Immigration: A Rationale Against International Student Recruitment

Wider migration policy discourses have negatively impacted international students present in the UK, creating a counter-rationale to their recruitment. Immigration policies have fluctuated from welcoming increased immigration for economic growth under Blair, to more recent attempts to reduce net migration under the Coalition government. It is argued that as migrants they contribute to public concern, social pressures, and abuse of the system. International students are categorised as migrants, caught in the same negative discourse. The solution is to "ensure that only the brightest and best can come" (May 2010a).

Stepping outside the policy discourse for a moment, it is important to distinguish between technical and political usage of the terms "migration" and "immigration". Technically, migration refers to both inflows (immigration) and outflows (emigration) of people *of any nationality* across borders. Thus, net migration is the sum total of emigrants subtracted from immigrants. In UK political discourse, however, migration has come to mean "immigration", and "migrant" has come to mean "immigrant". To remain, as Foucault (1972) insists "within the discourse", I use the terms as they are used in the discourse in the presentation of the results (Sect. "Changing perceptions of migration" but distinguish between the two in my analysis (Sect. "Public concern & social pressures").

This chapter begins with the qualitative analysis, which shows a changing view of immigration and of students as migrants. It draws on those key migration policy documents with particular relevance to

international students. Because documents were included on the criteria that they related to or impacted on international students, a full review of migration policy during this period is not attempted. Rather, migration has emerged as a theme from the policy on international students. The second part of the chapter explores the problematisation, arguing that migration discourses implicate students, at first to their benefit (see Chap. 7 in relation to skills gaps) and later to their detriment. It explores the assumptions and subject effects which derive from the categorisation of students as migrants.

International Students Should not be Recruited Because Net Migration Should Decrease

In policy discourses, migration is supposed to "work(s) for Britain", and be "in our country's interests" (Blair 2004). The UK's interests rank above those of migrants, or sending countries. Similarly, when Prime Minister, Gordon Brown (2009) made "(t)he case for managed and controlled migration where it is in the national interest—economically, socially and culturally". Later documents stress this still further: "The Government believes migrants should come to the UK for the right reason—to contribute to our society rather than simply taking from it" (Home Office 2013a). The use of the word "taking" suggests a model of society where resources are limited and migrants (read immigrants) have no intrinsic right to access services or resources. In contrast, migration is sometimes argued to be essential for growth and avoiding the collapse of public services (e.g. Blair 2004). This representation also continues into Coalition discourse: "And the *right* immigration is not just good for Britain—it's essential" (Cameron 2013, emphasis in original). The distinction here is in the use of the modifier, "the right" immigration, which speaks to the increasing "selectiveness" of later migration discourses. It is where immigration is not seen to work in the UK's interests that problems arise.

Changing Perceptions of Migration

Economic benefits are seen to be a key rationale for migration, and during the PMI and PMI2 periods, this rationale predominated (Home Office 2002; Blair 2005; Brown 2009). Immigrants are represented as playing significant roles in the provision of public services (Blair 2004)

and figures are cited to show their "disproportionate" contribution to the economy—10% of GDP while only being 8% of the population in employment. While migration is constructed as needing "control" and "management", the contributions of migrants are presented as a rationale for further increasing and welcoming immigration (e.g. Home Office 2002). Early speeches (Roche 2000; Blair 2004) select examples from historical moments of great potency in the national consciousness, such as Polish pilots in World War Two, and Indian soldiers on the Western Front. This implies an attempt to naturalise immigration to the UK, by incorporating it into national narratives of identity. Positioning migration as "an inevitable reality of the modern world" (Home Office 2002, p. 4) is one way of making it seem ideologically neutral (Fairclough, 1989), causing significant migration levels to be seen as natural and the benefits as common sense. This obscures the role of neoliberal values in encouraging and responding to migration as an economic issue.

Policy discourses under the Coalition Government also acknowledge important contributions from immigration (May 2010a Home Office 2011; Cameron 2013). Indeed, they sometimes draw on precisely the same examples to illustrate Britain's strength in diversity (Cameron 2015). However, in these later speeches, it appears to be a preliminary rhetorical move conceding ground before establishing a need for tighter control, leading to the establishment of a target to reduce net migration, specifically the number of non-EU immigrants (HM Government 2010, p. 21) to around the "tens of thousands" (Green 2010b; Cameron 2011; Home Office 2013a). These are seen to be the "levels our country can manage" (Cameron 2011). Although negative perceptions of the UK's welcome to international students are seen as a barrier to increasing growth in the sector (BIS, 2013), "the sheer number of students coming in, and the large proportion of total inward migration this represents" (May 2010a) are said to be unsustainable (Green 2010a; Home Office 2012). The 2015 Brexit vote was also embedded in this anti-immigration narrative.

