CHAPTER 7

Income: An Economic Rationale and International Students as Economic Contributors

The most dominant rationale in the policy discourse is the financial incentive to recruit international students. At its heart is the premise that the UK needs more money and that direct international recruitment is an appropriate, effective means of obtaining it. The 2011 Budget (HM Treasury and DBIS 2011, p. 40) argues that "Higher education is central to economic growth". The direct income gained through tuition fees and related payments (Conlon et al. 2011), as well as the economic growth that results from the labour market value of skilled graduates, are claimed as essential functions of international higher education. From the outset of the PMI, the economic gains were cited as a major factor in attracting international students: "British exports of education and training are worth some eight billion pounds a year. Money that feeds into our institutions and helps our goal to open up opportunities for more people to study" (Blair 1999). This emphasis has intensified throughout the period, and David Willetts' foreword to the Coalition International Education Strategy echoes the same logic: "Overseas students who come to Britain to study make a huge contribution to our economy" (BIS 2013a, p. 3). He cites tuition fees, other payments and the boost to local economies as well as the national economy as a consequence of international students' presence in the UK. The focus gradually turns away from the physical presence of international students and embraces virtual engagement in international education at a distance. The conceptualisation of education exports in the Coalition IES is much broader than direct recruitment to UK HEIs, including transnational education,

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educational publishing and equipment, educational technology, English language schools and research (BIS 2013a).

The emphasis on income gained through education exports in general, and international students' presence in the UK in particular, relies on a number of problematisations at work in the discourse of marketisation in higher education in policy on international students. The first section highlights the key concepts which emerged from the qualitative analysis. Essentially, the income to be gained from international students' tuition fees, other expenditures, and labour market contributions are argued to give the UK a competitive advantage in the international higher education marketplace, thus maintaining its global status. The second section presents the WPR analysis, which argues that the underlying problem is one of competition, where the UK is vulnerable to losing market share. The core assumptions in this representation of the problem are that international higher education is a marketplace, universities are businesses, education is a commodity, and growth is a unilateral benefit. This engenders a subject representation of international students as ways to earn money, as vectors of income, rather than individuals.

Income Generation and Competitive Advantage

International higher education, and particularly the direct recruitment of overseas students to UK HEIs, is constructed as a global business (DfES 2003), with economic benefits to the UK (BIS 2009). It is represented as a source of external income (Mellors-Bourne et al. 2013) and therefore "a major contributor to national wealth and economic development" (British Council 2012b, p. 3). It is also described as a sector (Böhm et al. 2004), and an industry (BIS 2013b): "(e)ducation is a tradable sector with imports and exports like any other tradable sector, such as manufacturing" (Conlon et al. 2011, p. 12). International education is frequently described as a "market" (British Council 1999; DfES 2004; British Council 2010; British Council 2012). The presence of international students in the UK is presented in terms of supply and demand (BIS 2013a and d), which can be influenced by national policies. The rhetorical use of international student numbers is prevalent in policy discourses, and is closely linked with the market model (Blair 1999; DfES 2006; Cameron 2011a). Almost without exception, all the documents highlight the numbers of international students as a sign of success. For example, "In 2002/2003, 174,575 international students studied in UK higher education institutions", (DfES 2004, p. 17), "an extra 93,000 (international students) in HE" were recruited (DIUS 2009), and "In 2011/2012, there were 435,000 international students studying at 163 publicly funded higher education institutions" (BIS 2013a, p. 14). Further, student numbers are discussed as targets. For example, the PMI set a target "to achieve a higher education market share of 25% by 2005 (50,000 additional students)" (Blair 1999). This is a small sample of the ways in which international students are quantified in policy discourses. These representations of students through numbers, percentages and references to the market, rather than using case studies or named individuals, reduces individuals to statistics. It indicates how far discourses of marketisation have penetrated into international higher education policy.

Income

The size of the market in international higher education is said to have "grown sharply in recent years" (BIS 2013a), often quantified in terms of income potential (BIS 2013b): for example, "(I)n 2008/09, the size of the global market for higher education was £3.34 million" (Conlon et al. 2011, p. 77). Universities are claimed to be "earning more than £9 billion in foreign exchange" (Clark 2015). A growth rate of 7% is predicted between 2012 and 2017 in the global education market (BIS 2013b). This sustained growth is unusually high in comparison to other sectors (Böhm et al. 2004), and is, therefore, an important target for government intervention. These data are typically presented to set out the potential profits the UK could amass (DfES 2003; BIS 2013b). The UK's "performance" in terms of "market share" is then evaluated (British Council 2003).

The economic benefits derived from increased income constitute the main rationale for increasing the UK's "market share" (Blair 2004; Home Office 2002; DfES 2003; DTZ 2011; BIS, 2013a). Financial benefits are argued to accrue to institutions from tuition fee income (e.g. British Council 2003) and to the wider UK economy through spending on other "goods and services" (e.g. Conlon et al. 2011) and job creation (e.g. Johnson 2015). Through their financial contribution, international students are seen to stimulate demand for courses where domestic numbers are low, sustaining provision in a wider range of courses (Johnson

2015). This funds research and teaching in HEIs (British Council 2003) and is thus sometimes presented as ultimately benefiting UK students through intercultural learning.

HEIs are observed to be increasingly dependent on this income (Home Affairs Committee 2009). Such dependence could be construed as a source of concern, but Blair (2006) and other central policy actors (e.g. British Council 2003; BIS (2013a) instead represent this as a contribution from the sector to the country. Yet the inherent risk of a commercial approach is acknowledged: "Although international students represent an important source of income for universities, the international activities of our higher education institutions cannot be primarily motivated by commercial self-interest, or they will wither" (BIS 2009, p. 89). This perspective is an unusual one in the corpus, although concerns are expressed regarding the perceived dependence on particular "markets"; having too many students from one country on one course (British Council 2003). Hence, the PMI2 emphasised the importance of diversifying recruitment, aiming to double the number of main source countries of students to the UK each year (DIUS 2009). This goal was not achieved (DTZ 2011), and the sector remains reliant on a few source countries, particularly China (UUK 2014).

