Eco-systemic Transitions: A holistic vision of international students' transition experiences to British Higher Education

Imene Berrouaine

Thesis submitted to the University of Nottingham for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

University of Nottingham

2022

Abstract

Students' academic transitions have attracted considerable attention as a widely theorised and a thoroughly researched multi-faceted topic. Prime discourses have sparked some of the most prominent and controversial debates about the theoretical underpinnings of *'students' transition' into higher education'* and its implications for praxis. In the British higher education (HE) landscape, the university is subjected to conflicting pressures – between expectations, demands, and retentions – in the light of increased diversity in the student body. Student voice and engagement acted as a vehicle of empowerment in (re) shaping educational policies.

A fundamental blueprint of these discursive primings have placed this debate within the neoliberal university narrative. The pervasiveness of the neoliberal effect on the perceived quality of experience is not new to the academic debate. On a macro level, neoliberal ethos of higher education has functioned as a key reference in the vernacular of policy analysts about governmental governance, management mechanisms, and support strategies in the sphere of higher education. Exploring the nexus between theory and practice, transition in higher education pedagogy has long been critiqued as ill-defined, nuanced, and problematic in echoing the multiple ontological truths of the student experience. The fragmented nature of transition support rationality is firmly rooted within metanarrative of neoliberal logic of the western higher education sector. Homogeneity in support pedagogies is a product of, most notably, the status quo logic of the neoliberal agenda that has exerted a constraining linear approach to transition-focused-support interventions. This research endeavours, first-hand, to inform a well-theorised transition support practice for a diverse body of students. The transition literature bestows coexisting philosophical narratives and robust theoretical frameworks that entertained controversial concepts of linearity, uniformity, fluidity, diversity, and multiplicity of experience. A fundamental element of this study is to push against these limiting boundaries of assessment to address students' 'successful', 'troublesome', and 'failed' students' transitions (Quinn, 2010, p. 124)- *concepts in the transition literature*- beyond simplistic binaries of success, adaptation, and retention to explore the myriad of broader patterns. Foregrounded in this belief, this study aims to challenge the 'taken-for-granted' conceptual and theoretical underpinnings in HE policy frameworks. Drawing upon a mosaic of discursive, spatial, and conceptual formations, this study aims to capture the complexity of the international student's transition experience.

The formal aim of this inquiry is to investigate the extent to which institutional support provision and orchestrated intervention programs accommodate the diversity and multiplicity of experiences in the international student body. Therefore, there was a call to drift away from conventional frameworks to a multi-layered approach of understanding and engaging with transitioning students' needs and expectations. With the aim of disrupting rigid reductionist paradigms, this thesis is underpinned by a wholistic perception of the international student's transition experience. Navigating a feasible route towards this goal, the research is developed with in an eco-systemic critical framework with an emphasis on dynamic interactions [individual ↔ context], and [policymaking↔ ideological perspectives]. This study intends to follow a diagnostic – rather than descriptive- approach to unpack students' perceptions of their own experiences, whilst navigating the myriad of macro and micro environmental and structural factors. The individual sits at the heart of a dynamic organic system *[socio-psych-cultural-economic ecology],* thereby a plethora of networks and connections are highlighted. This study has followed a data triangulation approach from two rounds of data collections with a sample of international students from a British university. The first cycle has focused on the breadth of views and perspectives with a large study with qualitative surveys from (total of n = 611) international students. Outcomes of the first survey study have informed and guided the scope of focus in the second cycle. In this latter, focus groups interviews have been conducted with a sample of (n =26) postgraduate taught international students. Besides discursive opportunities, this study has deployed a variety of reflexive and participatory techniques such as participatory visual research method for conceptual reflexivity, engagement, and expression (e.g., cards, participant-produced drawings).

Grounded in an eco-systemic logic, this study's findings have reflected the dynamic interplay between proximal process from micro-meso-exo-and macro levels of the system. Most notable within the findings of this thesis was the role of inter-individual differences, such as the effect of resource (socio-psych-academic individual background) and situational demands on the quality of experience. On an individual level, outcomes of this study have addressed the role of students' educational trajectories, cognitive resources, their own and their families' educational backgrounds and socio-economic status in shaping their current experiences. On a micro-level, social support (friends and family) and academic support systems acted as powerful units to transition. Whilst ruptures in the first is caused by social detachment and re-connection, ruptures in transition-focused-support seem to be centred around relevancy and distribution mechanisms from the host university (in scale, frequency, and depth). This equally

addressed a thread of issues around the pseudo-neutrality of knowledge, non-inclusiveness, non-belongingness, and under-representation that is hosted by reductive institutional practices and interventions. On a macro level, the analytical lens has allowed exploration of students' internalized comprehensions, and apprehensions of their identity and positionality within the system of HE. The data narrative has provoked reflective discursive connections to the neoliberal agenda of the system, unveiling students' consumerism tendencies and demand of 'rights as customers' in getting support and 'value for money' for their educational experience.

This research contributes to knowledge through casting light on prime interwoven transition complexities from a holistic lens of analysis. It acknowledges the value of dynamic overarching conceptual frameworks in investigating complex-interwoven aspects of diversified experiences. Operating within this critical interpretive framework, this study allows infusing further discussions about conceptual understandings of students' diversified transition experiences. This research promotes the aim of transcending from linearity to multiplicity, from homogenisation to diversification, and from non-representation to inclusion in transition-focused-practices. Building on this thread of arguments, at the heart of this thesis' aims is to inform transition-tailored interventions, support practices oriented to international students, stakeholders and policy-makers in England's higher education landscape and beyond.

Keywords: International students, Transition into HE, Eco-systemic framework, transition-support, inclusivity, neoliberal influences.

Acknowledgments

At the end of this doctoral journey, I am indebted to all those who contributed to this thesis.

A special acknowledgment and thanks go to the University of Nottingham for making this research possible. I wish to extend my sincerest thanks and gratitude to Dr. Edward Sellman and Professor Stephen Joseph for their expert guidance, mentoring, sharp insights, and for their valuable support and encouragement throughout the research journey.

I am grateful to colleagues and friends at the university of Nottingham and beyond whom I turn to whenever I need shoring up. I am grateful for their companionship and unconditional support.

Thanks go to all the participants of this study for their open-heartedness, generous time, and contribution. This thesis could not have been completed without them, their patience, collaboration, and trust were outstanding.

Much thanks to my wonderful friends from my hometown in Mostaganem, Algeria. At different moments of this journey, I could always count on their unfailing support and their "can-do" spirit.

Gratitude is also expressed to my beloved family and to my parents for their wise counsel, encouragement, understanding, positivity, and unconditional love.

Thank you all for your unwavering support.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

List of Drawings

Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations

HE	Higher Education
ISs	International Students
PGIT	Postgraduate International Students
MA	Master of Art
MSc	Master of Science
OfS	The Office for Students
HEFCE	The Higher Education Funding Council for England
QAA	The Quality Assurance Agency
NSS	The National Student Survey
F&HE	Further and Higher Education

Preface: *Overlapping Positionalities*

This work is driven by a fascination with the complex flexibility of human nature in life transitions. At the heart of my research journey resides the aim to explore that transition process, with its mosaic complexities and interwoven challenges. For multiple reasons, my story is a good place to start. In embarking upon this journey, I have defined and re-defined, positioned and re-positioned myself as a 'researcher' first and foremost, as an 'international student', and as a 'support agent' at university. The intersection of all those identities has fed into my axiological positioning.

In highlighting my own belief system and epistemological assumptions, it is crucial to make a recognition of 'who am I' and 'what have I become' under given circumstances. It is important to share that I arrived to this research because of both. To start, my experience as an *'international student'* co-exists alongside many overseas students- whether involved in this study or outside the scope of this research. I arrived in the UK as a doctoral student from Algeria. The angle within this thesis about transition from global south to global north echoes back aspects from roots and journey from a north African country to a western country — conforming to totally different socio-cultural and educational systems. In that respect, I believe relativity and self-reflexivity in research is an important démarche to consciously highlight the links between personal reality and the researched phenomenon.

My compressed form of experience acts as a virtue of foreknowledge. Reflecting on my personal transition trajectory, my conceived experience, into and through the UK higher educational system, was multi-layered and multi-faceted – from psycho-socio-academic perspectives. Transitioning into a completely new socio-cultural and educational system was both challenging and rewarding. The very first weeks at university were hectic, disoriented, and unstable. Attempting to piece together all the information was puzzling. Where institutional regulations were troublingly bold, there was a little room to question them. The narrow understanding of the multiplicity and the diversity that lies behind students' transition appeared to set the contours around the chain of challenges experienced despite the existence of support. This curious perspective to unveil transition beyond its simplistic understandings has inspired me to investigate the institutional ontological rationality behind transition

interventions and other forms of support for transitioning students from global south to global north systems.

In stark contrast with my first experience, I was also a *university support agent*. De-constructing my humble support role at university for a total of four years, I have worked within a richly vibrant context of transitioning students to HE as a pastoral support tutor in residential halls at university, as well as a personal academic tutor on campus. As I became part of the system, my passion grew for engaging with functioning support mechanisms that are offered to students transitioning into a new system and academic habitus. Working alongside a mounting cohort of students has given me exposure to systemic issues students face as they transition into higher education. Whilst understanding the contours of the system as an insider has allowed me access to an overwhelming privilege, it made me recognise students' common challenges, their constant voiced concerns, as well as those unheard voices. On one hand, these voices have echoed my own complex transition experience. On the other hand, they opened my eyes to ruptures in the support system in place, despite the numerous trainings and interventions tailored to accommodate overseas students' diverse needs. A major deficit that has triggered my attention was the binary mode of success and failure, and most importantly- the linearity that lingers behind reductive chains of support.

Sitting on the other side —as an insider within the university system— I have come to the realisation of the large gap between the institutional perception of transition and students' actual lived transition experiences. As a support tutor, adhering to the support procedures dictated by the institutional understanding of transition, on many occasions, had a superficial diagnostic effect where the intervention would only put a band-aid on the problem, yet drives away from core issues that international students confront. Departing from this communication breakdown, this research is an attempt to address the blind spot in the support system from the perspective of students. However, prior to achieving this objective, there is a need to address the blurriness of the epistemological and conceptual perception of 'transition' into higher education for overseas students.

Underneath this clear division of roles- between being an international student and a support tutor for a diverse body of students- lies an invisible one: *the researcher*. The duality of my own positionality in this research stems from living in both roles. In this research journey, I was both an insider and an outsider. I experienced varying degrees of both voices from my

personal and professional experience along the spectrum. Hellawell (2006) notes that "the same researcher may slide along more than one insider-outsider continuum, and in both directions, during the research process." (p. 486). The sliding inbetweener position in research can be legitimately justified and significantly appealing. This aligns with the idea of the *fluid positionality* which is shaped by the recognition of our own overlapping identities. In the journey of becoming, the entanglements of voices that I have packed along the way of my journey as a transitioning student as well as a support tutor have informed this thesis. Enlightened by this epistemological copresence, this research responds to one of the many calls for the long overdue quest of an epistemological reconstruction- from the bottom up- to inform institutional behaviours and actions vis-à-vis international students transition into a UK higher educational system.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Background of the study

A broad and extensive body of research has laid focus on transitional pathways, trajectories, and journeys. Bound to its various conceptual foundations and terminological choices, 'transition' is a natural experience of shifting from one period to another in our life cycle. Whether it is planned or unplanned, transition has been recognized for decades of research as a worldwide investigated phenomenon (Ecclestone, Biesta, and Hughes, 2010; Field, Gallacher and Ingram, 2010; Edmunds et al., 2017; Gale and Parker, 2014). Central to this topic, educational transitions have been an object of research since the 1990s, adhering to its direct impact on life patterns, mindsets, achievements, and critical health states, and thus becoming an extensively researched area for the past thirty years (Williams, 1982; Mclnnis, 2003; Hillman, 2005; Krause and Colleagues, 2005). Our knowledge about educational transitions is based upon empirical studies that investigate the way students progress from one academic programme to another within the same context, or from one context to another. Whilst a considerable amount of literature has been published on transitions in educational settings, the focus of these studies varies in terms of theme focus, student background, and profile, as well as implications of institutional policies (Flaga, 2006; Ecclestone, Biesta and Hughes, 2010; Edmunds et al., 2017; Baker and Irwin, 2019).

In the higher education context, the contemporary life of transitioning students usually shifts from its stable contours presenting more complex challenges. Often, transitions imply ruptures after detachment from previous life patterns. Contextual embeddedness —across time and space —has been both a product and producer of theoretical conceptions and paradigm shifts in developmental trajectories (Bourdieu, 1984; Tinto, 1975, 1993; Bridges, 1986; Gale and Parker, 2014; Deleuze and Guattari, 1987; Bronfenbrenner, 1986). Prevailing accounts of the transition conception have traditionally failed to capture the fluidity and multi-dimensionality of the transition experience through linear models, such as inductionists (transition as a 'pathway') and developmentalists (transition as a trajectory) (Gale and Parker, 2012; Taylor and Harris-Evans, 2018). Often, success of educational transitions is measured by students' graduation (completion of the course) or attrition (withdrawal) from the programme (Schnell, Louis and Doetkott, 2003). Conceptual critiques have tackled controversies in conceptual

frameworks with reductionist tendencies that tend to overlook the profound interrelationship between students' resources, inter-individual differences, socio-cultural and economic backgrounds, and psychosocial processes in their current experiences. Through this lens, transition to higher education is often understood as a transactional process that is de-contextualised from its core biopsychosocial-cultural elements. Consequently, the very attempt to support students' transitions into higher education- with a reductionist vision- can lead to what the literature depicted as troublesome transitions (Meyer and Land, 2005), or even failed transitions (Quinn, 2010). Drifting away from the assumption of uniformity, homogeneity, and linearity of transition, the cornerstone of this research endeavour is to explore and expand on the themes of 'differentiation', 'subjectivity', 'heterogeneity', 'multiplicity', and 'individuation' of the international student's transition experience.

On a parallel discourse, prime transition narrative is critical to policy making in higher education. In England's higher education landscape, counter discourses heavily criticised neoliberal ideologies and practices, such as the institutionalisation of the policies of marketisation (since the late 1970s) that initiated the customer-service-provider mode (Furedi, 2010). The neoliberal saturation in policies and reforms have been heavily criticised for its commodification to higher education, leading to structural disempowerment and the emergence of 'defensive education' due the implied student-customer pressure. This prevails in 'value for money' discourses (the Dearing Report, 1997; Office of students, 2018; Universities UK, 2015) and its reflection on institutional services (Munteanu et al., 2010). Nevertheless, there is a margin between the idealisation of the student-as-customer in the neoliberal university and the accommodation of their needs and diversities. Hosted by the neoliberal vision, student satisfaction imposed itself as 'a form of governmentality' (Day and Pirrie, 2020). The manifestation of 'student voice' was translated into a legislative and policy framework that has focused on pedagogical strategies and institutional practices (Taylor and Robinson, 2009; Czerniawski and Kidd, 2011).

The conception of student voice has diverted to serve 'a rights-based discourse', that was backed up by Human Rights Act (1998) and the Equality Act (2010), which both take into account students' freedom of choice and speech (Young and Jerome, 2020). The National Union of Students (NUS) (2015) reported: "we fear that the suggested language is too passive: questions focusing on 'feedback' and 'response' suggest a transactional, consumerist relationship between staff and students that does not reflect the sector's current commitment

to true partnership" (p. 4). This could be swept under the enactment policy towards empowerment of unheard or vulnerable individuals (Salzer, 1997; Couldry, 2010). Despite the growing importance of student voice and empowerment in legislative reforms, representation of international students is an ongoing concern, resulting from a monological approach that celebrates homogenous grouping, marginalisation, and standardisation in transition pedagogies and support interventions (Wilson, 2009; Kift et al., 2010). Envisioned through the prism of neoliberal agenda, it is argued that "the main drivers of marketisation include the need to accommodate larger numbers of students without compromising on quality" (Brown, 2010, p.21). Fundamental to establishing a common ground between the two meta-discourses of transition and policy making is acknowledging the former as relational, entangled, and moulded by micro and macro factors/powers.

Goals and foci of the research

This thesis explores border-crossing transitional experiences for international students seeking higher education (HE) in the United Kingdom (UK). The table below summarises the questions that this thesis explores along with its research objectives.

Table 1. *Research goals and objectives*

Target	***Research Questions***	***Research Objectives***
Individual level	**1-** What characterises inter and intrapersonal transitional processes across the diverse international student body? o And how would individual arrays of diversities [in the background] impact students' transition quality?	• Achieve a nuanced conception of students' diverse transition experiences. • *Inter-individual differences:* Exploring the implications that individual resources, socio-academic backgrounds have on the nature of transition to HE.
Micro level	**2-** What characterises the ecology (contextual vessel) of international students' transition within UK higher education? o What is the role of [social and academic] support systems in transition to university?	• *Navigating social and educational spaces in transition-* finding the nexus between the student and support systems. • *Addressing conceptual silences* (in educational policies and reforms) on international

Meso level	**3-** To what extent does the institutional micro-support, that is tailored for ISs (e.g., interventions/ action packages), reflect transition-oriented-educational policies?	students' transition to higher education. • *Inform policymakers*: Bridging the gap of knowledge by activating students' conceptual and critical reflexivity on their own experiences.
Macro level	**4-** What are the hierarchical forces that fuel, shape, and affect the transition experience of international students in higher education? o How do structural power hierarchies influence students' ideological and ontological perceptions of the world around them, and thus of their transition experiences into such a system?	• *Positionality within the new system:* The role of notions, values, ideological perspectives in the international student's identity construction and reconstruction.

The scope of this thesis is to advance the current understanding of transition into higher education for overseas students. Moving beyond the reductionist view, the foreground of the ontological and epistemological lens of this thesis is to explore PG international students' transition into UK higher education as a complex whole. Therefore, employing an integral-holistic vision that operates on multiple scales and levels (from micro to macro) is critical for the design of this research. At the heart of this analytical objective is to navigate the breadth and the depth of experience by exploring the intersectionality between power forces (individual-context relations). Fundamental to this inquiry is exploring the transforming individual identity and the dynamic interplay between the multi-layered connections with contextual factors within this transition landscape. This research was carried out in the expectation to amplify student voices about diverse arrays of their pressing transitional challenges within the new educational system. In the pursuit of this aim, the reflective nature of this research has pushed against rigid conceptual boundaries to seek broader ambition of converting students' vivid conceptions of their experiences to inform the transition scholarship. By (re)envisioning international students' experiences, I intend to examine the praxis of conceptualisation of transition through international students' narratives, and thus identify the missing links between theory and practice.

Thesis structure - The road ahead

This section defines the road map of the thesis by giving the reader an indication of the core ideas of subsequent chapters.

This chapter explains the seeds of this research. Following up this slim introductory chapter (1), ***Chapter 2 'Literature Review'*** consists of an outline of the conceptualisation of 'transition' in literature, along with a revision of its reconceptualization with respect to multi-faceted research paradigms. Furthermore, at the heart of the goal of locating the international student transition experience to the UK, there is a persistent call for an understanding of the contextualisation of higher education as a system in the global sphere. This informs the research insights about the ideological and ontological stands of the current higher education system, as well as identifies literature perspectives on the impact of governing structural, socio-cultural, and economic forces on the quality of the international study experience.

Chapter 3 'Toward an Ecology of Transitions' offers a brief overview of the epistemic background of the adopted theoretical framework and explores its empirical validity to this study. ***Chapter 4*** '***Methodology'*** details a layout of methodological underpinning of the study is presented, along with its epistemological stand, ethical considerations, research design, methods, and analysis scheme. Furthermore, the findings from three methods (survey-interviews- visual method) are presented in ***Chapter 5 'Findings- Part I, II, III, IV'*** in a multi-layered analytical framework (eco-systemic) to make the case of this study. Finally, ***Chapter 6 'Discussion and Implications'*** presents an overarching summary of the findings, offers a space for discussion and critical reflexivity, highlights a set of implications informed by the input of this study in closure.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Rationale, structure, and ethical considerations

This comprehensive literature review chapter aims to offer discursive framings of epistemic, theoretical, and practical understanding and controversies in the trajectory of transition-oriented documented research. This chapter explores the grand narratives which start on how transition is conceptualised and problematised in literature and spiral into the implications of global trends and macro level policy factors on the transition practice.

The rationale for the structure of this chapter favours the hybridisation of theoretical lenses of research to break away from monological way of conceptualising and theorising phenomena. This approach has been reinforced by a taxonomy of literature review methods (Arskey and O'Malley, 2005; Cronin, Ryan and Coughlan, 2008; Lau and Kuzeimsky, 2016). There is a necessity for 'multiplicity' in critical research reviews where notions of recognition, acknowledgement and consciousness are accentuated in an attempt to minimise the distance between conducting research and realising 'justice' in human sciences. Critical and interpretive reviews seek to "reveal strengths, weaknesses, contradictions, controversies, inconsistencies" (Baumeister and Leary, 1997, p. 312). Speaking of a justice-oriented form of research inquiry, a range of contemporary qualitative researchers encourage explorative inclusive research, such as anticolonial research (Lincoln and Cannella, 2004; Rau, 2005; Cannella and Manuelito, 2008; Cannella, 2015).

At the forefront of this literature review, as well as other stages of this empirical study, there is a constant reminder of the acknowledgement of diverse perspectives, definitions, and conceptualisations frameworks that are hosted by different theoretical types of visions and volumes. That acknowledgement covers a wide spectrum of reliability and bias, as truth-oriented theories hold their own possible biases, agendas, and pre-set assumptions (Cannella, 2015). Similarly, it employs a reflective account from the researcher in depicting strengths as well as weaknesses of existing literature.

Without claiming to be exhaustive, this chapter aims to explore different conceptual resources, theories, and dilemmas to help enrich the researcher's as well as the reader's understanding of 'transition' in a contextual framework. Put as such, it also reflects the researcher's attempts to journey through the different theoretical conceptualisation of the key topics, like internationalisation, globalisation, and neoliberalism. Engaging with multiple theoretical positions, I believe, allows a space for thinking, framing, debating, and reflecting on the ideas mobilised through those discourses. The review aims to have a theory-informed understanding of the studied phenomenon, i.e., educational transition. Despite the appreciation of the weight and scale of the pre-existing theoretical work, there is a connection to its research context that helps map out its knowledge contribution to a particular field or fields of interest. Therefore, I look to explore a literature-based ground of contextual knowledge theory; within which theoretical as well as empirical reflections are embedded.

Conceptualisation and re-conceptualisation of 'transition': Interaction models of transition: breaking down 'transition'

Before delving into 'educational transitions', I sought to investigate the conceptualisation of the term. There are different lenses through which the concept of 'transition' was viewed. Although some conceptualisations may cross paths, others may clash. Unsurprisingly, there is an agreed-upon lack of consensus around transition conceptualisation. Ecclestone, Biesta and Hughes (2010, p.5) argued that "there is no agreed-upon definition of what constitutes a transition". In the latest update of Cambridge dictionary definition (2020): Transition is defined as —noun: the process or period of changing from one state or condition to another; verb: undergo or cause to undergo a process or period of transition. According to Gale and Parker (2014, p. 734), however, transition is 'under-theorised in the literature' or 'taken-for-granted' as a notion. Colley (2007) argues that "it is impossible to arrive at a single definition of transition that might gain consensus" (p. 428). The impact of those forms of understanding of transition was anchored within what Valsiner (2006) referred to as "conceptual blinders" (p.168) that exist within an 'epistemic market' (Valsiner, 2009), which moulds and directs empirical studies in this field. Ecclestone, Biesta and Hughes (2010) asserted that diversified conceptualisations of theories serve realising "how to manage or support transitions" (p. 5). Therefore, the heterogeneity of definitions, concrete and abstract realisation of the term was translated into numerous disputes on epistemologies, methodologies, and practices.

The concept of '*change'* has been a controversial and a much-disputed subject within the field of social science and education. Crafter and Maunder (2012) refer to transition as "change being brought about or influenced by some external or social situation, which has the power to shift our understandings of ourselves" (cited in O'Donnell, Kean and Stevens. 2016, p.6). Within this understanding, transition can be interior as much as it can be exterior. In other words, individuals undergo 'change' while moving from one phase to another, regardless of whether this would imply a physical change that occurs due to exterior factors such as immigration (Slvati, 2016), or could be caused by a mental and cognitive change (Ulrich, 2017). Nevertheless, transitions can move beyond the individual to systems, like societal transitions (De Haan and Rotmans, 2011; Holtz et al., 2015), and/or institutional transitions (Peng el al., 2015). There is a wide popularity of the vague concept of 'transition' that has kept witnessing change in its conceptualisation and interpretations that are adopted in many disciplines. In the midst of theoretical dialogue, the discourse about 'change' has involved redefining social structural patterns, boundaries, and relationships. There is a growing recognition of transition phases in transitional models.

'Ending, losing and letting go', 'neutral zone', 'new beginning' (Bridges' Model)

In a similar vein, according to Bridges' theory, 'change' has a different conceptualisation from 'transition'. William Bridges (1986) argued that "change occurs when something starts or stops; it can be planned or managed on a rational model … Transition is a three-part psychological process; it cannot be planned or managed by the same rationale formulae" (p.26). Dima and Skehill (2011) explain that Bridges (2002) categorised 'change' as 'situational', in which the individual is presented to a new context, rules, and roles, whereas transition taps on the psychological adaptation process that change implies. Nevertheless, one cannot exist without the other; Bridges (2002) asserts that "unless transition occurs, change will not work" (p. 4). According to this argument, transition consists of 'ending', a 'neutral zone', and a 'new beginning'. In his argument, those phases are flexible and might overlap. That is to say, the beginning of one does not necessarily occur by the end of its precedent (i.e., former transition); and that the individual might experience several phases at the same period of time. However, "movement through transition is marked by a change in the dominance of one phase as it gives way to the next" (Bridges, 2002, p 70).

Drawing on Bridges' transition model (2002), each of the phases sketched above carries a number of striking emotions. The first phase, '*Ending',* presents the scenario of desperation after change where challenge is a key determinator for the changing process of the psychological pattern. Bridges argued that the implications of change start with the challenge to cope, leading to the experience of "emotions of fear, denial, anger, sadness, disorientation, frustration, uncertainty and a sense of loss" (Cheng et al., 2015, p.1). The sense of loss starts with an "un-plugging" action from the previous context and form of reality. This phase is highly presented in the separation phase of students from their country, family, and friends. This separation entails *Disengagement, Disidentification, and Disenchantment* (Bridges, 1986). After detachment from the previous context, the second phase individuals arrive at is '*Neutral Zone'* that acts as a middle point (in-between) in transition that signifies stability, scepticism, yet provokes explorations. This suggests that it is at this very phase that transition happens as individuals acknowledge their position and decide to adapt to the environmental changes. The third phase is the final destination of the emotional journey that suggests an openness, reasonable actions, and positive attitude toward the adaptation process. Bridges' transition framework has been drawn upon in a number of studies to understand and measure the psycho-social transition process (for example, Dima and Skehill, 2011; Van Ryzin et al., 2011). Despite its popularity, it was not the only one that captured the emotional journey of individuals throughout transitions (Tinto, 1988; Fisher, 2005).

Separation, transition, incorporation

A different perspective of transition research challenges the widely held view of the first-year experience. It has identified student transition to higher education to be more complex to be studied at a specific stage and generalised to the whole period (Tinto, 1988, 1993). Both decisions and triggers of transitional changes vary from one stage to another. Tinto (1988) argued that with regards to students' withdrawal from universities, counsellors and advisors would measure the whole period based on the first six months within the programme, assuming that success in its completion is "more than half the battle in persistence" (p. 439). This contradicts Tinto's vision of studying transition that was built on earlier notions of transitional dynamics and transition paths in van Gennep's (1960) typology.

Tracing back its evolution, anecdotal evidence has been collected through longitudinal studies on individuals and groups in a social context. A classic study of the Dutch anthropologist, van

Gennep (1960), entitled *The Rites of Passage,* was a reference for Tinto's exploratory research. Van Gennep had been carrying out research on the mechanisms of change of individuals' lives in tribal societies. Through observation, van Gennep's interest grew toward exploring the dynamics of change across major life events (e.g., birth, marriages, adulthood, and death). This had helped him highlight major "life crises" for these individuals. Moreover, he sought to identify the types of mechanisms (e.g., acts, rites, ceremonies, and rituals) that are employed within the community to support and restore stability after change has happened. In that fashion, Gennep's longitudinal study landed to the conclusion that change is multifaceted, transforming the cultural, behavioural, and contextual patterns of life. Therefore, Tinto had divided the transition process into three phases: *Separation, Transition, and Incorporation.* Tinto's model of departure (1975, 1982, 1987, 1993) was centred around these three stages: approaching *Transition* as "the movement of individuals from membership in one group to membership in another" (Tinto, 1988, p. 440).

The first stage of transition starts with "separation" from the past physical and socio-cultural context. Tracing up the ideology behind Gennep's study and Tinto's theory, the physical and contextual separation has psychological and behavioural implications. According to Tinto (1988), the integration into the university community implies for students to "disassociate themselves physically as well as socially from the communities of the past" (p.443). This might not be the case for home students who are staying in the same socio-cultural context. Yet, it could be applicable for at least those individuals who have to move away (for the first time) from their local schools and cities to settle in distant universities. By the same token, overseas students face more challenges in their separation phase. The notion of 'loss' comes along with the separation phase. Noble and Walker (1997) asserted that old forms of "possessions generate an almost womblike sense of security that becomes magnified when the owner leaves the comfort and protection provided by home and family" (p.40). Similar to that, possessions are portrayed in the social and psychological support from the social community, such as family, friends, colleagues, etc.

The second stage starts with the exposure to the new context. A key parameter of transition is the depth and scale of change in the transition phase, which is mainly determined by "the degree of difference between norms and patterns of behaviour of the past and those required for incorporation into the life of the college" (Tinto, 1988, p.445). Patterns of behaviours and coping mechanisms are closely associated with the degree of perceived change in transition,

and hence the adaptation process varies from one individual to another. Individuals start to 'incorporate' new values and norms and move away from the pre-established one from their former environment. The '*incorporation*' phase, therefore, is established in a sense that students merge or adapt within the new community by establishing new behavioural patterns that are compatible with the novel context.

A remarkable difference between Tinto's (1975, 1993) *'incorporation'* and van Gennep's (1960) is that in the latter individuals have 'the choice' to be or not be incorporated with the new community, which is not the case for university students. Students' transition requires a 'full incorporation' into the life of university (Tinto, 1988, p.445). This incorporation is reinforced through social interaction with members of the community, which is translated as the integration processes. The host institution usually puts forward formal and informal mechanisms of support and interventions like 'orientation programmes'. Speaking of which, Tinto's Model has criticised the frequency and depth of those interventions, stating that students are often left to navigate the maze of the university life by themselves without much institutional assistance. The singularity of choice as well as poor support was identified as the main reasons why students leave their courses and programmes "to seek membership in other communities" (Tinto, 1988, p.447).

Tinto's transitional model has offered a "*near paradigmic status"* for transition to higher education (Braxton, Milem and Sullivan, 2000, p. 107). As much as Tinto's model (1993) has gained a wide popularity in facilitating understanding students' departure, it was criticised for overlooking cultural variables in transition for minorities of students (Kuh and Love, 2000; Rendon, Jalomo and Nora, 2000; Guiffrida, 2005, 2006). Several researchers have called for changing key characteristics of the model to be culturally sensitive to students' diverse backgrounds (Dennis, Phinney and Chuateco 2005; Guiffrida, 2006). Based on these perspectives, the refinement of the theoretical model has suggested shifting from the notion of 'breaking away' from a community to acknowledging the effect that that background community/ family/ friends have on their academic achievement and socio-cultural integration. Culturally embedded norms and values imply future behaviours and hence conceive predictable reactions towards different system practices that may contradict the system they were brought up into.

The increasing recognition of the significant role of socio-cultural background in future transitions has accentuated conceptual critiques in models like Tinto's. These models have previously implied that transitions impose the concept of 'leaving behind' notions, values, social relationships, and social behaviours in the past and 'incorporate' new ones in order to 'integrate' within the new context and community. Nevertheless, the process of detachment has been revisited through social scientists, which revealed that although individuals physically detach from previous roles and contexts, they still carry along fundamental aspects of their socio-cultural and educational backgrounds. The connections to the past have presumably acted as focal points of attention in understanding transitional patterns and behaviours for individuals. Much relevant to this discourse, amid the growing diversity of student body transitioning into university, the gap of understanding students' backgrounds, needs, and expectations widens (Skyrme, 2007). There is therefore a persistent call for educational institutions to have a grasp of cultural disparities between privileged and underprivileged students (Yvette, 2016) and highlight 'non-belonging issues' (Solomon, 2007).

Self-transition in liminal transitions

Traditionally, several commentators and social researchers have looked at transition as an integral process of the self. Noble and Walker (1997) have integrated the notion of the "extended self" (Belk, 1988) along with van Gennep's (1960) transition model of "liminal transitions" - in his work *The Rites of passages*- to explore self/identity transitions. To break these notions down, van Gennep's (1960) transition model, as earlier discussed in Tinto's model, has defined three stages of transition [separation, liminality, and aggregation]. The liminal period sits in the middle of this three-stage typology. During this period, alienation and withdrawal from social context slowly dissolve by entering the next stage of 'aggregation' where the individual sets off to a new start in the social structure. Noble and Walker (1997, p.31) explained that "In this metaphor, the departure from an old state and entry into a new one is separated by a doorway. On one side of the door separation rituals are conducted. On the other, rituals of aggregation take place". The authors argued that *after* symbolic detachment from a former context, the individual starts the self-concept search journey, which is defined as 'liminal transition'. The psychology of liminality has investigated self-perception, whether as perceived, or as conceived, by internal (individual), or external (social) beliefs, all of which have an impact on the psyche during the transitional stage. Just like Noble and Walker's (1997) classic work, other transition research studies have revolved around the notion of 'self-

development' and 'expectations' by exploring the gap between 'one's perceived self and one's ideal self' during transitions. Within this belief, transition is viewed as linear from the perspective of Van Gennep's (1960) spatial movement given that an individual's personal identity is 'transported' from one physical space to another. Thus, it is the transition experience for the self. Noble and Walker's (1997) work has attempted to look at the way 'facets of ourselves' - such as physical appearance, emotional and mental wellbeing, as well as interpersonal traits- transform during and throughout the transition process. The notion of 'liminality' was also used by Elder (1986) in his research on life course and human development which broke transition into inter-dependent events with shifts or turning points. The notion of 'turning point' was also explored in recent works like Palmer, Paula and Owens (2009) that investigated the transition stage as the ''in-between-ness – a betwixt space" (p.37).

Induction, development, becoming

Another conceptual lens in human development literature overshadows the aspect of development in understanding '*Transition'.* Learning from literature in the field, several researchers have attempted to rethink transition(s), particularly as a form of 'becoming' to reshape the theory-practice. Experience has been often perceived as an amorphous (shapeless) concept that responds to the individual's life cycle. In the case of higher education, it begins with a consideration of enrolment, learning and assessment, then graduation, according to the HEFCE student life cycle (Maringe and Fuller, 2007; Arambewela and Maringe, 2012). The three-phase models have become a casualty among transition researchers describing evolution over time. Gale and Parker (2014) have viewed *Transition* as "the capability to navigate change" (p. 737). Central to the notion of capability was the ability of using 'resources' in adapting to changing conditions. Adopting 'social inclusion' and 'social distinction' (Bourdieu, 1984), Gale and Parker expand their theoretical perspective to include key required features for individual response to change, such as agency (Ecclestone, 2007; Ecclestone, Biesta and Hughes, 2010), voice and mobility (Smith, 2009). Following a comprehensive literature review, Gale and Parker (2012) have produced a categorisation of transition into three Ts: *Induction (*henceforth *T1), Development* (henceforth T2), and *Becoming* (henceforth T3), which was further discussed in Taylor and Harris-Evans (2018) with the aim of re-conceptualising 'transition'.

Framed as such, each type occurs at a specific time frame. Quinn (2010) argued that transition is "a fixed turning point which takes place at a preordained time and in a certain place" (p. 122). Gale and Parker's (2012) vision argued that "pivotal moments of change" (p.739) in previous transitional works have drawn a linear progression motion to transition. This was apparent in several studies; for instance, Burnett (2007) has noted that students' transition into higher education consists of "Pre-transition (or Beginning to Think About University), Transition (or Preparing for University), Orientation Week, First Year Student Induction Programs, The Middle Years, and The Capstone or Final Year Experience" (p. 24). From this review perspective, the linear vision has been the case for earlier transition typologies that were aforementioned like van Gennep's (1960), Tinto's (1975,1993) and Bridges' (1986, 2002).

Transition as induction (T1)

Transition-as-induction (T1) was the centre of attention of transition-research and practice as being "arguably the most critical time" (Krause, 2005, p. 9) that bears a level of complexity and difficulty (Krause and Coates, 2008). The two first weeks, by academic standards, is often considered to be the transition phase and therefore is on the zone light for institutions' interventions, like induction weeks (Hultberg et al., 2008). Others, however, believe that it is rather a narrow period for transition (Brooman and Darwent, 2013). The T1 [Transition as an Induction] extends to host the university support for students in terms of "course advice and student decision-making" (Krause and Coates, 2008, p. 499) and curricular and co-curricular activities (Kift, Nelson and Clarke, 2010). Gale and Parker (2012) address the T1 approaches such as 'transition pedagogy' which is considered a more 'holistic approach' of transition such as that of Kift's and her colleagues' (Kift and Nelson, 2005; Kift, Nelson and Clarke, 2010), which aimed for a 'coherent', 'integrated', 'coordinated, 'intentional', 'cumulative', 'interconnected', and 'explicit' higher education (Gale and Parker, 2014, pp. 740-741). Nevertheless, these frameworks have been heavily ctiticised for their failure to accommodate the diversity of students. As a response, insights from the 'southern theory' (Gale, 2012), for example, would inform diversified ways of 'knowing' without imposing 'institutional privileging' over language, knowledge, and values (Thomas, 2002; Gale and Parker, 2014).

Within this discussion, researching transition pathways calls for structural changes of institutional practices to meet students' distinctive transition capacities and capabilities (Gale and Bok, 2012). T1 has placed emphasis on the critical phases of transition during the academic

experience, such as the first academic year (Krause, 2005; Krause and Coates, 2008) which implies necessary adjustment to the educational system and the academic environment (Wilson, 2009). While emphasising the importance of the beginnings (Kantanis, 2000), there comes a persistent need for navigating 'varying degrees of adjustment', and regulating different expectations based on various conventions (Beasley and Pearson, 1999, p.303).

Transition as development (T2)

Gale and Parker's model has also laid focus on internal factors of transition, such as identity change and inter-personal development. Traditionally, identity shifts have also been perceived from a linear perspective, where identity changes through life stages or phases (Terenzini et al., 1996; Noble and Walker, 1997). Similarly, university is looked at as "a transitional stage" (Gale and Parker, 2012, p.741) where students prepare for "becoming somebody" (Ecclestone, 2009, p. 12). Students' transformation or development has marked the conceptualisation of this type of transition. As opposed to the notion of 'smooth transitions' (Gill et al., 2011), developmentalists have denied the vision of 'transition-as-period' and acknowledged it as 'a stage' where the process of change is 'discontinuous' (Werner, 1957; Gale and Parker, 2014). Time appears to be a significant factor for human development. However, this significance varies between the concepts of 'period' and 'stage'. In the stage, transition may take place beyond certain time frames where "the time available might be exhausted but this does not guarantee transition to the next stage" (Gale and Parker, 2014, p.742). Quinn (2010) has also argued that "the rhythms of the young people's learning lives do not synchronise with the set time frames offered to them" (p.122). However, transitional periods give less significance to time and use it only to measure the beginning and the end of transition.

Various conceptions of transition were demonstrated in epistemological, theoretical, and practical approaches. Whereas students' transition was envisioned as 'pathways' for T1 advocates [inductionists], it was portrayed as 'trajectory' for T2 advocates [developmentalists]. In an attempt to highlight the difference, Pallas (2003) noted that "pathways are well-travelled sequences of transitions that are shaped by cultural and structural forces … A trajectory is an attribute of an individual, whereas a pathway is an attribute of a social system" (p.168). Key to this discussion is the implications of each perspective on institutional interventions and support practice, "whether the transition 'problem' is best addressed at the level of institutions, an organisational psychology of student transition (T1), or at the level of individuals and groups,

a developmental and social psychology of student transition (T2)" (Gale and Parker, 2012, p.743). In the midst of these critical debates about conceptual preferences, transition- triggered-development implies 'a shift from one identity to another' (Ecclestone, Biestaand Hughes, 2010, 6). Within this account, transition requires students' enculturation within higher education, often leading students to adopt different identities (Sellar and Gale, 2011). This is recognised within minority students where university curriculum materials are perceived as "a challenge to one's identity and a threat to familiar ways of knowing and doing" (Krause, 2006, p.1), which often leads to adaptation challenges and eventually attrition (Peterson, Kovel-Jarboe and Schwartz, 1997; Vinson et al., 2010).

Transition as becoming (T3)

Another lens of research has rejected the linear vision of conceptualisation of transition with the argument that former approaches have studied students' transition in isolation from socio-cultural and contextual diversities. Normative discourses fail to host students' diverse experiences as "the concept of transition itself does not fully capture the fluidity of our learning or our lives" (Quinn, 2010, p. 127). Critical cultural studies have highlighted the gap in transition theories and empirical studies that overlooked the interconnections between transition issues and key factors of socio-cultural backgrounds and structures. Smith (2009) asserted that "the study of transitions has been largely conducted in isolation from wider analyses of occupational and social mobility" (p.371).

The 'different ways of knowing' were highlighted throughout the conceptualisation scheme of transition and have shed light on knowledge diversity as the 'unspeakable' aspect in universities. Quinn (2010) argued that the "yoking together of the speakable with transition, inevitably leaves those with lives that are marginal [to institutional narratives] and [with] incoherent [genealogies] unable to make the transition to fully 'educated person'" (cited in Gale and Parker, 2012, p.745). Underrepresentation is manifested in curriculum properties, pedagogies, and support practices (Parker, Gale and Bok, 2012) which consider students' previous knowledges as 'deviant' from 'the norm' (Colley, 2007, p. 430) or 'inadequate' (Quinn, 2010, p.126). 'Fitting in' has long been considered key to for overcoming transition challenges. This has led to the mobilisation of discourses that have favoured adaptation to 'core practices of education' such as pedagogical tasks and grading systems (Wilson, 2009). Nevertheless, the research gaze in studying students' experiences has started progressively considering the effect of factors in the non-academic context on students' satisfaction about

their experiences (Arambewela and Maringe, 2012). Another theoretical focus has emphasised 'cultural-differences' (Oakes, 2005), through which the 'fitting in' concept of adaptation is internalised and achieved.

Given the advances in the conceptual understanding, with the aim of rethinking transitions theory–practice, Taylor and Harris-Evans (2018) respond to Gale and Parker's typology model gaps in developing T3 (Transition as becoming) based on the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari (1987, 1994).Taylor and Harris-Evans (2018) have stated that T1 looked at "how well (or not) students are able to navigate institutional norms, how (well) they cope with the fixed institutional structures and procedures they come up against, and how (well) they deal with the shock of coming to university" (p.1255), and thus acknowledged its 'chronological' orientation of understanding development. The linearity of T1 has focused on informing and familiarising at the initial stage. T2, however, has explored Bourdieu's concept (1984) of *habitus* through an 'individualist transition pedagogy' that accentuates working on resilience, agency and growth (Taylor and Harris-Evans, 2018). In this respect, progress and change are tightly associated with identity factors. Nevertheless, as much as individual habitus or background factors like gender, social class, ethnicity, and age (Colley, 2007; Boliver, 2013) mould those identities, the existing factors in the *institutional habitus* also play a major role in shaping students' sense of agency, consciousness of decisions and reflexivity (Ecclestone, 2009; Smyth and Banks, 2012).

Transition as 'assemblage', 'rhizome', and 'becoming'

As Gale and Parker's three-fold typology has conceived a wholistic picture of transition pathways and trajectories of change, development, and transformation, it has left an open possibility for further exploration of the trajectory of 'transition as becoming' (T3). Taylor and Harris-Evans (2018) argued that their approach stands out from previous models in considering the 'interplay of microlevel events' one that condemns "deficit models of transition oriented to 'squeezing' students into pre-existing (and often inflexible) institutional goals and established academic practices, or 'squaring up' students into the preformed identity of the viable academic subject" (p. 1256). Moving against the 'acculturation', adjustment, or 'alignment' practices, the authors dispute the lack of depiction of students' lived transition realities as they "travel in irregular ways through the various landscapes of their experience [university, family, work, social life] and bring those landscapes into relation with each other" (p.1256). At the heart of

this argument is the proposition to infuse change into T1 and T2 institutional visions in dealing with transitional challenges.

Despite the paucity of research application of the Deleuso-Gattarian philosophy on higher education context, it has brought a nuanced understanding into the complexity of experience through notions of 'assemblage', 'rhizome' and 'becoming'. Taylor and Harris-Evans's (2018) paradigm to rethink transition was focused on the variability of experiences among cohorts that established the notion of 'ongoing transitioning' instead of a linear form transition which triggered an approach of looking at "the detail, density and difference" (p.1257). The authors have investigated the circumstances of transitioning experiences through two projects: 1) the longitudinal *Student Transitions and Experiences Project* that depicted experiences through visual media and autoethnographic writing and 2) a more focused *Higher Education Transitions (HETs) project* through the analytical lens of Deleuze and Guattari's (1987, 1994) attempting a "conceptual trip" (Rajchman, 2001, p.22) to better understand transition for students.

Within the ontological assumption of this philosophy, "an assemblage establishes connections between certain multiplicities" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 25) or where components are intertwined in "a multifaceted gathering" (Bodén, 2015, p. 200). Nevertheless, the concept of assemblage in bodies, materials, or structures is ever evolving and non-static. Focusing on the active state of each 'singularity' [a Deleuzian term] within its 'arrangement' web of other elements (or singularities) enables us to understand its inner connections, functionalities, and effects. This can be translated in simple tasks students perform in order to solve their daily problems, such as accessing virtual learning environments for the purpose of submitting an assignment or finding resources. Noticeably, the focus drifted from the inner circle of elements (student-focused) to the outer circle (environment-focused), or what Taylor and Harris-Evans (2018, p.1259) referred to as the 'inside' and 'outside bodies' that are important to achieve a sense of belonging to the student. Thus, a wholistic understanding of experience is established through navigating the students' order of priorities of their individual 'assemblage(s)' of their experience components, pushing beyond the boundaries of the 'inside' factors to host 'outside bodies'.

Whilst the assemblage aspect has centred around multiplicities of components, the 'rhizome' approach of meaning making has believed in 'a centred, non-hierarchical and networked'

connections of experience (Taylor and Harris-Evans, 2018, p.1257). The concept was derived from Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) logic of '*Thousand Plateaus'* that was later employed in theoretical and methodological critiques: for instance, in St. Pierre's (1997, p. 187) notion of '*adventitious multiplicity'* in identifying a shift of epistemological understanding of transgressive data towards a more adequate paradigm of meaning. The approach speaks to the non-rigidity and diversification of experience in research, attending to patterns of commonalities, distinguished irregularities, singularities, and differences.

The aspect of 'rhizome' was used in Taylor and Harris-Evans (2018) to investigate the concept of 'knowing'. The process of knowledge making was described as an "ongoing happening, an absorption, immersion, and gathering that followed nonlinear pathways and was subject to recursive iterations which produced often accidental becomings" (ibid, p.1261). The continuity of the process of knowing was entangled within a web of connections with contextual bodies, elements, and factors, be it social, affective, or academic. These relationships have forged conjunctions where the mode of 'plugging' was activated towards 'external' bodies that shape the 'internal' logic and rationality of the individual [student]. Using the lens of 'rhizome', the concept of 'knowing' is not seen as a 'cognitive intellection' but rather as 'an embodied form of (be)coming-to-know. The rhizome understanding of experience within these structures identifies knowledge making or 'knowledge-ing' as 'transient', 'mobile', 'heterogeneous', and 'connective' (Ibid, p.1262). The flexibility intends to accommodate the variability of challenges that students attend to during their transition experiences, or what is rather assigned to as 'subjectivities' and differences.

The 'becoming' aspect, on the other hand, has evolved from the vision of transition as "an entangled, nonlinear, iterative and recursive process" (Taylor and Harris-Evans, 2018, p.1256). Following the path of Gale and Parker (2012, 2014) of T3 'Transition as becoming', the authors (Taylor and Harris-Evans, 2018) have referred to the concept of 'becoming' from a Deleuzian perspective as "the continual production of differentiation", that depicts "the immanent unfolding of the 'self'" (p.1262). 'Self-differentiation' is considered as the engine of the process of 'becoming' throughout a scale of time. The ontological meaning, nevertheless, in Deleuze and Guattari (1987), did not refer to the internal or external occurring change, neither did it specify time frames or destinations (for example, 'from' a stage 'to' another). Rather, 'becoming' was not linked to the idea of time-bound and context-bound presence or conscious agency. In other words, this ontological scholarship has believed that individuals (students) do

not accord with the notions of T1 and T2 that position students in the driving seat of change for their own experiences by interacting with their environment (integration).

The concept of 'self', however, is considered as "an assemblage of intensities, forces, affects, fluxes, instants" (Taylor and Harris-Evans, 2018, p.1263) that evolve in different directions due to the unpredictability of environmental factors. The *praxis of becoming* is shaped through "diversity, multiplicity and the destruction of identity" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994, p.174). This theoretical proposition condemns the stratification internalised in the conception of T1 (transition as an induction) and T2 (transition as development), which often restricts the idea of transition to intellectual and social adaptation practices (Gale and Parker, 2014). In the Deleuzian vein, change can be rather seen as 'a movement' [from/towards/between/ and of certain agents] which refers to *transition* as a verb rather than a noun (Taylor and Harris-Evans, 2018). It is the 'transitioning' event that happens which produces divergent ways to the event of 'becoming' of individuals. The constructive perspective of transition attends to dynamicity as well as heterogeneity of experience with a focus on 'individuation' and 'subjectivity' that is unique to each person. The becoming of the self, nevertheless, has emerged in conjunction with environment. Thus, it was explained that "every becoming is a block of coexistence" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p.322).

Beyond transition boundaries

Different conceptual frameworks have offered various understandings of, and research directions for, studying 'transition'. Bonassi and Wolter (2002, p.199) refer to it as "a multidimensional process, extending over a particular time". Similarly, Colley (2007, p. 428) described it as 'a process of change over time'. Time, therefore, was accentuated as a key factor of transition (Colley, 2010). This was apparent in most of the aforementioned transitional models that have used either a spatial or chronological movement describing the evolution of and the adaptation to change (van Gennep, 1960; Tinto, 1988, 1993; Parker, Gale and Bok, 2012, 2014). Nevertheless, Worth (2009) recognised that "many researchers have discussed how transitions have changed – how they no longer follow a traditional linear path – but much of this research on youth transitions does not really provide an alternative to the linear model that is fundamentally different" (p.1051).

The notions of 'linearity' and 'normativity' have been altered by notions of 'development' and 'becoming' in researching transition (Gale and Parker, 2012), shifting away from

transformation from one identity to another and attending to – what Deleuze and Guattari (1987) called – 'multiplicities' of experience that is composed of heterogeneous singularities in dynamic compositions (Sotirin, 2005, p. 99). From another angle, other lenses of research have acknowledged the role of social systems in supporting transition, social ties and friend and family support (Hendricks et al., 1996; Rosas and Hambrick, 2002; Guiffrida, 2004, 2005).

Multiple and multidimensional transitions (MMT) theory

According to the wider educational transition literature, the cause and effect of transition extend beyond a singular domain and contextual boundaries. With this line of perspective, multiple and multi-dimensional transitions (MMT) theory (Jindal-Snape, 2016) evolved as a conceptual framework in which those changes and disparities are highlighted, the backbone of which is the multiplicity of transitions. At the heart of the MMT beliefs is the need to recognise the effect of one transition on other life domains, producing multiple transitions. This can be projected on personal or professional identity, expectations, roles, rules, and life patterns (Jindal-Snape, 2010, 2015). There is a dearth of literature that investigated the individual's personal development throughout their transition process, particularly that interested in identity transformation (Noble and Walker, 1997; Clouder, 2005). Research has noted that the effect of change is projected not only on the self, but also on social status, relationships, personal and socio-cultural values (Parkes, 1971; Jindal-Snape, 2016; Jindal-Snape, et al., 2019).

Another key aspect that was captured by the multi-dimensionality of transition is the dependency of self on others. Attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969), one of the widely used contemporary theories in psychology, has highlighted the effect of context on self-development especially in early life stages and foundation stage. Social constructionist research conceptualises the undergoing 'identity work' as the process where "individuals are […] engaged in forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening, or revising the constructions that are productive of a precarious sense of coherence and distinctiveness' (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002, p. 626). Nevertheless, transition patterns grow more complex as individuals increase in age, travelling across several domains from social to professional. Transition involves "qualitatively distinct stages of maturation involving trajectories of transformation, from one student and/ or career identity to another" (Gale and Parker, 2012, p.737). Multi-faceted transitions imply disparities in development and coping mechanisms, which have been

portrayed in sexuality and/or gender identity (e.g., LGBTQ+) (Gordon, Rees and Jindal-Snape, 2020) and psycho-social and socio-cultural identity (Pennington, Bates and Bolam, 2018).

‘Conceptualised transitions’ in the context of HE

Elaborating on the conceptualisation underpinning has fuelled the way practitioners and policy makers have dealt with transition in applied fields. Deleuze and Guattari (1994, p.111) pointed out that “to think is to experiment putting theory into practice”. The enactment of thoughts has allowed the generative input into conceptual territory of transition (Ecclestone, 2009; Gale and Parker, 2014; Jindal-Snape, 2016; Taylor and Harris-Evans, 2018). The collated knowledge about the process of transition can be gleaned by studying the plethora of reoccurring concepts, many of which are integrated within the policy documents and are reflected onto practices. Down the path of reimagining transition, Gale and Parker (2014) condemned the separation of the conceptualisation process from broader theoretical perspectives. The authors argued that “much policy, research and practice […] is disconnected from the extensive research literature on youth and life transitions and also from education research and social theory. This limits how student transition is conceived and, hence, limits the policies, research and practices that flow from these conceptions” (p.747).

As a response to this argument, Gravett (2019) has suggested a threshold concepts framework where they combined ‘transitions as troublesome’, ‘transitions as rhizomatic’ and ‘transitions as becoming’. There has been recognition of the fluidity of students’ experiences in this approach that has brought together notions and approaches that have been discussed earlier in this chapter. Performative discourses have looked at notions like '*troublesome transitions’* [an idea explained by Meyer and Land (2005)], where students experience a state of disorientation and lack of understanding in the new learning context. Both the ‘rhizome’ and the ‘becoming’ notions were explored in earlier sections of this review chapter. The rhizome, explained as the ‘intermezzo’, the ‘interbeing’, or the in-between things (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 26), tends to explore a non-linear understanding of transition as “the most important characteristic of a rhizome ... [which] has multiple entryways” (Sermijn, Devlieger and Loots, 2008, p.637). Similar to that was the conception of 'becoming' where “the line … has neither beginning nor end, departure nor arrival, origin nor destination” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, pp. 341–342). Taken together, the approach has had the potential of reframing the theoretical discussion around transition.

Nonetheless, the conceptual shift has major implications on the institutional support that is held throughout the transitional space, especially for students. The thread of the narrative in this chapter seeks thus far to collate conceptual perspectives that tend to respond to the limitations occurring in transition practices which are merely based on the 'conceptual silences' (Gale and Parker, 2014, p. 747). The significance of the dynamic conceptual and theoretical approaches that have been reviewed thus far stems from their "potential to disrupt established conceptions [… and ...] promote new ways of thinking, that celebrate students' agency and becomings" (Gravett, 2019, p.9). Nevertheless, a fundamental blueprint for the operationalisation of educational institutions remains relatively overlooked when it comes to transition pedagogies in the literature (Quinn, 2010; Pennington et al., 2018). The debate around what is transition and how it should be managed surpassed the mere conceptual boundaries to revolve around institutional agendas, norms, and policies. In order to move towards the pivotal conceptual change, it is important to understand the cumulative effect on the socio-economic and political positions on the institutional policy and practice (Taylor et al., 2018). To summarise, the grand narrative of transition from the educational policy perspective expands beyond this specific section. The upcoming sections, therefore, intend to draw on former discourses and further explore those epistemological and theoretical frameworks within a contextual framework.

Contextualisation of transition to HE: meta-narratives

University in the age of globalisation: notions and perspectives

Spread through a network of collective policies, paradigms, and systems of thoughts, 'globalisation' is a travelling notion that has successfully been infused in sectors, practices, and ways of living. The meta-discourse of globalisation has shifted the way research was centred around transitional and developmental journeys from one context to another (Lin and Long, 2020; Peterski, 2020). Predominantly, there is a juncture between both 'globalisation' and 'internationalisation' of higher education. Both have laid down a path where knowledge expansion, networking, and cultural diversification have been encouraged to reinforce novel approaches to system reproductions (Marmolejo, Green and Egron-Polak, 2012; Egron-Polak, 2014; Knight, 2015; Kuzhabekova, Hendel and Chapman, 2015).

Looking up the linguistic discourse governing these notions, it has been argued that there is a misconception behind using internationalisation and globalisation interchangeably as

synonyms. Giving the two concepts some context, Scott (2000) noted that "internationalisation reflects a world-order dominated by nation states" (p. 4), whereas globalisation reflects "global competitiveness" and "intensified collaboration". Internationalisation, in his argument, "conjures up a world of diplomatic exchanges and international agencies in which the interests of ex-colonial and great powers still linger" (ibid, p. 4), the aspects of which had to do in the past with 'neo-colonialism' and 'geopolitical' interests of allies. On the other hand, globalisation was viewed as a totally different phenomenon that "conjures up the existing world of internet, mass tourism, and global popular culture" (p. 4). From another perspective, in a report for the UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education, 'globalisation' was referred to as "the reality shaped by an increasingly integrated world economy, new information and communications technology (ICT), the emergence of an international knowledge network, the role of the English language, and other forces beyond the control of academic institutions", whilst 'internationalisation' has been defined as "the variety of policies and programs that universities and governments implement to respond to globalization" (Altbach, et al., 2010, p. iv).

The institutionalisation of globalisation (King, 2009; Youtie et al., 2017) has brought about educational transformations to the higher education sector (Cullingford, 2002; Mebrahtu, Crossley and Johnson, 2000; James, 2003). An extensive literature has dwelled on the conceptual and operational difference between 'institutions' and 'organisations' in that respect (for example, Khalil, 1995; Scott, 2008; Scott, 2013). Nevertheless, operating at both macro and micro levels, 'globalisation' alongside with 'institutional internationalisation' has a history of continuously being constructed and reconstructed in theory and practice, especially in the sector of higher education (Bienkowski and Stanley, 2012). Research narrative has highlighted the prominent effect of internationalisation on the higher education institution at a regional and international level (Bienkowski and Stenley, 2012). Within the prism of globalisation, the discursive context of policy making has succinctly consolidated their reforms around a number of terms. In a policy-oriented paper, Mayo (2009) has listed: "'knowledge economy', 'competitiveness', 'entrepreneurship', 'lifelong learning', 'access', 'mobility', 'outcomes and performance', 'quality assurance', 'innovation and creativity', 'diversification', 'privatisation', 'internationalisation', 'autonomy' and 'business-HE relationships'" (p.89). Highlighting its power and significance in making pivotal changes to systems and pedagogies, the terminology used in dominant policy discourses finds its roots back in the body of scholarly literature that was centred around the notion of globalisation of higher education.

Global universities have succeeded in establishing a broad international community of academia, that has fostered knowledge exchange, cooperation, and collaboration, that is wired by universal communication technologies, allowing access to scientific communities, databases, and multi-national educational programmes. Nevertheless, the featured 'global' university emerges within a globally mobilised world where equivalence rules in qualifications, mobility, economic standards, and quality assurance are emphasised (Lester, 2008; Johnson and Wolf, 2009). It is governed by global standards of Higher Education (Kind, 2009; Freedman, 2010), benchmarking characteristics (Alden and Lin, 2004; Levin, Jeong and Ou, 2006), and cost (Altbach, 2004).

As much as 'globalisation' was viewed as an eye-opening opportunity for new horizons, it has also been perceived by other researchers as a contamination to the local cultural heritage. The narrative around this term has shaken the certainties and beliefs around knowledge and power within the 'postmodern prism' of education (Atkinson, 2003). A classic work entitled *'Universities and the New International Order'* by Spitzberg (1980) has dealt with the concept of 'dogma' and knowledge distribution in international universities in a north American context. It explored the questions around power dynamics, knowledge, and the cultural identity as universities have become 'hubs' of international engagement and cultural exchange. Spitzberg had the belief that ever since it evolved, globalisation has promoted 'intellectual mediocrity' in the sense that "third World universities are peripheral in an international academic system and that this situation is a result of a combination of factors, most of which reflect international inequalities in wealth, power and resources" (p. 441). Arguably, 'power' and 'equality' have competed as the two main discourses in a globalised higher education. Further sections will attempt to unpack the collated terminology, arguments, and implications deployed in this narrative.

Routes of practice of the 'global university': homogenisation or diversification

Universities through globalisation routes stumble upon the difficulty to host 'differences', ending up trapped between 'diversification' and 'homogenisation' (Fairweather, 2000; Knight, 2020). Initially, it was the move from a specialised regime to an integrative regime that has featured the shift of globalisation of the educational sector (Qiang, 2009). Universities who employed diversification in their schemes have adhered to organizational conformity that is implied by the global market rules. Consequently, institutions that had a 'specialised system'

[which used to have diversified targets and profiles] were replaced with ‘a standardised system’ [which dictates a single criterion approach to measure efficacy]. The mechanisms of the institutional change have been studied from a lens of organisational behaviour theory that considered topics such as ‘resource dependency’, ‘institutional isomorphism’, and ‘neo-institutionalism’ (Gornitzka, 1999; Qiang, 2009).

To break these notions down, ‘resource dependency’ highlights the automatic link between the institution and the surrounding environment as the former is always in a position of resource dependency. Control relations and power distributions seem to define the extent of dependency in the educational sector. On the other hand, ‘institutional isomorphism’ tends to be an adaptive process that institutions in similar environmental conditions undergo. The conformity to standard rules may reflect a sense of ‘professionalism’ and thus tend to create a “cross-organizational homogenization” (Qiang, 2009, p.462). Nevertheless, ‘neo-institutionalism’ appears to investigate “the survival value of organizational conformity to institutional environments” (ibid, p.426), where it is determined whether the policy/ programme adopted by those institutions is ‘institutionalised’ on the basis of common rules followed by other competing institutions or through ‘gradual legitimisation’ by the system.

The aforementioned organisational theories have shed light on the aspects of ‘dependency’ and ‘determinism’ that are established from inter and intra-institutional interactions. These changes are prone to challenges in theory as well as in practice. There are a multitude of approaches, campaigns, and protests that condemn rigidity, ‘eurocentrism’, lack of diversity and hybridity in practice (Bhambra, Gebrial and Nişancıoğlu, 2018). This has initiated philosophical and ideological pedagogical movements of change to the conceptualisation of the educational experience abroad that were later on translated into pedagogic interventions, like de-westernisation, or de-colonisation of higher education in an attempt to search for identity, diversity, and representation in the global sphere of education (Tlostanova and Mingnolo, 2012; Parasekeva, 2013). This angle of change will be clarified later in this chapter in conjunction with pedagogic implications of the academic transition from global south to global north.

As an extension of the meta-discourse of ‘global universities’, the notion of ‘neoliberalism’ as an ideology tends to breathe life into new educational policies and practices. Globalisation or else internationalisation of universities cannot exist in a vacuum. Clyne et al. (2001) asserted

that globalisation is "irretrievably lost" to the neoliberal agenda (cited in Dixon, 2006, p.320). The constructions of globalisation have been discretely grounded on economic imperatives of the sector of international education, where the discourse of education has been vastly dominated by economics (Ross, 2016). Retrospectively, the narrative of higher education in a neoliberal vessel acknowledges the fact that there are dominant powers that monitor the policy making process in higher education. Evidently, there exists a conjunction between globalisation conceptualisation and the neoliberal values of education (Clyne et al., 2001). The following section attempts to contextualise this discourse by opening up a window on the way neoliberal patterns govern the process of educational change with regard to international and global approaches in the sector of higher education.

The 'neoliberal' university: framings and perspectives

Theoretical lens of governmentality and neoliberalism

A range of researchers have established a link between neoliberalism and governmentality (e.g., Ball and Olmedo, 2013; Kaščák and Pupala, 2011; Martimianakis and Muzzin, 2015; Brass, 2016; Kanade, Nicky and Bruce, 2019). Kaščák and Pupala (2011) consider both to be "the technologies for the neoliberal government of education" (p.145). There is a worldwide metanarrative around the intersection of these two concepts over the past 30 years of research. Signalling its theoretical discourse, Foucault (1994) noted that 'governmentality' extends beyond its political sense to the social, as it hosts "modes of action, more or less considered and calculated, that [are] destined to act upon the possibilities of action of other people. To govern, in this sense, is to structure the possible field of action of others" (p. 341). Whilst governmentality suggests the social and political spectrum, neoliberalism, as Kaščák and Pupala (2011) noted, refers to "the economic vassalage of the state" (p.148). This lens has focused on the underpinning of authority in social sectors, like education (Neoliberalism and Education, 2007; Weber and Maurer 2006; Doherty, 2007).

Neoliberalism - as a concept- has seen a variance of interpretations, most of which feed on the British neo-Foucauldian ideas. Foucault (1969, 1970, 1972) has followed an 'archaeological' approach to understand the concepts of 'liberalism' and 'governmentality', by which he contemplated investigating connections, correlations, and relationships in a field of analysis where theoretical concepts 'coexist'. The variance of topics and angles of viewing the notion

and practice of neoliberalism has provided rich conversations that illuminated a stratum of multi-dimensional research inquiries. At the heart of the intellectual architecture of liberal notion is the localisation of 'society' (social liberality) and governing parties (political power), which introduced reforms to the 'policy-making' in higher education (Olssen et al., 2004; Lubienski, 2014).

In the prism of his series of work, Foucault has looked at the "discursive formations" of neoliberalism in education. Allowing a grasp of this analytical logic, records of Foucault's works show that, in the late 1970s, he explored and analysed 'liberal governmentality', in which he argued that -when viewed from a positive lens- the state's role with the economy is setting governmental laws and conditions. Olssen and Peters (2005) explain that "in neoliberalism, the state seeks to create an individual that is an enterprising and competitive entrepreneur" (p. 315). Davies and Bansel (2007, p.248) argued that "people are reconfigured as productive economic entrepreneurs of their own lives." In the authors' view, the reconfiguration, in the name of liberalism, has placed individuals as 'economic entrepreneurs' that can be 'produced' by the institutions. The entrepreneurial does not only mean the economic but also involves the social entrepreneurial that extends individual governance powers (Lubienski, 2014).

Kaščák and Pupala (2011, p.149) have noted that Pongratz's (1987) article was a solid reference as "one of the few writings on education who has since 1987 been focusing on how the ideas of Michel Foucault can be applied to education …. since more systematic Foucauldian analyses on education first began appearing in pedagogy in the 1990s." Pongratz demonstrated how the strategies of 'soft power' and 'societies of control' were direct causes of 'a neoliberal logic' that denounces the totality of centralised forms of governmentality in educational settings. From the considerable work conducted in this area, studies claim the interwoven relationship between the neoliberal ideology and the policy making of education (Peters, 2001; Peters et al, 2009; Olssen and Peter, 2005; Kaščák and Pupala, 2011). These instrumentalised forms of liberty were conveyed in the psychological dynamics of education, the pedagogical rationality, pedagogical discourse, institutional interventions, and educational reforms. The new mode of governmentality has sought to close the gap of fragmented and ill-informed pedagogical practices.

Commonly, other layers of research have followed the systems of significance that contribute to 'education governance' (Lubienski, 2014; Wilkins and Olmedo, 2018). Wilkins and Olmedo (2018, p.2) refer to education governance as "a heuristic device, discourse and technology of the government." Those modes of governance have witnessed an ontological shift in the educational sector, by decentralising educational reforms (Karlsen, 2000), and empowering communities (Ranson et al., 2005), establishing connections between 'local and community', and looking for 'educational alternatives' (Lubienski, 2014).

Governmentality and self-governmentality: an observed freedom

In this active employment of the neoliberal discourse, there is an assertion that this global ontological transformation is depicted in all domains of our present lives, including our inner selves. Doherty (2007, p.202) noted that "we are all neoliberals now, or at least we live and move in a world whose geography is being refashioned by the evolving project of an imperious neoliberalism." Common discourses have looked at the scale of those ideological influences on the conceptions of the self, the social, and the government.

Liberal values have dictated new forms of preferences of 'individualism' and 'subjectivisation' over centralism of institutional governance (Kaščák and Pupala, 2011, pp.148-149) with the aim of hollowing out traditional structures (Holliday, 2000; Bache, 2003; Ball, 2008). Nevertheless, while addressing the governance structures in British education, Lubienski (2014) shed light on the policy of 'disintermediation' that was issued to take away power from intermediate 'meso-level' educational authorities between schools and their macro governing entities. This role diminishment of intermediate institutions is argued to suggest a 'direct link between producers and consumers' (p.424). Novel understandings of the 'freedom' of the liberal state citizen suggest that it is "a resource for the government … to govern through pervasive observation, measurement and the regulation of every detail of life" (Doherty, 2007, p. 197). The scope of governmentality, in that understanding, does not stop at the level of dictating what citizens should do, but also through interfering in what citizens decide to do themselves. In a similar vein, Peters (2001) argued that it goes beyond the administration level "to the point where government and self-government coincide and coalesce" (p.1).

Exploring the wide range of literature on neoliberalism points in various directions: political rationality, economic practicality, social ideology, and capitalism vs. communism. Whilst many have applauded this ideology, others have questioned the delusion of the liberal democratic triumph like Brown's (2015) *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution*. Brown (2015) has written extensively about the relationship between neoliberal ideology and democracy, '*Homo economicus'.* Speaking of the interference of economy in social life, she addressed the economisation of all spheres of life - including education - under the neoliberal rationality. She asserted that "all conduct is economic conduct; all spheres of existence are framed and measured by economic terms and metrics" (p. 10). The author's views centred around the idea of 'freedom'; she added that "capitalism, in the form of neoliberal reason, defeated democracy". This assumption rests on the argument that neoliberalism has contradicted the egalitarian ideal by introducing 'the popular sovereignty'. The core argument was the "democratic self-rule" (p.11) that is promoted by the ideology of neoliberalism.

Although heavily criticised as a book in reviews like (Gane, 2016), this book has gained popularity by shaking the vision toward Foucauldian views. In a review on Brown's views, Dean (2016) addressed the role of communication in feeding into the 'capitalist productivity' of the sectors. Dean stated that "communication serves capital, whether in affective forms of care for producers and consumers" (p.980). The idea of 'human capital' surfaced in all the discourses about the 'economisation' under liberal systems, like the UK, where individuals are investors and sources of investments, simultaneously.

Why are these discourses 'relevant' to the agenda of Higher Education in the UK?

Drifting away from the conflict, laid by theorists and scholars, there is a vast space in the literature for 'liberal democracies' (Peters, 2001; Harvey, 2005; Davies, 2014). These, and many other follow-up discussions and scholarships, offer insight into the ontological, structural, and institutional shifts in key public sectors, like higher education (Leslie, 2016). Years of research evidence have discussed the transformation of universities through the transportation of the neoliberal model to higher education (Giroux, 2000; Hill, 2005; Rutherford, 2005). There are distinctive rationalisations of neoliberal-pivotal changes like the shift in control from a state-led higher education to a neoliberal consumer-led sector (Tooley, 1996, 2000). For a researcher or an evaluator of educational experience quality of students [as citizens within the system], it is important to highlight the scope and scale of this ontological change in the British higher education [as an institution, educational providers, and social

actors]. Therefore, there is a persistent call for expanding the vision beyond 'experience outcome' to understand the disparities, variations, and the multi-dimensionality of the effect of the ideological trends – that shifted educational core values (neoliberalism in this case)– on the way scholars have investigated 'the transition experience' of international students to western educational systems.

The next section seeks to situate those theoretical notions in the context of this research study by relating the hegemonic and counter-hegemonic discourse of neoliberalism to contemporary research discussions about the quality of higher education, positionality of students, arising issues, and the series of educational reforms. The backbone of this review section is to explore research of students' experiences within the neoliberal rationality, the economic globalisation, and eventually the marketisation of the higher education sector. The intersection of these topics is further elaborated within the landscape of research that has challenged understandings of the purpose of higher education in the age of globalisation and neoliberalism.

'A variant of liberalism' of the higher education system - towards a political-economic liberty

Neoliberalism as a ubiquitous term has been a hotly debated ideology in higher education (Harvey, 2005; Naidoo and Williams 2015; Tavares and Cardosa, 2013; Tholen and Brown 2018), often allied with *liberty, freedom, and investment.* Between supporters and opponents, it has been argued, at its emergence, that the neoliberal capitalist ideology served the aims of empowering individual interests, breaking the cycle of oppression for the public good, fostering competition, and thus guaranteeing an economic wellbeing for the system. Besides the theoretical coverage of the ideology (Foucault, 1969, 1970, 1972; Tooley, 1996; Brown, 2015), the historical scholarship was quintessentially grounded on the evolution of those liberal beliefs throughout a series of major events that strike provocative explanations of ideological choices and behaviours to structural systems- mainly educational institutions. Harvey (2005, p. 1) noted that "future historians may well look upon the years 1978-80 as a revolutionary turning point in the world's social and economic history". In a short reference to the history of neoliberalism, the new world order has been governed by a series of political events and epicentres since post-war (WWII), one of which is Margaret Thatcher's [UK Prime Minister] pledge to terminate 'inflationary stagnation' paving route for economic liberalisation, followed by new reforms in the US to apply deregulation, privatisation, and 'liberal' measures to local and global levels of the economy (Roberston, 2007; Bok, 2009). Harvey (2005) asserted that "from these several

epicentres, revolutionary impulses seemingly spread and reverberated to remake the world around us in a totally different image" (p.1). The ideological shift has touched every aspect of life in the western world, which has reshaped mindsets and discourses in key sectors upon the institutionalisation of marketisation, which had deeply affected the higher education sector.

Marketisation discourse of higher education

The institutionalisation of marketisation has paved the way for the introduction of market-like behaviours to the educational system. In his book, McCaig (2018) addresses the marketisation ideology of higher education in the UK by tracing its policy development over a 30-year period starting from the mid-1980s. More interestingly that the contents of the book was the language introduced to the discourse. 'Consumers', 'educational market', 'service providers' and many similar terms seem to direct the conversation towards the core of the topic of marketisation. This transformation of discourse as well as of roles and perspectives has also marked a range of literature about the topic. For instance, Compton and Weiner (2008) have quoted Merrill Lynch Report (1999) in *The Book of Knowledge Investing in the Growing Education and Training Industry*, which noted the incremental change in the educational sector' policies and ideology, which noted:

> *"[…] A new mindset is necessary, one that views families as customers, schools as "retail outlets" where educational services are received, and the school board as a customer service department that hears and addresses parental concerns. As a near monopoly, schools escape the strongest incentives to respond to their customers—the discipline of the market".*

Mok (2001) has highlighted the transformation of management practices within the higher education arena, illustrating that there was a noticeable change in the discourse of educators and academics towards a more 'market-oriented entrepreneurism'. In his work, there was a reference to expressions like 'productivity gain' and 'consumer oriented-research' that reflected the vision as well as the 'new' norms of the institutional practices (Sigahi and Saltorato, 2020). The marketisation and the commercialisation of higher education in the twenty-first century differ in "pace, intensity and moral legitimacy" (Lynch, 2006, p.2), the impact of which has transformed the concept of 'education' as well as 'student' due to its commercialisation tendencies of higher education (Bok, 2003).