Public Concern & Social Pressures

The policy documents claim a "public concern" (Home Office 2011), "something we heard on the doorstep" (Cameron 2011), regarding "the perceived abuse of public services, pressure on jobs and employment, and numbers of immigrants" (Home Office 2011, p. 27). While present under

New Labour as well (Blair 2004; Brown 2010), the mantra of public concern became more prevalent after 2010. According to the Home Office Impact Assessment (2011, p. 27) regarding reform to the student visas, "the reasons given for public concern include the perceived abuse of public services, pressure on jobs and employment, and numbers of immigrants".

The rapid influx is claimed to cause "great economic and social pressure", in particular "on key public services such as schools, the health service, transport, housing and welfare" (May 2010b). Although earlier documents have occasionally highlighted "tensions" (Home Office 2002), impact on employment (Home Office 2006) and a lack of social integration (Blair 2004), the Coalition Government places more emphasis on the negative impacts of immigration (e.g. Cameron 2011). The proposed solution is to reduce migration, which will alleviate "congestion and pressure on public services such as schools and healthcare at a time when public spending is reduced" (Home Office 2011, p. 10). In the British situation, this is further complicated by EU membership, which requires of member states that they allow free movement of people. The UK cannot prevent immigration from European member states, which also contributes to net migration. Public concern around the perceived lack of border controls this generated arguably contributed to the 2016 Brexit vote. A secondary solution proposed was to introduce a health surcharge for all immigrants (Home Office 2013a), which was implemented in 2015 (Home Office 2015). Students are implicated in this proposed solution because they are categorised as migrants (May 2010b), albeit at a reduced rate of £150 instead of £200.

Abuse of the System: Bogus Students

Public concern is also said to centre on perceptions of abuse of the visa system. Under New Labour, it at first referred to asylum (Roche 2000; Blair 2004). The public is said to lack "confidence in our immigration system" (Home Office 2011), so reforms and "tough action" are in part intended to "restore public confidence in the immigration system" (May 2010a). New Labour policies also identify public concern as significant, particularly regarding the asylum system (Roche 2000; Home Office 2005) and bogus colleges (Home Affairs Committee 2009). but later becomes linked to students: "We are also overhauling the visa system to make it simpler for talented individuals who want to come to study in Britain, while keeping out anyone who intends to abuse the system"

(Blair 2006). Limiting abuse was part of the rationale for establishing particular procedures as part of the Tier 4 student visa route (UKBA 2008; Brown 2010), to facilitate "genuine students" to enter the country (BIS 2009). Yet the Coalition Government was "determined to be different" in tackling abuse of the system, which is said to undermine public confidence (Green 2010a; Home Office 2013a). Issues were primarily identified with the abuse of the Tier 4 route (May 2010a) and reforms to the student visa route attempted to prevent "abuse by filtering out those who contribute least and pose the highest immigration risk" (Home Office 2011, p. 9). While "abuse" primarily relates to illicit economic activities, other risks are also present, such as terrorism (Home Affairs Committee 2009; Gower 2010) and "proliferation", the transmission of information related to creating weapons of mass destruction. This concern led to the introduction of the Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS) (UKBA 2008; QAA 2012).

Bogus colleges were a particular focus of the debate on abuse. These colleges were found to be facilitating illegal economic activity among their students, offering subpar education and resources (Home Affairs Committee 2009). This discourse began under a Labour Government, (Home Office 2006), intensified during Gordon Brown's premiership (Gower 2010), and became still more prevalent under the Coalition and Conservative Governments (Cameron 2015). While this is described as "protecting international students from rogue providers and dodgy operators" (Johnson 2015), students came to be labelled as "bogus", in contrast to "legitimate students" (Home Office 2006; May 2010a; Cameron 2013). So-called "bogus students" are those who "have no intention of studying and who disappear to work illegally" (UKBA 2008, p. 8), typically from courses in further education, English Language colleges or less selective higher education institutions. They are said to be "disguised economic migrants" (Home Affairs Committee 2009, p. 65) or to be seeking long-term residence (Home Office 2011). They are said not to have "a genuine desire to study" (May 2010a) and to be "gaming the system" (Cameron 2011), sometimes through fraud (Home Affairs Committee 2009). Yet only 2% of HE students are shown to be non-compliant (Home Office 2010). This suggests an attempt to discursively reposition "legitimate students" as distinct from "illegitimate" or "bogus" students and to distinguish such efforts from the overall drive to reduce migration. This activity is also legitimated with reference to maintaining the reputation of the sector (Johnson 2015).