Income generated through overseas students is quantified: "overseas students alone are worth £5 billion a year" (The Labour Party 2005, p. 25); and "international students bring in around £8 billion a year to the UK" (Home Affairs Committee 2009, p. 10). Because this income is derived from foreign currency sources, it is treated as an export (Conlon et al. 2011). The importance of the income students bring is enforced by the requirement to demonstrate that they have "sufficient funds" available to obtain their visa (Home Office 2012). Students needed to have enough money to pay their fees and support them for the first year, initially set at £9600 (UKBA 2008). After the reforms of 2010–2011, the requirements for proof of this funding became more stringent, necessitating cash funds in the students' own bank account for more than 30 days, or proof of relationship to the account holder, restricting acceptable banks, and so on (Home Office 2013a). The rigidity of these requirements has been the subject of much criticism from quasi-independent organisations (e.g. UKCISA 2010) and Parliament (e.g. Home Affairs Committee 2011), but highlights the importance of students' money for policy makers. In contrast, the Home Office does not itself verify academic status or prior qualifications, leaving this up to institutions. This is a clear indication of priorities in defining the legitimacy of students as immigrants, which is predicated on their financials, rather than their academic status.

Filling Gaps in the Labour Market

In addition to direct revenue, international graduates are framed as generating income through their participation in the labour market, filling "skills gaps" (Roche 2000; Blair 2006; Brown 2009; Cameron 2011). This rationale occurs throughout the policy periods, but especially under Labour Governments, where migration policy is placed in the service of the UK's knowledge economy and industry (Home Affairs Committee 2011). In this logic, certain professions are framed as having "labour shortages", unable to recruit adequate numbers of workers domestically, such as the IT and health care sectors (Roche 2000). Recruiting highly skilled migrants, and, in particular, international students with UK HE qualifications is seen to solve this dilemma (MAC 2010). Immigration to fill a skills gap is not a preferred option; instead, it is considered a last resort when those skills are not available domestically (Brown 2010; May 2010b). As described in Chap. 3, the Points-Based System for migration management includes international students under Tier 4, who could at first easily seek graduate employment in the UK after studying (Home Office 2006). This was a key factor in maintaining the attractiveness of the UK under the PMI and PMI2.

While continuing to acknowledge the contributions of migrants and the necessity of filling skills gaps, later discourses emphasise greater selectivity in recruiting migrants and students, and tightly restricting those certain students permitted to work as graduates (May 2010b; Cameron 2011). With the aim of maximising the economic and cultural benefits to the UK, particular migrants are sought: "those whose ideas and innovation can help drive our growth and productivity" (UKBA 2011, p. 17). Specifically, this means that "*entrepreneurs* will be welcome; *scientists* will be welcome; *wealth creators* will be welcome" (May 2010b, emphasis mine). The most desirable migrants are therefore business people and those in high (economic) value occupations where the returns to the UK economy will be quick and easily measurable. For example, the Postgraduates for International Business programme established by UKTI places international students into internships in local business in order to enhance their export potential (UKTI 2014). This implies that international students' labour is valued and legitimised when it leads to export income. In contrast, the Immigration Skills Charge to be introduced in 2017 will levy businesses which employ migrants in skilled areas by £1000 per employee by year, with the aim of upskilling British workers (Home Office 2016). This policy shift demonstrates the increasing hostility towards skilled migration, encompassing international graduates. The UK's economic interests with regards to domestic unemployment rates, as well as overall growth, remain central, but different policy tools and logics are used.

The International Higher Education Marketplace

The economic model at work in this rationale frames international higher education as a marketplace. This marketplace is described as rapidly evolving (British Council 1999), experiencing "volatility" (British Council 2000, p. 9), "dynamic" (British Council 2003, p. 6), and experiencing "major changes". The documents describe a "series of social, cultural and demographic changes throughout the major target markets" (British Council 2000, p. 9). In particular, these changes are identified as "growing customer expectations, intensifying competitor activity, technological advancements, enhanced mobility, ageing populations, growth in knowledge-based economies and changing government attitudes" (British Council 2003, p. 7). Mellors-Bourne, et al. (2013, p. 19) adds "changing patterns of demand". The overall market is considered to be expanding in terms of the number of students who would consider international education (Mellors-Bourne et al. 2013). These changes in part led to a shift in focus away from direct student recruitment towards strategic collaboration (British Council 2010), and transnational education (BIS 2013a, b). This reflects an emphasis on the diversification of educational income sources (DTZ 2011). "Traditional student recruitment" is argued to no longer determine who succeeds in the global education market (British Council 2010, p. 3). Indeed, the IES sets out the Coalition Government's aim as being to "effectively promote excellence *beyond attracting international students* via the Education UK recruitment service to cover all education exports: transnational education, education products and services and work with other countries to develop their own education infrastructure" (BIS 2013a, p. 58, emphasis mine). This demonstrates the shift in emphasis: while direct recruitment will "continue to be important to UK education exports" (BIS 2013a,

p. 14), the majority of the strategy is devoted to transnational education. This suggests that transnational education is preferable for political reasons, namely the increasingly divisive debate on migration (see Chap. 8). Transnational education allows the UK to acquire the same income from education exports, without the inconvenience of physical bodies being present within the borders of the nation.

Within the market, competition is an important theme (DfES 2003; BIS 2009; BIS 2013a). The market is argued to be increasingly competitive (British Council 2000a), due to more countries becoming involved, and established destination countries becoming more strategic and more aggressive (Böhm et al. 2004; QAA 2012). Countries listed include "China, the Republic of Korea, New Zealand, Australia, France, Japan, Italy, Canada and South Africa" (British Council 2010, p. 5) as having increased their "market share" i.e. attracted more international students. So while this discourse presents demand for international higher education as growing, so is supply and competition.

In representing international higher education as a marketplace, education is at times represented as a product (British Council 2003; BIS, 2013d). For example, the Brand Report (British Council 1999, para. 57) describes educational institutions as "product providers", and the IES (BIS 2013a, p. 61) emphasises the importance of students being sure that "they are getting a quality product and a recognised qualification". In the PMI, the "product" typically refers to particular programmes or courses (British Council 2000a). In the IES, it appears to incorporate the experience as well as the course, consistent with the latter phase of the PMI2.