The 'neoliberal marketisation' discourse in policies: policy route of the British higher education

The review has taken a divergent way from the theoretical lens, with the aim of exploring the nature as well as the rationality of higher educational policies that have adopted the marketisation ideology. A deeper look into those policies has demonstrated the way democratic rights of students were transferred into economic ones. Brown (2015) asserted that the "neoliberal rationality disseminates the *model of the market* to all domains and activities – even where money is not at issue – and configures human beings exhaustively as market actors, always, only, and everywhere as *homo economicus*" (p. 31). Relevant to former arguments, those roles are defined and legitimised by governing reforms and policies.

When dwelling on risks and rewards of the commercialisation, Bok (2003) asserted that the benefits of the marketisation policies - mostly financial- are often more acknowledged by policy makers due to their tangibility, whilst the dangers of it - mostly moral- are overlooked. In his work about higher education and inequality in the context of the US and the UK, Brown (2018) has raised the question, '*Is higher education – and especially the post-war expansion of most higher education systems – part of the problem or part of the solution*?" (p.37) through which he argued against the marketisation of the higher education sector. At the core of his work sits an emphasis on the socio-economic inequality that is reinforced by the marketisation policies and strategies. The argument suggested that a rupture in the social fabric would be caused by those policies, where education gradually loses its educational morals to serve *a marketised system*. Nevertheless, before delving into arguments 'for' or 'against' marketisation, it is crucial to look at the historical ground of those policies.

The series of reforms, in a recent piece of analytical work of McCaig (2018), are considered part of the governmental milieu of the British higher educational sector. As a policy analyst, McCaig (2018) explained that 'neoliberalism' in the context of his book "implies the use of market incentives by governments within a regulated system in an effort to change behaviours, be they institutional, academic or student behaviours" (p.17). Agasiti (2020) commented that McCaig's vision of neoliberalism in higher education has a 'cultural matrix'. More to that, the input of the book has shed light on the direction of policy change and discussed the rationality behind it. In McCaig's (2018) book, the accumulation of policies has been broken down into 'five distinct stages of market reforms'.

The modelling of those steps aimed to explore the rationalisation behind each one of the reforms that have predominantly become guidebooks to universities. The policy discourse analysis (PDA) has included governmental-sponsored reviews, green papers, white papers, Acts of Parliament, and funding council reports (McCaig, 2018). McCaig's (2018) analytical work drew out nine distinct discursive themes from the set of governmental reforms over the past 30 years. Below is the author's demonstration of the evolution of themes under *'The cumulative effect of marketisation discourse*" (p.5):

- ***Stage1:*** Efficiency and accountability; human capital (**1986-1992)**
- ***Stage 2:*** Efficiency and accountability; human capital; diversity as a good (**1992-2000)**
- ***Stage 3:*** Diversity as a good; efficiency and accountability; human capital; differentiation
- ***Stage 4:*** Diversity as a good; efficiency and accountability; human capital; differentiation; competition on price and quality (**2010-2015)**
- ***Stage 5:*** Diversity as a good; efficiency and accountability; human capital; differentiation; competition on price and quality **(2015-present)**

Upon the analysis, the two key stages of market reforms are defined as the *"efficiency and accountability*" and *"celebration of diversity".* The former has emerged from analysing the White Paper 'Higher Education: Meeting the Challenge' (DES, 1987), the Education Reform Act of 1988, and Further and Higher Education Act (F&HE) (HMSO, 1992). These two themes have explored the 'marketised discourse' in the policies and focus on the use of market-like concepts that dealt with universities as business-like organisations. Participation in higher education has expanded as an obligation of the reforms, resulting in a need for adjusting the costs to assure 'accountability' and 'efficiency' of the system.

The analysis has also fed into dichotomous visions that led debates about growth and expansion, quality and purpose, centralisation versus autonomy of university, diversity and differentiation of the system. This differentiation, for instance, was manifested in the Russel Group of universities, established in 1994, and post-1992 universities. Key to differentiation was the fees and widening participation policy that suggested that students should pay more tuition fees for older universities (Russel group) compared to 'new universities' due to the educational value and standards. This has been later - from 2000 to 2015- resolved by encouraging diversity of higher education providers in order to increase competition. The

White Paper (2003) and Higher Education Act (2004) were analysed as part of the third stage of reforms, which has increased differentiation for attracting 'students-customers'. Up to then, the costs were non-variable as all students had £3,000 as a fixed tuition fee, until the White Paper legalised £9,000 as the annual tuition fee (Students at the heart of the system, 2011). The 'cost neutral' decision terminated the competition based on 'cost' or fee differentiation.

McCaig (2018) worked on the interpretation of the reforms, particularly unveiling layers of pro-market arguments. He argued that each of the policy stages has been "key external drivers". He explained: "a) the establishment of institutional missions' groups (1994); b) neoliberal ideology, c) domestic institutional league tables (2005), d) the consequent ramification for public spending after the 2008 crash; and e) the ongoing perception that 'there may be too many people going to university' (2015 onward)" (2018, p. 4).

This review will not delve into those aspects in detail. However, I quote this reference to illustrate the neoliberal rationality embedded in the reforms along its chronological evolution. The model has been further discussed and structured. In an updated form of McCaig's model, Banwait and Hancock (2021) have laid out an explanative six phases of those analysed reforms.

Table 2. *Evolution of marketisation in higher education in England (Banwait and Hancock, 2021, adapted from McCaig, 2018)*

Phase1	*The Architecture of HE Massification: Systematic growth and sustainable funding (1960-1980)*
Phase2	*The Unification of HE: Improve efficiency, accountability, and human capital (Post 1980)*
Phase 3	*The Expansion of HE: Diversity as good (1992-2000)*
Phase 4	*The Differentiation of HE: Increased differentiation of the marketplace (2000-2010)*
Phase 6	*Increasing Competition in HE: Increased competitive differentiation (2010-2015)*
Phase 7	*Value for Money: Risk and exit: the completion and correction of the market (2015-Present)*

Throughout the five stages of marketisation, the line of analysis argues that the reforms implied market-oriented mechanisms that fuel competition between universities and uplift the educational system performance to higher 'marketised' standards. Overall, one of the key objectives was the necessity to provide a wider 'human capital' (through wider participation),

which was served by ‘diversification’ of education providers for an ‘open market’ of higher education. Fuelled by pro-competitive behaviours, efficiency of universities was measured by meeting ‘*standards of quality’*, and *‘return of investment’* for the student as well as the state (Agasiti, 2020). Other research inquiries have emphasised the governmental planning of higher education on the global level (for example, Olssen, 2006; Simons, 2007). Kaščák and Pupala (2011) reflected that “the highly competitive entrepreneurial environment is governed by a rich diversity of universities at all levels allowing for the utilisation of entrepreneurship education” (p.153). The ‘*value for money*’ stage, on the other hand, has emphasised ‘quality oversight’ over educational materials, programmes, courses, and offered facilities. On that ground, ‘the exit’ from the competitive sector was deemed to be the fate of providers who have failed to live up to the quality standards compared to others who remained in the higher educational market. This institutional failure was the decisive factor of the exit destination ‘out of the system’. Nevertheless, the threat of exclusion carries with it a sense of accountability and responsibility for ‘satisfaction’ to the executing power (government) and the consumers (students). Many scholars have contemplated this dialogue of accountability in institutional practices in response to the new market rules (Bok, 2003; Brown, 2018).

Social theory and institutional governance/ academic identity/ student experience

The neoliberal driven ideology has become an integral part of the fabric of the social as well as the institutional life. The rise of that wave of change gave birth to key factors, such as ‘marketisation’ and ‘consumerism’ that have marked its effects beyond the economic sector (Lynch, 2006; Brown, 2015). The critiques and debates presented themselves through these discourses and hybridised theoretical approaches. Amid push and pull of policies that serve different political and economic directions, other aspects have been involved in the analysis of that change in practice (McCaig, 2018). The introduced change (i.e., reforms) has initially reflected the governmental guidance to higher education institutions. However, the reasoning of it has equally been projected on the university world to shape different institutional and individual forms of behaviours. Further research has been dedicated to navigating through those tendencies of behaviours in response to policy changes.

A wider lens of ‘experience’ hosts theories that explore the topics of governance, freedom, and quality of experience. Murphy et al.’s (2020) recent work has examined the politics of higher education in the light of social theory. The authors of this book have shed light on three areas:

university governance, academic work politics, and student experience politics. A triangulation of the three discourses has allowed understanding the corresponding needs for change of each aspect. The series of publications in the work of Murphy et al. (2020) have contextualised the discourse of university governance at the heart of social theory that discusses a range of topics like "power and knowledge, privilege and authority, autonomy and control" (p.1). This was explored within three interrelated areas: 1) institutional governance, 2) academic work, and 3) student experience.

The first area [institutional governance] has looked at the governing powers of university and its performance as a system. Murphy et al. (2020) has addressed the idea of the university being an 'institutional powerhouse', a space within which ideas, notions, perspectives are heard, and individuals are empowered in response to the call for democracy and justice. The authors explained that amid the debate around 'consumerism and neoliberalism', "the university is still expected to assist in creating generations of independent thinkers, which in turn are expected to provide a sound basis for a critically-reasoning public that can speak truth to power[sic]" (p.1). Centred around the notion of empowerment, educational governance under the neoliberal agenda serves the distribution of equal opportunities of participation, knowledge, and voice.

The institutional governmentality is often closely linked to performance, or performativity as Koch and Labraña (2020) put it. The authors have a theory informed explanation of governmentality, at the light of Lunhamann's (1995) work of organisational theory and Foucault's (1980, 2007) work of discourse analysis, through which they depict the consequential effect of 'accountability' on the performing higher education system. The academic governance structure is usually under the surveillance of accountability measures that comply with the educational market rules and demands (King, 2007; Burk, 2005). The mechanisms of surveillance are displayed in "performance indicators, league tables, student satisfaction surveys, institutional audits and professional developmental reviews" (Fejes, 2016, cited in Murphy et al., 2020, p.32). The literature on this topic demonstrates that the effect of these accountability regimes on quality is highly questionable as it pushes forward higher education towards competition, knowledge economy, and marketisation (Zepke and Leach, 2007; Jayasuriya, 2010; Schwier, 2012; Murphy et al., 2019).

The ideological package of change has had a tremendous transformation to the academic structures of higher education. When discussing the factorability of change, research

acknowledges the effect of globalisation on policy making (Marginson, 2008) and the dramatic expansion of demands with the growth of the body of students enrolled in universities (Marginson, 2016). While it is difficult to encapsulate the scale and the depth of those changes, arising questions continue to evolve around the concepts of participation, representativeness, academic equality, and inclusion (National Union of students, 2013; Hensby, 2017; Wright and Rapper, 2019). Advocates of the notion of democracy in inclusion reinforced the idea that performative expectations from the system can be both measured and observed through the assessment of those who benefit from the educational services and programmes, i.e., students.

The student positionality in the system

In competing discourses of the neoliberal ideology, 'positionality' "becomes starker when the social world becomes more competitive and increasingly differentiated in terms of resources and status" (Olssen, 2000, p.499). 'Student as a consumer' is a largely explored topic (Molesworth et al., 2010). In their work entitled 'Her Majesty the Student', Nixon et al. (2018) speak about the way higher education (HE) market discourse changes roles and positions and even individual students' expectations and aspirations. Molesworth et al. (2009) have addressed how this is translated in the novel policies of higher education expansion of marketised offers for vocational courses, which has led to the legitimisation of the market ideology. Molesworth et al. (2009) stated, "For us, some sections of the modern British university have become so embedded in a market economy [that] they have lost the will – perhaps the capacity – to critique it" (p.278).

Referring back to the relevancy of this thread of events to the transition experience, it is important to note that the international student is in fact acting upon those ideological and structural norms and being acted upon by them. Besides revising thick forms of freedom that incorporate 'wellbeing/ development', Olssen (2000) noted that in both Raz's (1986) and Jonathan's (1997) conception of freedom, as well as being an individual capacity, it is "a politically provided space" for individuals (p.504). Restating the interpretations of fellow scholars (for example, Apple, 2001; Ball, 2003), Lynch (2006) noted that "competitive individualism is no longer seen as an amoral necessity but rather as a desirable and necessary attribute for a constantly reinventing entrepreneur" (p.3), leading neoliberalism to "trivialise education that has no market value" (p.4).

‘Students’ voices’ discourses – neoliberal lens

Inseparable from the ideology of neoliberalism is granting a supreme value to the individual. Student status in the educational system has been inflected with discussions of ‘power’, ‘resistance’, and ‘voice’. Assumptions and definitions of human rights and values have informed the theorisation of ‘voice’ (Robinson and Taylor, 2007). A line of theoretical elaboration of ‘voice’ definitions has associated voice participation with power (Lizzo and Wilson, 2009; McLeod, 2011; Planas et al., 2013; Holligan and Shah, 2017).

Collective national efforts have worked towards the mobilisation of communicating customer needs, articulating concerns, and reporting back through surveys like The National Student Survey (NSS, 2017). Student voice policy was intensified in higher education institutions in the UK, from classroom (Fielding, 2004) to the institutional level (Maunder et al., 2013; Flint et al., 2017). As described by DBIS (2018), the office of students (OFS) became ‘the new market regulator of higher education’ (p.1) with the aim of guaranteeing quality for students as customers. As the designated body for such purpose, the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) believed that students should be “engaged […] in the quality of their educational experience” (QAA, 2018, p.3). In a review to the OfS, QAA and NSS, Young and Jerome (2020) argued that the three “reflect the significance of the neoliberal framing of student voice as all three focus on students as consumers (generating data on the ‘quality’ of education) and as consumers of the data (as prospective/current consumers of courses)” (p.692).

In an analytical reflection, Day and Pirrie (2020) spoke of *student satisfaction as a form of governmentality*. In their work, a documentary analysis was performed on artefacts related to methodologies of universities on league tables that have opened a portal into ontological and epistemological interpretations. Following the Foucauldian approach, researchers have viewed governmentality as an analytical tool to explore ‘student experience’ through a depiction of the functionality of the [governing] micro-practices of the institution (Merlingen 2011; Day and Pirrie, 2020). In this respect, data that qualifies as ‘student satisfaction’-related is highly valued as an indicator for academic experience quality. The route of this data collection is through evaluation surveys, interviews (less often), or observation schemes that inform the institution about students’ feedback on their academic experience. These practices have invoked epistemological conflicts, in which they were addressed as "hierarchical observation’ that implied ‘a pyramidal functioning of disciplinary power" (Thiel, 2019, p. 544). Thiel has also

pointed out ‘normalising judgement’ about the quality of education. Structures that have favoured maximising students’ satisfaction with the provided services have been able to meet the performance indicators of their ‘institutional governmentality’. In a backward reflection, I find this vision very similar to the notion of ‘individualism’ and ‘subjectivisation’ discussed in Kaščák and Pupala (2011) under section of *Governmentality and Self-governmentality: An Observed Freedom* earlier in this chapter.

Beyond the questions of market-like forces and behaviours, voice and participation can be also viewed from a socio-cultural perspective, in which both ‘accountability’ and ‘democracy’ are capitalised. Universities are described as ‘sites of citizenships’ (Teune, 2001; Colby et al., 2003). As a democratic institution, the university tends to have a ‘civic responsibility’ towards students and should therefore allow students’ contribution to institutional governance, by having the right as organisational members (Lizzio and Wilson, 2009). Lizzo and Wilson (2009, p.70) refer to three dimensions of students’ participation in change: “functional *(how does it benefit the university?),* developmental *(how does it benefit the student?),* and social *(how does it benefit society?)*”. Whilst students’ input informs ‘change’, change appears to be the direct assignment of the operating institution/ university by ensuring quality, maintaining students’ satisfaction, and guaranteeing an appropriate return on students’ financial investment.

Those ideological conceptions of the individual and social experience have kept being shaped and reshaped as decades unfold through the phases of neoliberalism; from ‘classical liberalism” to “liberal individualism” to “collectivism” to grant social democracy and reconceptualise liberty and freedom (Collini, 1979, Olssen, 2000). Olssen (2000) argued that individuals and societies are both “governed by relations of mutual dependence”. The argument was that ‘self-reliance’, for instance, is considered as a sub-concept of the collectivist notion of ‘self-realisation’ by which individuals and societies thrive on improvement and development. The conjuncture between the ‘self’ and the ‘others’ as social individuals serve the purpose of co-existing needs and preferences that are mediated by a neoliberal ideology.

Power relations and students’ voice: empowerment/ participation/representation

In examining neoliberalism from the standpoint of seizing rightful power and status, students’ positionality has actively been reflected in theirs as well as their institutions' behaviours,

discourses, and practices. Foucault (1982, 2010 [1979]) has explicitly centred his research around identifying 'power relations' which prevail in all aspects of life and are certainly applicable to student-institution relationship. Foucault's discussions, in this respect, were implemented in a variety of studies (for example, Ball, 2013; Canning, 2016; Thiel, 2019; Young and Jerome, 2020). Cannella (2015), for instance, has addressed Foucault's notion of 'power' "as complex, circulating, relational, and dangerous, but always produced by, and producing resistance, as existing only within the presence of resistance" (p.594). Nevertheless, 'Neoliberalism' as an ideology in higher education market is defined as a theory of 'preference satisfaction' and 'preference formation' (Jonathan, 1997; Olssen, 2000). The prime goals of satisfaction and formation of preferences were realised in sectors like education. In this respect, education can be perceived as 'social good'/ product, also referred to as 'a positional good' due to the diversity of expectations, preferences, and choices. Understood as such, the theory of satisfaction aims to reach an egalitarian ideal by protesting against dictated forms of non-inclusive practices and reforms.

Freedom of choice, however, can amount to conflicting opinions. Drawing on Jonathan's (1997) argument, Olssen (2000, p. 499) added that one of the flaws of neo-liberalism is that "while it claims to increase freedom by the very act of bringing individuals into conflict with each other, some must lose in this competition effectively negating this freedom". This line of argument suggests that conflict can stem from the unrealistic assumption of the neoliberal institution of its ability of hosting everybody's diverse needs, or even listening to everybody's opinion in the first place, without being entrapped in issues, like lack of representation, or accentuating certain social groups'/ individuals' privilege of transmitting an opinion at the expense of others. Thus, the 'rights talk' opens a debate that suggests that the very end-goal of inclusivity may lead to non-inclusivity and misrepresentation. The conflict of interests, therefore, is a direct cause of the inability to maintain a balance between representation and feasibility of those claims. When subjected to scrutiny, acknowledging both legitimate and illegitimate constraints of that freedom of choice, voice, and rights teases out deeper '*representation rights'* questions, such as *whose voice is being heard? And why?*

Targeting a different lens of 'privileged human subjectivities', Cannella (2015) has interpreted the neoliberal human individual as "an embodiment of capital without ideology or choice" (p.596). Put as such, Cannella has argued that fractured forms of subjectivities are often studied as a social construction with a disregard to the historical and contextual factors that helped its

emergence. Based on Foucault's (1982) work, studies like Taylor and Robinson (2009) and Young and Jerome (2020) argued that 'voice' can be a 'dividing practice' in the case of students' participation and representation. Speaking of "whose voice is being heard", representors or 'carriers of voice' exercise a discursive power, yet also a divisive power that may overshadow other 'unheard' or 'underprivileged' voices. Opponents of the 'capitalist' ideas of higher education, and market reforms of the sector, suggest that 'short-termism' in higher education is similar to a business approach, caused by "the economization of communication" and increasing the demands for more participation and information (Brown, 2015, 2018). Joint with the aforementioned claims of Jonathan (1997) and Olssen (2000), Brown's (2015) account of the implementation of neoliberalism as an ideology assert, though ruptured by expectations and aspirations, that it leads to a "civilizational despair" (p. 221).

'Liberal', 'international' higher education: celebrated notions vs. debated notions

There is more to the neoliberal global controversy discourses on higher education practices than the power-positionality matrix. Liberal views have affected the academic pedagogic rhetoric (Carter, 2009). It is useful to mention that the appropriation of higher education agenda has been tightly linked to the effect of globalisation on ideologic reformation and educational transformations (Mebrahtu, Crossley and Johnson, 2000). Nevertheless, this appropriation has set a fertile ground for questioning institutional and academic practices especially to international students, introducing conceptual changes for the global higher education (Seats, 2020).

A popular appeal of this market-driven ideology of the higher education sector has set the ground for the notion of 'academic capitalism' (Slaughter and Leslie, 2001; Sigahi and Saltorato, 2020), used to address universities' engagement in market-like activities. Slaughter and Leslie (1997), for instance, have initially elaborated on this topic by tracing back the evolution of reforms and policies that introduced market behaviours to higher education in Australia, Canada, and the USA. The body of research on *academic capitalism* has grown steadily, starting by working on the interdisciplinary theorisation between state, markets, and globalisation of higher education (Slaughter and Rhoades, 2004), leading to the birth of the theory of academic capitalism (TAC). Further research about this notion has provided a multi-level network of actors of higher educational system, macrostructural, organisational, and

individual (Cantwell and Kauppinen, 2014). As such, this article seeks to establish connection between small-scale individual and organisational behaviours with larger scale ideologies, which are likely to be translated into and transmitted through reforms and policies. Discussions of students' mobility, neoliberal tendencies in higher education inevitably raise questions about the 'marketisation' behaviours of universities and relate back to their effect on students' 'position' and 'power status' in the organisational hierarchy.

Communicative capitalism in universities [education providers & education seekers]

Brown (2015) has similarly referred to the notion of 'communicative capitalism' which could be hollowed out from its mere cause, leading to 'communication without communicability' (Dean, 2016). Fielding (2004) has addressed the issue of inadequacy of institutional communication policies in disregarding the aspect of 'dialogue' between academic staff and students. Students' voice practices, according to Fielding, can be discretely marginalising to students. On a parallel view, framing and structuring also play pivotal roles in representation and responding to diverse socio-cultural and learning background of students as 'service users' and 'consumers' (Valentine and Capponi, 1989; Johnson and Deem, 2003). Another angle of research asserts that students' diversity is reflected in the way they respond to standardised systems to collect feedback (Benner and Kane, 2014). Reversely, students' expectations continue to exert a pressure on the host university, evoking an active state of aspiring to achieve students' satisfaction. Attending to those 'needs' serves the purpose of adhering by the - national and international - standards for educational excellence in the higher education arena. That excellence, however, is determined by a number of interrelated facets.

The decline in a capacity to serve 'customer needs' would counteract the equation of marketisation policies of 'value for money' (Kamvounias and Varnham, 2006), eventually leading to a risk of replacement and disqualification in the leading boards of higher education providers. The neoliberal model of higher education with its market values continue to cause major inconsistencies and inefficiencies. This is mirrored in its realisation, conflicts of interests, positions, and contradictory forms of coercive powers within the western university's organisational system. It extends to affect teachers and educators (Hill, 2005) besides ground values of education (Morrison, 2001). The wake of criticism of the neoliberal policies of higher education is symptomatic of the growing recognition of its effect on the system as a whole.

Student voice policies in England are trapped in a 'neoliberal imaginary' (Ball, 2012, 2017); one that assumes that the 'customer-student is always right' (White, 2007).

Institutional behaviours have long been the centre of research attention, especially following the evolution of neoliberal education. In a criticism of `*the tenets of Millian liberalism'* (a term used in the classic work of Jonathan, 1997, p. 185), Olssen (2000, p. 504) asks: "what substantive mode of organization is recommended? How is it to cope with multiplicity of group interests, values, and orientations to life? Should there be different schools for different groups? To what extent should there be a common curriculum?" None of these questions have been addressed or resolved in Mill's approach to freedom. Yet, they have remained at the heart of questioning of educational system values and practices on a global level. Freedom of choice, for instance, has been the centre of attention.

Driven by the neoliberal thinking, a hallmark of higher education policies encouraged the individual student choice. The self-discourse has been intensified about individuals as human capital units, whose personal, social, and economic interests have been honoured throughout liberal market values. The educational institution held dear these values treating the student as a self-conducting citizen (Peters, 2001). Students' financial investment in higher education institutions grants them the right of 'choice making' (Naidoo et al., 2011; Naidoo, 2016). Choices, therefore, are made with accordance with individual students' interests as consumers. That choice often has positive or negative associations with social inequalities (Callender and Dougherty, 2018).

The market-led moral is claimed to promote fairness, equality, and efficiency of the sector (Apple, 2001; Thrupp, 2001) for the purpose of serving new neoliberal educational agendas (Bonal, 2003).Within the discussion of the type and scale of the 'equality' offered, some researchers have raised questions about the need for equality of 'choice' and affordability of access to high standards of higher education (Lynch and O'Riordan, 1998; Lynch and Baker, 2005; Tight, 2000). Callender and Dougherty's (2018) work has discussed the 'idealisations' and 'illusions' of the student choice-model in a marketised higher education. The authors have charted the evolution of the student-choice rationale in the British higher education with the aim of exposing whether the choice model contributes to the 'reduction' or 'production' of social inequalities.

Mobilising change: from ‘westernisation’ and ‘epistemicide’ to ‘decolonisation’ streams of education philosophies

In the discursive flux of the commodifying nature of education, the social justice agenda of contemporary education advocates accountability, widening participation, and equal opportunity of knowledge distribution across the sector (Murphy et al., 2020). There is a drastic transformation of the university world that prevails in ideologies, paradigms, teaching methods, and power relations. A commonly held belief has served the narrative of ‘internationalisation’ for the betterment of the quality of the educational system (Knight, 2001, 2012). In response, the concept of *‘westernisation’* has been generously explored as an adopted approach in the educational practice of higher education (Rhein, 2016; Shreeve, 2020). Often, the term has melted into the globalisation narrative (Guo et al., 2021).

Paradoxically, however, the notion of globalisation has been criticised for being “bolted on to, rather than integrated into, analyses of educational structures, policies and processes, and of the societies in which they are embedded” (Dale and Robertson, 2003, p. 3). In other words, the knowledge/power compression has played a significant role in determining the elite form of knowledge system and pedagogy at universities. In this respect, the standardisation of the academic content for the purpose of ‘internalisation’ or ‘globalisation’ has made a reverse effect on reinforcing knowledge hierarchies rather than accentuating diversities. Those hierarchies have been attributed to ‘governance’ which - as a concept- demonstrates a standard form of rationality based on power relations and status.

Knowledge governance approach in western modern higher education has led to “cultural genocide, linguicide and epistemicide” (Hall and Tandon, 2017, p.7). The authors have referred to '*epistemicide'* as "the killing of knowledge systems" (p.6). Postcolonial theories have heavily critiqued the cultural domination and the systematic privileging of knowledge (Risvi, 2007; Paschyn, 2014). Debates arose as the implementation of western educational pedagogies was “perpetuat[ing] neo-colonialism and western hegemony” (White, 2015, p.115). Between coloniality and pedagogy, research sheds light on the question of ‘whose knowledge?’ in order to investigate the western dominance of knowledge (Selvaratnam, 1988).

Hybrid identities and representation

In the context of higher education, globalisation and internationalisation pathways of the sector hold notions of space, time, power, multiplicity of knowledge, and diversity backgrounds. Understood as a flow of networks (Castells, 1999, 2009), the two factors of 'knowledge' and 'power' are exchangeable between individuals and organisations as 'social actors'. Akin to the transition ecology, postcolonial research addressed 'the ecology of knowledges' where social justice is met through cognitive justice (Santos, 2016). Nevertheless, it was the notion of 'unstable and unbounded spatial understandings' that has reinforced the (dis)location of individuals, which has thus created hybrid identities (Dixon, 2006, p. 320). Postcolonial theorists have looked into the identity construction in this respect (Dixon, 1995, 2006; Spivak, 1996). Nevertheless, the 'insider/ outsider' binary (MacLure, 2003, p. 99) has touched aspects of equality and representation in policy making. In a global international educational system, 'policy makers are insiders' (Dixon, 2006, p.321). As opposed to teachers and students, policymakers' voices are louder in the higher education arena. Status and privilege are infused factors of the system of globalisation as to whose voice is heard and why it matters. "The move of the university from a service profile to a market profile has caused significant concern and dilemmas for academics and university policy makers" (Dixon, 2006, p.320). With global imperatives, governance in higher education entails the discussion about the role of political rationality, bureaucracy, and privilege to the formulisation of standard rules of knowledge in higher education, the specification of problem-focus, and the orientation of interventions.

Response to marginalisation: student agency to change through activism

Global imperatives of institutional environments as well as the diversity in international students' social mobility have changed the concept of studentship, agency, and collective students' identity (Klemenčič, 2015; Rapper and Burke, 2020). Operating under a neoliberal higher education system, concepts such as 'voice', 'individualism', empowerment', and 'inclusion' have taken a political stance, where 'political activism' becomes the new form of expression (Altbach and Klemenčič, 2014). From a different perspective, it has been suggested that student activism serves the university agenda in safeguarding the benefits of 'customer-students' and preserving their diversity (social and ethnic) especially in an era where identity and individual lifestyles became the primary focus of universities (Wright and Raaper, 2019). Aligning with the aforementioned narratives, student power has been enacted through activism to steer the wheel of change of pedagogical practices (Klemenčič, 2014).

Cognitive justice & knowledge democracy [decolonisation stream]

A thread running through the reflective dialogues of neoliberalism, globalisation, and internationalisation has led to the emergence of 'subjectivity', 'intellectual freedom', 'justice' as opposed to 'standardisation', 'conformance', and 'marginalisation'. The shift, however, entails divorcing former forms of rigid practices and acknowledging misrepresentation and marginalisation as forms of negligence and structural racism (Bhambra, Gebrial and Nişancıoğlu, 2018). Under these circumstances, the university happens to be under an immense pressure to live up to the standards of education publicised by reviving these notions.

> *"[…] The university, and higher education more generally, is still judged against the once-revolutionary ideals of democracy, reason, truth and justice, ideals which uphold the university as a publicly oriented institution. This public character for many represents the beating heart of the institution." (Murphy et al., 2020, p.2)*

On the margin of accountability and regulation, there has been a reconfiguration of the neoliberal university rules and practice towards the construction of meaning to the academic identity (Hodgson and Watts, 2020). The twenty first century has witnessed a wave of movements calling for de-westernisation of the educational curriculum (Berit, Obijiofor and Fitzgerald, 2013; Parasekeva, 2013). With the flow of international students, the university's major concern has shifted towards dealing with issues arising from the increased 'otherness'. Student mobilisations have increasingly stimulated the move towards 'transnational liberation' (Khative, Killjoy and McGuire, 2012). This diversity has challenged the rigidity of canons of knowledge as new paradigms were adopted due to the proliferation of research communities (Scott, 2000), gradually evolving towards 'learning to unlearn' westernised pedagogies (Tlostanova and Mingnolo, 2012).

The decolonial stream of change has contributed to "understand[ing] the role of the University as a modern/colonial institution in the reinforcement of Western perspectives at the expense of the plurality of knowledges of the world" (Wekker et al., 2016, pp.10-11*)*. Icaza and Vázquez (2018) have explored the role of political and historical context or else what they referred to as '*the university and the geopolitics of knowledge'* (p.109) in responding to the heterogeneity of the academic community. This lens of analysis has highlighted the way the corporate/ neoliberal model of university is found to restrict pedagogical practices and oppress different

epistemic understandings due to its pro-business ethos. Nevertheless, there was a plethora of social movements and initiatives of decolonisation of teaching and learning, such as 'Decolonising our universities' movement in Malaysia, the 'Rhodes Must Fall' process in South Africa, 'Why is My Curriculum White*?'* in the United Kingdom (Hussain, 2015), and the student mobilisations, mainly '*the University of Colour'* (UoC), the New Urban Collective (NUC) (ibid, p. 110).

The plurality of initiatives is a call to pinpoint the epistemic modern/colonial divide (Icaza and Vázquez, 2018). For international students, the shift from global south to the global north imposes an identity transformation. This notion has been reoccurring in different discourses like the academic transition models (Gale and Parker, 2014; Jindal-Snape, 2016; Taylor and Harris-Evans,2018). From a practical perspective, the process of international students' integration to the educational system was argued to have posed several challenges for the university. It seems that despite the cultural richness and diverse perspectives that students bring, it becomes a harder task for the university to manage and adjust if students themselves choose to ''ignore, copy or destroy the difference'' (Kroger, 2001, p. 116). Responding to these challenges, the decolonial perspective has rebuked inequality and marginalisation by fostering epistemic autonomy through the diversification of curricula (Payne, 2019).

Along the spectrum of the internalisation of the university, there was a need for more person-centred understanding of the intercultural relationship development of students (Kudo, Volet and Whisted, 2020). There has been a number of social class-oriented and generation-focused studies that attempted to close the achievement gap (Chang et al., 2004; Nicole et al., 2014), stimulating dialogue about cross-racial diversities on campus (Jayakumar, 2008; Johnson-Bailey et al., 2009; Haslerig et al., 2013; Rodríguez et al., 2018). This has extended to investigate sex diversified orientation roles and interventions (Dessel et al., 2013; Iverson and Seher, 2014; Lumby and Azaola, 2014) as well as previous experiences and exposures (Bowman and Denson, 2012; Park, 2015).

Problematising the notion of diversity in higher education has addressed university practices that varied from 'diversity-rich to diversity-poor' in terms of stimulating knowledge co-production. This prevailed in participatory methodology practices which amplified unheard students' voices like 'Diversity Discussion Circles' (Icaza and Vázquez, 2018). This and other attempts continue to challenge rigid ideological positions, stimulate discussions, and add up to

the epistemic and pedagogic toolbox of contemporary education. Nevertheless, these endeavours have extended the scope of the question of diversity and inclusion beyond the academic lens of curriculum and pedagogy to also investigate institutional transition practices.

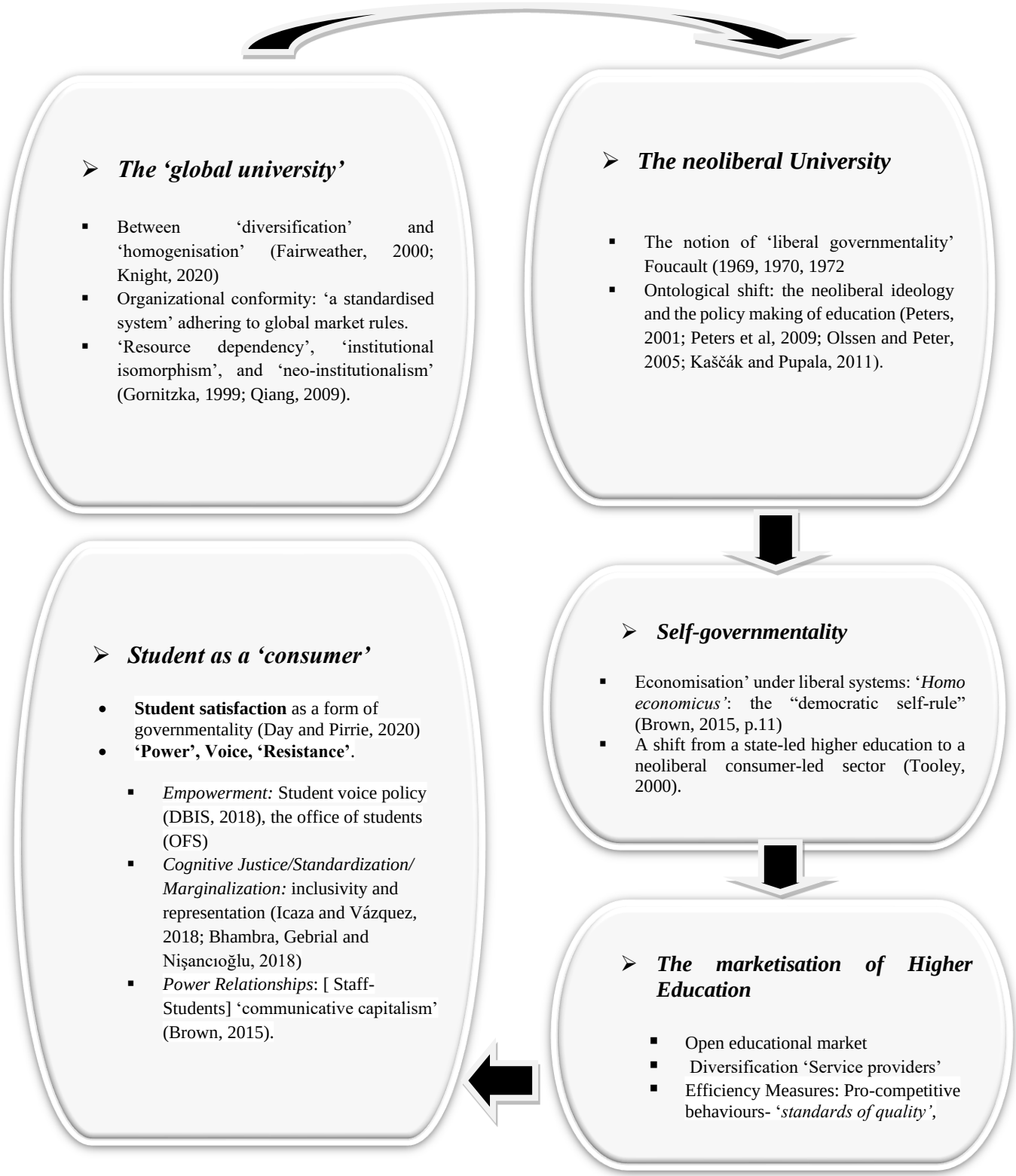


Figure 1. *Contextual Vessel of Transition into Higher Education-Governing Notions and Ideologies*

Transition pedagogies between theory and practice

Building on previous epistemological and theoretical groundings of 'transition', discussed earlier in this chapter, the conceptualisation process has served in informing the multiplicity of the scholarly perspectives on students' experiences. As opposed to a monological approach, different transitional models have proposed the exploration of the concept through a variety of notions, most of which have laid focus on identity (trans)formation and academic development in the process (Nicholson and West, 1995; Leathwood and O'Connell, 2003). On the other end of the spectrum of theorising, there exists a need of contextualising those epistemic transition models within empirical pedagogical spaces at higher education. This section tends to explore relevant literature in this perspective.

As a recall to that angle of the literature, the focus on transitional phases was visible in models like Bridges' interaction model of '*ending, neutral zone, new beginning'* (Bridges, 2002) and Tinto's model of departure (1975,1993) of '*separation, transition, and incorporation'.* Incorporation for instance has proposed a *"near paradigmic status"* of transition yet overlooked the socio-cultural background in a call to 'detachment' and 'breaking away' from the past. Nevertheless, other scholars have viewed transition as 'liminal', where a series of events are deemed interconnected between the past and the present (van Gennep, 1960; Elder, 1986), leading to transition to evolve as 'a betwixt space' (Palmer, Paula and Owes, 2009). The two other prominent lines of theorisation have capitalised the notion of 'becoming', defining educational transition as *'induction, development, becoming'* (cited in Gale and Parker, 2014)*;* and *'assemblage', 'rhizome', and 'becoming'* (cited in Taylor and Harris-Evans, 2018).

The table below collates the four key conceptual models of transition that this chapter has discussed thus far. Referring to these theoretical underpinnings, further sections seek to explore the way conceptual gaps of transition contribute to possible pedagogical malpractice.

Table 3. *Conceptual models of Transition*

Bridges' transition model (1986, 2002)	*'Ending, Losing and Letting Go', 'Neutral Zone', 'New beginning'*
Tinto's transitional model (1975, 1993)	*Separation, Transition, Cooperation*
Gale and Parker's Transition Conceptual Framework (2014)	*Induction, Development, Becoming*
Taylor and Harris- Evan's Transition Conceptual Framework (2018)	*'Assemblage', 'Rhizome', and 'Becoming'*
Jindal-Snape's Transition Conceptual Framework (2016)	*Multiple and multidimensional transitions (MMT) theory*

Successful vs. troubling transitions: conceptual gaps and pedagogical oversight

The dialogical journey of understanding transition has aligned with the dichotomous discourses portraying organisational as well as pedagogical change. The discussion around the operationalisation dimension of the former transitional models has served steering the educational change towards interrogating perspectives and approaches while provoking reflexivity on academic practices. To avoid redundancy, in accordance with multiple theoretical frames, this section attempts to shed light on the functioning aspect of transition-oriented programmes and pedagogies in the context of higher education.

In this vein, and for the purpose of supporting transitioning students, universities have systematically integrated interventions in curricula and pedagogical practice, induction programmes (Murtagh, Morris and Thorpe, 2013; Thomas, 2013) and early interventions that offer a pre-entry support, such as 'summer bridge' (Barnhart and Stanfield, 2013; Johnson, 2016). Many lines of inquiry on transitions have placed those institutional interventions under the spotlight. This has prevailed in works that diagnosed irregularities and malfunctioning of transition interventions, such as 'failed transitions' (Quinn, 2010) 'cutting rough diamonds' (Hope, 2017) and 'a fish in the water' (Murtagh, Morris and Thorpe, 2013).

Within the modern vision of policy making, the global standards of higher education require a high capacity of flexibility and adaptability to change and diversity. Students' transition to an international perspective of higher education has introduced 'non-traditional students' (Briggs, Clark and Hall, 2012; Coertjens et al., 2017). The transitioning student identity, socio-cultural, and educational profiles have played major roles in the psychosocial aspect of their interactions

and socio-academic integration process. In this line of argument, empirical research - mostly UK focused- has looked into the development of student identity through transition (Bathmaker and Thomas, 2009; Palmer et al., 2009; Parker and Gale, 2014; MacFarlane, 2018). Throughout their integration process, it was argued that students require "identity work" (Crozier et al., 2008, p. 579) that entails developing their 'learning identity' (Christie et al., 2008; MacFarlane, 2018).

Revisiting notions in transition-practice

There is a pedagogic value of exploring students' resources that allows dictating a range of implications on the teaching and learning practice as well as on educational policy decisions overall. Whilst different programme initiates echo the commitment of support agents to effectively help students navigate their transition pathway through university, literature demonstrates its tendency to drift away from the student profile (Quinn, 2010; Taylor et al., 2018; Gravett, 2019). Gale and Parker (2014) asserted that "research in the field needs to foreground students' lived realities and to broaden its theoretical and empirical base if students' capabilities to navigate change are to be fully understood and resourced" (p. 734). Similarly, Taylor and Harris-Evans (2018, p. 1256) argued that the "becoming' aspect of transition 'shifts the discourse towards an understanding which sees higher education as part of the whole life of the student, which notices and views the granularity of students' lived experience".

Certainly, these views are also underpinned by the assumption that the building process of students' new skills and identities are foregrounded on their pre-requisites. The learning process 'is not just about how students meet the requirements demanded of them at specific points in their academic career, but it is embedded in the totality of their prior experience' (Christie et al., 2016, p.480). Research in this respect has extended to acknowledge diverse experiences of development in terms of interpersonal and cognitive skills, self-concept, and psychological wellbeing (Bernsden et al., 2002; Bowman, 2010a; Bowman, 2010b). According to former transitional models, however, transition occurs at two levels producing internal (psychological and developmental) and external (institutional and socio-cultural) structures. Therefore, the next step is to inquire about the way literature has portrayed notions surrounding institutional transition support between theory and practice.

Mediating habitus(es): socio-cultural-academic

'Managing habituses' has thrived as a notion in transition to higher education (Edirisingha, Cane and Jiang, 2018). Originally, 'habitus' in Bourdieu's (1994) work was referred to as the embodiment of a set of dispositions based on previous experiences and frames of references. The notion of habitus, however, tends to run deeper than values or norms as it exists on the sub-conscious level of action which provokes a sense of re-production (Thomas, 2002). It has been argued that "habitus produces action, but because it confines possibilities to those feasible for the social groups the individual belongs to, much of the time those actions tend to be reproductive rather than transformative" (Reay et al., 2001, p. 357). Whilst the term *habitus* has been closely tied to social class and power dynamics, it has been vastly employed in the context of higher education. Research on transition to higher education has addressed the integration process of 'institutional habitus' (Reay, David and Ball, 1998, 2001).

Responding to the notion of integration into the new habitus requires a consideration of 'background' and former habitus which tends to define former structures, norms, and interactions. Certain transition-focused models (e.g., Tinto, 1977) have emphasised the relationship between the notion of 'interaction' and 'integration'. Earlier studies have pinpointed the effect of bicultural adaptive variables such as 'communalism' or 'collectivism' in social integration (Triandis et al., 1988; Triandis, McCuster and Hui, 1990; Thompson and Fretz, 1991). Those variables have demonstrated a direct impact on the way students establish support mechanisms around themselves. Thompson and Fretz's (1991) study, for instance, has revealed that 'more communal' students, who were identified as African American students, have a tendency to have an 'over-involvement' in 'collectivist-focused social systems'. On the other hand, students with less collectivist orientations were remarkably more self-centred. They also tend to be driven by either family-oriented motivations and individual-based motivations or sometimes both with either minor or remarkable disparities between the two ends. Those motivational orientations are likely to be projected in interpersonal behaviours like commitment and persistence, as well as academic achievement, and integration within new systems (Dennis, Phinney and Chuateco 2005; Guiffrida, 2006). Arguments have been invoked to explain the way implications for the 'personal deficit' were caused by a gap in transition (Tate and Swords, 2013; McFarlane, 2018). Cultural psychology theories, for instance, have established that individuals are 'enmeshed' within particular contexts (Valsiner, 2006) and thus

call for the application of ‘person-context analyses’ in transitional and developmental studies to bridge existing gaps.

The role of the socio-economic-academic Background in Transitions

Socio-cultural systems play a major role in shaping and reproducing social hierarchies. Drawing on the theory of Bourdieu (1992), individuals are highly affected by their socio-cultural backgrounds. This factor plays a significant role in placing people on the privilege scale. Educational reports have recorded a low admission rate from students unprivileged backgrounds to what traditionally has been considered as ‘high-status degree programmes’ or ‘elite’ disciplines, like medicine (Department of Education, 2014). Consistent with this idea, Lucas (2001) highlights the necessity to consider the variation of features in different learning phases at the educational system. The qualitative differences, according to Lucas, pave “an important pathway through which social background affects educational transitions” (p. 1648).

Within the same frame of thought, sequential transition models have been developed to focus on testing the effects of family background on educational attainment (Mare, 1981; Shavit & Blossfeld, 1993). Cultural capital theory suggests that the level of parents’ education and occupational status have a direct impact to the potential of their children (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). The theory assumed that highly educated parents are better qualified to support their children at crucial times throughout their educational career; and thus, have a high probability of smooth educational transitions. Other theoretical lenses (like Boudon, 1974, Breen and Goldthorpe, 1997) argued that “family background effects on educational transitions are not only the result of the better cognitive stimulation within the family, but also of (perceived) costs, benefits, and success probabilities in different alternatives” (Tieben, et al., 2010, p. 79). These listed characteristics are classified as ‘primary effects’, adding to them other ‘secondary effects’, such as parents’ social status. The impact has been also addressed through environmental factors such as the socio-political and economical background of family (Stocké, 2007; van de Werfhorst and Andersen, 2005).

In the quest of social inequality patterns, transition for individuals seem to be largely bound to socio-economic backgrounds influences. Inherited privileges seem to be through the transmission of cultural, economic resources, and educational advantages. Research has demonstrated that retention success and retention rates vary across the three types of

demographic categories: where a) a third-generation student: one whose both parents and grandparents attended university, b) a second-generation student: is one whose at least one parent attended university, and c) a first-generation student: is one whose none of his parents and grandparents attended university. There is a consensus that first generation students have lower education aspirations than non-first-generation students (Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak and Terenzini, 2004; McCarron and Inkelas, 2006; Miller. 2008). Studies show that they are less academically rigorous, and more focused financial gains as they see university degree as a means to an end to support their families (Bui, 2002; Schultz, 2004).

Building bridges

The discussion about building bridges (Briggs, Clark and Hall, 2012) and minding gaps (Leese, 2010; Smith, 2017) has been widely relevant to the current educational challenges. An extended area of research has drawn upon these metaphors to celebrate differences and acknowledge the irregularities. Whilst this line of discourse draws priorities of policies regarding transition, it also highlights unhelpful, ruptured, and deficit models (Quin, 2010). As much as conceptual linguistics of transition has been constantly revised and reframed, "the dominance of the conceptualisation of transition as linear drives simplistic thinking, resulting in reductive policy and practice" (Baker and Irwin, 2019, p. 15). This is portrayed in the normative institutional perception of notion of successful transitions as being correlated to retention rates (Nyström, Jackson and Karlsson, 2018; Goodchild, 2017).

Research as such has offered a multitude of factors to consider whilst researching students' experiences. In exploring students' attrition, Jones (2008) has defined four areas to inquire into students' withdrawal from university (defining withdrawal rates, identifying causes related to success, looking into institutional policies responding to withdrawal, and discussing implications for both institutions and students). Within this framework, Jones has highlighted six major factors: preparation for HE, course match, quality of academic experience, social integration, financial difficulties, and personal circumstances (cited in Bowles et al., 2014. p.213). The multifactorial variations have ranged from intrinsic to external factors, which were echoed in other studies such as Lang (2001) and Beans (2005). Nevertheless, it was not the fluctuations of retention rates that was the research target in progressive studies, but rather the conceptualisation and understandings of the host university to transition demands. Hovdhaugen, Frølich, and Aamodt (2013), for instance, have interrogated the way institutional measures affect students' retention rates.

Given the widespread attention to developmental processes, the critiques of transitional pedagogies are centred around short-sightedness of the interventions. Whilst some researchers celebrate focus on interior variables of transition, others pinpoint the implementation of narrow perspectives of studying life experiences. Individual past experiences are often accorded little value when it comes to transitional pedagogies (Daniel and Brooker, 2014; Hughes and Smail, 2015). A major criticism of the arising stereotypes about academically supporting international students has addressed the misrepresentation or the dismission of their diverse learning background. Different discourses have provided insights into the academic support-international student interaction (Chalmers and Volet, 1997; Lacina, 2002; Tran, 2008). Another line of research has focused on analysing underrepresentation and inequalities across educational transitions (Maaz et al., 2008; Kalalahti et al., 2020; Härkönen and Sirniö, 2020), the disparities of intergenerational income mobility (Chetty et al., 2007; Robert, 2018), and the way students' economic mobility shapes expectations for former and new generations (Alexander et al., 2019). Drawing on those forms of knowledge, the role of socio-cultural factors was accentuated in shaping socio-economic inequalities (Kearney and Ron, 2020), thus highlighting the effect of students' educational background on the nature of their transition (Rutland et al., 2016).

Within the argument of transitional spaces, the notion of 'liminality' (Turner, 1969) is characterised as an 'indeterminacy' period that sits at the heart of the transformative experience. Although claimed to be a contested concept, the 'deficit' dialogue is viewed as 'a threat to student agency' (Gravett, 2019). Gale and Parker argued that there is "more of a proposition yet to be fully expressed in HE research, policy, or practice" (2014, 737). These propositions are evident in the growing call of personalisation and variation as an end to reduce understandings of transition experience to adaptation processes. There is a persistent call for support initiatives to be reframed to celebrate notions of diversity in knowledge and values. This would be fostering a sense of student-staff partnership where students are engaging in dialogue that aims for their inclusion in transition pedagogies (Matthews, Cook-Sather and Healey, 2018; Gravett, 2019). The struggle of bridging gaps becomes more critical 'between academic, administrative and support programs' (McInnis, 2003, p.13). By meeting the two ends, research highlights the gap of academic integration and engagement of transitioning students (Nelson et al., 2006; Schmid, 2008; Holton and Finn, 2018). Similarly, there is a call for destabilising linearity, reinforced multiplicities, and fluid connections under the belief that gaps "should be experienced and lived, rather than 'bridged'" (Winstone and Hulme, 2019, p.3).

Conclusion and directions of the study

Whilst this literature review chapter has focused primarily on the theoretical debate around governance structures' responsibility, accountability mechanisms, agendas, and micro and macro imperatives to changes and reforms in the higher education system, the discussion of the rest of this thesis is oriented to look at the impact of those underlying ideologies on students' transition experiences. Through that, I attempt to draw on international students' experiences to depict commonalities, variations, and challenges during their transitional experiences to the British educational system.

It is of a paramount importance to set the boundaries around what this inquiry does and does not focus on. This review chapter did not attempt to investigate 'institutional governance' practices from its socio-economic or political aspect, as per se, nor did it seek to affirm or deny the validity of the scholarship behind it; that varied from theoretical, ontological, and practical assumptions, matrices, and frameworks of understandings. However, the collated set of arguments and discourses have acted as a solid ground of grasping the topic through its theory and practice-orientations, which was argued to be a response to the call for contextualising this research inquiry within the multiplicity of rich discourses. Therefore, the scrutiny has been informed by discussions that inspected and tracked the rationality of neoliberal forms of governmentality in the UK higher education context. Besides exploring the ecology of the university context, the study has endeavoured to internalise forms of theoretical conception of 'transition'. Thus, I attempted to explore transition experience through the prism of neoliberal higher education.

Chapter 3: Towards an ecology of transition– theoretical framework

Background and directions

The literature review chapter has demonstrated the landscape of conceptual perspectives in the transition scholarship. As an initial signposting to the reader, the conceptual lens adopted in this research study aligns with the hegemonic beliefs that problematise linearity of 'transition' experiences (Gale and Parker, 2014; Jindal-Snape, 2016; Taylor and Harris-Evans, 2018). To engage with this, the former chapter has established a dialogue between divergent perspectives that aimed to capture the complexity and multi-dimensionality of the transition experience. Dismantling the perceived vision of transition into higher education as unidirectional, this study aims to look at the complex pathways and identify connections and relationships. Building on this recognition, this chapter discusses the possibility of employing a broader and integrative framework that navigates multi- and cross-scale interactions beyond the traditional reductionist lens of inquiry. This study adopts the bioecological theory of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) as a conceptual and practical framework to investigate international students' transition experiences. Within this chapter, I undertake to present a brief overview of its epistemic background, theoretical roots, and empirical validity to this research study.

Linear vs. circular motion of 'transition'

"After all, we are, every one of us, inhabitants of a universe where everything turns in circles" (Kundera, 1978, p.66).

Explaining the choreography of life experiences, Kundera (1978) referred to the circular motion that is portraying the flexibility of 'circle dance' movements. This portrays life transitions and change, whether cultural, environmental, emotional, or otherwise. Such a change, Adelman (1988, p. 183) argued, "is inextricably tied to the social ecology in which we are embedded". This is portrayed in the role of contextual factors, from the surrounding social network to the physical environment, in shaping the experience. Human actions and interactions, therefore, do not solely evolve as responses to a concrete physical stimulus. There

is a rather complex process through which individuals construct knowledges and translate them into social behaviours. As a result, humans attribute different meanings to their experiences.

Projecting the notion of experience on this research theoretical scope, the conceptualisation of 'transition' has demonstrated variations of perceptions and epistemologies between linear and circular. Previously reviewed models (for example, Bridges' Model, 1980; Tinto's Model, 1988; Fisher's Model, 2005) seem to be putting those challenges and procedures into steps and phases. Moreover, the psychological aspect appears to be quite dominant in these models. Given their chronological approach, individuals' experiences are evaluated in terms of swings of emotions, feelings, and coping strategies at the different stages of transition. As much as they help delineate the psychological adaptation process, they also detach it from other exterior processes. To foreshadow this argument, it is empirical to look for research support. As a point of departure, this framework is supported by systems theory on human development that draws history back to Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1968, 1972) and Miller in the 1960s and 1970s. Rejecting *reductionisim* that is presented in traditional life models, such theory is built upon the notion of the *Whole* in research. Therefore, it incorporates different measures and mechanisms that construct the overall experience of the individual. The rationale behind this theory is explained through avoiding the presented biases in studying parts of the human life in isolation from the others. As this increases the probability of an incomplete picture, the theory suggests looking at the organism in which the experience evolves. As complex as this stands, multi-disciplinary knowledge is key to clarifying the whole picture (Millova and Blatny, 2015).

The purpose of the theoretical approach is to look at the functional whole of the students' transition experience. This section presents the rationale of the analysis based on this theory and discusses a framework for the analysis. The research journey is ever influenced by those processes of thoughts and actions, which implied transparency. This, however, does not claim to offer a definitive model for conceptualising the transition experience. Rather, it depicts the fluctuations, the critics, the arguments, and the decisions that have been both influenced and impacted by the rationale of this study.

Purpose of this section: the *What? Why? - The how? - The so what?*

This section will walk the reader through

1- Overview: Background of systems theory

2- The Bronfenbrenner's ecological model (1979)

2.1. Definitions each of its systems, and the relationship between them

2.2. Contextualisation: identifying those systems in the context of HE.

Rationale of '(W)holism' in experience

Research in human development tends to consider the functionality of the individual within a set of systems surrounding them. The organismic approach integrates environment and context as key factors for change and development. This theory stems from the notion of *Holism* or *Wholism* which considers any phenomenon - whether related to individuals or organisations- at the core of a holistic system that involves physio-bio-psycho-socio-cultural sub-systems. On a larger scope, systems theory has gained more popularity in different life domains. It has inspired related theories and generated many models; for example, the life model (Gitterman and Germain, 2008), social work theory (Teater, 2015), family systems theory (Sharf, 2012), and the Zurich Model of Social Motivation (developed by Bischof, 1985, 1993, cited in Schneider, 2015). This has echoed in other domains other than sociopsychology, such as the world systems theory (WST) (Wallerstein, 1974) in socioeconomics, which is considered a particular society within its world capitalist system (Chirot, 2015).

Mirroring that vision on sociology, for instance, social classes cannot function as separate entities from each other. Chirot (2015, p. 750) states: "All societies have operated within larger systems, and without placing them in that context, our understanding of how they work is severely limited. There can be no general laws of social behaviour that do not take this into account." Therefore, system models are powerful tools that act as a simplification of human life in a given context/ space. As designed, those models postulate mechanisms of the real world and aim to observe the functionality of a set of variables within the whole system. According to the interaction theory, the developmental system '*functions as a whole'*. The features of the totality are a result of interactions between all parts of the system. "*Simpler*

processes taking place in the system (such as emotional changes) take less time than more ***complex*** processes (such as changes in the relationship between the person and the environment)" (Millova and Marek Blatny, 2015, p.882).

Developmental theories initially consider the role of individuals in shaping their experiences. On developmental trajectories, this role expands as individuals presumably have more control over their own decisions. This progressive activity is examined in research through life stages. At early stages of life, a layer of research claimed infants displayed initially passiveness and helplessness (Scarr, 1996). Dynamical systems theorists, on the other hand, have associated the quality of development with the change of environments. Bronfenbrenner (1979) identified the dynamic interactions that come with environment changes as *'ecological transitions'*. Those transitions, according to (Barron, 2006, p. 196), act as "both consequences and motivators of development". The bi-directional effect occurs at interior levels of the 'whole' system. Thus, the individual sits at the heart of those environmental conditions, both affecting and getting affected by them. Before delving into the functionality of those interweaving elements and factors, it is crucial to define key concepts and properties of the *Systems Model* followed in this research.

What is a 'system'?

A system is defined *as* "an organized whole made up of components that interact in a way distinct from their interaction with other entities, and that endures over some period of time" (Anderson, Carter and Lowe, 2007, p. 294). Remaining at the heart of this belief, the fundamental unit of 'system' is the dynamic interaction within its structures, each of which is important to the survival of the whole system. Tien and Berg (2003) have highlighted the multiplicity of *'system'* as a concept. "A system can be natural (e.g., lake) or built (e.g., government), physical (e.g., space shuttle) or conceptual (e.g., plan), closed (e.g., chemicals in a stationary, closed bottle) or open (e.g., tree), static (e.g., bridge) or dynamic (e.g., human)" (p.23). The overarching theory itself is interdisciplinary covering a range of every system in nature, whether organisms, societies, or organisations, producing biological systems, social systems, and cultural systems respectively. Consequently, a system's *components* vary from "people, processes and products" and attributes that are defined by "the input, process and output characteristics of each component", as well as relationships that evolve as "interactions between components and characteristics" (Tien and Berg, 2003, pp. 23-24).

Clustered as such, elements of systems are also considered as sub-systems, functioning at a multidimensional hierarchy, but also interacting in harmony to maintain the balance within the system overall. This formulation of functions works in collaboration between both micro and macro levels within the same system, but also across different types of systems. Several considerations impose both shape and structure to the modelling of those systems in different contexts and disciplines. In a wide field of research domains, the framework of the theory is used to tailor evidence-based strategies to solve problems or explain phenomena (Atzaba-Poria et al., 2004; Yakushko and Chronister, 2005; Behnke et al., 2011; Williams and Nelson-Gardell, 2012; Mutumba and Harper, 2015). Overall, systems theory offers vast arrays of interdisciplinary systems.

Building awareness around the multi-dimensionality and multi-functionality of systems located within this global theory was the first step down the path of selecting the appropriate framework and angle for this research. Thus, I opted for adopting the lens of 'ecosystems' aspiring to build a holistic view that includes both internal and external processes of international students' experiences. As mentioned earlier, Bronfenbrenner's theory (1986) has addressed the dynamics of ecological transitions that occur during the individual's life span. With much relevance to this research context, students' experiences are mirrored in those transitions from one context to another.

Bronfenbrenner's theory is an appealing and powerful conceptual tool. Tracing back its emergence, it has undergone three phases. During its evolution, the theory aims to establish an understanding of the human development (1973, 1979). Soon, the role of the individual within the developmental framework was highlighted (1980,1993), followed up by a suggestion of Process–Person–Context–Time model (PPCT) of the theory. The ecological model has foreseen an evolution over a long period of time. The modelling process went through a gradual evolution jumping through different transition phases from focusing on the environment to interaction between organisms, i.e., processes (finally published in Bronfenbrenner, 1986). This framework has pushed the frontier of our understanding of the world around us.

Referred to as a 'self-reflective' theorist (Tudge et al, 2009), Bronfenbrenner employed a critical reflective vision along the process of his theory development. He noted; ''I have been pursuing a hidden agenda: that of re-assessing, revising, and extending—as well as regretting and even renouncing—some of the conceptions set forth in my 1979 monograph''

(Bronfenbrenner, 1989, p. 187). There is a clear distinction between the different versions of the theory, laying down a foundation of the ecology rationale and progressively developing concepts. Furthermore, Bronfenbrenner (1999) stated that ‘‘it is useful to distinguish two periods: the first ending with the publication of the Ecology of Human Development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), and the second characterized by a series of papers that call the original model into question’’ (p. 4). The latter has put into function the concepts of the operational systems, microsystem, mesosystem, exo-system, and macrosystem.

Which version of Bronfenbrenner's theory I am using?

A glance at the evolution of this theory allows an understanding of its focus, aims, and perspectives. Despite its importance, Eriksson et al. (2018) note that the developmental stage is not considered in most studies adopting the theory. The authors' work have looked into Tudge et al.'s (2009) work on the uses and misuses of the theory, which was an examination of 25 papers building on the Bronfenbrenner's theory. Only four papers have followed the late version of this theory- called the Process–Person–Context–Time model (PPCT). In line with it, Eriksson et al. (2018) focused on how different concepts of Bronfenbrenner's theory are used in context.

It is highly important to identify the variation between different versions of the same theory in order to avoid any conceptual incoherence in its application to this study. Tudge et al. (2009) have referred to this crucial decision in the process of framing and analysing input. According to the authors, the misuse of the theory "creates a twofold disservice … misleading researchers about the contents and propositions of the theory… and prevents a fair test of the theory" (p.198). Adhering to a pragmatic view of this knowledge, different concepts appear and reoccur in different versions of Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory, marking its evolution in perspective and focus over time. From this stand, there is an endorsement of the belief that 'knowledge exists in the form of statements or theories which are best seen as instruments or tools; coping mechanisms, not once and-for-all-time truths. … Rather knowledge is a web or a network of statements rather than an edifice, and the value of any form of knowledge is its usefulness and applicability which may be constrained in terms of time and place and user' (Bryant, 2009, pp. 4–5). Eriksson et al. (2018, p. 419) report that Bronfenbrenner's (1975) ecology highlighted the relationship between the individual and environment "in order to develop, and not only survive, the fit between the individual and its environment must be even closer".

The bio-ecological systems: defining properties and boundaries

The position of the individual in the system - *theoretical lens on the PTT Model*

The circle of the individual is the core of the systems' model. Bronfenbrenner's theory has acknowledged the weight of the personal characteristics in shaping life experiences. Within this vision, the examination of social phenomena and vivid experiences take into consideration what individuals bring with them to social contexts. This view has expanded to capture even individuals' biological and genetic aspects (Bronfenbrenner, 2001, 2005). In their paper "Nature-Nurture Reconceptualized in Developmental Perspective" (1994), Bronfenbrenner and Ceci refer to the way in which the genetic elements are 'not finished traits' as they are completed by the environmental factors that shape and determine their development process and orientation. Together, their vision highlighted the two ways of interaction between the bio-psychological traits of the person and the external context. The inner-outer process was referred to as "proximal processes", or the "engine of development", which according to Eriksson et al. (2018, p. 420) was developed in mid-1990s–2006 of the Bronfenbrenner's theory. This version of the theory underlined Process–Person–Context–Time (PPCT) model. More attention, however, was placed on the personal and interpersonal traits. The wider discussion within the theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1993, 1995; Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998, also 2001, 2005) includes three components of individual characteristics: *demand, resource, and force characteristics.*

To break it down, first, *Demand characteristics,* also referred to earlier as 'personal stimulus', are named as such due to their function as a stimulus to the individual within a given context that implies exposure and interaction with other people. This covers a range of physically apparent traits like age, gender, ethnic look, and skin colour, based on which individuals establish instant reactions and expectations during interaction. *Resource characteristics,* on the other hand, are mostly hidden traits "though sometimes they are induced, with differing degrees of accuracy, from the demand characteristics" as Tudge (2009, p. 200) noted. They refer to 'social and material resources' (ibid). Unfolding this dimension, these two categories of resources include "access to good food, housing, caring parents, educational opportunities appropriate to the needs of the particular society, and so on" (ibid, p. 200). According to this dimension of the theory, different resources imply having different life experiences, and thus differentiated trajectories for development. Finally, *Force characteristics* involve a deeper

look into the interpersonal characteristics of the individual that cover levels of motivation and persistence. Both, according to Tudge (2009), go hand in hand in the development process.

In another framework, the segmentation of the individual characteristics is slightly different. As illustrated by Reeb et al.'s (2017) model, the individual's circle lies at the centre, representing three point-inter-related factors; personal factors, environmental factors, and psychological factors. While personal factors reflect "vulnerabilities, resiliencies, and developmental stage"; the environmental ones operate at the level of analysis representing 'risks and resources' (ibid, p. 14). Psychological factors refer rather to the coping mechanisms. Overall, looking beyond the contextual influences on individual and collective experiences, this dimension of the theory acknowledges the role of the individual's profile, traits (mental, psychological, or physical), and their socio-cultural background in shaping the experience. This theoretical proposition has had its own implications in different contexts and research domains. As for higher education, opening a window for debate should also include insights of skills (Bronfenbrenner, 1993, 1995; Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998) and resources which would be informative to both students and host universities (Yoon and Portman, 2004).

Systems' properties- macro/exo/meso/micro

Within the theoretical framework of systems, each system is tailored to serve a function. The sub-units, however, relate to and emerge from the overarching system. An extensive body of research has been guided by the systems theory. Bronfenbrenner's model is exhausted in child development studies and is seldomly employed in adult education. Bronfenbrenner (1993) postulated ecological components, centred around the individual. Those components are defined by the theory as *sums of wholes*. Systems are usually designed to be embedded within each other. To provide a bird's eye view, Bronfenbrenner's ecological model (1979) incorporated four major eco-systems: micro-systems, macro-systems, and the macro-systems within meso-systems.

Microsystem

The microsystem represents the most inner circle in the ecological theory. Bronfenbrenner (1979) defines it as a "pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given setting with particular physical and material characteristics" (p. 22). For international students, the microsystem comprises the set of interactions and

relationships between the individual (at the centre) and their closer circle of direct contacts, relatives and parents, spouses, close friends, classroom peers, teachers and mentors, or co-workers. The bioecological model has highlighted the distinctive contribution of those who participate in the individual's life on a regular basis to their personal and professional growth and development. The previously discussed formulations of personal traits and qualities that lie at the heart of this model also apply to the sub-parties located within the micro-system (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998). In other words, 'resources', 'demand', and 'force' of each of the participators within the micro-system (parents, friends, etc.) play a major role in shaping the quality of interaction and support provided, and thus in determining the orientation of development within these networks.

Mesosystem

Rooted in the ecological principles of experience is the notion of interconnectedness between and within the ecological systems. Extending outward, the mesosystems expand the circle of connections – connecting two or more systems with the student sat at the centre of the ecology model. In other words, the components of 'mesosystems' are the glue that put all the micro-systems together. The vision hosts other dimensions of relationships, not only bi-directional (between the individual and a given party) but equally between different layers of systems. The bioecological model has recognised those interactions among co-existing systems (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998). The mechanisms within the mesosystem level are peculiar to interactions between micro-systems; this could be between 'friends-family', 'peers-teachers', 'teachers-family', etc. Interactions between elements of the micro-system are highlighted as crucial to building up support networks for international students (Zhang, 2018).

International students' experiences thrive and develop within the surrounding support systems, whether social or academic. For instance, Bhochhibhoya, Dong, and Branscum's (2017) study highlighted the way overseas students seek social support from their family and friends. It is through those support channels that students establish solid connections with their environment. On many occasions, students reach out to people who share the same nationality and/or similar socio-cultural backgrounds when looking for support in the new country. Likewise, Baloglu (2000) emphasised that friends are the most frequently consulted source for support before family and university. When discussing adaptation issues, it is important to refer to the quality of interaction between the micro-units. Contextualising those patterns in time and

space sits at the core of the problem-solving process. Fundamentally in research, the mesosystem notion functions as a party that conceptualises interventions (Reeb et al., 2017).

Exo-system

Exosystems are defined as "the contexts we experience vicariously and yet they have a direct impact on us" (Swick and Williams, 2006, p.372). Those contexts are located in the outer system existing beyond the individual. Within its original definition, Bronfenbrenner (1979) explains that an *exosystem* consists of "one or more settings that do not [or may not] involve the developing person as an active participant, but in which events occur that affect, or are affected by, what happens in the setting containing the developing person" (p. 25). From the perspective of the bioecological model, the student's experience is governed by a set of economic and political, organisational policies. As systems are adaptable to their changing environment (Mele et al., 2016), keeping abreast of that change in policies and regulations is paramount to adjustment outcomes.

Events occurring outside the smaller contextual bubble of the individual still echo back to impact their personal, social, and professional lifestyle, patterns, and behaviours. Zhang (2018) suggested that, for international students, influential structures located in the exosystem are "foreign policies, immigration laws, visa regulations, and academic requirements" (p.1766). In a study on community college, Kless (2004) has discussed how foreign policies, in a US context, have had an impact on the international student enrolment rates, giving the example of the September 11 terrorist attack and its security implications on the visa screening process. Students' mobility and application are also impacted by political ideologies translated into policies, like anti-immigration in a given political administration (Fischer, 2017).

Literature has noted the enormous pressure that international students face following the procedure of international borders entry, visa policy, and registration procedures at HE. The governance of those structural organisational rules is found to have a number of psychological effects on international students, like stress and confusion (Rose-Redwood and Rose-Redwood, 2017). System actors at this level are policy makers. The exo-system hosts those roles and roles of external forces in context. In a higher education context, this highlights the role of consultancy programmes and support bodies and agents within the institutions, such as international services officers at universities (Bargerstock and McCarthy, 2012).

Macrosystem

The larger systems include socio-cultural values, "community happenings" that help us to "hold together to the many threads in our lives" (Swick and Williams, 2006, p. 372). This broader layer of the model holds the overarching economic, social, political, and educational systems, the patterns of which are translated in lower levels of the ecological system (micro, meso, exo) (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Eriksson et al., 2018; Zhang, 2018). Despite the far proximity between the macrosystem and the centre (i.e., the student), structures occurring at that level of system have a huge impact on the individual's experience. Within systems thinking, knowledge exported from those bigger level systems is translated in actions and behaviours within other units of systems. From a socio-cultural angle, that influence is manifested in the way collective and individual perceptions of cultural and lifestyle choices are shaped.

Further, ideologies and beliefs reflect enormously the behaviours and practices of organisational and operational systems, such as the academic support system (Stebleton, 2011; Zhang, 2018). In line with this, as contexts with shared beliefs (Eriksson et al., 2018), macrosystems mould and shape the rules and norms that dictate the orientation of policies and intervention programs, occurring at lower levels systems (merely exosystem). On the practical use of this theory, several studies have identified distal factors occurring within and across systems- from macro to micro - like the association between patterns of previous university experience and language proficiency in the present context (Poyrazli and Graham, 2007; Leong, 2015; Zhang, 2016, 2018).

The rationale behind the conceptualisation of macrosystems focused on the realisation of the notion of 'culture' and 'ideology' on a bigger scale level. Within the context of higher education, the mainstream culture of the host country of overseas students carries a number of cultural attitudes and values. The gap between past and present contexts was a critical theme discussed in multiple research studies. It was discussed in educational practices like teaching and learning approaches (Hillsand Thom, 2005; Kember, 2000), and academic and teaching support (Hutson, 2010; Reid and Dixon, 2012; Lau and Ng, 2014). It also reflects differentiated educational morals and values, like the old work of Ashworth, Bannister, and Thorne (1997) about international students' perceptions of cheating and plagiarism, entitled 'Guilty in Whose Eyes?'. The gap enlarges with the miscommunication between individual and institutional expectations (Pancer et al., 2000; Kingston and Forland, 2004, 2008).

Research (e.g., Ineson et al., 2006; Tas, 2013; Baklashova and Kazakov, 2016) pointed out that international students experience cultural shocks during their transition overseas. Consequently, they encounter multi-level socio-psycho-cultural challenges navigating different levels of organisations, whether inside or outside the campus, which triggers negative feelings, such as homesickness, intolerance, isolation, and depression (Erichsen and Bolliger, 2011; Wang et al., 2015; Szabo et al., 2016). Most frequently, those challenges are found to be less intense for students with almost similar cultural norms and language (Yan and Berliner, 2013; Leong, 2015).

The notion of time in transition-chronosystem

Development unfolds layers of time spans (Thelen and Smith, 2006); each layer or phase has its own properties. Set on both mathematics and physics assumptions of modelling, the authors (2006) proposed that the dynamic systems serve the constantly occurring change to the elements of the previous models. Detaching from its pure quantitative grounds, their theory employs a qualitative lens to explain developmental transitions. Adding to this vision, the notion of *time* and *timing* during the transition is of a paramount importance. Underlined by developmental theorists, like Bronfenbrenner, time as a factor has both a direct and indirect influence on the individual's adaptation and development processes.

Can the notion of time be framed in transition?

Systems nature and structures get more differentiated by time as they evolve and develop. This applies to all kinds of systems, biological, natural, and systematic. Social organisations also observe such development as complex socio-ecological systems. This prevails in works that addressed university-as-ecosystem (Kinchin, 2021). Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998) have discussed the division of time as a spectrum into three essential distinctive parts: micro-time, meso-time and macro-time. By micro-time, they referred to the frame of time where events happen at a small scale, such as a specific period of an activity or an interaction. On the other hand, meso-time expands the period of those activities and interactions to include the individual's surroundings. Macro-time, as its name indicates works on a larger scale of the human experience. The time notion has been picked up and developed later throughout Bronfenbrenner's theoretical journey. Mature versions of the theory had referred to this element as '*The chronosystem'* (Tudge, 2009).

Research has also explored the inter-relatedness between time change at different layers of systems, micro-meso-macro. This sheds light on the fact that dynamic and continuous change occurs beyond the individual level to touch many aspects of the socio-cultural one and institutional ones (policies). Yet, it puts forward the argument that the notion of 'time' and 'timing' of development at each level of the system is of a crucial significance to the quality and efficiency of interaction between them. While some systems – cultures, individuals, organisations – grow faster than others, *time* within the *PPT (Process/Person/Time)* model of this theory identifies how they respond differently to events due to their place in the historical timeline. As an illustration, Tudge (2009) mentioned Elder's (1974, 1996) work on the effects of the Great Depression in the United States on two cohorts. Although they were sharing the same geographical location, the two samples are ten years apart. Thus, significant variations have been noted in the way they have perceived and experienced the same event. Tudge asserts that it is "because they experienced each of these events at a different point in the life course" (p.201).

