Hannan et al.'s (1999) observations (chapter two, section 2.4.7) that innovations in teaching practices may not always be immediately successful[55]. For the academics in my study, if they distrust management and believe they could be made redundant at a moment's notice (as X3 and Y6 do) it would seem, like Findlow's (2008) participants, that they would not want to risk the consequences of an unsuccessful teaching innovation. Instead, playing it safe would probably seem the most sensible option. Insecurity then, both in regard to job safety and the expected support of management, may provide a substantial obstacle to one of SoTL's central elements.

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[55] Haigh (2010) also discussed examples of SoTL in which some new ideas or practices did not work.

It is apparent then that the potential implications for SoTL from the evidence presented in this chapter are two-fold. Academics' overwhelming workloads may leave little extra time, effort or energy available to engage in it, and the insecurity of both the wider HE environment and academic/management relationships could reduce the likelihood that academics will innovate and try out new things in their teaching practices.

5.8 Moving on…

This chapter has identified various ways in which academic professionalism appears diminished, or at the very least threatened, either by management or the environment academics are working within. Some interviewees perceive management explicitly diminishes their status as teaching professionals by not seeking or valuing their professional opinions to any large extent. Others feel their status as professional academics eroding with the concomitant rise in their administrative responsibilities, which increasingly direct their time, effort and energy away from their teaching and learning activities. These findings are significant given that one of SoTL's central aims is to advance the teaching profession. Due to this significance, the following chapter continues the focus on academic/teaching professionalism. Specifically, it will explore whether interviewees perceive they are being de-professionalised in the current HE environment and by dominant HE agendas. It will further consider the extent to which the employability agenda may *re*-professionalise academics and question if this re-professionalisation could also be de-professionalisation in another guise.

Chapter 6: Academic de-/re-professionalisation

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter explored interviewees' perceptions of the management/academic relationship and observed the overwhelming workload pressures all interviewees reported experiencing. I argued in that chapter that academics either explicitly perceive or their comments suggest that they are being exploited both by management and their overburdening workloads. The data also indicated that this exploitation has potentially negative consequences for academic professionalism and academics' views of their status as academic or teaching professionals within their institution. This chapter builds on the data presented in chapter five by examining more explicitly interviewees' views about their professional status in the current higher education (HE) context and considering the impact of agendas like consumerism and employability on both teaching and academic professionalism.

In 2003 Ball argued that school teachers in England were being de-professionalised and re-professionalised through taking on new roles and the requirements of performativity. In this chapter I examine the extent to which this argument may also apply to the HE teachers in my study. I begin by looking at a few interviewees' explicit sense of the de-professionalisation of their academic role. I then explore the greater perception within the sample of the erosion of academic professionalism. Whilst the majority did not explicitly perceive de-professionalisation, their comments suggest academic professionalism is reducing in two ways: through the erosion of their professional judgement and being put in second place behind students. Interviewees' perceptions suggest this second place positioning is reinforced to academics overtly through management emails and tacitly through the allocation of office space. The chapter then moves on to explore whether re-professionalisation may also be occurring through the employability agenda. Specifically, the data indicate that this agenda could be re-professionalising academics as teachers for employment purposes, which I argue may have significant implications for their academic professionalism. Many interviewees also expressed an almost unquestioning support for this agenda, which I suggest inhibits their abilities to see the limitations and/or tensions within it. Further, most interviewees displayed a considerable lack of criticality about the role of universities in developing students' employability skills. Consequently, I argue they do not sufficiently recognise the dangers the agenda poses, such as utilitarian teaching or

instrumentalising higher level thinking skills. It is because of these dangers that I suggest re-professionalisation could be de-professionalisation in another guise.

At the end of the chapter I identify two potential implications for the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL). Firstly, its aim to advance the practice and profession of HE teaching is difficult to achieve if academics are being de-professionalised, or at the very least their professionalism eroded. Secondly, utilitarian teaching, which is teaching linked mainly to meeting employer needs, potentially implies a reduction in both the intellectual rigour of teaching at HE level and the need to research into teaching practices. If academics are re-professionalised to deliverers of employment training, the necessity for researching teaching and learning would seem likely to reduce. Thus, the aims of SoTL, and its place within the academic role, may be negatively impacted by academic de/re-professionalisation.

6.2 De-professionalisation

In the previous chapter I questioned numerous times whether certain interviewees' comments could imply the occurrence of academic de-professionalisation. These questions arose particularly in response to various academics feeling infantilised by a 'top-down', imposition management style and their academic expertise undermined by increasing administrative responsibilities. I also highlighted in the previous chapter, Beck and Young's (2005, p.184) argument that academics are experiencing an 'assault on their professionalism' through, for example, marketisation, imposition of an 'audit culture', and requirements to meet externally imposed performance criteria. Archer (2008b, p.386) confirmed that these 'new times' in HE are, at the very least, 'disrupting notions of [academic] professionalism'. Three interviewees did overtly perceive de-professionalisation to be occurring to some extent:

> …professionalism in the sense of being an academic, yes undoubtedly, that's utterly under attack…because you're having to produce all the statistics [about graduate employment rates] [and] may be we will have to in the future package [the course] as a product (Y3).

> One of the real advantages of academia was always the fact that you got a sense of being an independent practitioner, [you'd be] given work to do and you [managed it and did] it yourself, but this is being eroded… it's much more like working in a call centre here than working in the hallowed halls of a university (X3).

> ...yes I think there is a de-professionalisation...I think as much as anything it's about our place within the...management structure and that lack of engagement. At one time I was on various committees...and I felt 'yes I'm having some sort of impact here'. Now those have all gone and...I've got no input I feel into any decision-making that might be there (Y1).

All three quotes convey a different sense in which the interviewees perceive de-professionalisation to be occurring. Y3 is clear that academic professionalism is 'utterly under attack', particularly from government's employability and consumerist agendas currently shaping HE. Y3's comments here refer to fears s/he expressed earlier in the interview that academics may increasingly be held responsible for their students getting a job once graduated, thereby making HE teaching have a more instrumental orientation. S/he also perceived an increasing emphasis on 'selling' education as a product to be used in the graduate jobs market, which s/he believed may shift his/her role to 'training people towards exams all the time' (Y3). From a different perspective, X3 alludes to an erosion of academic independence and autonomy. S/he suggests the role is now 'more like working in a call centre'. In previous comments X3 uses production line analogies when giving his/her perceptions of academia today (see chapter four, section 4.3 and chapter five, section 5.2.1). I suggested this analogy implies his/her sense of a reduction in the academic role, and this implication seems to continue within the call centre reference here. Sprigg et al. (2003, p.1) affirmed that call centre jobs are generally 'considered to be 'low-quality' and heavily routinised forms of work'. Typically, managers give staff scripts to work from and deviation is not always encouraged. Likening academic work to this scripted, routinised type of work effectively emphasises X3's sense of eroded independence and self-management. In contrast again, Y1's sense of de-professionalisation appears to come from the loss of previous input s/he had into 'decision-making' processes. Chapter five (section 5.3) described many interviewees perceiving a 'top-down' management style that does not appear to seek or concomitantly value their opinions. I suggested in that chapter that these perceptions could deepen some academics beliefs' in their de-professionalisation and Y1's quote here indicates this may be true.

These three academics obviously constitute a minority of the interview sample. Yet comments from at least nine others evoke a sense amongst interviewees of their eroding academic professionalism. This sense was particularly conveyed in comments alluding to academics' professional judgement and their hierarchical place in relation to students.

6.2.1 The erosion of professional judgement

Y1's quote above conveys his/her explicit sense of the erosion of his/her professional input into the key workings of the university. The strength of this sense led him/her to conclude that 'the academic voice has gone really, or paid lip service to'. I identified in the previous chapter that many interviewees feel management no longer includes them to any significant degree in decision making processes and perceive an imposition style of management rather than a collegial one. However, not referred to in that chapter were the views of three interviewees (Y4, Y5 and Y6) in one particular school regarding a recent management mandate that all feedback to students should be typed rather than handwritten. These views provide a good example of how some academics appear to be experiencing the erosion of their professional judgement. All three interviewees indicated that management made the decision about typed feedback after students' commented on the National Student Survey (NSS) that some lecturers' handwriting can be hard to read. The interviewees understood the need to help students as much as possible and it is not my intention here to debate the rights or wrongs of typed feedback. The point to note is that all felt it to be a decision management imposed on them rather than one that they could contribute to, as Y6 illustrates:

> And then the [feedback] thing, one of the emails [from the Dean] basically said 'it's been decided, I will not have any more discussion about this, the end' (Y6).

Significantly, the three interviewees' opinions were that the strategy could lower feedback quality rather than enhance it. Y4 explained:

> …how [is someone with 300 students] supposed to type individual feedback to every single student?...I actually think the quality of the feedback is going to go down because people are going to have to be very instrumental in the way they actually give that feedback and they're going to be giving generic comments and a sort of tick list of comments because I don't know how else they are going to do it (Y4).

Concerning these academics particularly were the large marking loads they can have, the amount of time it may take to type feedback and the restrictions the decision places on where and when they can mark work, for example, only when they are sitting by a computer. Over a third of the interview sample stated that marking is a significant part of their workload. The professional judgement of these three interviewees is that some academics may adopt instrumental approaches to cope with their marking loads at the same time as satisfying

management's demand, which could reduce feedback quality. The evident irony then is that these academics feel management's imposed initiative to enhance the feedback process for students could actually have the effect of diminishing it beyond even academics' current feedback practices. There is evidence in the data of other interviewees becoming more instrumental in their work due to heavy workload pressures. I quoted U4, for example, in chapter five (section 5.4) highlighting the challenges of finding time 'to re-invigorate' teaching: 'I've been there at two in the morning with a lecture on at 10[am] going through [last year's] PowerPoint trying to get new examples in there' (U4). Instead of being able to 're-invigorate' the whole teaching session, U4 focuses more instrumentally on updating the previous examples used. X2 also commented on marking loads impacting on chosen assessment strategies:

> [We're] being really strategic with the assessments that we set…because every piece of assessment needs to be marked and feedback returned to students within 20 days of handing it in…We're doing lots of presentations this year with first years…so they're all marked then and there (X2).

X2 admits to being 'strategic with…assessments' to reduce the marking pressure caused by the 20 day turnaround policy. Presentations appear to be chosen because they can be marked 'then and there' rather than that they provide pedagogical benefits. Other researchers have similarly found academics adopting instrumental teaching or assessment strategies rather than ones more pedagogically sound as a way to cope with their workload demands (e.g. Jones, 2007). The typed feedback example related here suggests that some academics may feel forced into adopting these instrumental approaches if management does not appear to seek or value their professional judgements, i.e. imposes decisions from 'on high' rather than negotiates them. A further implication is that once these approaches are adopted, academics may no longer be working to the professional standards they would set for themselves. If this is the case, it seems impossible to say that de-professionalisation, for these academics at least, is not occurring. Kolsaker (2008) argued that for a group to have professional status, the group itself must control its professional practice. The typed feedback example suggests that this control is not in place for some academics.

Two interviewees also felt that their professional judgement is ignored in favour of what the institution believes students want. Still referring to the typed feedback decision, Y4 said:

> …it's come from the students and we are responding to it, but do we always have to respond to do exactly what somebody else wants? (Y4).

Similarly, Y1 stated:

> [The student experience] shouldn't just be student driven, it's not consumer driven…[yes we need] to meet the needs of students but is there not a view that we know what students need to know and we are the people in the field who know what is out there, that we can guide students to? (Y1).

It is interesting that Y4 and Y1's quotes both end on rhetorical questions. These questions suggest that the interviewees feel there are currently no other answers than 'yes, we must respond to what somebody else wants' and 'no, there is not a view that academics know what students need'.

Y1's comment also implies that consumerism may be driving, to some extent, the erosion of academics' professional judgement. Buckton (2008, p.12) argued that within a growing consumerist agenda, most students believe it acceptable to question those educating them and are more comfortable than previous cohorts in asserting their 'consumer rights'. X3 perceived this growing assertiveness:

> …if [students] don't get what they want [from one lecturer] they'll go to the next [lecturers] door and knock on that …equally you get students who fail [and] will take every strategy they can in order to appeal against the fail because I think they feel they've paid their money, they ought to get the qualification…the customer wants something in return for their money and a fail isn't enough and if they don't get what they want from a lecturer they will keep going until they get what they want (X3).

I demonstrated in chapter four (section 4.3) that many interviewees believe the university's ethos is one that promotes students positioned as consumers. Academics' professional judgements would seem in danger of being downplayed in this type of environment if students choose to assert their 'consumer rights'. An incident related by one academic underscores this potential danger:

> Last semester I taught [a module]…and the module description clearly says that this is about feminism and some students signed up for it not being aware of…that…They went by the name of the module…but didn't [read] the module description and they were then surprised why [it was] about feminism and [did] not for example include gay theories. But the thing is that would've been a different module. So suggestions were made as to what we should teach and how we should teach it and what should be included and what should not. Now for

me it was clear that the module description is there…we follow that...The suggestions made by the students were good but they just did not relate to this module, that would have been a different module, someone would have had to draw up something else. We couldn't do that as we were teaching it because the module already existed in that particular form…So we had some rather heated discussions about this and…it was just difficult in that situation having students who didn't really know what that module would be about because they did not do…their part of the work because they should have done some research before signing up for it and then complaining about the content and trying to modify it. It was not very easy to navigate between those different positions because we still had to teach the module as it was because any changes would have been minor modifications that we just couldn't make as we went but at the same time we had students who were not very happy in the module (U7).

U7's experience here seems to be of some students asserting their 'consumer rights' by saying what they want to study in the module instead of what the academic has planned. It appears more than an example of student feedback to the academic as throughout U7's relation, the power seems largely to be on the side of the complaining students. U7 highlights that the students did not 'do…their part of the work' and read the module guide, but it does not seem that s/he is able to use this as an effective response to the students. Instead, 'heated discussions' are entered into about changes that could possibly be made in order, it would seem, to keep the students 'happy'. The university processes may have stopped any changes being immediately made but U7's professional role and judgement appear weakened, particularly as s/he seems to take a defensive note throughout the quote by repeatedly justifying (either to me as the interviewer or him/herself) why changes were not made. At least twice s/he repeats that either the students' suggestions would require a new module drawn up or that changes could not be made once teaching had begun. S/he seems unable to rest on his/her professional judgement that the module was clearly described and covered topics relevant to that description.

This particular incident appears to confirm X3's belief that some students will now more confidently try to 'get what they want'. More importantly, it supports Y1 and Y4's sense that students 'wants' (Y4) are gaining prominence over academics' professional judgements.

6.2.2 The academic in second place

The preceding section highlighted some interviewees' growing sense that their professional judgement is being eroded by increasingly having to respond to student demands. Nearly a third of interviewees' comments suggested also perceptions of a hierarchical environment in

which the student comes first with the academic in second place. For some, this hierarchy was explicitly felt:

> There is no concern of the academic experience whatsoever, student experience is everything…the student satisfaction survey [is] everything, in fact in the old days in car factories you would have a big banner saying 'quality is important'…there is a virtual sign in the office saying 'student satisfaction is paramount', everything…academic satisfaction is nowhere on the radar at all, it's seen as of no consequence (X3).

X3's comment here links to Sabri's (2010) argument that HE policy's sole focus on the 'student experience' effectively obscures the 'academic experience' from view (see chapter two, section 2.4.4). X3 believes that the 'academic experience' is not only obscured but given no credence whatsoever: it is 'nowhere on the radar'. I discussed the car factory analogy in chapter four (section 4.3) and how it suggests X3 feels reduced to a production line worker producing satisfied graduates. The analogy also evokes a potential consequence of consumerism in HE: customer satisfaction becoming 'paramount'. The extent to which X3 believes this situation has occurred is indicated by him/her repeating three times that 'student experience' is 'everything'. Academic experience or satisfaction is 'seen as of no consequence' because the students' wants and needs must come first to keep them satisfied customers. Both Y3 and U7 supported X3's perceptions:

> [It's become a saying] that student experience is everything, but I think there will be more and more of that [as tuition fees increase] (Y3).

> [T]he marketing strategy at the moment is that the student comes first…it's a slogan that appears in so many e-mails especially now before next year when the [tuition] fees will be really high…We get e-mails from the highest authorities saying the student comes first and the implication is that staff come second (U7).

Y3 and U7's comments both suggest that higher tuition fees are central to establishing a hierarchy in which 'the student comes first' (U7). Significantly, U7 indicates that the university's 'highest authorities' reinforce this hierarchy through email messages sent to academics. S/he further suggests that an implication of this hierarchy is management's lack of concern for academics' work environment:

> …there is an implied hierarchy by statements that say the students come first and… and everyone else comes second [and] it has got implications on several levels. It starts with…office space and heating but it goes on…For example, last winter it was so cold in here

that I was wearing five layers and my fingers were still blue, and I've had so many colds and tonsillitis…And I'm constantly ill and constantly feeling cold but at the same time I'm supposed to be here and serve the students…if I'm not given appropriate conditions I can't do the work in such a way as I'm expected to….[L]ast week…we were told we are not allowed to get small heaters for under the desk…[and you] think…'what now? Am I supposed to be here all healthy and here for the students and fulfil all of my tasks or do you want me to fall ill and be at home?' (U7).

U7 clearly feels the lack of sufficient office heating is evidence of management putting him/her second to students. S/he does not believe s/he is 'given appropriate conditions' to work, yet his/her perception is that management still expects him/her to 'be here and serve the students'. S/he evokes a sense of being abandoned by management when s/he asks 'what now?' Though questioning management, s/he seems to be asking the questions only in his/her own head. It would seem then that s/he has little or no faith that management will care about the questions s/he raises. If this is the case, s/he is another interviewee, like those I discussed in chapter five (section 5.2.1), who has lost trust in management to be concerned about academics' health and well-being.

U7 also refers to implications for office space in his/her quote above. Four academics in two faculties where I conducted interviews remarked on the increasing trend to place academic staff in large open plan offices. Baldry and Barnes (2012, p.243) argued that this trend to move academics out of their own office and study spaces should be taken 'as a visual index of the extent of the current assault on [academic] professionalism' because it makes universities look like call centres (echoing X3's analogy above – section 6.2) rather than scholarly communities. At least one interviewee had similar views:

I think there are kinds of degradation…of the academic role…for example the tendency increasingly to deprive staff of offices and group them in pigpen working environments…it's demonstrably, according to all of the research, bad for the student experience and bad for the staff experience…there's a fine example of [managerialism] - managers get the private offices, academic staff get the pigpens. I think that's disgraceful (U5).

By likening these types of offices to 'pigpen' environments, U5 conveys his/her belief that they are degrading, to an extent, the academic role. Further, s/he perceives it to be a clear managerialist strategy. His/her quote conveys the image of managers herding academics into smaller, confined spaces. X1, on the other hand, believed costs are driving the open plan office trend:

There's 30 odd of us in [a big open plan office]…all the academic staff bundled together in one room…it's cheap building [costs]. [Previously] we had rooms [with] maybe 2, 3, 4 members of staff in…which was nice, you could get on with stuff. There is a benefit to having open plan because you can get more interaction going with course teams on a very ad hoc basis. The downside is if I'm trying to do marking or creative writing for a lecture or a tutorial or whatever then I have to do that at home because I can't concentrate in a big office (X1).

According to X1, academic staff are 'bundled together' in one room to reduce building costs. S/he does recognise some benefits, but his/her choice of words evokes images of academics being shoved and tightly packed together. In this way, X1 supports U5's sense of open plan offices degrading the academic role. X1 also identifies that traditional academic tasks, such as thinking, creative writing and teaching preparation are difficult to complete in these large open plan spaces. Instead they have to be taken home where there is more peace and quiet to concentrate. Baldry and Barnes (2012) reported similar comments from academics they interviewed in Scottish and Australian universities. Most of their respondents noted the difficulties of doing any kind of 'cognitive-based work' (p.235) in open plan offices and significantly, some also perceived, if not a degradation of the academic role then, at least, a degrading of the way they have been used to working. A Scottish respondent in particular stated:

I feel if you're an academic you should have your own office, you should have space for your books and papers, you should be able to speak to students in your office, and you should be able to have this rapport. It's a diminution of what we've been used to (Baldry and Barnes, 2012, p.239).

If open plan offices are degrading the academic role, they would also appear to support X3's assertion that 'academic satisfaction is nowhere on the radar at all'. The perception of these interviewees at least is that open plan offices can have a detrimental effect on academics' abilities to do their jobs well. However, like U7, the belief also is that management is not concerned and in fact has created such offices to suit entirely its own purposes. Nearly a third of academics interviewed indicated a sense of coming second to students. The discussion here shows how their work environment can contribute to perceptions that academics' experience is indeed 'seen as of no consequence' (X3).

6.3 Re-professionalising the academic: teaching for employment

Chapter two (section 2.4.3) discussed the increasing utilitarian focus of HE policy over recent decades. The pervasiveness of the employability discourse (Moreau and Leathwood, 2006) led the Campaign for the Public University (CfPU) to argue in 2011 that the government views 'all courses as "training for employment" and all universities as training providers' (p.3). It seems logical in this argument that the CfPU must also believe academics have been reduced merely to the training deliverers. I noted in chapter three (section 3.3.2) that the institution is a former polytechnic and as such its history is connected with providing more vocationally oriented education. One interviewee at least felt this history still shaped the university's focus:

> This university came out of colleges, colleges then became polytechnics and the polytechnic then became a university…so it's always been an applied university so I think the ethos of it is more towards ensuring that people obtain their qualification and that it's practical and they're able to use it…and I think we are still at heart a university that is practical based and is looking to ensure that people get the qualifications they need in order to make a living in the world (Y2).