In order to measure marketplace success, students are represented as numbers and targets. High international student numbers are represented as indicators of the UK's competitive success. The PMI and PMI2 targets for recruitment are frequently mentioned (Blair 1999; DfES 2006) and evaluated (DIUS 2009; DTZ 2011). These targets are widely represented as successfully met: "we have not only reached this target but beaten it by an extra 43,000 students" (Blair 2006); "the targets were exceeded ahead of schedule, with an extra 93,000 (students) in HE" (DfES 2006); and "(the PMI) was very successful, exceeding its 75,000 student recruitment target by 43,000 students" (British Council 2010, p. 6). A more measured evaluation in the DTZ final report (2011, p. 4) states that "the PMI2 has met some of its targets", identifying the increased diversity of recruitment as a particular area which was not met.

Similar ambitions are also expressed in the IES, although in more cautious terms: "(w)e *consider it is realistic* for the number of international students in higher education in the UK to grow by 15–20% over the next 5 years" (BIS 2013a, p. 35, emphasis mine). The target is more explicitly set in the press release than in the strategy itself: "(i)t (the IES) aims to secure an extra £3 billion worth of contracts for the UK's education providers overseas, and attract almost 90,000 extra overseas university students by 2018" (BIS 2013c). This discrepancy suggests that government does not wish to position itself as responsible for actively promoting direct recruitment of international higher education students. This contrasts with the discourse prevalent during the PMI, where there is a suggestion of possession over students: *"we want to have* 25% of the global market share of Higher Education students" (Blair 1999).

Maintaining the UK's Position

Policy discourses therefore argue that the UK must maintain its market position, as indicated by student numbers, against the competition, by becoming more professional in its education marketing (British Council 1999), define the unique selling points of a British education (British Council 2003), and measure the perceptions of international students (DTZ 2011). The PMI targets were to increase the "market share" of higher education students held by the UK (Blair 1999). The UK is argued to have a strong position within the world market, (British Council 2003), "second only to the USA" (DfES 2004, p. 20) and to be a "world leader in the recruitment of international students" (Blair 2006). Similarly, the IES (BIS 2013a, p. 26) argues that "(t)he UK has a number of truly international educational brands, many of them with a long tradition behind them". The shift to describing education as "brands" again evidences the dominance of marketised discourses. This is quantified as "a market share of 13% in 2011" (BIS 2013b, p. 6). The British Council (2000a) and Blair (1999) attribute this position to a "reputation for quality". However, increasing competition is presented as threatening this position (British Council 2000a; Bone 2008; Kemp et al. 2008), requiring a "different approach" (British Council 2010, p. 16) to recruitment (through partnerships and transnational education). As the IES has it, "the UK needs to move quickly to secure a world leading position" (BIS 2013a, p. 49). Without such changes, the BIS (2011, p. 78) projects that market share would "decrease… to 8.8% in 2020".

The national brand (see Lomer et al. 2016), and education marketing more generally, are considered to be key ways to improve the UK's position (Blair 1999; DfES 2004; Cameron 2011; BIS 2013a). They are intended "to create the demand from international students that will satisfy member institution needs" (British Council 2000a, p. 16). This statement is explicit: the demand is not merely being met by education providers; rather, it is being generated through marketing in the service of institutions. Education is, in this positioning, merely another attractiveness factor for the UK, like its tourist attractions, and as such may be expected to behave like other industrial sectors.

The Problem of Money

Unlike in other rationales, the policy discourses explicitly document challenges in this area (Bacchi 2009, Q1), which change over time. The PMI highlighted the lack of professionalism in higher education marketing (British Council 1999). By 2006, the challenges had become more focused on consolidating the national brand through a renewed focus on student experience and employability, and diversification (DfES 2006). From 2009, in the wake of the bogus college scandal, the challenges cited were primarily to strengthen the immigration regulations in the interests of sustaining reputation for competitive advantage (May 2010a, b). The IES published in 2013 refocuses attention on the marketisation of the sector, especially "a lack of coordination", different forms of competition and a structure not amenable to growth (BIS 2013a, b). There is palpable continuity underlying these shifts: the UK is always argued to be in a relatively strong position, but nevertheless vulnerable for different reasons, and the answers are typically found in marketised responses. This creates a role for policy interventions to provide the right marketised responses, legitimising government activity.

These challenges reveal a clear problematisation (Bacchi 2009). At their heart, they are implicitly addressed towards the aim of increasing the UK's income. This presumes a need for more money, both for higher education and the country as a whole. Over this period, central funding for HEIs was being significantly reduced, particularly in England, (Sastry 2006) having fallen by 10% from 2000–2011 (Universities UK 2013). Policy discourses do not mention this unsurprisingly. It may, therefore, be inferred that this "export income" is a replacement for central government funding, which may explain the lack of concern regarding the sector's dependence on global revenue streams. In addition, it is suggested that international students may stay on as graduates to fill particular skills gaps in the labour market. This also contributes to the national economy. Nationally, while positive economic conditions ruled from 1999–2007, Buller and James (2012) argue that the New Labour government had to create a sense of economic competence, which they did by explicitly implementing conservative monetary policies by increasing the UK's income and reducing state expenditure. Since 2007, the economic crisis has dominated political discourses, making revenue gain still more central as a rationale (HM Treasury and BIS 2011).