Projecting this argument on international students' case, their own version of customised background historical events plays a crucial role in their transition to higher education in the UK. Within the larger body of students coming to the UK, there are variations in terms of personal, educational background and experiences which fall within the personal resources category discussed in the literature chapter (Payne, 2019; Jayakumar, 2008; Kearney and Ron, 2020; McCarron and Inkelas, 2006). Nevertheless, there is a close relationship between those life experiences and the time frame they were collected and developed within. Students experience the transition to higher education at different points of their life course. Unsurprisingly, maturity and personal experience play crucial roles in shaping interpersonal, professional, educational skills as well as coping skills and strategies, like endurance, persistence, agency, etc.

The development of the Process–Person–Context–Time model (PPCT) is the most mature version of Bronfenbrenner's theory occurring at the last phase (Eriksson et al., 2018). With this model, there comes a great emphasis on physical and theoretical frames of existing systems. But more to those frames is the chronological frame in which those life events occur. Individuals' experiences change over time, both internally (personal characteristics) and externally (environmental conditions). Investigating the effect of the *Time* factor, following the theory, implies length of the study's process (Tudge et al, 2009). Longitudinal studies "with

at least two measurement points [take] into account the current point of historical time" (Eriksson et al., 2018, p. 421). Reflecting on these distinctions, a great importance is given to the personalised individual experiences during transitions, where factors that shaped and continue to shape the personal experience- like historical events- play a major role in determining the quality of adaptation to a new experience.

Analysing the composition of these ecological systems is imperative to the comprehension of the whole process (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). A closer look at the theory reveals the importance of considering the individual's characteristics, traits, and qualities. Through this examination we identify variations between individuals in terms of privileges they may have or lack and project the role they play in shaping different experiences. Responding to critics of misuses of the ecological theory, contemporary research has systematically reviewed and evaluated the ecosystemic theory (Tudge et al., 2009). The critics revolved around mixing elements from different versions of the ecological theory in application. In weighing the theoretical appropriateness, Errikson et al. (2009) affirm Tudge's assumption that the use of the latest version of the theory, i.e., the PPCT model, did not imply, according to Bronfenbrenner, the use of all the four parameters or dimensions (Person, Process, Context, Time). Rather, Bronfenbrenner has emphasised the role of proximal processes in shaping and influencing contextual and individual characteristics.

Interaction of systems within the eco-systemic Framework

Table 4. *Theoretical focus of Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory in international students' transition*

	Ecological systems	***Properties***
Key concepts	*Micro-system*	The relationship between individual and immediate environment: Peers- friends-teachers-workplace (Bronfenbrenner 1977).
	Meso-system	The inter-relationships between settings (university- sponsor body) (university- visa office)-(University- Other preparatory institution)- family and friends-University- family.
	Exco- system	Social structures- Mass media, public agencies,
	Macro-system	The blueprints of society, cultural norms, political rules (Bronfenbrenner, 1975)
	Chronosystems	The impact of time on the systems.
Core of inquiry	Examining the Ecological transitions of international students to Higher Education in the UK. How does the interaction between the ecological systems shape and affect the individual [International students]'s experience at Higher Education?	

How can these systems work together? More precisely, what shapes the actions and behaviours of the individual? This question is hardly new. Interaction between those respective systems was the backbone of Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory. The dynamic features of the

ecological properties pertaining to each system under scrutiny have allowed their interconnectedness across the systems. In other respects, like in General System Theory (GST), von Bertalaffy (1956) referred to a system as 'a complex of interacting elements' (Mele et al., 2010). The assemblage of those units in context implies its interdependence. One of the main principals of this theory has referred to the relationship between exo- and macro-systems as directional, as they present conditions for other systems- meso, macro systems and personal circle. On the other hand, coordination could be influential between systems, allowing the feasibility for elements from meso systems and ecosystems to influence remote systems like exo- and macro systems (Svanborg, 2014).

Within this suggested nested model, systems function both as whole and sub-wholes. Exploring this argument, Reeb et al. (2017) refer to Koestler's (1967) coined term *Holon*, which he associated with the notion of *System* in this model. He contended that "there is no satisfactory word in our vocabulary to refer to . . . sub-wholes . . . The term that I would propose is 'holon', from the Greek *holos* = whole, with the suffix *on* which, as in prot*on* or neutr*on*, suggests a particle or part" (Koestler, 1967, cited in Reeb et al., 2017, p. 10). As explained, *Holons* are inter-dependant entities which a function within a "holarchy". This holarchy is not subject to any '*hierarchical control*', but rather functions in a flexible '*bi-directional relationship'* (up or down) with other holons (systems). As much as a *Holon* celebrates certain autonomy, or what is referred to as a 'self-*assertive tendency*', it is still dependant on the larger whole/system. For a full grasp of the whole, the integrated relationship of the sub-wholes implies considering all components.

In considering the relationship and interaction between those systems, Reeb et al. (2017, p. 10) explain "a feedback cycle refers to the process in which a holon (subsystem) receives internal or external information (a form of energy) and adapts accordingly. Adaptation involves both *accommodation* (the system modifies itself to incorporate new information) and *assimilation* (the new information is interpreted and integrated within the system)". Moreover, regardless of the contextual field or organism that is projected on, a crucial element of the equation of interaction is interaction and reception, acting as a cause and effect. Reeb and colleagues (2017) have identified it as "systems within a holarchy [that] interact and influence one another in a pattern of *reciprocal determinism*, thereby promoting a process of *self-regulation* necessary for a state of balance (also called equilibrium, homeostasis, or steady state)" (p. 10). The concepts of interaction and participation are central to the systems.

Proximal processes

Systems operate as a complex whole. Behaviour, however, is born from those interactions between the systems, also called *proximal processes (henceforth PP*). The notion of proximal processes dates back to Vygotsky's (1978) 'zone of proximal development', which was intended to reach beyond the existing boundaries (Bronfenbrenner and Ceci, 1994). Those processes are postulating the connections between two or more functioning units; also, in the earlier stages of conceptualisation, referred to as 'engines of development' to the individual experience (ibid, p. 572). Within the ecological model, the proximal processes are interactional processes within multiple levels. Their power is realised in their subsequent effect on the personal developmental outcome.

Proximal processes are capitalised in the latest version of the bioecological theory: Process–Person–Context–Time (PPCT) (mid-1990s–2006). In specifying the role of PP, Bronfenbrenner's reconceptualization of the theory has addressed their functionality within the micro-systems level as it involves interaction with close environments. Consistent with this view, proximal processes characterise the intervening mechanisms that connect the inner circle (individual) with the outer circles (micro-system and macro-system). 'Cross-contexts links' have a direct or an indirect impact on the whole process of development (Barron, 2006; Rosa and Tudge, 2013), highlighting the reciprocal interaction between the individual (i.e., student) and their immediate environment, namely 'significant others' (Bronfenbrenner, 1995), spaces, and activities (Eriksson et al., 2018).

A nested or networked model?

Neal and Neal's (2013) work has verified the concept of 'nested' or 'networked' when it comes to the application of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (EST). Their argument builds up on Simmel's (1955) notion of intersecting social circles. Bronfenbrenner (1979) described the ecological sphere as 'a nested arrangement of structures, each contained within the next', which must be examined as an interdependent whole to fully understand the forces surrounding a developing individual (p. 22). The nesting metaphor represents a hallmark of the EST that is reflected in the graphic depictions of theory. Originally, the concentric circles portrayed in the widely recognised model represent a multi-level conceptualisation of systems. Critics from research like Neal and Neal's (2013) have addressed the weakness of the EST in emphasising

the interconnections between those multi-levels with relation to the human development. The controversial view of this argument sheds light on the way the theory treats the systems as a collective whole. For instance, in our context, the student-peers connections occur at a micro-system level. Nevertheless, it is *extended to* rather than *'nested within'* (according to the original ES Theory) the circle of educational policies that shape such relationships within the academic context. Policy making as a mechanism occurs at the exosystem level. Neal and Neal's (2013) critique acknowledged that both entities are connected; however, they exist and develop in two distinct settings—one that has the student and another that does not. Thus, they have identified the connection between systems in the ecological systems theory as 'overlapping'- 'non-nested'. Neal and Neal (2013, p. 726) asserted that "viewing ecological systems as nested undermines the theoretical coherence and conceptual utility of EST".

The authors' work also commented on the assemblance between Simmel's and Bronfenbrenner's conceptualisation of systems. One of the key debates revolving around the circular motion of the systems is the determination of forces, powers, and the direction of impact from small to large systems and vice versa. Commenting on the concentric vision of the systems theory, Simmel (1955) argued that 'participation in the smallest of these … already implies participation in the larger' (cited in Neal and Neal, 2013, p. 726). This is illustrated in the way small forces at a micro-level (like individual traits/actions) reverse impact on the big governing forces at macro-level (such as cultural norms and customs). Explained by the authors (2013), "in feudal society governed by tradition and custom, membership in a particular family determined one's trade, and one's trade determined one's friends (i.e., other guild members) and one's place of residence". Thus, they concluded that 'family membership' in the small social circle for Simmel (1955) and system for Bronfenbrenner (1979) 'determined' the bigger ecological forces that shape the individual's development experience. Thus, the notion of (w)holism manifested in the nested model is argued to perform an elusive and more complex vision when it comes to application. Overall, there are clearly a few variations between the concentric configuration (the nested model and the social systems) circles model. Neal and Neal (2013) gave a strong impulse for the elements of the bio-ecological model to be juxtaposed instead.

In explaining the reciprocity of cause and effect between systems, Millova and Blatny (2015) argued that "the existence of soft assembly means that the development of a person includes a dynamic link between the system stability on the one hand and the fluctuations around the

stability states, i.e., changes that are a source of functional novelty within the system, on the other" (p.880). Eriksson et al. (2018) asserted that previous applications of Bronfenbrenner's theory in several research studies did not extend beyond reporting factors within each system (micro, meso, exo and macro) due to the researchers' incapacity of digging into the interaction mechanisms between the systems. According to this view, the fundamental purpose of the multifaceted ecological analysis is to break free from the reductionist research view by exploring and understanding a given phenomenon into a web of interactive systems. Ruling out those complex interactions sits at the heart of a functionable systems analysis that creates a cohesive picture where all the surrounding elements of life experience (whether systems, contexts, or individuals) melt into it.

Navigating the ecology of international students' transition

This chapter aimed to infuse discussions around the dynamic properties of the transition ecology. The situatedness and the complexity of factors have implied a thoroughly explorative framework to this research project. Reading through Bronfenbrenner's key publications has informed the path of this inquiry. Environmental features play a crucial role in determining the quality of the human 'experience'. There was a great emphasis on the wholistic principle of the systems model (Millova and Blatny, 2015). The dynamic notion of experience has been the centre of attention in developmental psychology, as reviewed earlier. Systems theory's epistemological perspective has offered "a dialogue between holism and reductionism" (Mele et al., 2010, p.127). This sits at the heart of this research's interests in unveiling the co-existing mechanisms of change that go beyond the individual (student) to overshadow its surroundings (Bronfenbrenner, 2009; Liu, 2012; Elliot et al., 2016). In alignment with previous arguments, international students encounter several challenges during their transition journey to a different social and academic context (Zhai, 2004; Tas, 2013; Wang et al., 2015; Szabo et al., 2016).

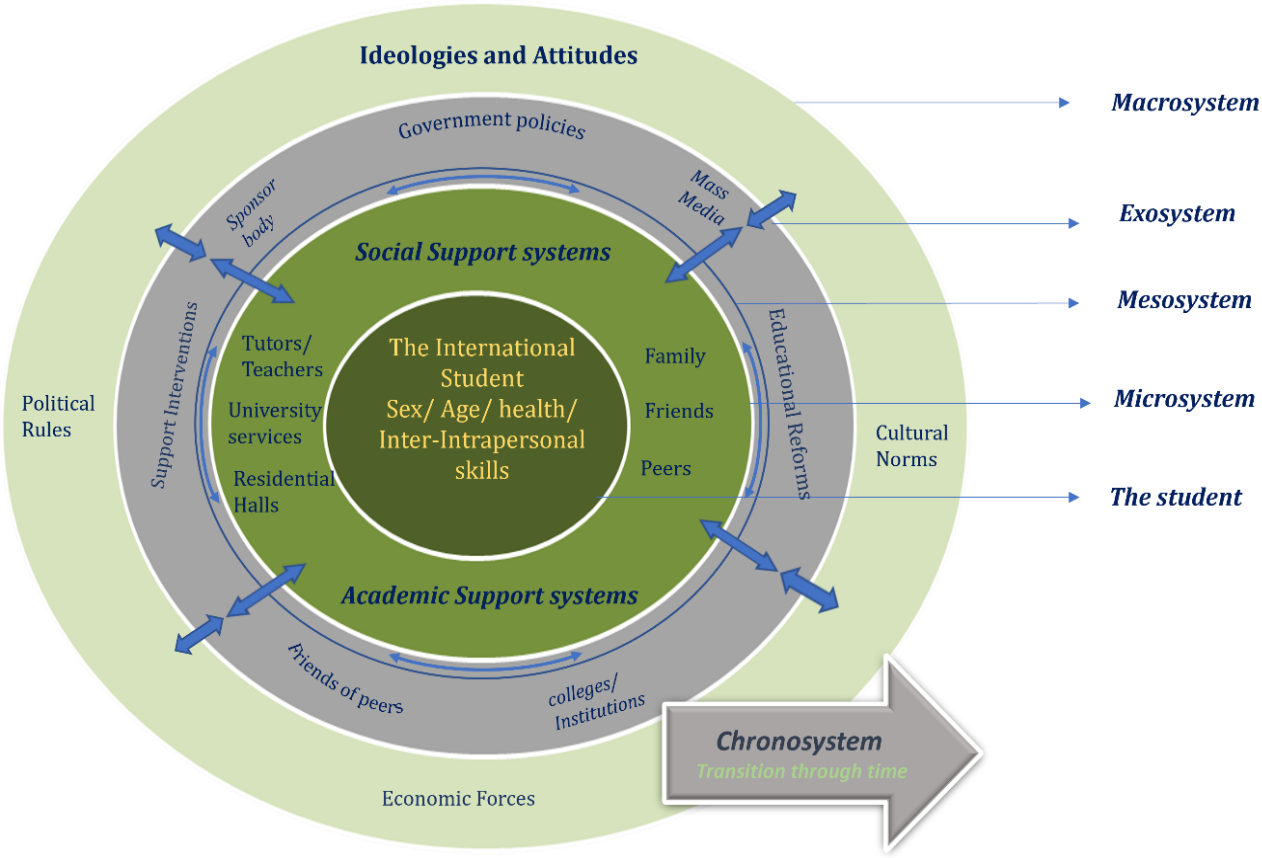


Figure 2. *Eco-systemic vision of international students' transition (inspired from Bronfenbrenner Ecological Theory of Child Development).*

The dynamic character of human life inherits diversity, unpredictability, and continuity of change. As much as this applies to the student's experience, international students' life patterns undergo an enormous level of change, academically, socially, and personally. On the bigger scale, the transition journey to the UK comes with several implications where students divorce themselves from their background context values to be able to participate in and be part of the new context. This process, in a research context, is referred to as 'adaptation'. This study aims to look beyond minimalist concepts of 'adaptation', 'coping', and 'challenge' to include the contextual factors and predictors that are key players in determining the aforementioned processes.

Moving from the part to the whole, the theoretical and analytical focus has shifted to the operationalisation and interconnectedness behind those mechanisms (Bronfenbrenner; 1977, 1979, 1992). The inclusive character of this framework explained earlier in this chapter has the potential to capture underlying factors behind the adjustment and development process during individuals' transition. Put in context, the nature of the transition to another context offers an ever-growing diversity of options and opportunities of growth. This occurs within complex

settings. Researchers like Ellaway, et al. (2017) have recommended employing ecological theories to decipher the complexity of systematic contextual change. This is realised by working both on 'the whole' and the specific; employing the reductionist view to look at traits and properties of the systems, and at the same time examining how they contribute to the holistic view.

There exists cognitive as well as psychological stimulation from external forces— whether smaller or bigger circles of environmental factors— to the individual. Multiple studies have followed an ecological perspective in investigating transition to higher education (for example, Taylor and Ali, 2017; Zhang, 2018). Within the same vision, others have emphasised the role of other organisational systems in the student experiences, such as the academic support (Hunter and White, 2004; Rice et al., 2009; Reid and Dixon, 2012; Swecker et al., 2013; Vianden and Barlow, 2015). Social support is similarly critical to the experience, fuelled by family and friends (Reeb et al., 2017). These micro-levels are embedded within the whole framework discussed earlier in this chapter.

Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory has built extensively upon the systems theory. Accessing those systems is the first step of the way of exploring patterns of (multi-levelled) properties of different contributing parties in the experience. Viewed from the ecological perspective, systems alone do not tell the whole story; interaction is key to the whole process. In order to foster dialogue about those interactions in the analysis of international students' experiences in this research, it is crucial to look at the underlying 'proximal processes' between support systems and individual adaptation processes, such as academic, social and psychological functioning. This study stands out by moving beyond highlighting students' individual backgrounds and environmental influences- from an eco-systemic perspective- to navigating transition through proximal processes, connections, and interactions between individuals/ support agents, educational policy reforms/ interventions, and micro/ macro systems.

Drawing on the previous line of discussion, there is a derivation of several hypotheses and propositions for this study. Kinchin (2021, p.2) stated that "the growing acknowledgement of the interconnectedness of complex systems (the ecological approach) needs to be aligned with ecological ways of thinking (i.e., systems thinking)". The purpose of this research is to locate those influences within the student's ecological system, at a micro-level, interactions, and socialisation process (with peers and friends), on one hand. On the other hand, it echoes back

to the ethos and values of the macro level systems, socio-cultural, economic, and educational norms, rules, and policies. This opens a window to investigate the role of dominant hierarchies that govern and control the other sub-systems within the educational ecological sphere. This research has capitalised this aim at all stages of the empirical study (data collection, and analysis). With the aim of composing a coherent picture of experience, it was important to tease out the ways in which the properties of the whole system(s)- (socio-cultural and academic) function. As for the analytical perspective, contextualising experiences is key to deciphering the interwoven mechanisms of international students' transition experiences within the ecological framework, and thus identifying points of interventions at different levels/ systems in the future.

Chapter 4: Methodology

An overview of the research process

"Research, like diplomacy, is the art of the possible." Patton (1990, p. 13)

Introduction

The overarching aim of this research is to investigate both the breadth and the depth of the transition phenomenon into and through higher education in the UK. The previous chapters in this thesis have shed light on the trajectory of the transition scholarship and discussed the possibility of investigating students' transition experiences from an eco-systemic perspective. Critical to the foregoing, this chapter elucidates the way this study has been conducted following rigorous and methodical approach.

The purpose of this chapter is to present sequential methods of data collection, at the heart of which is informing the educational transition scholarship through methods and data triangulation for a deeper understanding of the transition phenomenon. This methodology chapter proceeds as follows. The first section puts forward the rationale for adopting a critical and interpretive paradigm and the choice of methodology and details the procedures of data collection and analysis. Similarly, through this chapter, I explore the way my social ontological and epistemological perspectives are reflected on this research practical, theoretical, and analytical stand. Defying the myth of 'the objective researcher' (Onwuegbuzie, 2002; Andres, 2012), the researcher's positionality is key to analytical credibility and research rigour. As a position-transparent researcher, I am aware and wary of what my self-reflexive assumptions, pre- dispositions, and biases bring to the research.

Epistemology, ontology, and axiology

A supreme discourse of theoretical, conceptual, and empirical research pathways inherently draws on epistemological stances. As a Greek word, 'episteme' refers to 'knowledge'; research is thus described as 'the systematic quest for knowledge', the philosophy of knowledge. Philosophers have looked at the sources and forms of knowledge such as 'intuitive knowledge (e.g., use of faith and intuition), authoritative knowledge (e.g., use of knowledge from leaders,

records of reports/ books), logical knowledge [application of reason], and empirical knowledge [sense experience/ objective and empirical ways] (Slavin, 1984; Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017). Epistemological questions of research have asked whether there is such a thing as an absolute truth and what is the surest path to find it? (Davidson, 2000; Cooksey and McDonald, 2011)

Ontological questions, on the other hand, are brought forward to ask about what constitutes the truth, nature of being, and look at the way knowledge is constructed (Scott and Usher, 2004). It tackles the underlying belief system of the research approach, whether the one we adopt as researchers or the one that persists due to the nature of research inquiry. Is 'reality' determined through natural/ social phenomenon, or does it reflect our individual social beliefs and cognitive processes? Ontology is essential in examining the foundational concepts of 'reality' and how these philosophical assumptions are reflected in the research process. It seeks to look at the way the researcher approaches a research problem, weighs its significance, and undertakes the path towards investigating it further or contributing to its solution (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017).

Axiology, nevertheless, is concerned with the nature of ethics in the research practice. It articulates the logic behind making decisions and helps distinguish between wrong and right behaviours. Holding in high regard human values of everyone involved in the research project, any cultural, intercultural and moral issues or clashes have addressed four criteria of axiology, namely *teleology, deontology, morality and fairness.* To unpack these notions, the application of the *teleology criterion* is met through questioning whether the research makes sense and whether it has used meaningful research pragmatic steps/actions (or methods). *Deontology*, on the other hand, refers to the consequences behind the research endeavours which should benefit the participants and the researcher, and inform/ add to the research field and the scholarship. Moreover, the *criterion of morality* portrays the truthfulness and transparency of the moral value adopted in research. *Fairness addresses the researcher's actions and behaviours like* favouritism *or* discrimination or else fairness and equality. All of these fall under the umbrella of ethical considerations in research. This will be further addressed within the context of this research in a different section later in this chapter.

Research paradigm/ philosophy

A *paradigm* is referred to as a "set of interrelated assumptions about the social world which provides a philosophical and conceptual framework for the organized study of that world"

(Filstead, 1979, p. 34). As per this definition, Filstead (1979) incorporated a paradigmatic schema to contextualise and conceptualise this research inquiry. Guided by Filstead (1979)'s philosophical assumptions, the paradigm affiliation is reflected in methodological choices (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). There exists a philosophical and methodological pluralism in research paradigms. As a term, 'paradigm' has been first used to mean a 'philosophical way of thinking' by the American philosopher Thomas Kuhn (1962). It has also been often used to address 'world views', or certain school (s) of thought(s) in educational research (Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), there is a compression of four foundational elements in 'paradigm': epistemology, ontology, methodology and axiology. Whilst epistemological and ontological understandings are foregrounded in the researcher's philosophical orientation, they portray the conceptual lens through which the inquirer selects and determines their practical and analytical methodological approaches (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017).

In fashioning their research methods, researchers acknowledge and explicate their methodological flexibility as it falls within a spectrum of paradigm positions. The gurus of qualitative research like Kuhn (1962) and Guba and Lincoln (1994) have viewed these diverse paradigms as ways for human construction, where meaning is 'constructed' through data. Philosophical assumptions have guided the way reality was explored [or else the way data was collected and analysed]. Under this principle, pluralistic approaches and numerous classification schemes have attempted to define and classify these various visions of conducting research (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). Of the various paradigmatic schemes, Guba and Lincoln's (1994) scheme is more comprehensible. In a more recent work, Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) have re-defined the boundaries around these paradigms [Positivist/postpositivist- Interpretivist Paradigm/Constructivist Paradigm- Critical Paradigm /Transformative Paradigm]. The next section elucidates key aspects of each of these research paradigms. I believe an unpacking of each of these assumptions and principles would enable me to locate this research into a paradigm. The figure below walks the reader across key paradigms- as per Kivunja and Kuyini (2017)'s theoretical underpinnings- identifying their core believes and values.

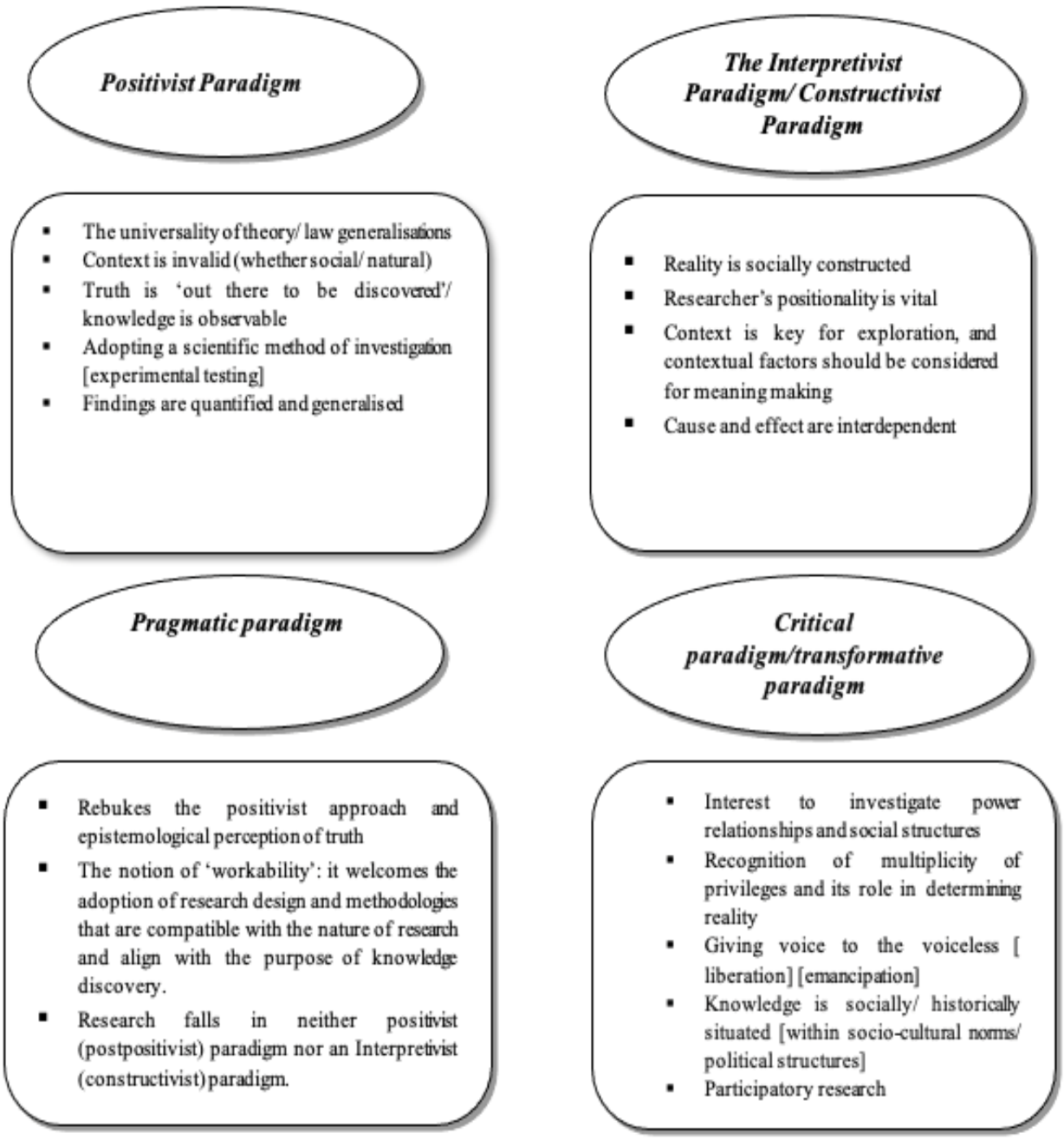


Figure 3. *Paradigms' beliefs and research values*

Positivism and post-positivism

As a form of philosophical realism, hypothetical-deductive methods usually imply systematic observation and description of a certain phenomenon (McGrath and Johnson, 2003). Tracing back its philosophical roots, the historical scholarship of positivism is based on investigating apprehend-able reality. As for its epistemic and ontological positions, Kivunja and Kuyini

(2017) have described it as "objectivist, its ontology naive realism, its methodology experimental, and its axiology beneficence" (p.31). *Objectivist epistemology* is met through functioning within logic and reason (Fadhel, 2002), whilst a '*naïve realist ontology'* suggests that truth is out there to be discovered, context is invalid, and advocates the use of scientific method of investigation. *A beneficence axiology* aims at maximising good outcomes out of the research (see tables of Paradigms Beliefs above). In its pure form, the positivist paradigm is based on experimentation and a deductive logic of "formulation of hypotheses, testing those hypotheses, offering operational definitions and mathematical equations, calculations, extrapolations and expressions, to derive conclusions" (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017, p.30) [check the table below for compatible methods].

Operating within the same paradigm, positivist and post-positivist stances differ on the totalitarian vision towards exploration, prediction, and control of a phenomenon. Under the positivistic umbrella, research inquiry is trapped between "theory verification" and "theory falsification" (Lincoln and Guba, 2000, p. 107). Despite their differences, both these streams of research philosophy build upon the causation equation (cause-effect linkages), where a phenomenon is objectively quantitatively studied and generalised. The post-positivist cousin advocates that reality can never be fully understood (Lincoln and Guba, 2000). This approach has aligned with the scientific stance of 'control' and prediction. However, it has advocated for acknowledging imperfection along the process. A major criticism of this quantitative-focused research was the detachment of the role of the researcher from the research (ibid).

The interpretivist paradigm/constructivist paradigm

The interpretivist paradigm grew out of dissatisfaction with the rigidity of the positivist stance. Drifting away from its objectivity, interpretivism seeks to understand the subjective human experience. Efforts were made to investigate individuals' ways of thinking and meaning making of the world around them (Guba and Lincoln, 1989; Scotland, 2012). In assuming *a subjective epistemology*, researchers argue that data has to be bound to individuals' interpretations of their own lived realities. Knowledge is thus explored within its natural setting through a dialogical interactive approach (Punch, 2005). Interpretivism advocates *a relativist ontology,* whereby reality is looked at from different angles. This assumption argues that there exist multiple realities to the same situation through different lenses of interpretations (the research participants' views). The paradigm follows *a naturalist methodology* where the

researcher acts as a participant-observant in the process of data collection (through qualitative methods).

Pragmatic paradigm

Philosophers argued of the impossibility of identifying the 'truth' using a singular approach or "by virtue of a single scientific method" (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017, p.35). There has been a wave of criticism advocating against the mono-paradigmatic orientation of research [like positivist paradigms] (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003; Alise and Teddlie, 2010; Biesta, 2010). These theorists have looked further at non-standard paradigms that host the different visions and approaches. Thus, pragmatic paradigms developed to stop the 'Paradigm Wars' that occurred between the positivist/postpositivist and the Interpretivists (Gage, 1989). Advocating a relational epistemology, the pragmatic way for understanding a phenomenon was through the relationships between factors. This has given birth to a mixed-methods methodology where both quantitative and qualitative methods are combined in the search for truth, serving a value-laden axiology where the outcome of research is deemed for public benefit.

Critical–ideology [Connections and Overlaps]

The tenets of both the critical paradigm and interpretivist paradigm are that reality is socially constructed (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). However, while the constructivist paradigm holds a subjectivist epistemology and a relativist ontology, the critical paradigm follows a transactional epistemology [between the researcher and participants] with an ontological position that is based on historical realism (Scotland, 2012; Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017). The critical paradigm is best suited to research that studies human rights, power dynamics, and social justice, with an axiology that takes cultural norms into consideration (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017). The critical ideology has also been employed intertwined with the pragmatic paradigm. Breaking out the misconception of 'common sense', the critical pragmatic approach is committed to the ideology that reality is subjectively shaped, and knowledge is contextually constructed. This discussion hints at the relational matrix between critical and pragmatic approaches. Dewey (2007) started from a perspectivist position to develop a "critical reflection in the complex medium of lived experience" (p.13). Our lived experiences are "intrinsically social and communicative" (ibid, p. 19). Tracing from Dewey's Reconstruction in Philosophy (1920) and particularly Democracy and Education (1916), a new dimension of research has evolved. At the heart of this paradigm, the 'philosophy of the social' lays key concepts, like 'growth' and

'social relationships'. Dewey's approach aims at investigating "the world we inhabit when we 'grow' properly … [and which] is the breeding ground … for all our habits, institutions, beliefs, relations, and aspirations" (Kadlec, 2007, cited in Midtgarden, 2012, p. 506).

Overall, there are several approaches to understand the world around us from a subjective or objective perspective (see table below).

Table 5. *Paradigms, characteristics, and beliefs (Inspired from Kivuja and Kuyini, 2017).*

Paradigms	***The Positivist paradigm***	***The Interpretivist Paradigm/Constructivist Paradigm***	***The Pragmatic Paradigm***	***The Critical Paradigm/Transformative Paradigm***
Epistemology	***Objectivist epistemology*** [The application of reason for knowledge discovery]	***Subjectivist epistemology*** [Meaning making of the data is through cognitive processing of interaction with research subjects]	***Relational epistemology*** [where relationships are defined according to the research nature]	***Transactional epistemology*** [Interaction between the researcher and research subjects]
Ontology	***Naïve realist ontology*** [Material objects of this world are perception-independent]. (Searle, 2015)	***Relativist ontology*** [Multiplicity of realities of the same studied situation] (Chalmers, Manley and Wasserman, 2005)	***A non-singular reality ontology*** [Individuals' interpretations of their realities vary]	***Ontology of historical realism*** [negotiate political, social and economic positions and power structures]
Methodology	***Experimental*** Manipulation of variables that enables the researcher to accept/ reject hypotheses. (Smith and	***Naturalist methodology*** [Researcher is an observer of knowledge - through qualitative methods]	***Mixed methods methodology*** [Ruantitative and qualitative research methods]	***Dialogic methodology*** [Qualitative Methods]

	Heshusius, 1986)			
Axiology	***Beneficence axiology*** [Maximising good outcomes and minimising any risk to the research and participants]	***Balanced axiology*** [Value of research is determined through its outcomes]	***Value-laden axiology*** [Valuable research that seeks problem solving]	***Cultural- values informed axiology*** [Emancipatory worldview towards social transformation]

There is no linear relation between approaches and methodologies, which is a consequence of the wide paradigm change that research has witnessed over the last two decades. Different theories often overlap eventually because of their fuzzy boundaries. The table below demonstrates the multi-diversity of methods hosted in each paradigm.

Table 6. *Research paradigms and research methodologies (Inspired from Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017, pp. 37-38)*

Paradigm	*Research Methodologies*
Positivist Paradigm	▪ Experimental methodology ▪ Quasi-experimental methodology ▪ Correlational methodology ▪ Causal comparative methodology ▪ Randomised control trials methodology ▪ Survey research methodology
Interpretivist Paradigm	▪ Naturalist methodology ▪ Narrative inquiry methodology ▪ Case study methodology ▪ Grounded theory methodology ▪ Phenomenology methodology ▪ Hermeneutics methodology ▪ Ethnography methodology ▪ Phenomenography methodology ▪ Action research methodology ▪ Heuristic inquiry methodology
Critical Paradigm	▪ Neo-Marxist methodology ▪ Feminist theories ▪ Cultural studies ▪ Critical race theory ▪ Freirean studies ▪ Participatory emancipation ▪ Postcolonial/indigenous methodology ▪ Queer theory ▪ Disability theories ▪ Action research
Pragmatic Paradigm	▪ Naturalist methodology ▪ Narrative inquiry ▪ Case study ▪ Phenomenology ▪ Ethnography ▪ Action Research ▪ Experimental methodology ▪ Quasi-experimental methodology ▪ Causal comparative methodology

Critical paradigm and social-ecological systems research: Methodological implications

Researchers wrestled with controversies and contradictions in paradigms (Guba and Lincoln, 2005). Within the lens of the critical pragmatic approach, the social construction of knowledge occurs through "social and positional power of the advocates of that knowledge" (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 27). It argues that language is the powerhouse of power relations (Frowe, 2001). There are stratified consensuses of knowledge that we are either born into, or we later inhabit within a pre-existing system. This argument speaks to the transition conceptualisations [in the literature review] (Ecclestone, 2009; Gale and Parker 2014; Jindal-Snape, 2016; Taylor and Harris-Evans, 2018). Whilst the literature chapter has reviewed the theoretical perspectives and conceptualisation underpinnings of transition to higher education, the former chapter has suggested an eco-systemic approach to understanding transition – adopting Bronfenbrenner's theory of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1975).

Research paradigm is an articulation of the researcher's stance, epistemic and ontological perceptions of knowledge. In an attempt to study the functional whole, this research consciously employs the ecological system theory to explore students' transition experiences. Considering insider-outsider dynamics, this study explores the effect of social-ecological interactions on patterns of their experiences. In fact, it seeks to explore knowledge systems and social systems that move above and beyond the individual level. Development of integrative conceptual frameworks like the bio-psychosocial model (Kiesler, 2000) or the bio-ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) focuses on the multi-dimensionality of the human experience by looking at socio-cultural and institutional impacts. Viewed in this way, the ecological framework seeks to make sense of the internal complexities of human experiences. Governed by broader structures, international students' transition into higher education has been affected by ontological, structural, and institutional changes. There is a vast space in the literature that has explored pivotal policy changes, ideological choices, and institutional behaviours (Lynch, 2006; Agasiti, 2020; Murphy et al., 2020).

Supporting the conceptual understanding of the multi-dimensionality of this topic, this research envisions the individual's transition experience wired within a nested web of systems. Exploring these dynamics, the critical paradigm seems fit to the nature of this research (Crotty, 1998; Scotland, 2012). The central endeavour of the critical paradigm is to examine the way

these power forces and hierarchies influence international students' ideological and ontological perceptions of the world around them, and thus their experiences within such a system.

Research rationale

The paradigmatic focus of this research has methodological implications. Historically, there has been a growing appreciation to the use of qualitative methods in human development research (Mishler, 2004; Creswell, 2009; Denzin, 2011). Qualitative research advocates for a methodological approach that promotes 'experiential reality' – as put by Babbie (2001), which is a reality based on personal experience.

There is an overlap between approaches and paradigms. Terminology can create a blurry vision when the researcher does not set clear boundaries between methods, designs, and paradigms (Creswell, 2014). Traditionally, it is argued that some pragmatic persuasions of the paradigms may not be served by given methodologies, for they are merely controlled by the onto-epistemological and methodological stand of the researcher (Willig, 2001). In other words, on the spectrum of more social constructivist research than postpositivist, Sparkes (2014) has asserted that whilst the former would prefer qualitative methods, the second tends to go for quantitative methods. Researchers tend to rebuke one approach or the other based on their views of what best aligns with the topic and the foci of research.

Several qualitative frameworks have been designed to provide a large toolkit of approaches for understanding phenomena (Patton, 2015). Aligning with the adopted critical approach to understanding transition experiences, qualitative research strategy was deemed appropriate to provide depth and meaning for lived experiences (McNamara, 1999; Kvale, 2006). As opposed to the linearity process of quantitative approaches, qualitative paradigms have been able to accommodate diversity and richness of views, behaviours, and beliefs (Trochim, 2005). In many instances, these paradigms can host the change that occurs to a phenomenon like 'transition' and unfolds in the data collection, analysis, and interpretation stages (Hartas, 2015). In studying socio-cultural dynamics and social structures, the historical, social, and cultural context is of a paramount importance in conducting research. Mirroring this rationale on this research, the previous chapter has elucidated the link between the neoliberal ideology, institutional governance, and students' experiences (Foucault,1969, 1970, 1972). Positioned as such, this paradigm addresses a cardinal question about the role of those ideological influences, values, and dialogical relations in defining human behaviours, aspirations, and mindsets.

Research Design and Strategy- Methods Triangulation

Transition is a multi-faceted phenomenon (Bonassi and Wolter, 2002; Jindal-Snape, 2016). To foreshadow this argument, this research advocates the implementation of an eco-systemic understanding of students' transition- using Bronfenbrenner's theory (1986). Drawing on this rationale, the examination of experience implied the use of pluralistic approaches for a richer understanding of this multi-functionality and dimensionality (Patton, 1990; Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003; Biesta, 2010). From a methodological point of view, the persistent need for methods diversification has rebuked the use of a singular method or a mono-paradigmatic orientation to address social reality (Alise and Teddlie, 2010). This wave has introduced new trends for research development in social research, such as "methodological diversity and triangulation" (Neimeyer and Diamond, 2001, p. 57).

At the outset of this perspective, the paradigm of this research study follows *Methods triangulation*, a more profound form of data collection. The overarching demand of the multi-disciplinarily in research has introduced complex interactions between entities of research. Exploratory research has been established throughout a long history of practice in different research areas (Creswell, 2009; Denzin, 2010; Grafton, Lillis and Mahama, 2011). This section will take us on a journey to look at vast arrays of literature about the timeline and aspects of the emergence and development of *Triangulation* as a concept in order to be clear on its implications, merits, and demerits.

The term 'Triangulation' was first introduced by Campbell and Fisk (1959). The idea started with the need to provide more methods to test a hypothesis, thus producing a '*Multi trait-Multi method approach'*. The ambiguity of the type of data required for such an approach has been later solved by Denzin (1970). Denzin argued that data should be complementary in terms of theoretical background, methods, context, time, and people. The concept has been systemised by Fielding & Fielding (1986) to connect qualitative and quantitative information. There were critical voices early on that supported mixed methodologies, like Brewer and Hunter (1989), when they referred to the multi-methods approach as a tool "to attack a research problem with an arsenal of methods that have non overlapping weakness in addition to complementary strengths" (p.17). Overall, the function of this method is oriented towards understanding various aspects of empirical reality (Denzin, 1978).

This hybrid approach allows the researcher to gain a "dialectic learning" of the researched phenomenon (Olsen, 2004, p.4). Methods triangulation is also a form of "methodological pluralism" (ibid, p. 14). The plurality of methods involved in data collection serves the purpose of looking at different facets of the same investigated subject. Breaking the stereotype of the dichotomous nature of research, the pluralism in social research practises tolerance towards methodological choices based on appropriate empirical decisions. Meaning, at a fundamental level of interpretation, is key to the research process. Mayring (2007) addressed the issue of understating the meaning of terms and entities prior to hypothesis generation.

Triangulation, as a term that has been traditionally used in Mathematics, merely aims to strengthen the design 'to increase the ability to interpret findings' (Renz et al., 2018, p.824). Webb et al. (1966) were among the supporters of the idea that the validity of the findings can only be granted if two or more instruments are implemented for the measurement of the studied variables (Renz et al., 2018). Despite the controversial views around triangulation versus the validity of data, this method still offers new insights for a robust understanding of the researched phenomenon. This approach is both liberating and flexible as it allows the researcher to use different lenses to discover various aspects of the same research problem. With this possibility, there is a maximised chance to enrich the research findings compared to using one research instrument.

Types of triangulations

Extending beyond its scientific- mathematical boundaries in the 1970's, triangulation has become widely used in social research (Denzin, 2010). There is a general consensus on the effectiveness of complementary research methods that triangulation offers. Despite this, these strategies lay on a platform of broad notions, where the application of methods depends on the type of triangulation. Therefore, it is important to draw a distinction between different rationales of the triangulation approach to be able to prescribe what fits into this study.

Triangulation acts as a form of methodological multilingualism where the phenomenon is looked at from various facets. Denzin (1978) has divided this approach into four basic types. According to Denzin, the triangulation in research methodology can be subdivided into: (1) investigator triangulation; 2) theory triangulation, 3) data triangulation, and 4) methodological triangulation. The table below collates the theoretical understandings behind each type.

Table 7*. Types of triangulations in research*

Type of Triangulation	*Focus and Implementation*
Investigator triangulation	"The use of more than one investigator, interviewer, observer, researcher or data analyst in a study" (Denzin, 2010, p.15). This method suggests the possibility of having an assistant/ observer during the interview sessions.
Theory triangulation	The use of multiple theories or hypotheses when examining a situation or phenomenon. The idea is to look at a situation/phenomenon from different perspectives, through different lenses, with different questions in mind.
Data triangulation	Alternatively, triangulation is performed on data generated from multiple sources, contexts, and targets. This approach works on closing gaps in data, where weak data are compensated for by other data from different sources (Jick, 1979; Denzin, 2010). This 'counter-balancing strategy', as referred to by Grafton, Lillis, and Mahama (2011), aims to exploit the merits of both quantitative and qualitative methods.
Methods triangulation	Triangulation is also applied in methodological designs, where multiple methods are implemented to study a given phenomenon. The rationale of such approach is to minimise bias that is likely to occur from a single method approach. Following a similar rationale as other triangulation approach, compensation is critical to this methodology. At the core of this strategy, findings introduced by one research method can deliberately justify, augment, introduce, and

	verify data generated by another. In this sense, data can be collected from a single or multiple contexts, locations and with the same or different populations. The consistency of findings is tested following this approach using cross-methods analysis.

Research Methods

Drawing on the paradigmatic understanding, this research investigation implemented exploratory qualitative approach. Two inquiries are sequentially designed for complementary cross-purposes: a) survey-based study, and b) semi-structured focus group interviews. The use of two methods design has initially allowed for the diversification of method and data evaluation (Chatterji, 2010). The recruitment of students in the two rounds of data collections has combined both purposive sampling (Anon, 2008; Palys, 2008) and snowballing sampling technique (Morgan, 2008). Whilst the former served the breadth, the latter has focused on the depth of the research inquiry. I will attempt to break down the following section to elaborate on the underpinning of each method along with its implementation process.

Method 1: qualitative survey

It is of a paramount importance to note that this research has originally intended to pursue a mixed-methods approach for data collection. A survey (mixed methods) was initially developed to explore the dimensions of the international students' adjustment in the UK. Nevertheless, mainly for the reason of space and coherence in this thesis, the quantitative data have been disregarded. Thus, the qualitative data in this research have been reported with a critical paradigm focus. In the first round, qualitative data have been collected as part of a survey administered to international students at a UK university in two rounds of data collection. The first one was with a sample of (n= 480) students, while the second round was with (n=131) students. Open-ended questions about the challenges faced have generated (n=100) and (n=21) answers respectively.

Access Route to Participants

Prior to delving into the data collection process, it is worth referring to the major challenges involved in this study. There have been a few setbacks that precluded me from following the

initial plan of recruitment and sampling. It is important to note that access to students was meant to be sought via a number of services at the University. With research conducted under optimal conditions, access was not regarded as an obstacle at first. I contacted different services at the respective University with the hope that the survey could be forwarded to as many students could be reached via their service databases (as demonstrated in the figure below).

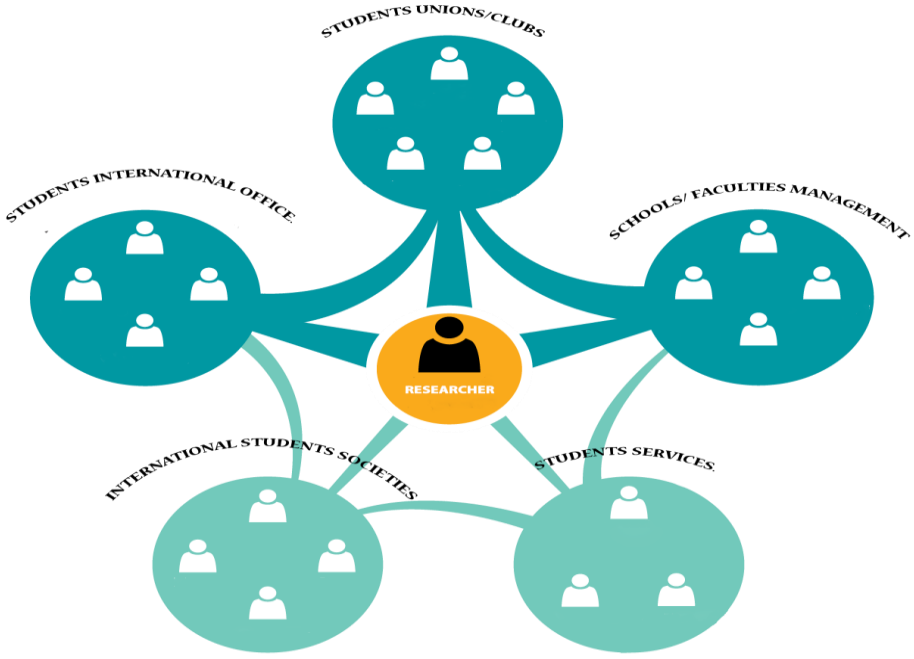


Figure 4. *Routes of access to research participants*

Open ended questions are routinely employed in surveys for the purpose of extending the scope of information gathered, as well as motivating informants to answer (Geer, 1988,1991; Andrews, 2005). In another sense, it acts as a way for measuring knowledge of the subject among the targeted sample. Furthermore, this part of the instrument sought to provide more options for expressing knowledge or absence of knowledge. Other researchers, for instance, have discussed its importance in the case where respondents are not able to give accurate answers to the closed-ended type of questions. Open-ended questions, in that case, could simply be a room for students to express their refusal or denial of knowing the answer (Krosnick and Presser, 2010). Another role of the open-ended questions is to weigh the relevance of a given topic to an audience (Holland and Christian, 2009). Length of the response, however, heavily relies on the interest in the question. Insights from research like Borg and Zuell (2012) and Andrews (2005) show that open-ended questions about dissatisfaction of a

service or a situation are likely to be lengthier than the ones where respondents are asked to speak about their satisfaction.

Data analysis procedures

There is a wealth of data collected through this research method. To systematically view the data, a three-step approach has been adopted to initially make sense of it: organisation, validation, and evaluation. Enabling a more comprehensive analysis, I attempted to extract common topics and views from the sum of data collected in the first phase. Considering the multifaceted phenomenon under investigation, views in the responses might reflect different shades of arguments. Therefore, a classical method of analysing responses to open-ended questions is content analysis (Gerbic and Stacey, 2005; Züll, 2016). Following the rationale of content analysis (Krippendorff 1980; Weber, 1990; Downe-Wamboldt, 1992; Neundorf, 2002; Elo and Kyngäs, 2008), the following sections proceed to explain the process of analysis. Acknowledging the merits of both types of content analysis, inductive or deductive, I chose the former. Thriving on the flexibility of this approach, an inductive method of analysis offered new insights from the responses in data which might have been unintentionally overlooked in the previous steps of this research. In an exploratory fashion, the analysis process consists of organising responses, coding, creating categories, and reporting.

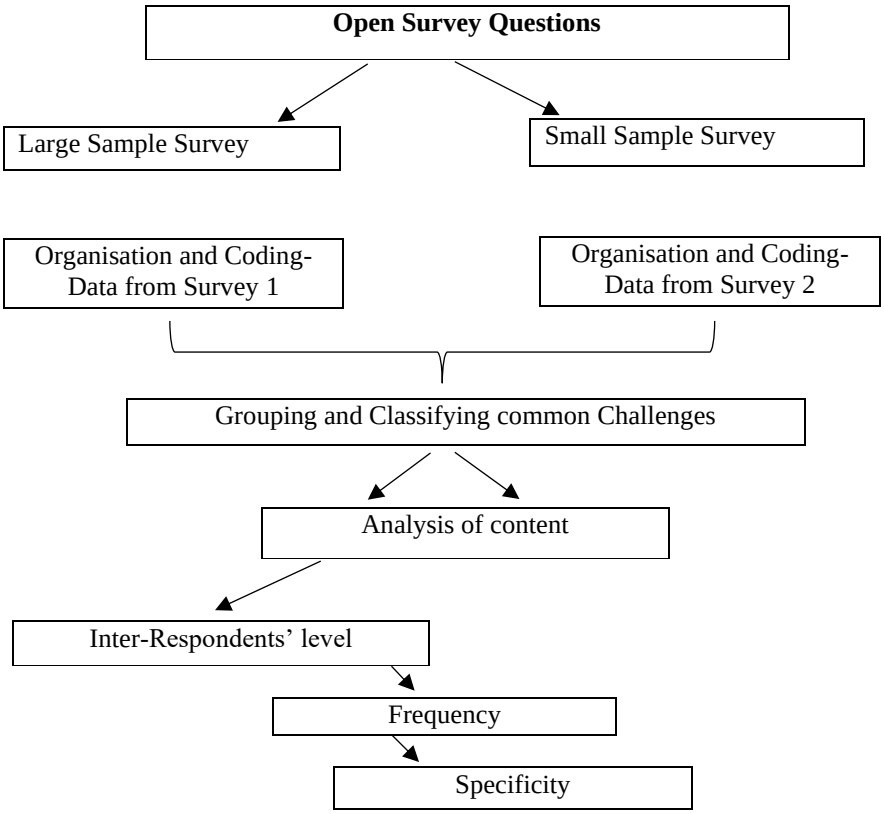


Figure 5. *Analytical procedures of open-ended questions*

Grouping and organisation

For creating a framework, the qualitative data was initially read and re-read for meaning making, establishing relationships. It was then categorised, grouped, and coded. Primarily, codes were extracted from the participants' responses themselves, unrestricted by any research hypothetical assumptions. The organisation phase implied sub-actions, like filtering, segmenting, grouping, and comparing codes.

Charting students' experiences through qualitative data is often messy and complex. Key to that, data should be subjected to a sense of order and organisation. The coding style followed an inductive approach, where codes are extracted from the responses. Breaking up the plethora of topics in the answers into different meaning entities, summarised into codes, then overarching themes and sub-themes were the highlight of the first step of analysis. As advised at this stage, a label is assigned for each category in the categorisation scheme (Züll, Scholz and Schmitt, 2010; Züll, 2016). There happens to be different routes to analysing open-ended

questions, whether computer-assisted, semi-automatic, or manual coding (Züll, 2016). In this study, the coding scheme-carried out by means of Excel had considered the frequency of codes as they fell within their respective categories of sub-themes and themes. The coding process aimed to reduce replication in responses. Following a data reduction process, the themes emerged from the data itself without imposing a structure upon them.

From an analytical point of view, it was worthy to take case scenarios of international students as they add valuable insights to the induced themes. Before endeavouring into the analytical layout, I would like to address the point that none of the stated challenges is peculiar to international students as they could be experienced by home students as well. Moreover, none of the reported problems is shared with all the participants of this study as it is based on a set of different responses and views. The research insights aim to picture international students' views and perceptions of their experiences within the English higher education landscape. Nevertheless, this research aspired to step out of the descriptive tradition of approaching this phenomenon, aiming to develop an alternative narrative and focus.

Method 2: Focus group interviews

For the purposes of this research study, a qualitative methodology was selected to provide a layer of depth to the research inquiry. Creswell (1998) states: "Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The research builds a complex, holistic pictures, analyses words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in natural setting" (p. 15). Corroborating this assumption, striving towards a holistic grasp of the international student's transitioning experience implied the use of discursive methods. Critical paradigms imply dialogic methods infused with exploration, communication, and reflection (Kincheloe and McLaren, 1994). Thus, the data collection method implemented in the second fold of this study was focus group interviews. The group discussions technique is widely used to discuss, share, and draw from complex experiences, beliefs, and behaviours (Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995; Hayward, Simpson, and Wood, 2004; Andrew and Jonathan, 2006; Gibson, 2012).

Research argued that the advantages of in-depth interviewing are characterised in the genuine in-person contact with the target population (Brekhus, Galliher and Gubrium, 2005). While other predominant qualitative methods are often carried out with participant observation or one to one interview, the focus group method requires both skills, preserving its 'peculiarity as a

distinctive research method' (Morgan, 1988, 2002; Andrew and Jonathan, 2006). Both, one to one interviews and focus group interviews sit under the umbrella of qualitative methodologies, each of which has its own strengths and weaknesses. While the *individual* depth interview (IDI) emphasises the in-depth information of one participant at a time, the focus group method acts as "*a group depth interview*" that focuses on the group *dynamics* instead. The focus group interview method has been paid a significant attention in many fields, like economy, sociology, psychology, education, etc. (Kamberelis and Dimitriadis, 2005). Echoing the study objectives, focus group interviews offered a dialogic space that has permitted students to interrogate patterns of their experiences, such as their positionalities and identities along the spectrum of their transition to higher education (Birch and Miller, 2000).

Sample recruitment- post survey

At the outset, the survey study has facilitated reaching student participants through a purposive sampling procedure (Shaw, 1999). A formal request was made via email to participants in the former study of international postgraduate taught Master students in a UK university. The focus group interviews were conducted between May and August 2019. This round of data collection generated 86 participants interested in a follow-up focused group interview. Nevertheless, due to the time and scale of the study, I decided that approximately 35-40 informants would be a practical number. Due to the ups and downs of arrangement procedures and availability, a total of 26 participants were interviewed. The interviewees took part in focus group interviews (n=5), where the sample was divided into 5 to 6 participants in each.

Frames of understandings of focus groups

Within this thesis, students' educational transitions were viewed from a critical pragmatic perspective. This stance has been heavily influenced by Bronfenbrenner's (1975. 1977, 1968, 1993, 1995,1999) theory of experience situated within proximal processes and reciprocal transactions between the 'student' (individual), the agents (social/ academic), micro-meso-macro structures (environments/powers/ governing forces), and behaviours (actions). This also aligns with the belief of the duality of 'agency' and 'social structure' (Bandura, 2012), which hosts the argument that experience is constructed from the interplay of personal, behavioural, and environmental determinants. Evidently, the open-endedness of the process allowed the exploration of the educational trajectories students experience, adaptation processes, and their

varied responses to available support interventions. While there was a theoretical and a methodological appreciation of flexibility, there was a persistent urge for research framing to the distinguishable dimensions of the international student's transition experience throughout the data collection process (Patton, 2002). The next section seeks to answer the following question:

What could allow in-depth understanding of context specific correlations/ interconnections in the research phenomenon?

Hierarchical focusing method

In much of the methodological tradition, interviews have been held to be a base form of qualitative research providing 'thick description' for a phenomenon (Smith and Osborn, 2008; Schultz and Avital, 2011). One of the most concrete implications of focus group discussions is the diversity of opinions and the display of nuanced, controversial, and even contradictory accounts and perspectives. Whilst student participants displayed a diverse array of visions and anecdotes, a control to the scope of the multitude of narrative voices was needed for them to align with the research domain. This, however, does not imply putting constraints over the discursive opportunities of the research participants. Conversely, it allows for grasping the complexity of students' transition experiences and educational trajectories through a thematic strategy.

Given the large scale and the complexity of the researched phenomenon, I have implemented Tomlinsons' (1989) method of hierarchical focusing. With the aim of mitigating the risk and tension between the researcher's and participants' agendas, this method offers a systematic way for interviewing by creating a web of topics to be discussed. There are interwoven advantages for the collective discussions (Kamberelis and Dimitriadis, 2011). Adopted in pursuit of highlighting conceptual-contextual variations, the method is designed to be responsive to individual differences and elicit the elaboration of their accounts in a context-focused framework. The construction of a hierarchical agenda embraces a branching strategy where macro and micro topics are embedded within a deeply layered hierarchy. The scheme outlines stages, actions, and interactions of participants as they elaborate on topics. Whilst "minimising researcher framing and maximising interviewer openness" (Tomlinsons, 1989, p.167), questions are designed to ensure coverage of all aspects and angles of the topic(s). A skeleton structure for the interview agenda is provided in Appendix 2.

Following a thoughtful approach, I smoothly moved from the more general to the most specific, from the conceptual to the contextual elements. About the questions formulation and directiveness, research requires the interviewer to be able to "generate rapid insights [and] formulate questions quickly and smoothly" but also "guard against asking questions that impose interpretations on the situation" (Patton, 2002, p.343). In another respect, Micnichiello et al. (1990) noted that an unstructured interview is "always a controlled conversation, which is geared to the interviewer's research interests" (p.93). Drifting away from directiveness and control, a balance is required. In this context, the hierarchical strategy of the interviewing process provides a more contextual framing. Yet, it preserved both "the interviewees perspective [and] the researcher's own research agenda" (Tomlinson 1989, p. 155). The author's vision of 'having it both ways' hosted this argument for an open approach of interviewing, without excessive influence of a certain agenda. Thus, to a great extent, my control, as a researcher, over the conversation during the interviews was intended to be minimal. Given the semi-structured nature of the interviews, reflections and spontaneous generated questions were kept in an aide-memoire (Minichiello et al., 1990; Briggs, 2000).

Cards activity

The researcher has deployed a card activity as a data-gathering method within the focus group interviews. Within the context of flexible and creative methodologies, cards-based games have been widely popular in research management, innovation teams, and qualitative market research (Muethel and Saunders, 2008; Rowlev et al., 2012). This playful method has also been used in ethnographies and social research (Bernhaupt et al., 2010). In focus group interviews, card games are used as visual cues that facilitate establishing interpersonal interaction between the group facilitator and group members, which shifts away the focus of informants from the interviewer towards one another and stimulates better conversation (Kitzinger, 1994).

Applied in this study, the objectives of this process included data gathering, structure and organisation, focus and proactiveness, depth and reflection. To elaborate on the process, cards and coloured pens were provided for participants to write a set of processes and steps that they believed were problematic during their transition period (whether at the stage of pre-arrival or after arrival to university). Using this approach, the articulations of interviewees have guided the interview towards certain directions with little influence of the researcher. The interview agenda was collaboratively constructed with the student participants. The participants have

then discussed the items they wrote with their group peers. Research has highlighted the way this card activity enhances participants' motivation and breaks the usual interviewing routine (Bradburn et al., 2004). The participants were asked to 'take their ideas a bit further', 'compare', 'contrast', and 'reflect critically' on their experiences. This strategy allowed the informants time for thinking and reflecting. In this respect, reflections were drawn from their chosen topics. Whilst there was a spontaneous coverage of a number of arising topics and issues, I checked the participants' exhaustive coverage of all ideas and perspectives.

Visual Method- a venue for reflexivity

This study has attempted to establish a pattern for conceptual reflexivity (Riach, 2009) on students 'transition into higher education — using *participant-produced drawings*. Earlier in this thesis, the literature review chapter demonstrated controversies in conceptualising transition experiences (Meyer and Land, 2005; Gale and Parker 2014; Taylor et al., 2018; Gravett, 2019). This part of the study has deployed reflexive practices as means of conceptualising transition into higher education from the lens of student participants. The use of participatory visual methods (PVM) in qualitative research is not novel to the field of social sciences. There exists a variance in the implementation of visual methodologies (Pink, 2012; Rose, 2016) whether for diagnosing conceptions and misconceptions of realities (for example, Kose, 2008) or utilising input for advancement of operating systems (Zweifel and Wezemael, 2012; Lee and Cavanaugh, 2016; Wan, 2018).

Participatory visual research methodologies (PVRM) were born from a qualitative paradigm that acknowledges the sensory vision of the participants' input. For the past decade, interest in visual methods has been escalating in qualitative research (Davidson et al., 2012; Comi, 2014). As knowledge owners, participants tend to articulate, express, map, visualise, and/or reflect on their different experiences in different shapes and forms. Speaking of experiences produces a content that is overflowing with details, contexts, and characters. When put in context, there were several reasons that explained why *participant-produced drawings* were implemented as a method of data collection in this study. To list the key ones, I would refer in this section to *Expression*, *Reflexivity*, and *Engagement* (Pink, 2012; Rose, 2016).

Beyond words: drawings as a mode of expression

Within the perspective of 'meaning making', the analytical lens often involves social semiotics, which is a science that seeks to depict the meaning of signs (co-founded by Ferdinand Saussure, 1857-1913). Given the presence of sign-systems in visual materials, the dichotomous notion of signifier (word) and signified (concept) extends beyond its verbal boundaries (literal texts) to the non-verbal ones (Somekh and Lewin, 2005; Silverman, 2014). Research input to social semiotics in contemporary research has infused the notion of 'multimodality' which took place in different stages of research (Lemke, 1998; Kress, 2000). The co-presence of two modes of expressions of thoughts, non-verbal and verbal, provides richness for meaning. Kress (2010) contended that "Language alone can no longer give us full access to the meanings of most contemporary messages, which are constituted in several modes: on pages in the mode of *writing* and of *image,* on screens through CD-ROMS and on the Web; in *speech, music, image*- moving or still; in *gesture, colour and soundtrack"* (cited in Parrott, 2019, p.177).

The semiology box of analysis of meaning and experience sought to look into in-depth meaning of signs in data that move beyond words to other semiotic resources (Rose, 2016) that are used as alternative modes of expressions of meaning. Nonetheless, visual data not only present themselves differently, but are also explored through different connections (shapes, images, lines, etc.). Parrott (2019) noted that "writing and visual communication are interrelated and what can be called 'integrated design' where linkages, causalities are communicated by symbolism" (p. 177). In that line of argument, Ledin and Machin (2018) reflected on the concepts of coherence and cohesion in a visual material. "A running text has a clear sense of running order, cohesion, and conjunction. Here, in visual communication, the overall coherence comes from a visual design where different semiotic materials are deployed such as alignment, spacing, colour coordination, iconographic representations, and graphic shapes" (Ledin and Machin, 2018, p. 30).

This methodological endeavour pushes beyond the boundaries of lexis and language description. The sensory route that was adopted in this study via drawings encourages both emotional and reflective forms of expressions. Spelling out some of those assumptions, understandings, and categorisations can be associated with the bi-dimensional view of visual methods in research. In a reference to Chaplin (1994), Thompson (2008) noted in her book that 'the visual' in the field of social science was investigated by two methods: investigating the

production of or the manufacturing of visual artefacts. While in the first way the researcher investigates the roots, the theoretical underpinning, and the practical uses of the input (i.e., the image, video, etc.), the second seeks to host an environment for 'manufacturing' or making the visual artefact. Chaplin (1994) has referred to the first as 'the sociology of the visual', and the second 'visual sociology'. A core premise of this approach is to investigate the meaning-making process; something that this method seeks to achieve. The participants were engaged in the dialogue about their input (data), as "active co-producers of the data" (Thomson, 2008, p.8); asking the researcher to work '*with* research participants, rather than *on* them" *[Italics for Emphasis]* (Ibid, p.7).

Procedures

Before commencing the research, the participants were approached to take part in a semi-structured focus group interviews that aimed to discuss their transition journeys to a UK university. Approaching the end of the focus group interviews, the participants were each given a sheet of A1 paper and provided with a large selection of coloured pens and markers. They were asked to respond to the following question:

- If you were to visualise your academic and social experience at university, what pattern or shape would it have?
- Please take your time thinking it through and using the drawing tools provided to draw that pattern or shape. While drawing, please use phrases or sentences to illustrate what you mean by the different shapes you create in order to help the researcher make sense of what you draw.
- Please put in mind that this task has nothing to do with your drawing skill or ability, as it is most important to discuss how your pattern reflects your individual experience and perspective.

Verbal interpretation of the participants-produced drawings was required. The participants were assured and encouraged to express creatively (Oakden, 2015). This step was considered as the backbone of the analysis of the data for preserving authenticity of meaning and accuracy of findings. Therefore, the participants gave their consent to be audio-recorded while drawing and were asked to provide an explanation of their individual drawings once completed. Their interpretations have acted as a reference in the analysis.

The analytical journey [Thematic analysis]

Analysing data is a multi-dimensional artefact that is informed by both reflexivity and reflection throughout the whole research process. Drawing on a critical paradigm, the central endeavour of this research study is to explore the richness and dimensionality of students' transition experiences. There is a gamut of approaches that have sought to discuss systematic strategies and models that inform the stage of data analysis and interpretation in qualitative research (Knafl and Howard, 1984; Miles and Huberman, 1994). Scholarly conceptual revisions have challenged the existence of 'empirical subjectivity', introducing techniques like 'bracketing' where the research investigates a 'pure' phenomenon. Husserl (1931) has referred to *bracketing* as '*epoche'* (Greek word for 'a cessation'), where judgment about the studied phenomenon is suspended. The meaning of this concept has been stretched to address phenomenological reduction where the research moves beyond the bounds of pre-existing knowledge and theorisations (Cypress, 2017). Bracketing as a methodological device in interpretative qualitative research emphasises reflection and reflexivity on the studied phenomenon. One way to counter lack of reflexivity is to echo students' lived experiences, acknowledge the margin of researcher's and participants' biases, and minimise their impact on the credibility of interpretation. Following this path, this section entails the exploration of reflexive awareness and clarity that assist the analytical journey, walking the reader through the steps (from codes to themes), decisions, strengths, and possible biases or methodological limitations.

In this study, each of the focus group interviews lasted for two hours and a half, which generated 252 pages of transcripts that took the researcher three months to transcribe. The challenging part was how to make sense of the vast mass of material from this study. Acknowledging the scale of the task at hand is the first step down the path of an efficient analysis. The data were analysed following Braun and Clark's (2006) systematic guidelines of thematic analysis (see table below). The thematic type of analysis challenges the validity of the pre-defined theories and research assumptions, through which researchers tend to look for supportive data for their ground theories rather than non-supportive input. Whilst study designs following qualitative approach- as opposed to quantitative approaches- offer conventionally unmeasurable data, the coding process takes a different route to achieve rigour and accuracy in treating the data. Researchers like Curtis et al. (2001) suggest that "the use of rank order comparisons of frequency of codes can be used" (cited in Hsieh and Shannon, 2005, p. 1283).

In other contexts, research models have been followed, sometimes blindly, by other researchers in certain field studies. A good example is Kübler-Ross' categorisation of grief (1969) (denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance) among patients in severe health stages. The terminology of grief has been tightly linked to this sub-categorisation. A good question was raised by Hsieh and Shannon (2005) about how this type of model can be applicable to all participants' cases without being biased. On the other hand, striking opinions that may allow for bias in the participants' answers have been highlighted when reporting the data [see findings chapter- Participant Bias section].

The coding strategy in a directed qualitative analysis implies working on a predetermined model of codes. Due to the unpredictability of the flow of data, other coding methods were adopted. With the aim of generating a robust understanding of the data, organisation was required. To compact the large amount of diverse raw data, tables and charts were used. Codes and topics were categorised and clustered together to identify patterns within the data. Interpretation is tightly related to the manner data is approached (Alhojailan, 2012). The coding of data in this study was done manually rather than by means of NVivo software. This approach allowed the researcher to provide an in-depth interpretation and analysis. Researchers have acknowledged the useful impact of the software approach to data analysis yet highlighted its restrictiveness in in-depth analysis (Welsh, 2002).

There has been a debate on whether the traditional way of coding is time consuming for a large data input. There is an assumption that computers offer the 'best' coding systems, saving time and enormous energy put into the task of coding (Coffey et al., 1996). Nevertheless, Coffey et al. (1996) and Thompson (2002) contend that "indexing data in this way has no great conceptual advance" over the common way of coding and categorisation with a pen and a paper (cited in Frost, 2008, p. 20). Within the dilemma of treating the two procedures - 'coding' and 'analysis'- to be the same, Thompson (2002) highlighted that "any computer can be programmed to do the mechanical part of the analysis … no computer can do the conceptual part" (cited in Frost, 2008, p. 20). In my study, I have adopted the traditional way of coding for the purpose of obtaining genuine and reliable results. This study design is believed to offer a chance for informing this investigation with more context-related and sample-related data. Irrespective of the approach, manual or software, the cornerstone of thematic analysis has centred around the 'keyness', representativeness, and coherence of themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

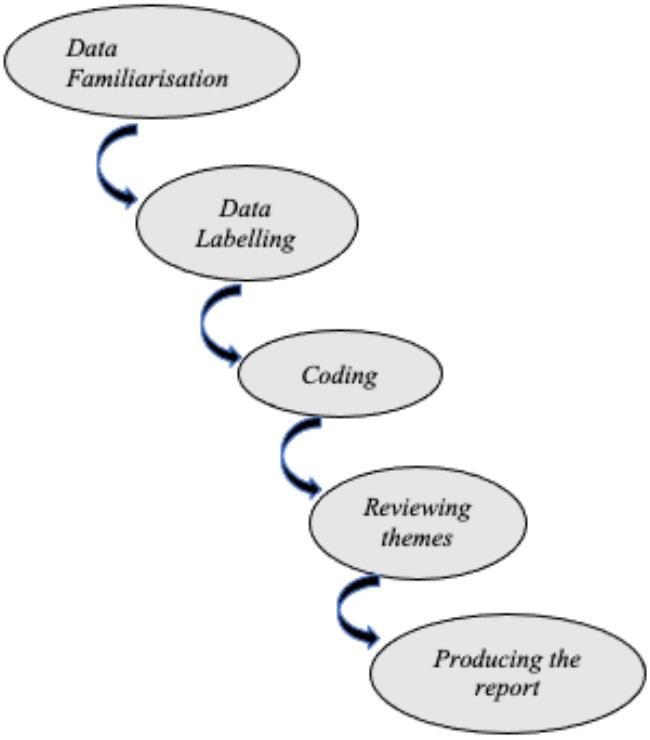


Figure 6. *Steps of Thematic Analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 35)*

Data familiarisation- data labelling

Each focus group interview was read and re-read for the purpose of data familiarisation (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011). The second step hence was the coding, which consisted of two parts. The first task was a thorough scanning of all the interview transcripts and systematically coding line by line. Data labelling has systematically marked similarities, repetitions, controversies in the narratives (Ryan and Bernard, 2003). The task has enabled me to establish an understanding of what could be the dominant pattern of codes within each interview and across the whole sum of interviews. Next, was the contour coding, which aimed to highlight fragments of data that represent different topics. In this respect, strategies like colour coding of key segments, patterns, and notes were useful in data organisation (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011). After this thorough process, a structure has been imposed on the data obtained.

Coding newly identified factors

Although the hierarchical focusing as a method implied classifying data into a succinct structure, it had no impact on the dynamics of the discussions and narratives. Stitched in among the themes and codes were new evolving themes. These themes were similarly coded when they happened to be the mainstream of the discussion. In the case where unpredicted variables, typologies, or analogies were brought to the interview discussion, they were identified to be analysed before deciding if they represented a new category or subcategory of the initial model codes followed in the study. When themes or factors are identified, data collection aims to focus on aspects that are not fully developed. In the case of data saturation, i.e., when new information does not add to the factors, the collection is considered completed.

New thematic insights further refine, extend, and enrich the body of research data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The main strength of this approach is that it contributes to the extension of the existing body of research and grows other genuine assumptions. The discussion might carry a focus on identifying parallels between existing models, e.g., models of transitions for students, and newly discovered codes from a study conducted on international students going through the same transition. Prior to analysing the data, I undertook a transcript strategy for additional comments and non-verbal observations, which continued to inform the ongoing data collection. Non-verbal behaviour - such as gaps, pauses, hesitations, silence, anger, tenderness, or strength in the vocal expression- have been reported along the verbal data during transcription. I kept "an aide-memoire"; an agenda for the interview— that aimed to guide the conversation – or the pool of topics to be discussed, but also allowed flexibility in the analytical approach.

Overall, the coding scheme aims to adopt a tree diagram to organise the hierarchical structure for the categories (Morse and Field, 1995; Morse and Richards, 2002), followed by a definition of the codes and factors deduced. Since there is a possibility for interconnection between categories and sub-categories, the coding also identifies these relationships and correlations (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). The thematic analysis carried the objective of looking at thematic alignment between transitional models- reviewed in the literature chapter- and factors represented in students' responses. The report of the study findings adopted a rank order of all codes in terms of frequency and importance according to the research informants.

Limitations of the study

It is important to note that improving research practice lies at the heart of unveiling the misfits and gaps of this research study. Conducting this research study intended to follow a rigorous and methodical approach to achieve trustworthy and reliable research (Morse et al., 2002). Nevertheless, this part of the chapter acknowledges the difficulties and challenges of both the approach and the process. In a distinctive fashion, this section seeks to address those pitfalls, crises, and setbacks to guide the explanation of the methodological considerations and how they have informed the upcoming research decisions. In meeting this end, this research explore rigour and credibility through two visions. Whilst this research adheres to the consensus on quality criteria through the standard vision of validity, reliability, and bias (Long and Johnson, 2000; Golafshani, 2003; Rolfe, 2006), it allows testing alternative approaches to rigour and credibility assessment as potential measures that are more compatible with qualitative research (Noble and Smith, 2015).

Testing Rigour, Validity and reliability - *towards a qualitative research terminology*

In the broadest context, validity in qualitative research refers to the soundness and the "appropriateness" of the methodology, the sampling, and the data analysis approach. In exploring the effectiveness of the research process, epistemological insights and practical examples from functional research frameworks are brought forward (Selvin, 2000; Rolfe, 2006; Kirkman, 2008; Noble and Smith, 2015). As a concept, validity is explained as "the state of being well grounded or justifiable, relevant, meaningful, logical, confirming to accepted principles or the quality of being sound, just, and well founded" (Cypress, 2017, p.256). In the positivist tradition, a valid study is determined by the truthfulness and accuracy of the scientific measures and its findings. The definition of validity differs from a quantitative approach. Restating Leininger's view, Cypress (2017, p.257) explains that "validity in a qualitative sense means gaining knowledge and understanding of the nature (i.e., the meaning, attributes, and characteristics) of the phenomenon", thus calling for the introduction of new parallel terminology (Morse, 1999).