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The policy discourse attempts to resist "misperceptions" of these efforts as a cap on student visas, as they do not intend to reduce the number of "genuine students" (Home Affairs Committee 2011). Rather, it is argued that the intent is to reduce abuse: "we want to see tough action being taken against those who have no right to be here or who abuse our services" (Home Office 2013a, p. 1). There is frequent reiteration of the statement "there is no cap on the number of legitimate students coming to Britain" (BIS 2013, p. 4) in various forms (Cameron 2011; BIS 2013c; Home Office 2013d). Indeed, legitimate students are welcomed: "(w)e're rolling out the red carpet to those whose hard work and investment will create new British jobs" (Cameron 2013). Or alternatively "Government's welcome to international students is genuine. But it is to genuine students" (Johnson 2015). The positive terminology—"red carpet", "welcome" and "genuine"—is used in conjunction with quite restrictive criteria.

The repeated iteration of the phrase "the brightest and the best" indicates increased selectivity (Roche 2000; Home Office 2006; May 2010a; Green 2012; BIS 2013; Cameron 2015). These statements are frequently positive framed: "we want universities to attract the best talent from around the world to come and work and study in them" (BIS 2015, p. 2). The stated objective of the Impact Assessment of changes to UKBA regulations is to "improve selectivity of students and Post-Study Work route migrants to the UK, to ensure they are the brightest and the best and those making the highest economic contribution" (Home Office 2011, p. 1), by "weeding out those who do not deserve to be here" (May 2010a). The exclusionary discourse, restricting migrants and students to those who are "desirable" or "deserving", advocates "a system where we only let in those students who can bring an economic benefit to Britain's institutions and can support Britain's economic growth" (May 2010b). In this discourse, students need to earn their right to study in the UK by their elite status and contributions to the country. Phrases such as "only let in" and "weeding out" reveal the exclusive nature of this discourse, which is stronger in Coalition policies than under New Labour.

Negative economic costs of this increased selectivity are accepted: "Whilst we recognise that the estimated economic costs of these proposals appear significant, it is clear that Option 2 (restricting requirements

for international students) will help tackle abuse in the student system and help to reduce net migration" (Home Office 2011, p. 32). These costs primarily affect further education and English language tutors sectors, seen as sites of greatest abuse, while HE is positioned as a site for legitimate students (Cameron 2013). In a report for the BIS, Conlon et al. (2011) estimate that these proposals reduce estimates of annual growth in education exports from 4 to 3.7%. The Migration Advisory Committee (2010) also anticipates economic costs in wider net migration reductions. This appears to be in tension with claims to be acting in the best interest of UK universities (Home Office 2011), and with the broader economic goals of the International Education Strategy, to foster growth in education exports (BIS 2013). This tension is apparent in the attempt by Dr. Vince Cable, then Business Secretary, to mitigate declines in student numbers from India: "the doors are open to Indian students to benefit from our world-class universities" (BIS 2014). In an echo of the 1983 Pym Package, he also announced a number of scholarship opportunities for Indian students.

This counter-rationale may, therefore, be summarised as follows. Restricting the right to study in the UK to selected legitimate students who make the right kind of contribution reduces abuse of the system. Although it may lead to reduced economic growth, this is an acceptable cost. Reducing abuse of the visa system by limiting access is intended to restore public confidence in the migration system, and to reduce perceived social pressures which lead to public concern. This is part of an overall drive to reduce net migration, where high levels are seen to be "unmanageable" and "unsustainable", and not in Britain's interests.

The Problem of Students as Migrants

The central problem is represented to be excessive immigration causing public concern, to be solved by reducing abuse and overall immigration numbers (Bacchi 2009, Q1). Prior to 1997, public attitudes had been broadly positive towards immigration, as numbers had been low during the Conservative Governments of the 80s and 90s (Ford et al. 2015).

Blair's government liberalised migration policy considerably, particularly on economic migration (Ford et al. 2015). In 2000, the concept of "managed migration" for the economic benefit of the UK gained prominence in policy (Düvell and Jordan 2003; Flynn 2005). This is a response to pressure from business interests. The economic and labour

market rationales for immigration were made, highlighting the potential gains to the UK (Roche 2000). This established a category of "wanted" immigrants based on their skills (Mulvey 2011), where the "unwanted" were understood to be asylum seekers and illegal immigrants with nothing to offer. The UK's humanitarian obligations under international treaties do not figure much in this narrative. "Managed migration" as a policy could be seen as continuous with the previous Conservative administration, although they did not publicise this stance as overtly as the Blair government did (Mulvey 2011). International students were linked to "managed migration", as well as to the financial and political rationales (Roche 2000). Changes to visa procedures and work permissions demonstrate that New Labour sought to facilitate international students' entrance to the UK and its labour market.