The economic role played by higher education in generating national income took on an increasing importance in a climate of austerity after the 2008 financial crisis. The over-confidence of New Labour's predicted "end to boom and bust" ended spectacularly in the 2008 financial crisis, triggered by subprime lending in the US market and spreading rapidly to the rest of the world (Kharas 2010). The ensuing credit crunch led to reduced economic activity globally, threatening the UK's market position and funding for higher education (Robertson 2010). Although state funding had increased from 2002–2010, this was seen as insufficient to match student demand (Shattock 2013) and maintain global market position. Full-cost fees for home students of £9000 were introduced in 2012 as a result of the 2010 Browne review (Shattock 2013). The decision was taken by the Conservative-led Coalition, although it is likely that a New Labour administration would have adopted a similar position given previous policy decisions such as the 2003 introduction of variable fees (Brown and Carasso 2013). This meant that the majority of institutional funding derived from teaching, rather than block state grants (Brown and Carasso 2013). International recruitment was therefore important to sustain higher education funding for domestic purposes (Universities UK 2014), in a context of full-cost home fees and straightened economic circumstances. It has become a key source of institutional funding for certain universities and parts of the sector, namely high ranking and Russell Group universities (Universities UK 2013). Despite opposition from student groups, the imposition of full-cost fees was legitimated by the acceptance of the knowledge economy principle that higher education constitutes a private good, rather than a public good (Williams 2012). Chronologically, the decision to impose full-cost fees on international students preceded the domestic fee hike by about 30 years. This suggests that acceptance of the market and private good model for international higher education enables the later introduction of equivalent principles for home students. If returns accrue primarily to the individual rather than the society or the country, it can be seen as legitimate to impose the cost on the individual not the taxpayer.

The knowledge economy model is also apparent in the emphasis accorded to higher education as an export industry. Usually universities' role in the knowledge economy is considered in terms of training graduates, enhancing their marketable skills in desired areas. However, as an industry in its own right, with its own export capacity, higher education is also a prime example of a knowledge-based industry: its resources are the human knowledge and skills of its staff rather than its physical assets or equipment, and profit is generated through its human capital creating intangible goods (Olssen and Peters 2005). In this sense, generating higher education exports is a coherent element of a knowledge economy strategy.

A knowledge economy strategy has been a key element of economic policy since the early years of the Blair administration (Robertson 2010). Consistent with wider European policies and the Bologna process, this policy emphasised Britain's global competitiveness, highly skilled workers, and also the expansion of higher education markets overseas. The 2003 White Paper *The Future of Higher Education*, for example, considers selling education overseas to be a global business. The 2009 DBIS report *Higher Ambitions* suggests that in view of the net annual contribution to national income, higher education plays an important role in making Britain competitive as a knowledge economy, although this is secondary to its role in knowledge generation and training.

A number of core assumptions underpin this representation of the UK's income as a problem (Bacchi 2009, Q2). Firstly, that international higher education is a marketplace. Secondly, that UK HEIs are businesses and that the role of the sector is to generate income nationally. Thirdly, that education is a product. Fourthly, that growth is unequivocally positive. These assumptions have been challenged by the literature with regards to UK HE, on numerous grounds. The following discussion will apply these criticisms to international education and consider alternative ways in which international education may be understood. There are two broad categories of critique: firstly, on the grounds of the accuracy of the assumptions about marketisation made, and secondly, on the potential negative impacts of marketisation. In this problem representation, students are constructed as numbers and income sources.

International Higher Education: A Marketplace

The most fundamental assumption is that international higher education is a marketplace. This is widely held throughout the policy periods, without explanation, justification or alternatives. Brown and Carasso (2013) suggest that the characteristics of a market model in higher education would include: fully autonomous institutions; low barriers to market entry and wide student choice; wide variance on price; freely available information which enables students to make rational choices; regulation in the form of consumer protection; and qualitydetermined by what employers and students value. They, along with Marginson (1997), conclude that higher education is more accurately described as a "quasi-market", moving in the direction of full marketisation. "Quasi-markets" are seen to achieve government goals (Dill 1997; Naidoo and Williams 2014), as some state power is retained with the appearance of neutrality operating through the marketplace. On a national level, UK HE may be seen as quasi-market due to a number of factors: the difficulty of establishing an entirely new university; the low probability of the government allowing an HEI to fail (Dill 1997); and the continuing subsidisation of student fees by the government through the loan system (Brown and Carasso 2013), among others.

International higher education, however, is more widely accepted as a marketplace (e.g. Harman 2004; Naidoo 2007). It is seen to be closer to a "true market", as the competitors are countries rather than institutions (e.g. Tham 2010; Shu 2012). Therefore, new entrants are countries which have traditionally not competed for international higher education, like Malaysia (Tham 2010) and Taiwan (Ma 2010). In this sense, the barriers to market entry are lower, and there is no international regulation or overarching quality assurance. The GATS agreement assured a degree of free movement in trade and services, and consequently in student mobility (Robertson et al. 2002). This, it is argued, ensures wide and free student choice internationally. It is also argued that global competition generates increased choice and lower prices (Naidoo 2007). Global league tables (Marginson and van der Wende 2007) and the importance of reputation to the capacity of countries to attract international students (Xiang and Shen 2009; Hazelkorn 2011) suggests that students conceive of education as a product, wishing to have the best.

However, international higher education could be argued to fall short of a "true market" ideal type (Bacchi 2009, Q4). Firstly, higher education institutions often compete internationally as a sector rather than as individual institutions. National agencies like the British Council, IDP Australia (Sidhu 2002) and EduFrance (Dodds 2009) promote an entire sector. In the UK, institutions operate within a national brand (Lomer et al. 2016), and there is a strong driver towards both national and international collaborative research relationships (e.g. BIS 2013a). So there is a tension between competition between individual institutions, and an expectation that HEIs will behave in similar, marketised ways, as defined by the national brand. This is consistent with the move towards "governing at a distance" (Rose and Miller 2008). The market actually can be seen as a governance mechanism. Yet it is widely portrayed as a depoliticised field (Sidhu 2006), meaning that the capacity of the sector to resist government intervention is reduced. So domestically, institutions do not necessarily compete or behave differently; instead, the sector competes with other countries, institutions behave in similar ways and tend to comply with the marketisation model. This suggests that the sector is effectively disciplined through the international marketplace.

Secondly, the marketplace is regulated in the UK, although not globally. The QAA regulates all institutions, and, therefore, their international provision, which Brown and Carasso (2013) argue to be tightly controlled by ministerial intervention via HEFCE. International higher education in the UK is also further regulated by the UKBA (Jenkins 2014). At the time of writing, permission for HEIs to recruit legally international students depended on having "Highly Trusted Sponsor" status, entailing compliance with a wide range of oversight by the Government (UKBA 2011; UKBA 2013). This suggests that international higher education in the UK is only partly marketised. These regulatory barriers are discussed, for example, in the BIS (2013a, b), not silenced, but they are interpreted merely as challenges for the sector to work around. This creates a contradiction to the market discourse: on the one hand, markets need free movement across borders; on the other, demands of border security limit such movement. Yet policy discourses fail to address the incompatible conceptualisations of international higher education implicit in these two representations. Immigration policy represents higher education as a fundamentally national affair, where students are presumed to remain within the borders of the nation in which they hold citizenship. Market-based economic policy supposes that students can move as freely as tourists on holiday in order to consume the service of international higher education. This contrast of thinking about higher education causes tension in policy.