In assessing validity, the credibility of findings in qualitative inquiry is assessed in terms of quality, rigour and trustworthiness. Lincoln and Guba (1985) have introduced the concept of 'trustworthiness' instead of the concepts of reliability and validity. As an assessment criterion,

trustworthiness “refers to quality, authenticity, and truthfulness of findings of qualitative research” (Cypress, 2017, p. 254). The naturalistic paradigm has replaced the terms credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability with truth’s value, applicability, consistency, and neutrality (Cypress, 2017). As opposed to quantitative paradigms, reality in qualitative research is "multi-dimensional and ever changing" (Merriam, 1995, p.54). The quest for understating the lived experiences of individuals has to assess the quality of research before, during and after the study is conducted. During data generation, research credibility - or else validity- is assessed through "the researcher’s ability to articulate data collection decisions, demonstrate prolonged engagement and persistent observation, provide verbatim transcription, and achieve data saturation" (Cypress, 2017, p.261). The analytical credibility, however, is achieved through careful analysis to reduce biased ideas of the respondents that are influenced by prejudice and preconceived notions. Whilst these issues often cloud the findings’ interpretation, providing thick descriptions through interview transcripts is important. This study also applied the purposeful choice of participants by following a purposive sampling to transferability.

On the other hand, in its traditional definition, reliability assures the ability to replicate the same research results on another occasion or by different researchers (Bryman and Bell, 2015). This quest has been argued to be epistemologically challenging in fluid and transformative research settings (Patton, 1999; Trochim, 2005). From a scientific lens, the major assumption is that the reliability of the findings is attained through the success of their replication (Merriam, 1995). The notions of replicability and stability are bound to the idea of a ‘measurable method’- that is employed in quantitative studies- where a phenomenon is measurable and observable throughout statistical procedures. Scholars have raised crucial questions around the replication challenge in qualitative research (ibid), where results are meant to be consistently achieved under the same circumstances or identical conditions. The fundamental measures- whether in their traditional terminology [validity and reliability] or in their alternative conceptualisations [trustworthiness, applicability, credibility/ rigour]- are inheritably integrated to attain rigour in research and could be met in qualitative studies through strategies like triangulation, member checking, and peer examination (Guba and Lincoln 1985; Merriam, 1995). The truthfulness of the research data was assessed through both methods and triangulation.

Several calls in the literature support using the convergence technique of data from different sources to draw more robust conclusions (Giba, 1990; Mertens, 2003). In stressing the relevance of this research strategy, a mixture of methods or sources is employed in this research study to elucidate both depth and complexity of the studied phenomenon, i.e., transition into higher education. Employed in a complementary fashion, both surveys and focus group interviews are two lanes towards the same objective (Bryman, 2004). The triangulation technique has allowed determining directions of the study. For instance, the open-ended survey results informed the more in-depth questions during the interview stage. Nevertheless, addressing the weaknesses and the strengths in each method was vital to the process of reflectivity and assessment (Guba and Lincoln, 2005).

Another essential part of this strategy has been double checking the accuracy and credibility of the data, as it allowed an examination of the researcher's interpretation of the findings throughout the research process (Wellington, 2000), thereby growing more confidence in the study's results (Bryman, 2004; Wellington and Szczerbinski, 2007). A significant drawback of methods' triangulation is that it can be both "time- and labour-intensive" (Renz et al., 2018, p.824). The time dedicated to a thorough analysis and interpretation of data could as well be a demanding task. This commitment, however, is argued to be eventually rewarding, as it is a critical process for reassuring the trustworthiness of the data (Lincoln and Guba, 2000).

The table below break down the objectives of the qualitative methods triangulation employed in this study. Capturing the distinct features of each method- earlier in this chapter- has set the ground for accentuating their core objectives. The combination of these methods- through triangulation- has served in connecting their objectives to achieve both breadth and depth of the inquiry.

Table 8. *Triangulation Strategy- Methods Objectives*

Method	***Objectives***
Open-ended Survey	➢ Offer a wide view on different views and perspectives ➢ Inform, guide, and limit the scope of the studied phenomenon - towards a more in-depth stage of exploration (for instance interviews).

Focus Group Interviews	➢ Offer a platform for open discussion, expression, anecdotal examples of students' experiences ➢ Explore the layers of change (personal, environmental, cultural, academic) that the academic and the cultural transition implied. ➢ How students develop their adaptation, survival skills, and coping mechanisms over time- resilience, agency, autonomy, etc.
Visual Participatory Method (Visual Storytelling)	➢ Navigating students' experiences ➢ Drawing a scheme – visualising transition ➢ Readjust or create a model of transition that involves layers of depth (eco-systems) and trends of change (psychological phases for adaptation to change) ➢ Have something in hand to reflect on during the interview ➢ A method of participant involvement in the process of analysis: let participants analyse their own data and help the researcher make sense of it.

Despite the solid theoretical ground of this methodology, the actual use of triangulated methods in fieldwork could raise several issues and challenges. It is important to explore risks attributed to this approach. The limitation in using qualitative methods in research revolves around *transferability, faithfulness, and dependability* instead of *reliability and validity* (Sandelowski, 1986; Holloway, 2003; Tobin and Begley, 2004). Kitto *et al. (2008) have suggested a six criteria model for quality assessment (i) clarification and justification, (ii) procedural rigor, (iii) sample representativeness, (iv) interpretative rigor, (v) reflexive and evaluative rigor and (vi) transferability/ generalisability.*

Central amongst these rationales, triangulation opens new insights into both research application and analysis. Johnson et al.'s (2007) study has explored one of the major issues of research methods, conceptualisation and definition. The vagueness in the definitions available to date around the use of multiple methods and methodologies is often criticised to be based on loose controversial arguments. The weakness of definition is not necessarily a threat to the concept itself. Research methods have a tradition of being subject to false interpretation or misunderstanding, even by experts in the field. Researchers like Creswell and Tashakkori (2007) entertained the idea that conceptualisations and definitions evolve and continue to be

re-constructed and refined. I believe this would allow the exploration of different aspects, traits, and attributes of the method itself, leaving a room for flexibility and creativity. Guba (1990) affirms that “having the term not cast in stone is intellectually useful and allows for reshaping understandings" (p. 17). This is also emphasised by Noble and Smith (2015) who addressed the criticism towards qualitative research for lacking transparency and scientific rigour and rebuked the non-inclusive standards of judgment that disregard the nature of research. Therefore, the authors have outlined alternative terminology to assess the credibility of qualitative research.

The table below draws on Noble and Smith’s (2015) conceptual framework, demonstrating the way this research quality has been assessed. In this table, adhering to their conceptual underpinnings, I explain how each criterion has been approached in this study, through both the transitional lens of ‘standard terminology’ and ‘alternative terminology’. Whilst accentuating the conceptual shift between the two, the third column addresses the way the methodological and analytical processes of this study has achieved each credibility value.

Table 9. *Credibility criteria between quantitative and qualitative research- How is it achieved in this research study?*

Standard terminology	***Alternative terminology***	***Strategies for meeting credibility criteria (used in this research)***
Validity Whether the findings reflect the actual data.	***Truth value*** Recognition of multiple realities, acknowledging the existence of methodological bias, and assuring the representativeness of participants’ perspectives.	***Reflexivity and reflection*** ➢ Used a reflective journal an aide-memoire (Minichiello et al., 1990).
Reliability Consideration of the analytical procedures, method(s) biases in influencing the findings.	***Consistency*** Akin to the term ‘trustworthiness’, whereby the researcher keeps a ‘decision-trail’ that outlines their decisions clearly during the research process, allowing other researchers to arrive at a similar finding. ***Neutrality (or confirmability)***	***Representativeness/ Audibility of the findings*** ➢ Audio recorded interviews allow data revision, double checking meanings and voice tones.

	This level precedes meeting the truth value, consistency, and applicability. It revolves around the engagement of the researcher with the participants and builds on the understanding that methodological choices reflect the researchers' philosophical position, thus differentiating the researcher's accounts from the participants'.	➢ Data triangulation: (Survey results/cards activity themes/ visual method themes/ focus group interview themes). ➢ Rich verbatim extracts ➢ Cards activity allowed participants to highlight main themes. ➢ Visual method use has provided a rich understanding of students' perspectives and visualisation of their experiences. ➢ Achieving auditability through a transparent and clear description of the methodological process/ decisions. ➢ Participants' participation in the analytical process: a consensus reached through double checking themes throughout the three methods.
Generalisability The transferability and applicability of the findings to other research contexts.	***Applicability*** The consideration as to whether the results can be met in other contexts, settings, or with other researchers.	➢ ***Application of findings to other contexts*** Providing rich context details, sufficient depth to the findings to enable transferability and applicability to other research settings.

Ethical considerations

This researcher complies with the ethics codes of the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the guidelines recommended by the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011). An ethical approval for this research study was granted by the University of Nottingham Ethics Committee. This section walks the reader through the reflexive research process that highlights ethical principles, challenges, and considerations.

Ethical considerations from this lens are viewed as a set of procedures, strategies, norms, and behaviours that demonstrate good research conduct (Birch and Miller, 2002). The 'good conduct' assumption, however, has been questioned over the years in qualitative research to explore gaps in ethical principles (Orb, Eisenhauer, and Wynaden, 2001; Kelly et al., 2012). Scholars, academics, and practitioners working on research ethics boards have conventionally agreed that there is no area of research that is immune of ethical challenges (McCarthy, 1998; Haggerty, 2004). Towards mitigating ethical dilemmas, research ethics boards (REBs) offer a practical guide for the assessment of outlined ethics procedures such as confidentiality, transparency, rights, dignity, and informed consent protocols.

Informed consent acts as an integral part of the research process. It is of the utmost importance that a detailed report is provided to inform the participants of the nature and the outcome of the study. This involves elaboration on the nature and objective of the research, the researcher's agenda, the funding body of this research, the way the data will be used, shared, and published (Orb, Eisenhauer and Wynaden, 2001). A copy of the consent letter and the consent form are attached in ***Appendix 3 and 4***. Whilst informed consent stresses the researcher's responsibility for ensuring clarity of terms, researchers are still required to respond to any calls for an ongoing negotiation of the terms of agreement (Oakley, 1994; Woodgate, Tennent and Zurba, 2017).

Anonymity of participants is a core value in research ethics (Coolican, 1990; Creswell, 2013; Roberts 2015). This act involves obscuring all personal identifcation that might be associated with the participants (Walford, 2005). Both anonymisation and pseudonymisation are highly recommended by the EU's General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). Article 4 in GDPR defines the process of pseudonymisation as the processing of personal data in such a manner

that the personal data can no longer be attributed to a specific data subject without the use of additional information, provided that such additional information is kept separately and is subject to technical and organisational measures to ensure that the personal data are not attributed to an identified or identifiable natural person".

Nevertheless, ethical dilemmas evolve around this process. There are routes to prevent the identifiability of participants through *thick description* in an *in-depth analysis*. Allen and Wiles (2016) cited Vidich and Bensman (1968) as an example of invasion of participants' privacy which might be a typical issue in in-depth ethnographic studies, calling, however, for a moderate balance of analysis and description to protect involved individuals. Besides that, a major concern that struck me as a researcher, during my data collection, arose around how the anonymisation process could challenge the principal of anonymity. Initally, from a research point of view, the process of pseudonymisation was supposed to blur the identity of the real participant. Hence, creating another 'unreal' identity. Pseudonymity, therefore, in the process of hiding the research subject's identity, allows for creating a different identity of them. Some researchers (e.g., Tolich, 2010) argue that it is a superficial type of confidentiality. Allen and Wiles (2016) explain further that the superficial type tends to be masking identities only from general consumers of the research, but not from those who know the participant or their online personae well" (p. 151). Whilst the pseudonymisation approach is methodologically accepted, key elements of reality could be lost in the process if pseudonyms fall outside the participant's real identities and fail to reflect their socio-cultural backgrounds. To be put simply, the implications this has are reflected in creating assumptions about what the "given" name(s) would hold in terms of background information, like age, economic status, ethnicity, gender, etc. Nevertheless, and with that level of awareness about its pro and cons, the pseudonymity in this study has achieved the anonymity of the research participants and maintained clear boundaries around their distinct socio-cultural and academic identities.

Statements of confidentiality and anonymity were documented, mentioned, and explained to participants at different phases of the research. By the end of the interview session, the pseudonymisation process was discussed with participants. Informants chose their preferred pseudonyms which are used in the findings chapter.

Navigating ethical challenges- beyond protocol

Several scholars have challenged the limiting assumptions of ethical procedures and protocols in dealing with moral research issues in sensitive research topics (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004; Rossman and Rallis, 2010). Novel research has rebuked the detachment of the researcher from research participants (knowledge holders). Aspiring to evaluate and change protocols, richer approaches sought instructiveness and stressed coproduction of knowledge (Aluwihare-Samaranayake, 2012; Åkerström and Brunnberg, 2013).

Retrospectively, there was an imperative need for ethical considerations "to move from being purely procedural toward being relational" (Woodgate, Tennent and Zurba, 2017, p.3). Relational ethics became an object of growing interest introducing a paradigm shift in treating ethical dilemmas. Moving beyond traditional research ethical boards (REB) protocols, new provisions and approaches like 'everyday ethics' have been advocated to be employed in social research practice (Austin, 2007; Rossman and Rallis, 2010). The term is defined as "moments that demand moral considerations and ethical choices that arise as a part of a researcher's daily practice" (Rossman and Rallis, 2010, p. 379). Furthermore, these insights have provided an inclusive framework that allowed the researcher to engage more intuitively with participants. At the heart of this process sits the careful consideration of positionality of both the researcher and the student participants. This affective relational approach has opened a vision of active participation and engagement in the research process where participants are approached as active agents instead of research subjects.

Empirical observations of the positionality of participants identify them as the 'valuable other' (Mayall, 2002) or as the 'More Knowledgeable Other' (MKO) as described in Vygotsky's (1978) social development theory, given their ability to contribute to meaning creation and address gaps and tensions of functional systems (social-cultural-economic-political). Stemming from this view, theoretical elaborations advocated "asymmetric relationships" based on trust and respect (Åkerström and Brunnberg, 2013, p.531). Evidently, the participatory process implies a considerable time investment from student participants. As knowledge holders, students express their personal truths and provide an insider perspective on actions, situations, and experiences. Considering the 'sensitive' nature of research in social sciences, ethical issues can prove difficult to navigate, consequently, this is a need for extending beyond protocols to embrace ethical negotiations. This could revolve around engagement in sensitive

topics or disclosure of personal stories (Woodgate, Edwards and Ripat, 2012; Åkerström and Brunnberg, 2013).

The 'elephant in the room' topics

Both researchers and participants are often sceptical about addressing "the elephant in the room" topics or any disclosure of sensitive issues. These are often referred to in the research practice as "micro-ethical issues" (Holland et al., 2014). Such ethical dilemmas often address the participant's vulnerability and risk of disclosure within a power dynamic (Harris et al., 2015). This could be the researcher-knowledge holder (participant) relationship or else knowledge holder- other powers (titles or affiliations). Holland et al. (2014) explained that "it could be argued that although much ethical regulation is ostensibly focused on the rights of the participant, the participant-as-actor could be said to be missing from much ethical regulation because the focus is on what the researcher may or may not do" (p. 425). Existing at the outset of research, the implicit trust that the researcher provides to participants can clear ethical tensions and give participants a sense of empowerment and safety to voice their concerns. Key to this, clarity, and transparency is the negotiation of power (Woodgate and Leach, 2010). This could be illustrated by check-in with the participant if they are comfortable to be recorded, are able to elaborate on ideas, share anecdotes, or on rare occasions would want to quit the interview. Harris et al., (2015) argued that "power differentials are always bad, that honesty, openness and understanding should be at the heart of the research process (as opposed to mystery and purposeful concealment)" (p. 586).

Whilst the formal protocol of consent and anonymity highlights the elements of risk and confidentiality, it often shies away from the aspect of accountability and draws constraints on the way information is shared and skews their visions to abide to tailored questions (Kustatcher, 2014; Woodgate and Zubra, 2017). Nonetheless, in relational and mindful ethics, the researcher is aware of physical and psychological safety, moral distress, or any vulnerabilities. This prevails in Aluwihare-Samaranayake's (2012) notion of embracing "critical consciousness stance" where a connection is established with the participant ensuring the elements of "respect of persons, justice, non-maleficence, and beneficence" (p. 67). The reflexive research practice has advocated a mindful inclusive approach where ethical responsibilities are fulfilled. In the light of this framework, sustaining a mindful presence in research practice involves "(i) openness and curiosity, (ii) empathy and acceptance, (iii) receptive attention and deep listening,

(iv) relational engagement, (v) flexibility and reflexivity, (vi) self-awareness and self-regulation, and (vii) being non-judgmental and respectful" (Woodgate and Zubra, 2017, p.8).

Taken together, the methodological and ontological framework of this study has sought to create a comfortable space where different versions of realities can be explored. This process has taken into consideration that 'each stage of the research process may be a potential source of ethical problems" (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007, p1). Following the fundamental traits of ethical protocols, I have incorporated both standard and mindful approaches that put-on guard and monitor my own biases, predispositions, and assumptions, employ critical reflection, and preserve space and freedom for knowledge holders' narratives and multi-dimensional realities.

Summary

This chapter has walked the reader through the current research ontological and epistemological positions, detailed the employed research methods, and discussed its methodological relevance to the researched phenomenon. The complexity of the multi-scale dynamics of transition experiences from an eco-systemic perspective has informed this study's view on using methodological pluralism for depth and breadth of phenomenon discovery. The critical–ideological perspective has been integral in shaping the methodology of this thesis. For a self-conscious research design, reflexivity throughout the research journey has ensured crystallising the researcher-participants positionalities, perspectives, allowed a space for knowledge co-production and analytical interpretations, and highlighted possible biases, pre-suppositions, or any relational ethical challenges. Operating in a synthetic methodical manner has established a solid ground to achieve overarching research constructs such as authenticity, quality, rigor, and trustworthiness.

Chapter 5: Findings

Eco-systemic Framings of International Students' Transition to HE

Overview and structure

This chapter collates the reported findings of this research study collected from international students. First and foremost, this chapter begins by acknowledging its limited physical space and ability to contain a thorough exploration of all the angles of the students' transition experience to a greater depth. Given the multi-dimensionality of this phenomenon, the researcher attempted insightfully to provide a 'wholistic' view on the significant findings of this research study. Viewed from a bioecological perspective, this multi-folded chapter aims to explore the complex nexus between the transitioning student and their surrounding micro and macro systems.

Recognising the complexity of the human experience through the lens of Bronfenbrenner's human developmental theory, this chapter is divided into layers. ***Part I*** attests to the intra- and inter-personal factors that shape the two variables of 'resource' and 'demand' in students and addresses the way they contribute to the quality of their transition. ***Part II*** hosts students' anecdotes and perceptions of the environmental influences, shedding light on the role of functional support systems in their transition into HE – from both social and academic support agents. Furthermore, ***Part III*** permits the analysis to run further to explore the socio-cultural and institutional impacts on the international student's transition experience. Aligning with a critical pragmatic vision of this research, the macro-level of the ecological system theory accentuates the power relations between the individual and their inhibited macro-system. In the light of this argument, this outer ring of the bio-ecological transition aims to journey through students' perceptions of the ideological choices, policy behaviours, and positionalities (whether socio-cultural or institutional) of the governing system. Functioning outside the bio-ecological framework, ***Part IV*** encompasses a thin volume of visual data demonstrating a symbolic conception of the 'transition experience' through a depiction of students' individual experiences.

Advocating against analytical uniformity, data triangulation has been effective when necessary to highlight striking commonalities, contradictions, or polarities within the range of the dataset across the used methods (survey, focus groups, visual method).

Part I: The student at the core of the system

Background Diversities at the Bio/ individual level (Demand/ Resource)

The role of personal resource in the adaptation process - A dichotomous view

Resources as a positive factor

Students come with their own packages of knowledge and experiences. Along their different and divergent life journeys, they pack a set of perquisites, values, and convictions from previous systems they have experienced in the past, whether academic or cultural. The sum of skills developed along the way is what constructs a set of - what I refer to in this chapter as - *resources*. Together, the power of personal resources is remarkable in the new experience, acting as a shield against arising challenges. Participants have reflected on the role of their 'personal and academic resources' in the adaptation process to the new context.

The source of data in this section

It is highly important to clarify that this section, exclusively, relied on data from two sources given their compatibility in orientation and argument. The joint responses are from two data instruments: 1) the focus group interviews (Total=5 groups), and 2) the open-ended questions survey (n=130/ n=480). To make a distinction in the reporting, the respondents from the survey would be referred to as (P1, P2, etc), whereas the ones from the focus groups are identified with their pseudonyms. The data collected during the two phases appear to flow in the same direction by reporting the weight of prior HE education experience abroad in the adaptation to the UK system for postgraduate international students. With that consideration, it was a reasonable decision to combine both sets of data in this theme under one section to avoid redundancy in the research narrative.

Experience as a privilege/ bonus

'I have been there'

Capturing students' views on their own adaptation processes reveals gaps and differences across their experiences. Those gaps are essentially based on their own profile, background,

and previous experiences that helped develop their adaptation skills throughout time. Experience in higher education contexts has been highlighted as a major strength for about 1/3 of the interviewed international students. Participants in this respect have expressed that they were aware of the privilege they have had throughout their experience in similar academic and cultural contexts, which might not be necessarily the case for their peers.

On a marginal note, it is important to highlight that knowledge comes as a result of the struggles encountered in the past experience. A participant, who has had their undergraduate degree from a UK University, reflected:

> "*I think I have had my share of struggle beforehand in my last experience, now I don't get to go through it all over again. To be honest, although it was not easy, I gained a lot of knowledge throughout it that helped me a great deal in this experience doing my Masters!"* (Greg, G3).

The challenge element in the experience, therefore, is not inevitable; it is rather a phase that is located on the timeline of the student's journey. Some international students tend to experience it earlier than others, if they have pursued HE studies abroad. This was apparent in many of the other responses related to the topic of 'prior experience at HE overseas'. Another response stated:

> "*My previous knowledge helped me settle in once I came back. I was settled because I have gone through that phase before" (Arif, G4).*

In the next sections, I break out the pieces of this acquired '*knowledge'* as I journey through the data informing the aspects of this familiarity that regulates the transition phase of this category of international students.

Awareness and preparedness

Familiarity with socio-cultural system- acquired cultural skills

Students who have previously undergone the socio-cultural transition seem to have a better understanding of the social and cultural norms outside their home countries. As this may vary from one to another, participants in this study have spoken about the positive role their previous cultural experiences had in their adaptation process to the British context. At the core of these

conversations lies the phrase of '*being familiar with'* a set of cultural aspects, such as cultural behaviours, social norms, rules, and policies. This was reflected in the pattern of responses from both the focus interviews and the survey. This familiarity with the daily lifestyle on a micro and macro level, some mentioned, fed their socio-cultural competence, and thus helped them to adjust to the cultural context in a quick and efficient manner. As an illustration of this point, a participant stated:

> *"Before coming to the UK for this course, I have moved away from home previously for my undergraduate program. I don't feel I am completely a stranger here to rebuild a social life as in getting to know how people think or function. I feel I grew confidence with the knowledge I have gained about the country, the culture, the city rules and policies. I am now familiar with many of these aspects." (P32)*

The familiarity with those cultural aspects seems to have a powerful reflection on the new experience. In other words, the generated social skills from the past experience make the international student immune to major challenges in the cultural adaptation process for their current transition. That immunity might not be absolute, yet the past experience can still act as a reference to the new arising challenges. Each of these aspects is further highlighted in the next sections.

On the other hand, other insights from the responses have looked at the way their participation in interactive processes within the social context has improved over time. About that aspect, some of the comments have been made around the familiarity with the cultural profile in a multi-cultural context like the university. Several respondents referred to the way their previous experience abroad involved dealing with individuals from different cultural backgrounds. Another advantage was building social networks with people from diverse backgrounds. The exposure to that cultural diversity in their previous university, many assumed, helped them in their socialisation process within a similar context. Below are few examples:

"In my previous university I have had lots of exchange students. Having that phase with them in the past made me aware of many things about other local or international students. So, I think I am good at making friends with them in terms of respecting their different cultures." (P36)

"That past experience has helped me to develop social skills that allow me now to speak with people from different backgrounds in a different language from mine." (P37)

The statements above emphasised the association between cultural awareness and the process of social adjustment. Prior knowledge appears to be an essential element to establish that level of familiarity with the multi-cultural profile of the university context. Eventually, both socialising and making friends become easier tasks once this knowledge is utilised. Consequently, prominent changes occur to the individual's awareness about their context. In the next sections, I tend to explore, in the light of the data from this study, levels of that cultural awareness which students gain from their past experiences. The respondents, in the previous examples, made reference to the way their past social experiences contributed to developing their socio-cultural as well as communication skills. Phrases like *"cultural familiarity"* and *"cultural awareness*" were often used in the responses in the survey. Interestingly, those terms did not necessarily refer to one specific aspect of 'culture'. Social behaviours, actions, and interactions are usually elements that happen on a smaller scale, yet they also can be bound to certain social rules and norms, that are themselves dictated by a set of policies. This dimension of the data has opened the door for considering other socio-cultural elements sitting on the top of the hierarchy.

Familiarity with the cultural environment- governing systems

Furthermore, this familiarity expands beyond the micro social context to other exo levels of the operating cultural system, such as city rules, policies, and regulations. If looked at from another perspective, knowledge of the surrounding environment does not pertain only to social norms governing communication and interactions between students, but also to the surrounding structural systems. In this respect, participants highlighted how they already had awareness of their surrounding environment. This was illustrated in the case of transport and shopping. One of them elaborated:

"I think for me, it was being already familiar with the infrastructural networks, train, buses, transport, how and where to get access to services or things, even finding key places for necessary shopping. I think knowing these is really critical for any student. So, I am glad I have already had in mind how these function from my first time being here." (Greg, G3)

Rooted in the process of adaptation to the social context is the knowledge about how the surrounding systems operate. By systems, in this case, I refer to the sum of daily services that are considered necessary for individual citizens. Students expressed that familiarity with the nature of transport available and the awareness about how it functions was essential to their adjustment. Besides transport, another key service for students is shopping for essentials. As foreign students, being aware of the variety of shopping locations as well as prices was also helpful as it played a major role in facilitating the process. Hence, they appear to be more relaxed. A participant commented:

"(…) basically, that knowledge I built had an impact on my personal life, it made it much easier. Like, I didn't have to find like "oh which store I have to go to get what I need" because I already knew'. (Sarah, G2).

The level of comfort that experienced students abroad have had appears to be a missing element for other new overseas students. For the latter, the hustle of navigating their surroundings seemed to be a stage that the former category of international students had already overcome. The lack of that experience implies a gap in knowledge, which in itself explains the categorisation argument of international students (ISs) in the first place. Speaking of that gap, Liam (G1) recalls the early stages of his past experience.

"I remember in my first time as an undergraduate student here, I have spent way too much money simply because I did go to the nearest shops which were expensive. I did not know which shops are available around me that I can actually get same products but with affordable price. "

According to this comment, the gap of knowledge about the environment tends to affect the financial state of students as well. As far as the student budget is concerned, some of them assumed they could have managed to save money if they had known better about the facilities

provided. As reflected in the arguments, attaining that level of awareness also tends to be part of the process of acculturation and adjustment. This has likewise been emphasised in other comments. For instance:

> '*I understand this was part of us as foreign students getting to know how the system works here. But it gets easier when you have enough information and knowledge about it' (Liam, G1).*

As mentioned earlier, there is a reciprocal effect between being culturally aware and the process of cultural adjustment. In sum, the discussion about prior experience abroad is often conflated with social and cultural competence. The term cultural competence, which was often used in the responses, embraces key concepts like cultural knowledge, cross-cultural knowledge, or what is referred to in some literature works as cultural consciousness (Azzopardi and McNeill, 2016). Participants of this category believe that their cultural competence was achieved in the past, which helped mitigate the risk of facing socio-cultural challenges in their transition.

Familiarity with the educational system

The foregoing analysis revealed that one of the principal elements of the concept of '*familiarity'* with the British context- as a whole- is the one related to the academic context. Prior to delving into this, it is important to highlight the aspects of familiarity related to the academic system, i.e., a set of rules, structures, and norms.

What do participants mean by the educational system?

In presenting the findings associated with the view in question, it is important to acknowledge that students referred to the 'educational system' in different ways. This brought to the researcher's attention that students held a dichotomous vision about the term itself. On one hand, they referred to the practical sense of '*educational parameters'* as in academic tasks, required academic skills, and academic expectations from the institution. On the other hand, the second view entailed a more abstract sense; this was apparent when discussing the cognitive skills required, the end goals of the academic institution, its expectations and the governing ideology of the system as a whole. The participants, nevertheless, did not necessarily use these two visions joint together in their responses, as some of the views accentuated one aspect over the other.

Echoing students' views, and as already indicated in previously stated findings, the gap of preparedness seems to be highly associated with knowledge about the educational system. Many PG international students expressed that their hesitation and discomfort was due to their 'unfamiliarity' with the academic system. Hayley (G2) stated:

> "*Despite coming here, I still feel unprepared because the UK educational system is so different from what I experienced before [he continues] I mean the rationale behind the academic system as a whole, the teaching and learning goals, the academic expectations, the norms and so on!"*.

Joanna (G3) added:

> *"I had my education in my country. The experience is so much different from this one (abroad). I am struggling to cope with the educational system and the academic culture still."*

In a broader sense, both extracts of responses illustrate the abstract conception of the system as a set of norms, as per the use of the phrases 'academic culture' and 'academic expectations'. Hazel (G3) explained.

> *'I think the difference is in the autonomous learning, the teaching methods in class, the exams nature and so on'*.

There is also reference to other theoretical dimensions of 'the educational/ academic culture' occurring at a micro level, such as the teaching and learning goals. An even closer lens to the practical sense of the properties of the educational system has been highlighted in the aforementioned comment that is reduced to exams and classroom teaching methods.

HE experiences abroad- *A space for personal development (resource)*

"Knows better"

Taken together, the most striking results in this section revolve around the distance between 'not knowing' and 'knowing' about the British educational system. A preview of this premise

is probably demonstrated in earlier stages of analysis; however, little in the sections above spoke to the way 'HE experiences abroad' contribute to the individual skills development for international students. Students' inputs and comments informed how this gap of knowledge has been bridged due to their previous experiences in foreign educational systems (similar to the UK). In the section to follow, I trace the multiple skills experienced students believe have been fostered along the phase of their prior transition.

Fostering academic skills

As highlighted throughout the earlier sections, the familiarity with and awareness of the system also appear to unfold some developmental processes of the individual skills. The data reveals that this is mainly actualised in the academic context. Students believe that their previous academic experience has reinforced their cognitive and practical academic skills. Taking this into account and given the little space that bears this dimension of analysis, the following examples, extracted from the survey, illustrate a snapshot of students' brief comments about the experienced areas of skills development.

Source of data- *survey*	*"I have gained lab- experience, I learned how to function within it, and this largely impacted how confident I am now about it" (P3)* *"Both my writing and speaking have been improved beside my reflective style." (P10)* *"I got to understand the notion of critical thinking and apply it to my assignment, which was really effective." (P6)*

A subsequent number of responses have stressed that gaining academic skills is a key outcome of their past experiences. It should be noted that the use of '*Academic skills'* as a term in the responses is not to be peculiar to a singular type of skill — since the notion consists of different categories and sub-categories of skills students gather along the process. To break that down, participating international students have expressed that their academic experience abroad helped in producing skills that fit in different contexts and domains, whether communication skills, such as reading and writing, or more cognitive skills such as 'critical thinking', reflective style, and analytical perception. Participants made a reference to their intellectual functioning,

where their cognitive potential widens to gain understanding as well as adopt reflective styles in approaching course content. Thus, this yielded improvement in the academic achievement, as noted by the comments above. Furthermore, the obtained academic skill set had a more practical orientation (P3)—they appeared to be translated in course-specific trainings, or self-familiarising with certain academic environments (like laboratories) and grasping how to operate within its conditions. The preceding views demonstrate that students find themselves able to produce effective academic work having those pre-requisites and acquired skills.

Research skills

Another dimension of the 'academic skills' was captured by the data; a few examples were provided in the box below for illustration. Stated frequently yet succinctly, research skills are considered as key outcomes of prior academic experience. A number of areas were identified in the responses pattern around establishing familiarity with research methodology, methods, and approaches. This was equally echoed in other comments about fostering practical research skills such as reviewing and previewing research evidence. Besides nourishing their skills, the responses also indicated that the students found this acquired knowledge from previous academic trainings and courses (abroad) to be reflected in their academic practice in the present time. An interviewee argued that his past experience had opened his research horizons. Eliciting this view, Greg (G3) stated:

> *"My past knowledge about research, I learned it all from my previous course in the UK, and I came to understand how research functions, what is required, how to interpret data and so on. I think I often come back to this knowledge now in this course, it was very enlightening and helpful."*

Along the same argument of having past practices as a reference to current ones, students like Greg expressed that they found refuge in their pre-requisites. Others, on the other hand, focused on how this prior knowledge about conducting research had supported their research-specific tasks like essay and/ or academic paper writing. Overall, this small section mainly sheds light on international students' views on the reciprocal connection between the individual's background knowledge and the adjustment to the 'new' academic context. The 'novelty' of the context, in this respect, is negotiable since some students viewed it as a continuity of their first transition experience instead. Greg added:

'I feel I am not new to the research module; I am just building on top of my knowledge; it is a continuous learning process.'

Source of data- *survey*	**Research skills**
	"*I have gained research skills, the rationale behind the methods of research." (P33)* *"It helped me in understanding the methodological methods and facilitated to a great extent the process of writing papers and assignments." (P12)* *"The skills of previewing and reviewing research" (P 17)* *"Academically, I know how to write an essay, how to start a research project, how to report it, etc." (P. 20)*

Autonomous learning

Parallel to the aforementioned skills, students' responses have indicated that they grew after their past experience abroad as independent learners. The pathways of independent learning and agency may intersect. Interestingly, the participants explained that they learnt autonomous learning strategies; using phrases like 'self-study, 'individual work', and 'independent learning' (see the box below for illustration). These reoccurring expressions refer to a student-centred learning style that international students get accustomed to during their experience in a western academic institution. This point was highlighted by few comments that made a reference to the ideology of the higher education system. In other words, the skill of 'independent learning' is perceived as a required skill in a UK university. Thus, the skill is believed to be constructed through early practices in their respective universities abroad. Nevertheless, this might not be the case with all experienced international students abroad. To avoid the generalisation of this point, an outstanding comment by P49 has referred to the way negligence from previous institutions has created and trained the skill of autonomous learning. As much as the motives behind taking an independent learning style vary, a common point of the stated argument was that they were all linked to their previous experiences.

	Autonomy and independent learning
Source of data- survey	*"Independent study/ Independent learning" (P44)* *"I have learnt that the nature of higher education requires more reliance on the individual work." (P46)* *"Self- study; the limited attention given to students back in the country where I studied my undergraduate has helped me cope with the demanding nature of the MSc in the UK". (P49)*

The predominant effect of 'experience' is reflected in skills. The very process of integration in the past seems to create multi-levelled skills. It can be argued that the frequency of developing one over the other varies from one student to another, given the varied likelihood of mentioning skills joint together in the responses. The regulation process occurring in the past has created adaptations to the areas linked to content, context, and skills. International students with prior experience abroad seem to have developed various skills. This, in fact, raises the question whether the nature of their 'transition' to higher education is different from that of other international students. Following the path of this question leads to other sub-questions like: *what are the properties that make that transition different? And does that imply the need to acknowledge varieties in the international student body?*

One international student body- diverse transitions

Adopting this lens of analysis, a deeper look at the data in hand shows varieties of profiles and resources within the body of international students. The purpose of this specific analytical road in this study is to break free from the misconception of identifying or treating 'international students' in research as one solid group. Whereas the use of 'international students' as a reference to one group suggests its distinctive character from the other type of 'non-international students', it might imply a degree of uniformity of experiences. The risk of the latter is created by static conceptions that occur in theory but are rarely reflected in practice.

With a major emphasis on this point, acknowledging the differences at the individual and community level of international students was an essential step prior to delving into the analysis. This recognition was more reinforced by the raw data from this study during the analysis phase. With this in mind, the pattern provided by the data in this study has created a vision where students are categorised according to their *resources.* Furthermore, it is worth understanding at this stage how 'prior experience' reflects on international students (IS's) personal skills and development during their transition.

How does prior experience reflect on the IS's interpersonal skills?

Building interpersonal strengths

Throughout their past experiences in higher education abroad, students have been accumulating a wealth of information about 'life as an international student'. This experience has had both an academically as well as a culturally contextualised nature. According to the findings, in both dimensions, this knowledge has helped accelerate the self-regulation process during their adaptation. In other words, the students discussed the way they were adapting old behaviours to new situations, which had frequently efficient results. One stated:

> *"I discovered many things previously, so now I would not repeat my mistakes, I simply apply what worked well for me in the past"* (Arif, G4).

Old behaviours act as a reference in similar situations. Nonetheless, the non-static nature of 'experience' over time enables learning along the process. Thus, the cycle of learning enables development, as in the case of 'learning from past mistakes', which was illustrated in the previous comment. Those skills and competencies were generated from the past yet appear to be reflected in current practices in socio-cultural as well as academic settings. In this section, international students of this category express how their pre-requisites have contributed to their inter-personal skills, and thus to their adaptation process.

Openness

Standing as a distinctive feature of the cultural experience, 'openness' was one of the most frequently used concepts by student respondents when it came to expressing the positive effect of prior experience on the self. The term itself has had multiple uses in the data, and thus

implied different meanings. I have selected a few examples from the data extracts to display this difference in perspective.

Openness to 'cultural diversity'

Within the pattern of data, the concept of 'openness' was associated with other concepts like awareness, and acceptance. Each of these interwoven aspects can be the cause of the other(s). I will not reflect at length on the cause-and-effect relationship between those concepts; however, in this section I simply attempt to mark their interconnection in the responses. One of the respondents clearly utilised this chain of concepts when referring to the pros of their past experiences abroad. They stated:

> *"I completed my undergraduate at a university in New York, U.S.A. Living in a country thousands of miles away from home - where the culture is so different - has made me more open, accepting, and sociable." (P15- from Survey)*

> '*I think it all starts when you start embracing that difference in the culture, it makes you open to that change of perspective and more connected to people when you understand their differences.'* (Hannah, G2)

These statements echo the belief that exposure to and integration into a 'different culture' has resulted in positive improvements in interpersonal traits. Reflected on
these responses, embracing the 'other' culture would be the gate to both awareness and openness. Besides their interpersonal skills, social reciprocity appears to be an evident consequence of cultural openness. This connects back to the role those cultural considerations play in improving as well as personalising social interactions. In other words, students with a cultural experience believe that they were made aware of the 'other' culture(s), mindsets, or ideologies and thus they succeeded in building that social reciprocity after embracing it. In whichever order they are utilised, those concepts appear to have a triangular relationship within the responses from the participants' point of view.

Openness can also stand on the opposite side of 'being preserved' according to some students. This phrase was used in one the comments when discussing '*the state of wellbeing'* after the acculturation process that occurred in the past:

> *"I feel I am not preserved or tied up to one vision as a person, I am now aware of different lifestyles and open to other cultures. It feels liberating!"* (Ethan, G2)

This vision of *'openness'* is concentrated on *'awareness'*. The latter refers to widening the horizons of knowledge at the socio-cultural level. Within that statement, there was the idea of leaving behind previous mindsets (where the student was reserved to one vision) and the embracing of another 'open' mindset. Breaking the patterns of stability that featured in the past reflects on the individual's emotions and behaviours. 'Liberating' was the term used to express the experience in this case. Interestingly, there was an emphasis on the aspect of freedom from more 'preserved' or static vision in the process. This also implies another level of transition, which is intrinsic, from one state of mind/being to another.

Openness to 'change'

Another fundamental dimension of openness, in the data, was the one responding to *change*. To explain this further, students' responses have introduced the two notions of variability and adaptability to the environment. Slightly different from previous arguments, this one emphasises the role of past experience in the functioning process of adaptation. In this point precisely, the students claimed that they became capable of having an adaptive response to varying conditions, which also suggests that their adaptation process to new contexts was accelerated in a timely fashion. A key response example:

> *'I think the experience has made me more open to change, I can adapt quickly to new situations, the thing I suffered from in the past when I was new, completely lost at times.'* (Greg, G3)

Openness to change, therefore, is viewed as a direct consequence of previous experience. In this case, Greg believed that having had an experience in the UK as an undergraduate affected his nature of being, as he referred to himself as 'open to change', and thus being adaptable to upcoming changes in his environment. This was a shared vision with other respondents, like Arif G4, who commented:

> "*I became more flexible I guess- to changes happening around me, especially leaving things that you take for granted in the past and simply be open to experience completely new things unpredictably*".

According to Arif, flexibility to environmental changes is conceived within the experience of letting go of the past; with that comes embracing new patterns of life. The two actions appear to happen simultaneously during the transition. The statement also suggests that the trait of 'openness' plays a role potentially in perceiving unforeseen or 'unpredictable' situations in the new experience which entails having adaptability skills.

Emotional resilience

The individual's affective state and skills can also be powerfully affected by prior experiences. This argument was reinforced by the students' reported comments in this study. Captivating evidence has highlighted the notion of building resilience upon previous adjustment processes. One repeated perspective was that the skill of resilience is born from experiencing an academic environment that feeds on a competitive educational system. The students viewed their previous system's values as the triggering reason behind their hard work, commitment, and resilience. Harris (G5) illustrated:

> "*I studied at the university of XY and there was a level of competition overall within the university that allowed working hard and constantly pushed us for it. It allowed us to be able to compete and be resilient to changes, and also to learn how to thrive elsewhere".*

A similar view was stated:

> "*The competitive environment and rigorous methods of studies in my previous university have helped me cope up with all the academic pressures in my current stay at this university".* (Aakriti, G4)

Both views have linked the educational system's values to their individual behaviours as students in the past, and thus to its reflection on their present skills and behaviours. Another argument was more particularly focused on personal financial conditions. Greg (G3) noted:

"*As most students were under scholarships in my college when I was doing my A levels, we had to work harder to maintain our GPA in order to maintain our scholarships. This experience has taught me how to be determined and to manage to cope under new conditions."*

The motives differ in this example as they are more related to how the programme funding situation has implied tenacious willingness to complete the course. This view also has joined the others in highlighting the gains of the experience, or in other words, the personal developmental outcomes, which were in this case revolving around coping strategies. Overall, all the aforementioned examples have intersected in echoing the way those international students have matured throughout their experiences into more determined resilient students. This dimension adds a psychological substance to the individual's skills.

	Building resilience through prior experience
Source of data- ***survey***	*"I gained maturity through time and changed the way I deal with problems." (P50)* *"My university prepared me for the academic challenges and provided me with different opportunities to work on different projects - like as organizer etc, I grew my confidence and resilience through it." (P52)* *"To gain confidence within myself, learn from others from different backgrounds and different ways of thinking." (P 48)*

Time management

Besides stress management, the other pattern that emerged throughout the analysis pinpointed time management. Strongly connected to previous findings, this aspect sheds light on the students' comments on their practical organisational skills. The respondents recognised the acquisition of skills process that occurred in their previous experiences. Interestingly, the skill of time management does not stand solely as it also seems to contribute to the student's cognitive and psychological development. Reading through students' expressions, it was clear that the concept of 'time management' itself has had multiple references and interpretations. To state a few, one of the examples has referred to it as the ability to establish 'balance' in their

lives. This is by drawing a line between 'work', 'academic studies', and 'social life'. Within the same vein of argument, another one has highlighted the dimension of skill that entails the personal ability of managing academic workload yet maintaining a room for social interactions. Another layer of responses has noted how the process was reflected on their inter-personal skills, i.e., discipline and commitment to tasks in specific time frames. What seems to join time management and performance was the aspect of self- confidence in regulating the time allowed to certain tasks. Participants also viewed time management as a coping strategy since it was born from obstacles faced in previous experiences (see P 23). Taking control over time also seems to be mirrored in the psychological state as the same example shows. The respondent believed that his time management skill would prevent escalating the tension- 'I do not let it overwhelm me'- as they limit the impact on their wellbeing.

Time management and organisation

"*It helped me settle into the university lifestyle quicker and I knew how to balance my work and studies and social life." (P52)*
"I already knew what university was like, so I knew how to manage my time and what the best ways for me to study were." (P.54)
"Helped in managing the workload without it interfering in my socialisation time, which boosted my confidence" (P39)
Time management was a great challenge in the past, but now after that phase I have more control over my time and I do not let it overwhelm me.' (P 23)

Source of data- ***survey***

Based on the data stated above, management skills seem to be thoroughly enhanced and trained during previous experiences. Those skills came as an inevitable outcome of familiarity as there seems to be a strong correlation between the two aspects in the data. Reflecting on the students' experience in a more holistic sense, the web of developmental processes and outcomes that have been highlighted thus far are a) academic skills like research skills, and autonomous learning; b) social and cultural skills like communication skills and intercultural awareness;

and c) interpersonal skills, like confidence, openness, time management, and emotional resilience.

Hosted within the notion of 'experience', skills seem to be employed by international students as coping mechanisms in reoccurring situations. At this point, there comes a hypothesis that suggest that adjustment issues occur if students cannot relate to the new situation and as a result start addressing them as 'challenges'. With a link to previous discussions, those challenges might occur less for international students with an experience abroad. Either that or they are still occurring as they are replicated in a similar environment, in which case, students treat them as 'manageable' since they have developed resilience to the tension/pressure that comes with them. It might be explained that those experiences are reoccurring experiences, not new ones. Dwelling on familiarity, beyond interpersonal skills, it seems to touch all aspects of the student's life. This is illustrated in one of the participants' views on the way they have been influenced by the university lifestyle.

> *"I got used to university lifestyle, having different lectures, interacting with different cultures, having the first taste of real responsibilities in terms of studies, being more organised."* (P6)

Resource and Integration

A reverse look at the analysis permits viewing the role that the individual's resource elements have played in shaping the interactions with the micro systems in the academic and social contexts. In a reductionist sense, it is important to look at each of the existing background elements pertaining to the individual international student- for instance background education and developmental skills (referred to here as *resources*). Endorsing this view, the researcher is looking at background resources as shapers of the individual student, as well as distinctive features that allow the understanding of what the student 'has' or 'lacks' in terms of skills (based on their experiences) in order to decipher their current behaviours during their current transition to this level of higher education. Nevertheless, understanding connections between the individual and their surroundings lies at the heart of comprehending the data offered in this study. There appears to be a dual interaction between the self (student knowledge) and their academic and social environments (on micro levels).

Referring to previous arguments, the infusion of information from prior educational systems contributes to the bank of knowledge as well as the skill development process of individual international students. The adopted skills and ways of being sit at the heart of what 'experience abroad' could offer to international students. As mentioned above, the familiarity with and awareness of the surroundings on a micro level (academic context-classroom, social contexts) allows improvement in academic performance and effective participation in culturally communicative activities. On a marginal note, the repeatedly mentioned term of 'familiarity' is thoughtfully used from the data as an aspect that is deeply engaged by international students with an experience abroad. In this generative analytical process, prior experience abroad acts as a step forward on the ladder of personal, social, and academic development.

Managing the gap of knowledge

As the concept of 'personal resources' has been discussed earlier, it sheds light on a positive perception of privileges and gaps. In the analysis, it is employed to capture opinions that fall within the same frame of definition. Introduced to a new system, the international student experiences 'difference' in rules, roles, and policies, all of which require 'functioning resources', or skills. The earlier sections have thoroughly discussed the sum of academic, social, and interpersonal skills experienced international students have reported. Nevertheless, employing the toolkit of skills acquired from the past, some interviewees note, was not very practical in a 'different' educational system.

Previous experience as a 'negative' factor: understanding the gap of resources between the past and the present

As much as it could be a shield, personal resource elements also present themselves in an opposite way, hindering the individual's progress and growth. The participants have brought to the discussion the properties of their 'resources', 'previous knowledge', and 'learned behaviours'. Throughout the analysis, it was brought to the researcher's attention the dichotomous view of prior knowledge around the context of higher education. As much as it seems to give access to a 'similar experience' in a 'replicated' HE context, it could drive away from that preconceived reality of the experience if it lacks the element of 'similarity' in context. Put differently, international students explained that their resources and skills were only effective if they (skills) were compatible with familiar situations and challenges. On the other

hand, other participants who have not had ‘an experience of HE abroad’ felt that their type and quality of resources were not valid in the new social and academic context. The gap in resources, therefore, pertains to the distance between their former experience (in home country) and the current one (in a foreign context).

To put those insights in context, selected examples are presented as an illustrative output from the focus group interviews. One of the angles of those views has demonstrated a gap in academic skills between the past and the current experience. Most of the comments seemed to be oriented specifically towards the building process of research skills and its implication on current challenges. Commenting on their academic challenges, two interviewees from G4 claimed that it was the implications of the academic instruction in the past that presented the occurring challenges at the present academic context. For instance, while highlighting the difference in the nature of coursework between the present (UK educational system) and the past one (home country), Robina (G4) succinctly stated:

> *“It is about the coursework structure… We didn't have coursework structure, I had assignments [she continued] and assignments are basically- you get a topic/ question and search.”*

Within the same vein of the argument Robina (G4) presented, Marwa G4 referred to the teaching priorities in her old educational system. She commented about what was ‘important to learn’ in research subjects in her home country:

> *“You don't even have a structure to follow in conducting research. It is not like ‘Literature review, data, research process, and conclusion’ for instance. We did not have that kind of structure back home. My university teachers were not concerned about the structure; they just wanted you to give the necessary information.”*

Research, therefore, particularly for Robina and Marwa, seems like a straightforward process of giving information about a given subject. The process, on the other hand, was intentionally neglected. It is difficult, however, to grasp if they were happy with the ‘different’ teaching values and approaches or not. Therefore, in the following question, I asked what their feeling about it was. In both of their follow-up answers, they refereed to their gap of knowledge. Robina (G4) explained:

> *'I do like this approach [referring to the current one in the British system]. It is more organised and clearer. But it is just difficult to adapt when you have no knowledge about it.'*

Marwa (G4) also shared the same view, where she stated:

> *'I agree with* Robina (G4)*, this one has more accurate steps. My point is not to criticise any of the approaches, but simply to say that we learned differently for a long time, and the shift is challenging'.*

While both interviewees expressed a preference for the British teaching approach to research, they emphasised the challenge that came with the transition from the old to the new system.

New system, new educational values, new skills

Dwelling on the transition challenge, old patterns of teaching and learning have implications for the current learning process for international students. Within the narrative of the interviews, the students made a reference to several subject areas where they experienced unaccustomed ways of learning. In a close-up view, we discussed the topic of 'academic assignments' in the current educational system as an example. Participants, like Robina (G4), expressed that they were confronted with the challenge of adapting to a different vision of academic task. This has particularly to do with the task requirements before its completion, as well as in the later stages of its assessment. About her coursework, Robina (G4) explained:

> *"I think here in the UK, the hardest part is focusing on everything. You have to focus on how many people's works you read, how much content you are giving in the coursework, and on top of that, referencing matters. So, sometimes it is very frustrating that the teachers look at the way you reference and not actually how much effort you put into giving data for the actual coursework."*

Referencing was a repeatedly dwelled upon subject in the interviews, as a key requirement of their academic tasks, assignments, coursework, and exams. Beyond its importance, what seems critical to the interviewed international students was the 'unusual' emphasis on it as a parameter of success in the academic work. Throughout the conversations, interviewees from different focus groups noted that the technique of referencing was not taken as a measure in the

assessment of the academic work, neither was it considered as a reflection of its knowledge value in their past educational systems.

> *"Yeah, it did seem like a big deal here! which is unusual for me, for us!!! I mean, for me, referencing was just giving answers about the links of information. Because of the factor that back in India, they consider it as innate statement. Because it is a student's work, it is supposed to be taken from a set of resources, and they know that it is not perfect, and that is okay. But they do not want to see your referencing style. They would ask " have you understood the concept/s?". You take it for granted that you have referenced. They want to see do you have the knowledge that you need. That's it. That's all they seek."* (Robina, G4)

Taken as an example, adhering to a specific style of referencing did not seem a priority for Robina (G4) in her past academic experience. According to her, 'referencing' is a miniscule element of the academic work that does not need to determine its quality. Teachers, on the other hand, apply those norms through their assessment of the research piece where they lay the focus on one element rather than the other. In the previous academic system, Robina explained, that there was hardly any emphasis on the style and layout but rather on the process of absorbing new knowledge. In other words, the parameters of layout and referencing were minimised since they were only thought of as means to an end to achieve the learning target.

Speaking of the knowledge value in westernised research methods, other participants argued against the overrated importance given to the extended literature reviews required in research subjects. Marwa G4 recalls a remark that appeared repeatedly on her research assignments. She explained:

> "[…] *the feedback always has one point that your literature review is very short. My paper was about something else, then why should I write 5,000 words for a literature review, which is already somebody else's work."*

Just like Robina and Marwa, other participants, who shared a similar view, also explained that they failed to see the relevance of precisely following a dictated set of measures and steps in conducting and reporting research. Nevertheless, there was a window of investigating where that gap of understanding of a given assessment measure like 'referencing style' is coming from. Unsurprisingly, the misunderstanding is found to be tightly connected to their gap of

knowledge about those specific parameters — about research steps in this case. At the heart of this argument, the absence of a common ground of understanding, knowledge, and values between the previous academic system and the current one contributes to widening the gap even further. Ahmad (G4) recalled:

> "*I don't know whether all of you had a chance to learn about referencing*. **[**addressing other participants in the group**]** *I did not!! because while I was in medical school, I did not have to submit a single coursework in my lab, all the exams that I had were underwritten examination or bios […] I had to submit only one piece of course work. That was a good thing; and I was only involved in a part of data collection, but I was not involved in the whole research procedure. It was something new to me! So, I feel I did not quite get to the point where I see the value of referencing or exploring its styles. "*

Those international students who are unaccustomed to the British educational system struggle to realise the relevancy of concepts, techniques, and/ or methods. Ahmad (G4), for instance, expressed that he did not have the chance to explore the method(s) of referencing in his past academic experience, and therefore, failed to understand its value and importance. There is an underlying assumption behind those previously stated arguments in the interviews that past experiences do not usually bring about emphasis on all concepts since they vary according to the course nature as well as the type of academic tasks with respect to various field subjects (lab work, assignments, coursework, etc). Often, ISs explain that they have had to be introduced to newer- or more varied- versions of methods and concepts. Those modest or major differences at the level of academic knowledge would be directly reflected at the level of functioning and performance. This argument was mirrored in the statements above where the participants addressed the lack of information about certain concepts in their perquisites and the way it affected their academic performance currently in the new system. For this sample of international students, that type of knowledge might have been framed, defined, explained, exercised, and/ or evaluated differently in the past.

Learning from scratch

Following up on the same line of thought, the new academic experience has also brought about change in the academic mindset and behaviours. As much as that gap of knowledge was a source of error, it made the students open to new discoveries in the new educational system.

Nevertheless, a few international students emphasised the challenge they faced during the adaptation process. For most, that change was radical. *'Learning from scratch'* was the hardest task students from a different academic background have to endure. The participants associated that 'learning' mainly with certain concepts, techniques, and methods which are deemed necessary to the understanding of the academic task. In an anecdotal reflection, Ahmad (G4) recalled the difficulty of the process:

> *"I had to learn from scratch; like I did not even have the slightest idea how to reference something. I had to learn it the hard way. In one piece of a given course work, I was penalized for referencing because I forgot to check it.... sometimes you take the help of the software. Somehow, I used to check it manually, and it was a mess which I could not realize. I submitted it, but when my feedback came, it was devastating."*

The point was well taken by other participants in the group who shared similar opinions and anecdotes. In commenting on the previous statement, Marwa (G4) noted:

> *"So, the major difficulty that I felt after coming here to the UK is that the education, I mean the knowledge, the methods, the teaching even [pauses] everything that I had before coming here doesn't match."*

It seems that Marwa's point, however, has stepped outside the reductionist thoughts and arguments shared about the variations in task priorities, achievement, and assessment. It rather summarised how 'education', which she used as an umbrella term for the knowledge acquired, and the leaning/ teaching, has been different. Whilst that argument has overshadowed probably more angles on a larger scale, others have come back to emphasise the consequences of that mismatch between their educational background and the current educational system. Parallel to previous thoughts, time taken to grasp the concepts and methods is deducted from the time of practicing, and therefore affecting the quality of the outcome (in exams and assignments).

> *'I feel I am always falling behind in my progress. No matter how much I take time to learn and understand, there is not much time to practice. […] Soon, I have exams, I have assignments, course- works, and projects that I need to give my best performance at. The issue is that other home students would not probably*

take half the time I take to learn something because they know of it previously.'
(Robina, G5)

The lack of knowledge that is manifested in academic subjects is not only projected on performance but is also a reason for a delayed academic progress. Compared to other peers, Robina (G4) felt that she would consume more time to catch up with 'the learning' process of the course content as well as to build and reinforce the required skills. It was, therefore, generally acknowledged by those who participated in this focus group that having a background education in the UK was considered a privilege that is missing for international students like Robina, Aakriti, Marwa, and Ahmad. On a further note, time seemed like a major factor in the equation of learning. Most participants pointed out that they had a short timeline to be learning new concepts, given their short course. This point is further discussed in the next section.

Racing time- 'The clock is ticking'

Following up on previous thoughts, university students at a postgraduate taught level – the sample in this study- are bound to narrow time frames, experiencing only one year as a chance to graduate and fulfil a degree. International students, specifically, experience a different layer of challenge, which is the gap between their personal resources and the system's expectations. AP2 noted:

'We have just one academic year, that's all. [Pauses] So, I feel the clock is ticking for me to adapt to the system of education, even to the culture and rules in here.'

Another AP4 commented:

'*The problem is that we are not aware of those skills or level of performance required from us as students because we don't have that knowledge from the past, and at the present time we have a limited time to adapt to everything quickly.'*

Consistent with previously presented arguments, having former experience and exposure to a similar educational and/or cultural context appears to minimise time pressure on students during their adaptation process.

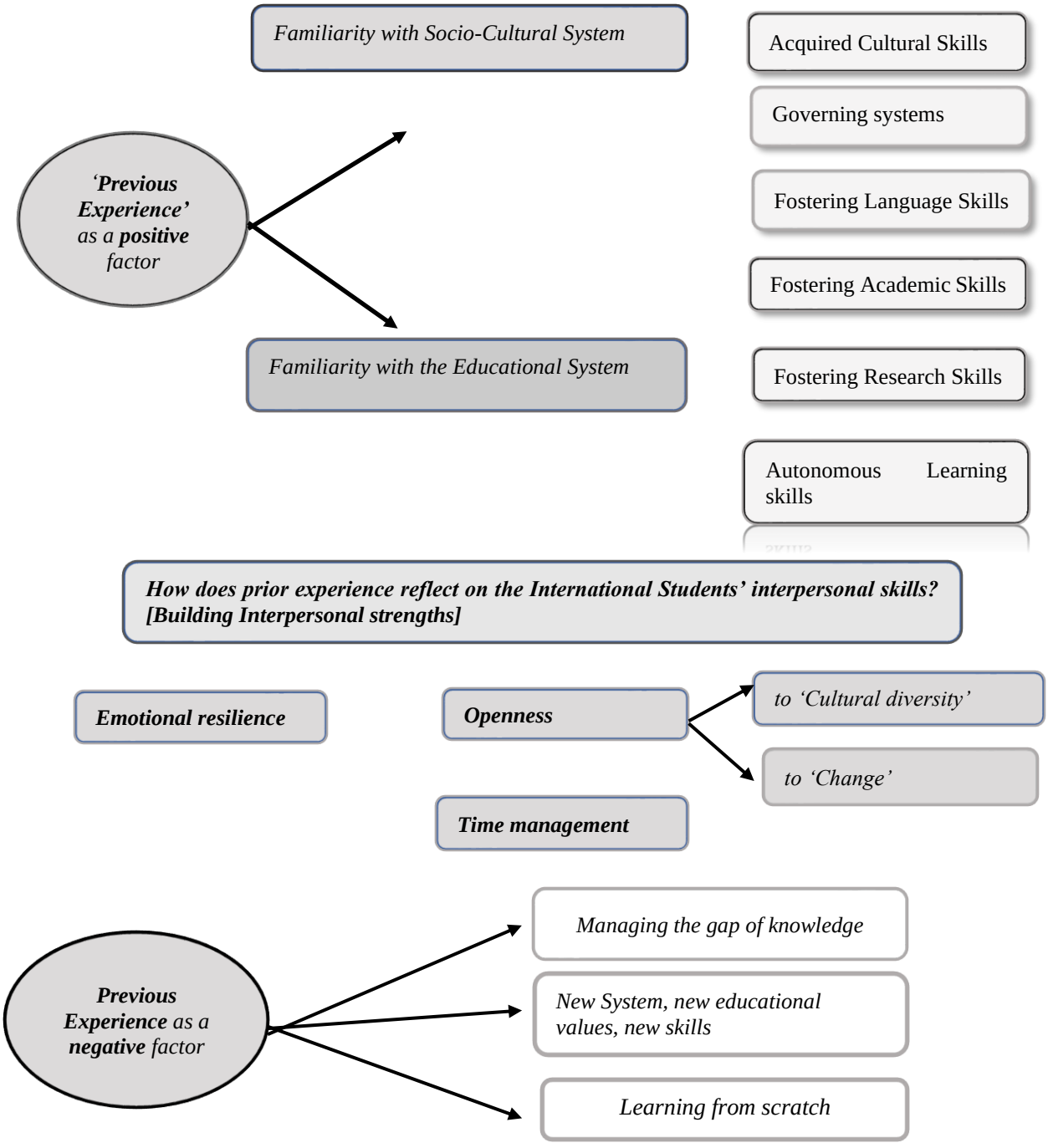


Figure 7. *The role of previous experience (resource) in the adaptation process*

Part I Summary

The building of a world around those new convictions is perhaps the most challenging task for international students. Above and beyond the direct positive effects of 'prior experience' on students, past experiences may also implant certain academic/ social ideologies, behaviours, and beliefs in individuals, thus making the adaptation process to new and different educational and social systems more challenging. Those patterns of knowledge are geared into pre-existing systems that were responsible for the student's personal development in the past. In consequence, there appears to be a larger gap of knowledge, skills, and resources between the past and the present context. The gap is not solely limited to the academic experience but also extends to the socio-cultural as well as the inter-personal level of experience. This is also manifested in the students' perceptions of the system's properties like the teaching methods, curriculum, course content, etc. Considering the shift, the international student clearly experiences internal changes to different notions, concepts, and values.

In this section of the analysis, the data has argued that the process is integrative of the self by highlighting the role of former experience in the adaptation process. Nonetheless, the impact of past experiences extends even beyond the boundaries of the time frame where it occurred in the past to the present experience. Time, on the other hand, appears to be a crucial element in determining the effectiveness of the adaptation process. Nevertheless, psychological outcomes are yielded from the pressure created by implying an urge in adaptation, or acceleration in the process. Amid the variety of input from the findings around the notion of self, resources, and demands, other mechanisms and systems seem to play a vital role in facilitating the transition for international students. Other questions are yet to be answered on whether those aspects of the self and background packages are taken into consideration in those mechanisms of support. In the next section, I attempt to shed light on a different angle of the findings where practices of support are analysed from the participants' point of view.

Part II: Role of Support systems [Micro and Meso level (s)]

The preceding findings demonstrated how transition to higher education is influenced by variations in individual's resources that are embedded in the international student profile. Nevertheless, the data thus far told us nothing about whether/ to what extent/ and how the support systems at a micro and macro level react to those background variations to enhance the academic, social, and psychological functioning for international students. In this section, data showed us that transition sequences tend to appear at two levels of analysis: macro scale (socio-cultural and educational ideologies), and micro scale, where those ideologies and norms are practised in direct contact with social and academic environments, in which the role of support systems is more emphasised. The analysis of this dimension of the data is set forth in a series of questions to highlight the explorative pattern of the study. This room of analysis precisely explores students' perceptions of the support systems around them and their impact on their transition experience to the UK.

Psycho-social support

Family support

A pervasive theme in this study was that of family support. Family is presumably located at the closest circle in terms of direct relationships with the student. Throughout the discussions carried out in the interviews, students referred to the way their families were the primary source of their support whilst at university. This support is spread out through different stages of their transition into the new academic as well as the social context. Nevertheless, this support is also variable from one individual to another in type, level, quality, and frequency. Therefore, it was important to ask: *what are the forms of family support that are identified by the data? How do the participants demonstrate that variance? And what is the level of its impact on the student's individual experience abroad?*

Family's educational background- a personal resource or a support bonus?

"Parents' academic background makes a huge difference in terms of support"

Remarkably, the reference to family's educational background was apparent early on the data collection, within the very first two focus interviews. Given the unstructured nature of the interviews, students were found to associate the type and quality of their families' support to

them with their level of understanding of their academic and social experiences at university. According to most, this bonus comes as a result of having intellectual parent(s), gaining exposure to western cultures through the ability to travel abroad, and thus developing socio-cultural skills. This awareness varies considerably among the body of international students participating in this study. In order to portray this dimension and increase our understanding of the role of these background factors in social support, I will be displaying data extracts of views from students who fall within different categories, 3rd, 2nd, and 1st generation graduate students.

Creating categories for explaining patterns of social triggers and behaviours is a fundamental process in this analytical lens. Before delving into the data presentation, it is important to clarify that the categorisation, in this section, is influenced by a literature review perspective where a) a third-generation student— is one whose both parents and grandparents attended university, b) a first-generation student— is one whose at least one parent attended university, and c) a second-generation student— is one whose both parents and grandparents did not attend university. Starting off with the third-generation students, higher levels of education were attained by family members in the past. One of the participants from this category elaborated:

> *"I think my case is a little different from some students, my parents both studied abroad, and both have PhDs, even my grandparents have been to university. I have only master's degree, and my sister will start a master. My mother sometimes asks, " do you want to do a PhD?", and I am like "No". Because I work, and they both also worked and then went to study abroad, so they saved some money and then went out. So, I did that the same way, and my company also sponsor me of my tuition fee in this Master. I will go back to work for them. Right now, I didn't plan for a PhD. But overall, I like the ambitious vision they have, which definitely comes from experience. I would say it is a more efficient type of support but again it comes with a price, since they have high expectations always to be successful as they were." (Sarah G2)*

Sarah (G2) explained how her parents' academic background is mirrored on her individual experience, goals, and ambitions. That level of support stems from awareness of the 'international student's experience', given the fact that both her parents were international students in the past. Nevertheless, she also stated that there are possible costs for having this

type of support, which are manifested in “high expectations”. In this regard, Sarah (G2) stated that there are certain obligations imposed towards satisfying her family by maintaining a level of achievement and success. Meeting those expectations was also embedded within that type of support for 3rd generation students like Sarah. On the same line of that cause-and-effect relationship, second generation students have had a different experience. Maggie (G3) was one of the participants who belonged to this category. About her support experience, she recalls:

> *“I also have family support. My parents are graduated from university, but they have never studied abroad and never learned English before. At their age, in China, they didn't study English. But they know English is important to me especially in this global age. So, they totally supported me to come to UK to chase my goals.”*

Family background appears to be a repeatedly emphasised factor for all the students interviewed as part of this study. Compared to Sarah’s parents, Maggie’s parents might not have a thorough understanding of the international experience, nor did they have English language proficiency. However, they still appreciate the value of education abroad for their daughter. The support level may vary slightly, yet both seemed satisfied with it. Marwa (G4), a first-generation student, noted:

> *“One of my parents went to university actually. Apart from supporting me in my formal studies, I think the relationship between us is of trust, independence, freedom. This makes me less anxious, well supported, and satisfied.”*

Depicted by this statement, the traits of the parents-student relationship strengthen the ties of support, creating a more relaxed and fulfilling context for the individual student. Grounded in this belief, according to the narrative, students whose parents have had a prior higher education experience seemed to be well-supported. Nevertheless, the intensity of demand and expectations may vary from 3rd generation to 2nd generation students.

Support from family does not always stem from a level of awareness of the academic context or the implications of the transition process. The family profile is not necessarily characterised with that knowledge privilege. Within the interviews, first generation students, on the other hand, have maintained that the support they have from their families is merely moral and emotional. Data has shown that the social support that this category of students has from their

parents is relatively minimal compared to the two other ones. By minimal, I refer to its quality. First-generation students reported that their parents' support does not have the ability to expand beyond the zone of moral support. This is further elaborated by the data extract below:

> "*In my family, my parents have never been to school and never had any formal education. We, my siblings, and I, are the first generation to go to school. It was step by step, I completed my undergrad, I chose to start a job and after that, I wanted to get know more about my field, so I have started this course. But in terms of my family background, I had no inspiration [laughs]. I mean if one of my parents was a doctor, they would want me to be a doctor. But it was not my case."* (Omran, G3)

About his parents' comprehension of the challenges he faces, Ahmad (G4) said:

> *"To an extent …I think my family understood that it is hard. Maybe they don't understand on a daily basis what I go through, but they're very supportive no matter what. When I told my mom that I did badly in an exam and then I was feeling very upset. She said even if you fail, it's okay, I just want you to be okay, your mental health is more important than anything else."*

Given this perspective, parents who have not had higher education tend to have a blurry vision of the academic expectations of their children and therefore fail to offer efficient practical support and advice in this respect. Prayer, affirmation and motivational statements, validation of self-worth, and reassurance are all forms of moral support that students receive from their families despite their limited knowledge of the academic underpinning of their studies. Interestingly, a level of awareness is also demonstrated in the case of Ahmad (G4) about the importance of mental health and wellbeing. Although the statements above are selected to act as a sample, the reoccurrence of the narrative across different focus groups has helped the researcher identify certain properties of this type of social support. Stepping outside the frame, first generation students seem to have more oriented affective support from their parents.

An important angle that the data has shown was the variance of support provided and how it was associated with background factors. The data has highlighted the nexus between the family educational background and the social support provided. Yet, this also extends to other social support sources, such as other people in the micro level. With this lens of analysis, the

participants who belong to the last-mentioned category- 1st generation graduate students- demonstrated lack of social support in other domains, rather than the moral and affective ones. This gap, we hypothesise, might be filled with an alternative source of support. Teasing out this idea, we have asked, *if not parents, then whom?* To which, almost all concerned students have answered: friends.

Friends' support

Loose Social Attachments: Establishing different forms of support

'I substitute my parents with my friends'

Another key form of support that is identified through this study is friends' support. When attempting to understand the role of friends in the students' lives, the participants tended to highlight the flaws of family-individual student's support. Those flaws and gaps are not, however, intentional, since the participants have related them to legitimate factors. For instance, the mutual understanding is deemed to be unattainable, for some, due to the generational gap between parents and individual students. This view has been shared with most of the participants. In seeking comfort to overcome an unpleasant situation, reaching out to friends seems to be an alternative support mechanism to family. Ethan (G2) for instance, noted that he often vented out to friends about his insecurities, challenges, and negative emotions, gaining in exchange their emotional support.

> *"Friends! they emotionally support me. Besides my family, my friends are a strong source of support. I think it is about being from the same generation, I feel they understand better what I am going through compared to parents."* (Ethan G2)

In the same vein of argument, Greg (G3) referred to the value of communication with friends who have a mutual background and experience. '*Relatable*' was the way he described the type of discourses he exchanges with his friend, as they are both international students and have had a work experience together in the past. Belongingness is another strong factor in this type of friendship as he expressed his satisfaction about the fact that they come from the same country as well as home city, which also reflects a nuance of that relatability and connection. The two experiences - of Greg (G3) and his friend- seem to be aligned as they both intersected in the

past and stretch in parallel paths in the future, given that they are both pursuing a similar degree abroad. This, however, is a type of connection that Greg explained he would not be able to have with his parents. In the statement above, Greg did not explain how this support specifically alternated with his family's support. A simpler reason is that it probably did not, as it might go hand in hand with it. However, he referred to several reasons why his friend's support was both unique and important.

From 'getting' support to 'providing' support (Demand factor): 'Walking the extra mile' – Social responsibilities for adult students

The process of recapturing new forms of living and behaving in the new context is sometimes minimised to making decisions about accommodation, budgeting, or even having to come to terms with the standards of living. Looking beyond those decisions, this section allows a room to investigate reported challenges of adult international students in the focus group interviews. I have taken the chance of gaining insights into a snapshot of the divergent student life challenges and demands of some of the participants from this category. Those challenges are found to revolve around making critical decisions for responsible adult students. This section is entitled as such following one of the statements made by an interviewee in this study:

> "*I feel as mature students with family responsibility, we always have to do more, do those extra efforts; at the end we just embrace the reality that compared to other students we do walk the extra mile to adapt to University life"* (Dalilah, G1)

Dependency for adult students

Dependency and financial sacrifices

Across the board of responses, most of the sacrifices for the interviewees were financial, which take place both before and after arrival in the host country. Financial sacrifices could be applicable to all types of students with different circumstances, yet the concerns reported in this section were highlighted specifically by adult students with family responsibilities across focus groups. As for the first instance, speaking about his motives to join this course abroad, Omran (G3) recalls:

> *"I was interested in this course when I was working. So, I worked for several years before starting this course, which means I had some savings, then I decided to join this course.* ***It is not easy as parent or someone with family responsibility*** *to use that money on my personal career. So, I had to really think it through to make a reasonable decision for something that really matters. So, yeah, it is never easy."*

In his statement, Muhammad refers to the challenge of family responsibility in making the decision of joining a postgraduate course. The thought process behind such a decision reflects how careful considerations are taken to suit other members of the student's family. In other words, joining the course was an investment in himself. Yet, it was one that comes with consequences on his attached family. Echoing a similar view on their financial investment, Hannah (G2) from another focus group noted:

> *"Arriving here takes a lot of efforts. As a family, we paid before coming here and once arrived we paid an extra month of accommodation. It was quite difficult for us (…) I mean for our budget.* ***It was not my life decision, it was ours****".*

Similarly, just like Hannah, Greg (G3) has struggled with finding suitable arrangement with his family, to which, he stated:

> "*(…) the University campus was full. Because I came here with my family, my daughter and wife, so I had to find some something outside the campus. It was still expensive, far from my campus, yet* ***we had to go with that for everybody's sake.****"*

Interestingly, the three statements from different focus groups have addressed the implications of the dependency on - as well as the responsibility for - a family on critical decisions. The point of commonality across these views and experiences was the sense of challenge in choosing what works for everyone. Adult students also appear to embrace 'selflessness', 'thoughtfulness' when it comes to taking those personal decisions that may affect their families' lifestyles. This is illustrated by Greg's (G3) choice to live away from campus. In that sense, he prioritised his family at his own personal expense, 'for everybody's sake' as he stated. The nature of decision making regarding what could be counted as minimal choices - such as accommodation- differs from home to international students, let alone mature international

students, given their life pattern, profile, and background. Therefore, it is interesting to explore this angle from their perspectives.

Juggling different roles

Mature participants with social responsibilities reported that they saw themselves 'juggling many responsibilities'- as one participant noted- which stood in the way of fully enjoying the student experience they came for. Most of them acknowledged the challenge that comes with the multi-tasking first-hand, as well as the sacrifices they had to make given their different circumstances at home. Omran (G2) explained his own situation:

> *"I have a family; my wife and daughter are here. My wife is doing her PhD while I do this master's degree. We go both to university and we must drop her off beforehand. Sometimes she gets sick, and I have to take over her role at home, as well us taking care of our daughter (...). So, it was difficult to manage family responsibilities."*

It seems that unforeseen circumstances, like health conditions, of one member of the family, the partner in this case, have had implications over the other. The load of responsibilities that mature students have tremendously raises the bar of challenge for them, and thus their anxiety levels. 'Managing responsibilities', as Omran (G2) put it was also a challenge echoed by other participants with families. Sustaining a healthy balance between those roles inside and outside home was one of the difficulties encountered by mature students. The quality of the home life appears to have a major effect on the mature student. Besides the unforeseen circumstances that may occur during the academic year, like the case of Muhammad, there are other cases where the accompanying families have other implications on the 'juggling' of roles. Hannah (G2) and Greg (G4) brought to light another challenge which they have both experienced.