Statements made by the university at the time the study was conducted can be seen to support Y2's comments. Its mission, as stated in another public facing document (Document B), focused on achieving excellence in *practice-based* education for the benefit of individuals *and* employers. This document also outlined the university's commitment to preparing students for work and ensuring that its graduates achieve high rates of progression to employment. Given this emphasis by the university on employment-related education and the pervasive discourse of employability in HE policy (Moreau and Leathwood, 2006), it is perhaps not surprising that nearly half the sample expressed an almost unquestioning support for the employability agenda. This support is captured in the quotes below:

> Things like employability have become increasingly important to us. [Students] need to be thinking as soon as they get here it's not just about getting a degree and leaving with a piece of paper, what will they do to get a job (X4).

> [W]e could see the way…thinking about employability [was going]…so it was built [into the course] deliberately (Y1).

> I'm very pleased with the way we do in terms of the new mantra of employability (U5).

These three quotes, and indeed comments from all 19 interviewees, convey 'employability' as a growing HE agenda. X4 notes that it has become 'increasingly' important, possibly as 'thinking about employability' (Y1) has altered. Significantly, U5 describes it as a 'new mantra' and though s/he does not indicate who is doing the chanting, i.e. government, university management or both, his/her description supports U7's belief that 'everyone seems to be talking about employability at the moment'. The sense that employability has become a 'mantra' (U5) or something 'everyone' (U7) is talking about could help to explain why nearly half the sample seemed immediately accepting of the agenda. Other studies suggest this acceptance is not unusual. Fanghanel (2007, p.14) interviewed 18 academics from seven UK institutions and reported that most had 'absorbed as inevitable the employability agenda'. U7 highlights that increasing tuition fees may be playing a part in the agenda's acceptance:

> It's important for us to consider employability because fees are rising a lot at the moment and what we want is...our students to get a good job (U7).

Implicit in U7's comment is that as students will be paying more of their own money to attend university, they should achieve some kind of return on their investment. As I noted in chapter two (section 2.1), the government has increasingly positioned this 'return' within HE policy as greater employment skills/prospects. Another interviewee echoed U7's perspective:

> Our employability is something that's really important to us, and that's something we need to make sure that we stick with because with the whole idea of fees, if [students] come to us and get a job at the end of it [then] that's a good thing [for students and for encouraging people to study with us] (X4).

X4's comment highlights the apparent interplay between employability and other agendas currently dominating HE policy. Good graduate employment rates not only help to ensure a 'return' on students' investments, they also make an effective marketing tool for attracting more students (consumers) to study at the university. Chapter four (section 4.3) noted that 'desperate' universities need to focus on enticing new 'customers' to secure their financial survival. At least one interviewee recognised this situation and believed employability to be a strategic solution for the university:

> I think to survive, especially new universities have got to be strategic; they've got to offer something haven't they. It's in our mission statement that we focus on employability (U4).

U4's belief that 'new universities' have got to 'offer something' is evoked in U7 and X4's comments that students should get some sort of return on their investment. These views could suggest that a new 'contractualism' (White, 2007, p.602) is emerging in HE whereby some universities offer increased employability prospects in return for students' tuition fees. At the very least, they intimate that this 'contractualism' could be in danger of occurring given the reduction in public funding and newer universities' greater dependence on tuition fees for financial survival.

There appear further dangers of academics accepting the employability agenda uncritically, which may have implications for their professional academic role. I stated above that nearly half the sample appeared to unquestioningly support this particular agenda. However, scholars point to a lack of consensus over both the definition of employability and how it should be measured (Knight and Yorke, 2003; Cranmer, 2006; Moreau and Leathwood, 2006). Boden and Nedeva (2010) argued that at least two different conceptions of employability can be distinguished in recent discussions of it. The first is based simply on getting a job. Within this conception it is the institution's responsibility to make the student employable and success is measured by how many graduates are in work (professional or otherwise) after a set period of time. The second conception revolves around employability as an individual attribute. The focus is not just on getting a job but ensuring the individual is sufficiently equipped for graduate work. Measurement of success is more complex in this conception and would not be accurately achieved simply by using employment rates. Only one academic in the study referred to this tension in definitions:

> The focus on employability is another interesting one because is it employability or is it to be employed? (Y4).

Y4 was the only interviewee to pose any kind of question about the meaning of the employability agenda. However, five other academics did comment on limitations they saw within the agenda, which centred on the narrowness of the current focus on employment skills. For example, two interviewees argued that individual employability is naturally enhanced as students engage with the 'broader opportunities' (Y1) offered by universities, such as involvement in the students' union and doing voluntary work. Three others suggested that students need to understand the contexts in which they will be working and not just the skills that will be needed.

There was then a small number of interviewees (six) that did express some reservations about the employability agenda. Yet, none of these reservations focused on whether increasing employability is actually the role of universities. I am not arguing that universities should not be concerned with the employment prospects of their graduates, but, as chapter two (section 2.4.8) highlighted, at the time the interviews were carried out there was much debate about the role of universities being debased to 'training for employment' (CfPU, 2011, p.3). That no academic referred to these debates or arguments within their interviews points to their lack of criticality about this issue. A more critical stance, for example, may have helped some to make a connection between employability and consumerism. Chapter four (section 4.2) highlighted that all those interviewed were against the consumerist agenda within HE. However, not one expressed any awareness that the employability agenda may also encourage education to be seen as a commodity to be purchased and consumed for the jobs market. Gibbs (2009), for example, argued that education is promoted as a commodity when universities offer it as a route to careers. Education, he stated, is positioned as 'one more thing to be consumed' (p.119). Additionally, the interviewees' seeming lack of criticality means that there is no apparent awareness about the very probable re-professionalisation of academics as training deliverers. Of course, to argue that this re-professionalisation is happening there would need to be evidence at least that teaching or teaching approaches are becoming more utilitarian or instrumental in light of the employability agenda. At this institution there is some evidence to suggest that it could be heading in this direction. Most prominent is the change that has taken place in the university's mission statement. As I highlight above, the current statement focuses on *practice-based* education to benefit both individuals and employers. Its previous mission statement had a slightly different emphasis. It focused instead on promoting learning and enterprise for the benefit of societal and economic wellbeing (Document C). There is no mention in this previous mission statement of employers, and there is instead an explicit focus on learning as well as enterprise. In the next mission statement this focus had changed to *practice-based* education and the word 'learning' is not mentioned at all. This change is not evidence that the university no longer views learning as important, but it does suggest that the institution is taking a more utilitarian view of the education it offers. There were indications from three interviewees that this view has filtered through to their practices to some extent. For example, U7, an academic from a non-vocational subject, described changes s/he had made to the assessment process of a module:

> [L]ast year in my third year project I let [students] do presentations…which was to train their speaking skills and organisational skills and making what they have been doing understandable to an audience who don't know all of the details of the project…[T]his

year…they have to pitch their project, so…[t]hat means they have to sell what they are doing, they have to convince their audience that what they are presenting is something worth investing in (U7).

The implication within U7's comments here is that s/he has altered the presentations to make them more in line with what students may have to do in the world of work. U7 actually stated that s/he specifically made this change in response to the university's increasing focus on employability. Utilitarianism comes into play here through his/her assumption that it is a world of commerce that his/her students will be entering: they must 'sell' their ideas and convince their audience that these ideas are worthy of monetary investment. It is also evoked through the lack of alternatives s/he presents to this world. There is no indication of preparing students to challenge, critique and present other options to the commercial world, just the sense that s/he must prepare them for it. There is also no questioning of the different speaking or communication skills that may be required for pitching projects or if there is any reduction in the skills s/he was trying to develop before. For example, if students are trying to 'sell' their ideas, they could be less likely to present a critical argument about them. Y3 provides greater awareness of the tensions around strategic teaching:

I just did an exercise in class…where we sat around and we judged each other entirely on appearance…I was trying to get them to realise that the way they projected themselves was supremely important when it came to going for a job... And when I was sitting there doing it I was thinking 'well actually this is really strategic isn't it?' I'm getting them to think much further ahead…Am I being too strategic? Is this being too applied for an academic sort of course? (Y3).

The tension for Y3 appears to be maintaining a balance between applied and academic teaching. His/her question of '[a]m I being too strategic?' suggests s/he feels the balance may be shifting more towards applied teaching, which is supported by his/her later remark that 'sometimes I feel like I'm shoe horning in the odd academic comment'. Y3 believes in encouraging students to think about their professionalism, but s/he admits that 20 years ago s/he would have been doing this in 'perhaps a more academic way'. This reduction in academic focus begins to suggest that academics may be further de-professionalised within their *re*-professionalisation as employment trainers.

U2 also indicated that the university's more utilitarian view may be impacting to a certain extent on course design too. According to U2, his/her particular industry now 'more and more…wants people to be multi-skilled'. Consequently, s/he reports that the course has been designed to give students 'breadth' of knowledge and skills across a number of

different fields. This particular course is 50% vocational, but U2 still echoes Y3's concerns about the balance being achieved:

> …having that breadth in the course is really important…[but] sometimes I think we lack a bit of depth…I feel [students] don't get immersed enough in their specialist subject…In some ways I'd like to…get them to a higher standard in a narrower field than the breadth that they get at the moment (U2).

U2 implies here that s/he feels industry needs are focused on, i.e. 'breadth in the course', to ensure students are multi-skilled but at the expense of students gaining 'depth' in the course and achieving higher standards in their chosen specialisms

Though only three interviewees gave any explicit sense of adopting more utilitarian practices, they highlight a trend that could start to increase given the university's changing mission statements. If teaching does become more 'applied' than 'academic', then there may be dangers of the *higher* sense of higher education being lost altogether[56]. U7 hints at this possibility in his/her quote above through the lack of critical thinking s/he gives to what his/her students should be prepared for. There is evidence from another small sample of interviewees (four) that students are encouraged to develop critical and creative skills but mainly in relation to employers' needs of these skills. Two illustrative quotes are below:

> I think what we do is try to inspire in our students critical thinking and…to be creative. Now these are key skills that employers are also looking for because they want someone who is creative and not someone who does things the same way as everyone else and I think they also want people to be critical because out of this critical approach something new can develop (U7).

> I think in some ways we need to prepare [students] for the job market because that's where most of them are going…I don't think we can have a university system now…where we sit around and think about things a lot…I think [academics] also need to start going 'where are you [the student] going with this? Let's think about preparing you for that' (U4).

It could be argued that the employability agenda may risk instrumentalising higher level thinking skills. U4's comment above particularly supports this point. If universities are not places where people 'sit around and think about things a lot', do they not then simply

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[56] Barnett (2011) argued that 'higher education' is an educational process *and* a critical concept. He stated that the terms 'university' and 'higher education' are used interchangeably but '[w]e may judge that institutions of higher education, including universities, do not always provide a 'higher education' to their students…' (p.3).

become places for training purposes? Ironically U4's department has the motto of turning students out as 'thinking [subject] workers' (U4 and U2), but it appears that the thinking only extends to the type that employers most want:

> I like to think that we're still [teaching students how to think but] the skills [will] hopefully [be] transferable [to different industry contexts too]. So…things like communication skills, logistics skills and the ability to work with other people, to negotiate…to problem solve (U2).

Though U2 would 'like to think' that they are still teaching thinking skills to students, s/he appears to focus mainly on their application to industry contexts. I indicated above that U2's course is 50% vocational, so his/her focus may not be too surprising. However, I would suggest that when these types of skills relate largely to increasing students' employability then an instrumental perspective of them is being taken. It is not thinking at a higher level about the employment trends or issues within their particular disciplines that is being encouraged, only the ability to fit in with what employers are looking for. Y3 was the only interviewee to acknowledge this instrumentalism occurring:

> [I]t may well be that all those luxury items [like teaching ethics and thinking] outside the box…get forced out because in the end [academics have] got to show fantastic competence in what's seen as our core business [i.e. achieving high degree completion and graduate employment rates] (Y3).

It is interesting that Y3 already considers skills like thinking 'outside the box' as 'luxury items'. It suggests s/he feels they are already being 'forced out' by agendas like employability. Jones (2007) argued that criticality as a whole has become an uncertain concept in current academia. Academics in her study felt unsure of their role in teaching critical thinking and being critical thinkers themselves. I show in this section that there appears a significant lack of criticality from many interviewees about the employability agenda being promoted in HE policy. I would suggest that this lack also means that issues within the agenda are effectively obscured. For example, Moreau and Leathwood (2006, p.306) highlighted that inequalities persist in employment opportunities and 'different groups of graduates receive different levels of returns' from HE because of factors such as their gender, ethnicity and social class. Only one interviewee expressed concern that inequalities like these may be hidden by the employability discourse being promoted:

…issues...[like] the glass ceiling or elements of institutional racism, etc, they just seem to kind of disappear from that agenda in terms of how they might be…identified and worked with and worked through and whose responsibility it is (Z1).

The data here suggest that some academics' lack of criticality regarding the employability agenda could be transferred to the students through the instrumentalising of higher level thinking skills. Within an instrumental perspective, criticality appears important only as far as it extends to employer needs. Whilst only a small number of interviewees' comments evoked a sense of instrumentalising critical thinking skills, this situation could grow as employability becomes the more prominent focus in HE. If this does happen, then the ultimate consequence may be what the CfPU (2011, p.3) suggests has already occurred – universities reoriented to places of 'training for employment', with academics most likely re-professionalised to merely the deliverers of this training. If their role is reduced in this way, it would be hard not to agree with Beck (2008) that re-professionalisation is simply de-professionalisation in another guise.

6.4 Chapter summary

This chapter initially discussed the extent to which the interviewees believe they are being de-professionalised. Whilst only three academics explicitly perceived de-professionalisation to be occurring, at least 12 others appeared to be sensing an erosion of academic professionalism. In particular, many perceived devaluing of academics' professional judgement and 'satisfaction' (X3). The chapter then assessed how the employability agenda may be re-professionalising academics as employment trainers rather than HE lecturers. Lack of criticality was significant to this point as nearly half the sample appeared immediately accepting of the employability agenda in HE policy. Even for those who did express reservations about the agenda, the dangers of instrumentalism that it poses to teaching and thinking skills were not largely recognised. The university's current mission statement suggests it is directly focused on offering practice-based education, which may be connecting the university more fully with its polytechnic origins. I am not arguing against the worthwhile or necessary nature of practice-based education, but I would suggest that offering education based primarily around employer needs and employability has implications for whether HE can indeed still be called *higher* education. If not encouraging their students to critique the practices they see around them rather than just fit in with them, are academics really preparing students academically or just making them 'fit for industry' (U4)? If the latter is the case then it would seem that academics are being re-professionalised and that this is de-professionalisation in another guise.

6.5 Implications for SoTL

There are many implications that the discussions in this chapter raise for SoTL. Chapter two (section 2.2.4) demonstrated that one of SoTL's underpinning aims is to advance the practice and profession of HE teaching. If academics are being de-professionalised or their professionalism eroded, as many interviewees in this study suggest, then this SoTL aim would seem very difficult to achieve. The potential for the employability agenda to promote instrumental teaching approaches also appears to directly threaten this aim. I highlighted in chapter two (section 2.2.2) Boyer's (1990) intention to characterise teaching as being as intellectually rigorous as other scholarly activities. However, if teaching becomes largely about encouraging students to develop skills in relation mainly to employer needs, then Boyer's argument is hard to maintain. I would suggest instead that there is a *reduction* in the intellectual rigour of teaching at higher education level if students are not taught to critique and question beyond the point that employers want. The practice and profession of teaching is not advanced if it is concerned only with satisfying employer requirements; rather it is diminished. Support for this view can be found in the CfPU's (2011, p.3) argument that universities are becoming simply places of 'training for employment' due to the predominant employability focus. Implicit in this argument, as section 6.3 noted, is that HE teachers are diminished to the deliverers of this training. Further, if HE teaching is reduced simply to training then the need for research to make teaching practices more effective is also reduced. This reduction could be disastrous for SoTL as chapter two (section 2.2.3) highlighted that research into teaching practices is the essential element that distinguishes between scholarly teaching and the scholarship *of* teaching. The ways in which this study suggests de-professionalisation and re-professionalisation may be occurring then have significant consequences for both SoTL's aims and its place within the academic role.

6.6 Moving on…

This chapter has considered the de-professionalisation and re-professionalisation of academics in the current HE environment. It indicated that many interviewees perceive an erosion of academic professionalism and it identified how the employability agenda could potentially erode that professionalism further. The following chapter explores the extent to which academics may reinforce the threats posed to their professionalism by examining some of the language used in their interviews. It identifies, for example, that neo-liberal discourse, like 'consumerist metaphors', were commonly used by interviewees, particularly

when discussing their courses or subjects. However, whilst some of their language may suggest academics are to some extent promoting the agendas that undermine or challenge their practices and professionalism, other aspects of their language suggest tensions and contradictions that could lead academics to question and/or critique these agendas. The next chapter then moves the analysis to a deeper level by using the interviewees' language to begin exploring the potential for academics to challenge and/or resist the agendas currently dominating HE.

Chapter 7: Interviewees' use of neo-liberal language

7.1 Introduction

The previous chapter examined the extent to which the academics in my study appear de-professionalised and re-professionalised within the current higher education (HE) environment. The data indicated that many interviewees perceive an erosion of academic professionalism. I also argued in that chapter for the potential of the employability agenda to erode both teaching and academic professionalism further and observed that most interviewees currently do not seem to recognise this potential. This chapter builds on the data presented in chapter six by examining some of the language academics used in their interviews. The data in this chapter suggest that some academics may be unaware of how they could be reinforcing the agendas that undermine their practices and professionalism through the language they use when discussing their courses, subjects and roles. Yet other aspects of their language also suggest hope that academics may realise their potential to question and critique the dominating agendas.

In the first part of this chapter I demonstrate that neo-liberal discourse, particularly 'consumerist metaphors' and 'business-speak', appears naturalised to some degree in many interviewees' language. Utilising a critical discourse analysis (CDA) perspective, I discuss the concepts of hegemony and ideology. Scholars argue that naturalisation of certain discursive practices is an effective way to maintain hegemonic values, opinions and beliefs. Indeed, the naturalisation of neo-liberal language appeared so effective for some interviewees that they seemed to find it difficult at times to think beyond the discourse. To help account for the extent of naturalisation, I analyse some of the language used in key institutional documents. Although Fairclough (1995, p.71) argued that ideologies cannot be 'read off' texts because they are open to diverse interpretations by readers, I observe similarities between the language used by the university and the language some academics used in their interviews. My observations confirm other scholars' views that neo-liberalism provides the language through which universities now define themselves (Davies, 2005), with academics required to speak it too (Morrish, 2011). Whilst the naturalisation I discern in many academics' language could support scholars' opinions about the strength of neo-liberal discourse and its infiltrating and colonising capacities (e.g. Davies, 2005; Archer, 2008a), other discursive practices used by interviewees suggest potential for challenging the dominant discourse and considering alternatives. Drawing on CDA, I identify contradictions in some interviewees' comments between their expressed beliefs and the language they

used. For example, a number of interviewees expressed views against consumerism in HE but then used its language at other points in the interview. I also demonstrate some interviewees recognising their appropriation of a consumerist discourse. These contradictions and recognition highlight that hegemony is never completely realised and discourses are constantly struggling for dominance. I argue that awareness of appropriating neo-liberal discourse underscores it as a *particular* discourse currently chosen over others, which means its seeming 'naturalness' could be challenged. Again, this argument echoes those made by scholars such as Davies (2005) and Morrish (2011) who lament the penetration of neo-liberalism into 'the hearts and minds of academics' (Davies, 2005, p.7) but maintain that resistance is possible.

At the end of the chapter I identify two potential implications for the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL). Firstly, I argue the scholarly aspect of teaching could be undermined by academics' naturalised use of consumerist language. For example, academics using language that emphasises a commodified view of education weakens the dynamic perspective of teaching that SoTL promotes. Secondly, I suggest SoTL should incorporate CDA so that scholarly investigations of teaching and learning focus also on discourse and discursive practices. Academics could then begin to build awareness of how neo-liberal discourse has infiltrated HE as a whole *and* their own language. From this awareness 'arise possibilities of empowerment and change' (Fairclough, 1995, p.82-83).