Problems with the Marketplace

The neoliberal consensus argues that market mechanisms are always effective solutions. But a number of critics also point to the perils of fully marketising international education. On a national level, it is argued that marketisation can reduce higher education's capacity to act as a public good (Tilak 2008), limit its potential to provide space for transformative education (Molesworth et al. 2009), and entrench social disadvantage (Naidoo 2007). International higher education can similarly cement global inequalities between countries (Tilak 2008; Xiang and Shen 2009; Tannock 2013) by concentrating income, prestige and talent in comparatively wealthy developed countries. Yang et al (2002, cited in Marginson et al. 2010) suggest that marketisation may actually decrease the quality of student experience, although as suggested earlier, this is in itself a marketised concept. Marketising international education may, therefore, have unintended consequences not considered in the policy discourse.

In particular, participation in international higher education is likely to be influenced by social and cultural capital. Discourses of marketisation construct students as perfect consumers, making free, rational choices based on economic criteria. For example, the Coalition Plan for Growth (HM Treasury and BIS 2011, p. 71) argues that:

> Markets rely on active and informed consumers who…force businesses to produce efficiently and innovate. Growth is undermined when consumers face excessive barriers to switching suppliers, (or) where there are market failures in the flow of consumer information.

The economic plan in which international higher education is implicated therefore relies on a model of consumer behaviour which does not hold true for international students. For example, Waters (2006) documents how social capital influences decisions to study internationally among Hong Kong students. Similarly, Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) identified family experiences of particular countries as having a major impact on the choice of study destination. Social capital also influences how students access and understand information, which may be challenging to interpret in its complexity, leading some to rely on the heuristics of global rankingsor paid agents (Xiang and Shen 2009). These examples only touch on the complexity of this issue, which for international higher education, draws on intersections of wealth, social and cultural capital, transnational networks, race and class, language and post-colonial networks of movement and power (Sidhu 2006). They are sufficient, however, to call into question the accuracy of presuppositions of equal access or perfect consumer behaviour underlying the market model. The requirement to have a certain, large, amount of funding available even to obtain a substantiates this critique; it automatically excludes significant numbers of potentially able students (Tannock 2013). The impact of capitals on students' access to and experiences of international higher education, however, are left unproblematic in the corpus. This suggests that students who have little by way of social or financial capital are marginalised by the policy discourse, and are not the target market.

Yet Blair (1999) claims that the PMI would seek

> to ensure that our universities and colleges *are open to able students* from around the world. In a world of lifelong learning, British Education is a first class ticket for life. I want to see the benefits of that education, that ticket, *given to as many as possible* across the world. (emphasis mine)

"British Education" is not, as asserted here, open to as many "able" students as possible from around the world, for they are prevented by barriers of financial and social capital. This claim is undermined from within by its silence on these inequalities (Tannock 2013). It suggests that equity as a value (Matross Helms et al. 2015) is primarily a rhetorical commitment. This point has been frequently made in criticisms of neoliberalism in education (e.g. Giroux 2002; Lynch 2006), but is less frequently made with reference to international higher education where the public good argument is more complex and criticism of marketisation less frequent (Marginson 2016). Yet if international higher education is to have a positive global impact to be driven by ethical, humanist values, these criticisms must be extended to international higher education and into our classrooms.

HEIs as Businesses and the Paradox of Government Control

In a market governed by neoliberal principles, higher education institutions are seen as businesses. One of the key challenges documented in the corpus refers to the difficulty of encouraging HEIs to adopt business-like behaviours. Market research conducted to help develop the

"Education UK brand" concluded that UK HEIs had "low levels of marketing expertise" (British Council 2000a, p. 5), "unclear selling propositions", and "a failure to recognise in real detail how markets are changing". This theme emerges again in the Coalition IES (BIS 2013a, b) which identifies a key challenge of "co-ordination failure", limiting the sector's capacity to respond and take advantage of "high-value opportunities". The implication in both of these examples is that HEIs are not responding like businesses and that this constitutes a problem. Ironically from a strict liberalisation perspective, the solution embedded in these policies appears to be central government "coordination". This took the form of increased activity through the British Council Education Counselling Services, the creation of a national brand (British Council 2000a) and later providing "brokerage and support" (BIS 2013a) to help HEIs coordinate. The "Britain is GREAT™" campaign conceptually positions international higher education to borrow from the UK's national image as traditional, with a strong heritage and a reputation for creative industries like fashion and music, aligning it with other exporting industries (Pamment 2015). In so doing, the inherent differences between HE, and, for example, the aviation industry, are elided and its character reduced to visual symbolism. These effects potentially tighten government control over a nominally autonomous sector, operating according to market norms (Shattock 2006; Trow 2006).

For universities are not businesses. Certainly, the public/private distinction has become increasingly blurred over the last 20–30 years (Tight 2006). HEIs are now expected to behave in more business-like ways, implementing instrumental approaches to managing academics, heavy reliance on the National Student Survey (NSS) and similar data sets relevant to "consumer satisfaction" (Naidoo 2007; Sabri 2011), as highlighted in the previous chapter. But universities also still rely heavily on public funding—45% of Russell Group universities' income came from public funds (Russell Group 2010). While this proportion is likely to fall (Brown and Carasso 2013), the state is still considered to have some responsibility for HE. On a national level, HE is supposed to provide a public function, as suggested by their charitable status (HEFCE 2014), by facilitating the creation of knowledge and providing a competitive advantage within the knowledge economy (Olssen and Peters 2005). This is a key silence and a way to think differently about higher education (Bacchi 2009, Q4). The public good, or "externalities of higher education" (Tilak 2008), is harder to demonstrate on a global scale as benefits are thought to confer on the country where the graduate works—typically their home country (Healey 2008). However, earlier understandings of international higher education positioned it as a tool for development (Walker 2014) as in the Colombo Plan (Harman 2004), and as Chap. 5 suggested, as global diplomacy. It is, therefore, possible to conceive of universities delivering international higher education as something other than businesses generating income. Instead, there could be recognition of the global public goods which emerge from higher education (Marginson 2016). It is concerning that universities are not resisting the move to become business-like. There is compliance in the sector on this point rather than a concerted development of alternatives.