> *"Because my husband did not speak English, I had to take care of everything, like I had to go to sign the contracts and so on. And even for him, he was feeling so un-useful. Yeah… he could not do anything (…) but those moments, were very challenging. Actually, they were awful.'* (Hannah G2)

> *"My partner's language is not that good to communicate. So, I have to do things myself, many times. It is not helpful especially when I have other things on my plate like assignments, academic work, or other. I mean of course it adds up to*

the pressure I already have, and mainly it just takes time. But, at the end of the day I have to do it, especially the procedure of childcare." (Greg G4)

Language issues of the accompanying family make it harder for the adult student to leave them without supervision, guidance, or company. This, according to Hannah and Greg, meant that they have had to accompany their partners daily, which adds up more responsibilities and can be time consuming. In expressing the same feelings involved, Hannah addressed the helplessness of her partner being unable to accomplish tasks independently. This is in addition to the emotional pressure on her in having to take over those roles. Similar aspects were also mirrored by Greg's comment about language and communication problems for his partner and their implications on his quality of life, such as multi-tasking.

Effect of responsibility on social adjustment

Time management with family responsibilities - social life as a 'luxury' to mature students

The *'student's life'* is usually a share of experiences occurring between the academic and social contexts. However, mature students' experiences are slightly different from other types of students, in other terms, more challenging. Most of these students have mourned the loss of the luxury of establishing social relationships, friendships, or even embarking on leisure activities as their peers would. Some have expressed that they have little or no time for social life as responsible adults. One of them explained:

"As a married woman, it is still hard for me to manage my time. I have so little time for socializing with people. My time is divided between kids' responsibilities and studies; that's all." (P23, Survey)

Another female participant has echoed a similar argument noting:

"*You know as a mother; I don't have time for socialising, it's all about the academic work, this is university life for me. Then, I would go back home to my family. No time to hang out with people (…) I mean especially when you have kids."* (Dalilah, G1)

There was an apparent sense of guilt that they should fit performing all the roles previously mentioned (student, spouse, and a parent) in their schedule. One key statement was made by one of the female participants, Dalilah (G1), in which she said:

> "*I think at the start I thought of it as a luxury especially when you juggle many things those other students don't (...). Kids are first, family is first, then my studies* ***(quiet pause) (…)*** *well, probably the order varies between these two but one thing for sure is that there is no room for having fun."*

By having fun, Dalilah (G1) explained that she meant *'socialising'*, which she described as *'a luxury'* other students have. Having outlined earlier the process of juggling multiple roles, it is important to note how participants have explained its effect on the quality of their student life. One of them explained:

> *"I think I encountered more difficulties to adjust to the context, the people, the culture around me, especially, being a mother and a student in a foreign country. I have many responsibilities for both my family and my studies."* (P24, Survey)

This participant, as well as others, has highlighted the association between their life responsibilities and the adjustment processes to the new context. As mentioned in her statement, there seems to be a focus on the two roles of 'being a mother', and 'a student in a foreign country' which could indicate several explanations. One interpretation, looking at the narrative structure for instance, would probably lead to identifying the priorities of the roles the participant assigned to herself, considering the order in which they were stated. Another would suggest that exercising those roles, coupled, exhausted the participant's time and thus had her led down the path of facing challenges to adapt to the surrounding environment.

As opposed to previous views, Greg (G3), who is a father and an MSc student, held a positive vision of his multi-tasking experience in that sense. According to him, allowing time for socialisation goes down to having time management skills despite the overload of other responsibilities outside of the student life frame. He explained:

> "*I think despite the other responsibilities I have as a parent, I still managed to live the student life; I managed to have friends, do exercises outside, as well as take care of my family."* (Greg, G3)

Overall, views about the effect of family responsibilities on 'the student social life' varied. Yet, there was a tremendous focus in the data on their negative effects on and implications for the mature student's social networking, social adjustment, and wellbeing.

Effect of responsibility on the academic performance

Hayley (G2), an MA student, who used to take care and is still taking care of her parents back home both by keeping them company and helping them financially, explained how important it was for her to maintain contact with them and how that influenced her academic performance as well as wellbeing.

> *"I take care of my parents and my young brother; I mean I used to live with them, and I also contribute financially. We are not from privileged background; we live also far from the city, so it was difficult to get things done easily before (…) Now, I have a close communication with my parents. Once a week at least, I should communicate with them, so I know how their condition is, and they know my condition as well. So… it affects my mood, and of course it even affects my performance at university." (Hayley, G2)*

As Hayley's quote exemplifies, the weight of family responsibilities - as in her case of taking care of her parents - is carried along from the past to the new experience. That weight bears a set of emotions of caring, worrying, and getting anxious. Comfort and reassurance, on the other hand, are sought and maintained through constant communication with her family. The sum of emotions appears to be fluctuating along the way, with the likelihood of it to be regulated in the process. These sentiments were shared by Arjun (G1), who is married, and a father of two, who said,

> *"I have my family back home; I am in fact married and have two kids. Although I know it is a one-year experience here and I am coming back after, it is not easy to let go of those responsibilities to my wife. I am constantly worried about them… well, same goes for my parents too, I think of them. I mean, I used to support them financially too. So, I guess even that I am physically present here,*

my mind is there (…) I won't lie that knowing they are good helps my mood, but when I am aware of any problems they are facing, I see it… I see it in my mental and health state, my academic performance. Especially for my course, I can't focus much; I do not perform in class or do assignment as good as I would want to. I think it plays a great role because I see it on me!!"

Likewise, Guru's left-behind family duties still haunt him while being here in the UK. This was not only the common point between his and Hayley's (G2) experiences, as there were many. They appeared to have a similar reaction to the way reassurance allows stability of the emotions of anxiety and worrying. There was a sense of guilt in Guru's narrative about not being able to accomplish his social duties towards his family back home. This is illustrated in the way he highlighted how difficult it was to *leave the load of responsibilities to his wife.* Nevertheless, the burden of such responsibilities, even when they are away, is not minimised as it occupies a great deal of their thoughts. As opposed to other mature students who have accompanying family members, students like Hayley (G2) and Arjun (G1) who left their families behind enter a constant stage of predicting, worrying, and feeling guilty about leaving them with less support. As thoroughly summed up by Arjun's (G1) argument, they are *not 'physically present'* with their family, yet '*the mind is there'*. The shift appears to be more towards a mental state, which has other implications than the ones experienced by the first category of mature students.

The stream of thoughts and emotions related to family responsibilities, whether those who are present with the student or those who are left back home, appears to have a direct impact on the academic life. More precisely, both views have argued that the feelings experienced have affected their academic performance, such as assignments and exams, and progress throughout the terms. 'I see it on me', Arjun (G1) emphasising the critical role that those anxieties had on his student life overall. It is important to shed light on the awareness these participants have about the underlying causes that are behind their academic, social, and even mental struggles. This was apparent in their thought process that was reflected in the narrative.

Academic support

In addition to social support, the data has also highlighted another important facet of support. The next section attempts to bring to light other interwoven aspects in the process of support

during the international student's transition to HE in the UK, most of which are related to the academic context. The academic support also varies in nature, from formal organisational support to informal such as peers' support. With this recognition, the data navigates the idea of how supportive the organisational culture at university is towards the international student, and how it, in exchange, reflects on the socio-cultural, academic, psychological, and even economic transition experience.

Hospitality and support

Primarily, the need for support displays itself at different stages of the university experience, especially on arrival. Hospitality is one of the key themes pertaining to the student's first phase of transition. Although universities are educational institutions, they do also hold a responsibility for students' hospitality on arrival. In the interviews, the participants shared anecdotes about their experiences on arrival. Denoting the lack of guidance and information from the institution as an important element that comes along with the notion of hospitality is the unfamiliarity of newcomers with the cultural, academic, or the geographical context. Robina (G4) and Aakriti (G4) have recalled moments from their arrival day.

> *"Transport that was supposed to be guided by university, has left as at University Park, and we didn't have anybody to escort us, or to tell us where to go. So, we were outside the campus. We didn't even know the campus in behind us. We were carrying three bags, it was very cold, we had to go uphill. We didn't have anybody [she repeated] I think it was about 30 minutes to the place we were supposed to reside at. I was fuming and very upset. There was this girl was literally in tears.!"* (Aakriti, G4)

Negative feelings associated with the experience of arrival seem to be tightly connected to the lack of hospitality. Although this has not been the experience of everyone who took part in the study, the majority expressed milder versions of the intensity of the experience. It is also worth noting that the two participants, taken as an example, experienced an emotional rollercoaster, as they stated above.

Implications / Effect of lack of support on other procedures (meso-system)

Another layer of the findings has revealed that students related those delays to the lack of guidance and information from their host university. The data analysis, then, has further investigated evidence on this aspect, to which it sought to ask; *how does the academic support at a micro level affect external procedures in other systems?*

As a matter of fact, the students stated that the procedures, like visa, or accommodation arrangements were delayed, cancelled, and re-scheduled due to the lack of information provided from the university about their paperwork and required documents. UK immigration rules require a Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies document (CAS) to allow students to enter the UK. Therefore, the CAS document is a key document that validates the admission and acceptance of the international student. Without the CAS number, international students' visa application will be rejected. The participants have spoken at length about how important that document is for overseas students to be able to study at university in the UK. Dalilah (G1) explained.

> *"Oh! the CAS documents! I haven't met one international student who has not suffered before they got appropriate information about it. It is the most important thing ever for us! Without it we are not even confirmed as students, we cannot even say we were accepted, we cannot even start making our arrangements to leave our home country. It is a very stressful thing to be honest."*

The procedures of arrival in the UK for overseas students seem to be defined by immigration policies. The visa procedure is a key step for all the international students that were interviewed in this research. The students who had delayed visa procedures or experienced complications due to the lack of the institution's communication in terms of their CAS argued that they were late for their academic registration, the police registration, and registration with the National Health Service (NHS). I have selected a few examples from each case as evidence of their argument.

Exceeding the deadline of registration, Malik (G5) and Robina (G4) explained the tension they had at that time due to lack of orientation:

> *"It was mess when I arrived, I literally had bags with me, just arrived from the airport straight to registration, I didn't get to breathe. I then was signposted in different directions because I didn't sort out other things like Permit of residence card (BRP) and so on. So, I took a taxi to town to a post office, it was the first time I go to town, I had no clue about anything. If it wasn't for the CAS delay, maybe if I arrived a week earlier, I wouldn't have suffered that much.'* (Malik, G5)

Malik (G5) vented out his frustration about his arrival experience as he had to take on many tasks and sort out several procedures at once. His lack of awareness of the order of those procedures also contributed to that tension. Similarly, those who explained that they arrived late mentioned that they missed the induction week. Below, I present extracts of responses from two interviews where the participants expressed their feelings and experiences. Mostly, they were lost, confused, and un-informed compared to other peers in their course.

> *"I did not make it to the induction, I had to figure out things myself later actually, which was not easy when you don't have ground information." (Otiz, G1)*

> *"Since I missed the orientation week, or induction week as they call it, I was pretty much lost to be honest, it also made reach out to classmates or anyone with so many questions and I discover they knew because they came two weeks before me, so […] yeah it was not the best.' (Dana, G5)*

Accommodation arrangements

Equally, the participants stressed the influence of procedure delays on their accommodation arrangements. Securing an accommodation after arrival is one of the essential arrangements for international students. Through the narrative in the interviews, the students highlighted the importance of sorting out their living situation and the difficulty of the procedure. Nevertheless, they blamed the lack of information about their arrival procedures for the delay, causing them to pay extra fees for granting a place to live in.

> *"I paid extra for the accommodation, actually a month ahead, because I have not received any email saying my CAS would be delayed, and I kept paying for*

rent. The landlord did not care much because it was my problem, but actually it was the university's problem too." (Dalilah, G1)

The findings show that students' financial state was affected by the delay of procedures in terms of overpaying. The 'unprecise' and 'unclear' information has also cost students their time. Students undergo all those preparatory procedures under time pressure. That lack of accurate communication, the participants believe, creates 'chaos' in their schedule, having to live with unpredictability during that particular phase. Sarah (G2) and Hannah (G2) explained:

"Informing us about the processing of our documents will help us a lot with our own schedule, because that would tell us also when to apply for a visa, when to sort out accommodation and so on... Because everything connected to the one document. it just makes my time and arrangements very chaotic and unpredictable." (Hannah, G2)

Overall, this section has mirrored students' perceptions of delays and the way both micro and macro procedures seem to be interconnected. Although each department in which the student is getting registered is separate from the other, any delay in one has an impact on the others. Interestingly in this section of the findings, the participants acknowledged that influence on the chain of procedures. On top of their concerns were the delays that affected their academic registrations and living arrangements.

Support interventions and inclusivity (Exo level of system)

Does the support system accommodate the diversity of students' backgrounds?
(Exploring student experience with support resources)

Hospitality and support in the academic context are also translated in a multitude of induction and welcome programmes. Those university initiatives with the purpose of granting a smooth transition to students are perceived differently from the participants. This section investigates the participants' perceptions of the support mechanisms in place and discusses further expectations, roles, and implications of that type of support on individual students. The introductory nature of induction packages tends to cover different subject areas to students. They tend to vary in length and nature depending on different variables, like the cohort size, class size, course popularity, and even attendance statistics. None of these will be discussed as part of this study in detail. Nevertheless, taken as an example, most of the students also pointed

out the lack of relevance of such a support programme to their different background knowledge and academic practices.

Overlooking the gap of knowledge

A- In Welcome Programmes

'[…] Because the type of information that was given that week, did not address people like us, international students." (One of the participants)

While exploring the variations of programmes available for students, the analysis landed on one of the comments about what Robina referred to as a '*transitioning course'*. NOOC appears, according to her description, to be a platform that provides information to support a smooth transition into a postgraduate taught course. Nevertheless, Robina (G4) demonstrated her dissatisfaction as she referred to the banality of information provided through this course, as it carried no novel input for her as an international student.

> *"[…] There is a transitioning course called NOOC; it is available, and they send you the link. The course has all sorts of things where you can transition into Masters, but it's not helpful for everybody because it's very basic. It is extremely basic, so it doesn't add more details to me as a foreign student. I am left out puzzled." (Robina, G4)*

Those induction programmes, according to most participants, do not necessarily celebrate the notion of diversity in the student body. In this respect, the students reported that the information given through the preparatory sessions did not consider their lack of knowledge. A repeatedly mentioned example in the discussion has shown that this inconsideration was demonstrated in presenting the Moodle platform to students vaguely without referring to its definition, properties, and functionality (what is it? and how does it function?). The participants believed that the academic institutions assumed that all students knew what Moodle was and how it worked and thus ignored that step of clarification. While it is impossible to document all evidential information in this section, I present Aakriti's comment.

> *"Because the type of information that was given that week, did not address people like us, international students, and me who don't have any idea what Moodle is, what a portal is, how to log it." (Aakriti, G4)*

The induction week was not inclusive enough of students' backgrounds, gaps of knowledge, or even their interests. The information provided was neither sensitive nor considerate to students' unfamiliarity with concepts and methods. A repeatedly mentioned example was their introduction for the first time to interactive platforms like Moodle. Unfortunately, the support programme was also perceived by the participants as not accommodating to their needs. As Marwa (G4) expressed, the induction was more focused on 'other issues' whilst students like her had different worries at that time which seemed more social life oriented, such as sorting out their shopping, living conditions, and so on. The intervention programme has overlooked this aspect of the students' life, i.e., the social, and the daily needs.

B- In course content-the teaching and learning

"I don't know where to begin, because I don't even know the basics of this knowledge"
(one of the participants)

The findings have already discussed broad aspects of gaps of knowledge with regards to support interventions. Drifting away from the notion of hospitality and welcomeness in its literal sense, the notion of inclusivity extends beyond initial support interventions that aim to provide broad and general information about the student's life on campus to touch major aspects of the actual learning process. This section concentrates on students' perceptions of their material of learning (course content), the method of information transmission, i.e., the teaching, and the process of learning and grasping the information. Although those mechanisms are interwoven and interconnected, the data highlighted the implications of the background gap of knowledge in each of those levels.

Conceptual gap of knowledge - "new and different knowledge"

The theme of gaps has also been shown to be indirectly related to the practical knowledge acquired, taught, and taken for granted from the students' previous systems of education. That said, this room of analysis will be presenting the participants' opinions about their actual learning process in their respective classes. A frequently repeated view was that the students feel mostly confused, lost, or puzzled with many questions about the content of their courses.

Robina (G4) was one of the participants who spoke at length about how the information provided during the sessions did not speak to students who had no or minimal background knowledge about it. She commented:

> *"I don't know where to begin, because we don't even know the basics, so how would you ask something that is not clear. I am not even sure how to construct my questions because I would not even understand the concept. The problem is that the teacher thinks everyone understands because other home students relate to it, whilst when I look at my friends who are like me international, they all seem confused."* (Robina, G4)

This argument was not only peculiar to Robina's case; surprisingly, this was repeatedly stated across the focus groups interviewed. Understanding the spectrum of this gap of knowledge was one of the aims of the follow-up questions that were asked whenever a similar view was shared. In my attempt of understanding the reasons behind this feeling of confusion, the participants' answers varied while recalling how and why there was a breakdown in that knowledge transmission. The findings have shown that the gap addressed is twofold, both theoretical and practical. This section is presenting evidence from both perspectives.

Starting off with the theoretical gap of knowledge, the students' views varied from having little or no ideas of the taught concepts that were important to their courses. A repeatedly mentioned concept, more of a skill, was 'critical thinking'. Maggie shared her experience working on her coursework. She explained that the teaching instructions referred to the importance of 'thinking critically' in assignments and coursework. Nevertheless, the issue for Maggie seemed to go deeper than application, since she clearly stated that she was clueless about what is the meaning of the concept of 'critical thinking'.

> *"[..]our teacher was asking us to be critical, you need to have critical thinking! Critical thinking is very important, he repeats. But honestly, I have no idea what it's about it. What is Critical Thinking? They just told us to be critical, but I don't know how to be critical. So, I have been very very... confused since I first started my coursework."* (Maggie, G3)

Likewise, similar views mirror Rachel's perception of her gap of knowledge. Aakriti (G4), for instance, referred to her unfamiliarity with the method of 'referencing'. She stated:

> *"I also had no idea what Harvard referencing means. I had no idea what referencing means to start with. How am I supposed to know its importance if I had no background knowledge about it?"*

Many participants from the group of Aakriti shared her view, replying:

> *'Me too, I have had no idea.'* (Robin, G2)

> *'Same, we were not taught these techniques in the past, so we wouldn't know of course"* (Marwa, G2).

Where their confidence in their skills was diminishing, it significantly affected their academic performance and their self-image. Malik (G5) stated:

> *"It does not stop here, it affects the grades we get, the way we feel about ourselves as well, you feel you are far behind those in your class simply because you were taught differently in the past."*

Technical gaps of knowledge

Another layer of lack of knowledge is the technical one. The participants have noted that they have struggled to access digital platforms that hold important course information, like Moodle. Lack of awareness about how to log into a Moodle for instance stands in the way to retrieve course materials. Often, alternative ways are sought to get information about the course. Participants explained how the variety of platforms did not yet solve the problem of attaining information, unless the student had knowledge about how to navigate through these platforms. The following extract is from a focus group where this point was discussed.

> *"I use YouTube since I tried many times opening the Moodle and could not still understand it."* (Ahmad, G4)

> *"I agree with that. The thing is we have got so many resources, like access to Bloomberg, and so many expensive softwares. But the thing is you're not taught how we use them. We never know like how many uses to other resources that we have access to."* (Harris, G5)

Navigating through the spectrum from ill-informed to information overload

The actual process of knowledge construction entails relying on the information provided from the support system at university. Both the quality and the means of information delivery act as key aspects to getting the needed support. This room of analysis involves various aspects of that support. Interestingly, a holistic look at the findings revealed that the students' views about the support they get lay on a continuum, from being uninformed to being overwhelmed with information. Therefore, I attempt to map those seemingly paradoxical, more of variable, views accordingly.

About the campus

The first aspect of focus in terms of support was the information provided about their accommodation. As mentioned in the section of hospitality, having immediate support on arrival was critical to assuring safety for new students, in the absence of which students expressed that they were found helpless and lost. Marwa (G4) argued that the information given on arrival was not useful since they had to look for their accommodation alone without that information in hand. She remarked:

> "*I mean it really should be given beforehand, and that was very necessary. How can we reach our accommodations? How can we know how to register? All the information was given later, after we had to ask and ask for it."*

In a similar vein, another view gave insights into the way the information given by university was perceived. Aakriti (G4) explained:

> *"It was quite overwhelming. It all seems systematic on paper, but it was not systematic for us. Theoretically, we knew everything, we felt we were ready since we had those leaflets and maps, but- in reality- we were lost* [Continues] *so we were all like a bunch of headless chickens just running, not sure who to follow to be honest."*

Students, like Aakriti (G4), complained about the lack of guidance in support. Although the information handed to them via leaflets and maps seemed to be informative enough, on a practical sense, Aakriti felt lost and confused. Other students joined Aakriti to affirm her view.

In other groups, students also brought up the subject of inadequacy of support. Arif (G4) also noted:

> *"[…] It was the whole rush behind, how to catch a hopper, how to reach the other campus? We did not have an ID to catch the bus, so we talk to the driver all the time, no BR, nothing! Feeling informed yet not really!"*

Arif's statement also gained everybody's affirmation. Echoing his concerns, Ahmad (G4) added:

> "[…] *and you feel so helpless because what else can you do? You can't ask. In reality, everyone does not know much beyond what is given to them from the university*".

The participants were explicit in expressing their dissatisfaction with the limitations they had. More than logistical information, this lack of knowledge extends also to other major areas in the student's academic and social life. The next section is exploring the findings within those areas.

About the educational system properties

University expectations

Unfolding other aspects of lack of support, the findings of this study demonstrate that lack of support affects to a large extent the academic performance. The standards of university's expectations seem to be translated in the assessment of the students' academic performance. Following up this stand, the students demonstrated a lack of awareness of their institution's expectations from them. The two extracts below aim to provide a snapshot of evidence from the interview discussions.

> *"[…] To summarise it, I just wanted to ask how can we know what is expected from us as student, forget about the standards answers teachers give us, and many times they don't give us, but really, what is expected from us because we were in another educational system, where the knowledge seem to be different, even the way we perceive it is different [pauses] so, we are lost trying to find answers."*(Racha, G5)

> *"I literally come from the other end of the world, education there is very different. So how would I know what are the educational expectations from me here? Who is responsible to tell me that? And if I don't know, how can I get good grades and be at my best to reflect my university."* (Ahmad, G4)

Within a loop of uncertainty, the students seemed to be continuously asking questions. Many of these questions, if not all, were unanswered. According to Racha (G5) the gap between her previous educational system and the current one left her with many questions revolving around the institutions' expectations, the educational system functioning notions, and the value of the taught knowledge in class. There seems to be an awareness of that gap of knowledge due to their background and recognition of the persistent need for support to adhere to their call for answering those questions. The flow of Ahmad's (G4) questions as he was reflecting on that topic spoke volumes. In his statement, he managed to link the lack of knowledge about the current educational systems' expectations to the upbringing in other systems. These two layers imply having adequate information and support for that transition. Having had little or no support in that respect, the other layer of implication extends to affect the students' academic performance. Noticeably, the three layers function in a synchronic motion, as one feeds the other.

Grading system and assessment

Tightly related to performance is the awareness of the educational system's properties. Given the novelty of their experiences abroad, the participants reflected on the way they aspired to be informed about their course parameters. Grading and assessment were highlighted as a major challenge for students in the former quantitative study. Likewise, it was a repeatedly dwelled upon subject in the interviews. Enquiring this further, the participants claimed that there was also a lack of input about the assessment measures of their academic work. A different structure and values of assessment entail a phase of adaptation. Yet, it also entails another phase prior to that, which is enlightening the students about it. Gaining awareness of the grading system appeared to be of a significant importance to the participants as they vented out their anger and frustration about the lack of clarification.

"Assessment is very unclear, not sure how I am evaluated, because it was not even discussed or negotiated. These should be clear to us before we land here." (Dana, G5)

"We were assessed, but nothing was communicated with us about ***how*** *we were assessed, we had to accept the outcome, the grade without negotiation."* (Robina, G4)

"Before that you come here to the university, they send you some email about how you can go to the website, how you can register. I think that they should send to the international people a guide, about how it's working here, the assessment mainly. And I know that in the Moodle there is like a section, and actually there are all the steps that you need to do for a good assessment. Even that assessment was not precise […] that should be more personalised for people from each department, because as I said it's a general one." (Hazel, G3)

After the phase of the encounter with the curriculum, the participants argued that they had minimal information on the assessment process, parameters, or the eligibility of their courses to fit those standards. A part of the information that support material on platforms like Moodle provides is the university grading system. Following Hazel's claims, lack of adequacy is demonstrated in displaying a general standard version of assessment on the Moodle page. She was not the only one that demanded that information should be shared prior to starting the course. Racha (G5) affirmed:

"[…] Without doubt! The information about curriculum and the structure of grading should be part of a pre-arrival pack sent by email."

Information overload

"Informed but not informed; simply overwhelmed!" **(***A quote of a participant***)**

The findings thus far have shown that the inadequacy of information is manifested in volume and quality. However, following up on the twofold argument, the overload of support information lies on the other end of the spectrum. The participants recounted anecdotes about the way they were drown with information from different sources, on-campus like the university and the accommodation, and even off-campus from the city transport services. Through the data, I aimed to answer the question, ***how does the academic support contribute to this overload?*** The views shared in this study seem to suggest that the institution's policy of providing information falls on either one of two ends: providing none or providing too much. That said, the students also appear to have issues in either case. There was a wealth of data around this aspect; however, given the limitation of this chapter's capacity, I have chosen to present Hannah's and Aakriti's statements.

> *"There were so many things, so many options, it is kind of overwhelming […] The first week, with socials, the events, etc! There are so many things. You know, I was so stressed out by it that I didn't attend any, I stayed at home. If I have known or had a schedule about those before I arrived maybe I would be prepared but it went from 0 to 100, from no information to all at once!!"* (Hannah, G2)

> *"[…] it's a lot to take in on that week of induction. Sometimes you tend to miss out on some things, because you don't actually know what is important and what is not... so you tend to miss out on a lot of things."* (Aakriti, G4)

'Missing out' was a shared feeling, in this case, as well as a clearly stated consequence of being overwhelmed with information. The students also stated that they had all kinds of information, whether essential or non-essential provided to them via booklets, emails, etc. This information covered a multitude of topics, interests, social events, health advice, and the list goes on. Although this might seem to the reader as a positive aspect, it has been perceived differently as it has major consequences on students' psychological wellbeing during their initial phase of transition. One of the students mentioned:

"It looks all good for people who are in their offices printing or sending this information, but it is really not filtered, it is about everything! They should also think of the receiver, can we absorb all of it?" (Roman, G5)

The amount and variety of information shared in a limited time made it difficult, if not impossible to absorb all at once. Support interventions, whether as in programmes like induction or as in information provided, may be a major trigger for distress in students. As reflected in the title of this section, one of the participants noted:

"I feel informed but not informed, I feel simply overwhelmed by it" (Dana, G5).

The participants spoke at length about the irrelevancy of some of the information that was given to them. Whilst many referred to the difficulty of digesting that amount of new knowledge, others focused on the way it affected their mood stability, mental health, and wellbeing. Being dissatisfied with the content, organisation, and amount of information, students were left with even more questions in mind about where the support beyond those leaflets is, or what Harris (G5) referred to as 'wastepaper on advertisement'. While some information is needed to effectively navigate the transition, information overload is perceived as unsatisfactory. In contrast to having no clue before arrival, the set of information after arrival causes more confusion and distress instead of guidance and direction.

Ruptures in the Academic Support system- triggers and reactions

Together with the challenges of adaptation comes the question of approaching support systems for help. Another dimension of the findings has projected the characteristics of that mechanism. Detected by the data, students' challenges exceeded mere information seeking about their allocations in campus or figuring out how to be assessed in their coursework and exams. Below, I list several shortcomings of the support highlighted by a snapshot of students' different experiences.

Lack of accuracy and transparency of information

In line with the arguments discussed above, information about the course properties is deemed essential prior to arrival. Transparency of that information, on the other hand, is even more

critical. Greg shared his experience about having inaccurate information about his course curriculum:

> *"I have a major concern which really makes me angry, probably wanted even to be part of this interview to share it. […] I applied in March. As a student, when you see the modules, you would take decide about this or that University. And that's the only reason I chose this University. So, when I came here, after the induction week, I found out that the modules I was supposed to take, that was advertised on March when I made my application, have totally changed."* (Greg, G3)

Greg expressed his surprise, anger, and frustration after the modules he signed up for were changed without his knowledge. He explained clearly how the course content was a strong factor in the decision making about which university he wanted to attend. This confusion was also shared by other participants. Roman (G5) said:

> *"You know after the induction; we have to select the option of modules to study, then I realised there was no option for our course. It was all compulsory; it was quite strange to happen. I asked other classmates, no one knew they were all compulsory and no option to take on another session."*

The transparency problem here seems to be related to the lack of communication between the university and the student concerning taking actions about their modules.

Frequency of academic support (Out of reach)

From another perspective, we have sought to understand the dynamics of that support by means of referring to the frequency of getting support, the availability, and responsiveness of support agents. Both positive and negative experiences were shared when it came to the topic of approaching the academic staff for help or inquiry. Starting off with the positive ones, a few participants reported that their academic staff (tutors) were providing them with the necessary help occasionally. An important observation to make is that that assistance also varies according to the role of the academic staff. Whilst the academic assistance from the lecturers is very course-content oriented in terms of clarifying information, which was part of their lectures (i.e., course material), the support from a 'personal tutor' seems to be more moral and psychological.

> *"I think of my lecturers are opened when I come to them to request for further explanation, because yeah, sometimes we as foreign students have language barrier, and also the materials are so hard for me, and then when I come to them by an appointment, they are okay with that and they explain, and it's really helpful when they do."* (Hayley, G2)

On the other hand, other students reported that they did not have constant contact with their tutors. Ahmad (G4) said:

> *"I think we only met our tutors once or twice during the whole academic year […] that is very different, because at home (India) you meet your teachers all the time, even if not, your teachers will ask to meet you. You feel they care enough, or I don't know how to say it […] I feel important and cared for in a way."*

Contact with personal tutors seems to vary among participants. However, the majority that stated that they had little, or no contact referred to their former educational systems, where they were more used to interacting with their teachers. '*Being valued'*, '*feeling important", "feeling cared for'* were feelings associated with the act of being contacted by teachers. Those emotional reactions were also mutual across the groups. One of the participants commented on the importance of being contacted by teachers:

> *"It seems that they take it lightly not to be able to reach your teacher, but it is very important, it is in fact why we are here."* (Roman, G5)

Other participants, who have made similar arguments, explained that they were dissatisfied with their current provision. This was highlighted by one of them:

> *'[…] It is actually unfair for us coming all the way here to have minimal time with teachers, limited number of sessions and so on."* (Ahmad, G4)

When discussing this point, the participants seemed to believe that less contact means less learning, which was perceived as 'unfair' as they made sacrifices to travel abroad seeking an education, rather than a degree. Mirrored in their arguments, the limited number of sessions and less contact with teachers reflect the quality of education they are getting.

Inhibitions to 'asking for support'

Time and unavailability

Another angle of availability that the data has highlighted was the limited time of the teaching sessions. Most of the participants argued that the time slots for teaching were only provided for the purpose of 'teaching' about the lecture subject, overlooking the need for interaction with students to answer their course related and general questions. Below are a few statements I chose to present from the focus interviews.

> *"it's quite difficult to ask questions because teachers are limited in time. So, if I want to ask questions, I have to go after work after the lecture and talk to him. But when asked questions, he gives me other questions to me, so it's...more confusing (everyone laughs). It is quite difficult to interact with the lecturers in that case. I ended up losing hope."* (Greg G3)

> *"The first time I came to my tutor. He said you don't have any particular questions; you don't have to see me. [everyone laughs] and as matter of fact, after hearing that, even when I had questions, I didn't contact him."* (Roman G5)

> *"Whenever I reach out for my lecturers in class, they say they do not have time now. I was a bit persisting every session, but after hearing the same answer, I gave up. I would rather ask internet [laughs] but again the issue is that it is not general knowledge, it is not obvious, it is related to what he said and that's why I needed to ask."* (Arif G5)

The three views are in line with the argument of having limited hours of teaching assistance inside and outside the class that resulted in a lack of academic support, and thus a reluctance to ask for support. Phrases, like 'losing hope', 'did not contact later for help', and 'I gave up' display the behavioural change that occurred due to being faced with resistance to giving support from their teachers. The pattern that is established clearly demonstrates the importance of student-teacher interaction in the learning process beyond the boundaries of the class hour(s) according to the participants.

The formal procedure

Another inhibition for seeking support is the formal procedure put in place for the teacher-student interaction. Capturing the process of interaction through the responses has shown that the students perceived the procedure to be complicated, lengthy, and confusing. Many of the responses have echoed the same view when the participants were asked 'why not ask for support?' There was overwhelming agreement among the participants across the groups in this study about their dissatisfaction with the procedure.

> *'My experience with going through the procedure to contact my teacher was not good at all! It is just so long; it gave me anxiety while waiting."* (Greg, G3)

> *"I think it's because of the form of interacting also. Because sending an email and waiting for a reply. If something went wrong, and I cannot come or he cannot meet me, it is a lot!! It is a huge procedure. I mean, the contact is possible, it is not like it is impossible, but it has more like procedure things going on. Again, if you compare it with India, it's a walk-in thing. You do not need to wait for an email."* (Racha, G5)

Although it seems to be a straightforward procedure of 'contacting' and 'being contacted back' in return, students experience setbacks to get that communication through. Communication breakdowns can occur due to the electronic system in place, whether emails or online platforms that are set for academic support purposes. Unintentionally missing appointments or not following up communication due to those technological shortcomings can cause more anxiety and tension. Racha reported that technical errors delayed their chance of getting the appropriate support from their teachers. '*A ten-minute conversation'* with his teacher was *'not worth the hustle'*, Arif argued. The quality of interaction, according to the students' views, has also been reflected in the time allocated for the interaction. In other words, the short time of meeting is not considered as an appropriate support which the student aspires to get.

The "open-door policy"

In accordance with the arguments presented above, there appears to be an intersection between lack of availability and the students' lack of interest in asking for support. Nevertheless, when speaking about their expectations vs. reality of that support, the students also referred to former

communications with the agents of support. Given the limits of space in this chapter, below I present three of those participants' views as examples:

> *"Yes, the funny thing is that in the first lecture, we have an open-door policy, so you can come anytime you want, but they are often busy."* (Harris, G5)

> *"Often, I have heard 'you can pop in whenever you have enquiries', turned out to be just said for the sake of being nice, but in reality, I never got to pop into a teacher's room whenever I needed them."* (Roman, G5)

> *"As a matter of fact, I haven't seen that door of communication open. We struggle to reach staff for assistance, especially if related to teaching. We were also left confused.'* (Aakriti, G4)

'The open-door policy' was pointed out not only by Harris, but also by most participants who shared his view. Despite its promising meaning as a 'policy' that means being available for support whenever needed, the students contended that that was totally the opposite of what they experienced. Similarly, their emotions of confusion towards this policy remain relevant as they believe they have not seen the translation of that policy they were promised.

A dimension of Power and hierarchical interactions

The impact of vertical/ horizontal relationships with teachers on Support Quality

There is so much more to the conversation of support than the availability. The data has also revealed a dimension where the act of support is tightly connected to certain beliefs, conceptions, and prejudices of the type and quality of support. Moreover, the data have also shown that those conceptions were conceived and taught in their previous academic systems. The following section is looking at this angle of data analysis. With this lens of analysis, investigating the reasons for students' reluctance to reach for support have deduced that taught values of student-teacher interactions play a major role in shaping their behaviours and expectations. Those interactions in the past system, for many participants, were 'vertical' in the sense of seeing the teacher figure as 'powerful', 'something big', 'above in status', 'important' and valuable. Extracted from the statements below, those adjectives depicted how the participants have viewed their teachers in the past.

"The teacher is something, you know something, something big!!! That he is not going to look at you like; we are in the same field... you are going to be... (showing with gestures arrogance)." (Maggie, G3)

"Not in educational institutions. You can't call your teacher by the first name in India. You have to do the respect. In my country, we call the titles instead of names, for example if he or she completed a doctorate degree, then we say Dr. It is just to show that he is above, I mean in status, in power." (Aakriti, G4)

"In my country, you cannot address professors or teachers by their names. You have to address them like Sir, Madam, and sometimes even Madam, they don't like it. They would like to be addressed as "Sir". I think because "Sir" in my country is a powerful thing my country. If you say He or she, they will think they are not important". (Ahmad, G4)

Nevertheless, when asked about whether that type of relationship has inhibited their contact for support, help, or academic advice. Some of them explained,

"*Not really! I think it was legitimate that they were the ones to refer to for help. I think the difference is that they were more interactive, more in charge of support instead of laying back waiting for students to contact them, as it is the case in a western university" (Hazel, G4)*.

"*I don't think I ever was, well there are some teachers I wouldn't approach directly, but most are very friendly, the difference maybe between them and here is that we see them often, there is more chance to ask after class, without worrying about contacting only through a form or an email to reach them." (Aakriti, G4).*

Looking at students' beliefs and behaviours in their former institutions provided more insights to the analysis. Casting light on the hierarchical powers in their past institutions, participants have referred to the distance between them and their teachers as a legitimate way that reflects respect and acknowledgment of their 'power'(ful) status. Although there seems to be a power relation, it did not seem to frighten neither did it inhibit them from asking for assistance from their teachers in their previous educational institutions. However, when compared to the current

educational system, where the titles are lifted from their academic staff, they expressed that they felt better supported in the past. Looking at their arguments, Hazel and Aakriti- among others- have further elaborated that the advantage they had was that of availability, ease of contact and communication without feeling the need to go through a formal procedure.

The collated arguments have attempted to unpack students' behaviours and feelings. Passing through a portal from past experiences to new experiences have served the need to comprehend the source and process behind learned and unlearned behaviours and conceptions (whether institutional, social, or individual), and connect the ends of cause and effect of support ruptures on students' transition journeys.

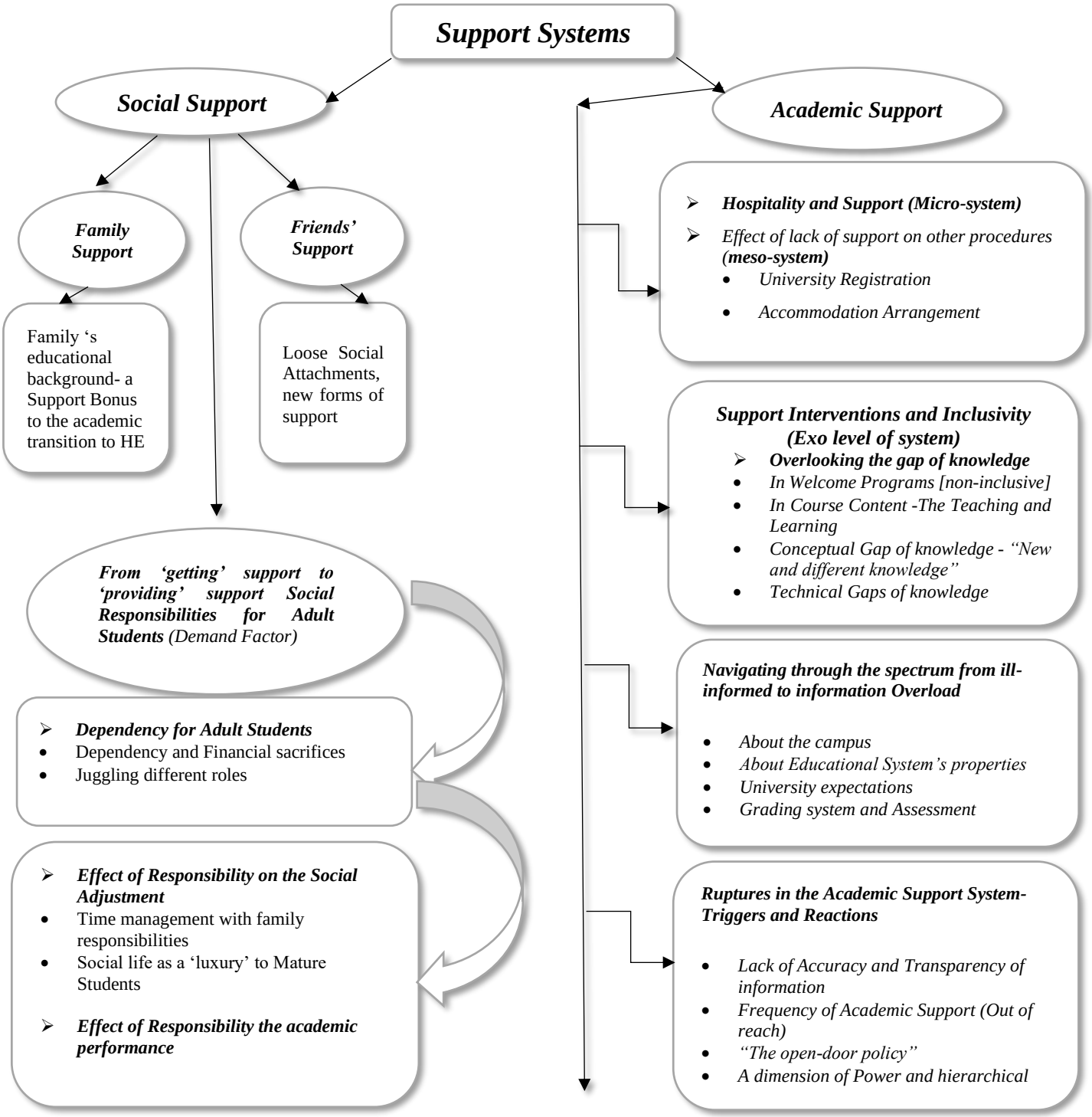


Figure 8*. Micro-systems: support mechanisms- strengths and challenges*

Part II Summary

In the light of the findings of this study, this chapter aims to elucidate the notion of support in the international student's social and academic life. Thus, the mechanisms of social and academic support were investigated in this study. In the social form of support, we identified the primary support agents, i.e., family and friends. The findings have highlighted the role of the family's educational background in determining the quality of support and facilitating the socio-cultural transition. From getting support to giving support, mature students are found to experience a different level of support issues. Entitled as '*walking the extra mile'*, the section explored the detours of their student life experiences with the implications of their social responsibilities. Juggling different roles, mature students have shown to require extra attention from the support systems in their host institution.

Drifting away from social support, another layer of support was presented, namely the academic support, in which the notions of 'hospitality', 'inclusion', and 'gaps' were highlighted. The findings regarding this dimension looked at the students' perceptions of the university support practices, their application in the academic context, and their implications for the international students' transition experience. The theme of gaps has unveiled two types: conceptual gaps and technical gaps of knowledge that are believed to be conceived as a result of both 'unfamiliarity with the system' and 'the lack of support from the system'. Remaining at the heart of the participants' views in this chapter, their arguments have echoed the argument that the support in place has disregarded the urgency of fulfilling their 'needs' and persistent calls for support. This paralysis of support tends to enlarge the gap of knowledge even further for international students. The discussion has also delved into the support system's awareness of students' gaps and the need for acknowledgment and inclusiveness. This allowed a room for a discussion about the role of support in the facilitation of the student's adaptation process to the course content, the educational system values, and the academic settings taken as a whole. However, through the accumulation of experiences depicted through the anecdotes shared, there was a significant shortage of support leaving students to navigate through a spectrum of being either ill-informed or overwhelmed with unfiltered information. Having had a look at students' expectations of support vs. how it is translated in the academic context, I will attempt in the next chapter to present other macro-level factors, triggers, and shapers of the international students' transition experience.

Part III: System's Governing values [Macro-level]: Windows of perceptions between students' expectations and reality- a lens on notions, values, and positionalities

The notion of diversity at university 'as realised' vs. 'as expected'

The theme of 'diversity' sits on a broad spectrum which encompasses many elements that can be translated both in the academic and social settings. In this section, I delve into the socio-cultural diversity and how it is realised at the academic setting from our participants' perspectives. The students in this study have made solid connections between aspects of their academic/ social environments and their experiences. Those environments, at least the academic, are believed to be pre-set by the host institution. Under certain conditions, like variability of nationalities, common interests, and different values, students seem to navigate their journeys. This room of analysis seeks to investigate students' views around those environmental conditions and their impact on key aspects of their 'student life', like 'academic socialisation'. I aim to answer these two questions; how *'diverse' is the student body? And is it a playing factor in the equation of academic socialisation?*

How 'diverse' is the learning environment?

Class profile/ size

During investigating the learning environment, the students' arguments landed on two key aspects, the size (in terms of numbers), and the profile (in terms of the socio-cultural background). Both of these aspects are further explored through the data in hand within this section, with the intention of looking into the impact of those variables on the overall 'international students' experience'. Therefore, a snapshot of views is provided to illustrate the participants' arguments. Critical attention was given to the diversity in classroom, as being the most frequently attended aspect in an academic setting.

The 'indifference' of background

"[…] my class looks like we are all looking for someone who is different"

When asked about the profile of their cohorts, the participants revealed that they were surprised by the lack of diversity, as opposed to their expectations prior to arrival. Joanna (G3), Maggie

(G3), and Greg (G3) are Chinese students who, despite being enrolled in different departments, happened to share a similar point of view about their class environments:

> *"I have all Chinese students. It is like 90% of my major are Chinese. For eighty percent students, we don't have chance to make a group with foreign students."* Joanna (G3)

> *"[…] the expectation difference was that I came here and then, I realised 80% of our classmates were from China. Normally in my undergrad, I sit in the front. So, when I sat, all those next to me were Chinese students speaking Chinese; I felt I am in China."* **(**Greg, G***3)***

> *'We also expected students would be more foreign, except the Chinese students, because like 90% of my major classmates are Chinese students, but (rolls eyes) I want to speak English more frequently, how would that be possible in a Chinese class".* **(**Maggie, G3)

Interestingly, what the aforementioned statements have established is that despite the common nationality (China), Joanna (G3), Maggie (G3), and Greg (G3) felt uncomfortable having had to study in a course where the majority is from their home country. When further asked about the reasons behind that feeling, Maggie elaborated:

> *"I came here with an idea in mind that my experience would involve more diverse students so that I get to explore more, why would I speak to Chinese if I already had all my life with them? It is just not what I came for'.*

The perspective of change was intensified by Maggie's argument as she maintained that meeting 'diverse students' was one of the goals of her experience abroad. By 'diverse' she meant students from different socio-cultural backgrounds than hers. In contrast, she pointed out that settling for communication with peers from her similar nationality would not offer her something new. Another layer of the novelty of experience was the language. Greg explained:

> *'[…] to be honest, I started sitting at the back of the class so I could speak English with other classmates, because otherwise I would not get the chance to practise my English.".*

A very similar view was Joanna's when she stated:

> *'I would never develop my language skills if I sit next to them, they form a bubble and only speak Chinese because it is comfortable. They even explain to each other the lessons in Chinese, so I have no chance to improve myself.'*

Overall, practising language seemed be another key goal that international students come to the UK for. As for Greg's and Joanna's arguments, having 90% of their classroom being 'indifferent' to them would take away the ability of language development, since inter-individual communication in class seems to be held in the Chinese language. In other scenarios, the students referred to their 'non-diverse' classes differently. There was a noticeable agreement among the participants that their class has a large majority of international students (usually of the Chinese nationality), and either a very minimal percentage or sometimes none of home students.

Aakriti (G4) reported:

> *"For me, we are 200 students in my course, not one British student."*

Roman (G5) also stated:

> *'We have only two British people in my class, they do not often show up as well.'*

Racha (G5) commented also:

> *"All my groups are international students. For the courses, the bigger courses are actually in Operations. But we have bigger class besides the small class. For the bigger class, I think it's 220 students and it could be a mix between home and international students. But, sadly in my big group, it's all about international students. So, I don't have any experience with home students […] even for small classes, all of them are international students."*

It is important to note that the statements were only a snapshot from the data. These arguments were not peculiar to particular students; however, many of the interviewed students expresses similar views. Put differently, Liam (G1) claimed:

> *'[…] my class looks like we are all looking for someone who is different [laughs] we are all international, with a vast majority of Chinese, but definitely we would need more diversity".*

Liam's statement received the agreement of his peers in the focus group as one of them confirmed:

> *"Very true! It was beyond my expectations to come to a confused class. We all somehow came for the goal to see different things than our home countries where everything seems the same, people, culture and so on. My class also has the majority of international students, Chinese mainly who speak only to each other, one British student who also seem confused [laughs]. The proportions of students are so odd."* (Malik G5)

Various comments have been made about the proportions and the nationalities of peers. Those parameters seemed very important to the students as they held different expectations prior to their arrival about 'how diverse their class would be'. According to Liam (G1) and Malik (G5), 'diversity' was one of the primary goals of the international experience. It is important to note that students, like Malik (G5), believe they come from a 'non-diverse' background, where they have experienced education in their home countries. Taken this into consideration, students' expectations grow around the notion of 'diversity' in the international experience.

Equally, nuances of this view highlighted the exposure to 'different groups of people, cultures, and languages'. Both Liam and Malik referred to the feeling of 'confusion'. That emotion seems to occur once their expectations are not met or realised. As for Liam's statement that everyone in his class was 'looking for someone different', a follow-up conversation with Liam about this point also linked back to the element of 'exposure' to that 'difference'. The absence of that element has created a gap in their social experiences as international students. He clarified,

> *'[…] even when we are all supposedly international students, I do not see many people for instance from various countries in my class, let alone home students, they are very rare, so when I say 'different' I mean it literally because all I can meet in my class are Chinese, I bet they also came here for that 'difference' not*

> *to see many versions of themselves [..] so yeah, that's what creates the confusion."* (Liam, G1)

Class profile's impact on the dynamics of the socialisation experience

The notions of 'exposure' and 'diversity' both sit at the heart of the socialisation process. Therefore, the researcher has further unveiled the students' views in this respect. This section briefly looks into the way the students have perceived the nature of their social interactions in their classes with their peers. With regard to the dynamics of interactions within the academic setting, the students revealed that those relationships with peers mainly developed within classrooms. When asked about the bigger scale of the academic setting, such as the university campus, the students argued that making relationships is limited compared to the ones developed on a smaller size context, i.e., classes. Arjun (G1) elaborated:

> *'[…] most of the people I know are from my classroom, because simply that's where we spend time the most, outside in campus it is very unusual and weird to approach people you do not know.'*

Arjun's view was taken as an illustrative example since his view was also shared with other participants across different focus groups.

The notions of 'belongingness' and 'segregation' in academic socialisation

With much focus placed on the class environment, participants reflected on their academic socialisation mainly in relation to their peers in class, whether home, European, or international students. Overall, understanding the way the participants viewed their classroom communities as 'non-diverse' has informed the follow-up questions about perceptions of 'the other'. Prior to that, the researcher aimed to understand under which circumstances that categorisation of 'us' and them' was made and how it reflected on the socialisation process. This section aims to delve into that angle of perception detected by the findings of this study.

To start with, participants from diverse backgrounds and nationalities explained that they cherished face-to-face conversations with home students, as they believed it would be of practical benefit to them to practise and thus to improve their English language skills. Nevertheless, the vast majority of the interviewed students reported that home students were reluctant to socialise with them. *"Friendly but not friends";* this is how one of the participants

(Aryan, G2) described the type of interaction they had with home students. Aryan's argument was echoed in other similar views, where the students clarified that the nature of communication was a one-way attempt from their side, with little or no involvement from British peers in the academic context. This reluctance seems to create a gap between international and home students, as overseas students eventually start withdrawing their attempts to interact due to the constant rejection. Below are two examples,

> *"If I talk about my classmates, only two home students, they are friendly, but they are reserved in a sense that if I talk to them, they will respond back, but they do not seem too interactive with international students."* (Ahmad, G4)

> *"They are not comfortable with that. And that is something normal for them [...] In my class, I have seen that people from this country sit together, and the internationals sit together. They don't want to mix up. Not sure why! I have imagined the university experience would be much different."* (Hayley, G2)

Another key consequence of this 'reluctance to communicate' or 'rejection' is the accompanied feeling of 'missing out' for overseas students. On follow-up comments, the participants also referred to what they 'would have gained' if that type of interaction with home students was easier and more welcomed. On the other hand, they commented on what they 'missed out' by having little chance of having that interaction. Given the limited space of the chapter, I have selected only two views to illustrate the point.

> *"I probably would have jumped on every chance I had to speak to a native speaker, to have the genuine conversation with English, knowing that the other person is not a learner. But at the same time, people's reaction put that barrier. I would say my experience was poor in that sense."* (Hannah, G2)

> *"I feel all of us as foreign students miss the chance to practice the language for instance or discover more cultural things closely by being friends with home students."* (Robina, G4)

The participants came to the agreement that their feeling of 'missing out' was concentrated on the chance to understand the British culture, practise its language, and fulfil the need to explore further a 'realistic version' of the socio-cultural context. Interaction with peers, therefore, for

the targeted international students bears more than its mere communication purpose. Rather, it meant having effectively used the time spent at university, which for many was their only chance for establishing those relationships and interactions. The participants also commented on the nature of their interaction with their peers from overseas countries. The feeling of missing out does not correspond solely to interaction with 'home students' but also to the one established with 'other international' students.

Sense of community within class: boundaries to the socialisation experience

Social boundaries, per se, whether intentionally or unintentionally established by members of the academic environment (i.e., students) act as pivotal contributors to the lack of social integration, as the data demonstrated. Echoing the students' views on the nature and quality of their socialisation with their peers in the academic setting, their concerns seem to be tightly linked to their feeling of detachment from their peers. Navigating the socialisation process, the students noticed that there is a form of attachment between students with a similar socio-cultural and linguistic background:

> *"I think there is a sense of nation amongst classmates […] I don't know if this is usual or just because they want to be amongst people from their own countries."* (Robina G4)

> *"Well, people tend to stay in their cliques. Even with the British students, they stick together. Chinese students stick together, it could be the same with other people from a common country, but I did not see that because most of the cohort is Chinese like me."* (Ethan G2)

Captured by the aforementioned extracts of the data, the act of collectiveness of certain students to form a group or a community allows the dynamics of interaction within those particular groups. The question was: *were those acts of socialisation, initiatives, and interactions peculiar to 'within' the groups, or did they also extend beyond their respective groups to other peer groups?*

Surprisingly, there was a noticeable agreement among the participants - across the interviewed sample- on the way the segregation was approached, which the students themselves adopted

and has affected the dynamics of interaction across their cohort. When reflecting on this aspect, Arjun (G1) explained:

> *"[…] They do not communicate much, unless it was very necessary, with people outside their communities […] we technically have a limited communication with peers who have a different background because of that. They are friendly greeting and so on, but that's all".*

Arjun's view was equally shared with other interviewees who thought that students, whether themselves or others, created those communities as comfort zones. That understanding was elaborated in many views like Maggie's (G3) when she said:

> *"As a Chinese student, I think I understand how much comfort students like me find within a Chinese group, where you do not have to do extra efforts to explain your culture or language, it feels like being home [she pauses] but also it does not let you see things outside of that group, it does not make you discover others."*

Maggie's comment was chosen from five data extracts that reflected a similar view. The reason it was chosen is because Maggie's statement brought together both parts of the equation, cause, and effect.

Part of the equation highlighted that the underpinning thinking behind forming communities might be looked at from the perspective of having safe zones or spaces, where the ground of communication is already set (ready) because members of that group share mutual cultural norms, language, and understanding of social behaviours. Whilst that gives a glimpse of the positive perspective of interaction, which it may offer, Maggie also recognised the negative implications this approach could have on international students with this vision. When seeking comfort in a group that '*feels like home'*, these students do not allow the socialisation experience to extend beyond the boundaries they set for themselves, '*to discover others'* who are outside those safe spaces. Along the same lines of the argument, Otiz (G1), who is also a Chinese student, noted:

"We always stick together, so we just go to each other for help or advice or a chat. But other than that, we don't know anyone else who is not Chinese. We hardly know like five to six people in our class by name."

Bearing in mind the reservation in this approach of socialisation informed by this angle of the data, there appears to be minimal interaction across different groups of students. That lack of integration that has been spoken about earlier in this section seems to widen further the gap of knowledge about 'the others'. Joanna (G3), who also talked about how other students socialise only with their groups said:

"I am close to a few students who speak my language, but all the rest of the class, I don't even think I remember their faces."

The idea of socialising within 'communities' in an academic setting appears to be a legitimised phenomenon or a form of socialisation among international and home students. Looking at the data in hand, participation in that approach comes by default to most students as they make choices with whom they would want to socialise. The researcher has further investigated the students' logic behind those decisions. Their views of having a sense of community revolved around the idea of comfort, familiarity, and safety that are found when interacting with people from a similar cultural background. Nevertheless, when thought through, the narrative reveals that whilst the students believe that the 'inclusion' of individuals with a 'similar' socio-cultural identity allows more interaction with peers, it implies the 'exclusion' of other peers with 'different' socio-cultural profiles.

Participant bias

How much bias was detected in the data? [Views on Chinese Participants]

Participant views are an integral part of the research data in its process, its input and output. Following earlier discussion- under the topic of diversity and social integration- there might be an explicit bias from other overseas participants toward Chinese students. Acknowledging the element of bias in the responses, the researcher has appreciated looking at a different angle of the topic by unveiling a different form of perception from the responses of Chinese participants themselves in this study. Interestingly, views that condemned the institutional acts of having 'Chinese majority' of students were not explicitly vocal in the focus groups where there were Chinese participants. Those views and statements appeared more vocal, detailed, and more

emotion-involved in other groups as opposed to the reserved opinions that took place with the presence of Chinese peers. Nevertheless, the depiction of bias does not exceed the broadline of 'opinion expression' and does not hold the intention of offending fellow participants, which explains the reserved form of opinions in the first instance.

'Bias'- as a term might have been recognised as a misfit to the qualitative research studies like this current one (Thorne, Stephens, Truant, 2016), it is however still compatible with the notions of rigor, trustworthiness, and reflexivity on the research process (discussed in the Methodology chapter). Witnessing, noticing, and reporting bias is a cornerstone of this research study as it adheres with the researcher's beliefs that the elements of subjectivity- in participants' views- are strength points of the qualitative research. Bias, therefore, is not deemed as a problematic issue in the respect. However, it is a form of unveiling the two-sided reality as depicted by participants- both objectively and subjectively. The two terms [objective and subjective reality] sit on to a spectrum where individuals' judgments and convictions are constantly questioned against societal norms. Nevertheless, personal bias projection can act as a blind spot. There is an inherited logic of an individual to disregard their own bias when perceiving reality. My sense is that setting a firm line between both forms of realities might be a distortion in itself to the results of the study, as it introduces bias from a third party- my own bias as a researcher.

How is diversity measured vs. how it should be?

At the heart of the conversations about 'diverse' and 'non-diverse' academic environment, a striking question has continued to come back to my mind as a researcher; that is, *what do students mean by 'diversity'? Or how do they perceive a 'diverse' environment?*

With the belief that students' answers to this question may vary according to their individual beliefs about and conceptions of 'self' and 'others', I aimed to investigate the source of their collective feelings of 'misfit', 'disappointment', and 'frustration'. Interestingly, many students clarified that the notion of having a 'diverse context' does not necessarily get translated in terms of the number of different nationalities that an academic course has. That is to say, the diversity of backgrounds does not seem to correspond with the percentage of 'different' students, as there might be a dominant group of a certain nationality or nationalities and small

groups or individuals that are deemed to be minorities within the large learning group. Harris (G5) explained:

> *"My understanding of the social experience at university abroad was to interact on a fairly daily basis with other overseas students as well local students in my course, my programme, etc. I have literally failed as much as others in this group said they did, to make sense of how is 'diversity' realised at this university because simply what I found is a huge number of students from one particular country- China- and very very [repeated] few from other countries and barely you couldn't see anyone who is British, which leaves us as students who came to experience that diversity with very little chance to interact with people from different backgrounds […] it is such a loss!"*

Harris's statement has not only reflected his point of view, but also others' who have confirmed that they have shared his feeling of frustration and disappointment. During that conversation, as I progressively tapped into the feeling of 'loss' that Harris expressed, there surfaced a feeling of anger about how different the social experience would have been if there was a better distribution of international students across their courses. Malik (G5) said:

> "[…] *I believe it is the institution's responsibility for granting that diverse context because it means a lot to the students like us who could not fit, a lot of us came for that purpose, not to be singled out or unaccepted in a very large group of what the university calls also 'international students'*".

Regarding this perspective, students, like Malik, seem to hold the institution accountable for how 'diversity' is measured and eventually experienced by targeted international students. Greg (G3) has also mentioned the way 'diversity' does not solely lie in 'different backgrounds' but also in how much difference is detected in the student body and how many people are different in one classroom. He explained:

> *"[…] well, I guess the way universities put forward their notion of 'diversity' is quite different from what we expect as students, and I guess this applies to all of us no expectation."*

Triggered by fellow participants' views, some Chinese participants mutually expressed that they would prefer a more diversified experience. Greg (G3) added:

> *"[…] I am actually one of those Chinese students my peers here talk about, and I agree with them about how huge the numbers are from only China compared to other countries, which is not fair for them because they form one community, and no one wants to socialise with outsiders. But again, even Chinese students are not happy with that because they came here searching for that difference, for that diversity and ended up just being home, just like China! So, the frustration is shared actually!"*

For many, such as the Chinese students, given the student proportion in their classroom, 'difference' cannot be depicted since the majority of their class has a 'similar' socio-cultural background. Depicted from the former discussions and arguments, the key driver of the student's life abroad besides their academic achievement is the desire to be in an 'inclusive' and 'diverse' environment for a healthy social experience. Whilst forming groups serves the purpose of seeking familiarity for comfort (see challenges chapter), it seems to have direct impact on other peers. Next, this analysis sought to explore the effect of that socialisation pattern on the psychological state of international students who are found outside of those 'formed communities' because they do not fit with its socio-cultural background.

The psychological impact of environmental factors on experience

One of the regularly depicted feelings across the body of participants in this study was the feeling of 'missing out' on key elements that the social experience bears, such us language practice, cultural exposure, etc. Along with that feeling, there was a range of other negative feelings that varied in level and intensity from one participant to another, such as alienation, loneliness, and exclusion, all of which are associated with their lack of social integration. This section attempts to briefly cover this dimension of data to illustrate the correlation between the socio-environmental factors and the psychological state of students.

As discussed earlier, several factors appear to have a direct impact on the socialisation process. Racha (G5) spoke about the large size of her class and how this was reflected on the psychological state of her and her peers. She explained:

> *"I think the class size was a bit overwhelming! We sometimes do not know if this person is in our class. You can only imagine how isolating that would be for most of us who are often lost, feeling ignored in the large group, not fitting with the majority."*

I asked Ramya further about who she referred to when she said, *"the majority"*, and why she would not fit with them. Her answer was as follows:

> "*By the majority, I mean the rest of the class. They appear to come all from the same place, same country I guess, same language, so they do not feel the need to interact with us sometimes. This is why it is isolating to be in a large group where it is not really diverse."*

This argument brings us back to former arguments about the topic of diversity and inclusion. There appears to be a correlation between the misinterpretation and mis-realisation of 'diverse context', reflected in the size and profile of the class, and the emerging issues of social integration, social adaptation, and the socialisation process overall.

The setbacks to establishing forms of relationships and friendships seem to be closely linked to the environmental conditions. Many students have reflected on the way this correlates with their psychological state by demonstrating the way they feel. As much as some students explained that they felt comfortable staying within their communities, others, like Otiz (G1), wanted to experience diverse interactions beyond those communities. He explained:

> *"In my class, we have one big group who is completely Chinese, but I don't want to be in that group, I want to be with different nationalities. In our class, we have a lot of nationalities, but they are not many at all. It makes me feel trapped to stay in my group, as if I have never left home, it is overwhelming."*

'Trapped' is the way Otiz described his feelings whilst in his group or community. Besides that, there was the overwhelming feeling of having no social encounters with people from a different cultural background than his. Nevertheless, on the other side of that experience sit the other views of international students who have had no chance to feel they belong to a 'group' or 'community'. Here are two of those extracts from the interviews to illustrate this point, Hannah's and Hazel's:

> *"I found it so interesting that I hear that people have friends from Argentina, Chile, and so on. Because I'm the only one from Latin America in my class, I mean... sometimes I feel alone in my course, it is a little sad in a way […] in my case, we have a lot of Chinese students, and they are all together. A couple of them like to talk to others, and maybe experience different cultures. I feel somehow disconnected from bigger communities."* (Hannah G2)

> "*I appreciate the diversity; but homesickness sometimes is very bad, I felt alone many times because there was no one who would speak my language or relate to me culturally in my course […] so I actually envy the Chinese community for instance, it is just like finding a home away from home".* (Hazel, G3)

Representation and belongingness in social communities seemed to be heated topics in the conversation. Whilst Otiz and other participants who shared his view felt overwhelmed with that 'non-difference', others like Hannah and Hazel had the feeling of abandoning that 'difference', seeking to deviate from that cultural exchange approach and start establishing relationships with peers from a similar nationality, region, or background. In both their statements, there was a reference to a host of different feelings, including loneliness, confusion, alienation, and detachment from others. As opposed to other participants' feeling of 'missing out on inter-cultural exchange' in socialisation, there was a desire for dependence and belongingness. This also addressed the issue of misrepresentation in the proportion of students in their respective courses.

Furthermore, other arguments seemed to be suggesting that the realisation of those expectations was related to the ideology of the educational institution itself. The limited, or the disproportionate, representation is found to have influenced students' socialisation patterns and psychological wellbeing. Nevertheless, there were a number of responses where the dissatisfaction expressed across the interviewed sample was ascribed to the institution's actions towards the international students' mobility. Ethan (G2) commented:

> *'I think it is the university's responsibility to offer a diverse environment.'*

When asked: 'how is that?' he replied:

"By controlling how many students they are including in each course and also to maintain that diversity in the programme, so we won't have these issues of having most students from one country and others not fitting in […]."

This particular response echoes similar shared views that held the university accountable for not offering an appropriate academic environment that meets their expectations.

Former chapters have concentrated on the margin of the expectations of international students from the host educational system. There was a consensus among the participants across the focus groups that there is a large gap in expectations that was overlooked by their host institutions. Arising challenges that have been identified thus far are associated with a plurality of areas (academic, social, economic, and psychological) at micro, meso, and exo levels of the system. The most profound impact of those aspects was the lack of institutional support awareness for, and reactivity to the students' interindividual differences. The students advocate that the support mindset of their institutions could be viewed as a contributor to their adjustment issues. The figure below encompasses the highlights of the aforementioned discussion around the perceived deficiency of support (see part II of the analysis).

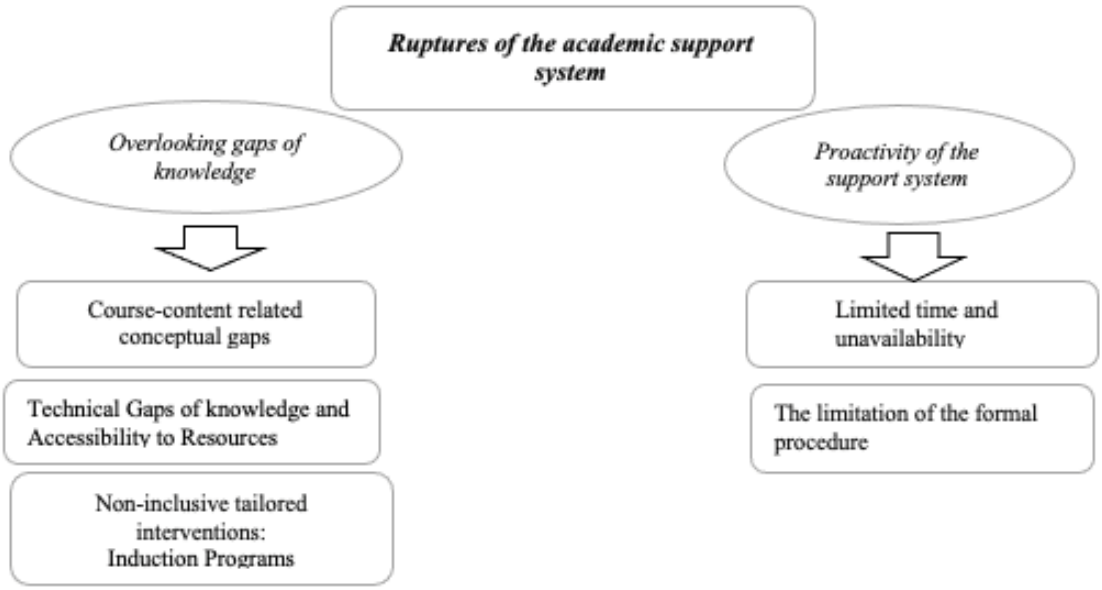


Figure 9. *Ruptures of the academic support system*

Establishing connections: *How can ruptures in the support system connect to the institutional norms and values?*

In their narrative surrounding each of the previously presented themes, including *'the proactivity of support'*, *'non-inclusivity of the support'*, and *'the mis-realisation of a richly diverse social experience'* (by the host institution), the participants referred frequently to the notion of *'personal and/or financial investment'* and *'value for money'* when they first decided to join a postgraduate course abroad. Initially, in the first round of analysis those concepts seemed to relate to intrinsic elements of backgrounds, skills, aspirations (Please check Part I of the analysis). Yet, with the second round of thematic analysis, looking closely at the interwoven aspects of the data, another layer of responses has shown that those concepts echo overarching values in the educational system. This section of analysis aims to unveil that dimension of the data as there seems to be a bi-directional influence between those values (the student's and the institution's values). In other words, the data suggested that the effect can be projected inward (from macro to micro levels) as well as outward (from micro to macro levels). Breaking this down, this section aims not only to investigate the use of the terms in context and trace the thread of its reoccurrence throughout the interview narratives, but also to shed light on the underpinning meanings of those connotations.

The notion of marketisation in the educational experience

Cost and sacrifices

Cost as a theme extends beyond the literal sense of price, money, and expenses, to other conditions such as relationships, living standards, social environments. In the sense of their individual investments, the students reported that travelling to the UK to pursue a degree *'cost'* them *'sacrificing'* their old relationships, their previous jobs, and their previous social status. Throughout the narrative, there was a strong assumption among the participants that their 'sacrifices' should be acknowledged and valued. The students reported that the sum of the *'sacrifices'* they made came simultaneously with their decision of studying abroad. As mentioned previously, the meaning of '*cost'* carries more than its mere financial sense. Greg (G3) reflected:

> *'[…] I think success is not cheap, it always comes at a cost and as a student who have made a decision to study abroad, I have just like others paid that, not only*

in terms of money but also when I left my former job, my family, my comfort […]".

Similarly, some of the participants referred to the core aims they had prior to enrolment and to their ambitions that contributed to drawing the image of expectations from the international experience. Hannah (G2) also pointed out the fluctuations of emotions between excitement and enduring the hardship of the process when she said:

"I have come a long way to do this, to achieve something actual in my life […] Getting the opportunity to study abroad is not that easy process especially for us in Chile, it is long and demanding. I was dreaming of it and working hard to get it. […] So, when I express my feeling of disappointment, it is because I expected a much better for that sacrifice and for that struggle."

Hannah was not the only one who felt that she deserved better and whose expectations were not met. She, among others, linked her feeling of disappointment to the way her (affective and practical) forms of sacrifices and struggle to chase her dream were undervalued.

How did students view the institution? Consumerism- education as a commodity

The students talked extensively during their interviews about the vague expectations the universities set for them. As previously highlighted in this chapter of the findings, the students also perceived the lack of transparency about the system properties (like grading system), the lack of information about the course content, and the non-inclusivity of support in response to the various gaps of knowledge dictated by their diverse backgrounds as major concerns. The escalating complaints about those ruptures of the support system have addressed their perception of higher education abroad as a sector. According to most of the participants, education was viewed as "a service" provided by their host institutions as well as an investment in the self to ensure a better future. In this section, I aim to shed light on those perceptions and identify the role they play in shaping their expectations about and responses to the actions and policies of the educational system.

From the number of instances where this argument has reoccurred, I have selected two statements that echo this view. Roman (G5) explained*:*

> *"[…] unlike my country where education is free and for all, education here is very much like a business where you offer tuition fees for a degree, and you have a contract which makes it typically as a business."*

Likewise, Aryan (G2) reported:

> *"[…] I definitely agree with others on the point that we all came for the purpose of education, but to be more open and clearer, we had invested in ourselves money-wise for the university to offer us that education, so you can say it is like purchasing a product".*

These statements and other similar ones have addressed the notion of consumerism in higher education, where students perceived education as a product that is sold in exchange of money (i.e., tuition fees). For some, like Roman (G5), this business vision that the host university embraces differs from the one he was used to back home since his former university has a free and an inclusive educational system. This point was also highlighted by other participants where they made reference to their old 'free' educational systems, noting that the 'money' aspect was absent and was not one of their concerns. Besides the aspect of money-involvement, Roman (G5) also addressed other properties of the business model implying a commercialisation practice, such as the term 'contract'. Aligning with that argument, Aryan (G2) viewed education as an investment where a degree is a 'purchased' good/ product. Speaking of that, Malik (G5) added:

> "[…] *It is in fact true that higher education is like marketing a product, even in the process of choosing courses, you have different fees for different course and levels, just like going for shopping."*

The input of this argument suggests that the marketisation process that universities employ to promote their courses and facilities has created a similar notion as trading products. Courses, therefore, were perceived to be educational packages or products that are put on the market for students to shop from. Nevertheless, contradictory views have condemned the way universities communicate their courses. Dana (G5), for instance, said:

> *"I would not say I came to shop for a degree, because education for me has other meanings and values."*

She, among a few other fellow participants asserted that the notion of consumerism contradicts the moral values of the academic institution. Racha (G5) added:

> *'[…] it might be due to the way universities advertise for themselves that we tend to see ourselves as people who are shopping around. But if you think about it is had a good side since it is giving us more options and freedom to choose."*

It was interesting to break down the assumptions behind 'the customer culture' with its pros and cons. As a result of brainstorming about this topic, it was believed that 'selling' or 'shopping' for education make it devoid of its core humanistic values such as learning. Nevertheless, its commercialisation aspect still promotes agency, dependency, and freedom of choice for students. Digging deeper into those beliefs, it was important to investigate the way students position themselves in the system.

How did the students view themselves? The customer mindset

The students explained that they also held consumerist ethos towards education abroad, through which they positioned themselves as *"customers".* Harris (G5), who was one of the advocates of the idea of keeping the 'moral values' of education, was surprisingly one of the participants who acknowledged himself as a customer in the system. As the discussion heated up about the way the process of commercialisation of the Master course moulded his expectations about the academic experience, he commented:

> "I *choose UK because it has a 1-year Master which is convenient and gives a good qualification. How did I know it was a good qualification?* [he asked, and answered], *Well, from the websites, from the rankings, from the advertisements, etc. so it was like purchasing and looking for better options. So, if I am paying this institution, I am expecting a good professionalism, treating me as a student, as a customer."*

There seem to be tight links with the marketisation aspect of the educational experience abroad. Unsurprisingly, however, many students like Harris reported that their decisions, expectations, and mindset became equally affected as an outcome. In a more direct question to one of the other participants who held similar views, I asked Malik (G5), "*So, do you see, Malik, that all these international students are customers?"* To which he responded, "*Yes. yes, for sure. When*

there is a market, there are customers, so just being part of it means you go by its rules." He then added, *"So, this is the market! And we are only looking for our rights in it."*

The findings of this study have witnessed an emergence of consumerist behaviours. Other participants accentuated similar opinions as there was a wide acknowledgment of themselves as consumers of education. Other follow-up questions urged themselves to be posed, such as: *What was for sale? The degree? The experience? The learning and teaching services?*

Responding to this line of questions, the students argued that the commercialisation aspect of their degree implied that it was for sale. Liam (G1) said:

> *"You come for the whole experience academic and social, it is all in one package, and this is not only how we see it as students but also how the universities advertise it."*

Internalised by several arguments, there was the use of terms, such as 'branded', 'marketed', and 'advertised' when they referred to their course programmes. Terms like "customer needs" and "customer satisfaction" surfaced onto the discussions as they were speaking about their 'rights'. To break this down, the following section looks at the way the participants used those terms and further investigates how they internalise those concepts.