7.2 A naturalised discourse

During my analysis I became aware of many interviewees using consumerist-type language in their interviews when referring to their roles, their courses, or HE as a whole. I found this language use surprising given that all 19 academics indicated their opposition to the consumerist agenda in HE. However, a critical discourse analysis (CDA) perspective may help to explain why this type of language appeared commonly used in many interview responses. Wodak (2001, p.10) stated that critical linguistics (CL), a term she used interchangeably with CDA, explores 'the ways in which language mediates ideology'. CDA, she argued, focuses particularly on ideology and how it helps to establish and maintain unequal power relations. Hegemony and ideology are key concepts in CDA. Mouffe (1979, p.181), in her work on Marxist theory, summarised Gramsci's view of hegemony as 'a complete fusion of economic, political and moral objectives…brought about by one fundamental group and groups allied to it *through the intermediary of ideology*…' (emphasis in original). Similarly Fairclough (1995, p.76), a principal CDA scholar, stated that hegemony

entails leadership and domination by one fundamental group 'across the economic, political, cultural and ideological domains of a society'. Ideology in Gramscian terms is a world-view with corresponding norms of action (Mouffe, 1979). Fairclough (1995, p.76) quoted Gramsci's original definition of ideology as a 'conception of the world that is implicitly manifest in art, in law, in economic activity and in the manifestations of individual and collective life' (Gramsci, 1971, p328, cited by Fairclough, ibid). Crucially, in CDA, language is central to the sustaining of hegemony and ideological conceptions. Luzón Marco (2000, p.121) noted that 'one of the most effective ways to legitimise power relations is the *naturalisation* of certain discursive practices' (emphasis in original). Similarly, Fairclough (1995, p.94) stated that naturalised discourse conventions 'are a most effective mechanism for sustaining and reproducing cultural and ideological dimensions of hegemony'. Referring again to Gramsci, Machin and Mayr (2012, p.24) argued that 'discourse constructs hegemonic attitudes, opinions and beliefs…in such a way as to make them appear "natural" and "common sense", while in fact they may be ideological'. As Luzón Marco (2000) observed, if a way of representing the world is naturalised, then its underpinning ideology becomes invisible. For critical discourse analysts then, the most effective way to naturalise ideologies is to naturalise them within discursive practices (Fairclough, 1995).

7.2.1 Naturalisation in interviewees' discourse

Chapter two (section 2.3.3) highlighted that neo-liberal ideology, based on intensifying 'commodification in all realms of social life' by prioritising 'market-based, market-oriented, or market-disciplinary responses to regulatory problems' (Brenner et al., 2010, p.329/330), has pervaded HE policy over recent decades along with a business-oriented culture, which have impacted not only the organisation of HE but its objectives too (e.g. Tasker and Packham, 1994; Jones and Thomas, 2005; Thorpe, 2008). McKenna (2005) asserted that the ascendance of neo-liberal values is evident in the discourse of commerce and economics dominating the language used in HE policy. Significantly, O'Sullivan and Palaskas (2007, p.38), in line with CDA, argued that the dominant neo-liberal discourse 'promotes and *naturalises* the commodification and marketing of higher education' (italics my emphasis). The examples of consumerist-type language from my data suggest that neo-liberal ideology has been naturalised not just within policy discourse but also to some extent within my interviewees' discourse. With reference to distinctions made by scholars such as Wasson (2004) and O'Sullivan and Palaskas (2007), I coded examples of interviewees' naturalised use of neo-liberal discourse as either 'consumerist metaphors' or 'business-speak'.

'Consumerist metaphors' refers specifically to the market-based values of neo-liberalism. There appeared in various interviewees' comments an unconscious use of the word 'sell', or its variations, which suggests these market-based values are becoming taken for granted to some extent. Importantly, I observed this word being used by academics in each of the faculties and the central support department where I conducted interviews. Predominantly, it was used in relation to the interviewees' particular course or subject, as these indicative quotes show:

> I suspect we may well be asked to make sacrifices in the next few years about how we support students and how we sell[57] the degree (Y3).

> [W]e…pay a lot of attention to the NSS…and it's a really big selling point for our course because we're ranked as top in the 50/50 vocational practical in the UK (U4).

> [W]e have to get our USP [unique selling point] out there [for when tuition fees increase in 2012/2013] (X2).

By using the words 'sell' or 'selling', the academics in the quotes above are increasingly positioning their degrees or courses as commodities to be bought and sold. Further, they are implicitly positioning higher education itself in the same way too through this reduction of its components (courses/degrees) to commodities. It appears the academics are unconsciously using the words here because all interviewees indicated that they were against the consumerist agenda in HE. This apparent contradiction in beliefs expressed and language used is discussed later.

To a lesser extent, some academics also connected the word to student activities:

> This [open day] was particularly…linked to enabling students to fill out their UCAS forms and sell themselves as effectively as possible (Z1).

> …now [students] have to pitch [their] project [in their assessed presentations]. That means they have to sell what they are doing, they have to convince their audience that what they are presenting is something worth investing in (U7).

These two quotes suggest the academics are extending the neo-liberal concept of commodification to students too: the latter have to 'sell' both themselves and their work.

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[57] Throughout this chapter I have underlined the specific words or phrases focused on in each quote to help draw readers' attention to them.

Critics of the Browne Report (2010) and 2011 White Paper (BIS) feared that increased tuition fees together with an explicit student-as-consumer focus would reduce HE to a commodity to be bought and sold in a competitive marketplace (Freedman and Fenton, 2011; Hall, 2011). These quotes suggest that this fear was not ungrounded. Chapter two (section 2.4.7) discussed consumerism promoting a transactional and delivery-based idea of education: a product or service received for the money given. The academics' use of the word 'sell', or its variations, seems to naturalise this idea. Only one interviewee explicitly referred to his/her course as a product:

> Very much in our mind is that next September has to be perfect [for when tuition fees rise]. And there's a lot of that thinking going on. And you think 'what has to be better and how does it have to be better?' Procedures yes…but in academic terms, what are we actually talking about? Are we saying we've got to change the <u>product</u> or something like that? We actually haven't had that debate (Y3).

However, over a third emphasised their role as deliverers, for example:

> …getting required [teaching] content <u>delivered</u> is tough enough and there is no opportunity within any of our course structure to <u>deliver</u> all this softer stuff at the moment [like employability skills] (X2).

> Now as far as I'm concerned, sitting from my side of the fence, I'm only looking at [the student experience] from the point of <u>delivering</u> the academic course (Y3).

> So certainly we're <u>delivering</u> very very efficiently (U1).

> …the amount of work and effort that went on…to make sure that we could <u>deliver</u> [students' marked] research proposals to them on Friday…before they went home for Christmas [was enormous] (X4).

> [When I first started at the university I was] <u>delivering</u> lectures and seminars on the theory courses… (U3).

During my analysis I debated about including 'deliver' as a consumerist metaphor. It seems a word that is commonly used in the HE context and I questioned whether I could be overstating its use in academics' comments if I categorised it as a consumerist metaphor. My deliberations over the word evoke the CDA perspective that discursive practices reflecting dominant ideologies can appear as 'common sense' (Machin and Mayr, 2012, p.24). However, CDA scholars, like Fairclough (1995), identify the need to 'denaturalise' the

language used to 'reveal the kinds of ideas, absences and taken-for-granted assumptions' (Machin and Mayr, 2012, p.5) that may be implicit within it. By 'denaturalising' the word 'deliver', I would suggest that this word reinforces a transactional view of education. To deliver something implies a recipient, and deliverer and recipients are not usually in an interactive or reciprocal relationship with each other. Additionally, typically 'delivered' is a package, or at least a final product of some sort[58]. I was further struck by the continual use of the word 'deliver' and how it was used in place of other words. For example, Y3 could have used words such as 'running', 'organising', or even 'facilitating', and these words would not have denoted such a one-way flow of work. X2 repeats the concept of being a deliverer twice, making the image of one-way transaction hard to escape. The 'content' is not even to be 'taught', it is to be 'delivered'. X4's quote is even more striking. Why does s/he choose the word 'deliver' here over the more appropriate word 'give'?

I would suggest the word 'deliver' reinforces the commodification of HE by promoting education as both product-based and unidirectional. Could the word 'deliver' be used so frequently because some academics are shifting more towards a service-provider type role? Over a third of interviewees did appear to be using service provider language, as these indicative quotes demonstrate:

> Students now most definitely see themselves as customers, which, you know, is understandable, they're paying a lot of money to be here or they will eventually pay a lot of money to be here, so they are more demanding of the <u>service</u> (X3).

> I think it's necessary for tutors to establish some ground rules on how they will offer <u>services</u> to their students (Y5).

> We can't just tread water and do what we've always done, we've got to be offering to help [students] in other ways and develop the <u>service</u> (Z2).

> I am very very clear that we have high <u>service</u> standards to observe and follow (U5).

The way in which 'service' is used in these quotes is evocative to me of monetary-based transactions occurring. X3 notes that students will be paying more money to attend HE, and Y5 and Z2 stress the need to establish or develop ways of 'offering' their services to students. Again, I would suggest it is significant that interviewees have used the word

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[58] See Channon's (2011) letter in the *Times Higher Education* (THE) which supports my view of the transactional connotations of the word 'deliver'.

'service' over other more educational terms such as guidance, assistance, support or even supervision.

A number of academics also appeared to be using naturalised 'business-speak' in their interview comments. The majority of such words or phrases related to the financial values of business, particularly those espoused in government white papers. The DES, for example, argued in 1987 that HE as a whole should ensure 'better value for money from the public funds…' (p.9). By 2011 the focus had shifted to individual courses, particularly new ones, offering 'increased value for money' (BIS, 2011, p.7). This focus can be seen in some interviewees' language, for example:

> We've got to make better improvements so students feel they are getting value for money (Y1).

Additionally, over a quarter of academics employed a 'value-added' discourse, for example:

> [Managers] want to see the value that we are adding so you've got to combine… quantitative with…qualitative [student evaluations] really if you're going to convince managers of the value of what you're doing (Z2).

> I wanted us to be adding a bit of value and getting [students] to think ahead of time [about employability and] how they might do better [in the jobs market] (Y3).

> …but for some students who've had a very difficult journey and are not high flyers, for them to achieve an honours degree even if it is a third class or 2:2, that's a big value-added achievement for them (Y1).

> And while I like to think that we give [master's students] added value, I'm very conscious that their main aim is to pass (Y2).

The term 'value-added' has been increasingly applied to education and scholars have attempted to define it in educational terms (e.g. Bennett, 2001; Cunha and Miller, 2009). Crucially, this application has taken place over the same period that scholars like Tasker and Packham (1994) and Churchman and King (2009) stress that business values and their associated terms have grown in HE. A synthesis of web-based dictionary definitions demonstrate the business origins of 'value-added' by referring to it as the enhancement

made to a product or service by a company before it is offered to customers[59]. It seems difficult to discount this definition applying to the quotes above when the proliferation of consumerist metaphors is also taken into account. At the very least, the academics here are using a discourse originating and more substantially aligned to business rather than previous educational values.

7.3 Difficulties in thinking beyond the naturalised discourse

The naturalisation of neo-liberal discourse and ideology may also account for some interviewees' seeming inability at various points to think beyond it and offer alternative 'conception[s] of the world' (Gramsci, 1971, p328, cited by Fairclough, 1995, p.76). The most powerful example of this inability came from four interviewees who explained to me the alternatives to the student-as-consumer concept that they try to promote to their students. I will present these four quotes in two sets of extracts. The first two are below:

> We were pupils, we were students, these people they [students] see themselves more as customers.
> *[KD] And how do you work with that?*
> Well, my initial response is 'no, you're not a paying customer, you're actually investing in your own future'…[S]econd to that I say 'it's not like Sainsbury's, you don't just buy your degree off-the-shelf…what you actually pay for is for me and my colleagues and all of these facilities to be here for you, within reason. You pay for the specialism and expertise and equipment and the software and all the machines and everything that's required for you to go through this learning process'. So steering them a little bit away from the paying customer more towards the investor is always a good argument I've found (X1).

> *[KD] The consumer notion is a strong one that keeps being reinforced in HE policy at the moment…*
> I know. I would actually prefer the term investor…[A colleague said that] what we'd like to think is that what they're [students] doing is investing, because if you invest you don't just leave your money sitting there and hope for the best, you actually make it work for you and you have to watch it all the time and you have to do things with it, you have to have an input to get the better output. And I quite like that analogy better than the consumer one which suggests that you pay your money and you get what you asked for (Y4).

In these first two quotes both X1 and Y4 offer the term 'investor' as a preferred alternative to the student-as-consumer. There are a number of ways in which this alternative term still appears fixed within a neo-liberal discourse. Firstly, it is still a monetary concept – it is the

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[59] Dictionaries used: Cambridge Dictionaries Online (2011); Dictionary.com (2012b); The Free Dictionary (2012).

students' money that both academics refer to being invested ('…what you actually pay for is…' (X1); '…you don't just leave your money sitting there...' (Y4)). Hollway (1984) noted the term 'investment' can refer to metaphorical elements such as mental or emotional investments. 'Investment' can also relate to aspects such as time, effort and energy that a person may have 'invested' in a project, relationship, etc. However, I would argue that in the quotes above, 'investment' refers to money and not metaphorical aspects such as these. X1, for example, ostensibly focuses largely on what that 'invested' money will buy for the student: 'expertise…equipment…software….machines'. Effectively then, s/he is not actually 'steering them' too far away from the consumer concept. Secondly, being an investor, like being a consumer, still centres on making a personal investment for individual benefit. As such, it seems the wider public or societal purposes and benefits of HE continue to be ignored. Supporting this view, O'Sullivan and Palaskas (2007, p.44) argued that the 'student-as-investor' notion constitutes 'higher education squarely as an economic activity' in which private benefits accrue to individual participants. Chapter two (section 2.4.1) described how the Browne Report (2010) and the 2011 White Paper (BIS) promote the university as a private rather than a public good by encouraging students to think of the education they will receive only in terms of future individual benefit. Although trying to offer an alternative to the consumer concept, the interviewees here use an analogy that still appears rooted within the government's neo-liberal ideologies for HE.

The next two quotes demonstrate two other academics' staying lodged within the private and individualised neo-liberal discourse when giving alternatives to the student-as-consumer. They differ slightly to the first two above in that the academics here recognise they are still giving a commercial equivalent to the consumer concept:

> *[KD] Do you get a sense of the consumerist agenda within higher education?*
> I haven't had in all of my years as Head a single student saying to me 'I have paid my fees therefore…' But what we [the department] do now have is our own version of a student partnership agreement and I'll read you what it says: 'you sometimes hear people say that in an age of higher tuition fees students have become consumers but give some thought to that idea. Does consumption really describe what happens in an educational environment? It's true you can buy a degree but not from a university. If you're looking for a commercial equivalent, the term client might be of more use. In professional work, for example medicine or law, you need the best advice, the right advice, not necessarily the advice that makes you feel most comfortable.' So that's the way we try to articulate that particular one to students (U5).

I think we have to say right up front to our students this is not a consumer relationship. Again we have to define the relationship and [a colleague has] actually said that in the student partnership agreement…which I'm very much in favour of - you [the student] are not a consumer, if anything if you want a commercial analogy it's more like a client relationship (U6).

The academics' recognition of their use of commercial equivalents strengthens the argument that the discourse has become naturalised to the extent that in some aspects it appears 'common sense'. Whilst trying to resist the consumer notion the academics support using an analogy that I would suggest reinforces a service provider-type role. Typically a 'client' signifies a person who pays for the service(s), or 'advice' (U5), offered to them. They are the recipients of the work done by the service providers rather than active participants in the process. It seems the interviewees' recognition of using commercially equivalent terms does not extend to the contradiction of promoting this analogy within a student *partnership* agreement. There appears a tension between identifying students as clients within a document that aims to promote their responsibilities as partners within the educational process. Do the roles of client and partner go together? I would suggest they do not, even within the commercial perspective used by the interviewees.

From the data presented above it appears neo-liberal and business discourse is naturalised to some extent by many interviewees seeming to automatically use its language[60]. Additionally, the ideology underpinning the discourse may appear 'natural' and 'common sense' (Machin and Mayr, 2012, p.24) to the degree that some may find it increasingly difficult to offer alternative 'conception[s] of the world' (Gramsci, 1971, p328, cited by Fairclough, 1995, p.76). These findings are supported by those of other scholars. Davies (2005, p.7) observed academics speaking 'neoliberalese' but argued they appeared to be unconscious of it. Similarly, Archer (2008a, p.282) concluded from her study that neo-liberalism has 'infiltrated' academics 'bodies and minds', which she evidenced also from the peppering of neo-liberal terms within her interviewees' accounts. Other scholars, such as Strathern (2000) and Morrish (2011) have argued that neo-liberal discourse has pervaded and penetrated HE to the extent that no other language seems available to the academics working within it. Importantly, Davies (2005) and Morrish (2011) assert that management, as well as government policy, has imposed neo-liberalism on academics. Managers and administrators, Morrish (2011) argued, 'demand to be spoken to in their own language by academics…'. This view links to McKenna's (2005, p.46) argument that academics have

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[60] Wasson (2004, p.178) maintained that types of speech may become 'automatic and routine'.

had to adopt the same discourse used in policy and by managers in order 'simply to be heard' (see chapter two, section 2.4.3).

7.3.1 The language of the university

I suggest largely in the preceding sections that interviewees are using neo-liberal language similar to that which has been pervading HE policy discourse. However, the views of scholars such as Davies (2005), McKenna (2005) and Morrish (2011) presented above indicate that academics' language may be influenced by the language of the university itself, and more specifically, the managers within it. Davies (2005) in particular asserted that neo-liberalism is a language through which most universities now define themselves. To what extent then is neo-liberalism identifiable within the language of the university?

I did not interview senior managers for this study. However, below are extracts taken from recent significant university documents that would have either been written by or under the instruction of university management. Within these extracts there are numerous examples of 'consumerist metaphors' or 'business-speak' that I noticed pervading many interviewees' language. A document setting out how to use the university's logo, for example, had a section titled 'Key *Selling* Messages' (Document D[61], italics my emphasis). This section began:

> Universities have very few 'unique' <u>selling points</u>, they rely instead on an ability to identify and publicise multiple '<u>selling points</u>'. Successfully differentiating institutions is achieved by choosing the best way to demonstrate and justify specific strengths and qualities. All <u>selling points</u> must be evidence-based, underpinned and qualified. These are what we term our key <u>selling</u> messages.
>
> Our key <u>selling</u> messages should emphasise the proposition that we:
> • Are a modern university; an innovator and leader…
> • Excel in the application of knowledge through practice-based learning and employer engagement which feeds directly into the curriculum and student experience…

In this short passage 'selling' is repeated five times. What are considered to be the strengths of the university are positioned as 'selling messages' that should be emphasised at presumably any given opportunity. I acknowledge this document was produced by a marketing-focused central department. However, this department states clearly on the

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[61] This document is only available on the university's intranet.

particular institutional web portal page (where the document is available to be downloaded) that the guidance document has 'been developed for *staff*, suppliers and external companies' (Document E, italics my emphasis). Hence, university staff are one of the key target groups to receive this message about how to 'sell' the university. Considering this emphasis on selling then, it may not be surprising that interviewees like U4 and X2 also spoke of 'selling points' for their courses.

Similarly, 'deliver', or its variations, also appeared in another key institutional document (coded Document F):

> …the University will be able to <u>deliver</u> all of its…courses on one site from the 2011/12 academic year…[62]

> The University is also involved in <u>delivering</u> innovative learning…

> …the University has approved <u>delivery</u> of its undergraduate and postgraduate business programmes…The courses will be <u>delivered</u> under a franchise arrangement…

I argued in section 7.2 that delivering something implies a recipient. At one point in Document F, students are positioned in just such a way:

> Our success in <u>delivering</u> education and training to <u>recipients</u> from around the world continued when…

This extract appears to confirm the one-way connotations of the word 'deliver'. As I argued in section 7.2, recipients are not usually in a reciprocal or interactive relationship with deliverers and mainly just receive the 'final product'.

I questioned above in section 7.2 whether interviewees may be using the word 'deliver', or its variations, because they are aligning more to a service provider-type role. There is again emphasis on service provision in the university documents. An objective given, for example, in Document B is to involve students in developing the university's community and shaping its 'future and the <u>services</u> it provides'. Document B further aligns deliver and service provision through its recurrent emphasis on 'service delivery'. For example, it emphasises the university's commitment to ensuring 'the highest standards of professional <u>service delivery</u>' as well as academic success.

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[62] I have not given page numbers of quotes used in this section to further protect institutional anonymity within the documents used.

Again then, there seems a mirroring of language being used by the university in its significant and strategic documents and by academics in their interview comments. This mirroring continues with 'business-speak' examples evident also in university documents or statements, such as:

> [This activity will] <u>add value</u> to the experience of our students and staff… (Document B).

> Our fees represent excellent <u>value</u> when you consider [our rankings in leagues tables] (Document G).

Fairclough (1995, p.71) advised it is 'not possible to "read off" ideologies from texts' because texts are open to diverse interpretations and readers 'appear sometimes to be quite immune to the effects of such ideologies' (p.72). I acknowledge this warning; however it seems clear that there is a similarity between the university's language and the neo-liberal language used by interviewees too. Furthermore, other scholars (like Davies (2005) and Morrish (2011)) argue that the language of the university and its management is penetrating the language academics use. Fairclough (1993, p.158) had previously stated that it 'may well be…that largely "top-down" changes in discursive practices are widely marginalised, ignored or resisted' by academics 'in a significant range of their activities'. My data, which is confirmed and supported by other scholars, suggest this view may be out of date and that academics may not be totally immune to the ideologies permeating texts. Rather, these ideologies may help to naturalise neo-liberal discourse within academics' own discursive practices.