Growth Is Good

One of the central assumptions of international higher education as a marketplace is that growth in the UK's market share of international higher education is necessarily good, as it increases the UK's income and makes the nation more competitive. This assumption, deriving from tenets of neoliberal economics, is so widely held as common sense (Fairclough 1989) that in the international higher education literature that it is rarely explored or justified in great detail. In the policy corpus, success is equated with growth. Both the PMI and the Coalition IES, aim to increase international student numbers, representing this growth as desirable. The PMI2 target was to "sustain the managed growth of UK international education delivered both in the UK and overseas" (DIUS 2009), and the IES, among other industrial strategies, aims "to secure sustainable future growth in the economy" (BIS 2013c). The conflation of success with growth is replicated in the compilation of rankings data (Marginson and van der Wende 2007), echoed in university rationales (Bolsmann and Miller 2008), and in much of the literature on international higher education in other countries (e.g. Harman 2004).

However, it is possible to think about this problem differently: the logic of competition and measuring by market share means that if the UK increases its proportion of international students, another country loses (Slaughter and Cantwell 2012). Marketplace competition is a zero-sum game unless "new markets" are opened up. This can be understood to further contribute to global stratification, deepening inequality between countries (Marginson 2006; Naidoo 2007). Some students are made appealing targets for competition, but other groups become less attractive (Rizva and Teichler 2007). The drain of talented students from developing to developed countries, exacerbated by global rankings that consolidate the reputations of already powerful countries (Marginson and van der Wende 2007), leaves developing countries with struggling tertiary sectors (Naidoo 2007). This consequence of the UK's market success is largely silent in the policy discourse and potentially undermines policy claims to seek to build "a new relationship with the emerging powers … based on values and mutual respect" (BIS 2013a, p. 53). If the UK's success is dependent on other countries losing their "brightest and best" students, and those with the most financial capital, this would seem to be in contradiction with the imperative to build relationships with precisely those countries.

While the adoption of policies for growth is taken for granted as a rational strategy, it is possible to think differently about growth in international higher education. Healey (2008) suggests that the reality of tightening public funding and massification of HEIs meant that growth in international higher education was a reactive, chaotic response to government policy, instead of a rational, deliberate strategy. This is consistent with other accounts of UK HE policy formation as haphazard (Belcher 1987; Bird 1994; Kogan and Hanney 2000; Humfrey 2011). Since the results of my research demonstrate that international higher education growth is, in fact, part of government policy as well as a sector response, extending Healey (2008) argument suggests a multi-vocal, contradictory, national policy, where expanding international higher education offers an exit route from straightened budgets. This interpretation is consistent with Blair's promise of abiding by the stringent fiscal policies set by the Tories (Buller and James 2012): with limited spending capacity, seeking another resource stream becomes paramount for the state to sustain HE as a valuable asset.

Growth in international higher education can also be seen as undesirable for its impacts within the UK. Healey (2008) suggests that significant expansion is more likely to take place in lower-ranking universities in vocational subjects, consistent with Marginson's (2006) analysis. This could lead to what Sir Drummond Bone (2008) called the "ghettoization" of international students, in particular, subjects and courses, leading to a domino effect with regards to experience, satisfaction and eventually, reputation. Potentially, excessive growth could lead to reduced rather than enhanced quality. It also exposes universities to increased risk of market failure (Slaughter and Cantwell 2011). Therefore, it is possible to see growth not as a rational, inevitable response, but also as a problematic, irrational response which disenfranchises other countries which could be considered partners and collaborators in international higher education.

Desirable Migrants and the Knowledge Economy

Economic growth is represented as hindered by skills gaps in the labour market in the UK, which international graduates as workers solve. Generally, where skills shortages occur in highly skilled, knowledge-intensive domains, international students are desirable temporary solutions (Tremblay 2005). New Labour migration policies targeted economic performance (Düvell and Jordan 2003), and saw skills gaps as barriers to growth, to be resolved by relaxing immigration requirements for highly skilled and graduate pathways (Wright 2012). Under the PMI, informed by a knowledge economy model, students constituted a source of skilled labour in areas where the UK was lacking (Geddie 2014). In this framework, skills are an element of individual human capital (Raghuram 2008), which can benefit nations that attract people with these skills. This is seen as essential to compete as a nation in the “race for talent” (Suter and Jandl 2008; Tannock 2009) and produces a synergy between labour policies and immigration (Düvell and Jordan 2003). This assumes that international graduates are an effective source for gaps in labour skill markets, although it is possible to think about this solution differently. For example, Migration Watch (2015) challenges this problematisation, stating that after the closure of the post-study work visa, comparatively few visa applications were made by graduates with job offers in the UK.

The convergence of the UK’s adoption of this policy with other countries experiencing temporary skills gaps and demographic labour shortages (Raghuram 2008; Hawthorne 2010; Cerna 2014) suggests that this representation of the problem and solution has come about through policy transfer (Bacchi 2009, Q3). Canada and Australia have tailored their migration policies to the needs of employers and businesses using Points-Based Systems for systematic recruitment, in particular, labour shortages (Ziguras and Law 2006; Robertson 2011; She and Wotherspoon 2013). In such a system, private actors can have an impact on public policy (Wright 2012; Cerna 2014), but whether such lobbying is ethical or appropriate is left unproblematic in the discourse, which assumes that policy should meet the needs of industry. What is not discussed in this model of competition is the ethics of recruitment, in terms of how this impacts countries which send students (Geddie 2014). Narratives around brain drain rarely appear in policy documents.