The 'customer culture'

All arguments and dispositions that the discussion entailed thus far appeared to fall into the same stream of negotiating "customer rights". For many, those 'rights' come as the cornerstones of the contract between the student and the university. Malik (G5) explained:

> "*In every contract, there are rights and due amount to pay, and this is how education institutions here work, for them no money is a deal breaker to get education, and for us since we give money as fees, our rights to be well-educated is a deal breaker".*

Malik's statement portrays an understanding of a business deal, where both financial benefits (i.e., fees) and service benefits (i.e., education) are exchanged. This view gained major agreements from his focus group. In addition to that view, Harris (G5) added:

> **"***The most important point is to understand their place in this chain and understand that they are providers of service."*

It was interesting to look at the way the commercialisation behaviours of higher education are perceived. However, it is even more important to unveil how those behaviours have reflected on the students' behaviours, mindsets, self-portrayal, and perception of the system taken as a whole. Throughout the discussion, a major aspect of the arguments has revolved around the student's as well the university's 'positionality' in the system. The use of 'chain' in Harris's statement suggested a hierarchical structure of the system, where he positioned the university (or academic staff) as 'providers of the service (that is education)'. There seemed to be a common understanding among the participants of that hierarchy as they applauded that view and added their own insights. Evidently, there was a solid sense of empowerment and entitlement of the 'customer-student' in both statements. Speaking of 'customer rights', the bi-directional benefit, that was expressed, has set a ground of understanding that students should exercise their rights as customers.

How does the notion of consumerism affect the quality of the service (i.e., education)? *Quality as an overlooked criterion*

Earlier conversations, themes, and discussions have unfolded layers of understanding of the educational system's operationalisation from the lenses of international students. As mentioned previously, major concerns have evolved due to the rupture in the support system. The students have linked those arising challenges that have been experienced to the lack of dedication (of the host institution) to listening to their needs, acknowledging their differences, and adjusting their policies. A turnover in the narrative of the interviews has incorporated views in which the students expressed their dissatisfaction as 'customers'.

The discussion in most of the groups has shown that the students acknowledge that their expectations do not revolve around finding rigid solutions to everybody's arising issues. However, they acknowledge that a milder form of issues may continue to rise as a normal reaction to the changes occurring in their lifestyles as well as their continuous adaptation process to its conditions. Notwithstanding that, there was a call for support at the stage of that transition, which was expected from the host institution. Racha (G5) said:

> *"I think we are pretty much aware that it is a normal thing to struggle facing major change in our life, so we normalise that fact, but we are also aware that there should be a support out there at this particular time to help with the major highlights and struggles."*

That awareness was mutually shared with others in the group. The lack of adequate support was one of the prominent concerns, linked to a broader spectrum of students' dissatisfaction with the 'service(s)'. Regarding their perception of the educational institution (under the section of *Education as a Commodity*), the students encouraged customer-like-behaviours by endorsing their rights in fulfilling their needs as students in the first place. Others, however, who were proponents of that view were surprised that the university follows a business model in advertising its educational courses and facilities yet fails to adhere to the standards they set. Malik (G5) stated:

> *"[…] The problem is that they're failing to provide the standards that they advertise themselves. So, I think that's why all the people I meet especially international students are so angry!! (pauses) ... But that's only for MSc course; I do not know anything about the other longer courses such as undergraduates or PhDs as they can have more time in their hands*."

Besides the limitations that the course period offers, a recall of one of the main challenges faced that were related to 'quality' was that of the non-practicality of knowledge as opposed to the students' pre-expectations. Ethan (G2) was one of the students who expressed their frustration with the utility of the knowledge of their course contents, pointing out that the institution should provide more practical teaching to be used in workplace. He explained:

> *"I think this education system needs to be changed, from a business perspective to discuss what we need. For instance, they do teach theories and not how to apply it in real life. There are only people studying here, reading books, writing assignments, and when they come to work, they don't have the practical skills. So, when I came here, I thought it would be different from my country since there are fees and so on, but unfortunately it is all the same."*

Ethan highlighted the idea of 'change' and positioned it within a 'business' framework, where he argued that 'needs' and 'expectations' should be discussed between the students and the

university. The feeling of frustration, therefore, was associated with the '*indifference'* between his old educational system and the current one despite the presence of financial investment in the second.

Commercialisation practices and conflicts of interests

There was a wide view in the findings that hosted the belief that higher education in the UK is market-led and therefore implied a business model. I have further sought to look at the way the consumerism vision has evolved; that is to investigate how the commercialisation practices of the universities have shaped, affected, or transformed the students' expectations before and after arrival. There was a rich amount of data flowing in that stream, which made the task more difficult by sifting through and filtering the data to focus on specific aspects to report. A cross-theme between the groups was the '*conflict of interests*. Whilst some of the participants stressed that the marketing promises of their courses affected their choices prior to arrival, they equally argued that they felt mislead when those expectations were not met. Hannah expressed:

> *"[…] I don't understand, it is so weird and frustrating, I think it's because education is more like a business here. There are so many people. So, they can't guarantee quality. They have certain barriers where there's less freedom for students to actually engage with the course content because of that lack of knowledge they have about the course and even where the teacher knows very little about their students too, and it applies also socially with classmates because of the lack of diversity […] so it's more of a business here, which is unfortunate because I didn't come for that".*

Hannah's (G2) statement has put a thread through all the arguments that have been made throughout all the steps of the analysis of this study thus far. The threaded view has suggested that each of the challenges she faced, in the academic and/ or social experience, were related to certain breakdowns of the system in place. Her argument has displayed a variety of key points where the institution failed to meet students' needs. This was interpreted as a homogenisation and non-inclusivity of support, as well as a misrepresentation and misinterpretation of notions like diversity in the academic environment.

The contractual relationship and customer satisfaction

Following the creeping of the notion of 'consumerism' in the interviews, the discussion was oriented towards the topic of students' satisfaction. A few participants have pointed out that there was a moral obligation of service providers to satisfy 'student-customers'. Harris (G5), for instance asserted:

> *"They are providing us services for our money, so they have to comply with our standards, not their standards."*

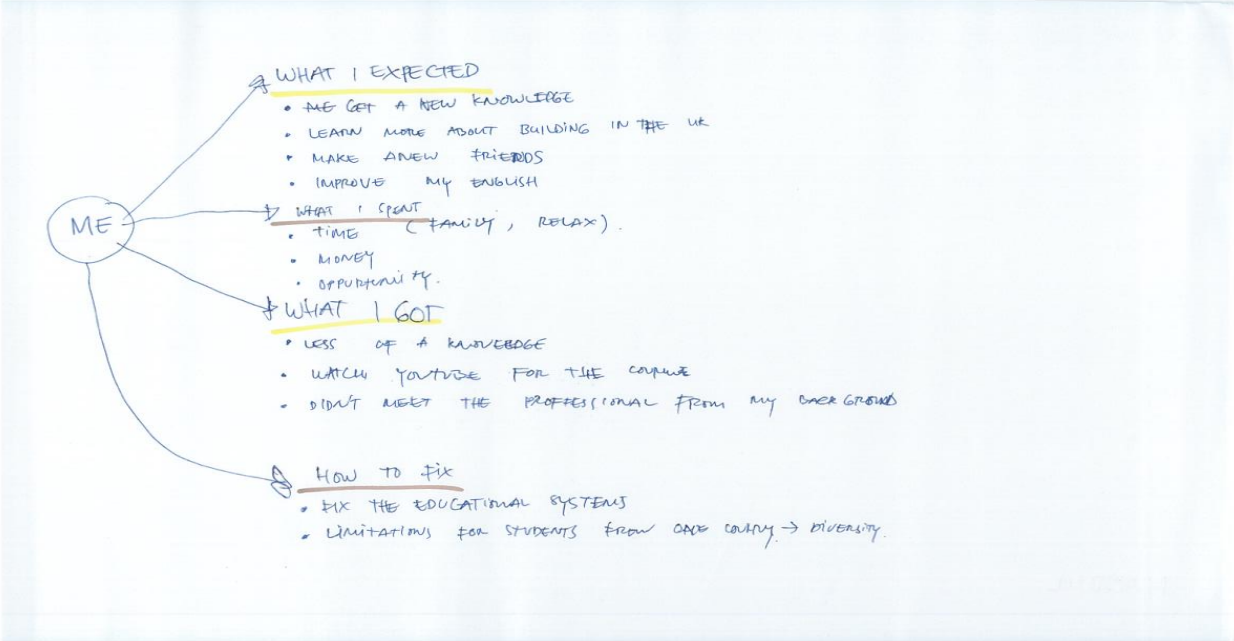
There was a consistent feeling of anger and frustration that accompanied similar arguments, at the heart of which the participants reported incidents where they were denied appropriate academic support. Roman (G4) recalled:

> *"I approached my tutor many times asking for help and engagement, and they tell me either I should do it myself, or they would simply ignore. This, and also as many would agree with me that we do not even meet our tutors to have that chance to ask […] I'm paying for that service as I understand, yet it is nowhere to be found. So, why would I apply for a Visa and waste a year of my life if I could not get the quality of education I expected."*

The view of '*I deserve better as a customer'* was strongly supported throughout similar anecdotes where frustration was associated with feeling 'ignored' or 'under-valued'. There was a deliberate call for attention but also a need for retaining a sense of control over their experience, which they invested in. Therefore, they used the approach of emphasising the urge for balance of interests and communication of needs between the two parties (students-university). Ethan (G2) added:

> *"I think that's crucial misunderstanding between the customers- who are the students, who are really making a huge commitment in terms of money, emotions, and their families […] I'm married, and this is a big challenge for me, I have other financial commitments other than myself and setting goals that are not met is crucial for me as well as my family*."

Referring to the sub-themes of ‘sacrifices’ and ‘costs’ in earlier sections, the consequences of unsatisfactory experience expand to affect the individual student as well as their supporting families, financially as well as psychologically, which emerged to be a crucial concern for most of the participants. Below is a representation by one of the participants depicting their expectations, investments, and outcomes, explained in bullet points.



Drawing 1. *Expectations vs. Reality of the educational experience- Visual data by Harris (G5)*

Summary of Part III

Responding to the gaps in earlier parts *I* and *II*, this chapter resumes the findings with an emphasis on the students’ perspectives on notions and values that are assumed to be hosted by a macro-level of the educational system. Between pre-set expectations and present reality, the participants discussed how crucial elements of their experiences, such as ‘diversity’ and ‘support’ were *marketised*, and then *realised* in the academic and social context. There was a clear gap between both, as students expressed feelings of dissatisfaction and frustration. Attempting to find a nexus between the bi-dimensional views in this respect, the analysis has highlighted the effect of marketisation and commercialisation practices of the university on the quality of education as well the support provided. In reporting its impact on quality of ‘the service’, the participants linked their arguments to the ruptures in the support system (e.g., the unavailability of and limited access to support, and the inadequacy of support if provided) as

opposed to their expectations and aspirations. Therefore, the creeping of consumerism to the data has introduced a rich discourse about ‘customer rights’, demanding ‘value for money’, and emphasised the contractual relationship between students as ‘customers’ and the university as a ‘service provider’.

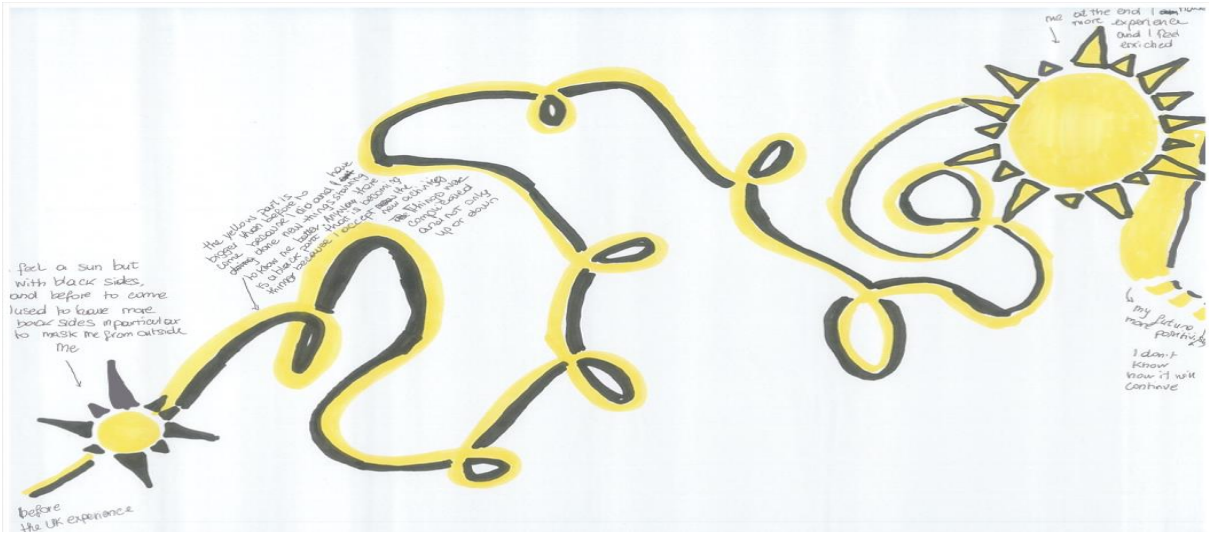
Part IV. Visualising the transition experience of international students- *a vehicle for conceptual reflexivity*

Overview- Visual Storytelling

As a margin of self-expression, the sensory mode of participatory visual methods has allowed capturing the psychological and cognitive mapping of students’ transition experience. Key to that, the researcher has used the focus groups opportunity to access students’ conceptual reflexivity about their transition (Riach, 2009; Mazetto, 2020). The visual creative method was employed as a thought-provocative, engaging, and inclusive tool. At the heart of this reflexive practice lies the purpose of focusing on imaginative processes for expressive accounts. Within the perspective of leveraging self-reflection and critical communication about experience, this technique has enabled students to overcome any verbal communication challenges, lack the literacy and language barriers (Kennedy and Brewer, 2016; Mannav, 2016). Within the aim of deconstructing the knowledge production process, this section reports the analytical perspective that participant-produced drawings offered to this research study. Participants were invited to reflect on their transition experiences, from their enrolment in the course until their graduation, using an artistic representation in drawing. Both their storytelling images and their narrations (of their drawings) acted as key reference to the coding and analysis of this section. Given the space constraints of the thesis, the drawings reported here are representative among the entire dataset of this study. The findings presented here revolve around the notion of ‘transition’, ‘becoming’, ‘evolving’, and ‘development’.

Becoming: Representation of self-evolution through time

Flourishing/ Growth



Drawing 2. *The sun experience (as named by Hazel, G4)*

Text 1: "Before the UK experience"
Text 2: "I feel like a sun but with black sides. Before coming here, I used to have thick black sides to mask me from outside [pointing arrow to the sun shape as 'Me']."
Text 3: "The yellow part is bigger than before arriving to university. This is because I have done new things and started to know myself better. The black part is becoming thinner as I start accepting new things in life."

"Things were complicated, not only ups and down" [referring to the circular twisting motion of the line]
Text 4: [pointing out to the sun shape] "Me at the end, with more experience, I feel enriched."
Text 5: "My future: more positivity, although I do not know how to continue from here".

Drawing 3. *Metamorphosis experience (as named by Maggie G3)*

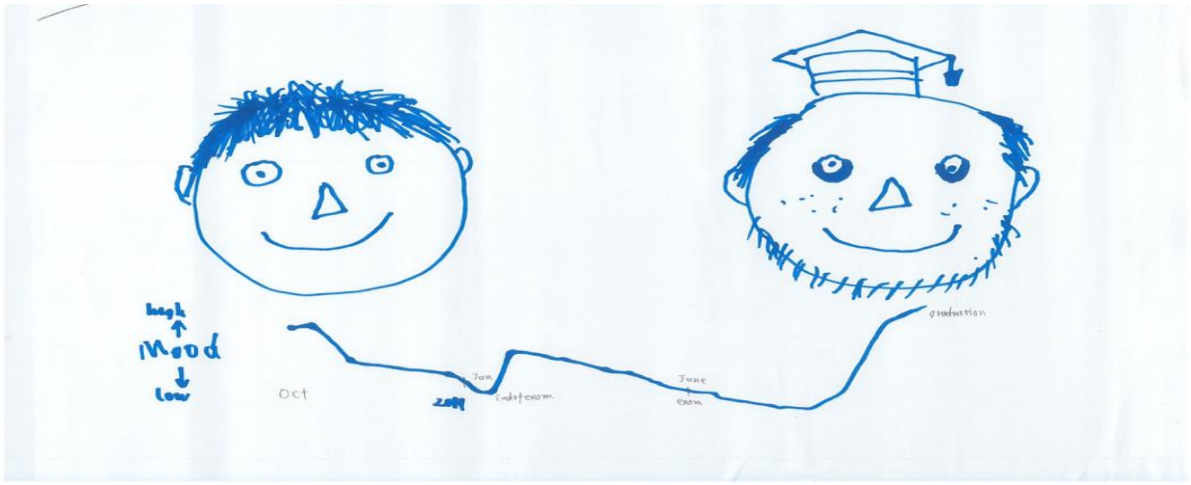
Text: "The drawing indicates my journey throughout my master's. I have used seasons as a way to show my difficult and emotional periods throughout the process, from *Autumn* (a feeling of fear and instability) as show by the wind then *Winter*, where a cocoon of a butterfly has its lows, and then *Spring* to *Summer* where I am almost done with my MA degree where I would have changed and developed new skills and a different mindset
- metamorphosis"

The participants' drawings reflected their awareness of the development/ transformation process they had undergone throughout their transition into higher education settings. In two distinct drawings, the participants used the 'sun' and the 'butterfly' as symbols of themselves. The former was interpreted by the respondent as the 'flourishing' process where she was "trying to figure out how to grow out of difficult situations". This was demonstrated by *the black line* which represents the shell that was keeping itself preserved. The line looked thicker around the sun at the beginning of the experience to 'mask' the self from the outside world. Masking is an attempt of protection from the unknown in the new experience, which also reveals a sense of cautiousness and carefulness. Noticeably, the line became thinner as time evolved which was explained by her as openness and 'acceptance' of her surroundings, also from allowing herself to explore and try new things. Environment exploration did not only make the line thinner but also opened a space for self-exploration when the participant noted 'I have done new things and starting to know me better [sic]'. On the other hand, 'complicated experiences' are represented by the circular twisting motion of the line; the sizes of the twists vary according to how complicated they get. The transitory status between the first and the final shape of the *Sun* (referring to the self) is constantly flowing and developing regardless of any external forces, obstacles, or circumstances. The continuity of change or else 'becoming' appears as non-static and not bound to a specific destination (i.e., finishing the course). Hazel

has pinpointed that the bigger 'Sun' was not the final product in this journey as she continues to grow and evolve after completing her degree. In her experience, the sun at the end was also a symbol of positivity that continued to shine brighter after adversity.

Although no reference has been made to the interwoven aspects of feeling or wellbeing, the *Metamorphosis* drawing has depicted change and evolution throughout the seasons prior to completing her self-development (into a butterfly). The environmental changes portray the periodic difficulty that affected Maggie. Weather conditions referred to not only the seasonal changes but also to the external factors that were beyond her control. Both illustrations demonstrate transformations-in-action over time, due to and in spite of circumstances. The similarity of the two drawings was their emphasis on the process (in motion) rather than the self- portrayal as a product (static) following a chronological order.

Resilience through change



Drawing 4. *The two faces (as named by Ethan G2)- A portrayal of change before and after transition*

Transcript Verbatim: "This is me before and after finishing my degree at University".
"What happened there?" (The researcher asked)
"Acne on my face, eye bags, lost hair, grew a beard, but still happy I am graduated now'.
Note: In the mood representation, "up" is positive mood and "low' is negative mood.

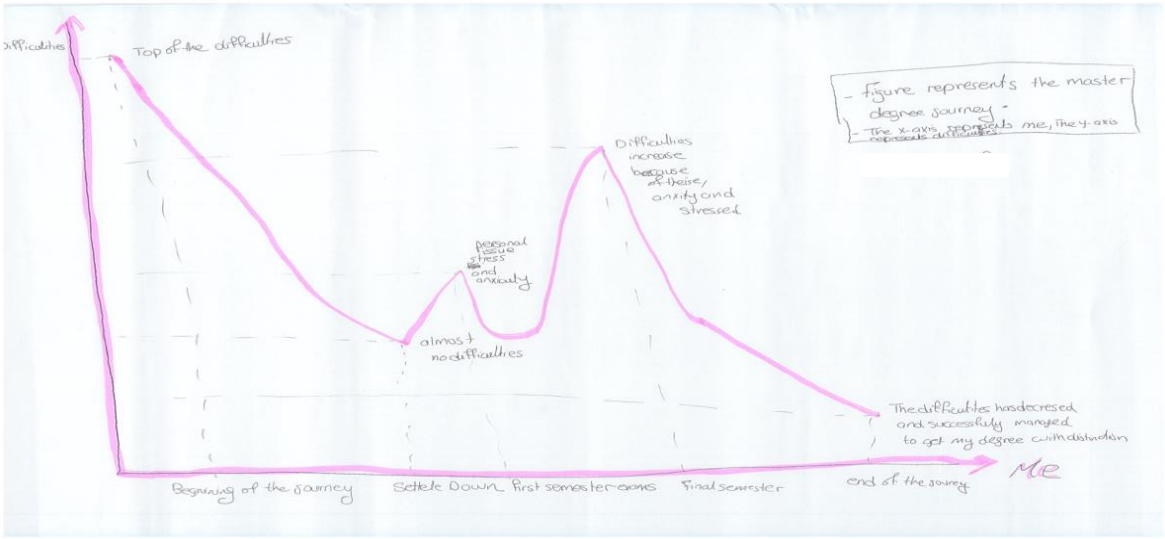
Demonstrated by the changing faces in this drawing, the participant expressed going through numerous challenges and emotions. Ethan explained that the reason behind the transformation in facial expressions was associated with the surrounding factors, such as 'stress' and 'anxiety' that affected every step of his transition process. He, therefore, portrayed the change from a

'happy' face to a face with eye bags due to tiredness, a beard due to negligence, and hair loss due to stress. According to the Ethan's interpretation, the line below demonstrated the mood swings "from up to down" within the time frame of the course (beginning in October and ending in September). The line was elevated just after the exam period finished in the first term; yet it continuously slumped in the second term due to the dissertation pressure. The steady rise at the end of the course represents the end of the stressful period as he embraced the happy emotions of achievement (of the master's degree) at the finish line. Ethan's visual representation has depicted the aftermath of the transformation, the adversity, the hardship he went through in his transition experience. However, the smile has symbolised resilience, grit, and persistence throughout the process.

ECG - The heartbeat

Drawing 5*. ECG- the Heartbeat (as named by Omran, G3)*

Text1: Initial days in getting admission
Text2: After getting into the university
Text 3: During course work and submission
Text 4: During holidays in Christmas
Text 5: After Christmas
Text 6: 2nd Semester- more project works
Text 7: During entire Second semester
Text 8: After 2nd semester- major work of 3rd semester
Text 9: After graduation [which path to consider] 1) job 2) Own business 3) left empty.



Drawing 6. *Graph Illustration of experienced difficulties during the educational journey (Racha, G5)*

Text 1: Figure represents the master journey. The X axis represents me, and the Y axis represents difficulties.
Text 2: Beginning of the Journey- Settle down- First Semester- Final Semester- End
Text 3: Top of difficulties- Almost no difficulties – Personal Issues and anxiety-Difficulties increased because of stress and anxiety- Difficulties has decreased and successfully majored to get my degree with distinction.

Drawing 5 and 6 depict the emotional changes experienced throughout these participants' transition journeys. Whilst the first one demonstrates the fluctuations of emotional stress and stability in terms of heart palpitations, the other drawing utilises a fluctuating curve on a graph. Since the drawing was an ECG tracing, the participant noted that the ups referred to tensions instead of good emotions; the small fluctuations were normal stable emotions; the low ones were relaxed emotions; and the constant fluctuation and arrows at the end depicted the confusion about the future steps, pathways, and open possibilities. Challenging moments were identified in the drawing: 1) prior to getting to university (during admission), 2) During exams and course papers, and 3) the workload of 3rd semester (dissertation). On the other hand, in a different representation of tensions and difficult moments, the graph illustrated that the peak level of difficulty was experienced at the beginning of the course on arrival, which was followed up by a significant slump in the amount of struggle experienced by the time they settled down. Their anxiety modestly increased once due to 'personal issues', and the line has considerably surged afterwards due to thesis-related anxiety and stress. Overall, the two representations, despite being different, have concluded that tensions and difficulties confronted along their educational journey of the postgraduate course were more centred on common points: pre-arrival, (in drawing 5), arrival- to adjustment (in drawing 6), and equally during momentous periods of academic workload like exams, coursework, and dissertation.

Summary of Part IV

This part has focused on the multiplicity of participants' transition experience interpretations – through visual representations- throughout their postgraduate educational journey. With the aim of bridging the gap between the researcher and the researched, this technique of data production was aimed to raise awareness of the whole process of change and evolution. It has contributed to increasing the participants' ability to recall patterns of change by symbolically framing their lived experiences. Besides contributing to co-construction and collaboration in knowledge sharing, the visualisation of experiences has offered communicative advantages, less verbal/linguistic structure constraints, and a greater level of reflexivity. Aligning with the constructivist epistemological standpoint, both verbal and visual modes have contributed to the richness of the whole set of data, and thus to our understanding of the multi-dimensionality of transition conceptually and practically. The findings of this part highlight the conceptual and affective dimension of the transition journey. 'Drawings are good at revealing the underlying emotional experience' (Vince, 1995, p. 12). Research has emphasised the importance of visual data as a 'confirmatory piece' in support of verbal data through data triangulation (Merriam, 1998; Kearnev and Hvle, 2012).

The set of data shared through this method has yielded a deeper understanding of the concept of 'transition' for the participants. It has also acted as a corner of reflexivity on their different and similar journeys through visual illustrations. The non-linearity of this process has yielded non-hegemonic patterns (shapes) that portray fluid, dynamic, and transition experience. The process of re-framing transition from the lens of students has opened a gate for self-discovery and evaluation. Involving participants in the analysis process of their own drawings have highlighted interconnections, cleared ambiguities, and addressed any overlaps of conceptions in reference to their respective personal experiences. Acknowledging the multiplicities and the variations across the visual data, the patterns of occurrence have highlighted the common notion of identity working, self (re) working, and becoming. Each individual storytelling image has articulated a profoundly personal experience despite its irregularities and commonalities with the rest of participants' drawings. It has also advocated against students transitions as homogenous pathways, but rather as non-linear and ever-changing. Symbolised transitions in this section have accentuated the interplay of being-becoming in a spiralling motion in time, which entailed doing and undoing, making, and re-making, changing and being changed by circumstances.

Taken together, this chapter has offered a mosaic of findings and interpretations of diverse student transition experiences into higher education through different methodological lenses. De-constructing complex interconnected patterns of individual transitions from and into multi-layered systems (HE in this case) required the adoption of an eco-systemic approach. With the purpose of understanding and re-framing students' transition experiences, this chapter has focused on unpacking complex relations (between micro-exo-meso-and macro forces/systems), exploring interwoven notions and conceptions, and navigating transition through interconnected chains of proximal processes a cross systems (bio-psych-socio-academic-ecological dimensions).

Chapter 6: Discussion and Implications

Overview and chapter structure

This chapter paints a holistic picture of the discursive framings that this research has offered thus far, establishing novel frames of understandings. Throughout the thesis, the students' narratives have been explored within a broader contextual framework of higher education in light of its neoliberal educational agenda. A persistent call for an understanding of the contextualisation of higher education as a system in the global sphere lies at the heart of the aim of locating the international student transition experience to the UK. This has informed the research insights about the ideological and ontological stands of the current higher education system, as well as identified cross-arguments from the findings and the literature about the impact of governing structural, socio-cultural, and economic forces on the quality of the international study experience. Furthermore, this research study peers through the window to explore the way the ideological shift from the global south to the global north (in this case, from previous educational systems to the British higher education system) has shaped and reshaped the mindsets, values, and beliefs of the transitioning students. The reflexive nature of this study has permitted the exploration of these discursive trajectories, investigating the way certain beliefs and notions were internalised into students' positionalities and transition experiences.

Studying transition within the higher education landscape can show that there are reflective discursive connections to multiple epistemological and ontological conceptions and positions, as well as socio-ecological influences within its contextual vessel. Thus, imbued with theoretical frames of references addressed in earlier chapters as well as the research novel findings, the current chapter is organised to merge and tie the two ends to highlight this research contributions to the field of educational transitions.

Summary of findings: exploring the ecology of transition- Interactive systems: macro- exo- meso- micro

(How do they all collaboratively feed into the notion of experience?)

Embracing the bio-ecological analytical framework, this study has attempted to explore the contours of the transition experience for international students in a postgraduate taught program. This section reviews the main research findings explored through this lens, revealing the nexus between the operational systems during the students' transition. Along the research process, the cause-effect factorial relationship seemed to be intertwined within the ecological systems (see table below). Spread out within this framework, the findings of this research are multi-fold, capturing contextual influences on the transition experience, conceptual controversies, and functional ruptures in the support system.

The analysis of this study has allowed sketching the multi-layered levels of factors and patterns that constitute the 'transition experience to HE' based on discursive narratives from the participants. The approach to explore 'transition' in its contextual hub is problematic, nonetheless. The underpinning articulation of these patterns and connections reported thus far in this research has been inspired by different robust theoretical framings, both analytical (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and conceptual (Gale and Parker 2014; Jindal-Snape, 2016; Taylor and Harris-Evans, 2018; Gravett, 2019). Broadly conceived, there is a call for attention to the inter-relativity between these eco-systems, thereby highlighting the role of these dynamics in enriching our understanding of the transition experience in a *wholistic* sense. The findings, reported in the table below, have aimed to answer the overarching research question:

What are the hierarchical forces that fuel, shape, and affect the transition experience of international students in higher education?

Table 10. *Bio-ecological transition [interwoven factors]- Findings Summary*

Individual Circle		**Micro-system**	**Meso-system**	**Exo-system**	**Macro-system**
Resource	**Pre-requisites** from previous academic experience (Lee, 2021) • Familiarity with the context/ educational and social system. • Academic preparedness • Construction of learner's identity (Reay, 2010)	***Social Support*** • **Socio-emotional support** (friends- family) • **Companionship:** Adult students' social integration issues. • **Instrumental support:** Informational support and assistance. a) **Family**: family education background's role in the student's transition, awareness, and preparedness (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; Mac Iver, Epstein, and Sheldon, 2015; Sathl, McDonald, and Stokes, 2021) b) ***Peers:*** assistance and support **(**Carragher and McGaugh, 2016; Maccabe and Fonseca, 2021; Eret, Guneri, and Avdin, 2018)	**Support mechanisms and institutional policy** **[Transition pedagogy]** a) Quality of information about enrolment/ course demands *Medium:* induction week/ Open day b) **Course content/ teaching practice** (Zepke and Leach, 2010). • ***Indutctionists approach -views of transition*** With short span interventions/ focused/ problem solving/adaptation and familiarisation. a) **Stimulation overload**: • Issues at the level of the 1) scale and 2) distribution mode of information.	**Institutional documentation/ registration/ visa processes** - Delays to issue documents of admission - Adult students walk the extra mile to issue accompanying family documents. - Time and duration of the postgraduate taught course [impact on adaptation process] (Coneyworth, et al., 2019) • **Impact on academic and social adaptation:** pace and quality. - Impact on time to join the programme in due course/	**The neoliberal values of the University** **[laws-customs- values]** • Policy-oriented: The commodification of education • Marketisation of the education experience • Diversification of student body and homogenisation of practice • **Contractual relationship** between University and students • The student as "**a consumer"** • Demand for **'Value for Money'**

Demand	**Age-differentiated body of international students** Adult students' demands and responsibilities: accompanying family (Heussi, 2012; Tobbell, O'Donnell, and Zammit, 2010)	***Academic support*** • **Quality**: standardisation/ homogeneity of the transition-oriented pedagogies [entailing lack of consideration of the 'resource' diversity of students/ 'demand' diversity. <u>*Concepts related to this narrative:*</u> *[Multiplicity of transitions/ demand/ resource] [cognitive justice/ voice/ equality]* • **Length** of support: scarcity of pro-active support- the focus of support on arrival and not before or after. • ***Hierarchical vs. vertical relationships*** with teachers and academic assistants.	• Pro-active support needed before arrival. b) **Scarcity of information:** ▪ Grading system ▪ Academic Expectations. c) **Homogenisation, standardisation and non-inclusivity** of the academic support practice and curriculum/ course content • The need for acknowledgment of resource and cultural disparities among the student body.	ability to make it to the induction week. • **Impact on psychological wellbeing**: confusion/ time pressure [between catching up and being left behind]	• **Standardisation of support** and demand for customised, culturally sensitive tailored support from the host institution
Interpersonal skills	**Resilience and persistence** (Tinto, 2006; Marginson, 2014) **Agency** (Tran and Vu, 2018; Bandura, 2018)				

The eco-systemic transition experience: inter-connections

With much relevance to the theoretical scholarship of the eco-systemic framework, key aspects like personal 'resource' and 'demand' have played a major role in determining the nature of transition for students. International students' transition to higher education abroad entails social displacement and identity transformation (Deleuze and Gauttari, 1994; Gale and Parker, 2012). These individual factors are integral to the personal development process accentuating the role of 'positioning and personhood' (Davies and Harré, 1999). The findings of this study, although supportive of the burgeoning literature of transition (Quin, 2010; Gale and Parker, 2012; Taylor and Harris-Evans, 2018), have revealed the interplay between factors where the transitioning self is analysed within a socio-educational ecology. From a theoretical lens, the relationality within the transition ecology in this research recalls Bronfenbrenner's (1993) "principle of interconnectedness" (p. 7) and Bandura's (1978) "principle of reciprocal determinism" (p. 346). The former addresses the two-directional nature of the ecological system of cause and effect, whereas Bandura's reciprocity highlights the 'proximal' changes between internal personal factors and environment interactions. In this study, both notions have assisted the researcher in understanding the way the transitioning student contributes to as well as reacts to their proximal environment that is embedded within a larger multi-layered system.

Establishing connections: 'resource', 'demand', and support ruptures

Just as the literature has pinpointed the patterns of cultural transition to higher education (Volet and Jones, 2012; Spencer-Rodgers and McGovern, 2002), the findings have highlighted the nexus between interpersonal and sociocultural factors in shaping the nature of the educational transition. Students' educational background (pre-requisites) acts as the backbone of their academic and personal development (Rutland, Dobbs and Tötemeyer, 2016). This is best reflected through an established familiarity with the socio-academic context at the micro and macro levels. Unlike newcomers, some participants of this study have dwelled on the way their past social and academic experiences abroad (whether in the UK or another country) have built their functioning and coping skills and altered their behaviours, actions, and interactions to align with certain socio-cultural norms and educational values and expectations. The notion of familiarity has permeated the findings, explored through both social and academic domains,

e.g., familiarity with governing systems, namely the socio-cultural system (acquired inter-cultural communication skills), and the educational system (acquired academic and research skills). Equally, the linguistic skill improvement was resulted through inter-participation between the social and academic settings.

Throughout their novel academic journeys, experienced students have expressed the way their previous transition journeys have built their inter-personal strengths, emotional resilience, confidence, and self-efficacy. The adaptive coping skills besides inter-personal skills act as enablers to 'transcend' or 'overcome' negative events and challenges (Kiesler, 2000). It was the package that contributed to the academic preparedness of these international students through established patterns of behaviours and coping mechanisms. In one way, the vision of 'resource' for experienced students appeared in the shape of 'knowledge privilege'. Nevertheless, the analysis chapter has pinpointed the dichotomous view of 'resource' where, despite this knowledge, students tend to draw different pathways and conceptions about their current transition experience when it drifts away from their preconceived expectations. The pros and cons of those past experiences run deep into students' biographies and background stories that manifest themselves in theoretical and ideological notions, conceptions, and beliefs of education, which are then translated into performance, convictions, and behaviours in the academic context. Thus, students with experience in the UK higher education system may build a better sense of 'belongingness' (Solomon, 2007).

Building a world around the new functioning multi-layered systems of cultural values, educational norms, and support is the primary goal for students on arrival. Whilst the weight of this task could be heavy, it might be lighter for some than others due to their skills background and perquisites from other experiences; yet it is still relatively a long-term objective. The transition literature has investigated knowledge privilege mostly from a socio-economic stance where it sheds light on societal inequality (Goodman, 2001; Johnson, 2006), which varies from other types of privileges like 'information privilege' (Booth, 2014). However, the generative analytical process has emphasised the bi-dimensionality of 'existing knowledge' alongside the 'gap of knowledge' in the notion of resource, which has unveiled two categories of 'gaps of knowledge'. These are *conceptual gaps, and technical gaps*, which are directly associated with 'the unfamiliarity with the educational/ social system'. Nevertheless, overlooked privileges- such as academic and professional experience as well as familiarity with the socio-academic context for some students- tend to widen the gap of

adaptation (Yvette, 2016), leading to core issues around 'institutional privileging' (Thomas 2002).

The 'resource' idea emerging from the findings aligns with Taylor and Harris-Evans's (2018) input on Gale and Parker's (2014) typology, which was inspired by the Deleuso-Gattarian philosophy of transition. This resource as a notion is perceived to operate closely with the notion of 'individual habitus', which forms the individual's background factors, such as gender, ethnicity, and social status (Bolivier, 2013) that have shaped the student's identity. This notion, simultaneously, has contributed to their development and resilience throughout their transition to higher education. Aligning with this perspective, the study has shed light on the way 'resource' directly impacted the students' adaptation process to the university context. Nevertheless, socio-cultural and educational backgrounds have surfaced as fundamental elements in shaping the student's identity, positionality, privileges, and diverse needs. Scrutiny of the transition literature has advocated sensitivity to students' socio-cultural background (Guiffrida, 2006). Understood in this context, 'personal resources' or else 'protective resources' (Reeb, 2017, p.11) could be expanded as well as fed to the individual through the mechanisms of social and academic supports. A bio-psychosocial approach to Bronfenbrenner's (1991) theory has pinpointed the role of internal subsystems (like community members in the micro system) besides contextual factors in provoking potential change and intervention. Central to the principle of 'developmental pathways' in the ecology of transition, interaction between internal resources (vulnerabilities and resiliencies) and external factors was considered key to determine the quality of transition, thus accentuating the student-environment bidirectional relationships. Observed within the students' ecological system, this research has attempted to answer the question c*an the gap in personal 'resource' be mended/ bridged through social support?* The short answer is yes.

The social support system plays a vital role at the micro level of the student's transition ecology. In an attempt to stitch together the facets of the international experience, the theme of social support has featured frequently among the participants across the focus groups in this study. Viewing support from both its narrow and broad sense, it acts as the cornerstone of the international student experience abroad. Informed by diverse perspectives and insights from this study, the provided support can be broken down into three categories, socio-emotional (from parents and friends), companionship (the case of adult students), and instrumental support (information about the socio-academic context). On the socio-psychological support

front, providing moral and emotional support, the social networks function as 'healing webs', as put by Pilisuk and Parks (1986), that aim to support the student's wellbeing. Nevertheless, family's support can also be instrumental when close family members share common educational foundations and experiences, which allow them to understand, facilitate, and explore alongside the student's transition challenges. The findings in this study echo the role of the family educational background in the student's transition, awareness, and preparedness, as well as in strengthening resilience and decreasing risk and vulnerability (Mac Iver, Epstein and Sheldon, 2015; Sathl, McDonald and Stokes, 2021). The absence of this privilege, this study reveals, promotes uneasiness to the transition and a likelihood of developing maladaptation challenges to other students. The psycho-emotional support, on the other hand, is found to be largely affected by the transition process due to physical dislocation or displacement (De Haan and Rotmans, 2011).

Can previous support systems be replaced after transition?

Students navigate their transition support in the prism of socio-cultural and contextual changes (Pallas, 2003; Gale and Parker, 2012). Responding to the immediate change of their social ecology, students extend the borders of their social interactions, altering the support providers in their primary social circle (i.e., former friends) after their separation as they experience *Disengagement, Disidentification, and Disenchantment* (Tinto, 1988; Bridges, 2002). As social ties with former friends weaken, new personal networks are formed in the socio-academic context, often with those who live or function in close proximity, like peers (Dennis, Phinney and Chuateco, 2005). The findings have shed light on the way transitioning students have navigated their current horizon of possibilities throughout their socio-academic journey. Some participants have addressed the generational gap between them and their parents to advocate for the need for establishing different forms of psychological support where they have more 'relatable' discussions. Literature has shed light on the role of social networks, such as communities of practice, in fostering integration and support to international students (Montgomery and McDowell, 2009). Similarly, the findings have emphasised the way physical proximity increases social attachment to students and vice versa. Thus, peers in the academic context (campus or accommodation) are identified as the new providers of this type of support accompanying fellow students in coping with uncertainty and confusion throughout the adaptation process. Nevertheless, in light of the institutional target of 'social and academic

inclusion', the diversity of the student body has implied different circumstances down the path to context adjustment.

Demand

This research has equally explored the impact of the 'demand' factor on the interviewed international students' transition experiences, highlighting the shift from 'being given support' to 'giving support'. Adult students have expressed experiencing a role strain as they embody multiple roles and juggle different social responsibilities. As the hosts of emotional, financial, and social support for their children, students-parents as caregivers become the 'providers' of support instead of the target of support in their transition journeys. This not only addresses the shift of support roles, but also highlights the emphasis and the emotional load on adult students as opposed to their peers. Mature-aged students' social roles, responsibilities, and social status imply 'walking the extra mile' (earlier discussed in the analysis chapter). The findings have also shed light on the element of 'co-dependency' in adult students' life that entails meeting the physical, psychological, social, educational and financial needs of their children, thereby affecting their social-emotional well-being (Duquaine-Watson, 2007).

A prevailing complaint was about time management. Adult students would spend less time to complete academic work if they were to take a part time job as this could add up to the time spent in childcare duties (Radey and Cheatham, 2013), leaving them behind in any academic or professional career advancement. This imbalance and incoherence between roles and responsibilities act as a burden on the transition experience of parent students. Given the tremendous demands the family duties have on their time, their socialisation time as overseas students shrinks, or even becomes as a 'luxury' as expressed by one participant. Among mature students, mothers especially have expressed an unease of prioritising their lives over their families'. The analysis of these findings has attempted to dig deeper to draw a comprehensive array of adult students' demand and the way it sits within the functioning support system. The students have talked about their struggle to adapt to the widening lack of recognition, inclusivity, and representation in institutional support interventions. Such claims pointed to the accountability of the host university to cater to adults and middle-aged students' needs and demands. *To what extent does the orchestrated support from the university correspond to students' transition diverse backgrounds?*

Structural lag and lack of inclusivity- between resource and demand

Within this discussion, the elements of 'resource' and 'demand' needed to be (re)contextualised within larger and deeper questions of the inclusivity of the support system. It is worth noting that the bio-ecological approach has emphasised the multidimensional assessment of students' transition experiences, activating a triangulation between the three elements of 'resource', 'demand', and 'support mechanisms', all of which are crucial variables in the equation of inclusivity of support. Despite the relationality between both (resource and demand), and before jumping to institutional-level impacts, the study has first explored the individual level. To provide a bird's eye view, the students have acknowledged the way their academic identities are foregrounded in their resources and shaped by their psychosocial demands. Nevertheless, the students reported a lack of inclusivity and representation, eventually presenting a whole array of issues of 'belongingness' and 'representation'.

The study has looked at the implications that resource and demand have for the nature of transition to HE. From an ecological perspective, it is evident that ontological imperatives have led to the construction of values and practices of both the student and the micro-support agents. The educational system is presented with 'non-traditional students' (international students) (Bamber and Tett, 2000) where socio-cultural-academic multiplicities and diversities thrive and seek to be acknowledged. Enabling microsystems of support (academic agents) to respond to students' diverse backgrounds has been the focus of research in attempting to bridge gaps (Briggs, Clark and Hall, 2012) and highlight socio-economic disparities among students (Rutland et al., 2016). As reflected through the findings of this research, the most intriguing feature of this debate was the institutional misrepresentation of plurality of students' backgrounds and knowledges. Consequently, students' expressed needs, demands, and aspirations have been overlooked. Evidently, literature has pinpointed the need to close the gap between transition-focused pedagogies and the diversity of students' profiles (Quinn, 2010; Taylor et al., 2018; Gravett, 2019). The dire consequence of this gap tends to affect students' academic and social inclusion.

The paradigm of inclusivity entails a trajectory between rethinking standardised pedagogies and attaining social and cognitive justice. The interpretations of the findings of this study lie in fine nuances of students' cognitive and behavioural actions. Speaking of the transformative experience of learning, research has emphasised the way it is mediated by a "personal stance"

(Salmon, 1989); one that reveals itself in the interactions within the educational setting, such as students' engagement with the learning material and the instructor. In this respect, the students have pointed out the gap between institutional pedagogies and their former resources (background academic experiences). This angle of the research findings has affirmed the notion of a 'structural lag' in the educational system (Riley and Riley, 1994; Amundsen, 2021). Despite the well-established support regarding student retention and performance levels, the focus on transition pedagogies has not gained the same interest from institutions in higher education (Quinn, 2010). Palmer et al. (2009) argued that "the actual experiences of students entering university have somehow failed to attract the level of academic scrutiny that is necessary to appreciate this transition." (p. 38). This also aligns with Bamber and Tett's (2000) view that the process of integration has "necessitated the invalidation of previously held beliefs, ideas or meanings" (p. 60).

Perhaps the most notable aspect of representation has affected international students from different age groups and social backgrounds. The transition to HE has presented quite a different challenge for adult students. On the cognitive level, "mature students do not just bring their experience with them, they are their experience" (Edwards, 1993, p.83). Functioning on a different level of experience and background, the academic maturity correlates with the social-cognitive maturity in adult students. This was accentuated due to the plurality, and multiplicity of transition in adults (Jindal-Snape, 2016), which has eventually produced 'blended identities' of parent students. The shift in identity trajectories — mediated through the package of their personal, professional, and academic experiences, and current roles and responsibilities — shape students' perceptions of experiences (Lindsay and Gillum, 2018). Through the examination of a threaded discussion with mature students in this study, they appear to encounter considerable challenges in terms of social integration, access to support, as well as academic and professional opportunities (Kops, 2020). Broadly conceived, pitfalls of transition pedagogies appear to be in steering away from being sensible to the socio-cultural pluralism and cognitive-epistemic knowledge differences. The next section looks to address social justice issues in the transition support, grounded both at the conceptual and the practical levels.

Revisiting transition focused practice- —a call to intervene

Untying the knots: conceptual controversies and conceptual silences

The literature review chapter has unpacked the meanings of conceptual tropes of 'transition' in educational settings, such as 'Induction', 'Development', 'Assemblage', 'Rhizome', and 'Becoming' (Kift and Nelson, 2005, 2010; Gale and Parker, 2014). A different angle of this study has looked at the way the conceptual complexities of transition are understood, internalised, and later translated into transition pedagogies in the context of HE. Beyond theorisation, the application of transition pedagogies is trapped within the 'induction'-'development' dichotomy. Research has previously shed light on the way conceptual preferences have had an impact on the policy making process and eventually on the nature and scope of institutional interventions. Epistemologically, for instance, students' transition was envisioned by *indutctionists* as '*pathway'* (attributed to a social system), as opposed to *developmentalists* who have advocated the term '*trajectory'* (attributed to the individual) (Pallas, 2003). Running counter to these arguments, the findings have rebuked the idea of straightforwardness that induction entails.

The students' narratives alongside their visual representations of the transition experience have presented a corner of reflexivity where meanings and practices are explored from the lens of the transitioning student. Based on the meanings unpacked from the findings of this research, the visual representations have challenged notions of linearity in their transition, highlighting the concept of change through 'growth' and 'development'. This prevailed in drawings like: 'Metamorphosis', 'The sun', 'The two Faces' (see the findings chapter). This lens, however, has extended beyond the verbal data, taking into consideration the active self-forming process that transition entails (Tran, 2016). From an eco-systemic stand, this trajectory has enabled peering through the individual-student development through time, which echoes the notion of the chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1986).

Explored as such, the knowledge and meaning co-construction in this study have allowed reflexivity, subjectivity, and self-understanding of the individual transition journey. Furthermore, in an attempt to reach that conceptual reflexivity, the data (drawings) have preserved the element of the non-linearity and continuity in the experience and yet allowed breaking the whole experience into phases. Interestingly, the assemblage of the psychological and cognitive elements of the transition experience, across the participants, has established a

common pattern of periods of strength, of challenge, and of vulnerability/ weakness. Nevertheless, these moments and phases tend to overlap in the process of development and self-exploration. The findings have revealed that the peak time of challenge may be common at the beginning of the course on arrival but is more likely to persist due to the academic workload, or other social and personal issues. The latter has addressed the topics of diversity and representation (Killick, 2012; Tran and Vu, 2016).

Transition pedagogy and the 'Conceptual Silences'- transition beyond induction

The policy routes of practice have been condemned for having overlooked the 'multiplicities of students' lived realities' (Gravett, 2019). It can be drawn from the discourses surrounding transition that institutional priorities have fostered a mindset of short-termism to obtain success, much of which was realised through pre-entry and induction initiatives (Pennington et al., 2018). Despite the valuable input of these interventions, they contradict the principle of 'fluidity' and 'multi-dimensionality' of the 'transition' experience (Quinn, 2010). The host university is expected to model social and cognitive justice through accommodating the breadth of diverse subjectivities and different lived realities (Lingard et al., 2001; Connell, 2007; Dei, 2008). Through this lens, the uniformity of the support practice has been heavily criticised through the findings of this study. The students have explained the pluralistic nature of their emotional, psychological, socio-cultural, and academic experiences. Nevertheless, this has invited the question of whether the standardisation of institutional support is in favour of those differences.

Certain research perspectives have argued that interventions tackling transition challenges should shift the focus away from legitimisation and adaptation to current paradigms and programmes (Thomas, 2002; White, 2015; Knight, 2020). International students on the postgraduate taught course encounter a multitude of challenges and concerns. Mediated through interventions that offer support on arrival (e.g., induction week), the institutional support policy tends to respond by providing information about a different array of the academic experience (Murtagh, Morris and Thorpe, 2013). Most participants in this research have reported a high level of psychological distress as a result to the information overload during the arrival week, leading to feelings of 'missing out', confusion, and fragmentation. According to the findings on this aspect, it was not only the volume of the support information

(in booklets, emails, posters, etc.) that was denounced, but also its efficacy, flexibility, and representativeness. In the same vein, the students have highlighted the non-inclusivity of the support material. This prevailed in the case of adult students with social responsibilities, where they expressed that their challenges were not represented during support interventions. Evidently, research has previously recommended that the institution should have a commitment to providing transitional programmes that are sensitive to adult students' challenges (Bamber and Tett, 2000). Integral to the relationship between person and environment, the intersection of biopsychosocial-cultural processes should be taken into consideration especially with an age-differentiated body of international students.

To tease this point out, support initiatives as perceived by the research findings are presumed to look at the international postgraduate student transition through a reductionist lens of [standardisation and adaptation] instead of implementing an integral-wholistic lens of [diversity and inclusion]. This has tackled both the breadth and depth (or quantity and quality) of tailored transition-support interventions. Grounded in the students' critiques of the institutional response in this research, there was an urgent need for something 'which extends beyond "induction week"' as described by (Pennington et al., 2018, p. 603). This call in the transition literature has been taken up to address the momentous mental health struggles, and the malfunctioning of the prioritisation of support to first year students- as this stands in the way of getting alternative support later (Gravett, 2019; Weale, 2019). Similarly, Gale and Parker (2014, p.741) have asserted that "frameworks consistent with T1 [transition as induction] generally fail to recognise this 'hidden curriculum'… particularly its institutional privileging, and hence fail to respond with transition strategies that move beyond students' socialisation and induction into dominant norms". Whilst Gale and Parker's typology has only tapped into the aspect of diversity, it brought the issue of inclusion into the spotlight. Compatible with findings in this study, this theoretical conclusion was present in the students' views. The knowledge gap is widened at the level of support due to the institutional inclusion policy.

According to the wider views of the participants in this study, the induction has solely included the familiarisation phase with the campus spaces, facilities, rules, and practicalities. This affirmed the conception of transition to university as [*T1,* Induction] where it is minimised to 'a period of orientation, familiarisation and information' (Taylor and Harris-Evans, 2018) without affirming the need to acknowledge students going through *T2* (transition as

development) and *T3* (transition as becoming). Nonetheless, this normative view of minimising transition to the initial phase has been denounced by research (Gale and Parker, 2012; Taylor and Evans, 2018; Gravett, 2019). As for the length of transition-focused support, research has acknowledged that the transition period extends beyond the first weeks after arriving at university (Tett, Cree and Christie, 2017).

Capturing conceptual limitations and controversies, there is a persistent call to review "conceptual silences" (Gale and Parker, 2014, p.747) in transitional paradigms. Beyond the narrowness of the 'induction' vision, conceptual frameworks have highlighted that *the flexibility* of transition is "a more spontaneous, connective, happenstance, affective and transversal practice than is normally thought" (Taylor and Harris-Evans, 2018, p. 1255). These frameworks have also shed light on its *uniqueness* where "each students' assemblage testifies to their unique passage through and inhabitation of transition" (ibid, p.1259). Affirmed by the findings, induction interventions function in isolation from the wider perspective of international students' diversities. Understood in this context, adaptation and development are often viewed in a binary manner, whereas they should be understood as intertwined and co-existing strands in the dynamicity of the transition journey. The findings correspond to the necessity of revising conceptualisation to mirror students' social realities (Nico and Caetano, 2017).

Based on this perspective, there is a need to revisit the narrow framing of pedagogical practices and policy making. Transition pedagogies have failed to "fully capture the fluidity of our learning or our lives" (Quinn, 2010, p. 127). The PGT international students in this study have highlighted tensions and paradoxes of the support mechanisms and transition-oriented pedagogical practices. The findings have explored how these practices are fed by a lack of awareness of 'diversity' as students are more likely to be treated as a homogeneous body, failing to acknowledge the interconnectedness between the interpersonal and intrapersonal processes of their transition journeys. This emergent recognition has echoed the plethora of conceptual initiatives that addressed the need for students to navigate "liminal transitions" (van Gennep , 1960) and for host institutions to acknowledge the complexity (Gravett, 2019), multiplicity (Jindal-Snape, 2016) and non-linearity (Gale and Parker, 2012) of their experiences.

Nested as the inner circle of Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model (2005) is the micro-system, which hosts the psycho-social and academic support mechanisms. Underpinning the value of this scholarship, international students' transitions were (re)contextualised within an operating support mechanism that interacted with and responded to complex socio-cultural and cognitive demands, diverse backgrounds, and expectations. The pressing transition challenges that students face on multiple scales are deeply intertwined, operating amid multi-faceted processes and socio-cultural influences, within a time–space compression (Colley, 2007). Understood as heavily influenced by its dynamic ecology, transition support should be informed by students' interpersonal and intrapersonal processes and multi-layered interactions with their academic environment, as well as identity construction and reconstruction processes through an array of contexts. With the considerable diversity that exists among international students, emphasising the factors of resource and demand, the university is asked to rethink transition practices by incorporating socially just, academically adequate, and culturally sensitive transition pedagogies. This goes back to the need for a comprehensive approach- 'transition pedagogy'- that suggests coherent (policy and governance structure level), integrated (within the institution and services), coordinated (institution-wide), intentional (awareness to difference), cumulative (long-term), interconnected (supportive to success and academic engagement), and explicit (connections between taught materials and assessment) higher education (Kift and Nelson, 2005; Kift, Nelson and Clarke, 2010).

While this dimension remains important, the aim in this thesis is also to reflect upon larger questions that have been both addressed in earlier chapters and triggered through the discursive opportunities with the participants of this research. Based on the epistemological and ontological underpinnings of this research, the analytical lens of this research has examined various ecologies experienced by the transitioning student. There appears to be more to transition pedagogies pitfalls than the binary vision of 'induction-development', or 'standardisation-inclusiveness' of support interventions. The discussions have shifted to the impact coming from the inner circle (micro-system) on the outer ring (macro-system) to address the impact of external powers on the academic values and standards, and thus the transitioning experience.

Polarising notions and ethos between theory and practice

A vastly superior discourse than the theoretical understanding of transition is the cohesiveness of the relationship between its conceptualisation endeavours of the educational transition and their practical applications in the terrain of academic support. To highlight the nexus between the two discourses, the findings appeared to align with the discursive priming that advocated against the controversies of the neoliberal influences on the trajectories of HE practices (Naidoo, 2015; McCaig, 2018). A fundamental discourse has highlighted the blueprints of the epistemological and ontological stands of the policy making of transition pedagogies and interventions in higher education. A significant feature of this research is that it positioned the support ruptures on a larger and more dominant spectrum of discourses- a neoliberal trend of higher education *between theory and practice* (see literature chapter). The latter has been characterised by a dual perspective both in policy and action, which counterintuitively led to 'polarised' notions and ethos. On a wider lens of the findings analysis, the internalised notions have addressed institutional pedagogical responsibilities, flagged epistemic issues, and highlighted practical implications for policy changes.

Transition practice within the realm of 'internationalisation', 'homogeneity', and 'standardisation'

One of the main critiques in this research has been associated with power dynamics when it comes to the prime discourse of framing change in academic support practices. The scope and direction of this piece of research has helped in accentuating educational inequalities as the support system was portrayed as abandoning the element of diversity in students' background resources and demands. A sizeable chunk of the findings has shed light on how these explicit background diversities were perceived as neglected in pedagogical materials (like in their curriculum/ course content,) and practices (academic performance assessment/ grading system as well as support interventions). The deficiency of pedagogical micro-practices links back to contradictions occurring in much larger meta-narratives of 'globalisation', 'internationalisation', and 'diversification' (Altbach et al., 2010; Youtie et al., 2017; Lin and Long, 2020). On a parallel discourse, this thesis has primarily allowed an examination of the relationship between state and higher education in policy making through revising the concept of 'governmentality' (Foucault, 1994), as well as the legislative package of transition-oriented-educational policies in the literature review chapter. Operating at both macro and micro levels, the institutionalisation of globalisation has implied inclusiveness, representation, and quality

assurance of the academic practice (Bienkowski and Stanley, 2012). Governed by global standards, international students as diversified targets have highlighted a shift in ideological and normative values of higher education between the global south and the global north. This is portrayed, in this study, through their socio-cultural interactions and knowledge transactions in their respective courses.

Typically accompanied with prime neoliberal discourses that govern the policy making in the field of higher education, students' experiences abroad have been affected by the global market of education (Henschke, 2005; Jones, 2005). Put differently, the area of research and practice is "falling within a normative paradigm of transition informed by an underlying neoliberal agenda where institutional concerns of success and retention are prioritised" (Gravett, 2019, p.4). Allowing a grasp of this equation, these pedagogies and paradigms seem to be stuck between 'diversification' and 'homogenisation' (Qiang, 2009; Knight, 2020). To break these notions down, this study has also echoed the issue of equality with the neoliberal terms of higher education and educating 'the right way' (Apple, 2001), which has equally been pinpointed in research by de-westernisation or de-colonisation streams of thoughts (Tlostanova and Mingnolo, 2012). Participants in this study have cast doubt on the efficiency of the institutional support in their transition journeys to higher education. Exploring the educational border crossings, international students thrive for support that extends beyond standardised practices. Through a lens grounded in an eco-systemic understanding of experience, ill-informed transition-focused pedagogical practices seem to directly affect processes of individual adaptation, mental wellbeing, growth, and development. Within the nested ecologies of international students' experience, the support ecology highly corresponds to situational demands, cognitive abilities, and inter-personal variables that revolve around the focal individual. On a micro level, further analysis has indicated the distinct role of the support systems' conceptual understanding of students' realities/ multiplicities of backgrounds and positions in supporting their transition-challenges. On the academic support front, ruptures in support failed to address the effect of the saliency of students' multiple identities on the trajectories of their academic development (Solomon, 2007; Taylor and Harris-Evans, 2018). Rich conversations have pinpointed the dynamic interplay between these proximal processes in the findings.

Throughout their journey, the heterogeneous student group is placed within complex conditions, diversified cognitive resources, psycho-social demands, and inter and intrapersonal

processes. All of these are key factors that ultimately shape the student's transition experience, informing the rate of attainment and retention. In light of the findings of this study, the hybridisation and multiplicity of the practice has acted as focal points of attention as students seek to have their positionalities, identities, and challenges heard and validated by the support system of the host university. Another facet of this study has investigated the way the educational system practices are bound to contradict their advocacy of inclusiveness and diversification, from international students' perspective. This approach has offered conceptual and reflective space to address these disparities and conflicts.

Ecology of knowledge: plurality, representation, and inclusion

In this section, I refer to the notion of 'ecology of knowledges' and 'representation' from the educational transition lens. "The ecology of knowledges confronts the logic of the monoculture… of knowledge", emphasising the statement that 'social injustice is based on cognitive injustice' (Santos, 2016, Chapter 7). In a broader context of this discussion, related epistemological dialogues and debates have made a reference to global capitalism and neoliberal education which seemed to be the operating engine for equality of opportunities (Rapper and Burke, 2020). The impetus behind this questioning of cognitive credibility resides in the two-factorial aspect of 'knowledge' and 'power' (Castells, 1999). The ecology of knowledge in this context is used deliberately to refer to the analytical lens used to depict students' knowledge subjectivities and institutional ethical-knowledge neutrality. The former is articulated in students' resources and demands, whereas the latter is depicted through transition-related practices and pedagogies.

The 'resource' factor in this research context has played the mediating role of *epistemic cognition* between individuals, especially in the academic place. The term itself reflects "how people acquire, understand, justify, change, and use knowledge in formal and informal contexts" (Greene et al., 2016, p.1). In line with this perspective, research has accentuated the role of the epistemological beliefs in moulding students' mindsets and behaviours, comprehensions, and apprehensions (Schommer-Aikins, 2004). Research has asserted that the 'internationalisation of higher education' has introduced implications for pedagogy and the learning experience as a whole, such as the 'internationalisation of curricula' (Leask and Bridge, 2013). Nevertheless, the quest for inclusion is beyond intervention-oriented or paradigm-bound changes but is also driving away from mainstream knowledge, allowing a

space for negotiations of socio-cultural values, epistemic and cognitive possibilities. One of the multitudes of literacy metaphors of international students has referred to them as a "homogenized enclave of otherness" (Cohen, 2004, p. 125). Yet, diversity of knowledge and background is the 'unspeakable' aspect when it comes to institutional transition support (Smith, 2009; Quinn, 2010; Gale and Parker, 2012). International students happen to be "straddling worlds" (Gargano, 2009, p.336) and often stuck in 'the betwixt space' in their transition to higher education (Palmer et al., 2009). This seems to worsen by the very transition-tailored support interventions like the scarcity of relevant information about the new world (social and academic) or issues around the distribution mechanisms (means, frequency, timing, scale, and depth).

Responding to fundamental factors like epistemological pluralism, ontological diversity, and students' background heterogeneity, the concept of 'cognitive justice' invites a deeper reflection on the institutional correspondence to students' transition. In accordance with inclusive modes of education, research has advocated employing 'flexible pedagogies' that serve integrative approaches of knowledge that are centred around notions of "learner empowerment", "decolonising education", "transformative capabilities", "crossing boundaries", and "social learning" (Ryan and Tilbury, 2013, p.5). That thread of research has elaborated on the way macro and micro cultures contribute to the variation of pedagogy, as a culture-neutral model still positions education within a web of socio-cultural references and relations (Alexander, 2001). The literature review has highlighted the way global imperatives of education have rebuked the pseudo-neutrality of 'valid knowledge' as opposed to coexisting epistemological knowledges and realities as in 'inter-knowledge'. The opposition between these two dimensions is often invoked in postcolonial and decolonial approaches of dismantling rigid educational practices (Dixon, 2006; Bhambra, Gebrial and Nişancıoğlu, 2018).

The counter-hegemonic arguments in this thesis challenge the linear conception of 'international students' transition', encouraging the use of different transition interventions and practices (Wilson, 2009; Kift et al., 2010) to reach alternative ends, with the aim of drifting away from knowledge domination and re-production that the standardisation of practice calls for. While this research main target has not been the adequacy of curricula or teaching materials per se, the findings have shed light on the non-inclusiveness of their knowledge diversities. The interviews revealed deep concerns centred on the notion of 'knowledge validity' and

'knowledge justice' in pedagogical support practices. This has constituted a parallel navigation of notions like 'diversity' and 'differentiation', 'equality' and 'inclusion' within the realm of higher education practices.

Dismantling standardised transition practices: engaging with diversity, heterogeneity, and diversification

Several assumptions that are linked back to the neoliberal agenda of universities underpin the idea of 'growth' and 'diversification' in the higher education sector. Mediated through the neoliberal ideology, the mechanisms of change of the macro and micro practices of the institution have pushed the sector of higher education towards pluriversality and diversification. As highlighted in the literature chapter, globalisation is deemed to be "irretrievably lost" in the neoliberal vessel of the educational system (Dixon, 2006, p.320). The organisational behaviour included the triumph of *'massification'* and *'differentiation'* within the sector according to Banwait and Hancock (2021), as well as *"efficiency and accountability"* and *"celebration of diversity"*- according to the policy discourse analysis (PDA) by McCaig (2018) (see literature review chapter). Fuelled by pro-marketised tendencies, quality standards and efficiency of the educational practices (academic support, mainly) have centred around the efforts made to meet students' needs (Koch and Labraña, 2020; Murphy et al., 2020). Research has pinpointed the 'cultural matrix' that exists in the neoliberal university (Agasiti, 2020), thereby accentuating the role of translating the notions of 'social justice', 'equality' and 'diversity – not only through institutional governmentality and policy routes, but also through micro-level support to a richly diverse body of students. In light of both literature resources and findings of this study, this section has sought to investigate the ambitious claim of inclusion within this dichotomous vision.

Problematising terminology – the international student body

The complexity of transition to higher education has left policymakers and stakeholders with entangled issues of diversity from social class, age, gender, and nationality to ethnic and indigenous backgrounds (Briggs et al., 2012). Moving beyond students' binary categorisation of 'home' and 'international', there should be a larger room for recognition of the rich diversity as opposed to the homogenous grouping strategy. Aligning with the literature perspective, the findings refute the generalisation of the term *international students*- that is often widely

associated with non-citizens of UK or EU enrolled in an educational institution abroad (Taylor and Ali, 2017). Ubiquitously used within the higher education sector, the eclectic nature of the term implies inter and cross-socio-economic-cultural variables. Educational discourses have addressed the way the rationality behind this inherent tendency of generalisation and homogenisation fails to address key epistemic-socio-cultural patterns and variables. The arguments highlighted in the findings have helped tease out to what extent the preconceived institutional categorisation affects their transition experiences. In that respect, the students have addressed the diversities in their social and academic backgrounds- from resource to demand- denouncing 'being treated all the same', or 'being out in the same basket' [as per their statements] despite their differences. Integral to this level of consciousness about their identities, students' visions have brought attention to the multifaceted meanings and interpretations of 'being an international student' and called for their host institution to bring sharper focus on pre-existing diversity concerns that come along this (non-) segregation. In a way, addressing these fragmentations broadens and deepens our understanding of the nexus between macro-epistemological understandings on the institutional level [reductionist conceptualisations] and individual developmental experiences [adaptation, representation, and growth within the system].

Recognition of identity/ background in tailoring support

Before going further, it might be worth considering what the healthy enculturation of international students within the new educational system entails. In a backward reflection, the increased "otherness" has advocated co-existing needs and preferences (Icaza and Vázquez, 2018). Embedded within the experience of the western university, globalisation has provided both opportunities and threats to learning identities. Krause (2006) contended that higher education curriculum for underrepresented students is both a 'threat' to old ways of learning and 'a challenge' to the portrayal of the student's own identity, which links back to the notions of 'cognitive and social justice'. In the UK context, there was a call for revising the social inclusion policy (Colley, 2007) where judging the quality of education can be 'normalised' (Thiel, 2019). The findings in this study entail a realisation of 'loss' and 'disregard' for previous learning identities. This view has indeed been supported by literature discourses. The institutional practices tend to embody a sense of 'letting go' and 'breaking away' from socio-cultural and academic backgrounds in order to fit in, which was highlighted by traditional models, for example van Gennep's (1960), Tinto's (1975, 1993) and Bridges' (1986, 2002).

These notions have gained a major criticism over decades of transitional research for overlooking students' background differences (Kuh and Love, 2000; Rendon, Jalomo and Nora, 2000; Guiffrida, 2005; Dennis, Phinney and Chuateco, 2005; Guiffrida, 2006).

The themes of inclusion and exclusion, or the 'not belonging', have reoccurred in several higher education studies (Palmer et al., 2009; Solomon, 2007). The findings have also echoed the debate around 'self/ identity recognition', where students expressed feelings less visible or acknowledged about their differences. In that respect, identity theories shed light on the importance of the notions of 'recognition' and 'regard' of the self when it comes to adjusting to a new context, thereby allowing a sense of belonging to emerge (Avraamidou, 2020). Going back to the notion of 'becoming' in Gale and Parker (2014), it is essential to recognise the fluidity of the process as students 'become' as they 'transition'. In an 'institutionally managed' transition (Nelson et al., 2006), there should be a recognition that "the terms of the transition are set by others" (Quinn, 2010, p. 119). Thomas (2002, p. 431) asserted that "educational institutions are able to determine what values, language and knowledge are regarded as legitimate, and therefore ascribe success and award qualifications on this basis". Speaking of minorities, the pedagogical practice "often ignores their differences" (Quinn, 2010, p.1). "Consequently, pedagogy is not an instrument of teaching, so much as of socialization and reinforcing status […] individuals who are inculcated in the dominant culture are the most likely to succeed, while other students are **penalized** [bold for emphasis]" (Thomas, 2002, p. 431). Therefore, the element of cultural domination and conformity in the act of standardisation tends to shift the meanings of integration and transition success by gaslighting students' identities.

This section has flagged the way these key notions are manifested in the narrowly defined conceptualisations of international students' transition. Along with the consequences of transplanting a student from an educational model to another, students struggle with having their diversities mis-represented and overlooked through the host educational system. The transition practice in UK universities attends to "assimilationist approaches to transition where international students are seen to 'adapt to' and 'fit in' seemingly uniform host environment" (Ploner, 2018, p.164). There appears to be a need to contextualise 'transition' by acknowledging the process of detachment, transit, and re-attachment (Palmer et al., 2009) within the new habitus. Moving beyond this argument, there is fundamental interconnectedness between conception and policy change. In this sense, the institutional change can be informed

through aligning the aims of the 'diversification' model of western higher education (Knight, 2020) with its social inclusion policy. This is portrayed through this research by addressing the dual interpretations of 'the transitioning international student' between 'homogenisation' and 'standardisation', demonstrating how they can be divergent in some ways and overlapping in others.

Positionalities and mindsets- *neoliberal lens*

Commodification of HE: at odds with core educational norms?

There is a philosophical realignment of the way higher education is perceived (Peters, 2001; Brown, 2015; Naidoo and Williams, 2015). In England's higher education landscape, discourses that champion the governmentality behind the neoliberal university have studied its marketisation routes and policies (McCaig, 2018). Within this lens, the literature chapter has explored the neoliberal rationality of higher education policies. Consequently, research has argued that the intensification of marketisation of higher education has led to its commodification (Tilak, 2008; Miller, 2010). The latter has driven towards a shift in the perception of academia or higher education as a whole as market-oriented entrepreneurism (Mok, 2001), magnifying the aspect of "*homo economicus*", or individuals as economic subjects (Brown, 2015, p. 31). There has been a prominent strand of scholarship that highlighted the neoliberal governance of UK higher education, which has directed the socio-political-economic change in the field (Canning, 2019; Steniford et al., 2021). Evidently, the literature records the growing fears that these marketisation streams would feed into the competitive spirit of universities, thereby shifting their targets and values from an 'education focused' to an 'income focused' institution (Browne, 2010; Naidoo, 2016). Whilst the former sections of this chapter have addressed the issues around 'social justice' and 'cognitive justice', in what follows, I discuss the trajectories towards the marketisation implications for educational ethos/ values and quality, through the lens of the findings in this study. In the light of this discussion, the researcher attempts to walk through core themes that revolve around students' positionalities within the system.

Seeing through the consumerist lens – *expectations from the system*

As foreshadowed in the findings chapter, this study has opened space for a diagnosis of the marketisation effect on students' discourses about experience and service quality in higher

education. This aspect of the findings has aligned with previous literature that discussed the effect of this consumer approach on students' positionality, like in 'Her majesty the student' by Nixson, et al. (2018), and on students' academic performance (Bunce et al., 2016). The findings have brought forward heated debates about 'students' positionality' in the educational system. Both arguments and counterarguments stream towards the consumerist tendencies, or rather 'value for money'. The intensified consumerist ethos has had its projection on notions of 'individualism', subjectivity', 'institutional accountability, and 'freedom of choice'.

Subjectivity in the system– Self-aware students

Theoretically, the rise of both neoliberalism and neoliberal governmentality has fuelled the conception of an individual as "a subject that understands itself, in liberal humanist terms, as free and in control of itself and responsible for its own fate" (Davies, 2006, p.88). The intensification of these values has contributed to the building of 'the neoliberal subject', which has thrived in socio-economic discourses (Davies and Petersen, 2005; Davies et al., 2006). Nonetheless, the 'subjectification' has assumed any poststructuralist critiques to be born from the exploitation of humans by capitalist political movements (for example, Henriques et al., 1998; Weedon, 1997). Davies et al. (2006) have claimed that the constantly changing individual neoliberal subjectification works closely with Foucault's (2000) analytical perspective that looked at "how discourse and related systems of power work in the constitution of individual subjects to subjugate and govern them, and how that power might also be turned towards critique and transformation" (Davies et al., 2006, p.89). This chain of arguments feeds into the idea that the neoliberal agenda has transformed the nativity of the human subject through a built-up awareness of the new inserted ways of thinking, being, and becoming in different life domains. The commodification aspect has been echoed in the findings of this research, where students perceive themselves as a source of income for the host institution, thereby questioning the ethically problematic institutional practices when it comes to educational equality, social, and cognitive justice. Evidently, the findings in earlier chapters have captured the way these beliefs cohered with students' behaviours and institutional practices.

Quality assurance

Within the liberally regulated educational system, discursive priming for quality assurance acts as points of departure for this discussion. The intensification of 'contractualist norms and values' within the neoliberal university (Olssen and Peters, 2005, p.324) has increased the institutional accountability towards maintaining high quality standards. Working within the market of higher education signifies universities working on their efficiency, effectiveness, and distinctiveness as institutions (IBS, 2015). The ideological package of change has discursively positioned students as 'customers' (Molesworth et al., 2010). Projecting Drucker's (1954) market management on higher education, Pigden and Jegede (2020) noted that "in a competitive market with intelligent consumers, understanding and satisfying the needs of the customer (the student) is as important as addressing the needs of the company (the university)" (p.1651). Equally, the contemporary university has been characterised as a competitive marketplace, where it proves its effectiveness through 'freedom of choice' and 'quality management' (Branett, 2010). A line of theoretical elaboration draws back on a Bourdieusian theorisation that advocates a form of capitals exchange (Naidoo, 2004). In this line of argument, students' transition to and engagement with university demonstrates a diversity of capitals to be exchanged (Reay, David and Ball, 2005).