7.4 Contradictory elements in interviewees' language

I highlighted above in section 7.2 scholars' arguments that the most effective way for one fundamental group to sustain hegemony, i.e. 'a complete fusion of economic, political and moral objectives' (Mouffe, 1979, p.181) over society is to naturalise certain discursive practices (Fairclough, 1995; Luzón Marco, 2000; Machin and Mayr, 2012). However, scholars also highlight that hegemony is never complete or total. Mouffe (1979) and Fairclough (1995; 2001) both described hegemony as a constant struggle, the cause of which Wodak (2001) assigned to different discourses and ideologies continually struggling for dominance. Due to this struggle, Fairclough (1995, p.76) argued that hegemony is 'never achieved more than partially or temporarily, as an "unstable equilibrium"'. Discursive practices, he also argued, are a facet of this struggle and as such can contain contradictory or inconsistent elements as 'hegemonic principles' (Mouffe, 1979, p.186) confront each other

and compete for dominance. There does appear to be evidence of these hegemonic and ideological struggles in some interviewees' comments. This evidence comprises a number of examples of academics appearing to contradict the beliefs they express with the language they use. These examples relate particularly to consumerism and suggest that whilst some academics appear to assume neo-liberal ideas in their speech, neo-liberalism itself may still be an 'unstable equilibrium' (Fairclough, 1995, p.76). The most powerful examples of these contradictions are given below:

Belief expressed - If you want to buy a degree, well it's unlawful any way but that's not what we are about.
Language used - We [academics] are the ones who are creating [the teaching] environment and we can <u>sell</u> it that way too (U6).

Belief expressed - I think if we're not careful we are going to be using a language and creating a culture where it's almost as if students can come in and just buy a degree, [which is] a bit ridiculous in some respects.
Language used – [T]his [open day] was particularly…linked to enabling students to fill out their UCAS forms and <u>sell</u> themselves as effectively as possible (Z1).

Belief expressed – [Having a] marketplace in higher education, what a naff idea… there are [dangers] with the students thinking they're buying a product and we have to make very clear that you don't pay your £9,000 and we just give you the degree certificate.
Language used – [W]e may…be asked to make sacrifices in the next few years about how we support students and how we <u>sell</u> the degree …[W]e're doing a review of our main degree, for the next September intake, and there's been no discussion suggested from management about how we make this a more <u>saleable</u> subject (Y3).

Belief expressed - I think that spectre of consumerism is there but at the moment we're managing to fend it off successfully.
Language used - But when we re-write the course…what's key…is that we maintain quality because…that's…our <u>selling point</u> if you like, that's what draws students in… and it's a really big <u>selling point</u> for our course (U4).

Each example above presents two contradictory quotes taken from an academic's interview comments. All four academics, at one point or another in their interviews, expressed their concerns about consumerism in HE. However, at other points they also appear to be using consumerist discourse in a seemingly common sense way. These contradictory quotes could suggest the academics are not aware of the language they are using. Indeed, Fairclough (1993) claimed that most individuals display a significant lack of awareness about

the language and discourse they use. On the one hand then, it could be argued that the academics above are shoring up consumerist agendas and ideologies by speaking its language. Archer (2008a) claimed that academics may have become unwittingly complicit in promoting the neo-liberal ideas they seek to resist. Could my interviewees' seemingly naturalised use of consumerist language mean they are also unwittingly complicit in promoting it as an agenda? If this is the case, it presents a very bleak picture of neo-liberalism being virtually inescapable. Many certainly espouse the power of neo-liberalism and could take the data above as further evidence of academics being 'infiltrated' (Archer, 2008a, p.282) or 'colonise[d]' (Davies, 2005, p.2) by its discourse. However, Fairclough (2001, p.124) argued that an 'order of discourse' is not a closed or rigid system, 'but rather an open system, which is put at risk by what happens in actual interactions'. From a CDA perspective then, these contradictions, which emerged during the 'actual interactions' in an interview process, highlight the open, or incomplete and partial nature of neo-liberal hegemony. As a result, the potential to problematise, expose, transform and restructure the dominant discursive practices is also highlighted in the data. There is further evidence that this potential could be realised by some interviewees.

7.5 'Talking the talk'

In my initial analysis of academics' language use in their interviews it appeared that at least eight were actively embracing neo-liberal discourse at certain points whilst also using it in a seemingly naturalised way at others. The data pointing to active language embracement differs to the naturalised data presented above because the interviewees appear *aware* of their use of the discourse. The quotes that most powerfully capture this active embracement relate to consumerist language and are given below:

> [W]e are the ones who see the students…we create the environment… and we should look to really creat[e] that kind of environment of freedom, of the life of the mind…and <u>we can sell it that way too if you want to put it in terms of</u> 'well, ok, the funding goes to the student now', that's the government's big thing isn't it (U6).

> I mean, <u>as a paying customer if you like</u>, students can expect a certain service and I think that service is that their modules be delivered, that staff turn up on time and that they have a certain quality of teaching (X4).

> [W]hen we re-write the course and re-validate, what's key in the academic's mind…is that we maintain quality because for us, for our course…that's…our <u>selling point if you like</u>, that's what draws students in (U4).

> …and if <u>we're going to use that language</u> then if you want <u>value for money</u> then…that…involves you [as a student] having to know how to play your part and to seek help when you're not certain (Z1).

Comments such as 'if you like', 'if you want to put it in terms of' and 'if we're going to use that language' show the interviewees recognise their appropriation of consumerist discourse: they are qualifying their statements and perhaps putting figurative inverted commas around their remarks. Again, there are two perspectives that could be taken here. By appropriating the discourse, it could seem the academics are accepting the values of it too to some extent. There is a sense, for example, of X4 accepting that students are 'paying customers' and for U6 and U4 that their courses must be 'sold'. This seeming acceptance could point once more to the strength of the neo-liberal discourse and its insertion into 'the hearts and minds of academics' (Davies, 2005, p.7).

However, if the above perspective is the only one that is taken a bleak picture would again emerge of colonisation by neo-liberal discourse seeming the only possible outcome. Alternatively, a CDA perspective may once more offer a little hope that other outcomes may occur. Fairclough (2001, p.128) in particular argued that although neo-liberal discourse (or managerial discourse as he called it) is 'rapidly colonising' public sector domains like education, the process of colonisation is never a simple one:

> There is a process of appropriating [discourses], which can lead to various outcomes – quiescent assimilation, forms of tacit or more open resistance (for example, when people 'talk the talk' in a consciously strategic way, without accepting it), or indeed the search for coherent alternatives (p.128-129).

I would suggest the quotes presented above in which the interviewees recognise their discourse appropriations could be examples of academics 'talking the talk' and that what appears to be active embracement of the discourse could be them using it in a 'consciously strategic way' (ibid, p.129). As I argue above, their qualifications such as 'if we're going to use that language' show their consciousness of the type of language they are using. Their comments suggest that they are aware consumerism, for example, is currently a dominant discourse in HE and so they frame some of their responses in its terms. Significantly, they are doing so consciously. Importantly, as I highlighted in section 7.4, CDA scholars emphasise that hegemony and ideology, and hence discourse, are never total or completely realised. Instead, discourses and ideologies are constantly struggling for dominance (Wodak, 2001). Furthermore, due to the partial and struggling nature of hegemony, there is

always the possibility to transform and restructure dominant discourses. Luzón Marco (2000) argued that the struggle between discourse types and opposing discourses can call into question and challenge the naturalness of the represented world-view. I would suggest that by 'talking the talk' the interviewees demonstrate their awareness of appropriating a discourse and this awareness could potentially lead to the 'naturalness' of the discourse being challenged. They recognise they are appropriating a particular discourse that is currently dominant within education and consequently, within this recognition there must also be awareness that the discourse is not fixed or concrete; rather it is an 'order of discourse' (Fairclough, 2001, p.124) that has been chosen over others. This recognition means that there is potential to contest the dominant discourse and 'search for coherent alternatives' (ibid, p.129). However, to what extent do my interviewees seem likely to realise this potential?

7.6 Potential to challenge the neo-liberal discourse

From the data presented in this chapter, the most accurate statement I could perhaps make at this point is that the academics I interviewed do not yet appear to be considering alternatives to the dominant neo-liberal discourse. This statement could give cause for concern. Fairclough (2001, p.128) argued that it would be a mistake to assume that dominant discourses 'are the only ones that exist'. It could be claimed that many of my interviewees are making this mistake by using the language in a naturalised way and also actively appropriating it at various points too. Fairclough (1995, p.225) also asserted that if teachers pass on to students the 'prestigious practices and values' of a dominant discourse '*without* developing a critical awareness of them, one is implicitly legitimising them…' (emphasis in original). There is some evidence in my data that a legitimisation of consumerist values may be occurring, which is captured in three quotes commented on in chapter six (section 6.3) and section 7.2.1:

> This [open day] was particularly…linked to enabling students to fill out their UCAS forms and <u>sell themselves</u> as effectively as possible (Z1).

> I don't think we can have a university system now that works in isolation where we sit around and think about things a lot…I think you [the academic] also need to start going 'where are you [the student] going with this? Let's think about preparing you for that, even in terms of <u>selling yourself</u>' (U4).

> [L]ast year in my third year project I let [students] do presentations…which was to train their speaking skills and organisational skills and making what they have been doing

understandable to an audience…[T]his year…they have to pitch their project, so…[t]hat means they have to <u>sell what they are doing</u>, they have to convince their audience that what they are presenting is something worth investing in (U7).

My previous discussions of these quotes suggest that the academics, by using this language, are encouraging students to view themselves and their work as commodities. If the interviewees are using these same terms with their students, it could be argued they are implicitly legitimising the neo-liberal value of commodification.

However, as I highlighted in the previous section, there are some academics who do recognise at certain points that they are appropriating a particular discourse. This recognition, and the contradictions I observed in section 7.4, would suggest, from a CDA perspective, that whilst the interviewees may not be yet considering alternative discourses, there is potential for it to occur. This potential would be pleasing to Davies (2005, p.13) who, whilst arguing the strength of the neo-liberal discourse and its colonising capacities, remained hopeful that academics could begin to work with students to expose the dangers of the neo-liberal discourse to, in effect, 'break open the old where it is faulty and…envisage the new'.

7.7 Chapter summary

This chapter examined the language many academics used in their interviews. I utilised a CDA perspective and explored the concepts of hegemony and ideology to explain why neo-liberal language appeared naturalised in many interviewees' comments. I also explored some academics' apparent difficulties in thinking beyond the neo-liberal discourse, which could result from the university's language also appearing to reinforce the naturalisation of neo-liberalism. However, by using a CDA perspective it is possible to identify areas in some interviewees' language where the potential for challenging the dominant discourse may lie. Firstly, apparent contradictions between some interviewees' expressed beliefs and language used highlight that hegemony is never total and discourses are continually competing for dominance. In this way, neo-liberalism as a *particular* discourse is emphasised, opening the possibility for alternatives to be considered. Similarly, some interviewees' recognition of their appropriation of the discourse underscores neo-liberalism as a discourse currently being used *over others*. Whilst the data may not suggest the academics are considering alternative discourses yet, from a CDA perspective there appears potential for it to occur. I ended the preceding section with Davies' (2005, p.13) hope that academics could work with students to 'break open the old [discourse] where it is faulty and…envisage the new'. Yet

within this hope she did not provide guidance as to how 'the old' could be broken open. Perhaps this gap can be filled, and so the potential realised, by turning again to CDA *and* the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL).

7.8 Implications for SoTL

From the data and discussions in this chapter I would argue there are two fundamental implications for SoTL. The first relates to the potential undermining of the scholarly aspect of teaching through academics' naturalised use of consumerist language. I show many academics are using this language and through which they position university courses as commodities to be sold and themselves as 'deliverers' of those commodities. I argued in section 7.2.1 that this language conveys a one-way, transaction-based view of education in which academics 'deliver' content to their student recipients. Boyer (1990, p.23), on the other hand, viewed teaching as a 'dynamic endeavour' wherein academics are learners too, extending and transforming their own knowledge and understanding through discussion and debate with students (see chapter two, section 2.2.1). Building on Boyer, Bender and Gray (1999) stated that teachers and students should be involved in a mutual learning process in which teachers not only extend their own knowledge and understanding but continue to learn from students the most effective ways to teach that knowledge and develop students' understandings too. I would assert that a commodified view of education where academics become more akin to service providers undermines this 'dynamic' perspective of teaching. U5 and U6, for example, preferred students to view themselves more as 'clients' than consumers. Would a paying client be happy to receive 'advice' (U5) from those who still view themselves as the kinds of learners that SoTL suggests teachers should be? If medicine is used as an equivalent, as U5 suggests, would a patient be happy for a doctor to say 'let's learn about this disease together'? I would argue that service providers are expected to 'deliver' the results of their knowledge and expertise rather than develop them mutually with 'clients'. Likening the academic role to service provision then effectively weakens the perspective of academics as learners too. Can academics accurately be called scholars if they do not continue to learn and develop in their disciplines or practices? With its emphasis on continued learning, I would suggest from a SoTL perspective they could not. I argued in chapter six that instrumental teaching approaches undermine the scholarly aspect of teaching. Academics aligned to service providers potentially undermine it even further.

However, as I also identified in this chapter, from a CDA perspective there is hope from some interviewees recognising their appropriation of the dominant discourse that it could be challenged and alternative discourses considered. The second implication for SoTL is that it could incorporate CDA so that scholarly investigations of teaching and learning in HE can help to 'denaturalise' the language used and begin to expose the values and assumptions implicit within it (Machin and Mayr, 2012, p.5). Even those scholars who lament the penetration of neo-liberal discourse in HE maintain that it can still be challenged. I commented on Davies' (2005) hope above, but Morrish (2011) also declared that 'resistance is possible…[o]ur work should be to…destabilise…values, discourse and regimes of power'. This destabilisation is the aim of CDA scholars. Fairclough (1995), for example, argued that it is through unbalancing discursive practices that they become open to restructuring. Ultimately, he stated CDA's goal is to 'systematise awareness and critique' of discourse and ideology, and from this awareness and critique 'arise possibilities of empowerment and change' (ibid, p.82-83). By incorporating CDA in SoTL then, language could become the focus of SoTL investigations. In this way, academics themselves would start building awareness of the extent to which neo-liberalism has 'infiltrated' (Archer, 2008a, p.282) both HE discourse as a whole and even their own discursive practices. This awareness could then be the first step to denaturalising it. Once denaturalised, academics could begin to consider the ideological elements the discourse is based on and how they may be rearticulated[63].

I do not intend to make this critique sound easier than it is or suggest that academics can suddenly change HE discourse when government and its policy directives are firmly entrenched within neo-liberalism. However, by conducting CDA within a SoTL-based framework academics could begin to feel empowered, through their increasing awareness, to question and challenge the discourse penetrating HE and even themselves. Though resistance and change may still be a difficult process, this academic empowerment must surely be a first step to it.

There are then threats to SoTL through the naturalisation of neo-liberal discourse that my data and other scholars suggest is currently occurring in HE. Yet this situation also points to how SoTL could be expanded to help academics begin to critique the discourse presently defining 'conception[s] of the [HE] world' (Gramsci, 1971, p328, cited by Fairclough, 1995, p.76). I highlighted in chapter two scholars' arguments for SoTL to become more critically-

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[63] Mouffe (1979) highlighted Gramsci's view that ideologies are never completely transformed, but a process of differentiation and change may occur through criticism in which elements of old ideologies are weighed and judged. Chosen elements may then be rearticulated into a new system. Similarly, W. Brown (2005) argued that ideologies can never be totally rejected but rather rendered differently.

focused by incorporating elements of critical pedagogy. I have begun to explore a more critically-focused SoTL in this chapter with reference to CDA. The next chapter considers it in greater depth.

7.9 Moving on…

This chapter has taken the analysis carried out so far to a deeper level by utilising CDA to examine some of the language academics used in their interviews. Whilst initially it could appear that neo-liberalism is colonising how academics think and speak about their HE world, a CDA perspective offers hope that there is potential for academics to begin questioning and critiquing the discourses penetrating HE. The following final analysis chapter continues to utilise CDA to explore in greater depth the potential for academics in my study to critique HE, particularly to the extent that a critically-focused SoTL requires. Additionally, this final chapter considers further the benefits of SoTL incorporating CDA and suggests this type of analysis could be pivotal in SoTL realising its critical potential.

Chapter 8: Potential for academic critique and resistance to the current HE context

8.1 Introduction

The previous chapter examined some of the language academics used in their interviews. I used critical discourse analysis (CDA) to discuss the extent to which neo-liberal discourse appears naturalised in some interviewees' language. However, by using this perspective it was also possible to identify certain tensions and contradictions arising in some aspects of their language, which may suggest potential for academics to question and challenge the naturalisation of neo-liberal language. This final analysis chapter builds on the data presented in chapter seven by focusing specifically on the potential for academics in my study to critique higher education (HE) to the extent a critically-focused scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) requires. I continue to utilise CDA in this chapter and again discuss its capacity to help develop a critically-focused SoTL.

The chapter begins by referring to Fisher's (2009, p.53) argument that teachers are experiencing 'reflexive impotence' whereby they know things are bad but also 'know' they cannot do anything about it. I present many examples from the data that appear to support this argument. However, I also discuss data that suggest a more dynamic process may be occurring in which some academics may appear to be experiencing 'reflexive impotence' but still find subtle ways to challenge and resist the situation(s) they imply they can do nothing about. I highlight how this data support scholars' views that resistance is always possible within any regime (Kolsaker, 2008) and particularly through behaviour at the micro level, which organisations find difficult to regulate (Murphy, 2011). I then utilise CDA again and focus specifically on Gee's (2011) concept of figured worlds. I show various figured worlds evidently competing and conflicting within interviewees' comments, with ultimately one more effective in shaping daily behaviour. I draw parallels here to the discussions in chapter seven (sections 7.4 and 7.5) regarding competing discourses. I suggest the very contradictions and conflicts between interviewees' figured worlds expose the partiality and incompleteness of each type of world. Consequently, there is potential for academics to recognise their different figured worlds and so question the extent to which they fully reflect their situations and the influence(s) that each type of figured world may have on their actual behaviour. Whilst I maintain this potential is there, I suggest it has yet to be realised. I also highlight that some academics may be limiting their capacities to critique HE by their focus on appearing a 'useful' employee.

At the end of the chapter I identify two potential implications for a critically-focused SoTL from the data presented. Firstly, I suggest that taken at face value, my data could imply that critique or challenge is unlikely to occur with many academics appearing to accept 'the way it is' (Y1). The outlook for a critically-focused SoTL then would be considerably grim. Secondly, I reiterate my argument from chapter seven that SoTL should incorporate CDA. By utilising such a framework, academics could direct their critical investigations towards their own HE experiences first. This could counter concerns about appearing antagonistic to management whilst redundancies loom and also be a pivotal first step towards academic empowerment.

8.2 Accepting 'the way it is'

I discussed in chapter two (section 2.5) arguments that a critically-focused SoTL could be a catalyst for change in HE. As well as researching one's own teaching practices, scholars such as Kreber (2005) and Cranton (2011) maintained that academics should also investigate the wider context(s) within which teaching takes place. Importantly, these investigations should include critically questioning the beliefs, values and ideologies shaping HE's direction and framework. By critically questioning in this way, academics may help to effect change within the system and identify alternatives to aspects of it (Kreber and Cranton, 2000; Atkinson, 2001). Essentially, as I identified in chapter two (section 2.5.3), scholars focus on the potential of a critically-focused SoTL to empower academics within and help emancipate them from a constraining HE system. Kreber (2005) and K.M. Brown (2005) highlighted critical theorists' views that the capacity of people to resist oppressive structures can only be achieved when fundamental questions are asked and assumptions challenged about the social, political and economic 'realities' of our time. By referring back to the previous chapter it is clear that these 'realities' to be challenged could also be described as the ideologies supporting hegemonic practices. In that chapter I drew on critical discourse analysis (CDA) and highlighted CDA scholars' views that hegemony is never complete and there is always potential to 'search for coherent alternatives' (Fairclough, 2001, p.129). However, as attested by the 'C' in CDA, it is through critique that scholars argue the potential will be realised (Fairclough, 2001; Wodak, 2001; Machin and Mayr, 2012). Whilst not referring to CDA, W. Brown (2005, p.14) echoed this view in her assertion that critique ultimately 'insists on alternative possibilities and perspectives in a seemingly closed political and epistemological universe'. I observed in chapter two (section 2.4.3) arguments that the university has become a 'passive entity' (Smith and Webster,

1997, p.4) with the British academic community succumbing to a sense of inevitability rather than actively imagining alternatives to government agendas (Thorpe, 2008). I suggested the erosion of academic identity in policy documents and the declining trust placed in them as professionals could provide reasons for this seeming passivity. However, Fisher (2009) offers another perspective. He suggested teachers are suffering 'reflexive impotence' (p.53) whereby they know things are bad but also 'know' they cannot do anything about it. That knowledge, he argued, 'is not a passive observation of an already existing state of affairs. It is a self-fulfilling prophecy' (p.21). Further, Fisher (2009) stated that managers frequently assert 'there is no alternative' (p.53) thereby reinforcing teachers' 'knowledge' that nothing can be done and so dampening the possibility for resistance against dominating agendas, strategies, etc. I have already highlighted in previous chapters (sections 4.3 and 5.2.1) examples of some academics appearing to accept 'the way it is' (Y1) without offering alternatives, but further instances can be added here. For example, Y1 also stated:

> I know that I spend more time on marking than [the] set amount that is allowed, because I want to give the students feedback but I do get frustrated that we're not able to really sit down and moderate in the way I'd like to see it done. But there's not much we can do about that (Y1).