It is assumed that the UK is a desirable destination for migrants, and that British industry will be able to recruit the "brightest and the best" (Cerna 2011). This assumption rests on a neoliberal economic model, where people are conceived of as rational economic actors, who will seek out migration opportunities on a primarily financial basis (Raghuram 2008). It also rests on the concept of a meritocracy, implying global equality of opportunity (Tannock 2009), despite the clear economic barriers to migration. However, the evidence of the effectiveness of highly skilled migration policies (Suter and Jandl 2008; Cerna 2011) regarding rates of stay and job positions (Hawthorne 2010) and contributions to the economy is limited. The inverse may in fact be true, that changes to permission to work while studying may have made the UK a more attractive destination for many students (Düvell and Jordan 2003; DTZ 2011). Certainly, the 2011 changes to the post-work study route negatively affected recruitment from India (Kemp 2016). The status of international students as sought-after highly skilled migrants who contribute to the economy is therefore not self-evident. Such policies are not necessarily effective, and rely on particular assumptions about mobility and individuals' reasons for being mobile.

Education as a Product

Having accepted international higher education as an industry, education is understood as a commodified product. In the British Council Brand Report (British Council 1999), for example, particular courses are framed as products: "Product: Degree courses, Technical courses, Vocational course" (Para. 60). Later, the British Council suggests that HEIs need to systematically consider their "product development strategy"(British Council 2000a, p. 13). Similarly the Coalition IES talks in terms of students "getting a quality product and a recognised qualification" (BIS 2013a, p. 61). This discursive construct positions students as consumers, as illustrated in the previous chapter, a tendency which has been observed in other research on advertising to international students (Sidhu 2002; Askehave 2007; Leyland 2011).

But the consequences of constructing education as a product, and students as consumers, are seen to be in conflict with deep approaches to learning (Molesworth et al. 2009), as the meanings attached to international higher education are reduced to the economic benefits they create for students (Rizvi and Lingard 2010). Molesworth et al. (2009) argue that seeing education as something to "have", consequent to a capitalist, liberal model, encourages students to "acquire" education in the form of a qualification, leading them to reject intellectual transformation. Where a pedagogical relationship is read as equivalent to the relationship between consumer and provider, relationships become instrumental, and learning may be compromised (Naidoo et al. 2011). Within the literature on international higher education students in the UK, marketisation is often taken as a given, reproducing the problematisation (e.g. Pereda et al. 2007; Barnes 2007; Bartram and Bailey 2010; Hart and Coates 2010). Indeed, the British Council (2003, p. 8, emphasis mine) quote an IDP Australia report as saying:

> The fundamental shift in the funding of higher education towards the consumer has had a profound impact on the expectations and needs of students. Fundamentally, this shift has resulted in a *breakdown* in the traditional teacher- learner relationship which has been replaced by a customer-service relationship.

Despite the clear negative terminology, the report presents this pragmatically and uncritically, as a challenge to be met and a given, rather than a major pedagogic flaw. That marketised practices have become the common-sense activities of the international sector speaks to the naturalisation of the marketisation discourse (Fairclough 1989). However, there are critical voices in the literature, albeit fewer than those who critique marketisation in domestic HE. For example, Naidoo and Williams (2014) suggest that pedagogical relationships are being commodified through explicit charters with students, such that learning is reduced to observable behaviours. Similarly, Giroux (2002) argues that marketisation contributes to a narrow vision of responsibility, agency and values, as well as depriving students of a collective voice. De Vita and Case (2003) take the internationalisation of the commodified curriculum to task as superficial and self-contradictory. Rajani Naidoo (2007) argues that this may have a particularly negative effect on developing countries, focusing on more vocational skills productive in the short term but without the extended depth of knowledge to gain sustainable advantage.

There are also alternative conceptualisations of international higher education. For instance, Madge et al. (2009) advocate an ethic of care and responsibility in international education. This "engaged pedagogy", after bell hooks, demands of educators that they work towards self-actualisation with students. This extends beyond critical education, into a holistic approach to the individual as a spiritual, embodied people. Sidhu and Dall'Alba (2012) suggest that an emancipatory cosmopolitanism is still possible in modern corporate global HE. However, as Ashwin et al. (2015) found with regards to quality, the alternative discourses are partial and incoherent, each voicing different critiques, and, therefore, failing to present a coherent alternative, which may be why marketisation discourse has become so pervasive.

International Students as Subjects: Economic Contributors and Numbers

International students are represented as valuable because they make major economic contributions to the UK through their fee payments, and other expenses while in the UK (Bacchi 2009, Q5). Indirect economic benefits are also thought to emerge from alumni connections leading to increased consumption of British brands and products, the establishment of trade networks leading to commercial advantage for the UK, economic development from skilled migration (Mellors-Bourne et al. 2013) and job creation (Home Affairs Committee 2011). As the IES has it: "countries (try) to attract more students from overseas to come to them to study, because that is what produces the largest and most visible financial benefits to the country concerned" (BIS 2013a, p. 31). Here, the financial returns on the presence of international students are made the preeminent rationale for their recruitment. The importance of economic contributions and financial benefits are emphasised throughout the policy periods, but in PMI texts, they are often listed last, after benefits to global diplomacy, cultural and social benefits, and educational contributions. This suggests that under the Coalition Government, the economic rationale for international students has superseded, though not eliminated, rationales of diplomacy and education.

The frequent use of international student numbers is revelatory. The numeric representation of international students in a binary category aggregated as statistics suggests attempted control through the collection of knowledge (Rose and Miller 2008). The act of quantifying a group of people transforms them from agents into objects, reifying them. Particularly with regards to the migration policy, separating out international students as a calculable category of analysis renders them subject to the actions of the powerful, namely their control through visa systems. Yet they engage in international education in varied and hybrid ways (Madge et al. 2014).