The student-consumer was one of the dominant discourses that seemed to be celebrated among the participants in this study. The literature has revealed that structural efficiency is closely tied to 'cost sharing' (Johnstone, 2004) and empowering the student as an exerciser of choice and a driving force of change. The value for money discourse is rather seen as an extension of the government policy that has coaxed students' commercialised mindset (Jones, Vigurs and Harris, 2020). The findings are directly in line with this vision, as students view their academic experience as a 'return of investment' (Agasiti, 2020). Centred around the notion of 'individualisation and 'self-interest', a need emerges to maximise the notion of 'institutional accountability' to re-consider students' level of contribution to knowledge co-creation. The students advocated the need for their teachers to establish an understanding of their 'frames of references' as opposed to overlooking the role of 'background resources' in their adaptation and developmental processes. This aligns with the analytical vision this research has hosted about the proximal connection between 'resource'- 'demand' and support networks (Bronfenbrenner, 1993). This perspective was also reflected in other works that addressed a "deficit model" of support, a term used by Montgomery and McDowell (2009, p. 455), that has

framed international students as passive and disengaged in their transitional experience (Tran and Vu, 2018).

As explored in the literature review, a fundamental stream of research argues that the transition discourse is critical to policy making. The reciprocity of theory to practice/ one to another can be explored when structural efficiency of the host institution is measured through meeting core educational values such as 'differentiation', 'subjectivity', 'heterogeneity', and 'individuation' of international student experience (Taylor and Harris-Evans, 2018). Therefore, the 'internationalisation' of the education sector should foster 'engagement' and 'co-creation' of the academic practice (Wang, 2020). Nevertheless, the neoliberal tenets have unleashed a discursive power through value for money (VfM) narratives as a way to assert student voice policies (Kamvounias and Varnham, 2006; Ball, 2017). However, 'voice' can be also viewed as a dividing practice (Young and Jerome, 2020). Students in this study have expressed the way they perceived knowledge hierarchies within the system. The compression of knowledge, power, and voice within a diversified body of students could lead to systematic privileging of knowledge that is reflected in pedagogy and curriculum (White, 2015). This is also compatible with the demand for *'representation rights' and* 'underprivileged' voices (Young and Jerome, 2020). At a developmental level, 'transition' to higher education requires a referral to the identity-work in classic works that explored "liminal transitions" (e.g., Gennep, 1960; Noble and Walker, 1997) or more recent ones that explored 'the 'in-between-ness'– transition as 'a betwixt space' (Palmer, Paula and Owens, 2009).

At a macro level, framed by the neoliberal governance benchmarks and strategies, research has addressed the threat of the institutionalisation of neoliberal rationality in higher education to equity and integrity. This prevails in its economising drive for information, or 'the economization of communication' (Brown, 2015, 2018). The findings of the current study are consistent with the assumption that there is a lack of transparency, where students are not given access to the right information that 'assists them with their choice' (Brown, 2010, p.15). The marketisation tendencies have equally been argued to be invoked by a negative turn in the quality of the pedagogic practice (Molesworth, Nixon and Scullion, 2009). The concern was merely reported to argue that there was a pivot of educational practices towards knowledge capitalism (Olssen and Peters, 2005). The pervasiveness of the marketisation discourse in higher education stemmed from the acknowledgement that education services, including support services, are shaped by this capitalist mindset and framed within its dictated

guidebooks and policies. As the university transitioned 'from a service profile to a market profile' (see literature chapter), the entrenched commercial interests appear to be jeopardising the core academic values (Tomlinson, 2018) by failing to conform to the standards of social and cognitive justice offered to students through support interventions. Despite the institutional manifestation of both democracy and diversity in the field of education (Banks et al., 2005), there appears to be a need for structural disempowerment by allowing a revision to conceptual controversies about students' diversified transition experiences.

An essential feature of this paradox is to understand the way institutional governmentality acts as interactive determinants of the educational practice and thus of arising transitional challenges. The implications from these debates seem to be reflected upon positionalities and mindsets (of students and academic support agents). This has helped articulate the connection between value for money discourses (Universities UK, 2015; Office of students, 2018) and the way this notion is reflected in operational services and pedagogical practices (Munteanu et al., 2010). A growing body of research has addressed the effect of these values as they continue to produce 'fragmented academic identities' (Steniford et al., 2021; Watermeyer and Tomlinson, 2021). Addressed as human capital units, students' perceived quality of their academic provision seems to be reflective of their financial contribution to the experience abroad, which also aligned with other discourses (Naidoo, 2016). While liberal education has envisaged a freedom-infused learning environment that favours individual rights, conservative paradigms have denounced it. The next section explores how the vision of 'consumerism' in the student experience - an overarching theme in the findings- can be also problematic for the educational system.

Consumer sovereignty? - *shifting the lens*

One of the prime interwoven issues depicted in this research was that of 'complex positionalities' and 'power dynamics. This study's interpretations of international students' discursive reflections on their transition experiences within the educational system have captured this complexity. Research has acknowledged the complexity of terminology referring to students and the way it reflects on student experiences. Based on existing scholarship, students have been referred to as "trainees (Franz 1998), clients (Armstrong 2003; Bailey 2000), producers (Ray, 1996), citizens (Svensson and Wood, 2007), co-producers (Kotze and Plessis, 2003), community (Coffield, 2008), change agents (Kay, Dunne and Hutchinson,

2010), and employees (Gillespie and Parry, 2009)" Banwait (2017, p.60). These models have advocated 'student accountability' by emphasising the importance of their engagement in learning. Nevertheless, 'student as a customer' has gained major criticism in educational research. The findings in this study, however, have drawn attention to the way these internalised notions are echoed in students' mindsets and behaviours within the educational system.

Students as partners

This lens of interpretation aligns with research advocating a 'discussion of inclusivity of involvement' where students are treated as 'partners' (Matthew and u.a, 2018). In the light of the reinforcement of neoliberal agendas and given the contractual relationship between students and staff members at a university, this research argues for a partnership between the two parties. This would echo the egalitarian learning values, whereby students are involved in "pedagogical conceptualisation, decision-making, implementation, investigation, or analysis" (Cook-Stather et al., 2014, pp. 6–7). Students' narratives in this study have echoed this vision, addressing issues around students' participation and representation in the pedagogic practice. As previously discussed, transition-informed practices have also aligned with the vision of inclusiveness and subjectivity instead of standardisation and homogeneity. In the realm of international massification of higher education, the commodification aspect of the university experience - in schemes and reforms such as Human Rights Act (1998) and the Equality Act (2010) - implies a need for maximising students' satisfaction by meeting their different expectations, preferences, and choices. The literature review chapter has explored '*student satisfaction as a form of governmentality'* (Day and Pirrie, 2020). In that respect, students' opinions act as performance indicators or assessment measures for institutional micro-practices (merely pedagogic) [see Students' Voices' Discourses in the Lit Chapter].

'Value for Money': a culture of empowerment or a culture of complaint

A fundamental stream of research argues that the agenda of 'student-as-customer' has encouraged the 'culture of complaint' (Molesworth, 2010, p.3), where students are encouraged to exercise their rights as consumers by putting conditions and pressures on the host institution. Counter arguments of the student-customer like Hussey and Smith (2010) explained that the customer metaphor causes more harm than good as it implies that students should succeed despite the efforts they put. Chowning and Campbell (2009) referred to that as the 'academic

entitlement' where students 'bargain' for services, grades, and personalised treatment such as re-scheduling and making decisions (Lessard, Chen and Farruggia, 2008, Banwait, 2017). Others have noted that the customer analogy emphasises the instrumental values of education, passive education, and a standardisation of teaching, all of which are argued to encourage student's disengagement from their education (Ramachandran, 2010; Acevedo, 2011). Others were advocates for the 'customer-student' rights (e.g., van Andel, Botes and Huisman, 2012). They have emphasised the sense of agency and empowerment the 'customer' position gives to students in the higher education market.

Under neoliberal values, the marketisation of higher education has become the vehicle of advertising, branding, promoting, and widening participation in education. These rituals of commodification have equally invoked different positionalities, rights, and roles both to students as consumers and the host institution as a provider of the service. In return, international students' expectations and aspirations play a huge role in reforming internationalisation strategies, recruitment policies, and the marketisation process of the higher education sector (Azmat et al., 2013). In evaluating the benchmark of expectations, research has looked at the 'unmanageable' standards students look up to, blaming the marketing process for passing misleading information and high hopes (Marcus, 2008). Reflecting on records of international mobility of international students, Sawir et al. (2008, p. 149) argue that "[t]hese students are not simply enrolment units administered by universities, nor merely customers of a large-scale services export industry, nor members of a classroom […] they are human beings whose global mobility is associated with distinctive opportunities and distinctive problems." The core argument throughout the findings has addressed the way normative pedagogies of transition have failed to host these 'diversities', leaving students bargaining their rights of inclusion and representation.

Highlighting the role of inclusion and diversity in breaking down hierarchies in the light of the neoliberal agenda, other streams of research have overlapped. While there is a belief that customer-like policies promote students' empowerment, amplifying voice and affirmation of status (Chung and Mclarney, 2000), there was an unsettling fear for other researchers that it might lead to academic entitlement and eventually a destruction of educational core values (Chowning and Campbell, 2009). Although the findings have not depicted such tendencies in the research participants, they have highlighted students' strengths within their arguments by referring to their 'customer' identity. An angle of research has been dedicated to denouncing

the application of the ‘customer is always right’ conventional notion to students (Marks, 2013). Perhaps in a clearer example, Delucchi and Korgen (2002, p. 101) stated that "We’re the customers […] Students do not expect higher education to involve effort, challenge, or constructive criticism; rather, they expect to be…amused…to feel comfortable and to put forward little effort". In a very similar use of vocabulary, the expression *'(I am/ we) are (a/ the) customer(s)'* was repeatedly stated in the students’ narratives in this study. However, it was rather used to assert their positionality within the system, or even claim their ‘customer/ student’ rights.

When seen through the perspectives of policy makers and staff members, the rationale behind the marketisation of higher education is triggered by an “identity illusion”, a “policy illusion”, a “brand illusion”, and a “cultural illusion” of the system (Banwait, 2017). Banwait has explained that his research has depicted “a cultural illusion amongst universities being stuck in an impressionistic mode, carrying pre-conceptions of right and wrong, good and bad” (p.214). Therefore, he calls out the reluctance of university to acknowledge the marketisation impact on the brand, policy, culture, and identity of the institution. The research findings have revealed that the identity illusion is, nevertheless, projected on students themselves and the way they envisioned (prior to arrival) and perceived later their experiences in higher education. The student as a customer is an extension of the education as a business (Holbrook and Hulbert, 2002; Tomlinson, 2014).

Although Banwait’s work has been oriented towards policy makers and institutional agents, the ‘cultural illusion’ appears to resonate with the findings in this study. The students have highlighted the paradox in the way this ‘consumerism’ vision is internalised within the marketisation policies. They have also addressed controversies between the way their experiences are ‘advertised’ and ‘branded’ (as inclusive package of academic and social support) and the way they are realised (through standardised interventions). This is reflected also in the institutional ‘brand illusion’ that lies in the semantic debate of whether students should be addressed as customers despite being treated as such; being ‘customers’ does not construct the whole vision of students about themselves or their experiences (Koris and Nokelainen, 2015). Evidently, this leads to an ‘identity illusion’ (Banwait, 2017) that prevails in the bipolarity of purpose and focus of education practices, adhering to the marketization implications operating as a “business-like” system.

Exhausted ‘neoliberal subjects’- support agents [reflective statement]

Another dimension seems to fall out of the picturesque vision that this research has explored thus far - academics within the neoliberal university. Support does not occur in a vacuum. Within the landscape of transitioning to higher education, it is critical to position students’ notions, struggles, and experiences within a larger scope. This section contributes to earlier narratives as it reflects on the way the conceived arguments about support in this thesis play out from a different lens of research. Whilst this study has investigated the students’ critical reflections on their support experiences, the intention is to broaden the debate to host other dimensions that exist outside the individual transitioning student.

As the front line of support, it is important to our knowledge not to mistake academic staff for free agents but rather as ‘neoliberal subjects’ themselves. A burgeoning body of literature has provided a different angle of investigation of the neoliberal effect on the sector from the lens of academic staff. Thus, it has provoked a great deal of interest in academics’ mental health and capacity to perform. The acceleration of the process of ‘neo-liberalising’ the university has encouraged global competitiveness (BIS, 2016), knowledge economy, rankings, and stratification in the sector (Marques and Powell, 2020), all of which have been highlighted in the literature chapter. The impact of the neoliberal governance has resulted in an excessive pressure that has evidently targeted the quality and value of knowledge offered as it ‘hits the target but misses the spot’ (Laing, Mazzolim and Todd, 2017) and also targeted the teaching, academic role, and performance (Loveday, 2018). This vision has proclaimed the effect that the values and standards of the educational system have on the labour of academic employees (Davies, 2005; Hall and Bowles, 2016). Retrospectively, criticism of the educational practice under market demands has altered institutional behaviours, and most importantly academics’ self-image (Harris, 2005). In this sense, psychoanalysts have diagnosed it as a ‘neoliberal production of anxiety’ (Berg et al., 2016) that is produced eventually by their constant attempt to take risks and compromise mental health to maintain the ‘excellence’.

A fundamental concern for researchers revolves around the fear that ‘student satisfaction’ becomes an essential part of the ‘student experience’. Freudi (2010) asked “ought the satisfaction of the student customer be one of the central objectives of the university?’ to which he later responded that ‘the answer must be a resounding NO!’ (p.5). The neoliberal saturation in the educational system has had a direct impact on institutional behaviours and support scale,

focus and quality overall. Ideologically, opponents of this commodification wave strongly believe that commercial pressures appear to threaten integrity of academics and teachers where they are encouraged 'to subordinate the educational needs of students' (ibid, p.5). Nevertheless, the culture of 'choice-liberty' for students that is promoted within the marketised university has been regarded as overrated by policy analysts as 'choice' is constrained by cultural and socio-economic capitals. At a macro level, the 'tendency to recast an academic relationship into a commercial transaction' (ibid, p.5) is no longer an implicit objective among higher education entrepreneurs. Conversely, fundamental tenets of HE policies have emphasised the principle of institutional accountability and diversity, which has sought a commitment to inclusion and equity through widening participation and differentiation (Reay et al., 2005). However, the paradigm of consumption seems to fail to host teaching paradigms with its core values, compromising intellectual development and inclusivity of diverse backgrounds. "Commodification inexorably leads to standardisation, calculation and formulaic teaching" (Freudi, 2010, p.6). These issues and more have been targeted throughout the students' narratives in this study. Literature suggests a need for pivotal change in academic paradigms embracing inclusive theoretical visions like the 'epistemology of compassion' (Vandeyar, 2013) or the 'pedagogy of compassion' (Vandeyar, 2021).

Notwithstanding the fact that the main goal of this thesis is to explore international students' transitions, there is a need to address the juncture between the socio-economic-political positions and the transition practice. Economic and political narratives and discourses have fed into the adopted mores and values by both the system as well as its students. Policy analysts have highlighted the strength of this inter-connection (Brown, 2015; McCaig 2018; Agasiti, 2020). Through the lens of students, the cumulative effect of these factors on their experiences in higher education has been highlighted through their narratives. Following an interpretive critical paradigm (Guba and Lincoln, 1988), the ever-changing phenomenon of 'transition' had to be placed within its ideological, structural, and contextual frames for a 'holistic' understanding of experience. Tapping on the door of a parallel angle of research does not necessarily always produce counter arguments. In this case, however, addressing the questions behind a snapshot of a research thread can contribute to the wider narrative of this thesis. Evidently, this has stepped on deeper issues regarding the ethical values around the purpose of education which are echoed through orientations of policies and produced even broader implications for the system than mere interventions for 'academic-students' support.

Conclusion, summary, and reflection

Throughout the research journey to explore transition to higher education, I have stumbled upon a range of research frameworks, theories, methodologies, and conceptual models that explore fundamental controversial positions. Standard visions often function in a form of dichotomies or binaries, which implicitly favour one philosophical assumption and deny the other, such as unity/ diversity, reason/ subjectivity, induction/deduction, homogeneity/heterogeneity, and individual/society. This research aimed to mount beyond this conceptual splitting to embrace 'wholism'. The first step in this research was acknowledging the fluidity and complexity of *'transition',* which has elevated the objective of this study to a *reflective explorative level*. It was rather approached as *an organized complexity* (von Bertalanffy, 1968).

In pursuit of locating students' experiences, my empirical knowledge as a researcher has expanded on policy actions, reforms, and ideologies that are hosted and exerted by the university as a governing system. Casting this objective has unveiled the inadequacy of linear and reductionist approaches that are devoid of individual attributes and diverse contextual assets. This research has employed the eco-systemic theory of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 2005), which underscores the way these assets and connections with individuals, communities, and support systems coalesce to shape experience under contextual/ecological conditions. Through engaging this lens, the inherited neoliberal values of the educational system have not been a complementarity of the inquiry, but rather key to understanding the interconnections of policymaking ↔ ideological perspectives (exosystem and macrosystem). In an inclusive relational fashion, this research inquiry has examined further the way conceptual assumptions of the educational system about 'transition support'- under neoliberal tenets- have been reflected on the policymaking process (interventions and pedagogies) and thus on the quality of students' experiences (individual ↔ context relations).

This research has profound and wide-ranging implications for the educational policy. Light is cast on both conceptual and practical controversial issues. The table below summarises key points.

Table 11. *Research targets and Implications- concluding points*

Research target	***Overall implications of the study***
	'Non-homogenous international student body'
Achieve a nuanced conception of students' diverse transition experiences **[the role of inter-individual differences]** **(*Individual level)***	Considering the multiplicity of individual transitions in: • **personal resource** and bio-socio-psych-academic background, and interpersonal skills. • **situational demand** (across different age groups/ special needs, etc.)
Conceptual controversies and conceptual silences of the transition experience **[between theory and support practices]** ***(Meso)***	• Rebuking the standardisation and homogeneity of the transition-oriented pedagogies (in course content, curricula, and interventions). • Inclusivity of the academic support
Navigating social and educational spaces in transition ***[Student-support systems]*** ***(Micro level)***	• *Establishing dialogue between staff-students and negotiating diverse needs.* • Flexibility of interventions • Minimising '*information overload'*: quality and length of support • Ease of access: the need for pro-active support (Pre-arrival).
	Exploring controversies
Explore student's positionality within the system **Neoliberal influences [ideological shifts]** **[The role of notions, values, ideological perspectives in shaping transition]** ***(Macro level)***	▪ ***Commodification of higher education*** - Quality assurance vs. educational standards - Value for money and student-customer satisfaction ▪ ***Seeing through the 'student-consumer' lens*** - Culture of empowerment or a culture of Complaint (identity crisis)

This research has a vested interest in echoing students' voices to policymakers, celebrating strengths, and addressing controversial issues. Theoretically, this research vision has mounted against the limitations of the reductionist perspective to strongly recommend a holistic-relational- and integral research framework in approaching transformational life change within and between systems, addressing the dynamic exchanges in the human experience (micro ↔ meso ↔ exo ↔ macro). The space in this thesis comes at the expense of detail in exploring all levels. The premise of this research has accentuated the notions of equality, inclusion, diversity, social and cognitive justice. The findings of this research cannot be generalised to the entire sector or to other contexts.

Placed in a larger context, the marketisation of Higher Education is rooted within the British system. Therefore, the focus of the narrative has shifted from purely condemning the policies to addressing the overlooked gaps. The diversion in perspective serves the purpose of change and improvement rather than debate and conflict. By throwing light on these issues, the interconnections between macro and micro aspects aimed for empowering the vision of students about the multiplicity of their transitions that contradicts the status quo of a linear-mono-cultural western model of education. Through their lens, this research has attempted to investigate the authenticity of educational policy goals in spreading cross-cultural values, compassion, inclusion, and knowledge democracy among students.

Sketching the contours of re-framing transition requires a boundary crossing from linear to ecological thinking; from measuring entities to mapping patterns, from structuring to navigating, and from singular epistemology to embracing epistemological pluralism and exploring diverse knowledge ecologies. Within the nested cycles of university as an ecosystem, the uniformity of support policies that is yielded from an ideological misconception — that often tends to homogenize 'the student experience' — have implied a shallow identification to 'student identity/ position' within the system. For instance, the term *'international student'* acts as a homogenizing institutional label that functions in spite of the categorical implications of students' diversities, backgrounds, and ontological realities (force and demand). Unlike its theoretical and political prospects, taken for granted concepts like 'empowerment', 'students' engagement', and 'voice' appear to be nuanced and problematic within the neoliberal university. Whilst exploring power relations, this study has shed some light on the behavioural effects of a 'marketized-oriented' ideology for students and the way these neoliberal internalised notions are translated in practice. Infused within this thread of discussion, a

plethora of conflicting notions have raised in this thesis, such as domination and resistance, homogeneity and diversification, unity, and individualism.

In the myriad of entanglements, there appears to be a mis-alignment between institutional transition practice and students' lived transitions. In gazing forward, it would be interesting to reflect on the ideological agenda that underpins policy initiatives, inclusion-oriented reforms, and tailored support interventions to transitioning international students. Processes need to be put in place to counter the homogenisation of educational materials, pedagogies, and support initiatives, through implementing an integral knowledge paradigm that honours socio-cultural-academic diversity in the international student body. Equitable educational reforms and policies should advocate the mobilization of this change by opening avenues for negotiating and communicating these gaps and differences. It is critical to reflect (w)holistically on students transition within an eco-system in order to open up to new horizons and possibilities – recognizing the complexity of the (bio) diversities, knowledge ecologies/ epistemologies, institutional support hierarchies, and socio-economic forces. It is equally a call for educational futurists to address pro-active support, adhering to diversity-sensitive measures in enacting change, and design multi-levelled interventions. Nevertheless, key to the whole transformative process, is to break the traditional hierarchy and bridge the communication gap between students ↔ support agents ↔ HE institutions ↔ policymakers.

List of references

Agasisti, T. (2020) 'The marketisation of English higher education: A policy analysis of a risk-based system (great debates in higher education)'. *Higher Education Quarterly, 74*(2), pp. 215–217.

Åkerström, J. and Brunnberg, E. (2013) 'Young people as partners in research: experiences from an interactive research circle with adolescent girls'. *Qualitative Research, 13*(5), pp. 528–545.

Alexander, R. J. (2001) *Culture and pedagogy: International comparisons in primary education*. Oxford: Blackwell

Alden, J. and Lin, G. (2004) *Benchmarking the characteristics of a world class university: developing and international strategy at university level*. London: The UK Higher Education Leadership Foundation.

Alhojailan, M.I. (2012) 'Thematic analysis: A critical review of its process and evaluation'. *West East Journal of Social Sciences*, *1*(1), pp.39-47.

Alise, M. A. and Teddlie, C. (2010) 'A continuation of the paradigm wars? Prevalence rates of methodological approaches across the social/behavioral sciences'. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, *4*(2), 103-126.

Allen, R.E. and Wiles, J.L. (2016) 'A rose by any other name: participants choosing research pseudonyms'. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *13*(2), pp. 149–165.

Altbach, P. (2004) 'The costs and benefits of world-class universities'. *Intrnational higher Education*, (33), pp. 5-8.

Altbach, P. and Klemenčič, M., (2014) 'Student activism remains a potent force worldwide'. *International Higher Education, 76,* pp. 2–3.

Altbach, P. G., Reisberg, L. and Rumbley, L. E. (2010) *Trends in global higher education: tracking an academic revolution*. Paris: UNESCO.

Aluwihare-Samaranayake, D. (2012) 'Ethics in qualitative research: A view of the participants' and researchers' worlds from a critical standpoint'. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 11, pp. 64–81

Alvesson, M. and Willmott, H. (2002) 'Identity regulation as organizational control: Producing the appropriate individual'. *Journal of management studies*, *39*(5), pp. 619–644.

Amundsen, D. (2021) 'Life is not always linear: expanding the notion of transitions in higher education to challenge structural, static and linear processes facing Indigenous and older adult students'. *Studies in Higher Education (Dorchester-on-Thames)*, pp. 1–13. Doi: 10.1080/03075079.2021.1948526.

Anderson, R. E., Carter, I., and Lowe, G. R. (2007) *Human behavior in the social environment: A social systems approach*. 5th edn. New York: Aldine De Gruyter.

Andrews, M. (2005) 'Who is being heard? Response bias in open-ended responses in a large government employee survey'. *Paper presented at the 60th Annual Conference of the American Association for Public Opinion Research*. Miami Beach, FL.

Andrew, P. and Jonathan, T. (2006) 'Focus group method and methodology: Current practice and recent debate'. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education*, 29, pp. 23– 37.

Anon, (2008) 'Purposive sampling'. *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*, 2, pp. 697–698.

Apple, M.W. (2001) *Educating the 'right' way: markets, standards, God and inequality*. New York: Routledge Falmer.

Arambewela, R. and Maringe, F. (2012) 'Mind the gap: staff and postgraduate perceptions of student experience in higher education'. *Higher Education Review*, *44*(2), pp. 63-84.

Arksey, H. and O'Malley, L. (2005) 'Scoping studies: Towards a methodological framework'. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, *8*(1), pp. 19–32.

Ashworth, P., Bannister, P. and Thorne, P. (1997) 'Guilty in whose eyes? University students' perceptions of cheating and plagiarism in academic work and assessment'. *Studies in Higher Education, 22*(2), pp. 187-203.

Atkinson, E. (2003) 'The postmodern prism: Fracturing certainty in educational research'. In: Swann, J. and Pratt, J. (eds.) *Educational research in practice*. London: Continuum (pp. 35-50).

Atkinson, R. J. *et al.* (2017) 'Electrophysiological, cognitive and clinical profiles of at-risk mental state: The longitudinal minds in transition (MinT) study'. *Biological Psychiatry (1969)*, *81*(10), pp. 1-26.

Atzaba-Poria, N., Pike, A. and Deater-Deckard, K. (2004) 'Do risk factors for problem behavior act in a cumulative manner? An examination of ethnic minority and majority children through an ecological perspective'. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, *45*(4), pp. 707–718.

Austin, W. (2007) 'The ethics of everyday practice: Healthcare environments as moral communities'. *Advances in Nursing Science, 30*, pp. 81–88.

Avraamidou, L. (2020) 'Science identity as a landscape of becoming: rethinking recognition and emotions through an intersectionality lens'. *Cultural Studies of Science Education, 15*(2), pp. 323–345.

Babbie, E. (2001) *The practice of social research*. 9th edn. Belmont, United States of America: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning.

Bache, I. (2003) 'Governing through governance: Education policy control under new labour'. *Political Studies, 51*(2), pp. 300−14.

Baker, S. and Irwin, E. (2021) 'Disrupting the dominance of 'linear pathways': how institutional assumptions create 'stuck places' for refugee students' transitions into higher education'. *Research Papers in Education*, *36*(1), pp.75–95.

Baklashova, T. A. and Kazakov, A. V. (2016) 'Challenges of international students' adjustment to a higher education institution'. *International Journal of Environmental and Science Education, 11*(8), pp. 1821-1832.

Ball, S. J. (2003) 'The teacher's soul and the terrors of performativity'. *Journal of Education Policy, 18*(2), pp. 215-228. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0268093022000043065.

Ball, S. J. (2008) 'New philanthropy, new networks and new governance in education'. *Political Studies, 56*(4), pp.747–765.

Ball, S. J. (2012) *Global education Inc.: New policy networks and the neo-liberal imaginary*. London: Routledge.

Ball, S. J. (2013) *Foucault, power, and education*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Ball, S. J. (2017) *The education debate*. 3rd edn. Bristol: Policy Press.

Ball, S. J. and Olmedo, A. (2013) 'Care of the self, resistance, and subjectivity under neoliberal governmentalities'. *Critical Studies in Education, 54*(1), pp.85–96.

Bamber, J. and Tett, L. (2000) 'Transforming the learning experiences of non-traditional students: A perspective from higher education.' *Studies in Continuing Education, 22*(1), pp. 57–75. Doi: 10.1080/713695715.

Bandura, A. (1978) 'The self-system in reciprocal determinism'. *American Psychologist, 33*(4), pp. 344-358.

Bandura, A. (2012) 'On the functional properties of perceived self-efficacy revisited'. *Journal of Management, 38*(1), pp. 9–44.

Bandura, A. (2018) 'Toward a psychology of human agency: Pathways and reflections. *Perspectives on Psychological Science, 13*(2), pp. 130–136. https://doi-org.nottingham.idm.oclc.org/10.1177/1745691617699280

Banks, J., McGhee, C., Cortes, C., Hahn, C., Merryfield, M., Moodley, K., MurphyShigematsu, S., Os ler, A., Park, C. and Parker, W. (2005) *Democracy and diversity: Principles and concepts for educating citizens in a global age*. Center for Multicultural Education: University of Washington.

Banwait, K. (2017) *The student as customer: A study of the intensified marketisation of higher education in England*. Doctoral dissertation. University of Derby. Available at: https://derby.openrepository.com/handle/10545/622828 (Accessed: 2 January 2021).

Banwait, K.S. and Hancock, C. (2021) 'Post Browne review: a reflective analysis of marketisation dilemmas of senior managers in English universities', *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, pp. 1–18. Doi:10.1080/08841241.2021.2006853.

Bargerstock, C. and McCarthy, K. (2012) *Immigration basics: FAQ for academic advisors advising international students*. *NAFSA*. Retrieved from https://www.nafsa.org/ findresources/Default.aspx?id=32981

Barnhart, A. C. and Stanfield. A. (2013) 'Bridging the information literacy gap: library participation in summer transition programs.' *Reference Services Review, 41*(2), pp. 201–18. Doi:10.1108/00907321311326147.

Barron, B. (2006) 'Interest and self-sustained learning as catalysts of development: A learning ecology perspective'. *Human Development, 49*(4), pp. 193–224.

Bathmaker, A. M., & Thomas, W. (2009). Positioning themselves: an exploration of the nature and meaning of transitions in the context of dual sector FE/HE institutions in England. J Furth High Educ, 33(2), 119–130. doi:10.1080/03098770902856652.

Bean, J. (2005) *Nine themes of college student retention: Factors predicting the success of first- year, first-semester students at Tennessee State University*. Doctorate dissertation. Tennessee State University.

Beasley, C.J. and Pearson, C.A.L. (1999) 'Facilitating the learning of transitional students: Strategies for success for all students'. *Higher Education Research and Development, 18*(3), pp. 303–21.

Behnke, A.O., Plunkett, S.W., Sands, T. and Bamaca-Colbert, M.Y. (2011) 'The relationship between Latino adolescents' perceptions of discrimination, neighborhood risk, and parenting on self-esteem and depressive symptoms'. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 42*(7), pp. 1179–1197.

Berg, L.D., Huijbens, E.H. and Larsen, H.G. (2016) 'Producing anxiety in the neoliberal university'. *The Canadian Geographer*, *60*(2), pp. 168–180. Doi: 10.1111/cag.12261

Bernhaupt, R., Weiss, A., Pirker, M., Wilfinger, D. and Tscheligi, M. (2010) *Ethnographic insights on security, privacy, and personalization aspects of user interaction in interactive TV*. Proceedings of Euroitv 2010: Tampere, Finland.

Bernsden, M., Spears, R., Pligt, J. and McGarty, C. (2002) 'Illusory correlation and stereotype formation: Making sense of group differences and cognitive biases'. In McGarty, C., Yzerbyt, V. Y. and Spears, R. (eds.) *Stereotypes as explanations: The formation of meaningful beliefs about social groups*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 90–110.

Bhambra, G. K., Gebrial, D. and Nişancıoğlu, K. (2018) *Decolonising the University*. London: Pluto Press.

Bhochhibhoya, A., Dong, Y. And Branscum, P. (2017) 'Sources of social support among international college students in the United States'. *Journal of International Students, 7*(3), pp.671–686.

Bienkowski, W., Brada, J. and Stanley, G. (2012) *The university in the age of globalization*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Biesta, G. (2010) 'Pragmatism and the philosophical foundations of mixed methods research'. In: Tashakkori A. and Teddlie, C. (eds.) *Sage handbook of mixed methods in social & behavioral research*. 2nd edn. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, pp. 95-118.

Birch, M. and Miller, T. (2002) *Encouraging participation: Ethics and responsibilities*. London: Sage Publications Limited.

Birch, M. and Miller, T. (2000) 'Inviting intimacy: the interview as a therapeutic opportunity'. *Social Research Methodology, 3*, pp. 189–202.

BIS [Department for Business, Innovation and Skills] (2015) *Higher education: fulfilling our potential, 9 September 2015*. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/higher-education-fulfilling-our-potential (Accessed: 8 November 2019).

BIS (2015) *Fulfilling our potential: Teaching excellence, social mobility and student choice, 6 November2015*. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/474227/BIS-15-623-fulfilling-our-potential-teaching-excellence-social-mobility-and-student-choice.pdf (Accessed 8 November 2019).

BIS (2016) *Success as a knowledge economy: teaching excellence, social mobility and student choice*. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/523396/bis-16-265-success-as-a-knowledge-economy.pdf (Accessed 17 December 2020).

Bodén, L. (2015) 'The presence of school absenteeism: Exploring methodologies for researching the material-discursive practice of school absence registration'. *Cultural Studies <=> Critical Methodologies, 15*(3), pp. 192–202.

Bok, D. (2003) *Universities in the marketplace: the commercialization of higher education.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Boliver, V. (2013) 'How fair is access to more prestigious UK universities?' *The British Journal of Sociology,* 64(2), pp. 344–64. Doi: 10.1111/1468-4446.12021.

Bonal, X. (2003) 'The Neoliberal Educational Agenda and the Legitimation Crisis: old and new state strategies'. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 24*(2), pp. 159-175. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01425690301897

Bonassi, T. and Wolter, S.C. (2002) 'Measuring the success of transition: The results of a pre-study in Switzerland'. *Education+Training, 44*(4–5), pp. 199–207.

Booth, C. (2014) 'On information privilege'. *Infomational*. Available at: https://infomational.wordpress.com/2014/12/01/on-information-privilege/

Borg, I. And Zuell, C. (2012) 'Write-in comments in employee surveys'. *International Journal of Manpower*, *33*(2), pp.206–220.

Bourdieu, P. (1984) *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste* (translated by R. Nice*)*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Bourdieu, P., & Loïc J. D. Wacquant. 1992. *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*. Cambridge: Polity.

Bourdieu, P., & Passeron, C. (1977). *Reproduction in education, society and culture*. London, Beverley Hills: Sage Publications

Bourdieu, P. (1994) 'Structures, habitus, power: Basis for a theory of symbolic power'. In Dirks, N. B., Eley, G. and Ortner, S. B. (eds.) C*ulture/power/history: A reader in contemporary social theory*. Chichester, England: Princeton University Press, pp. 155-199.

Bowlby, J. (1969) *Attachment and loss.* London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis.

Bowles, A. *et al.* (2014) 'Staying the distance: students' perceptions of enablers of transition to higher education'. *Higher Education Research and Development*, *33*(2), pp. 212–225. Doi:10.1080/07294360.2013.832157.

Bowman, N. A. (2010a) 'College diversity experiences and cognitive development: A meta-analysis'. *Review of Educational Research, 80*, pp. 4–33.

Bowman, N. A. (2010b) 'The development of psychological well-being among first-year college students'. *Journal of College Student Development, 51*, pp. 180–200.

Bowman, N. A. and Denson, N. (2012) 'What's past is prologue: How precollege exposure to diversity shapes the impact of college diversity experiences'. *Research in Higher Education, 53*, pp. 406–425.

Bradburn, N.M., Sudman, S. and Wansink, B. (2004) *Asking questions: The definitive guide to questionnaire design: For market research, political polls, and social and health questionnaires*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass

Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006) 'Using thematic analysis in psychology'. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), pp. 77-101.

Braxton, J. M., Milem, J. F. and Sullivan, A. S. (2000) 'The influence of active learning on the college student departure process: Toward a revision of Tinto's theory'. *Journal of Higher Education*, 71(5), pp. 569-590.

Breen, R., & Goldthorpe, J. (1997). Explaining educational differentials: Towards a formal rational action theory. Rationality and Society, 9(3), 275–305

Brekhus, W., Galliher, J. and Gubrium, J. (2005) 'The need for thin description'. *Qualitative Inquiry, 16*(6), pp. 1−19.

Bridges, W. (2002) *Managing transitions: Making the most of change*. London: Nicholas Brealey Publishing.

Briggs, A. R. J., Clark, J. and Hall, I. (2012) 'Building bridges: understanding student transition to university.' *Quality in Higher Education, 18*(1), pp. 3–21. Doi:10.1080/13538322.2011.614468.

Briggs, C. (2000) 'Interview'. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology, 9*(1-2), pp. 137-140.

Brooman, S. and Darwent, S. (2013) 'Measuring the beginning: a quantitative study of the transition to higher education'. *Stud High Educ, 39*(9), pp. 1523–1541. Doi:10.1080/03075079.2013.801428.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1975) 'Reality and research in the ecology of human development'. *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society, 119*(6), pp. 439–469.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1977) 'Toward an experimental ecology of human development'. *American Psychologist, 32*(7), pp. 513–531.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1978) 'The social role of the child in ecological perspective'. *Zeitschrift fu ̈r Soziologie, 7*(1), pp. 4–20.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979) *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1986) 'Ecology of the family as a context for human development: Research perspectives'. *Developmental Psychology, 22*(6), pp. 723–742.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1993) 'Ecological models of human development'. In: Gauvain, M. and Cole, M. (eds.) *Readings on the development of children*. 2nd edn. NY: Freeman, pp. 37-43.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1995) 'Developmental ecology through space and time: A future perspective'. In: Moen, P., Elder Jr., G.H. and Lu ̈scher, K. (eds) *Examining lives in context: Perspectives on the ecology of human development*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, pp. 619–647.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1989) 'Ecological systems theory'. In: Vasta R. (ed.) *Annals of child development*. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, Vol. 6, pp. 187 – 249.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1999) 'Environments in developmental perspective: Theoretical and operational models'. In: Friedman, S. L. and Wachs, T. D. (eds.) *Measuring environment across the life span: Emerging methods and concepts*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, pp. 3 – 28.

Bronfenbrenner, U. and Ceci, S. J. (1994) 'Nature-nurture reconceptualized in developmental perspective: A bioecological model'. *Psychological Review, 101*(4), pp. 568–586.

Bronfenbrenner, U. and Evans, G. W. (2000) 'Developmental science in the 21st century: Emerging questions, theoretical models, research designs and empirical findings'. *Social Development, 9*(1), pp. 115–125.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (2009) *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA, USA; London, UK.

Bronfenbrenner, U. and Morris, P. (2006) 'The bioecological model of human development'. In: Lerner, R. M., Damon, W. and Lerner, R. M. S. (eds.) *Handbook of child Psychology. Theoretical models of human development*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, Vol. 1, pp. 793–828.

Brosnan, C. et al., 2016. Experiences of medical students who are first in family to attend university. *Medical Education*, 50(8), pp.842–851.

Browman, A. S. *et al.* (2019). How economic inequality shapes mobility expectations and behaviour in disadvantaged youth. *Nature human behaviour*, 3(3), pp.214–220.

Bowman, N. A. (2010) 'College diversity experiences and cognitive development: A meta-analysis'. *Review of Educational Research, 80*, pp. 4–33.

Browne, J. (2010) *Securing a sustainable future for higher education*, 12 November 2019. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/422565/b

Brown, R. (2018). 'Higher education and inequality'. *Perspectives (Association of University Administrators (U.K.))*, *22*(2), pp.37–43.

Brown, W. (2015) *Undoing the demos: Neoliberalism's stealth revolution*. New York: ZONE Books.

Bryant, A. (2009) 'Grounded theory and pragmatism: The curious case of Anselm Strauss'. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research, 10*(3). Available at: http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs090325

Bryman, A. (2004) *Social research methods*. 2nd edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Bui, K.V.T. (2002). First-generation college students at a four-year university: Background characteristics, reasons for pursuing higher education, and first-year experiences. *College Student Journal.*, *36*(1), 3–11. https://doi.org/info:doi/

Bunce, L., Baird, A. and Jones, S. E. (2016) 'The student-as-consumer approach in higher education and its effects on academic performance'. *Studies in Higher Education*, *42*(11), pp.1958–1978.

Burnett, L. (2007) 'Juggling first year student experiences and institutional changes: An Australian experience'. *Paper presented at the 20th International Conference on First Year Experience, July, in Hawaii, USA*. Available at: http://www98.griffith.edu.au/dspace/bitstream/10072/32622/1/51648_1.pdf (Accessed 7 June 2011).

Burke, J. (2005) 'Reinventing accountability: From bureaucratic rules to performance results.' In: Burke, J. (ed.) *Achieving accountability in higher education: Balancing public, academic and market demands.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, pp. 216–245.

Callender, C. and Dougherty, K. J. (2018) 'Student choice in higher education—reducing or reproducing social inequalities?' *Social Sciences (Basel), 7*(10), p.189.

Cannella, G. S. and Manuelito, K. (2008) 'Feminisms from unthought locations: Indigenous worldviews, marginalized feminisms, and revisioning an anticolonial social science'. In: Denzin, N. K., Lincoln, Y. S. and Smith, L. T. (eds.) *Handbook of critical and indigenous methodologies*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, pp. 45- 59.

Cannella, G. S. (2015) 'Qualitative research as living within/transforming complex power relations'. *Qualitative inquiry, 21*(7), pp.594–598.

Canning, J. (2016) 'Conceptualising student voice in UK higher education: Four theoretical lenses.' *Teaching in Higher Education*, *22(*5), pp. 519–531.

Cantwell, B. and Kauppinen, I. (2014) 'Academic capitalism in theory and research'. In: Cantwell, B. and Kauppinen, I. (eds.) *Academic capitalism in the age of globalization*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, pp. 3–9.

Carragher, J. and McGaughey, J. (2016) 'The effectiveness of peer mentoring in promoting a positive transition to higher education for first-year undergraduate students: A mixed methods systematic review protocol.' *Systematic Reviews*, *5*(1), pp. 68–68. Doi: 10.1186/s13643-016-0245-1.

Castells, M. (1999) 'Flows, networks, and identities: A critical theory of the infor- mational society'. In: Castells, M., Flecha, R., Friere, P., Giroux, H., Macedo, D. and Willis, P. (eds.) *Critical education in the new information age*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, pp. 37-64.

Castells, M. (2009) *The rise of the network society*. Wiley-Blackwell.

Chalmers, D.J., Manley, D. and Wasserman, R. (2005) *Metametaphysics: New Essays on the Foundations of Ontology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Chaplin, E. (1994) *Sociology and visual representation*. London; New York: Routledge.

Chatterji, M. (2010) 'Evaluation methodology'. *International Encyclopedia of Education*, *3*, pp.735–745.

Chetty, R. *et al.* (2017). 'The fading American dream: Trends in absolute income mobility since 1940'. *Science (American Association for the Advancement of Science)*, *356*(6336), pp.398–406.

Chowning, K. and Campbell, N.J. (2009) 'Development and validation of a measure of academic entitlement: Individual differences in students' externalized responsibility and entitled expectations'. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *101*(4), p.982.

Christie, H., Tett, L., Cree, V. E., Hounsell, J. and McCune, V. (2008) 'A real rollercoaster of confidence and emotions: Learning to be a university student'. *Studies in Higher Education, 33*(5), pp. 567–581. Doi:10.1080 /03075070802373040.

Christie, H. *et al.* (2016) 'It all just clicked: A longitudinal perspective on transitions within university'. *Studies in Higher Education (Dorchester-on-Thames)*, *41*(3), pp.478–490.

Chung, E. and McLarney, C. (2000) 'The classroom as a service encounter: Suggestions for value creation'. *Journal of Management Education, 24*(4), pp.484-500.

Clouder, L. (2005) 'Caring as a 'threshold concept': transforming students in higher education into health (care) professionals'. *Teaching in Higher Education*, *10*(4), pp.505–517.

Clyne, F., Marginson, S. and Woock, R. (2001) 'International education in Australian universities: Concepts and definitions'. *Melbourne Studies in Education, 42*(1), pp. 111-127.

Coffey, A. and Atkinson, P. (1996) *Making sense of qualitative data: Complementary research strategies.* Sage Publications.

Coertjens, L. *et al.* (2017) 'Students' transition into higher education from an international perspective'. *Higher Education, 73*(3), pp.357–369.

Cohen, D., Hoshino-Browne, E. and Leung, A. (2007) 'Culture and the structure of personal experience: Insider and outsider phenomenologies of the self and social world'. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology, 39*(1), pp. 1-67. Doi: 10.1016/S0065- 2601(06)39001-6.

Cohen, E. (2004) 'I am my own culture: The 'individual migrant' and the 'migrant community', a Latin American case study in Australia'. *Journal of Intercultural Studies, 25*(2), pp. 123–142. Doi: 10.1080/0725686042000264053.

Cohen, L., Manion, L. and Morrison, K. (2007) *Research methods in education*. London: Routledge Farmer.

Cohen, L., Manion, L. and Morrison, K. (2011) *Planning educational research: Research methods in education.* New York: Routledge Editors.

Colby, A., Ehrlich, T., Beaumont, E. and Stephens, J. (2003) *Educating citizens: Preparing America's undergraduates for lives of moral and civic responsibility*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Colley, H. (2007) 'Understanding time in learning transitions through the lifecourse'. *International Studies in Sociology of Education, 17*(4), pp. 427–43. Doi: 10.1080/09620210701667103.

Colley, H. (2010) 'Time in learning transitions through the lifecourse: A feminist perspective'. In: Ecclestone, K., Biesta, G. and Hughes, M (eds.) *Transitions and learning through the lifecourse*. London: Routledge, pp. 130–46.

Collini, S. (1979) *Liberalism and sociology: L.T. Hobhouse and political argument in England 1880-1914*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Compton, M. F. and Weiner, L. (2008) *The global assault on teaching, teachers, and their unions stories for resistance*. New York, Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Coneyworth, L. *et al.* (2020) 'The overlooked cohort? - Improving the taught postgraduate student experience in higher education'. *Innovations in education and teaching international, 57*(3), pp. 262–273.

Connell, R.W. (2007) *Southern theory: The global dynamics of knowledge in social science*. Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin.

Cook-Sather, A., Bovill, C. and Felten, P. (2014) *Engaging students as partners in learning and teaching: a guide for faculty*. San Francisco: Josey-Bass.

Cooksey, R. and McDonald, G. (2011) *Surviving and thriving in postgraduate research*. Prahran, VIC: Tilde University Press.

Coolican, H. (1990) *Research methods and statistics in psychology*. London: Hodder & Stoughton.

Cornwall, A. and Jewkes, R. (1995) 'What is participatory research?' *Social Science and Medicine, 14*, pp. 1667– 1676.

Couldry, N. (2010) *Why voice matters: Culture and politics after neoliberalism*. London: Sage.

Crafter, S. and Maunder, R. (2012) 'Understanding transitions using a sociocultural framework'. *Educational and Child Psychology*, *29*(1), pp. 10–18.

Cresswell, J. (2009) *Research design: Qualitative and mixed methods approaches*. London, United Kingdom: Sage Publications Ltd.

Creswell, J.W. (2013) *Qualitative inquiry and research design: choosing among five approaches*. 3rd edn. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Cresswell, J. (2014) *Research design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Los Angeles, United States of America: Sage Publications Ltd.

Creswell, J. W. and Tashakkori, A. (2007) 'Editorial: Developing publishable mixed methods manuscripts'. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, *1*(2), pp. 107–111. Doi:10.1177/1558689806298644.

Cristina M., Jacqueline P. and Francesco P., (2010). A Brief Review of Systems Theories and Their Managerial Applications. Service Science 2(1-2):126-135. http://dx.doi.org/10.1287/serv.2.1_2.126.

Cronin P., Ryan F. and Coughlan M. (2008) 'Undertaking a literature review: a step-by-step approach'. *British Journal of Nursing*, *17*(1), pp. 38–43

Crotty, M. (1998) *The foundations of social research*. London, United Kingdom: Sage

Crozier, G., Reay, D., Clayton, J., Colliander, L. and Grinstead, J. (2008) 'Different strokes for different folks: Diverse students in diverse institutions—experiences of higher education'. *Res Pap Educ*, *23*(2), pp. 167–177. Doi:10.1080/02671520802048703.

Cullingford, C. (2002) 'Globalisation, educational transformation and societies in transition'. *Journal of Vocational Education & Training*, *54*(1), pp.171–176.

Cypress, B. S. (2017) 'Rigor or reliability and validity in qualitative research: Perspectives, strategies, reconceptualization, and recommendations'. *Dimensions of Critical Care Nursing*, *36*(4), pp. 253–263. Doi:10.1097/DCC.0000000000000253.

Czerniawski, G. and Kidd, W. (2011) *The student voice handbook: Bridging the academic/practitioner divide*. Bingley, Emerald Group Publishing.

Dale, R. and Robertson, S. L. (2003) 'Editorial introduction'. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, *1*(1), pp. 3-11.

Damianakis, T. and Woodford, M. R. (2012) 'Qualitative research with small, connected communities: Generating new knowledge while upholding research ethics'. *Qualitative Health Research*, *22*(5), pp. 708–18.

Daniels, J. and Brooker, J. (2014) 'Student identity development in higher education: Implications for graduate attributes and work-readiness'. *Educational Research*, *56*(1), pp. 65–76. Doi:10.1080/00131881.2013.874157.

Davidson, D. (2000) 'A coherence theory of truth and knowledge'. In: Bernecker, S. and Dretske, F. (eds.) *Knowledge, readings in contemporary epistemology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Davies, B. and Bansel, P. (2007) 'Neoliberalism and education'. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 20*(3), pp. 247-259.

Davies, B. *et al.* (2006) 'Constituting the feminist subject in poststructuralist discourse'. *Feminism & Psychology, 16*(1), pp.87–103.

Davies, B. and Petersen, E. (2005) 'Intellectual workers (un)doing neoliberal discourse'. *International Journal of Critical Psychology, 13*, pp. 32–54.

Davies, B. and Harré, R. (1999) 'Positioning and personhood'. In: Harré, R. and van Langenhove, L. (eds.) *Positioning theory: Moral contexts of intentional acts*. London: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., pp. 32–52.

Davies, B. (2005) 'The (im)possibility of intellectual work in neoliberal regimes'. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education, 26*(1), pp. 1–14.

Day, S. and Pirrie, A. (2020) 'Tales from the matrix: Student satisfaction as a form of governmentality. In: Murphy, M. *et al.* (eds.) *Social theory and the politics of higher edducation*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc.

DBIS (2018) *Strategic guidance to the office for students – priorities for financial year 2018/19* (London, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy). Available at: www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/1111/strategicguidancetotheofs.pdf (Accessed 21 September 2019).

Dean, J. (2016) 'Wendy Brown, Undoing the demos: Neoliberalism's stealth revolution. New York: Zone Books, 2015, p. 296'. *Critical inquiry, 42*(4), pp.979–982.

De Haan, J. and Rotmans, J. (2011) 'Patterns in transitions: Understanding complex chains of change'. *Technological Forecasting & Social Change, 78*(1), pp.90–102.

Dei, G. J. S. (2008) 'Indigenous knowledge studies and the next generation: Pedagogical possibilities for anti-colonial education'. *Australian Journal of Indigenous Education, 37*, Supplementary, pp. 5–13.

Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F. (1987) *A thousand plateaus: Capitalism and schizophrenia*. London: Continuum.

Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F. (1994) *What is philosophy?* New York: Columbia University Press.

Delucchi, M. and Korgen, K. (2002) 'We're the customers-we pay the tuition: Student consumerism among undergraduate sociology majors'. *Teaching Sociology, 30*(1), pp. 100–107.

Dennis, J. M., Phinney, J. S. and Chuateco, L. I. (2005) 'The role of motivation, parental support, and peer support in the academic success of ethnic minority first-generation college students'. *Journal of College Student Development, 46*(3), pp. 223-236.

Denzin, N. K. and Lincoln, Y. S. (2000a) *Handbook of qualitative research*. London: Sage.

Denzin, N. K. and Lincoln, Y. S. (2000b) 'Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research'. In: Denzin, N. K. and Lincoln, Y. S. (eds.) *Handbook of qualitative research.* 2nd edn. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, pp. 1–28.

Denzin, N. K. and Lincoln, Y. S. (2011) *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research*. 4th edn. Thousand Oaks, United States of America: Sage Publications Ltd.

Department of Education, 2014. Undergraduate Applications Offers and Acceptances. *Report and Appendices.* Canberra, ACT.

Dessel, A. B. *et al*. (2013) Heterosexual students' experiences in sexual Orientation intergroup dialogue courses'. *Journal of Homosexuality*, *60*(7), pp.1054–1080.

Dictionary, Cambridge (2020). Transition.
https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/transition

Dima, G. and Skehill, C. (2011) 'Making sense of leaving care: The contribution of Bridges model of transition to understanding the psycho-social process'. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *33*(12), pp. 2532–2539.

Dixon, M. (1995) *The curriculum decision to teach in English in schools in Kathmandu*. Unpublished research project. The University of Melbourne, Australia.

Dixon, M. (2006) 'Globalisation and international higher education: Contested positionings'. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, *10*(4), pp.319–333.

Drucker, P. (1954) *The practice of management*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.

Duquaine-Watson, J. M. (2007) 'Understanding and combating the digital divide for single mother college students: A case study'. *Equal Opportunities*, *25*(7), pp. 562–57

Edirisingha, P., Cane, C., Cane, R. and Jiang, M. (2018) 'Student-contributed podcasts to support transition to higher education'. *Journal of Learning and Teaching in Higher Education, 1(1),* pp.44-58.

Edmunds, J. A. *et al*. (2017) 'Smoothing the transition to postsecondary education: The impact of the early college model'. *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness*, *10*(2), pp. 297–325. Doi:10.1080/19345747.2016.1191574.

Edwards, R. (1993) *Mature women students: Separating or connecting family and education*. London: Taylor & Francis.

Ecclestone, K. (2007) Lost and found in transition: The implications of 'Identity', 'Agency' and 'Structure' for educational goals and practices'. *Keynote paper presented at Researching Transitions in Lifelong Learning Conference*, University of Stirling, June 22–24.

Ecclestone, K. (2009) 'Lost and found in transition'. In: Field, J., Gallacher, J. and Ingram, R. (eds.) *Researching transitions in lifelong learning*. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 9–27.

Ecclestone, K., Biesta, G. and Hughes, M. (2010) 'Transitions in the lifecourse: The role of identity, agency and structure'. In: Ecclestone, K., Biesta, G. and Hughes, M. (eds.) *Transitions and learning through the lifecourse*. London: Routledge, pp. 1–15.

Egron-Polak, E. and Hudson, R. (2014) *Internationalization of higher education: Growing expectations, fundamental values* (IAU 4th Global Survey). International Association of Universities. Available at: http://www.iau-aiu.net/sites/all/files/IAU-4th-GLOBAL- SURVEY-EXECUTIVE-SUMMARY.pdf

Elder, G. H., Jr. (1974) *Children of the great depression*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Elder, G. H., Jr. (1996) 'Human lives in changing societies: Life course and developmental insights'. In: Cairns, R. B., Elder, G. H., Jr. and Costello, E. J. (eds.) *Developmental science*. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 31 – 62.

Elder, G. (1986) 'Military times and turning points in men"s lives. *Development Psychology, 22*, pp. 233–45.

Ellaway, R. H., Bates, J., & Teunissen, P. W. (2017). Ecological theories of systems and contextual change in medical education. *Medical Education, 51(12)*, 1250–1259. https://doi.org/10.1111/medu.13406

Elliot, D. L., Reid, K. and Baumfield, V. (2016) 'Beyond the amusement, puzzlement and challenges: An enquiry into international students' academic acculturation'. *Stud. High. Educ, 41*, pp. 2198–2217.

Eret, E., Guneri, O. Y. and Aydin, Y. C. (2018) 'Evaluation of peer mentoring program in higher education: does it support smooth transition of new faculty to the academia?' *Yükseköğretimvebilimdergisi, 8*(3), pp. 532–541. Doi: 10.5961/jhes.2018.294

Erichsen, E. and Bolliger, D. (2011) 'Towards understanding international graduate student isolation in traditional and online environments'. *Educational Technology Research and Development, 59*, pp. 309–326. Doi:10.1007/s11423-010-9161-6

Eriksson, M., Ghazinour, M. and Hammarström, A. (2018) 'Different uses of Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory in public mental health research: what is their value for guiding public mental health policy and practice?' *Social Theory and Health, 16*(4), pp.414–433.

Fadhel, K. (2002) 'Positivist and hermeneutic paradigm: A critical evaluation under their structure of scientific practice. *The Sosland Journal*, pp. 21-28.

Fairweather, J. (2000) 'Diversification or homogenization: How markets and governments combine to shape American higher education'. *Higher Education Policy, 13*(1), pp. 79–98.

Fejes, A. (2016) 'The confessing academic and living the present otherwise: Appraisal interviews and logbooks in academia'. *European Educational Research Journal EERJ, 15*(4), pp.395–409.

Fielding, M. (2004) 'Transformative approaches to student voice: Theoretical underpinnings, recalcitrant realities'. *British Educational Research Journal, 30*(2), pp. 295–311.

Field, J., Gallacher, J. and Ingram, R. (2010) *Researching transitions in lifelong learning*. London and New York: Routledge.

Filstead, W. J. (1979) 'Qualitative methods: A needed perspective in evaluation research'. In: Cook, T. D. and Reichardt, C. S. (eds.) *Qualitative and quantitative methods in evaluation research.* Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, pp. 33–48.

Fischer, K. (2017) 'Many colleges see a drop in international students, chronicle survey finds'. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Available at: https://www.chronicle.com/article/Many-Colleges-See-a-Drop-in/241109 (Accessed: 22 September 2020).

Fisher, J. M. (2005) 'A time for change?' *Human Resource Development International, 8*(2), pp. 257-263. DOI: 10.1080/13678860500100665

Fisher, S. and Bruce, H. (1987) 'The stress of the transition to university: A longitudinal study of psychological disturbance, absent-mindedness and vulnerability to homesickness'. *Br. J. Psychol., 78*, pp. 425–441.

Flaga, C. T. (2006) The process of transition for community college transfer students'. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, *30*(1), pp.3–19.

Flint, A., Goddard, H. and Russell, E. (2017) *Architects of their experience: The role, value and impact of student academic representation systems in higher education in England* (London, TSEP).

Foucault, M. (1969) *The archaeology of knowledge*. London: Routledge.

Foucault, M. (1970) *The order of things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. New York, NY: Vintage.

Foucault, M. (1972) *The archaeology of knowledge*. New York: Pantheon Books.

Foucault, M. (1980) *Power/knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings by Michel Foucault, 1972–1977*. Brighton: Harvester.

Foucault, M. (1982) 'The subject and power'. *Critical Inquiry*, *8*(2), pp. 777–795.

Foucault, M. (1994) 'The subject and power'. In: Faubion, J. (ed.) *Michel Foucault. Power*. New York: the New Press, pp. 326-348.

Foucault, M. (2007) *Security, territory, population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977–1978.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Foucault, M. (2010 [1979]) *The birth of biopolitics: Lectures at the College de France 1978–1979* (G. Burchell, Trans.). Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan.

Freedman, G. (2010) *Unlocking the Global Education Imperative*. Available at: http://www.blackboard.com/CMSPages/GetFile.aspx?guid=6032f8df-b6ba-4510-81d2-3198459529dc (Accessed: 14 November 2021).

Frowe, I. (2001) 'Language and educational research'. *Journal of Philosophy and Education*, *35*(2), pp. 175-186.

Furedi, F. (2010) 'Introduction to the marketisation of higher education and the student as consumer'. In: Molesworth, M. *et al.* (eds.) *The marketisation of higher education the student as consumer*. Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge.

Gage, N. L. (1989) 'The paradigm wars and their aftermath: A historical sketch of research on teaching since 1989'. *Educational Researcher*, *18*(7), pp. 4-10.

Gale, T. (2012) 'Towards a southern theory of student equity in Australian higher education: Enlarging the rationale for expansion'. *International Journal of Sociology of Education*, *1*(3), pp. 235–58.

Gale, T. and Parker, S. (2014) 'Navigating change: A typology of student transition in higher education'. *Studies in Higher Education*, *39*(5), pp. 734–53. Doi:10.1080/03075079.2012.721351.

Gane, N. (2016) Review: Wendy Brown, Undoing the demos: Neoliberalism's stealth revolution. *Theory, Culture & Society*, *33*(7-8), pp.350–355.

Gargano, T. (2009) '(Re)conceptualizing international student mobility'. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, *13*(3), pp. 331–346. Doi: 10.1177/1028315308322060.

Geer, J.G. (1988) 'What do open-ended questions measure?' *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, *52*(3), pp. 365–371.

Geer, J.G. (1991) 'Do open-ended questions measure "salient" issues?' *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, *55*(3), pp. 360-370.

Georgia, T. and Nadia, A. (2017) 'Learning and living overseas: Exploring factors that influence meaningful learning and assimilation: How international students adjust to studying in the UK from a socio-cultural perspective. *Education sciences*, *7*(1), p.35.

Gibson, J. E. (2012) 'Interviews and focus groups with children: Methods that match children's developing competencies'. *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, *4*, pp. 148– 159.

Gill, B.L., Koch, J., Dlugon, E., Andrew, S. and Salamonson, Y. (2011) 'A standardised orientation program for first year undergraduate students in the College of Health and Science at UWS: A practice report'. *International Journal of the First Year in Higher Education*, *2*(1), pp. 63–69.

Giroux, H. (2002) 'Neoliberalism, corporate culture and the promise of higher education: The university as a democratic public sphere'. *Harvard Educational Review*, *72*(4), pp. 1-31.

Golafshani, N. (2003) 'Understanding reliability and validity in qualitative research'. *The Qualitat ive Report*, *8*(4), pp. 597–607.

Goodchild, A. (2017) 'Part-time students in transition: Supporting a successful start to higher education'. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, *43*(6), pp. 774–87. Doi:10.1080/0309877X.2017.1404560.

Goodman, D. (2001) *Promoting diversity and social justice: Educating people from privileged groups*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Gordon, L. R., Charlotte, E. and Jindal-Snape, D. (2020) 'Doctors' identity transitions: Choosing to occupy a state of betwixt and between'. *Medical education*, *54*(11), pp.1006–1018.

Gornitzka, Å. (1999) 'Governmental policies and organisational change in higher education'. *Higher Education*, *38*(1), pp.5–31.

Gravett, K. (2019) 'Troubling transitions and celebrating becomings: from pathway to rhizome'. *Studies in Higher Education (Dorchester-on-Thames)*, pp.1–12.

Greene, J. A., Sandoval, W. A. and Bråten, I. (2016) *Handbook of Epistemic Cognition*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Guba, E. G. (1990) 'The alternative paradigm dialog'. In: Guba, E. G. (ed.) *The paradigm dialog*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage, pp. 17–27.

Guba, E.G. and Lincoln, Y. S. (1988) 'Do inquiry paradigms imply inquiry methodologies?' In: Fetterman, D. M. (ed.) *Qualitative approaches to evaluation in education: The silent scientific revolution*. London, Praeger.*on*, *35*(2), pp. 200–214. Doi: 10.1080/02568543.2021.1880991.

Guba, E. G. and Lincoln, Y. S. (1989) 'What is this constructivist paradigm anyway?' *Fourth Generation Evaluation*. London: Sage Publications, pp. 79-90.

Guba, E. G. and Lincoln, Y. S. (1994) 'Competing paradigms in qualitative research'. In: Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S. *Handbook of qualitative research*. 3rd edn. California: Sage, pp. 105 – 117.

Guba, E. G. and Lincoln, Y. S. (2005) 'Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences'. In: Denzin, N. K. and Lincoln, Y. S. (eds.) *Sage handbook of qualitative research*. 3rd edn. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, pp. 191–215.

Guiffrida, D. A. (2004) 'Friends from home: Asset and liability to African American students attending a predominantly white institution'. *NASPA Journal, 24*(3), pp. 693-708.

Guiffrida, D. A. (2005) 'To break away or strengthen ties to home: A complex question for African American students attending a predominantly white institution'. *Equity and Excellence in Education, 38*(1), pp. 49-60.

Guiffrida, D. A. (2006) 'Toward a cultural advancement of Tinto's theory'. *Review of Higher Education, 29*(4), pp.451–472.

Guillemin, M. and Gillam, L. (2004) 'Ethics, reflexivity, and "ethically important moments" in research'. *Qualitative Inquiry, 10*, pp. 261–280

Guo, Y. *et al.* (2021) 'Internationalization of Chinese higher education: Is it westernization?' *Journal of Studies in International Education*, pp. 1-18.

Haggerty, K. D. (2004). Ethics creep: Governing social science research in the name of ethics. *Qualitative Sociology, 27, pp. 391–414.*

Hall, R. and Bowles, K. (2016) 'Re-engineering higher education: the subsumption of academic labour and the exploitation of anxiety'. *Workplace, 28*, pp. 30–47.

Hall, B.L. and Tandon, R. (2017) 'Decolonization of knowledge, epistemicide, participatory research and higher education'. *Research for All, 1*(1), pp. 6–19. DOI: 10.18546/RFA.01.1.02.

Härkönen, J. and Sirniö, O. (2020) 'Educational transitions and educational inequality: A multiple pathways sequential logit model analysis of Finnish birth cohorts 1960–1985'. *European sociological review*, pp. European sociological review, 2020–06-29.

Harris, C., Jackson, L., Mayblin, L., Piekut, A. and Valentine, G. (2015) 'Big Brother welcomes you: Exploring innovative methods for research with children and young people outside of the home and school environments'. *Qualitative Research, 15*, pp. 583–599.

Harris, S. (2005) 'Rethinking academic identities in neo-liberal times'. *Teaching in Higher Education, 10*(4), pp. 421–33.

Hartas, D. (2015) *Educational research and inquiry: qualitative and quantitative approaches*. London, United Kingdom: Continuum International Publishing Group

Harvey, D. (2005) *A brief history of neo-liberalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Haslerig, S. *et al.* (2013) 'A compelling interest'. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, 6*(3), pp. 158–173.

Hellawell, D. (2006). Inside–out: analysis of the insider–outsider concept as a heuristic device to develop reflexivity in students doing qualitative research. *Teaching in higher education*, 11 (4), pp.483–494.

Hendricks, A. D., Smith, K., Caplow, J. H. and Donaldson, J. F. (1996) 'A grounded theory approach to determining the factors related to the persistence of minority students in professional programs'. *Innovative Higher Education, 21*(2), pp. 113-126.

Henriques, J., Hollway, W., Urwin, C., Venn, C. and Walkerdine, V. (1998[1984]) *Changing the subject: Psychology, social regulation and subjectivity*. London: Methuen.

Hensby, A. (2017) 'Campaigning for a movement: Collective identity and student solidarity in the 2010/11 UK protests against fees and cuts'. In: Brooks, R. (ed.) *Student politics and protest: International perspectives*. Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 13–29.

Henschke, G. (2005) 'Characteristics of growth in the education industry: Illustrations from US education businesses'. A paper presented to the symposium on *New Arenas of Educational Governance: The Impact of International Organisations and Markets on Educational Policymaking*. University of Bremen, Sept 23-24.

Heussi, A. (2012) 'Postgraduate student perceptions of the transition into postgraduate study'. *Student Engagement and Experience Journal*, *1*(3), pp. 1-13. Doi:10.7190/seej.vli3.52.

Hill, D. (2005) 'Globalisation and its educational discontents: Neoliberalism and its impacts on education workers' rights, pay and conditions'. *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, *15*, pp. 257-288. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09620210500200143

Hillman, K. (2005) 'The first-year experience: The transition from secondary school to university and TAFE in Australia'. In: Longitudinal studies in Australian youth: Research report no. 40 (pp. 1–57). Camberwell, VIC: Australian Council for Educational Research.

Hills, S. and Thom, V. (2005) Crossing a multicultural divide: Teaching business strategy to students from culturally mixed backgrounds. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, *9*(4), pp.316–336.

Holbrook, M. B. and Hulbert, J. M. (2002) 'Review essay'. *Journal of Consumer Affairs, 36*(1), pp. 99-114.

Holland, J.L. and Christian, L.M. (2009) 'The influence of topic interest and interactive probing on responses to open-ended questions in web surveys'. *Social Science Computer Review*, *27*(2), pp. 196–212.

Holland, S., Williams, A. and Forester, D. (2014) 'Navigating ethical moments when researching substance misuse with parents and their children'. *Qualitative Research, 14*, pp. 411–427.

Holliday, I. (2000) 'Is the British State Hollowing out?' *Political Quarterly, 71*(2), pp. 167−176.

Holligan, C. and Shah, Q. (2017) 'Global capitalism's Trojan horse: Consumer power and the national student survey in England'. *Power and Education, 9*(2), pp. 114– 128.

Holloway, I. and Todres, L. (2003) 'The status of method: Flexibility, consistency, and coherence'. *Qualitative Research, 3*, pp. 345–357. Doi: 10.1177/1468794103033004.

Holton, M. and Finn, K. (2018) 'Being-in-motion: The everyday (gendered and classed) embodied mobilities for UK university students who commute'. *Mobilities, 13*(3), pp. 426–40. Doi:10.1080/17450101.2017.1331018.

Holtz, G. *et al.* (2015) 'Prospects of modelling societal transitions: Position paper of an emerging community'. *Environmental Innovation and Societal Transitions, 17*, pp.41–58

Hope, J. (2017) In *'Cutting Rough Diamonds' The Transition Experiences of First-Generation Students in HE,* Taylor & Francis.

Hovdhaugen, E., Frølich, N. and Aamodt, P. O. (2013) 'Informing institutional management: Institutional strategies and student retention'. *European Journal of Education, 48*(1), pp. 165–77. Doi:10.1111/ejed.12002.

Hsieh, H. F. and Shannon, S. E. (2005) 'Three approaches to qualitative content analysis'. *Qualitative Health Research, 15*(9), pp. 1277–1288. Doi:10.1177/1049732305276687.

Hudson, R. (2016) 'Dominated by economics? Evidence of changing drivers of internationalization and its funding within higher education institutions in Europe'. *Higher Education Policy, 29*(1), pp. 1–19.

Hughes, G. and Smail, O. (2015) 'Which aspects of university life are most and least helpful in the transition to HE? A qualitative snapshot of student perceptions'. *Journal of Further and Higher Education, 39*(4), pp. 466–80. Doi: 10.1080/ 0309877X.2014.971109

Hultberg, J., Plos, K., Hendry, G. D. and Kjellgren, K. I. (2008) 'Scaffolding students' transition to higher education: parallel introductory courses for students and teachers'. *J Furth High Educ, 32*(1), pp. 47–57. Doi: 10.1080/03098770701781440.

Hunter, M. S. and White, E. R. (2004) 'Could fixing academic advising fix higher education?' *About Campus, 9*, pp. 20-25.

Husserl, E. (1931) *Ideas: General introduction to pure phenomenology*. (Trans. Gibson WR). New South Wales, AUS: George Allen & Unwin/McMillan.

Hutson, B. L. (2010) 'The impact of an appreciative advising-based university studies course on college student first-year experience'. *Journal of Applied Research in Higher Education, 2*(1), pp. 4-13.

Icaza, R. and Vázquez, R. (2018) 'Diversity or decolonisation? Researching diversity at the University of Amsterdam'. In: Bhambra, G.K., Gebrial, D. and Nişancıoğlu, K. (eds.) *Decolonising the university*. Pluto Press.

Ineson E. M., Lyons, A. and Branston C. (2006) 'Cross cultural change, adjustment and culture shock: UK to USA'. *Preliminary Communication, 54*(4), pp. 355-365.

Ipsos MORI (2017) *NSS National Student Survey*. Available at: www.thestudentsurvey.com/content/NSS2017_Core_Questionnaire.pdf (Accessed: 29 March 2019).

Iverson, S. and Christin, V. S. (2014) 'Using theatre to change attitudes toward lesbian, gay, and bisexual students'. *Journal of LGBT Uouth, 11*(1), pp.40–61.

James, R. (2003) 'Finnish higher education in transition: Perspectives on massification and globalization'. *Australian Journal of Education, 47*(3), p.312.

Jayakumar, U. M. (2008) 'Can higher education meet the needs of an increasingly diverse and global society? Campus diversity and cross-cultural workforce competencies'. *Harvard Educational Review, 78*, pp. 615–651.

Jayasuriya, K. (2010) 'Learning by the market: regulatory regionalism, Bologna, and accountability communities'. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, *8*(1), pp. 7–22.

Jindal-Snape, D. (ed.) (2010) *Educational transitions: Moving stories from around the world*. New York: Routledge.

Jindal-Snape, D. (2016) *A-Z of transitions*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Jindal-Snape, D., Johnston, B., Pringle, J., Gold, L., Grant, J., Scott, R., Carragher, P. and Dempsey, R. (2015) *Multiple and Multi-dimensional transitions: Understanding the life transitions of young adults cared for by CHAS and the impact on their parents, siblings, and professionals*. Dundee: University of Dundee.

Jindal-Snape, D. *et al.* (2019) 'Multiple and multidimensional life transitions in the context of life-limiting health conditions: Longitudinal study focussing on perspectives of young adults, families and professionals'. *BMC Palliative Care*, *18*(1), p.30.

Johnson, A. (2006) *Privilege, power and difference*. 2nd edn. Mountain View, CA: Mayfield.

Johnson-Bailey, J. *et al.* (2009) Rooted in the soil: The social experiences of black graduate students at a southern research university. *The Journal of Higher Education (Columbus)*, *80*(2), pp.178–203.

Johnson, J. M. (2016) 'Managing transitions, building bridges: An evaluation of a summer bridge program for African American scientists and engineers'. *Journal for Multicultural Education, 10*(2), pp. 206–16. Doi: 10.1108/JME-01-2016-0010.

Johnson, R.B., Onwuegbuzie, A. J. and Turner, L.A. (2007) 'Toward a definition of mixed methods research'. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research, 1*(2), pp. 112–133. Doi: 10.1177/1558689806298224.

Johnson, R. N. and Deem, R. (2003) 'Talking of students: Tensions and contradictions for the manager-academic and the university in contemporary higher education'. *Higher Education, 46*, pp. 289–314.

Johnson, S. and Wolf, A. (2009) 'Qualifications and mobility in a globalizing world: Why equivalence matters'. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy and Practice*, *16*(1), pp. 3–11.

Johnstone, D. B. (2004) 'The economics and politics of cost sharing in higher education: Comparative perspectives'. *Economics of Education Review, 23*(4), pp. 403–410.

Jonathan, R. (1997) 'Illusory freedoms: Liberalism, education, and the market'. *Journal of the Philosophy of Education, 31*(1), Special Issue, p. 220.

Jones, K. (2005) 'Remaking education in Western Europe'. *European Educational Research Journal, 4*(3), pp. 228-242.

Jones, R. (2008) *Student retention and success: A synthesis of research*. Available at: http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/ evidence net

Jones, S., Vigurs, K. and Harris, D. (2020) 'Discursive framings of market-based education policy and their negotiation by students: the case of 'value for money' in English universities'. *Oxford Review of Education, 46*(3), pp.375–392.

Jory, B. (2016) 'A governmentality perspective on the common core'. *Research in the Teaching of English*, *51*(2), pp.230–240.

Kalalahti, M. *et al.* (2020) 'Diversified transitions and educational equality? Negotiating the transitions of young people with immigrant backgrounds and/or special educational needs'. *Nordic Studies in Education, 40*(1), pp.36–54.

Kamberelis, G. and Dimitriadis, G. (2005) 'Focus groups: Strategic articulations of pedagogy, politics, and inquiry'. In: Denzin, N. K. and Lincoln, Y. S. (eds.) *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research*. 3rd edn. Thousand Oaks, United States of America: Sage Publications Ltd., (pp. 887– 907).

Kamberelis, G. and Dimitriadis, G. (2011) 'Focus groups'. In: Denzin, N. and Lincoln, Y. (eds.) *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, United States of America: Sage Publications Ltd., pp. 545-561.

Kamvounias, P. and Varnham, S. (2006) 'Getting what they paid for: Consumer rights of students in higher education'. *Griffith Law Review, 15*, pp. 306–32.