Y1 here conveys his/her concern that there is not enough time to moderate the marking of students' work in the way 'I'd like to see it done'. In this comment Y1 implies that the moderation process may not be as rigorous as it was previously. However, clearly evident is his/her sense that s/he just has to accept it and that there is nothing s/he can do to change the situation. Indeed, s/he seems to ascribe this lack of agency to the whole academic community by his/her use of 'we' rather than 'I' in his/her last sentence. U2 conveyed a similar sense of impotence when discussing his/her views about a change to how some final degrees are classified. S/he explained that students could fail either of their two big assignments in their final year (their dissertation or practical project) and still gain a good degree because:

> that 30 credits, if they were their worst 30 credits, wouldn't need to count towards their degree, and that just doesn't seem right to me. Actually I think their final degrees should include their dissertation and their practical project as givens...[It was] changed last year, so either it ought to be an average of your module marks or there ought to be key pieces of work that have to be taken into that equation from my point of view...That is something I can't do a lot about but it doesn't feel right to me (U2).

It appears this is an issue U2 feels strongly about as s/he states twice that it does not seem or feel right to him/her. Indeed, s/he later said that it 'seems like an erosion of standards'. Yet, at the end of his/her explanation here is his/her 'knowledge' (Fisher, 2009, p.21) that s/he 'can't do a lot about it'. S/he gave no indication in the interview that s/he had actually tried to do anything and, if this is the case, it could support Fisher's (2009) view of a self-fulfilling prophecy occurring.

Other interviewees also evoked a seeming lack of belief in their capacity to effect any changes when commenting on the future of HE, for example:

> *[KD] Do you have any thoughts about what the future of HE might be or this institution in particular?*
> I think the pattern for the future of HE here has been set for the last 18 months. I think there has been a period of transformation…it has become more of a service culture. It's much more like working in a call centre here than working in the hallowed halls of a university and I think that, for most universities, is the new culture. Certainly when I joined higher education nearly 20 years ago it was an easier lifestyle and you could take a week off if you wanted to go do something, you just did it and nobody was asking where you were or what you were doing, as long as the work was done. That is such an alien concept now because we are here, nose to the computer, accountable at all times of the day. So I think that's done now, that is the pattern for the next 20 years (X3).

I commented on X3's reference to HE becoming more like working in a call centre in chapter six (section 6.2). Significant here is his/her view that the pattern seems to be set. Effectively, s/he appears to be suggesting that change is not possible; HE will likely be as it is now for the 'next 20 years'. This view is interesting given that X3 acknowledges HE has recently been through a 'period of transformation' in which it has become 'more of a service culture'. However, s/he does not appear to believe that change can happen again to transform it once more. Rather, this latest transformation has been 'done now' and will be the final one for quite some time. His/her acceptance of the pattern, instead of belief that it could be changed, was further illustrated when I asked if s/he could keep working within such a system:

> To be honest I think if this is how it is for the next 25, 30 years, however long I'm going to be teaching for then fine, I can do it. It doesn't frighten me or worry me about things like the [administration] mission creep; I kind of expect it (X3).

I highlighted in chapter five (section 5.2) X3's sense of being exploited by management through the 'creep' of administrative activities into academics' roles. Surprisingly, here s/he appears to just accept it will happen and steel him/herself to dealing with it for 'however long I'm going to be teaching'. Rather than having an active sense of being able to effect change, I would suggest X3's outlook is defeatist; s/he is expecting managers to keep taking advantage of academics and is resolved simply to cope with it. S/he certainly evokes Y1's view that 'there's not much we can do about that'.

This view was also evoked in X1's description of his/her colleagues' attitudes to their challenging work situations:

> [We have] more and more students, more and more to do with fewer and fewer resources, and people are noticing. I am astonished as we reach the middle of November, we've got five more Mondays till the end of term, the number of people who are walking around saying 'only five more Monday mornings', I've never heard that before (X1).

X1's comment suggests his/her colleagues are currently viewing work as something to get through, counting the days down until the end of term. S/he also indicates it is a new development and something s/he has 'never heard' before. If some academics are doing as X1 describes, it suggests their difficult working conditions (more students and fewer resources) are to be endured rather than challenged. Their focus becomes the end of term when, presumably, they can have a break and fortify themselves to endure the next term before another break comes. Evoked here is U7's comment discussed in chapter five (section 5.4). Whilst acknowledging the negative impact of extensive weekend and after hours working on his/her health, U7 gives no indication that these working conditions should be challenged or resisted. Instead, his/her concern is how long s/he can physically cope with it. Indeed, at another point in the interview U7 showed little faith that academic resistance or challenge would have any effect at either an institutional or national level. After expressing great concern about the institution seeming to put the student first, which s/he felt implied academics come second, I asked U7 how s/he thought s/he could go about addressing that with management:

> I think it's not something that just a lecturer could go and address the topic talking to the highest levels of authority. It's something that schools and then faculties would have to discuss and then eventually has to be brought to university level as well, but of course I don't know how successful that would be because the marketing strategy at the moment is that the student comes first…so I don't know if that would make any difference (U7).

Two important points can be noted from this response. Firstly, challenging the system does not appear an option for U7. S/he seems wedded to the 'correct' way of doing things, i.e. a lecturer cannot go to the 'highest levels' but must work through the chain of command. Secondly, s/he twice doubts that any challenge would be successful or make a difference. His/her comments again appear to convey Fisher's (2009, p.53) idea of 'reflexive impotence', which could explain his/her response to my final question:

> *[KD] Do you think that there could be any academic activism with academics challenging and critiquing political intentions and agendas?*
> There has been some more recently. I don't know, it could be but I think in that sense I'm rather pessimistic of how far it would get (U7).

Y2, in response to the same question, expressed a similar sentiment but in more powerful terms:

> Short answer to your question is I'd be happy to get involved but I think you're flogging a dead horse and if that sounds defeatist, so be it. Essentially people who would never dream of second-guessing a doctor think that they can run education because they once went to school. And because everybody's been to school, everybody thinks they know what education is about and that their opinion is as good as everybody else's and therefore the level of debate is pretty poor (Y2).

Y2's 'defeatist' attitude appears to come from his/her view that the level of debate about education 'is pretty poor' and therefore not worth entering into. Whilst not exactly an example of 'reflexive impotence', Y2 still conveys no sense that s/he could help raise the debate level. Instead, s/he appears resigned to the situation and, indeed, any involvement would only be 'flogging a dead horse'.

There are then a number of examples that could support Fisher's (2009, p.53) argument about teachers experiencing 'reflexive impotence'. Many academics in my study do appear accepting of 'the way it is' (Y1), with little thought seemingly given to the possibilities for challenge or change. Of course, the HE climate at the time of interviewing could have enhanced these feelings of impotence. I highlighted in chapter three (section 3.5.2) the job insecurity being experienced across the sector at the time of this study, and at least two interviewees attributed this situation to potentially constraining academic resistance or challenge:

I don't foresee any academic revolt, isn't that awful, because with the current economic situation we're all very happy to have a job…perhaps it's going to be like that for quite some time…people get far less reactionary don't they in times of economic stress, you're just going to keep your job (Y3).

[KD] There are some people who say that universities have been quite passive over the changes that have been going on…
Yes because we all have mortgages, pensions, we have families, we're all a bit scared.
[KD] Do you think that's why there are those views about academics being passive?
Well I joined a demonstration in town early in the year, I took a hit on one day's pay docked. Actually every pound I earn presently matters, striking costs (Y5).

Y3 highlights the 'economic stress' many people are under and the need 'to keep your job' during a recessionary period in which jobs of any kind are not as readily available as previously. The potential consequences of this situation for academic critique of the HE context are discussed further in section 8.4.3. Y5 states that s/he has been active by taking part in a demonstration[64], but s/he is very aware of the money it cost. Of course, this view is understandable. However, even though Y5 has been on a demonstration, his/her comments still appear to support Y3's view that people 'get far less reactionary…in times of economic stress'. Significantly, no other interviewee said they had joined protests or demonstrations, or been revolutionary in any particular way.

8.2.1 Not considering alternatives

The discussion above highlights a general acceptance from many interviewees of 'the way it is' (Y1) with little apparent belief in their capacity to effect change, particularly in their working conditions. There is further evidence of some not only accepting their current situations but also uncritically assimilating various government agendas. The most powerful example of this uncritical assimilation relates to the employability agenda and this has been discussed in chapter six (section 6.3). However, assimilation of other concepts or agendas is evident elsewhere in the data, particularly in relation to 'student experience'. I highlighted in chapter two (section 2.4.5) Sabri's (2010) argument that 'student experience' is a discourse now privileged in HE over any other possible alternatives. In a later paper Sabri (2011, p.659) detailed the 'repetitive and totemic' use of the term in government documents since 2009. However, she identified that it is a 'shallow conception' (p.661) that 'homogenises, commodifies and diminishes an understanding of both "student" and

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[64] Chapter three, section 3.5.2 described some of the protests and demonstrations taking place at this time.

"experience"' (p.657). Yet, she argued, it is a 'powerful discursive move because it evokes radical reorientation, challenge to vested (academic) interests, consumer power and the quest for value for money' (p.661). It is beyond the scope of the analysis here to discuss Sabri's (2011) argument in detail. Significant to note is that despite these criticisms, nearly half the sample evoked 'student experience' as a neutral and problem-free concept. The following examples capture the term being used as a taken-for-granted notion:

> I think there'll have to be a lot more focus on student experience as a whole [following the rise in tuition fees] (Y3).

> We're revalidating the course this year…and…something that we discussed in the revalidation meetings [is] how can we make the student experience better (U2).

> [Management is] not providing any of the tools that we need to enhance the student experience (X1).

> [W]hilst we are valuing and doing lots of positive things to enhance the student experience it's very difficult sometimes to get a sense of students and the community body across what would be a working week (Z1).

Note in the last three examples the interviewees say '*the* student experience', which suggests there is only one type of student and one type of experience. Even for Y3, 'student' and 'experience' are both singular rather than plural. This framing reinforces Sabri's (2011) argument that 'student experience' homogenises both the diversity of the population attending HE and the experiences they may have. I did not ask interviewees if they were aware of Sabri's critique of the term, and her 2011 paper was not published until most of the interviews had been conducted. However, the examples above show a 'powerful discursive move' (Sabri, 2011, p.661) being seemingly uncritically assimilated into academics' views of what they (and the university as a whole) should be focusing on. Taken together with my previous discussion regarding the employability agenda (chapter six, section 6.3), the data here further suggest that some academics may be uncritically accepting certain agendas or 'discursive move[s]' (Sabri, 2011, p.661) rather than questioning the assumptions they are based upon or considering alternatives.

8.2.2 'Exploiting the gap'

It is perhaps fair to say the above discussion presents a somewhat gloomy picture of the state of critique and resistance by some academics at this particular institution. This picture

is reflected in Fisher's (2009, p.53) concept of 'reflexive impotence'. Importantly, Fisher (2009) offers no advice about how to escape this impotence and instead appears to suggest it is a totalising experience, i.e. people will be experiencing 'reflexive impotence' and nothing else. However, there is evidence in my data to suggest a more dynamic and less totalising process may be occurring. Specifically, some academics may appear to be experiencing 'reflexive impotence', but at the same time find subtle ways to challenge and resist the situation they seem to feel they can do nothing about. Y6 captured this state most distinctly and it begins to be illuminated in the quote below:

> *[KD] How would you wish to see HE developing?*
> I don't think it really matters what I think it's going to end up like, it's going to end up as it's going to end up. I think it's been clear already that different people and different universities have responded to what's going to happen in different ways. [This university] has chosen its way so for as long as I work at [this university] then I'm going to have to play along with its way but continue to do what I do at the moment, you know, exploit things and whatever else (Y6).

At the beginning of this quote Y6 clearly evokes a sense of 'reflexive impotence' by seemingly suggesting s/he cannot do anything to change how HE will develop - 'it's going to end up as it's going to end up', and s/he simply has to comply with the university's particular response – 'I'm going to have to play along with its way'. However, although feeling s/he can do nothing to change the situation, s/he begins to hint at challenging it from within by 'exploit[ing] things'. Y6 refers to this process as 'exploiting the gap' and at another point in the interview explained how it worked:

> More and more now I find myself…saying [to colleagues] 'but you could twist the [university] regulations in this way or you could just do this instead'. And the response you always get back is 'oh but there's this committee or this form or what would my line manager think'…New staff seem to feel very like they have to be into the system and the system dictates how they can act, but actually, maybe it's because I've been in it for so long, you realise that the system doesn't have a hold and you can act how you want to within it. You can exploit the system by seeming to give it what it wants and what it wants is 'meet your targets, do your paperwork, go to the right meetings' and you're fine as long as you do that. What you actually do away from that it doesn't care about and that's how you can exploit the gaps in it… [My] greatest triumph was winning the award for employability [for a particular course] when actually we're not trying to do that…We do do employability but it's our take on employability [and] you can twist it to suit what the university thinks it is (Y6).

Y6's challenge actually comes by working within the system; by seeming to give it what it wants from a (macro) managerial or organisational position - 'meet your targets, do your paperwork, go to the right meetings' – but then doing 'our take' on particular agendas at the more micro course level. Effectively then, Y6 indicates that challenge can take place when academics are working with students. A course may be designed to suit what the university thinks employability is, but in practice, when it runs with students, the academics can provide 'our take' on it. A similar sentiment was also expressed by U6. Whilst not using the same terminology as Y6, U6 emphasised the importance of the learning environment and not underestimating the effects of the relationship between academics and their students:

> I think the room for hope is that we [academics] are the ones in relationship to the students; the students aren't listening to the government somehow more than us I don't think…I think what we mustn't lose sight of is that we are the ones that are with them day in day out and we are the ones who create so much of the culture [they experience]. So yes…the format of institutions and so on, funding systems, they have had an enormous impact, but also it's what's going on in all of our minds that actually really matters…because that shapes behaviour and shapes the culture and the environment that is actually experienced on the ground (U6).

U6's comments here were in response to a question I asked about whether and how s/he saw academic resistance occurring to current HE agendas. His/her response appears to echo Y6's views about 'exploiting the gap': academics may have to work within institutional formats and funding systems but they still have agency to shape the learning environment and culture, which is effectively what students 'actually experienc[e] on the ground'. Importantly, that is where U6 believes there is 'room for hope'.

Scholars also support U6's hopeful potential. In chapter five (section 5.5) I highlighted Foucault's argument that there is the possibility for resistance within all power relations. I also noted Kolsaker (2008, p.517) who, summarising Foucault, argued that individuals retain agency 'to utilise strategies of power to manage and affect their constitution as subjects through a recognition of the possible subject positions available'. I would argue in the quotes above that Y6 and U6 are recognising 'the possible subject positions available' (ibid) to them. They are subject to macro forces (i.e. organisational and systemic agendas) and perhaps feel they can do nothing to change them. Yet, importantly, they recognise they can still retain power in their relationship with students and that here their subject position does not have to be based on compliance to macro forces but on their own beliefs and values and 'acknowledging' (Y6) them with their students. Y6 and U6's quotes suggest the possibility

for resistance lies at the classroom level and how academics interact with their students. The classroom, then, may be Murphy's (2011, p.513) 'dark corners' of resistance, which he argued no regime can fully expose. According to Murphy (2011), any organisation, including a university, finds it difficult to regulate behaviour at the micro level, and I would suggest this is recognised here by Y6 and U6. Effectively, the micro level is their classroom interactions with students. However, I must acknowledge Y6's comment about the challenging nature of encouraging new staff to realise their potential to 'exploit the gap' because, according to him/her, they believe 'they have to be into the system'. I should also note that besides U6, no other interviewee expressed sentiments evoking this exploitative potential. Of course, it is possible interviewees are finding ways to 'exploit the gap' but perhaps have not thought about it in these terms and so did not tell me. At the very least, Y6's remarks show 'reflexive impotence' is not as totalising an experience as Fisher (2009) suggested, and as such, there remains 'room for hope' (U6).

8.3 Figured worlds

The above discussion begins to illuminate some hope within what could otherwise seem a fairly gloomy picture of some academics indeed appearing passive by just accepting the way it is or uncritically assimilating various agendas/concepts without questioning inherent assumptions or considering alternatives. Taken largely as it is, the data could support Gill's (2009, p.230) view that academics are failing to look critically at their 'own back yard'. Even if this is currently occurring for many interviewees, a CDA perspective, as in the previous chapter, may again help to expand the 'room for hope' suggested by U6. Particularly relevant here is Gee's (2011) concept of figured worlds[65]. Gee (2011, p.76) explained that figured worlds are 'simplified, often unconscious, and taken-for-granted theories or stories about how the world works that we use to get on efficiently with our daily lives'. Essentially, they are ways to figure or construe the world. Gee (2011) emphasised people can have allegiances to competing and conflicting figured worlds, but the values of one may be more effective in shaping daily behaviour[66]. Importantly, he distinguished between three types of figured worlds based on 'how they are put to use and the effects they have on us' (p.90). Two appear especially relevant to my data:

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[65] Gee (2011) framed his work as discourse analysis rather than *critical* discourse analysis. However, I am using his concept of figured worlds to identify potential for academics to critique HE and so effect changes within the system. Therefore, I am using Gee's concept in a critical way.

[66] Gee (2011) related Strauss's 1992 study of working class men in the United States, which found most participants accepted the figured world that one can achieve the American dream but were influenced behaviourally by the figured world of 'being a breadwinner' (p.89) for the family.

Espoused worlds, that is, theories, stories, ways of looking at the world which we consciously espouse (say and often think we believe);

Worlds-in-(inter)action, that is, theories, stories, or ways of looking at the world that consciously or unconsciously guide our actual actions and interactions in the world (regardless of what we say or think we believe) (Gee, 2011, p.90).

These different types of figured worlds suggest one may consciously espouse perspectives and beliefs in relation to one figured world, but their actual actions and interactions may be based on another figured world which might not be consciously acknowledged or believed to have an impact. Analysis of my data illuminates various instances in which these two different figured worlds appear at play in many interviewees' comments. The extracts below capture the most compelling examples.

The first three extracts relate in some degree to the consumerism agenda in HE. I refer in chapter seven to academics using consumerist discourse, which supports neo-liberal ideologies. Based on Gee's (2011) definition above, consumerism could equally be described as a figured world, i.e. it is a theory or story about how the (HE) world should work. In the first of this set of three, U5 consciously espouses his/her view that none of his/her students as yet perceive themselves as consumers. However, in another statement U5 describes the steps his/her school is taking to steer students away from the consumer concept:

Espoused world – [KD] Do you get a sense of the consumerist agenda within higher education?
I haven't in all of my years as Head [of the school] had a single student saying to me 'I have paid my fees therefore [I should get the degree]'.
…
Worlds-in-(inter)action - We [the school] do now have…our own version of [the university's] student partnership agreement…and I'll read you what it says…'you sometimes hear people say that in an age of higher tuition fees students have become consumers but give some thought to that idea. Does consumption really describe what happens in an educational environment? It's true you can buy a degree but not from a university. If you're looking for a commercial equivalent, the term client might be of more use. In professional work for example medicine or law, you need the best advice, the right advice, not necessarily the advice that makes you feel most comfortable.' So that's the way we try to articulate that particular one to students…and a lot of our work has to be making students see that actually an educational environment is something unique and special and that it's not subject to the normal laws of consumer capitalism (U5).

I have already commented in chapter seven (section 7.3) on the apparent contradiction of promoting commercially-based roles for students in a *partnership* agreement. Importantly, U5 is Head of his/her school and as such was responsible for creating its student partnership agreement. The statement U5 reads from the agreement appears to negate his/her previous comment about not experiencing a consumer-focus from his/her students. If s/he does not perceive a sense of consumerism in HE, as I specifically asked, why is there a need for this particular type of statement? For U5 it appears in this extract that consumerism is the worlds-in-(inter)action type of figured world as it is this world actually guiding his/her actions regarding the student partnership agreement rather than his/her consciously espoused world. Whilst s/he may consciously state s/he does not perceive a consumerist focus from students in HE, his/her actions are guided by another figured world that does suggest this focus is occurring. Why else would academics' work need to be 'making students see' (U5) that consumerism does not apply to education?

The second extract in this set of three provides further evidence of a consumerist figured world guiding actions rather than interviewees' espoused worlds:

> *Espoused world* - I'm not a service provider, I hate the language. I think the relationship between a tutor and a student or a lecturer and pupil is something sacred and I know that's a corny word but it's not a normal relationship. It is somewhere between partnership and apprenticeship, it might start out as apprenticeship but hopefully it moves towards partnership.
> …
> *Worlds-in-(inter)action* - We're just redesigning [two Masters courses]…and we're also introducing a series of shell modules that will have the normal MA level standards like evaluation, analysis, critical appraisal, synthesis, etc., but it will be a shell module in that it won't have a title. So if someone comes in and suddenly the hot thing is [a particular topic] we'll be able to teach [that topic] using that shell module. If somebody comes in and wants something on [another topic] we'll be able to teach it using that module…So I think we will respond quite quickly (Y2).