A points-based immigration system attempts to simplify and quantify the skills held by migrants through qualifications, language levels, and desirable experience (Raghuram 2008; Cerna 2011; Hawthorne 2010), and in the case of students, their financial worth (Marginson et al. 2010). Again, the use of quantification appears as a technology of governance, regulating migrants' access to opportunities and mobility (Rose and Miller 2008). One crucial silence, however, regards questions of class, capital and equality—in other words, how some graduates come to have desirable skills while others do not (Raghuram 2008). Students' financial vulnerability during their studies is also not a significant component of central policy discourses (Marginson et al. 2010), although it is mentioned in some documents from quasi-independent organisations (UKCOSA 2004; Ipsos Mori 2006). Neither is the colonial legacy much discussed in terms of how this influences students' global imaginaries (Madge et al. 2009). Reading their presence as a sign of the UK's market success attributes action and agency to the nation and industry, rather than to students. The establishment of a statistical category of the "international" student creates an "othering" discourse, establishing a binary between home students and the international "Other" (Collins 2006; Sin 2009; Trahar 2010; Thomas 2013; Madge et al. 2014). This is a hollowed-out imagined subject, recognisable only by their difference to the supposed norm, such that "the international student" (note the definite article), is homogenised as foreign (Devos 2003). It also allows attendance monitoring and the deployment of recruitment statistics as fact-totems of success in the marketplace (Sabri 2011).

Students are active grammatically when making a financial contribution. They "contribute" (UKBA 2010), "bring" income and benefits (Home Affairs Committee 2009), "invest" (Home Office 2006), "make a contribution" (British Council 2003), "boost the economy" (BIS 2013c), "spend" (Blair 2004), and "can deliver tremendous… economic benefits" (British Council 2003, p. 14). However, this depicts only limited agency, because there is no choice implied. If a student is international, and not a scholarship recipient, they must make an economic contribution in this discourse. Indeed, if they do not, then this is seen as problematic. Research students (Kemp et al. 2008; Suter and Jandl 2008) are seen to contribute directly to knowledge creation and innovation. Students are often literally valued in terms of their economic contribution: "overseas students alone are worth £5 billion a year" (Labour Party 2005, p. 51), "nearly 50% of students globally worth £2.5 billion" (BIS 2013a, p. 15), and "an additional 50,000 students by 2004/2005, worth £500 million per annum" (British Council 2003, p. 14). Indeed, this is criticised by Sir Drummond Bone (2008, p. 3), who argues that the "problem with the UK (in terms of a falling market share) is a perception that our universities are solely interested in international students as a source of revenue". This was part of the logic behind the PMI2 revisions to emphasise building longer-term "sustainable relationships" (DfES 2006), as a result of perceptions that the UK was financially focused (British Council 2003). But these long-term sustainable relationships, like Sir Drummond Bone's criticism, are intended still to generate revenue for the UK, and this discourse is still prevalent.

As "designer migrants" (Kell and Vogl 2008) international students contribute to both the labour market and culture (Raghuram 2008; Cerna 2011). Having been educated in the country, they possess immediately transferable educational capital in the form of local qualifications, appropriate language levels (Hawthorne 2010) and desirable skills. In consuming education locally, they contribute economic capital and when they work, they contribute labour (Robertson 2011). In the policy discourse, there is little mention of experiences after entry, or on citizenship which, in contrast to the USA, Canada, and Australia, is not an intended outcome from highly skilled migration in the UK (Raghuram 2008). Rather, it is seen as a temporary stop gap measure (Wright 2012), which confers no rights on the workers. The discourse is also silent on job satisfaction (Raghuram 2008) and vulnerability (Nyland et al. 2009; Marginson et al. 2010). This suggests that the dominant policy discourse privileges the interests of the national economy and industry, over the interests of individuals, constructing individuals in terms of their relation to the labour market.

Crucially, the ultimate beneficiary is the UK (Fairclough, 2003), rather than the student. Other research on international students has identified similar rationales (Leyland 2011; Robertson 2011). Although the economic benefits to students are also present, they are much more prevalent in the documents from quasi-independent organisations (e.g. Kemp et al. 2008; Archer and Cheng 2012) than in the central policy texts (Blair 1999; British Council 2010; DTZ 2011). This is, however, a notable silence in the Coalition era texts, where it is rarely mentioned (Mellors-Bourne et al. 2013 is the exception). When the benefits to students are mentioned, it is the perception which is highlighted, and little attempt is made to establish or document material changes in students' circumstances which might be attributed to a UK education (again with the exception of Mellors-Bourne et al. 2013). The relationship established is one in which the student benefits the nation, and where the student's worth is measured in their financial contribution. The ideal subject (Fairclough 1989) created through this discourse is a relatively well-off student whose family transfers money to the UK. They spend money freely while in the UK (Conlon et al. 2011), live in private accommodation, have private health insurance (Home Office 2013a), and establish preferences for UK products and brands, as well as long-term commercial networks (Mellors-Bourne et al. 2013).

Students may internalise this representation, learning to value themselves primarily in economic terms (Sidhu 2006). International education can be understood as a process of self-formation, where students are engaged in actively creating their transformed self, drawing on their own values, concepts and experiences (Marginson 2014b). As Rizvi and Lingard (2010 p. 207) suggest, marketisation "converts students into economic units, with the implication that only those aspects of other cultures that are commercially productive are worthy of attention". This closes down possibilities for pedagogical strategies to facilitate self-formation beyond the economic. In a context of neoliberal ideological dominance, this representation contributes to dehumanising subjects, depriving students of an expectation of a democratic voice and treatment as an individual and reducing their agency to economic choices. Yet despite research which highlights such rationales in the UK (Askehave 2007; Bolsmann and Miller 2008; Leyland 2011) and research from Australia which offers similar critiques (Devos 2003; Robertson 2011), the UK literature on international students offers no such discursive critical of political representations. By this silence, researchers acquiesce in the economic subjectification of students.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the prevalence of a market-based problematisation in the corpus, where the problem is represented to be gaining competitive advantage and income for the UK. The core assumptions are that international higher education is a marketplace, that education is a product that competition is essential, that higher education is a source of income generation for the UK internationally, and that growth is necessarily a measure of success. In this discourse, international students are represented as a means to income generation, or economic resources, to the benefit of the UK.

However, criticisms suggest that international higher education neither is nor should be a perfect market. They have also highlighted how global inequalities may worsen as a result of such competition and growth. Criticisms have also been made of the effects of conceiving of education as a product in terms of reducing its transformative potential. These alternative voices, while disparate and diverse, demonstrate that it is possible to imagine international higher education differently, as emancipatory, equitable, caring and pedagogically sound.

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