Kanade, N. and Curtis, B. (2019) 'Student debt, neoliberalism and frame analysis: A Goffmanesque account of neoliberal governmentality'. *Journal of Sociology (Melbourne, Vic.), 55*(3), pp. 511–527.

Kantanis, T. (2000) 'The role of social transition in students' adjustment to the first-year of university'. *Journal of Institutional Research, 9*(1), pp. 100–110.

Karlsen, G. E. (2000) 'Decentralized centralism: framework for a better understanding of governance in the field of education'. *Journal of Education Policy*, *15*(5), pp. 525–538.

Kaščák, O. and Pupala, B. (2011) 'Governmentality - Neoliberalism - Education: The risk perspective'. *Journal of Pedagogy (Warsaw)*, *2*(2), pp.145–158.

Kearney, M. S. and Haskins, R. (2020) 'How cultural factors shape economic outcomes: Introducing the issue'. *The Future of Children, 30*(1), p.3.

Kelly, M., Jones, S., Wilson, V. and Lewis, P. (2012) 'How children's rights are constructed in family-centred care: A review of the literature'. *Journal of Child Health Care, 16*, pp. 190–205.

Kember, D. (2000) 'Misconceptions about the learning approaches, motivation and study practices of Asian students'. *Higher Education, 40*, pp. 99-121.

Khalil, E.L. (1995) 'Institutions versus organizations'. *J. Inst. Theor. Econ., 151*(3), pp. 445–466.

Kiesler, D. J. (2000) *Beyond the disease model of mental disorders*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers.

Kift, S. and Nelson, K. (2005) 'Beyond curriculum reform: Embedding the transition experience'. Paper presented at *the Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia (HERDSA) conference, 'Higher Education in a Changing World'*, pp. 225–35. Available at: http:// conference.herdsa.org.au/2005/pdf/refereed/paper_294.pdf (Accessed: 1 June 2018).

Kift, S., Nelson, K. and Clarke, J. (2010) 'Transition pedagogy: A third generation approach to FYE – A case study of policy and practice for the higher education sector'. *International Journal of the First Year in Higher Education, 1*(1), pp. 1–20.

Killick, D. (2012) 'Seeing-ourselves-in-the-world: Developing global citizenship through international mobility and campus community'. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 16*(4), pp. 372–389.

Kincheloe, J.L. and McLaren, P.L. (1994) 'Rethinking critical theory and qualitative research'. In: Denzin, N. K. and Lincoln, Y. S. (eds.) *Handbook of qualitative research*. pp. 138-157.

Kinchin, I.M. (2021) 'Exploring dynamic processes within the ecological university: a focus on the adaptive cycle', *Oxford review of education*, pp. 1–18. doi:10.1080/03054985.2021.2007866.

King, R. P. (2007) 'Governance and accountability in the higher education regulatory state'. *Higher Education, 53*(4), pp.411–430.

King, R. (2009) *Governing universities globally: Organisation, regulation and rankings*. London: Edward Elgar.

Kingston, E. and Forland, H. (2008) 'Bridging the gap in expectations between international students and academic staff'. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 12*(2), pp.204–221.

Kirkman, C. (2008) 'Establishing truthfulness, consistency and transferability'. *Nurse Researcher, 15*(4), pp. 68–78.

Kitto, S.C., Chesters, J. and Grbich, C. (2008) 'Quality in qualitative research'. *Medical Journal of Australia, 188*(4), pp. 243–246. Doi:10.5694/j.1326-5377.2008.tb01595.x.

Kitzinger, J. (1994) 'The methodology of focus groups: the importance of interaction between research participants'. *Sociology of Health & Illness, 16*(1), pp. 103–121.

Kivunja, C. and Kuyini, A. (2017) 'Understanding and applying research paradigms in educational contexts'. *International Journal of Higher Education, 6*(5), p.26.

Klemenčič, M. (2014) 'Student power in a global perspective and contemporary trends in student organising'. *Studies in Higher Education, 39*(3), pp. 396–411.

Klemenčič, M. (2015) 'What is student agency? An ontological exploration in the context of research on student engagement'. In: Klemenčič, M., Bergand, S. and Primožič, R. (eds.) *Student engagement in Europe: Society, higher education and student governance*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing, pp. 11–29.

Kless, S. H. (2004) 'We threaten national security by discouraging the best and brightest students from abroad'. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Available at: http://justice.law.stetson.edu/excellence/Highered/archives/2005/DiscouragingBestBrightest.pdf

Knafl, K. A. and Howard, M. J. (1984) 'Interpreting and reporting qualitative research'. *Research in Nursing and Health, 7*, pp. 17-24.

Knight, E. B. (2020) 'The homogenisation of prospectuses over the period of massification in the UK'. *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, pp.1–18.

Knight, J. (2001) 'Monitoring the quality and progress of internationalization'. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 5*(3), pp. 228-243.

Knight, J. (2012) 'Student mobility and internationalization: Trends and tribulations'. *Research in Comparative and International Education, 7*(1), pp. 20-33.

Knight, J. (2015) 'International universities'. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 19*(2), pp. 107–121.

Koch, T. and Labraña, J. (2020) 'What does it mean to assess quality? A socio-historical analysis of quality assurance systems in Chilean higher education'. In: Murphy, M. *et al.* (eds.) *Social Theory and the Politics of Higher Education*, London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc.

Koestler, A. (1967) *The ghost in the machine.* New York: The Macmillan Company.

Kops, W. (2020) 'Older adult education towards age-friendly Canadian universities'. *The Canadian Journal for the Study of Adult Education, 32*(1), pp. 59–73.

Koris, R. and Nokelainen, P. (2015) 'The student-customer orientation questionnaire (SCOQ): Application of customer metaphor to higher education'. *International Journal of Educational Management, 29*(1), pp.115-138.

Kose, S. (2008) 'Diagnosing student misconceptions: Using drawings as a research tool'. *World Applied Sciences Journal, 3*(2), pp. 283- 293.

Krause, K. (2005) 'The changing face of the first year: Challenges for policy and practice in research-led universities'. Keynote paper at *the University of Queensland First Year Experience Workshop*, October, 2005.

Krause, K. (2006) 'On being strategic about the first year'. Keynote paper presented at *First Year Forum,* Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia.

Krause, K. L. and Coates, H. (2008) 'Students' engagement in first-year university'. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 33*(5), pp. 493–505.

Krause, K., Hartley, R., James, R. and McInnis, C. (2005) *The first-year experience in Australian universities: Findings from a decade of national studies*. Canberra: Australian Department of Education, Science and Training.

Kress, G. (2000) 'Multimodality'. In: Cope, B. and Kalantzis, M. (eds.) *Multiliteracies*. London: Routledge, pp. 182–202.

Kress, G. (2010) *Multimodality*. London: Routledge.

Krosnick, J. A. and Presser, S. (2010) 'Question and questionnaire design'. In: Marsden, P. V. and Wright, J. D. (eds.) *Handbook of survey research*. Bingley, UK: Emerald Group Publishing Limited, Vol. 2, pp. 263-314.

Kübler-Ross, E. (1969) *On death and dying*. New York: Macmillan.

Kudo, K., Volet, S. and Whitsed, C. (2020) 'Intercultural relationship development and higher education internationalisation: a qualitative investigation based on a three-stage ecological and person-in-context conceptual framework'. *Higher Education, 80*(5), p.913.

Kuh, G. D. and Love, P. G. (2000) 'A cultural perspective on student departure'. In: Braxton J. M. (ed.) *Reworking the student departure puzzle*. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, pp. 196-212.

Kuhn, T. S. (1962) *The structure of scientific revolutions*. 1st edn. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Kustatcher, M. (2014) 'Informed consent in school-based ethnography: Using visual magnets to explore participation, power, and research relationships'. *International Journal of Child, Youth, and Family Studies, 5*, pp. 686–701.

Kuzhabekova, A., Hendel, D. D. and Chapman, D. W. (2015) 'Mapping global research on international higher education'. *Research in Higher Education, 56*(8), pp.861–882.

Kvale, S. (2006) 'Dominance through interviews and dialogues'. *Qualitative Inquiry, 12*(3), pp.480-500

Laing, K., Mazzoli-Smith, L. and Todd, L. (2017) 'The impact agenda and critical social research in education: Hitting the target but missing the spot?' *Policy Futures in Education, 16*(2), pp. 169- 184. Doi:10.1177/1478210317742214.

Lang, M. (2001) 'Student retention in higher education: Some conceptual and programmatic perspectives'. *Journal of College Student Retention, 3*(3), pp. 217–229.

Lau, F. and Kuziemsky, C. (2016) *Handbook of EHealth Evaluation: An Evidence-based Approach*, University of Victoria.

Lau, J. and Ng, K. M. (2014) 'Conceptualizing the counselling training environment using Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory'. *International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling*, *36*(4), pp. 423-439.

Leask, B. and Bridge, C. (2013) 'Comparing internationalisation of the curriculum in action across disciplines: theoretical and practical perspectives'. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education, 43*(1), pp. 79–101.

Leathwood, C. and O'Connell, P. (2003) 'It's a struggle: The construction of the 'new student' in higher education'. *Journal of Education Policy, 18*(6), pp. 597–615. Doi:10.1080/0268093032000145863.

Ledin, P. and Machin, D. (2018) *Doing visual analysis: From theory to practice*. London, UK: Sage.

Lee, J. and Cavanaugh, T. (2016) 'Building your brand: The integration of infographic resume as student self-analysis tools and self-branding resources'. *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism Education, 18,* pp. 61-68. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhlste.2016.03.001.

Lee, S. (2021) 'Alina Schartner, Tony J. Young: Intercultural transitions in higher education: international student adjustment and adaptation'. *Higher Education*, pp. 1367–1369. Doi: 10.1007/s10734-020-00618-y.

Leese, M. (2010) 'Bridging the gap: Supporting student transitions into higher education'. *Journal of Further and Higher Education, 34*(2), pp. 239–51. Doi:10.1080/03098771003695494.

Lemke, J. (1998) 'Multiplying meaning: Visual and verbal semiotics in scientific text'. In: Martin, J. R. and Veel, R. (eds.) *Reading science*. London: Routledge, pp. 87–113.

Leong, P. (2015) 'Coming to America: Assessing the patterns of acculturation, friendship formation, and the academic experiences of international students at a US college'. *Journal of International Students*, *5*(4), pp. 459-474.

Lester, S. (2008) Linking the Qualifications and Credit Framework levels to the European Qualifications Framework. *Report Commissioned by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority*, Taunton: Stan Lester, 23 October.

Levin, H., Jeong, D. W. and Ou, D. (2006) 'What is a world class university?' Presentation at *the 2006 Conference of the Comparative and International Education Society*, 16 March, Honolulu.

Lincoln, Y. S. and Cannella, G. S. (2004) 'Qualitative research, power, and the radical right'. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *10*(2), pp. 175–201. Doi:10.1177/1077800403262373.

Lincoln, Y.S. and Guba, E.G. (1985) *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Newbury Park, Calif.; London: Sage.

Lincoln, Y. S. and Guba, E. G. (2000) 'Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences'. In: Denzin, N. K. and Lincoln, Y. S. (eds.) *Handbook of qualitative research.* 2nd edn. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., pp. 163-188.

Lin, F. and Long, C. X. (2020) 'The impact of globalization on youth education: Empirical evidence from China's WTO accession'. *Journal of Economic Behavior& Organization*, *178*, pp. 820–839.

Lindsay, T. N. and Gillum, N. L. (2018) 'Exploring single-mother college students' perceptions of their college-related experiences and of campus services'. *The Journal of Continuing Higher Education*, *66*(3), pp. 188–199. Doi: 10.1080/07377363.2018.1537657.

Lingard, B. *et al.* (2001) *Queensland school reform longitudinal study (QSRLS)*. Brisbane: Education Queensland.

Liu, L. (2012) 'An international graduate student's ESL learning experience beyond the classroom'. *TESL Can. J. 29*, pp. 77–92.

Lizzio, A. and Wilson, K. (2009) 'Student participation in university governance: The role conceptions and sense of efficacy of student representatives on departmental committees'. *Studies in Higher Education*, *34*(1), pp. 69– 84.

Long, T. and Johnson, M. (2000) 'Rigour, reliability and validity in qualitative research'. *Clinical Effectiveness in Nursing*, *4*(1), pp. 30–37. Doi:10.1054/cein.2000.0106.

Loveday, V. (2018) 'The neurotic academic: Anxiety, casualisation, and governance in the neoliberalising university'. *Journal of Cultural Economy, 11*(2), pp. 154-166.

Lubienski, C. (2014) 'Re-making the middle'. *Educational Management, Administration & Leadership*, *42*(3), pp.423–440.

Luhmann, N. (1995) 'The paradoxy of observing systems'. *Cultural Critique, 31*, pp. 37–55.

Lumby, J. and Azaola, M. C. (2014) 'Women principals in South Africa: gender, mothering, and leadership'. *British Educational Research Journal*, *40*(1), pp.30–44.

Lynch, K. (2006) 'Neo-liberalism and marketisation'. *European Eeducational Research Journal EERJ*, *5*(1), pp.1–17.

Lynch, K. D. (2008) 'Gender roles and the American academe: A case study of graduate student mothers'. *Gender and Education, 20*(6), 585–605. Doi: 10.1080/0954025080221309.

Lynch, K. and Baker, J. (2005) 'Equality in education: An equality of condition perspective'. *Theory and Research in Education*, *3*(2), pp. 131-164. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1477878505053298.

Lynch, K. and O'Riordan, C. (1998) 'Inequality in higher education: A study of class barriers'. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, *19*, pp. 445-478.

Maaz, K. *et al.* (2008) 'Educational transitions and differential learning environments'. *Child Development Perspectives*, *2*(2), pp.99–106.

Maccabe, R. and Fonseca, T. D. (2021) '"Lightbulb' moments in higher education: Peer-to-peer support in engineering education'. *Mentoring & Tutoring for Partnership in Learning*, *29*(4), pp. 453–470. Doi: 10.1080/13611267.2021.1952393.

MacFarlane, K. (2018) 'Higher education learner identity for successful student transitions'. *Higher Education Research and Development, 37*(6), pp. 1201–15.

McInnis, C. (2003) 'From marginal to mainstream strategies: Responding to student diversity in Australian universities'. *European Journal of Education, 38*(4), pp. 387–400.

MacIver, M. A., Epstein, J. L. and Sheldon, S. B. (2015) 'Engaging families to support students' transition to high school: Evidence from the field'. *The High School journal, 99*(1), pp. 27–45. Doi: 10.1353/hsj.2015.0016.

Mackenzie, N. and Knipe, S. (2006) 'Research dilemmas: paradigms, methods and methodology'. *Issues In Educational Research, 16*, pp. 1-15.

MacLure, M. (2003) *Discourse in educational and social research*. Buckingham, UK: Open University Press.

Manduca, R. (2018) 'Income inequality and the persistence of racial economic disparities'. *Sociological Science*, *5*(8), pp.182–205.

Mare, R. D. (1981). Change and stability in educational stratification. *American Sociological Review*, 45, 72–81.

Marginson, S. (2008) 'Global field and global imagining: Bourdieu and worldwide higher education'. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, *29*(3), pp. 303–315.

Marginson, S. (2014) 'Student self-formation in international education'. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 18*(1), pp. 6–22.

Marginson, S. (2016) 'The worldwide trend to high participation higher education: Dynamics of social stratification in inclusive Systems'. *Higher Education, 72*(4), pp. 413–434.

Maringe, F. and Fuller, A. (2007) *Widening participation in HE: A policy overview.* Working paper for the non-participation in HE project for the ESRC funded project. Available at: www.educationsoton.ac.uk/nphe.

Mark, E. (2013) 'Student satisfaction and the customer focus in higher education'. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management, 35*(1), pp. 2-10.

Marmolejo, F., Green, M. and Egron-Polak, E. (2012) 'The internationalization of higher education: Future prospects'. *The SAGE Handbook of International Higher Education*, pp.439–455.

Marques, M. and Powell, J. (2020) 'Ratings, rankings, research evaluation: How do schools of education behave strategically within stratified UK higher education?' *Higher Education, 79*(5), pp. 829-846. Doi: 10.1007/s10734-019-00440-1

Martimianakis, M. A. and Muzzin, L. (2015) 'Discourses of interdisciplinarity and the shifting topography of academic work: generational perspectives on facilitating and resisting neoliberalism'. *Studies in Higher Education (Dorchester-on-Thames), 40*(8), pp. 1454–1470. Doi:10.1080/03075079.2015.1060708.

Matthews, K. E., Dwyer, A., Hine, L. and Turner, J. (2018) 'Conceptions of students as partners'. *Higher Education, 76*(6), pp. 957–971. Doi: 10.1007/s10734-018-0257-y.

Matthews, K. E., Cook-Sather, A. and Healey, M. (2018) 'Connecting learning, teaching, and research through student-staff partnerships: Toward universities as egalitarian learning communities'. In: Tong, V., Standen, A. and Sotiriou, M. (eds.) *Research equals teaching: Inspiring research-based education through student-staff partnerships*. London: University College of London Press, pp. 23–29.

Maunder, R. E., Cunliffe, M., Galvin, J., Mjali, S. and Rogers, J. (2013) 'Listening to student voices: Student researchers exploring undergraduate experiences of university transition'. *Higher Education 66*(2), pp. 139–52.

Mayall, B. (2002) *Towards a sociology for childhood: Thinking from children's lives*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Mayo, P. (2009) 'Competitiveness, diversification, and the international higher education cash flow: the EU's higher education discourse amidst the challenges of globalisation'. *International Studies in Sociology of Education, 19*(2), pp.87–103.

McCaig, C. (2018) *The marketisation of English higher education: A policy analysis of a risk-based system*. Bingley, UK: Emerald Publishing.

McCarron, G.P. and Inkelas, K.K. (2006) 'The Gap between Educational Aspirations and Attainment for First-Generation College Students and the Role of Parental Involvement', *Journal of college student development*, 47(5), pp. 534–549. doi:10.1353/csd.2006.0059.

McCarthy, M. (1998) 'Interviewing people with learning disabilities about sensitive topics: A discussion of ethical issues'. *British Journal of Learning Disabilities, 26*(4), pp.140-145.

McInnes, C., James, R. and Hartley, R. (2000) *Trends in the first-year experience in Australian universities*. Melbourne: Centre for the Study of Higher Education, University of Melbourne.

McLeod, J. (2011) 'Student voice and the politics of listening in higher education'. *Critical Studies in Education*, *52*(2), pp. 179– 189.

McNamara, C. (1999) General guidelines for conducting interviews. Available at: http://www.managementhelp.org/evaluatn/intrview.htm (Accessed: 16 March 2021).

McGrath, J. E. and Johnson, B. A. (2003) 'Methodology makes meaning: How both qualitative and quantitative paradigms shape evidence and its interpretation'. In: P. M. Camic, P. M., Rhodes, J. E. and Yardley, L. (eds.) *Qualitative research in psychology: Expanding perspectives in methodology and design*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, pp. 31–48.

Mebrahtu, T., Crossley, M. and Johnson, D. (2000) *Globalisation, educational transformation and societies in transition*. Oxford: Symposium Books.

Mele, C. and Polese, F. (2010) 'Key dimensions of Service Systems: Interaction in social & technological networks to foster value co-creation'. In: Demirkan, H., Spohrer, J. and Krishna, V. (eds.) *The science of service systems*. Springer (in print).

Merlingen, M. (2011) 'From governance to governmentality in CSDP: Towards a Foucauldian research agenda'. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, *49*(1), pp. 149–169.

Merriam S. (1995) 'What can you tell from an N of 1? Issues of validity and reliability in qualitative research'. *PAACE J Lifelong Learn*, *4*, pp.51-60.

Mertens, D. (2003) 'Mixed methods and the politics of human research: The transformative-emancipatory perspective'. In: Tashakkori, A. Teddlie, C. (eds.) *Handbook of mixed methods in social and behavioral research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, pp. 135-164.

Meyer, J. H. F. and Land, R. (2005) 'Threshold concepts and troublesome knowledge (2): Epistemological considerations and a conceptual framework for learning and teaching'. *Higher Education*, *49*(3), pp. 373–88.

Miles, M. B. and Huberman, A. M. (1994) *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Miller, M. (2008). The privileges of the parents. Change, 40(1), 6-7.

Millová, K. and Blatný, M. (2015) 'Personality development: Systems theories'. *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, *17*, pp. 879-883.

Minichiello, V., Aroni, R., Timewell, E. and Alexander, L. (1990) *In-depth Interviewing: Researching people*. Hong Kong: Longman Cheshire Pty Limited.

Mitchell J. C., Alexander, W. A. and Dongbin K. (2004) 'Cross-racial interaction among undergraduates: Some consequences, causes, and patterns'. *Research in Higher Education*, *45*(5), pp. 529–553.

Mok, K. H. (2001) 'Academic capitalisation in the new millennium: The marketisation and corporatisation of higher education in Hong Kong'. *Policy & Politics, 29*(3), pp. 299–315.

Molesworth, M., Nixon, E. and Scullion, R. (2009) 'Having, being and higher education: The marketisation of the university and the transformation of the student into consumer'. *Teaching in Higher Education, 14*(3), pp.277-287.

Molesworth, M. *et al.* (2010) *The marketisation of higher education the student as consumer*. Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge.

Montgomery, C. and McDowell, L. (2009) 'Social networks and the international student experience: An international community of practice?' *Journal of Studies in International Education, 13*(4), pp. 455–466.

Morgan, D. (1988) *Focus Groups as Qualitative Research*. London: Sage Publications.

Morgan, D. L. (2002) 'Focus group interviewing'. In: Gubrium, J. F. and Holstein, J. A. (eds.) *Handbook of interviewing research: Context & Method*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Inc., pp. 141–159.

Morrison, T. (2001) 'How can values be taught in this university?' *Michigan Quarterly Review, 40*(2), pp. 273-278.

Morse, J. M. (1999) 'Myth#93: Reliability and validity are not relevant to qualitative inquiry'. *Qualitative Health Research, 9*(6), pp. 717–718. Doi:10.1177/104973299129122171.

Morse, J. M. and Field, P. A. (1995) *Qualitative research methods for health professionals*. 2nd edn. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Morse, J. M. and Richards, L. (2002) 'Coding'. In: Morse, J. and Richards, L. (eds.) *Read me first for a user's guide to qualitative methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, pp. 111–128.

Morse, J. M. *et al.* (2002) 'Verification strategies for establishing reliability and validity in qualitative research'. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 1*(2), pp. 13–22. Doi:10.1177/160940690200100202.

Muethel, M. and Saunders, M. (2008) 'Enhancing the value added of mixed method designs: on the use of card-based games for simultaneous hybrid data collection'. *European Academy of Management Conference*, Ljubljana, Slovenia

Munteanu, C., Ceobanu, C., Bobalca, C. and Anton, O. (2010) 'An analysis of customer satisfaction in a higher education context'. *International Journal of Public Sector Management, 23*(2), pp. 124–40. Doi:10.1108/09513551011022483.

Murphy, M. *et al.* (2020) *Social theory and the politics of higher education*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc.

Murphy, M. (2019) 'Public sector accountability and the contradictions of the regulatory state'. *Administrative Theory and Praxis*, pp. 193–207. Doi: 10.1080/10841806.2019.1700455.

Murray-Parkes, C. (1971) 'Psycho-social transitions: A field for study'. *Social Science & Medicine*, *5*(2), pp.101–115.

Murtagh, L., Morris, K. and Thorpe, P. (2013) 'A fish in water-supporting transition to higher education and initial teacher training'. *Practice and Evidence of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, *8*(1), pp. 56-80.

Mutumba, M. and Harper, G.W. (2015) 'Mental health and support among young key populations: An ecological approach to understanding and intervention'. *Journal of the International AIDS Society, 18*(S1), pp. 54-63.

Naidoo, R., Avi, S. and Ekant, V. (2011) 'The consumerist turn in higher education policy: Policy aspirations and outcomes'. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 27, pp. 1142–62.

Naidoo, R. (2004) 'Fields and institutional strategy: Bourdieu on the relationship between higher education, inequality and society'. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 25*(4), pp. 457–471.

Naidoo, R. (2016a) 'Choice in the learning market: Tokenistic ritual or democratic education?' In: Peter, J. and Joelle, F. (eds.) *Dimensions of Marketisation in Gigher Education*. London: Routledge, pp. 38–47.

Naidoo, R. (2016b) *The competition fetish in higher education*. University World News Global Edition.

Naidoo, R. and Williams, J. (2015) 'The neoliberal regime in English higher education: Charters, consumers and the erosion of the public good'. *Critical Studies in Education, 56*(2), pp. 208-223.

National Union of Students (NUS) (2013) *Mapping Participation: The Journey of Students' Union Participation in Higher Education*: London: NUS.

Neal, J.W. and Neal, Z.P. (2013) 'Nested or networked? Future directions for ecological systems theory'. *Social Development*, *22*(4), pp.722–737.

Neimeyer, G. J. and Diamond, A. K. (2001) 'The anticipated future of counselling psychology in the United States: A Delphi poll'. *Counselling Psychology Quarterly, 14,* pp. 49–65.

Nelson, K., Kift, S., Humphries, J. and Harper, W. (2006) 'A blueprint for enhanced transition: Taking an holistic approach to managing student transition into a large university'. Proceedings of *First Year in Higher Education Conference*, Gold Coast, Australia, 12–14 July 2006.

Nicholson, N. and West, M. (1995) 'Transitions, work histories, and careers'. In: Arthur, M. B., Hall, D. T. and Lawrence, B. S. (eds.) *Handbook of career theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 181–201.

Nico, M. and Caetano, A. (2017) 'Untying conceptual knots'. *Sociology (Oxford)*, *51*(3), pp. 666–684. Doi: 10.1177/0038038515604107.

Nicole M. S., Maryam G. H. and Mesmin D. (2014) 'Closing the social-class achievement gap: A difference-education intervention improves first-generation students' academic performance and all students' college transition'. *Psychological Science*, *25*(4), pp.943–953.

Nixon, E., Scullion, R. and Hearn, R. (2018) 'Her majesty the student: marketised higher education and the narcissistic (dis)satisfactions of the student-consumer'. *Studies in Higher Education (Dorchester-on-Thames)*, *43*(6), pp.927–943.

Noble, C. H. and Walker, B. A. (1997) 'Exploring the relationships among liminal transitions, symbolic consumption, and the extended self'. *Psychology & Marketing*, *14*(1), pp.29–47.

Noble, H. and Smith, J. (2015) 'Issues of validity and reliability in qualitative research'. *Evidence-Based Nursing*, *18*(2), pp. 34–35. Doi:10.1136/eb-2015-102054.

NUS (2015) *Proposed changes to NSS and Unistats: NUS response*. Available at: https://www.nusconnect.org.uk/resources/proposed-changes-to-nss-and-unistats-nus-response (Accessed: 20 January 2021).

Nyström, A. S., Jackson, C. and Karlsson, M. S. (2018) 'What counts as success? Constructions of achievement in prestigious higher education programmes'. *Research Papers in Education, 34*(4), pp. 465–82. Doi: 10.1080/02671522. 2018.1452964.

Oakden, J. (2014) *The use of rich pictures in evaluation*. [Video of slide presentation]. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q7CTREXtFuk.

O'Donnell, V., Kean, M. and Stevens, G. (2016) *Student transition in higher education: Concepts, theories and practices*. York: Higher Education Academy.

Office for Students (2018) *What is value for money for students?* Available at: https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/regulation/value-for-money/.

Olssen, M., Codd, J. and O'Neill, A. (2004) *Education policy: Globalisation, citizenship and democracy*. London: Sage.

Olssen, M. and Peters, M.A. (2005) 'Neoliberalism, higher education and the knowledge economy: From the free market to knowledge capitalism'. *Journal of Education Policy*, *20*(3), pp.313-345.

Olssen, M. (2006) 'Understanding the mechanisms of neoliberal control: Lifelong learning, flexibility and knowledge capitalism'. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, *25*(3), pp. 231-230.

Orb, A., Eisenhauer, L. and Wynaden, D. (2001) 'Ethics in Qualitative Research'. *Journal of Nursing Scholarship* (accepted for publication June 12, 2000), *3*3(1), pp. 93–96. Doi:10.1111/j.1547-5069.2001.00093.x.

Pallas, A.M. (2003) 'Educational transitions, trajectories, and pathways'. In: Mortimer, J. T. and Shanahan, M. J. (eds.) *Handbook of the life course*. New York: Plenum, pp. 165–84.

Palmer, M., O'Kane, P. and Owens, M. (2009) 'Betwixt spaces: Student accounts of turning point experiences in the first-year transition'. *Studies in Higher Education (Dorchester-on-Thames)*, *34*(1), pp.37–54.

Palys, T. (2008) 'Purposive sampling'. In: Given, L. M. (ed.) *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods.* 2. Los Angeles: Sage, pp.697-8.

Pancer, S. M., Pratt, M. W. and Hunsberger, B. E. (2000) 'Great expectations: The relation between expectancies and adjustment during the transition to university'. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, *30*(10), pp.2100–2125.

Paraskeva, J. M. (2013) 'Whose internationalization?' *Journal of the American Association for the Advancement of Curriculum Studies, 9*, pp. 1-5.

Park, J. J. (2015) Understanding students' precollege experiences with racial diversity: The high school as microsystem'. *Journal of College Student Development*, *56*(4), pp.349–363.

Parker, S., Gale, T. and Bok, J. (2012) 'This isn't for the likes of us: Taste and capability in aspirations for higher education'. Paper presented in the invited symposium *Provoking Bourdieu: Playing with the logics of field, practice and taste in Australian education*, at the *Joint Conference of the Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE), the Asia-Pacific Education Research Association (APERA), and the World Education Research Association (WERA) Focal Meeting*, 2–6 December, in Sydney.

Pascarella, E.T. *et al*. (2004) 'First-Generation College Students', *The Journal of higher education (Columbus)*, 75(3), pp. 249–284. doi:10.1080/00221546.2004.11772256.

Paschyn, C. (2014) 'Check your orientalism at the door: Edward Said, Sanjay Seth, and the adequacy of Western pedagogy'. *The Journal of General Education, 63*(2-3), pp. 222-231.

Patricia, P. (2019) 'Rich pictures in qualitative research in higher education: The student as consumer and producer in personal branding'. *International Journal of Work - Integrated Learning*, *20*(2), p.171.

Patton, M. Q. (1990) *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*. 2nd edn. Newbury Park: Sage.

Patton, M.Q. (1999) 'Enhancing the quality and credibility of qualitative analysis', *Health Services Research*, *34*(5 Pt 2), pp. 1189–1189.

Patton, M.Q. (2002) *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

Patton, M. Q. (2015) *Qualitative research & evaluation methods*. 4th edn. Los Angeles: SAGE.

Payne, M. (2019) 'Global perspectives on higher education: A social constructivist case for diversification of complementary medicine curricula'. *Advances in Integrative Medicine, 6*, p.S37.

Peng, M. W., Sun, S. L. and Markóczy, L. (2015) 'Human capital and CEO compensation during institutional transitions'. *Journal of Management Studies*, *52*(1), pp.117–147.

Pennington, C. R., Bates, E. A., Kaye, L. K. and Bolam, L. T. (2018) 'Transitioning in higher education: An exploration of psychological and contextual factors affecting student satisfaction'. *Journal of Further and Higher Education, 42*(5), pp. 596–607. Doi:10.1080/0309877X.2017.1302563.

Peters, M. (2001a) 'Education, enterprise culture and the entrepreneurial self: A Foucauldian perspective'. *In Journal of Educational Enquiry, 2*(2), pp. 58-71

Peters, M. A. (2001b) 'Foucault and governmentality: understanding the neoliberal paradigm of education policy'. *The School Field, 12*(5-6), pp. 61-72.

Peters, M., Besley, A.C., Olssen, M., Maurer, S. and Weber, S. (eds.) (2009*) Governmentality studies in education*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

Petreski, M. (2020) 'Winners or losers? Workers in transition economies under globalisation'. *Post-Communist Economies*, *32*(4), pp.468–494.

Peterson, S., Kovel-Jarboe, P. and Schwartz, S. (1997) 'Quality improvement in higher education: Implications for student retention'. *Quality in Higher Education*, *3*(2), pp. 131–141.

Pigden, L. and Jegede, F. (2020) 'Thematic analysis of the learning experience of joint honours students: their perception of teaching quality, value for money and employability'. *Studies in Higher Education (Dorchester-on-Thames)*, *45*(8), pp.1650–1663.

Pilisuk, M., and Parks, S. H. (1986) *The healing web: Social networks and human survival*. London: University Press of New England.

Pink, S. (2012) *Advances in visual methodology*. London, UK: Sage.

Planas, A., Soler, P., Fullana, J., Pallisera, M. and Vilà, M. (2013) 'Student participation in university governance: The opinions of professors and students'. *Studies in Higher Education*, *38*(4), pp. 571– 583.

Ploner, J. (2018) 'International students' transitions to UK higher education – revisiting the concept and practice of academic hospitality'. *Journal of Research in International Education*, *17*(2), pp.164–178.

Poyrazli, S. and Graham, K. (2007) 'Barriers to adjustment: Needs of international students within a semi- urban campus community'. *Journal of Instructional Psychology*, *34*, pp. 28- 45.

QAA (2018) *UK quality code for higher education: Advice and guidance: Student engagement* (London, The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education). Available at: www.qaa.ac.uk/en/quality-code/advice-and-guidance/student-engagement (Accessed: 20 March 2020).

Quinn, J. (2010) 'Rethinking 'failed transitions' to higher education'. In: Ecclestone, K., Biesta G. and Hughes, M. (eds.) *Transitions and learning through the lifecourse*. London: Routledge, pp. 118–29.

Raaper, R. and Ciaran, B. (2020) 'Student politics: Resistance, refusal, and representation'. In: Murphy, M., Burke, C., Costa, C., and Raaper, R. (eds.) *Social theory and the politics of higher education: Critical perspectives on institutional research*. Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, London. Available at: ProQuest Ebook Central.

Radey, M. and Cheatham, L. P. (2013) 'Do single mothers take their share? FAFSA completion among aid-eligible female students'. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, *6*(4), pp. 261–275. Doi: 10.1037/a0035089.

Rajchman, J. (2001) *The deleuze connections*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Ranson, S. *et al.* (2005) 'The participation of volunteer citizens in school governance'. *Educational Review (Birmingham)*, *57*(3), pp.357–371.

Rau, C. (2005) 'Indigenous metaphors of the heart: Transformative praxis in early childhood education in Aotearoa, privileging Maori women's educator's voices'. Paper presented at *the 13th International Conference on Reconceptualizing Early Childhood Research, Theory, and Practice*, Madison, WI. October.

Raz, J. (1986) *The morality of freedom*. Oxford: University of Oxford Press.

Reay, D. (1998) 'Always knowing and 'never being sure': familial and institutional habituses and higher education choice'. *Journal of Education Policy*, *13*(4), pp.519–529.

Reay, D., David, M. E. and Ball, S. J. (2001) Making a difference? Institutional habituses and higher education choice'. *Sociological Research Online*, *5*(4), pp.1–12.

Reay, D., David, M. E. and Ball, S. J. (2005) *Degrees of choice: Class, race, gender and higher education*. London: Trentham Books.

Reay, D. (2010) 'Identity making in schools and classrooms'. In: Wetherall, M. and Talpade, C. M. (eds.) *The Sage handbook of identities*. Los Angeles, London, New Delhi: SAGE, pp. 277–294.

Reeb, R. N. (2017) 'Psycho-ecological systems model: A systems approach to planning and gauging the community impact of community-engaged scholarship'. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, *24*(1), p. 6. Doi: 10.3998/mjcsloa.3239521.0024.102.

Reeb, R. N. *et al.* (2017) Psycho-ecological systems model: A systems approach to planning and gauging the community impact of community-engaged scholarship. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, *24*(1), pp.6–22.

Reeb, R. N., O'Koon, B., Folger, S. and Snow, N. (2017) 'Critique of conceptual models guiding engaged scholarship and service-learning research: Towards a general systems theory approach'. Paper presented at the *International Association for Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement*, Galway, Ireland.

Reid, L. M. and Dixon, A. L. (2012) 'The counselling supervision needs of international students in U.S. institutions of higher education: A culturally sensitive supervision model for counsellor educators'. *Journal for International Counsellor Education, 4*, pp. 29-41.

Rendon, L. I., Jalomo, R. E. and Nora, A. (2000) 'Theoretical considerations in the study of minority student retention in higher education'. In: Braxton, J. M. (ed.) *Reworking the student departure puzzle*. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, pp. 127-156.

Renz, S. M., Carrington, J. M. and Badger, T. A. (2018) 'Two strategies for qualitative content analysis: An intra-method approach to triangulation'. *Qualitative Health Research*, *28*(5), pp. 824–831. Doi: 10.1177/1049732317753586.

Rhein, D. (2016) 'Westernisation and the Thai higher education system: past and present'. *Journal of Educational Administration and History, 48*(3), pp.261–274.

Riach, K. (2009) 'Exploring participant-centred reflexivity in the research interview'. *Sociology, 43*(2), pp. 356-370.

Rice, K. G. *et al.* (2009) 'International student perspectives on graduate advising relationships'. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 56*, pp. 376-391.

Riley, M. and Riley, Jr. J. (1994) 'Structural lag: Past and future'. In: Riley, M. W. *et al.* (eds.) *Age and structural lag: Society's failure to provide meaningful opportunities in work, family, and leisure*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, pp. 15–36.

Rizvi, F. (2007) 'Postcolonialism and globalization in education'. *Cultural Studies Critical Methodologies, 7*(3), pp. 256-263.

Robert D. (2007) 'Chapter 13: Critically framing education policy: Foucault, discourse and governmentality'. *Counterpoints (New York, N.Y.), 292*, pp.193–204.

Roberts, L. D. (2015) 'Ethical issues in conducting qualitative research in online communities'. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *12*(3), pp. 314–25.

Robinson, C. and Taylor, C. (2007) 'Theorising student voice: Values and perspectives'. *Improving Schools, 10*(1), pp. 5–17.

Rodríguez, J. *et al.* (2018) 'Engaging race and racism for socially just intergroup relations: The impact of intergroup dialogue on college campuses in the United States'. *Multicultural Education Review*, *10*(3), pp.224–245.

Rolfe, G. (2006) 'Validity, trustworthiness and rigour: quality and the idea of qualitative research'. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, *53*(3), pp. 304–310. Doi:10.1111/j.1365-2648.2006.03727.x.

Rosa, E. M. and Tudge, J. (2013) 'Urie Bronfenbrenner's theory of human development: Its evolution from ecology to bioecology'. *Journal of Family Theory & Review, 5*, pp. 243–258.

Rosas, M. and Hamrick, F.A. (2002) 'Postsecondary enrolment and academic decision making: Family influences on women college students of Mexican descent'. *Equity and Excellence in Education, 35*(1), pp. 59-69.

Rose, G. (2016) *Visual methodologies: An introduction to research with visual materials*. London, UK: Sage

Rose-Redwood, C. and Rose-Redwood, R. (2017) 'Rethinking the politics of the international student experience in the age of trump'. *Journal of International Students*, *7*(3), pp. i–ix. Doi:10.32674/jis.v7i3.201.

Rossman, G. B. and Rallis, S. F. (2010) 'Everyday ethics: Reflections on practice'. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, *23*, pp. 379–391.

Rowley, J. *et al.* (2012) 'Using card-based games to enhance the value of semi-structured interviews'. *International Journal of Market Research, 54*(1), pp. 93–110. Doi: 10.2501/IJMR-54-1-093-110.

Rutherford, J. (2005) 'Cultural studies in the corporate university'. *Cultural Studies*, *19*(3), pp. 297-317.

Rutland, C. S., Dobbs, H. and Tötemeyer, S. (2016) 'How does student educational background affect transition into the first year of veterinary school? Academic performance and support needs in university education'. *Journal of Veterinary Medical Education, 43*(4), pp. 372–381.

Ryan, A. and Tilbury, D. (2013) *Flexible pedagogies: new pedagogical ideas*. York: the Higher Education Academy.

Ryan, G.W. and Bernard, H.R. (2003) 'Techniques to identify themes'. *Field Methods*, *15*(1), pp.85-109.

Salmon, P. (1989) 'Personal stances in learning'. In: Weil, S. and Mcgill, I. (eds.) *Making sense of experiential learning*. Buckingham: Open University Press, pp. 230-241.

Salvati, L. (2016) 'Demographic transition, immigration, gentrification: Unravelling early signs of re-urbanisation in a European city'. *International Social Science Journal*, *66*(219-220), pp.49–62.

Salzer, M.S. (1997) 'Consumer empowerment in mental health organisations: Concept, benefit and impediments'. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health, 24*, pp. 425–34.

Salzinger, L. (2016) '(Dis)placing neoliberalism - Wendy Brown, Undoing the demos: Neoliberalism's stealth revolution (New York, Zone Books, 2015). *Archives européennes de sociologie. European Journal of Sociology, 57*(3), pp.460–465.

Sandelowski, M. (1986) 'The problem of rigor in qualitative research'. *Advances in Nursing Science, 8*, pp. 27–37.

Santos, B. de S. (2016) *Epistemologies of the South: justice against epistemicide*. Routledge.

Scarr, S. (1996) 'How people make their own environments: Implications for parents and policy makers'. *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law, 2*, pp. 204–228.

Schmid, H. (2008) 'Managing transitions: lifelong guidance in the European space'. Conference on a *European Model of Lifelong Guidance*, Lyon, available at: http://www.guentherschmid.eu/pdf/vortraege/lyon-08.pdf

Schneider, M. E. (2015) 'Motivational development, systems theory of'. *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, Elsevier Ltd, pp. 946–950.

Schnell, C.A., Louis, K.S. and Doetkott, C. (2003) 'The first-year seminar as a means of improving college graduation rates'. *Journal of the First Year and Students in Transition, 15*, pp. 53–76.

Schommer-Aikins (2004) 'Explaining the epistemological belief system: Introducing the embedded systemic model and coordinated research approach'. *Educational Psychologist, 39*, pp.19–29

Schultz, P.F. (2004) 'Upon Entering College: First Semester Experiences of First-Generation Rural Students from Agricultural Families', *The Rural educator (Fort Collins, Colo.)*, 26(1), p. 48.

Schultz, U. and Avital, M. (2011) 'Designing interviews to generate rich data for information systems'. *Information and Organization, 21*(1), pp. 1-16

Schwier, R. (2012) 'The corrosive influence of competition, growth, and accountability on institutions of higher education'. *Journal of Computing in Higher Education, 24*(2), pp. 96–103.

Scotland, J. (2012) 'Exploring the philosophical underpinnings of research: relating ontology and epistemology to the methodology and methods of the scientific, interpretive and critical research paradigms'. *English Language Teaching, 5*(9), pp. 9-16.

Scott. D. and Usher, R. (2004) *Researching education: Data, methods, and theory in educational enquiry*. New York: Continuum.

Scott, P. (2000) Globalisation and higher education: Challenges for the 21st Century. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 4*(1), pp.3–10.

Scott, R. (2013) *Institutions and Organizations: Ideas, Interests and Identities*. 4th edn. Sage.

Scott, W. R. (2008) *Institutions and organizations: ideas and interests*. 3rd edn. Thousand Oaks, Calif.; London: Sage.

Searle, J. R. (2015) 'Seeing things as they are: A theory of perception'. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199385157.001.0001

Seats, M. R. (2020) 'The voice(s) of reason: Conceptual challenges for the decolonization of knowledge in global higher education'. *Teaching in Higher Education*, pp.1–17.

Sellar, S. and Gale, T. (2011) 'Mobility, aspiration, voice: A new structure of feeling for student equity in higher education'. *Critical Studies in Education, 52*(2), pp. 115–34.

Sermijn, J., Devlieger, P. and Loots, G. (2008) 'The narrative construction of the self: Selfhood as a rhizomatic story'. *Qualitative Inquiry, 14*(4), pp. 632–50.

Shavit, Y., & Blossfeld, H. P. (1993). Persistent inequality. *Changing educational attainment in thirteen countries*. Boulder: Westview

Shaw, E. (1999) 'A guide to the qualitative research process: Evidence from a small firm study'. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal, 2*(2), pp. 59–70.

Shreeve, R. L. (2020) 'Globalisation or westernisation? The influence of global university rankings in the context of the Republic of China (Taiwan)'. *Compare*, *50*(6), pp.922–927.

Sigahi, T.F.A.C. and Saltorato, P. (2020) 'Academic capitalism: Distinguishing without disjoining through classification schemes'. *Higher Education*, *80*(1), pp. 95–117. Doi:10.1007/s10734-019-00467-4.

Silverman, D. (2014) *Interpreting qualitative data*. 5th edn. London, UK: Sage.

Simmel, G. (1955 [1922]) 'The web of group affiliations'. In: Bendix, R. (Trans.) *Conflict and the web of group affiliations*. Glencoe, IL: Free Press, pp. 126–195.

Simons, M. (2007) The 'Renaissance of the University' in the European Knowledge Society: An exploration of principled and governmental approaches. *Studies in Philosophy and Education, 26*(5), pp. 433-447.

Slaughter, S. and Leslie, L.L. (2001) 'Expanding and elaborating the concept of academic capitalism'. *Organization*, *8*(2), pp. 154-161.

Slaughter, S. and Rhoades, G. (2004) *Academic capitalism and the new economy: markets, state, and higher education*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.

Slavin, R. E. (1984) *Research methods in education: A practical guide*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Slevin, E. and Sines, D. (2000) 'Enhancing the truthfulness, consistency and transferability of a qualitative study: Utilising a manifold of approaches'. *Nurse Researcher*, *7*(2), pp. 79–98. Doi:10.7748/nr2000.01.7.2.79.c6113.

Smith, C. (2017) 'Mind the gap! Students' expectations and early experiences of higher education'. *Innovations in Practice, 11*(1), pp. 23–38.

Smith, D. I. (2009) 'Changes in transitions: The role of mobility, class and gender'. *Journal of Education and Work, 22*(5), pp. 369–90.

Smith, J. K. and Heshusius, L. (1986) 'Closing down the conversation: The end of the qualitative/quantitative debate among educational inquirers'. *Educational Researcher*, (150), pp. 4-12.

Smith, J. and Osborn, M. (2008) 'Interpretative phenomenology analysis'. In: Smith, J. (ed.) *Qualitative psychology: A practical guide to research methods*. 2nd edn. London, United Kingdom: Sage Publications Ltd., pp. 53-80.

Smyth, E. and Banks, J. (2012) 'There was never really any question of anything else: Young people's agency, institutional habitus and the transition to higher education'. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, *33*(2), pp. 263–81. Doi: 10.1080/01425692.2012.632867

Solomon, Y. (2007) 'Not belonging? What makes a functional learner identity in undergraduate mathematics?' *Studies in Higher Education*, *32*, pp. 79–96.

Somekh, B. and Lewin, C. (2005) *Research methods in the social sciences*. London, UK: Sage.

Spencer-Rodgers, J. and McGovern, T. (2002) 'Attitudes toward the culturally different: The role of intercultural communication barriers, affective responses, consensual stereotypes, and perceived threat'. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 26*(6), pp. 609–631.

Spitzberg, I.J. (1980). *Universities and the international distribution of knowledge*. State University of New York at Buffalo. Center for Comparative Education and Universities the new international order Buffalo.New York: Praeger.

Spivak, G. C. (1996) *The Spivak reader: Selected works of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak*. New York: Routledge.

Stebleton, M. J. (2011) 'Understanding immigrant college students: Applying a developmental ecology framework to the practice of academic advising'. *NACADA Journal*, *31*(1), pp. 42-54.

Stentiford, L., Koutsouris, G., Boyle, C., Jindal-Snape, J., Salazar Rivera, J. and Benham-Clarke, S. (2021) 'The structures and processes governing education research in the UK from 1990-2020: A systematic scoping review'. *Review of Education, 9*(3), pp. 1-43.

Stocké, V. (2007) ‘Explaining educational decision and effects of families' social class position’, *European sociological review*, 23(4), pp. 505–519. doi:10.1093/esr/jcm014.

St. Pierre, E. (1997) 'Methodology in the fold and the irruption of transgressive data'. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 10*(2), pp. 175–89.

Swecker, H. K., Fifolt, M. and Searby, L. (2013) 'Academic advising and first-genneratiion college students: A quantitative study on student retention'. *NACADA Journal, 33*(1), pp. 46-53.

Swick, K. J. and Williams, R. D. (2006) 'An analysis of Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological perspective for early childhood educators: Implications for working with families experiencing stress'. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 33*(5), pp.371–378.

Szabo, A., Ward, C. and Jose, P. E. (2016) 'Uprooting stress, coping, and anxiety: A longitudinal study of international students'. *International Journal of Stress Management, 23*(2), pp. 190-208.

Tashakkori, A. and Teddlie, C. (2003) 'Major issues and controversies in the use of mixed methods in the socialandbehavioral sciences'. In: Tashakorri, A. and Teddlie, C. (eds.) *Handbook of mixed methods in social &behavioral research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, pp. 3-50.

Tas, M. (2013) 'International students: Challenges of adjustment to university life in the US'. *International Journal of Education, 5*(3), pp. 1-10. Doi:10.5296/ije.v5i3.3481

Tate, S. and Swords, J. (2013) 'Please mind the gap: Students' perspectives of the transition in academic skills between A-level and degree level geography'. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education, 37*(2), pp. 230–40. Doi: 10.1080/03098265. 2012.763114.

Tavares, O. and Cardosa, S. (2013) 'Enrolment choices in Portuguese HE: Do students behave as rational consumers?' *Higher Education, 66*(3), pp. 297–309.

Taylor, C. A. and Harris-Evans, J. (2018) 'Reconceptualising transition to higher education with Deleuze and Guattari'. *Studies in Higher Education (Dorchester-on-Thames), 43*(7), pp.1254–1267.

Taylor, C., J. Harris-Evans, I. Garner, D. Fitzgerald, and M. Madriaga. (2018). Measurement Imperatives and Their Impact: Academic Staff Narratives on Riding the Metric Tide. In *Equality and Differentiation in Marketised Higher Education: A New Level Playing Field?* edited by M. Bowl, C. McCaig, and J. Hughes, pp.171–94. *Cham: Palgrave Macmillan*.Doi: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-78313-0.

Taylor, C. and Robinson, C. (2009) 'Student voice: Theorising power and participation'. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, *17*(2), pp. 161– 175.

Taylor, G. and Ali, N. (2017) 'Learning and living overseas: Exploring factors that influence meaningful learning and assimilation: How international students adjust to studying in the UK from a socio-cultural perspective'. *Education Sciences, 7*(1), p. 35. Doi: 10.3390/educsci7010035.

Taylor, Y. (2006) 'Poor transitions: Social exclusions and young adults'. *Sociological Research Online, 11*(1), pp.1–2.

Terenzini, P. T. *et al.* (1996) 'Making the transition to college'. In: Menges, R. J. and Weimer, M. (eds.) *Teaching on solid ground: Using scholarship to improve practice*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, pp. 43–74.

Tett, L., Cree, V. E. and Christie, H. (2017) 'From further to higher education: Transition as an on-going process'. *Higher Education, 73*(3), pp. 389–406. Doi:10.1007/s10734-016-0101-1.

Teune, H. (2001) *Universities as sites of citizenship and civic responsibility: United States study*. Philadelphia: International Consortium for Higher Education Civic Responsibility and Democracy.

Thelen, E. and Smith, L. B. (2006) 'Dynamic systems theories'. In: Damon, W. and Lerner, R. M. (eds.) Handbook of child psychology: Theoretical models of human development. 6th edn. Wiley, Hoboken, Vol. 1, pp. 258–312.

The official page of the University of Color. Available at: http://universityofcolour.com/. Members of UoC and of the New Urban Collective have created a facebook page 'Decolonials' at: www.facebook.com/groups/922214724542062/

The official website of the New Urban Collective. Available at: http:// nucnet.nl/. They have also created the Black Archives to document the history of Black and diasporic populations not included in universities' curricula. This initiative can be accessed at: www.theblackarchives.nl/

Thiel, J. (2019) 'The UK national students survey: An amalgam of discipline and neo-liberal governmentality'. *British Educational Research Journal, 45*(3), pp. 538–553.

Tholen, G. and Brown, P. (2018) 'Higher education and the myths of graduate employability'. In: Waller, R., Ingram, N. and Ward, M. R. M. (eds.) *Higher education and social inequalities: University admissions, experiences and outcomes*. London: Routledge, pp. 153– 167.

Thomas, L. (2002) 'Student retention in higher education: the role of institutional habitus'. *Journal of Education Policy, 17*(4), pp.423–442.

Thomas, L. (2013) 'What works? Facilitating an effective transition into higher education'. *Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning, 14*(1), pp. 4-24.

Thompson, C. E. and Fretz, B. R. (1991) 'Predicting the adjustment of Black students at predominantly White institutions'. *Journal of Higher Education, 62*(4), pp. 437-450.

Thomson, P. (2008) *Doing visual research with children and young people*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Thompson, R. (2002) 'Reporting the results of computer-assisted analysis of qualitative research data'. *Forum, Qualitative Social Research, 3*(2).

Thorne, S., Stephens, J., Truant, T. (2016). Building qualitative study design using nursing's disciplinary epistemology. *Journal of Advanced Nursing, 72*(2), 451–460.

Throop, M. (2001) 'Education policy and social class in England and New Zealand: An instructive comparison'. *Journal of Education Policy, 16*(4), pp. 297-314. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02680930110054317.

Tight, M. (2000) 'Do league tables contribute to the development of a quality culture? Football and higher education compared'. *Higher Education Quarterly*, *54*(1), pp. 22-42. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1468-2273.00143

Tilak, J. B. (2008) 'Higher education: A public good or a commodity for trade?' *Prospects*, *38*(4), pp.449-466.

Tinto, V. (1975) 'Dropout from higher education: A theoretical synthesis of recent research'. *Review of Educational Research, 45*, pp. 89–125.

Tinto, V. (1988) 'Stages of student departure: Reflections on the longitudinal character of student leaving'. *The Journal of Higher Education (Columbus)*, *59*(4), pp.438–455.

Tinto, V. (1987) *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Tinto, V. (1982) 'The limits of theory and practice in student attrition'. *Journal of Higher Education, 53*, pp. 687–700.

Tinto, V. (1993) *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition*. 2nd edn. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

Tinto, V. (2006) 'Research and practice of student retention: What next?' *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice, 8*(1), pp. 1-19. Doi.org/10.2190%2F4YNU-4TMB-22DJ-AN4W.

Tlostanova, M. and Mignolo, W. (2012) *Learning to unlearn: Decolonial reflections from Eurasia and the Americas*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press.

Tobbell, J. and O'Donnell, V. L. (2013) 'Transition to postgraduate study: Postgraduate ecologicalsystems and identity'. *Cambridge Journal of Education, 43*, pp. 123–138.

Tobin, G. A. and Begley, C. M. (2004) 'Methodological rigour within a qualitative framework'. *Journal of Advanced Nursing, 48*, pp. 388–396. Doi:10.1111/j.1365-2648.2004.03207.x

Tomlinson, P. (1989) 'Having it both ways: Hierarchical focusing as research interview method'. *British Educational Research Journal*, *15*(2), pp. 155–176. Doi:10.1080/0141192890150205.

Tomlinson, M. (2008) 'The Degree is not enough: Students' perceptions of the role of higher education credentials for graduate work and employability'. Available at: https://eprints.soton.ac.uk/199739/1/BJ (Accessed: 11 July 2019).

Tomlinson, M. (2018) 'Conceptions of the value of higher education in a measured market'. *Higher Education, 75*(4), pp. 711-727.

Tooley, J. (1996) *Education without the State*. London: IEA Education and Training Unit.

Tooley, J. (2000) *Reclaiming education.* London: Cassell.

Tran, L. T. (2016) 'Mobility as becoming: A Bourdieuian analysis of the factors shaping international student mobility'. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 37*(8), pp. 1268–1289.

Tran, L.T. and Vu, T.T.P. (2016) 'I'm not like that, why treat me the same way? The impact of stereotyping international students on their learning, employability and connectedness with the workplace'. *Australian Educational Researcher*, *43*(2), pp. 203–220. Doi:10.1007/s13384-015-0198-8.

Tran, L. T. and Vu, T. T. P. (2018) 'Agency in mobility: Towards a conceptualisation of international student agency in transnational mobility', *Educational Review (Birmingham)*, *70*(2), pp. 167–187. Doi: 10.1080/00131911.2017.1293615.

Triandis, H. C., Bontempo, R., Villareal, M. J., Asai, M. and Lucca, N. (1988) 'Individualism and collectivism: Cross-cultural perspectives on self-ingroup relationships'. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 54*(2), pp. 323-338.

Triandis, H. C., McCuster, C. and Hui, C. H. (1990) 'Multicultural probes of individualism and collectivism'. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 59*(5), pp. 1006-1020.

Trochim, W. M. (2005) *Research methods: The concise knowledge base*. Atomic Dog Publishing

Tudge, J. R. H., Mokrova, I., Hatfield, B. E. and Karnik, R.B. (2009) 'Uses and misuses of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory of human development'. *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, *1*, pp. 198–210.

Turner, V. (1969) *The ritual process: Structure and anti-structure*. London: Routledge.

Universities UK (2015) *Efficiency, effectiveness and value for money*. ISBN: 978-1-84036-332-6.

Valentine, M. B. and Capponi, P. (1989) 'Mental health consumer participation on boards and committees: Barriers and strategies'. *Canada's Mental Health, 37*, pp. 8–12.

Valsiner, J. (2006) 'Developmental epistemology and implications for methodology'. In: Lerner, R., Overton, M., Willis, F. and Molenaar, P. C. M. (eds.) *Handbook of child psychology and developmental science*. Hoboken, NJ, USA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Valsiner, J. (2009) 'Cultural psychology today: Innovations and oversights'. *Culture & Psychology*, *15*(1), pp.5–39.

Vandeyar, S. (2021) 'Pedagogy of compassion: Negotiating the contours of global citizenship'. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, *35*(2), pp. 200–214.

Vandeyar, S. (2017) 'The teacher as an agent of meaningful educational change'. *Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice*, *17*(2), pp. 373–393. Doi: 10.12738/estp.2017.2.0314.

Van de Werfhorst, H. and Andersen, R. (2005) 'Social Background, Credential Inflation and Educational Strategies', *Acta sociologica*, 48(4), pp. 321–340. doi:10.1177/0001699305059945.

Van Ryzin, M. J. *et al*. (2011) 'Using the bridges transition framework for youth in foster care: Measurement development and preliminary outcomes'. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *33*(11), pp. 2267–2272.

Vianden, J. and Barlow, P. J. (2015) 'Strengthen the bond: Relationships between academic advising quality and undergraduate student loyalty'. *The Journal of the National Academic Advising* Association, *35*(2), pp. 15-27.

Vinson, D., Nixon, S., Walsh, B., Walker, C., Mitchell, E. and Zaitseva, E. (2010) 'Investigating the relationship between student engagement and transition'. *Active Learning in Higher Education, 11*(2), pp. 131–143.

Viswanathan S. (1988) 'Higher education co-operation and western dominance of knowledge creation and flows in third world countries'. *Higher Education, 17*(1), pp.41–68.

Volet, S. and C. Jones (2012) 'Cultural transitions in higher education: Individual adaptation, transformation and engagement'. *Advances in Motivation and Achievement, 17*, pp. 241–284.

Von Bertalanffy, L. (1956) General system theory, in Emery, F.E. (eds.) General System, Yearbook of the Society for the Advancement of General System Theory.

Von Bertalanffy, L. (1968) *General systems theory: Foundations, development, and applications*. New York: George Brazillier.

Von Bertalanffy, L. (1972) 'The history and status of general systems theory'. *The Academy of Management Journal, 15*(4), pp. 407-426.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978) *Mind in society: The development of higher mental processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Wang, K. T., Wei, M., Zhao, R., Chuang, C. C. and Li, F. (2015) 'The cross-cultural loss scale: Development and psychometric evaluation'. *Psychological Assessment, 27*, pp. 42–53.

Wang, S. (2020) *International students' participation in intercultural classrooms at a UK university*. PhD thesis.University of Glasgow. Available at: https://theses.gla.ac.uk/79012/ (Accessed: April 12 2021).

Wan, S. (2018, June) *Conducting drawing method in studying curriculum leadership in Hong Kong: Some reflections*. [Power point presentation slides] Presented at the seminar 'Using creative and visual methods in comparative research'. University of Surrey, UK.

Watermeyer, R. and Tomlinson, M. (2021) Competitive accountability and the dispossession of academic identity: Haunted by an impact phantom. Educational Philosophy and Theory.

Weale, S. (2019, March) Levels of distress and illness among students in UK 'Alarmingly High'. *The Guardian*. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/education/2019/mar/05/levels-of-distress-and-illness-among-students-in-uk-alarmingly-high (Accessed: 16 July 2021).

Weedon, C. (1997[1987]) *Feminist practice and poststructuralist theory*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Weber, S., Maurer, S. (eds.) (2006) *Governmentality and education: Knowledge - Power - Transformation*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag.

Wellington, J. (2000) *Educational research: Contemporary issues and practical approaches*. London: Continuum International Publishing Group.

Wellington, J. and Szczerbinski, M. (2007) *Research methods for the social sciences*. London: Continuum International Publishing Group.

Welsh, E. (2002) 'Dealing with data: Using NVivo in the qualitative data analysis process'. *Forum, Qualitative Social Research, 3*(2), pp. 1-9.

White, M. (2015) 'The internationalization of higher education: Tensions and debates'. *Antistasis (Fredericton, NB), 5*(2), p. 101.

White, N. R. (2007) 'The customer is always right? Student discourse about higher education in Australia'. *Higher Education, 54*, pp. 593–604.

Wilkins, A. and Olmedo, A. (2018) *Conceptualising education governance: Framings, perspectives and theories*. Bloomsbury.

Williams, C. (1982) *The early experiences of students on Australian university campuses*. Sydney: University of Sydney.

Williams, J. and Nelson-Gardell, D. (2012) 'Predicting resilience in sexually abused adolescents'. *Child Abuse and Neglect, 36*, pp. 53–63.

Wilson, K. (2009) 'The impact of institutional, programmatic, and personal interventions on an effective and sustainable first-year student experience'. Keynote address, *12th Pacific Rim First Year in Higher Education Conference, 'Preparing for tomorrow today: The first-year experience as foundation'*, 29 June, in Townsville. Availavle at: http://www.fyhe.com.au/past_papers/ papers09/ppts/Keithia_Wilson_paper.pdf (Accessed: 2 June 2011).

Winstone, N. E. and Hulme, J. (2019) '"Duck to Water', or 'Fish Out of Water'? Diversity in the experience of negotiating the transition to university'. In: Lygo-Baker, S., Kinchin, I. and Winstone, N. (eds.) *Engaging student voices in higher education: Diverse perspectives and expectations in partnership*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 159–74.

Woodgate, R. L. and Kreklewetz, C.M. (2012) 'Youth's narratives about family members smoking: Parenting the parent- it's not fair'. *BMC Public Health, 12*(1), p. 965. Doi: 10.1186/1471-2458-12-965.

Woodgate, R. L. and Leach, J. (2010) 'Youth's perspectives on the determinants of health'. *Qualitative Health Research, 20*(9), pp. 1173–1182. Doi: 10.1177/1049732310370213.

Woodgate, R.L., Tennent, P. and Zurba, M. (2017) 'Navigating ethical challenges in qualitative research with children and youth through sustaining mindful presence'. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 16*(1), pp. 1-11. Doi:10.1177/1609406917696743.

Worth, N. (2009) 'Understanding youth transition as 'Becoming': Identity, time and futurity'. *Geoforum, 40*(6), pp. 1050–1060. Doi:10.1016/j.geoforum.2009.07.007.

Wright, A. and Raaper, R. (2019) 'Contesting student identities: Making sense of students' positioning in higher education policy'. In: Bagshaw, A. and McVitty, D. (eds.) *Influencing higher education policy: A professional guide to making an impact.* Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 65–77.

Yakushko, O. and Chronister, K. M. (2005) 'Immigrant women and counselling: The invisible others'. *Journal of Counselling & Development, 83*, pp. 292–298.

Yan, K. and Berliner, D. C. (2013) 'Chinese international students' personal and sociocultural stressors in the United States'. *Journal of College Student Development, 54*(1), pp. 62-84.

Young, H. and Jerome, L. (2020) 'Student voice in higher education: Opening the loop'. *British Educational Research Journal*, *46*(3), pp.688–705.

Youtie, J. *et al.* (2017) 'Institutionalization of international university research ventures'. *Research Policy*, *46*(9), pp. 1692–1705.

Zepke, N. and Leach, L. (2007) 'Educational quality, institutional accountability and the retention discourse'. *Quality in Higher Education*, *13*(3), pp. 237–248.

Zepke, N. and Leach, L. (2010) 'Improving student engagement: ten proposals for action'. *Active Learning in Higher Education*, *11*(3), pp. 167-177.

Zhang, N. and Dixon, D. N. (2001) 'Multiculturally responsive counselling: Effects on Asian students' ratings of counselors'. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, *29*(4), pp. 253-262.

Zhang, Y. L. (2015) 'Intercultural communication competence: Advising international students in a Texas community college'. *The National Academic Association (NACADA) Journal*, *35*(2), pp. 48- 59.

Zhang, Y. L. (2016a) 'An overlooked population in community college: International students' (in)validation experiences with academic advising'. *Community College Review*, *44*(2), pp. 1-18.

Zhang, Y. L. (2016b) 'International students in transition: Voices of Chinese doctoral students in a U.S. research university'. *Journal of International Students*, *6(*1), pp. 175-194.

Zhang, Y. L. (2018) Using Bronfenbrenner's ecological approach to understand academic advising with international community college students'. *Journal of International Students*, *8*(4), pp.1764–1782-1764–1782.

Zhai, L. (2004) 'Studying international students: Adjustment issues and social support'. *Journal of International Agricultural and Extension Education*, *11*(1), pp. 97–104.

Zha, Q. (2009) 'Diversification or homogenization in higher education: A global allomorphism perspective'. *Higher Education in Europe*, *34*(3), pp. 459-479. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/248961209_Diversification_or_Homogenization_in_Higher_Education_A_Global_Allomorphism_Perspective (Accessed: Jun 15 2021).

Zweifel, C. and Van Wezemael, J. (2012) *Drawing as a qualitative research tool an approach to field work from a social complexity perspective*. Available at: https://www.lboro.ac.uk/microsites/sota/tracey/journal/edu/2012/PDF/Christina_Zweifel-_TRACEY-Journal-DK-2012.pdf (Accessed: July 11 2021).

List of Appendices

Appendix 1- Survey Questions

- List the major challenges that you have faced during your transition to this university
- Reflect on the nature of your perceived social or academic support- from family, friends, peers, etc.
- Did you have experience studying in a higher education institution abroad?
- If yes, how did your past experience impact the quality of your educational/ socio-cultural transition into this course? (In terms of socio-academic skills/ adaptation/ coping skills)

Appendix 2- Interview Plan/Agenda (Hierarchical structuring)

Pre-arrival phase

Describe what it is like for you to come to university in the UK

1. Emerging Feelings (e.g., ambitions, fears, etc).
   What sort of feelings did you have before coming?
2. Preparedness and expectations (academically and socially)
   What were your expectations about the course you are enrolled in?
3. University Protocol- Satisfaction
   How was your experience with navigating the set of processes that are required from you (like registration to services)?
   Being enrolled in a course as an international student involves a number of procedures to be done (visa for example)

Arrival phase

1. Academic environment

- Familiarity with campus spaces- what was your experience finding the campus? Or accommodation?

2. ***Social adjustment*** (Functionality)
   - Accommodation
   - Transport in, across and out of campuses
3. ***Academic socialisation***
   - Peer interaction: Communication with peers
   - Developing relationships in campus.

4. Academic adjustment

- Finding a sense of belonging at university/ institution
- Getting used to the academic rigour/ demands/ grading and assessment rules.

Role of Support systems

a. Social support

- ***Family*** (academic/ financial/ psychological) support
- ***Friends (socio-psychological)***
- ***Adult students' accompanying family***

b. Institution support

- Type of support / How do you feel about it? Was it satisfactory to you? / What level of support you would like to see?
- What are your ***suggestions*** for change?

Appendix 3- Consent Letter

Project title: Supporting the transition to Higher Education: International students in the UK
Researcher's name: Imene Berrouaine
Supervisor's name: Dr. Edward Sellman, Prof. Stephen Joseph.

- I have read the Participant Information Sheet and the nature and purpose of the research projec has been explained to me. I understand and agree to take part.
- I understand the purpose of the research project and my involvement in it.
- I understand that I may withdraw from the research project at any stage and that this will not affect my status now or in the future.
- I understand that while information gained during the study may be published, I will not be identified and my personal results will remain confidential.
- I understand that I will be audio recorded during the interview
- I understand that data will look at students' experiences during their transition to higher education. I am also aware that I may have access to any data pertaining to me to review it. In case of withdrawal, it is my choice to decide whether data about me will be used in the study c destroyed.
- I understand that I may contact the researcher or supervisor if I require further information about the research, and that I may contact the Research Ethics Coordinator of the School of Education, University of Nottingham, if I wish to make a complaint relating to my involvemer in the research.
- Anonymized data will be kept secure for 7 years. Non-anonymised data (e.g. audio recording) will be kept no longer than necessary.

Signed …… (Research participant)
Print name …… **Date** ……

Contact details that were provided at the end of the original document were:

- *The researcher's Contact details (email)*
- *Supervisors' contact details (email and telephone number)*
- *The research ethics committee (REC)' contact details (email)*

Appendix 4- Participant Information sheet

Study title:

Navigating the educational Transition to Higher Education for International Students in the UK

Invitation

You are kindly invited to take part in an initial study on international students' experiences during the educational transition to higher education in the UK. Please be informed that it is totally your own choice whether or not to take part. If you are reluctant, you will not have to state any reason, and it will similarly not affect the care you receive. We will go through this information with you and answer any questions you may have.

This Participant Information Sheet will give you insights about our study objectives, challenges, benefits and risks, and important information you need to know about the procedure undertaken. This research adheres to the University of Nottingham Code of research Conduct and Research Ethics (2016).

Please make sure you have read and understood the whole document. Once you have made a decision to take part in this study, you will be asked to sign the Consent Form on the last page of this document. You will also be given a copy of both the Participant Information Sheet and the Consent Form to keep.

- **What is the purpose of this study?**

This study aims to offer a chance to hear students' experiences in higher education in the UK. Our main purpose of this study project is to identify issues that students from different cultural and educational backgrounds face when they make their transition to higher education in the UK.

- **What is this research's contribution to knowledge?**

This critical period is very sensitively covered in the literature but very little has been written about international students at college. That is why your contribution to the study is important to help us voice out your experience and identify your own challenges.

Your participation will help the researcher design appropriate interventions to suite the highlighted issues to continue further steps in the study.

- **Why have I been chosen?**

You have been selected because you have made the transition from one country to another- this could be cultural/social/educational. You may have had exceptional positive transition experience to higher education, or possibly have faced a set of challenges, either of which I would be glad to hear.

- **What will my participation in this study involve? Why is the collection of this information relevant for achieving the research project's objectives?**

You will be asked to attend a group interview with approximately five other international students. You will be having a discussion around the topic of educational transition from different backgrounds to a UK higher education and explore some common or different arising factors in the discussion. The session will be about an hour and a half long. This is a discussion-based interview; therefore, no pressure is on one participant over the other. It is supposed to be flexible and fun. There are no other commitments or lifestyle restrictions associated with participating.

- **How are the meeting arrangements made?**

After you decide to participate in the group discussion interview, place and time will be discussed. Respecting everybody's schedule, we will agree via email on the suitable time for the whole group. In case of delay, everyone should be informed via email or phone to prevent wasting time and energy.

- **What are the possible risks of the study?**

Participating in the research is not anticipated to cause you any disadvantages or discomfort on purpose. In case one of the asked questions or one of the themes of discussion is causing you discomfort or any distress; please make sure you let us know. You feel free not to respond if this is the case with any question. To prevent any of these possibilities, questions will be sent to you prior to the meeting day to make sure you can respond to them comfortably.

- **Who has ethically reviewed the project?**

This project has been ethically approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the University of Nottingham, UK.

- **What if something goes wrong?**

Your wellbeing matters. Therefore, if you have any complaints about the study in the first instance you can contact the ethics committee to raise a complaint. You will also be given other contacts of counselling in your local institution.

- **What are my rights?**

Do I have to participate?

Your participation is absolutely voluntary, and you have all the right to decline to participate at any stage. Your participation or decline to participation are equally respected.

- ***Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential, and how my information are going to be used?***

Your information collected during the course of research are strictly confidential. You will not be able to be identified or identifiable in any reports or publications. Your data will be used to highlight shared factors among the group, which will help us design the next phase of the study.

- ***Will I be recorded, and how will the recorded media be used?***

The interview session will be audio recorded. During the interview, and because of the large group size, the interviewer will ask only participants' first names for avoiding any confusion to my part. Following the Code of research conduct (2016), "Individuals who are or have been the participant of the research should not be identified or identifiable in any publication" (p.7). Therefore, your responses, however, will remain anonymous and no real names will be used in final scripts. Your names will be changed with pseudo names during the audio transcription and in the thesis.

- ***Can I withdraw from the study and what will happen to my information?***

Due to any circumstances, if you wish to stop, you are free to withdraw at any predictable time without experiencing any disadvantage. In case of withdrawal for the study, you can choose whether or not your information can be documented in my thesis or shared. If you wish them not to be shared, all records of information will be destroyed and will not be used in the research. If you wish to continue participating, you also have the right to access any information collected about you since you took part in this study.

- **What happens after the study?**

Results of this phase of the study will be published as part of the thesis. Yet, your identity will remain confidential. In further steps of the research, a web-based intervention (under no cost) will be available to participants after finalizing the project.

- **Who do I contact for more information or if I have concerns?**

If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about the study at any stage, you can contact

Contact details that were provided at the end of the original document were:

- *The researcher's Contact details (email)*
- *Supervisors' contact details (email and telephone number)*
- *The research ethics committee (REC)' contact details (email)*

Thank you for taking part in this research

Appendix 5- Participant Table (pseudonyms and profile information)

Group Name	***Pseudo name***	***Home country***	***Gender***	***Marital Status***	***Field of Study (MA/ MSc Course)***
Group 1	Arjun	India	Male	Married/ Father	Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Management MSc
	Otiz	China	Male	Single	Architecture Design MSc
	Ping	China	Male	Single	Microbiology (Bioscience) MSc
	Dailah	Pakistan	Female	Married/ Mother	Marketing MSc
	Liam	Austria	Male	Single	Business Management MSc
Group 2	Aryan	India	Male	Single	Environmental Engineering MSc
	Hannah	Chile	Female	Married	Applied Linguistics MA
	Sarah	Taiwan	Female	Single	Animal Nutrition MSc
	Ethan	China	Male	Single	Medical Sport MSc
	Hayley	Indonesia	Female	Single	International Business MSc
Group 3	Omran	Pakistan	Male	Married	Advanced Materials/ Engineering MSc
	Greg	Mangolia	Male	Married/ Father	Risk Management, Business
	Maggie	China	Female	Single	International Business MSc
	Joanna	Taiwan	Female	Single	Accounting and Finance MSc
	Hazel	Lebanon	Female	Single	Psychology MSc
Group 4	Robina	India	Female	Single	International Business MSc
	Aakriti	India	Female	Single	Mechanical Engineering MSc
	Marwa	Egypt/Bahrain (two nationalities)	Female	Single	Electronic Communication and Computer Engineering MSc
	Ahmad	Bangladesh	Male	Single	Master of Public Health (PGDip training)
	Arif	Indonesia	Male	Single	Education MA
	Dana	Pakistan	Female	Single	Medical Science (DM)

Group 5	Osama	Indonesia	Male	Married	Renewable Energy and Architecture MSc
	Roman	New Zealand	Male	Single	Law (Master of Laws)
	Racha	Kenya	Female	Single	Oncology MSc
	Harris	Armenia	Male	Married	Economics MSc
	Malik	Sudan	Male	Single	Environmental Engineering MSc