In Y2's extract, s/he initially provides quite a powerful statement about the sanctity of the tutor/student relationship that should not, in effect, be defiled by a consumerist agenda. However, the world guiding his/her actions does appear based on exactly this type of agenda. I would suggest that 'respond[ing]…quickly' to the latest 'hot thing' places Y2 within a service provider role because it appears s/he is concerned largely with being immediately responsive to student (consumer) demands. It is this immediate responsiveness, rather than questioning or considering the educational necessity, validity or relevance of the 'hot thing',

that scholars assert characterises a consumerist environment (Naidoo and Jamieson, 2005; Williams, 2013). Indeed, the term 'hot thing' seems to imply a fad or latest fashion. From this perspective, Y2 could be suggesting courses focus on popular fads or fashions within subjects or disciplines to appeal to more potential consumers (in this case the Masters students). If this is the case, s/he is contradicting his/her previous comment regarding the apprenticeship-basis of student/tutor relationships. Interestingly, Y2's apprenticeship comments reminded me of Y1's quote, which I referred to in chapter six (section 6.2.1):

> [The student experience] shouldn't just be student driven, it's not consumer driven…[yes we need] to meet the needs of students but is there not a view that we know what students need to know and we are the people in the field who know what is out there, that we can guide students to? (Y1).

Y2's 'espoused world' appears to reflect Y1's views here. As apprentices, students should be guided to some extent by the expert knowledge of academics who are well placed to judge what students need to know and should be learning. However, his/her actions, i.e. his/her role in creating courses to respond to the 'hot thing', seem guided more by a consumerist figured world in which academics, like service providers, must immediately respond to the wants of the customer.

In the final of this set of three extracts, X1's daily behaviours also appear based on a consumerist figured world despite his/her espoused lamentations about students adopting this kind of perspective:

> *Espoused world* - The students' expectations are different; they imagine that just because they can see you they can take up 20 minutes of your time.
> …
> *Worlds-in-(inter)action* - I know full well there are one or two [academics] who don't bother coming into the building unless they've got a class, so you're looking for somebody who is a key player perhaps within the school [who] probably props up at half nine, quarter to ten. Students are there [with problems and the] Course Director is the only person who can figure it [but] he ain't rolling in until half eleven because he hasn't got a class till then. He might stay here until seven o'clock at night but that's no good to me and it's no good to the student who's got the problem at half past nine (X1).

As I discussed in chapter four (section 4.5), X1 is one of the nine interviewees who believed students now explicitly see themselves more as consumers. I also discussed in chapter seven (section 7.3) his/her explanations about how s/he tries to steer them away from that

concept. His/her consciously espoused world then appears distinctly against consumerism in HE. These conscious sentiments continue in the quote above as s/he seems to suggest, and lament, that students' expectations are now consumerist in nature, i.e. their focus is immediate gratification for any problems or issues they may have. X1 implies students no longer expect to make appointments with academics to talk at mutually convenient times, but 'imagine' a here and now approach is appropriate whereby they can discuss any issues with academics when 'they can see you' passing by. However, his/her behaviour, and even attitude, towards academic colleagues appears guided by a figured world that conforms to his/her perceptions of students' consumerist expectations. S/he describes some academics arriving late to the university in the mornings or not until the time of their first class. The terms s/he uses convey a certain disgust with this behaviour. S/he states, for example, that some academics are not 'prop[ping] up' or 'rolling in' until times s/he considers to be quite late. These phrases evoke a sense of laziness on the part of the academics coming in late, even though X1 acknowledges that some may be staying until late in the evening. It appears these arrival times concern X1 because 'a key player' may not be around to deal with a student 'who's got the problem at half past nine'. It's also 'no good' to X1 who, as a more senior academic in the school, presumably has to deal with the problem instead. If X1 is resentful about this situation, it could account to some extent for the 'rolling in' type phrases. Yet, I would suggest X1's comments here conform to a 'student must be dealt with immediately' mentality. S/he gives no sense that it would be reasonable for the student 'who's got the problem at half past nine' to wait for the relevant academic to arrive, or to contact them later by telephone or email. Of course, there will always be problems that do require a here and now solution. However, X1 does not make this distinction and does appear to suggest that academics should be ready at the university to deal with any student problem or query as soon as it arises. In this way, s/he seems to reinforce the immediate gratification nature of students' expectations that s/he previously lamented.

Each of the three extracts presented above demonstrate that competing and contrasting figured worlds may indeed be at play in interviewees' comments, and the values of one may be more influential in shaping behaviour. For these three interviewees, it appears the consumerist figured world is the most influential one.

There is further evidence of competing figured worlds in interviewees' comments. The next example relates to pressures academics may be experiencing regarding various course/module targets. I noted in chapter four (section 4.4) some academics perceiving greater pressure from management to ensure target pass rates are achieved. This situation resulted in some feeling an increasing potential for grade inflation. In the extract below, U3

consciously espouses that s/he feels no pressure in this way, but a later comment suggests his/her actions are being guided by a somewhat different but related pressure:

> *Espoused world - [KD] Do you feel pressures of grade inflation here? Is there a pressure to get students through?*
> I don't feel a pressure to get them through actually and I wonder if there might be a pressure at institution level that somehow doesn't trickle down to the academics because when I sit in meetings, like exam boards, certainly the atmosphere in the room isn't about 'oh my god, we've got to do anything to get these through', it's certainly 'well yeah, she deserved that fail. I know that student, that's securely a fail', which I suppose is comforting.
> …
> *Worlds-in-(inter)action* – [If you don't meet your course recruitment numbers you know that] halfway through next term there'll be a grumpy Head of Department in your [course] team meeting who talks about our failure to reach the numbers. It's tricky and I think what brought that home a bit was…in…2010 there was talk of redundancies so…you've got a feeling that I need to keep my position here and I need to be more focused on cajoling students to come and when they're here I need to be more focused on cuddling them to make sure they stay and being outward and lovely and caring. And in fact [on an MA course] I [had] 10 students [start the course] and I lost three of them [for various reasons not related to the course]. And that just makes you nervous, and in fact then I started up this Friday afternoon coffee shop thing whereby I said to the students 'we'll meet every Friday afternoon at 2 o'clock, we'll meet at a lovely coffee shop up town and have a nice coffee together and we can talk about the modules you're doing but we'll have no set agenda, we'll just meet up'. And that was actually quite a success, it helped them bond with each other and I think it made them think I was [putting] a certain kind of caring focus on them, which I do to a certain extent but that was deliberately to just not lose any more students (U3).

In his/her first quote, U3 offers the 'comforting' perception that s/he does not feel pressured within his/her department to inflate grades.   According to U3, the atmosphere within meetings is not 'oh my god, we've got to do anything to get these through'. Yet his/her later comments regarding course recruitment offers a different picture.   Here, it appears the pressure *is* to get them through, possibly not in terms of grades but certainly in terms of staying on the course.   Meetings regarding this issue seem to have a slightly different atmosphere. Rather than being 'comforting', a 'grumpy Head of Department' may be talking about 'our failure to reach the numbers'.   U3's perception here again evokes a sense of blame being directed largely at academics, as discussed in chapter four (section 4.4.1). S/he does not say 'the failure' but '*our* failure'.   U3's subsequent behaviour then appears driven by this pressure 'to reach the numbers'.   This pressure seems intensified given U3's comments about redundancies.   Meeting course numbers evidently becomes closely

connected to 'keep[ing] my position here', at least from U3's perspective. Evoked here is X3's view of academics being reduced to units of resource to be hired and fired at will (see chapter five, section 5.2.1). U3 clearly feels 'nervous' about giving management any kind of reason to choose him/her for redundancy. S/he describes taking fairly strategic action to reduce the likelihood of further students leaving the course by 'cuddling them' and 'being outward and lovely and caring'. Whilst s/he notes beneficial consequences, such as the students bonding and feeling cared about by U3, these appear largely serendipitous outcomes as s/he openly acknowledges his/her deliberate motivation was 'to just not lose any more students'. U3's distinct figured worlds here evidently relate different perspectives about the pressure s/he seems to be experiencing. As such, they powerfully capture Gee's (2011) view that people can have allegiances to competing and conflicting figured worlds. Further, these examples at least suggest that it is the one that is perhaps less consciously acknowledged that may be the stronger in shaping behaviour.

Teaching may also be the subject of competing figured worlds, as this final example demonstrates. In this extract, X3's espoused world centres on his/her confidence that his/her personality is strong enough to ensure his/her teaching is often refreshed and renewed despite time and workload pressures. Yet later comments suggest the pressures may be too much, even for him/her:

> *Espoused world* - I think probably because of the personality that I am I like trying all sorts of new things, it comes naturally to me that I do update my stuff and try new things but I think that's a personality thing…I do it because it interests me to do that, but I can imagine a lot of colleagues who may not have that same personality will just churn out the same stuff because there isn't time to update it.
>
> *…*
>
> *Worlds-in-(inter)action* – We still teach but we don't have the time really to prepare material and put the care and love into the material and our teaching and updating material. Quite typically now it will be the day before and we're putting a lecture together (X3).

I would argue that X3's use of 'we' and 'our' in the second quote locate him/her firmly within the experience presented. If this argument is accepted then X3, through these figured worlds, gives two contrasting ideas about his/her actions regarding teaching preparation. In one s/he is 'updat[ing] my stuff and try[ing] new things'. In the other s/he is preparing lectures 'the day before' and is not able to 'put the care and love' into either the material or his/her teaching. So which should one believe? Which figured world gives the more accurate representation? Gee (2011) would perhaps say neither and both. Whilst one type of figured world may be more effective in shaping daily behaviour, Gee (2011, p.92) argued

figured worlds overall 'need not be complete, fully formed, or consistent. Their partiality and inconsistency are sometimes the result of the fact that one figured world can incorporate different and conflicting values…' Ultimately, Gee (2011, p.92) stated 'the partiality and inconsistency of figured worlds reflects the fact that we have all had a great many diverse and conflicting experiences…' In this way, figured worlds appear to echo scholars' arguments regarding the incomplete and partial nature of hegemony (see chapter seven, section 7.4). Fairclough (1995) asserted that hegemony is only ever partially or temporarily achieved as different discourses and ideologies continually struggle for dominance (Wodak, 2001). Whilst the extracts presented here show interviewees having allegiances to conflicting types of figured worlds, they also demonstrate that neither type is complete or totalising. Instead, while one type of figured world may more effectively shape behaviour; both types appear to be struggling for dominance in interviewees' perceptions of how 'the [HE] world works' (Gee, 2011, p.76). In chapter seven (section 7.4) I suggested from a CDA perspective that contradictions between certain interviewees' beliefs and discursive practices used highlight the incomplete and partial nature of neo-liberal hegemony and as such, expose the potential to problematise, critique and transform the dominant discourse. I would suggest the contradictions and conflicts between interviewees' figured worlds here offer the same potential. They again expose that no figured world is complete and highlight further that behaviour and actions may be shaped by a type of figured world not fully acknowledged. Additionally, in chapter seven (section 7.5) I noted Luzón Marco's (2000) argument that the struggle between opposing discourses can call into question and challenge the 'naturalness' of the represented world-view within those discourses. Applied to the discussion here, the conflict between different types of figured worlds could call into question in particular the accuracy of interviewees' espoused world view. Effectively, as in chapter seven, my data does not support the view that interviewees are yet aware of their conflicting figured worlds or are calling them into question. However, from a CDA perspective the conflicts are apparent and therefore so are the possibilities for awareness and critique. How this potential may be realised is discussed further in section 8.6.

8.4 Interviewees limiting their own potential for critique

The discussion in the chapter so far, whilst showing currently limited critique and resistance from my interviewees, has emphasised the 'room for hope' (U6) that arises from their comments. However, the data presented in chapters five and six also support scholars' views that much academic agency has been eroded in recent years. Chapter two (sections 2.4.4 and 2.4.5) highlighted arguments that academic identities have been continually

undermined (Beck and Young, 2005) through aspects such as their increasing disappearance from policy documents and the growing dominance of the 'student experience' discourse (Sabri, 2010; 2011). Additionally, scholars such as Strathern (2000) and Harris (2005) have observed the decline in trust placed in academics as professionals to ensure good standards of teaching and learning, and the growth instead of external accountability. As I suggested in chapter two, these circumstances could to a significant extent account for the seeming passivity of the academic community reported by scholars such as Smith and Webster (1997) and Thorpe (2008). Of course, the effects of intense workloads and managerial approaches may also play a part. Davies et al. (2006, p.316) claimed academics' workloads are now so heavy they no longer have the 'luxury' to stop and reflect on their own situations. Chapter five (section 5.4) did indeed highlight the almost overwhelming workloads that many interviewees feel they are struggling with. Additionally, chapters five (section 5.3) and six (section 6.2.1) showed most interviewees perceive a 'top-down' style of management at the university that they believe does not seek or value academics' professional judgements and effectively closes down any collegial negotiation and discussion. This particular perception could also help to account for some academics seeming 'reflexive impotence' (Fisher, 2009, p.53) as described above in section 8.2. There are evidently then a number of reasons why the potential for academics critiquing HE appears yet to be realised at this institution to any significant degree. However, my analysis also suggests that some academics may be further limiting their capacities for critique through their desire to present themselves as a 'useful' employee.

Chapter three (section 3.5.2) described the job insecurity being experienced across the HE sector at the time of interviewing. The strategy of two interviewees who particularly felt this insecurity was to make themselves as useful to the university as possible. Z2, for example, stated:

> [C]ertainly within our team I take the view that you've got to do more than just pull your weight, you've got to make yourself useful…We can't just tread water and do what we've always done, we've got to be offering to help in other ways and develop the service because if push comes to shove, you know, who are the people they're [management] going to keep? They're the ones who have that kind of outlook (Z2).

Z2's comments here relate to the redundancies and 'contractions' s/he has observed occurring in his/her own department and across the university as a whole. His/her strategy is to 'make yourself useful' to be one of the employees management is 'going to keep'. Significantly, being 'useful' means fitting in with the university's particular agendas:

[I]t's quite possible [management will further reduce our department] unless we can develop ourselves in new ways which are beneficial to the university's business model (Z2).

Z2's remarks here have two important implications for criticality. Firstly, s/he implies that the department's, and so his/her own, future is dependent on developing in ways 'beneficial to the university's business model'. To what extent then can, or will, one critique agendas they have to emulate in order to survive? Further, in the first quote Z2 notes it is not just about making oneself 'useful', it is also about having 'that kind of outlook'. Z2 suggests with this comment that academics need to change how they *think* about their work too and align that thinking with ways the university will consider 'beneficial'. There appears no space for critique within this kind of thinking, and Z2 offers no view suggesting that critique of the university's 'business model' should occur. Y5 further underscores the power of job insecurity to reduce academics' capacities for critique:

I'm massively busy, I am very keen to be busy, I'd like to keep my job. What I have to do is sensibly take on work that is presented as work that can be done [in other parts of the school too] because the modules which I've been about have either gone or are about to go. I'm fortunate that I can recognise where there are chances for me to apply that which I've been about to some of the other activities in this school…I'd like to stay working, my strategy at the moment is to keep my head down and keep smiling, to do my work, fall in line...I'm the docile worker (Y5).

Y5's position at the time of interviewing was slightly more precarious than Z2's. The university was closing Y5's particular department because the courses were deemed to recruit insufficient numbers. Y5's strategy is to keep busy and present his/her work as being applicable to other parts of the faculty to increase his/her chances of being re-deployed. In this way s/he appears to be following Z2's advice to 'make yourself useful'. Whilst s/he does not seem to suggest the change in thinking that Z2 does, Y5's 'strategy' is just as compliant. In his/her own words s/he is 'the docile worker' who 'fall[s] in line' and keeps his/her 'head down'. The focus is on appearing a useful, obedient employee rather than one who will rock the boat. Y6 noted colleagues using a similar strategy:

[I know] other people who are thinking 'I've already been told I'm going to lose my job, but if there's a chance that now I look like a good employee may be they'll keep me on to do another job'. I can think of one person [who said] 'I don't want to antagonise the Dean if there's a possibility that I could stay here after this job ends' (Y6).

My intention here is not to criticise any of these interviewees. Both Z2 and Y5 have families to support and the possibility of losing their jobs is obviously a very frightening one. Their strategies are, from this perspective, entirely understandable. My point is that the insecurity of the HE sector, for these academics at least, appears to encourage attitudes and behaviour directed more towards being 'useful', compliant employees rather than ones who will question and challenge. Of course, is it realistic to expect academics to critically question the values shaping their institutions if they believe those institutions could make them redundant at any time? Could management cultivate this insecurity to keep academics compliant? Scholars such as Shore and Wright (1999) and Davies (2005) do indeed suggest neo-liberalism embeds environmental vulnerability and insecurity to ensure workers remain compliant. The 'room for hope' (U6) again is that Y5 appears to recognise s/he is adopting this compliance strategy. Potentially then, s/he could choose to forego 'docile' behaviour if s/he ever feels in a more secure position. However, from a less hopeful perspective, Z2's comments suggest that a desire to be a 'useful' employee and conform to the university's agendas could become a more ingrained 'outlook' for some.

8.5 Chapter summary

I highlighted at the beginning of this chapter some scholars' arguments that academics should critically investigate the wider context(s) in which their teaching takes place (Kreber, 2005; Cranton, 2011). These critical investigations should focus on asking fundamental questions and challenging assumptions about the social, political and economic 'realities' of our time. However, I have showed many of my sample appearing to accept 'the way it is' (Y1) with apparently little thought given to the possibilities for challenge or change. In this way, the data seem to support Fisher's (2009, p.53) argument that teachers are experiencing 'reflexive impotence'. Yet, some data also suggest that the situation may not be as totalising an experience as Fisher's concept indicates. At least some interviewees recognise the potential to 'exploit the gap' and resist and/or challenge current HE agendas through their classroom interactions with their students. Again, I brought a CDA perspective to bear on some of the data and show various figured worlds evidently competing and conflicting within interviewees' comments. Whilst one type may be more effective in shaping behaviour, I argued that, like competing discourses (see chapter seven), the conflicts show that no figured world is complete. Therefore, there remains potential for interviewees to become aware of, and so call into question, the limitations of their espoused worlds and the influence on their actions of other, perhaps unconscious, figured worlds. Though accusations of passivity have been levelled at the British academic community (e.g. Thorpe,

2008), I suggested this potential for critique, along with behaviour linked to 'exploiting the gap', expands the 'room for hope' indicated by U6. However, I also identified that some academics may be limiting their capacities to critique HE by their focus on appearing a 'useful' employee. It remains then only to consider the potential implications for scholars' views of a critically-focused SoTL.

8.6 Implications for SoTL

Chapter two (section 2.5.3) highlighted scholars' views that SoTL should also assume a critical pedagogy approach in which academics question the HE framework around them. As I identified, Freire (2000, p.73) argued that critical pedagogy should enable people to develop their critical consciousness and see themselves as 'transformers of [their] world'. Through this critical consciousness people may see that changes, or simply just ways of being, are *choices* and alternative choices do exist. Scholars such as Kreber (2005) and Cranton (2011) maintained that a critically-focused SoTL would ensure firstly that HE itself is subject to explicit and critical investigation, and secondly that action occurs to effect changes that 'reflect the garnered understanding' (Gilpin and Liston, 2009, p.5) from those investigations. This emphasis on action reflects critics' views that academics themselves should change the HE system rather than politicians (e.g. Laurillard, 2002; Nicholls, 2005; Hall, 2011). A bleak picture could be taken from my data that suggests many interviewees appear to accept 'the way it is' (Y1) and not question whether other ways of being exist. From this perspective, one could simply agree with Fisher (2009, p.53) that 'reflexive impotence' is all but consuming HE teachers and critique or challenge is unlikely to occur. The current HE environment could also be seen to compound this situation, with some simply feeling too insecure to engage in any activity that management could deem 'antagonis[tic]' (Y6). This picture would imply then that the outlook for a critically-focused SoTL is decidedly gloomy.

However, as I also argued in chapter seven (section 7.8); a CDA perspective offers some hope. I suggested in chapter seven that SoTL should incorporate CDA so that scholarly investigations of teaching and learning in HE can help to 'denaturalise' dominant discourses and discursive practices, and expose their implicit values and assumptions. I reiterate that argument here, particularly as I have shown in section 8.3 how CDA can also help to expose one's figured worlds, i.e. the 'taken-for-granted theories or stories about how the world works that we use to get on efficiently with our daily lives' (Gee, 2011, p.76). Further, analysis of these figured worlds demonstrate how it may be the worlds not consciously acknowledged that more powerfully shape behaviour. If, for example, Y2, U5 and X1 were to conduct the

same sort of analysis as I have done here[67], they may be able to identify how their actions appear guided more by the consumerist theory or story of HE that they actually criticise in their espoused worlds. As I identify above, SoTL proponents maintain that HE itself should be subject to critical and explicit investigation. Where better for academics to start than by subjecting their own HE experience to this critical and explicit investigation?

Significantly, I would argue that whilst SoTL scholars call for SoTL to incorporate a more critical focus to bring 'into the light' aspects of teaching and learning in the HE context that may otherwise remain hidden (Brew and Ginns, 2008, p.543) they do not provide much practical guidance on how to begin. This point evokes Barnett's (2011) argument that scholars often offer meta-strategies for what a university should be, but with correspondingly little practical advice about the specific action to take. As he stated, 'what is to be done on the Monday…remain[s] far from clear' (p.69). CDA could perhaps provide the framework needed within a critically-focused SoTL to help academics begin their critical investigations. If so, it could also help to address another issue I would suggest SoTL scholars currently overlook. This issue is how academics progress from not yet realising their capacities to critique to engaging in a critically-focused SoTL, particularly at such an insecure time within the sector. I have found no evidence to suggest SoTL proponents have addressed this issue. Yet, it is very pertinent, particularly as my data indicate that becoming a useful employee rather than an antagonistic one could be an approach increasingly adopted as redundancies continue to loom. If CDA was to be a framework used within a critically-focused SoTL, as I suggest here and in chapter seven (section 7.8), it could mean that academics direct their critical investigations towards themselves firstly in respect of the extent to which they may be influenced by certain discourses and/or figured worlds. Consequently, the investigations may be less likely to be deemed antagonistic by management, and may even go under its radar, but would be pivotal in increasing academics' critical awareness and understanding of the HE context and their own experiences within it. As I identify above, scholars such as Laurillard (2002) and Hall (2011) maintain that academics themselves should change HE rather than politicians. Investigations that increase their awareness of discourses, ideologies, and/or theories/stories penetrating HE could help them feel empowered to do so. Again, as in chapter seven, I can lay no blueprint for how resistance or change may follow, or suggest that it would be an easy process, particularly if potential redundancies continue to threaten job security. However, I reiterate from chapter seven that academic empowerment must surely be the necessary first step.

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[67] They could, for example, analyse their own interview transcripts. I emailed each interviewee a copy of their interview transcript for verification.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

9.1 Introduction

In this conclusion chapter I discuss my findings in relation to the original research aims for this study. I then explore the wider implications of my findings and consider the contribution my study makes to the current body of knowledge about the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL). Finally, I identify directions for future research that build on the findings from my study.

9.2 My research aims

I identified in chapter one (section 1.2) that the predominant goal of my study was to examine whether SoTL still has meaning and relevance within the current higher education (HE) context in England. My four specific research aims were:

1. to explore the extent to which the underpinning values of SoTL (established by the Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (CASTL) as the aims of SoTL) are perceived of by academics in this study as an important part of their role as teachers;
2. to explore how the perceptions of academics committed to teaching and learning are located/shaped within the current HE context in which market principles and economic objectives are dominating policy strategies;
3. to examine the extent to which the values of SoTL can be followed within the current HE context;
4. to consider if SoTL could support academics' efforts to critically explore the wider HE context which shapes their teaching and learning practices, and so resist, or imagine alternatives, to dominant political agendas.

These aims are addressed to varying degrees within my analysis chapters (chapters four to eight). Chapter four, for example, identified that fostering significant, long lasting learning (one of SoTL's aims) is central to most interviewees' values. However, the data discussed in that chapter also suggest that these values are increasingly undermined by consumerist pressures that the academics I interviewed appear to be experiencing. Further, chapter seven demonstrated that these consumerist pressures, together with the economic objectives that are dominating HE strategy, are shaping academics' language to some

extent too. Chapters five and six highlighted the various managerial and workload pressures interviewees perceive within their roles, and the degree to which interviewees' perceptions suggest the academic role is being de-professionalised and re-professionalised. Consequently, the data suggest there are many challenges for academics to follow the values of SoTL within the current HE environment. Finally, chapters seven and eight considered how SoTL might be extended by incorporating critical discourse analysis (CDA) so that it could more effectively support academics' efforts to critically explore the wider context which shapes their teaching and learning practices.

In each analysis chapter I have discussed the potential implications for SoTL from the data presented. This chapter will not to repeat those discussions but will consider and examine more fully the research findings in relation to my research aims. As such, I will now discuss each research aim in turn.

9.2.1 To what extent are the underpinning values of SoTL (established by the Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (CASTL) as the aims of SoTL) perceived of by academics in this study as an important part of their role as teachers?

It may be useful here to reiterate the three underpinning aims of SoTL:

- to foster significant, long lasting learning for all students;
- to advance the practice and profession of teaching;
- to bring to teaching the recognition afforded to other forms of scholarly work (Hutchings and Shulman, 1999).

The aim that has the most bearing on academics in their role as teachers is the first: to foster significant, long lasting learning for all students. I identified in chapter four (section 4.2) that whilst CASTL may have established this aim, it did not define what 'significant' learning means or looks like. Consequently, I referred in that chapter to Fink's (2003) taxonomy of significant learning, which consists of six relational and interactive components ranging from foundational knowledge to learning how to learn. By relating the interviewees' responses about their teaching and learning values to this taxonomy, I demonstrated that fostering significant, long lasting learning is a value held by all interviewees to varying degrees. In particular, most interviewees described their desire to encourage students to apply their knowledge and critical thinking skills to work and society-based situations, to inspire students to care about the subject(s) being studied, and to help students become

autonomous and independent learners. As such, one of SoTL's central aims still has meaning and relevance within the values held by the academics in this study at least.

9.2.2 How are the perceptions of academics committed to teaching and learning located/shaped within the current HE context in which market principles and economic objectives are dominating policy strategies?

I discussed in chapter five (section 5.2) the sense of vocationalism some interviewees expressed towards their work as HE teachers and their evocation of 'inner dedication'. As I highlighted in that chapter (section 5.5), whilst no interviewee stated that their commitment or dedication to teaching has lessened within the current HE environment, many perceive challenges to maintaining both their identity as teaching professionals and their teaching values. Chapter four most explicitly conveyed many interviewees' perceptions that their teaching and learning values are undermined and obscured by the consumerist agenda currently dominating HE. Significantly, it is their perception of management's and students' compliance with this agenda that appears to be affecting them most deeply. Over half perceive management to be shifting responsibility for learning away from students and more directly towards the academics. Consumerist forces play a large part here as some interviewees perceive management to value good pass rates more than sound educational experiences to secure current students' funding and entice future potential students (consumers). Consequently, a number of interviewees expressed their sense of feeling pressured by management to ensure students do not fail, which could result in a reduction of academic standards. Many other interviewees also perceive pressure from management to ensure good National Student Survey (NSS) scores and concomitantly feel blamed if low scores are achieved. Some interviewees' responses here suggest that they not only feel subject to this pressure but their perceptions of their role may also be shaped by it to some extent too. Chapter four (section 4.4.1) showed at least one academic feeling they have to 'strive to keep our final year students happy' because they are the ones 'that really matter' (X4) given that these students are those required to fill out NSS forms. Many interviewees' perceptions then appear to be located within a context that seems threatening to their values and identities as teaching professionals. The perceived shift in responsibility for learning potentially constrains their abilities to help develop student autonomy and responsibility in learning. Additionally, the pressure felt to achieve good pass rates and NSS scores effectively reduces teaching to ensuring happy students who do not fail rather than facilitating challenging, and significant, learning experiences for students.

Importantly, some interviewees also perceive the consumerist agenda to be fundamentally altering their relationships with students. Nearly half the sample believes students now explicitly see themselves as consumers. As such, some academics feel students who are paying higher fees than previous cohorts have a greater sense of their entitlement to a high degree classification and see the responsibility for learning sitting more directly with the academics. Consequently, academic perceptions of the student/academic relationship, in this study at least, appear to be moving away from a reciprocal relationship in which each 'play their part' (Robbins Report, 1963, p.181) towards a relationship where the academic does most of the work for the paying customer.

Chapter six further explored the effect of the consumerist agenda on interviewees' perceptions of their place in relation to students at the university. Specifically, numerous interviewees feel management explicitly conveys the message that students, and the 'student experience', comes first. For some, these messages imply at best that academics and their experience come second and at worst that they are given no consideration whatsoever. Many also perceive an erosion of their professional judgement and believe management places students' (as customers) needs and wants above academics' professional opinions.

It seems apparent then that interviewees' perceptions of the consumerist agenda in HE emphasise the extent to which it undermines academics as teaching professionals and fundamentally transforms their relationship with students. Their perceptions appear located around this issue. However, it is evident also that their perceptions seem shaped by this agenda too. Chapter seven highlighted the naturalised use of consumerist language in many interviewees' comments. More importantly, it also showed some interviewees struggling to offer alternatives to consumer concepts. Section 7.3, for example, presented quotes from four interviewees whose alternatives to the student-as-consumer concept still appear rooted within a consumerist discourse. However, section 7.5 demonstrated that some interviewees are aware of their active use of consumerist discourse, which I argue means there is potential for them to critique and challenge that discourse. Whilst academics' perceptions then may be shaped to some extent by the consumerist agenda, it appears their perceptions could also potentially start shaping that agenda too. Chapter eight provided further evidence of these reciprocal shaping possibilities. Section 8.3 explored Gee's (2011) concept of figured worlds. I presented here examples of a consumerist figured world guiding some interviewees' actions rather than their espoused worlds. Again, these examples show that to some degree academics' perceptions of their environment are shaped by the consumerist agenda because this agenda is influencing various ways in which they act and

behave. However, I suggested in this chapter that interviewees' competing and conflicting worlds expose the incompleteness of their different figured worlds. Therefore, there is potential for academics to question and critique their figured worlds if they begin developing awareness about the conflicts and contradictions arising within them. As I stated in chapter seven (section 7.6), my data does not suggest that academics in my study are yet challenging, and so shaping, to any great extent the consumerist agenda in HE. Yet close analysis of their perceptions, particularly from a CDA perspective, suggests there is potential for them to shape, as much as be shaped by, this dominating agenda.

Whilst the consumerist agenda loomed large within interviewees' comments, discussion in the interviews did also focus on the employability agenda and its economic objectives. Chapter six presented much of the data gained in response to this agenda from my interviewees. As I indicated in section 6.3 of that chapter, all interviewees perceived employability to be a growing and dominating agenda within HE. Nearly half the sample appeared uncritically accepting of the agenda, with some seeming to echo the government's position that employability should be the 'return' students get for the higher fees they will be paying. I argued in this section that the interviewees' limited criticality about the employability agenda meant there was little acknowledgement of the potential re-professionalisation of academics to training deliverers[68]. The lack of critical discussion in interviews about the employability agenda may be a consequence of the university itself seeming to adopt a more utilitarian stance to the provision it offers (see section 6.3). Indeed, a small number of academics described changes made in their teaching and/or course design that appear to relate to the university's more utilitarian view of employability-based education. Yet some interviewees did convey concern that the balance between academic and applied education may currently be tipping in their practices towards the latter. I explored this balance shift through a small number of interviewees' comments regarding developing students' higher level thinking skills. It appears the academics in this sample are basing students' development of these skills largely around the needs and wants of employers. This situation led me to argue that an uncritical acceptance of the employability agenda could result in the instrumentalising of higher level thinking skills.

Overall, academics' perceptions in this study appeared significantly shaped by the employability agenda. Many appear to perceive it as inevitable and indeed as a necessary 'return' for higher fee-paying students. Whilst a few observe tensions within the agenda, it appears that a utilitarian view of employability is already impacting on some academics'

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[68] The Campaign for the Public University (CfPU) (2011, p.3) has already argued that the role of universities has been debased to 'training for employment'.

teaching practices and course design. It seems therefore that many interviewees' perceptions are currently located within a context in which employability, as in 'training for employment' (CfPU, 2011, p.3), is a growing and inevitable HE agenda.

9.2.3 To what extent can the values of SoTL be followed within the current HE context?

I discussed in each analysis chapter the implications for SoTL from the data explored in that chapter. Much of these discussions centre on the challenges the perceived HE environment presents to SoTL and to academics adhering to its values. I will briefly synthesise these discussions here.

I noted above in section 9.2.1 the three underpinning aims (or values) of SoTL. My data suggest a number of ways in which academics are challenged to follow its first value, i.e. fostering significant, long lasting learning for all students. Section 9.2.1 showed that all interviewees were concerned to develop this type of learning with students. However, as chapter four (section 4.7) discussed, this particular SoTL value appears threatened by the consumerist forces interviewees perceive from the institution, management and students, which primarily appear to shift responsibility for learning from students to academics. Additionally, academics perceive themselves to be pressured by management to ensure good pass rates and NSS scores. Section 4.7 showed that this situation appears to have many negative consequences for teaching and for fostering significant learning. Firstly, as some interviewees indicate, teaching quality may reduce as standards are lowered or grades inflated to ensure students pass the course. Secondly, the learning experience may become focused largely around keeping students happy rather than challenging them academically. Finally, academics might opt for 'safe' teaching instead of trying new practices and/or methods to reduce the risk of potentially bad NSS scores if students do not like the new methods.

Of course, it is not just significant learning that would suffer in this situation but the other two values of SoTL too. If 'safe' teaching is preferred, or deemed the less risky option, then there is little or no incentive to innovate with teaching practices. Similarly, if students are increasingly devolved of their responsibility for learning, there appears small need again to either experiment with or research teaching practices to encourage more effective student learning. If research, innovation and experimentation are not occurring, and their results not disseminated to the wider community, advancement of teaching practices would seem unlikely to happen. Correspondingly, if 'safe' teaching takes precedence over the

scholarship *of* teaching, it would be difficult to argue that teaching does indeed deserve the recognition afforded to other forms of scholarly work.

Yet it is not just consumerism that may be undermining academics' abilities to follow the latter two SoTL values. Chapter five (section 5.7) highlighted interviewees' apparently overwhelming and potentially exploitative workloads. These workloads may simply leave academics with no extra time, effort or energy to become involved in SoTL-related activities. This chapter also reported the potentially constraining effect of sector-wide job insecurities on academics' motivation to innovate and experiment with their teaching practices. Additionally, many interviewees in this study felt insecure within the institution itself. Section 5.2.1 highlighted both their distrust of management and their belief that management could make them redundant at any point. Again, as I suggested in section 5.7, academics may prefer to play it safe with their teaching practices in this type of environment rather than risk the consequences of an unsuccessful teaching innovation.

Chapter six (section 6.5) further discussed the challenges that the current HE environment presents to the teaching profession. Whilst SoTL aims to advance the profession of teaching, many interviewees currently perceive an erosion of academic professionalism. I also argued in chapter six that the employability agenda has the potential to reduce academic professionalism further. If teaching centres on helping students develop skills in relation largely to employer needs, then the intellectual rigour of teaching at higher education level is reduced as it is not encouraging students to question and critique beyond the point that employers want. The rigour of teaching is not only diminished in this situation, but the profession itself as HE teachers become more akin to deliverers of training than HE lecturers. Additionally, if academics are reduced to become more like training deliverers, then the need for them to research teaching practices would also seem likely to reduce. As chapter six highlighted, research into teaching and learning distinguishes between scholarly teaching and the scholarship *of* teaching. Further, it is through this scholarship that scholars argue the practice and profession of teaching will be advanced and accorded with the status and recognition it deserves (e.g. Hutchings and Shulman, 1999; Richlin, 2001). Therefore, if research into teaching and learning is diminished, then it seems inevitable that SoTL and its values are diminished too.

Chapter seven (section 7.8) highlighted that interviewees' naturalised use of consumerist language may be further undermining the scholarly aspect of teaching. I argued here that their use of this language conveys education as a commodity or service to be bought and sold, with academics the 'deliverers' of the commodity or service providers. I suggested that

service providers are typically expected to deliver to their customers or clients either the results of their knowledge or a finished product. Consequently, in this consumerist framework of education, the perspective of academics as learners too is weakened. Yet from a SoTL perspective, the academic is engaged in a 'dynamic endeavour' (Boyer, 1990, p.23) with his or her students whereby each continue to learn from the other. Indeed, as I questioned in chapter seven, is it possible to be a scholar if one is not continuing to learn? The growing consumerist vision of HE then not only challenges academics to follow the values of SoTL, it also makes these values increasingly obsolete by emphasising education as a finished product or service rather than a process to be engaged in by both student *and* tutor.

Overall then, the data from my study suggests the current HE environment has two significant implications for SoTL. Firstly, from a practical perspective, SoTL's values appear increasingly difficult for academics to follow given the pressures they perceive from management and their overwhelming workloads. Secondly, SoTL appears threatened from an ideological perspective too. Its central elements, such as research into and experimentation and innovation with teaching and teaching practices not only appear harder for academics to engage in but seem rendered virtually redundant in an environment where consumerist and utilitarian ideologies dominate and transform the role and identities of both students and academics. As I indicated in chapter four (section 4.7), the future of SoTL in the current HE context looks very uncertain indeed.

9.2.4 To what extent could SoTL support academics' efforts to critically explore the wider context which shapes their teaching and learning practices, and so resist, or imagine alternatives, to dominant political agendas?

The prior section indicates that my data present a somewhat bleak view about the future of SoTL within the present HE context in England, at least from the perspective of my interview sample. However, in chapters seven and eight I suggested SoTL could incorporate critical discourse analysis (CDA) so that academics might begin to build awareness of the extent to which ideologies and elements of the current HE system are impacting on their perceptions of their roles and activities. I argued that conducting CDA within a SoTL-based framework may help academics begin to feel empowered to question and challenge aspects such as the discourse(s) penetrating HE or the 'taken-for-granted theories or stories about how the [HE] world works' (Gee, 2011, p.76). Most importantly, chapter eight (section 8.6) highlighted that using a CDA framework within SoTL could help academics begin to subject their own HE experiences to critical investigation. I stated in section 8.6 that a fundamental

issue not yet adequately addressed by SoTL scholars is how academics progress from not yet realising their capacities to critique to engaging in a critically-focused SoTL. Applying CDA as a framework within this type of SoTL could mean academics direct their investigations towards their own experiences first, which would then help them develop their critical awareness and understanding of the present HE context. From this awareness and understanding, academics may feel empowered further to investigate the HE context beyond their own experiences. I declared in chapters seven and eight that resisting and imagining alternatives to the dominant political agendas may still be a difficult process for academics and one I can lay no blueprint for. However, academic empowerment must surely be the first step and it is this step that SoTL could support if it incorporates CDA within it.

9.3 Implications of my findings

The predominant goal of my research with respondents from one institution was to examine whether SoTL still has meaning and relevance within the current HE context in England. I have already discussed two significant implications for SoTL suggested by the data gained from interviewees in this study. From a practical perspective, its values appear increasingly difficult for these academics to follow. Additionally, the concept of SoTL is threatened from an ideological perspective and seems ever more redundant within the agendas, such as consumerism and employability, that are presently dominating HE. What then are the wider implications of my findings in relation to my main research goal?

It appears that SoTL still has meaning to some extent within the perspectives of the academics participating in this study. Whilst they may not have referred to SoTL itself, they identified its aim to foster significant, long lasting learning as central to their own teaching values. However, they also suggest that facilitating this type of learning in the current HE environment is getting harder and is increasingly undermined by the consumerist agenda in particular. Additionally, as chapter five (section 5.2) identified, some interviewees explicitly described the vocational stance they take to their work as HE teachers and the inner dedication they have to this role. Though their teaching values may be undermined, their inner dedication appears currently to hold firm (see section 5.5). Consequently, for many interviewees the importance of HE teaching is still evident, as is their desire to do the best for their students within their teaching roles. It appears then that the fundamentals of SoTL, e.g. teaching and supporting student learning being the central task of HE (see chapter two, section 2.2.1), still have meaning to the academics in this study. However, it is also evident that many interviewees perceive the HE and institutional context as constraining and

undermining the standards of their teaching and type(s) of learning they would like to promote with their students.

Whilst the data may suggest that SoTL still has meaning to some extent within the perceptions of some academics, it also indicates that SoTL's relevance may not only be threatened but could already be declining within the current HE environment. I highlighted in section 9.2.3 that its relevance is threatened from an ideological perspective, which suggests that SoTL as currently envisaged by proponents such as Shulman (1998; 1999; 2000; 2002) and Huber and Hutchings (2005) could become a concept obsolete within and out of touch with the current HE context. I observed, for example, in chapter two (section 2.3.5) that some of the most prominent SoTL advocates (e.g. Prosser, 2008; Hutchings et al., 2011; Shulman, 2011) have yet to sufficiently recognise the challenges presented to SoTL by factors such as the consumerist agenda, sector-wide job insecurities and ever increasing academic workloads. My data reinforce the huge obstacles that these factors present to academics engaging in SoTL activities. Further, the data support my concern in chapter two (section 2.3.5) that the lack of attention SoTL advocates are currently giving to contextual matters means SoTL could become isolated from the 'realities' of the HE system. Many interviewees, for example, perceive the 'realities' of their situation to be increasingly based around a consumerist vision of HE in which management and students shift the responsibility for learning more directly to academics than to students. In this vision, students become consumers to be kept happy and academics feel blamed for any and all problems arising within the 'student experience'. Additionally, job insecurities within the sector mean many interviewees believe they could be made redundant at any time and are concerned mainly to behave in a way that ensures they can 'keep [their] position here' (U3). It is these 'realities', as I discussed in each analysis chapter, that are challenging SoTL by challenging on the one hand the nature of teaching and learning in HE, and on the other hand, the extent to which academics feel confident and secure to experiment and innovate with their teaching and learning practices. By not acknowledging the 'realities' of the HE system and the challenges they present to SoTL, advocates such as Prosser (2008), Hutchings et al. (2011) and Shulman (2011) are not yet sufficiently addressing the extent to which SoTL's relevance within the current HE system is obscured and indeed threatened. As such, SoTL may be more likely to decline than become part of the professional role of all academics, as proposed by Shulman (2000) (chapter two, section 2.2.5).

Whilst the data from this study shows the potentially declining relevance of SoTL within the current English HE context, it also identifies how it might become a more relevant concept to, and a method of empowerment for, academics working within the present system. In

chapter two (section 2.5) I reviewed scholars' arguments for SoTL to become a catalyst for change within the HE system by infusing critical practice within teaching and learning investigations. In this way, academics engaged in a critically-focused SoTL could begin to investigate not only their teaching and learning practices, but the wider context(s) that shape and influence those practices. Kenny (2008, p.7) argued that by carrying out these wider critical investigations, academics should become 'more aware of the overall political and organisational contexts in which they work'. From this awareness, they may begin to feel more empowered to question, critique and challenge agendas dominating HE. In section 9.2.4 I reviewed my argument for SoTL to incorporate CDA in order that a framework can develop for how academics could approach SoTL investigations from a critical perspective. This framework appears necessary given that my findings suggest that in the current restrictive HE environment it appears unlikely that academics will feel able and confident to engage in a *critically*-focused SoTL. Indeed, there is little critical questioning of the current HE system occurring from my sample of academics at least. Incorporating CDA within SoTL could then provide a framework through which a critically-focused SoTL can be achieved. My data suggest this framework is needed before SoTL can reach its full critical potential.

9.4 My contribution to the body of knowledge about SoTL

Each analysis chapter has considered the implications for SoTL from the data discussed in that chapter. It is from these considerations that the full contribution of my findings to the current knowledge about SoTL is made. My data, for example, in chapter five show the various practical aspects, like overwhelming workloads and job insecurities, that constrain academics' abilities and confidence to engage in SoTL activities. These types of practical challenges have been previously identified by scholars like Lueddeke (2003) (see chapter two, section 2.3.5), and my data confirm that they are still significant barriers to involvement in SoTL and thus to SoTL becoming a part of every academic's professional role (see section 2.2.5).

Whilst some scholars may have already observed and discussed the practical challenges to SoTL that are evident within my findings, I have found no such discussions occurring about the ideological threats that the current environment also presents to this type of activity. It is here that my research extends the knowledge the currently exists about SoTL. Specifically, as I identified in section 9.2.3, the agendas currently dominating HE render the values of SoTL, and SoTL itself, virtually redundant. Whilst discussion in this chapter so far has centred on the consumerist and employability agendas, the growth of managerialism should

also be considered as one of the agendas that ideologically threatens SoTL. Chapters five (section 5.3) and six (section 6.2.1) showed many interviewees perceiving an erosion of their academic professionalism due to a 'top-down' management style that appears to ignore and devalue academics' professional opinions and judgement in relation to teaching and learning concerns. One of SoTL's aims is to advance the profession of teaching, yet my data suggest that some academics believe their teaching professionalism is currently being *eroded* within the present HE context. If this particular aim of SoTL is to maintain any kind of relevance to the contemporary HE context, SoTL advocates need to take account of findings like mine as they suggest, for example, that a more appropriate aim may be how to stop the profession of HE teaching being eroded further within this context. Likewise, my findings in chapters four, six and seven in relation to the consumerist and employability agendas imply the potential for a lack of need to advance teaching practices if learning becomes less the active responsibility of students and teaching becomes reduced to 'training for employment' (CfPU, 2011, p.3). Consequently, SoTL scholars may need to address the extent to which the necessity to advance teaching practices is undermined in the present HE context so that its aim to advance the practice of teaching can again maintain some kind of contemporary relevance.

My research, by identifying some of the ideological threats that currently exist towards SoTL, exposes significant issues not yet being addressed within the field. It also suggests a very uncertain future for SoTL in the current HE context if these issues do not receive the attention they require. Importantly though, my research seeks to expand SoTL further by pointing to ways that CDA could critically enable at least some academics to effect changes within the HE system. CDA could support academics' efforts to critically investigate the agendas, policies, structures, etc., that so significantly influence their teaching and learning practices. Whilst SoTL scholars call for SoTL to develop its critical potential (see chapter two, section 2.5), they offer little practical guidance as to how academics should approach SoTL investigations from a critical perspective. My suggestion for the incorporation of CDA relates to the evidence within my data that many interviewees in this study do not yet appear to be critically questioning the context they work within. CDA could help academics begin to subject their own experiences to critical investigation first, which may then empower them to question and critique their context(s) further. By offering and justifying CDA as the framework through which a critically-focused SoTL can begin to develop, my research creates a new turn within the SoTL literature.

9.5 Directions for future research

I have garnered, through my case study approach, rich and in-depth data about how academics in one institution perceive their role and identities as HE teachers within the present HE environment. These academics' perceptions suggest SoTL is threatened in the current HE climate both practically and ideologically. Further research that builds on the findings from my case study could be beneficial in exploring the extent to which the threats to SoTL are apparent in the perceptions of academics from across the HE sector. As a case study, my study provides the foundation for this further research by offering possibilities for comparing my data with that gained by researching in other kinds of HE institutions. The study of academic perceptions in these different institutions would further develop the picture of what HE teaching is like today and SoTL's relevance to this teaching.

I have also proposed the incorporation of CDA into SoTL to help SoTL develop its critical focus. This proposal invites further research to assess if CDA could effectively support academics in critically investigating the HE context they work within. Initial research could focus on whether academics feel CDA is a useful and effective process through which they can investigate their experiences within their own institutions. Further studies could then explore if academics' investigations of their own experiences support them in critically examining the wider context(s) they work in. This future research could help to build and develop the new turn in the SoTL literature that my research has created.

9.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed the implications of my findings in relation to the specific research aims of this study. I have shown that whilst the SoTL values may still have meaning to some extent to the academics in this study, its relevance is seriously threatened and undermined by the agendas and policies currently shaping the wider HE context. I have discussed the contribution of my findings and described how they broaden the current body of knowledge about SoTL. Additionally, I have shown how my findings expand the body of knowledge further by suggesting a critically-focused SoTL incorporates CDA as a practical framework through which academics can begin to critically investigate the context they work within.

9.7 A final comment…

Importantly, it should be noted that as this study concludes, the higher education sector in England is continuing to incorporate the changes brought about by the 2011 White Paper (BIS) and it remains a turbulent environment. This study explores academics' experiences during this turbulence, but importantly, it also identifies a potential way for them to begin to gain empowerment within it. To this end, the study offers both hope to and hope for academics working in the sector in this challenging time.

Appendix 1: The on-going cycle of scholarly teaching and the scholarship of teaching
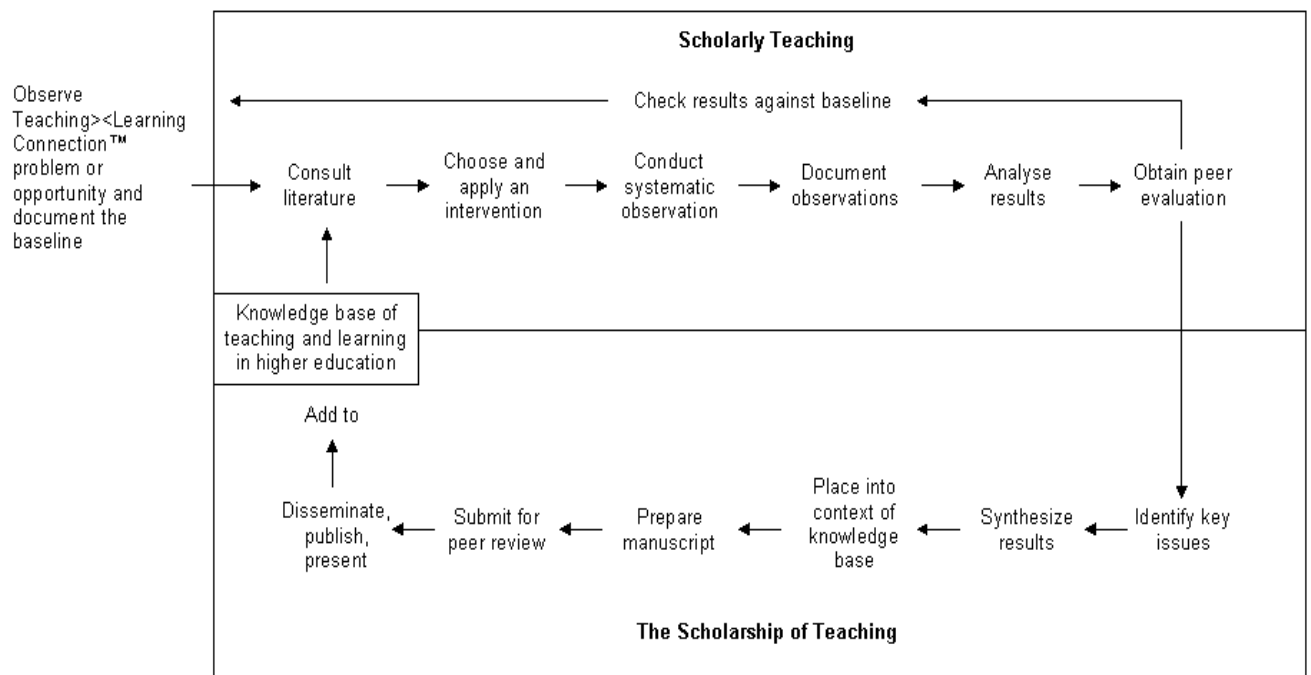
Taken from Richlin (2001, p.59).

Appendix 2: Reviewing the benefits of initially meeting potential participants

I will briefly explain here the evolvement of my strategy to meet initially and informally with each potential participant. I believe this strategy had significant benefits for my research methodology.

I decided on this particular strategy after meeting with the initial academic who was to begin my snowball sample method. Two things happened in this meeting: firstly, I recognised the need in the academic to offload his/her personal feelings about the current state of the HE sector (I noted in my reflective diary after the meeting that 'as soon as I mentioned the project being about teaching in the current context it was like the flood gates opened' 18/5/11, p.1); and secondly, I saw the benefits of establishing personal contact prior to the interviews. I noted in my reflective diary:

> Talking to [the academic] has made me see the benefit of establishing personal contact first. We were able to chat, build up a bit of a rapport before getting 'down to business'. This makes me think that it might be better to meet the names s/he gave me in person first, i.e. email and ask to have a brief meeting, and then in that meeting explain the research and ask them to participate. This may also help with the flood gates thing in that they may get some initial things off their chest in this first meeting rather than in the interview when time is limited (18/5/11, p.2).

So the initial meetings I held began with practicality being at the forefront of my mind. I could begin establishing rapport and we could discuss the wider context of the research project *before* the actual interview, so ensuring that 'on the day', if they agreed to participate, we could get straight down to the business of the interview. I therefore emailed all names obtained through my snowball method and suggested we met for a coffee to chat about my research. Every person I contacted responded that they would be happy to meet (most of these meetings took place over the summer term when academics had more availability). As I progressed with this strategy, I quickly began to realise that 'there is actually a lot going on in these initial meetings' (Reflective Diary, 16/9/11, p.42). Aside from establishing personal contact and building rapport, three particular benefits arose:

1. Input into interview schedule – after I had explained the nature of my research, many of these meetings became quite lengthy chats in which the academics began to talk about their views of the HE sector and the changes occurring at that time. The

issues they discussed helped to inform the interview schedule in two ways[69]: firstly, by suggesting particular questions to include; and secondly, once the schedule had been devised, they provided a way to check that all relevant topics mentioned in further meetings had been included.

2. <u>Focus points for each interview</u> – each academic inevitably had different views about the most significant or worrying issues facing HE at that time. By recording my thoughts after each meeting in my reflective diary, I was able to review these before each interview and, using the flexibility afforded in semi-structured interviewing, focus some of the questioning on their particular concerns.

3. <u>Equalising (to an extent) the power relationship</u> – an extract from my reflective diary illuminates this point:

> It occurred to me today that in doing these initial meetings I have to give something of myself too. Quite a few have asked about my background, so I tell them about my education and work history. It makes me feel as though they are judging my ability to do the research – I don't know if they are…but that's how it feels. So in terms of the power relationship, it doesn't feel that it's all with the interviewer. I actually feel quite vulnerable in that they could decide I don't know a lot about the issue and so [my research is] not worthy of their time. It's a bit of a test of my own understanding, knowledge and worthiness to interview them and conduct this research - obviously on the day it's just a chat we get into, but on a deeper level that's how it feels to me (16/9/11, p.41-42).

I consider my vulnerability in these meetings to be a benefit for the participants. In this research I sought their personal thoughts and opinions; therefore I believe that they deserved to know if I was 'worthy' enough to hear and collect them.

Overall, whilst the strategy began for practicality purposes, there were many direct and subtle benefits. It was a very effective part of my methodology and it is a strategy I would certainly consider using again.

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[69] I did not take any notes during the initial meetings but wrote up my thoughts and reflections after each meeting in my reflective diary.

Appendix 3: Template contact email

The template email below was used to initially contact all potential participants whose names I obtained through my snowball sampling method:

Email Subject: Coffee and chat regarding research

Email message:

Dear [name]

[Name of initial/previous contact] passed on your name to me as an engaging HE teacher here at [the university] who might be interested in some research that I'm conducting. I'm carrying out a PhD study in [the university] on teaching in higher education and the challenges to it that may be posed by the wider organisational and political context. I'm hoping to talk to teachers like yourself to gain their perspective on this issue.

[Name of initial/previous contact] spoke highly of you[70] and I'd very much like to meet with you for a brief chat to explain more about the research I'm doing. Would you be free [dates and times given]? I'll be very happy to get the coffees in to chat over at [campus] cafe. Or I could stop by your office at a time that suits.

I hope we may have the chance to meet and I will look forward to talking with you.

Kind regards

Kerry Dobbins
PhD Researcher

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[70] I used the phrasing 'spoke highly of you' so the recipient of the email would not feel uncomfortable knowing that they had been mentioned in a conversation between myself and one of their colleagues. I wanted to reassure them that their names were given in favourable terms.

Appendix 4: Participant information sheet

An electronic copy of the following participant information sheet was given to each potential participant:

Participant Information Sheet

'The academic as a scholar of teaching and learning': how meaningful is this concept within the wider higher education context in England?[71]

You are being invited to take part in a PhD research project. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Contact details are given below for you to ask about anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

What is the purpose of this project?

The aim of this research project is to investigate whether the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) is still a meaningful concept within higher education (HE) in England today. SoTL relates to the practice of engaging in teaching in HE *and* conducting research into that teaching to understand more about its nature and efficacy. The three underpinning aims of SoTL are to foster significant, long lasting learning for all students; to advance the practice and profession of HE teaching; and to bring to HE teaching the recognition afforded to other forms of scholarly work. The recent Browne Review, Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) and White Paper appear to reinforce a framework of HE that may be antithetical to the SoTL aims.   This framework, based on competition, economic objectives and consumerism, has been growing in HE policy over the last two to three decades. This study will explore the impact of this framework on academics who teach in HE and consider the extent to which the SoTL aims still have meaning in this current context.

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[71] This was my study's working title at the time interviews were conducted.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen as a potential participant for a number of reasons. Firstly, you are an academic who works and teaches within the current context of HE. Secondly, you work at [university], which is the research location for this study. Finally, you work in one of the following faculties: [removed to retain participant anonymity]. These faculties have been chosen for this research as they comprise the broad spectrum of subjects offered by universities. Additionally, following the Browne Review and Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR), they include both the priority STEM subjects and the subjects that will no longer be publicly funded. Each faculty comprises [removed] subject areas and it is anticipated that three academics will be interviewed from each area.

Do I have to take part?

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. This information sheet is for you to keep and, if you do decide to take part, you will also be asked to sign a further consent form. Should you agree to take part, you are still free to withdraw at any time in the process without giving a reason.

What will my participation involve?

Your participation will involve taking part in an interview that I, as the researcher, will conduct. The interview will last between 45 minutes to 1 hour and 15 minutes, though the exact duration will be agreed beforehand to ensure it suits your own time commitments. A possible follow up interview may be desired, but this would be subject to your agreement. The interviews will take place on campus in a location suitable to you. This location may be your office or an appropriate meeting room. The interviews will be scheduled to take place between October and November 2011. They will be voice recorded, subject to your consent, and a transcription will be sent to you for validation.

Will I be anonymous?

Your identity will be kept anonymous in this study and all information about you will be kept strictly confidential. Every effort will be made throughout the research process to protect your anonymity and confidentiality. All research data gained will comply with the legal requirements set down by the Data Protection Act (1998). All project information, including interview transcripts, will be stored securely and only I will have access to this data.

What are the benefits of taking part?

It is currently a very turbulent and uncertain time for academics in HE in England. It is also a very busy time with workloads continuing to increase. It is hoped that the interviews for this research, whilst collecting the relevant data needed, will also provide you with the opportunity to spend some time reflecting on and considering the changes that are occurring in HE. This time may help you to begin formulating and clarifying your own views and opinions, if you have not had sufficient space to do so before. Additionally, the interviews may explore the scholarship of teaching and learning, both as a process and as an activity, and this may be beneficial to you when considering or designing your future teaching and learning strategies.

What will happen to the results of the research?

The results of this research project will be written up as a PhD thesis. Following papers may also be published based on this research. The thesis and ensuing papers may include segments of interview data to illustrate the findings of the study, but only as long as they do not compromise your anonymity and confidentiality. As a research participant, you will be entitled to a copy of the thesis and any following papers.

Who has reviewed this project?

This project has been reviewed by the Education, Law and Social Sciences (ELSS) Faculty Research Degree Committee at Birmingham City University. It has also been approved by the ELSS Faculty Academic Ethics Committee.

Who can I contact for further information?

Please contact me if you would like any further information or clarification of any points. My contact details are:

Kerry Dobbins
Birmingham City University
Attwood Building, room A203
City North Campus
Franchise Street

Birmingham

B42 2SU

Email: kerry.dobbins@googlemail.com or kerry.dobbins@mail.bcu.ac.uk

I am easily contactable by email, however telephone messages can be left via Birmingham City University's faculty research administrators on 0121 202 4658.

Who can I contact if I need to complain?

Every effort will be made in this study to safeguard your interests and well-being. However, if you feel unhappy with any aspect of the research process, complaints may be directed to the Education, Law and Social Sciences (ELSS) Faculty Research Degree Committee at Birmingham City University. Initial contact with this committee can be made via the faculty research administrators on 0121 202 4658.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.

Appendix 5: Interview question schedule

Background

What is your role and title here at [the university]?

Can you briefly tell me about your background in HE as a lecturer (this country/other countries) up to your present role here?

Teaching values

In your role as a HE teacher, could you share with me the values you have about teaching that guide you in that role?

> What kind of learning are you trying to promote? What do you hope students will gain from your teaching?

HE context

There are many ways to describe the current HE context. Some would argue that it's consumerist/instrumental. What do you think of each of these frames? What are your experiences of them?

In which ways do you think that students could be said to be consumerist/instrumental? In which ways could it be said that tutors are impacted by the consumerist/instrumental agendas—of students and their own?

Managerialism

There is a large academic literature on what some call managerialism, others accountability, which explores how managerialism/accountability now impacts on academics. I am interested in finding out your understanding of the experiences of managerialism/accountability. Is this something you are familiar with? If so, tell me about your experience of it and how you think it is shifting over time?

- what impact do they have on your work as a teacher? On how much you can support student learning?
- what effect on workloads, activities/duties, focus on teaching – work intensification?

I'd like to talk to you now about students' surveys – both national and institutional ones. Can you tell me about your experiences of these?

Some critics argue that aspects such as management/accountability de-professionalise lecturers and HE teaching. What do you think of this argument?

Students

Have students changed over the years? If so, in what ways?

>How would you characterise your relationship with your students (partnership, apprenticeship, service provider)? Do you think this might change in light of rising tuition fees and the government steps to put students, in government words, at the heart of the system?

Insecurity

HE can be viewed as a very insecure environment at the moment for lecturers and for universities more generally. Do you feel any of this insecurity?

>How would you describe it? What do you think are the factors that contribute to such insecurity? How does it affect your work as a teacher/your commitment to teaching?

Changing HE

Due to government policy, HE is now being radically revised, which has led to considerable uncertainty regarding its future and purpose.

>What do you think will happen as a consequence of these revisions? What will the impact be on teachers/students? What kinds of students do you think will be likely to come to this university in the future?

>If you could organise HE, how would you do it – what would your vision of HE look like?

Consent Form

'The academic as a scholar of teaching and learning': how meaningful is this concept within the wider higher education context in England?

Name of researcher: Kerry Dobbins

	Please initial box
I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for this study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.	☐
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason. I understand that I may contact the reviewing body (given at the bottom of this form) should I wish to make a complaint.	☐
I agree to audio recording of my interview	☐
I agree to take part in this study	☐

_____   _____   _____
Name of participant   Date   Signature

Kerry Dobbins_____   _____   _____
Name of researcher   Date   Signature

Contact for further information:

Kerry Dobbins
Birmingham City University
Attwood Building, room A203
City North Campus
Franchise Street
Birmingham
B42 2SU

Email: kerry.dobbins@googlemail.com or kerry.dobbins@mail.bcu.ac.uk

Reviewing body:

Education, Law and Social Sciences (ELSS) Faculty Research Degree Committee – Birmingham City University. Contact to be made through faculty research administrators on 0121 202 4658.

Copies to: participant and researcher

Appendix 7: Fink's (2003) taxonomy of significant learning

Fink (2003, p.31) explained that each category of significant learning contains 'specific kinds of learning that are related in some way and have a distinct value for the learner'. He assigned a 'special value' (ibid) to each component of his taxonomy:

Diagram adapted from Fink (2003, p.31-32, italics in original).

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