Policy was much more restrictive on issues of asylum, and six major acts of Parliament were enacted in less than 10 years (Spencer 2007). At the outset, the main focus was on reforming procedures and bureaucracy, rather than making radical shifts in policy. From 1998, with the publication of the White Paper *Fairer, Firmer, Faster*, changes to immigration procedures were made, to become "more user-friendly and streamlined" (Roche 2000) and more modern (Düvell and Jordan 2003). The Immigration and Asylum Act in 1999 attempted to revise the "complex", "piecemeal" and "outdated" systems, positioned as reducing illegal immigration and limit opportunities for abuse of the system (Fiddick 1999). There is no mention of student migration in the Immigration and Asylum Act itself, where the focus is firmly on asylum seekers, and illegal migrants. These restrictive efforts were limited by human rights and EU legislation (Ford et al. 2015).

A dualistic policy emerged of strict enforcement of immigration overall but promoting student immigration for economic reasons. This corresponds with Ford et al. (2015) observation that this period saw a negative shift in public mood towards immigration. This shift is observable in many countries around the world, such as Canada and Spain (Gilligan 2015). The rise in public concern and deeply hostile media coverage around immigration from this time on appears to be linked to refugees and asylum seekers, as well as to the rise of radical right-wing anti-immigration political parties, such as the UK Independence Party. This is evident in the minutiae of some of the subsequent changes. A number of restrictions were implemented on asylum seekers and refugees in which students were sometimes ignored, sometimes implicated.

For instance, rights of appeal for students were restricted in both the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act (2002) and the 2006 Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act, while the 2004 Asylum and Immigration Act, does not deal with students at all. Instead, they aimed to make New Labour appear strong on asylum during a period of rapid increase in applications: in 2002 alone, there were 84,130 asylum applications (Philo et al. 2013).

The 2002 White Paper *Secure Borders, Safe Haven* advocated making it easier for postgraduate students in particular subjects to switch immigration categories, especially from study to employment, after completion of their degree (Home Office 2002). This is argued to contribute economically and particularly to address work-force gaps in the UK as careers such as doctors, nurses, dentists and religious ministers are explicitly identified. Such a focus is consistent with what Flynn (2005, p. 477) describes as "the intention to reconfigure migration policy around business interests". In other words, facilitating international students' work has the twin benefits of attracting more international students and of addressing labour market shortages, both of which satisfy the needs of businesses, as Chap. 7 indicated. The establishment of the Migration Advisory Committee in 2007 consolidated this approach, as they create skills shortage lists to inform migration policy. However, student work visas were time limited and did not contribute to permanent settlement entitlements. The UK was therefore not looking at international students as a source for permanent, skilled population growth, unlike Canada and Australia during this period (Ziguras and Law 2006).

The culmination of these changes came after the 2005 general election with the introduction of the Points-Based System (PBS) (Home Office 2006), which presented a full system for managing migration. It was in effect less liberal and more regulated than previous regimes (Ford et al. 2015). This system was influenced by the Australian model, partly in response to Conservative calls during the election for quotas (Geddes 2005). It was intended to eliminate subjectivity in the decision making process by awarding fixed numbers of points for every condition met (Home Office 2006; Mavroudi and Warren 2013). The study route, Tier 4, was implemented in March 2009 (UKBA 2008). It was almost immediately revised as a result of the bogus college scandal (see Chap. 3 for more details).

The Coalition Government has essentially continued with the Points-Based System, but has placed caps on particular routes and tightened

regulations (Ford et al. 2015). This is consistent with their shift towards a cautious rhetoric on reducing immigration in order to tackle the "burden on public services" (Bale et al. 2011). In attempting to shift perceptions away from the Tories as the "nasty party", it became important for Cameron to be seen as "reasonable" on the immigration debate. The emphasis was on reducing numbers and controlling immigration, not ending it, and the reasons given were apparently practical, rather than ideological. In the wake of the Brexit vote, this mitigating pressure appears to have diminished somewhat and the political rhetoric is now becoming increasingly uncompromising.

Within the problem representation, international students are represented as migrants. This generates a number of assumptions (Bacchi 2009, Q2). Secondly, "public concern" about immigrationis presumed to include students. They are discursively conflated with asylum seekers and illegal immigrants and are assumed to add pressure to services and community tension. The risk posed by students to the UK appears as a secondary problem, where the solution is increased discipline through compliance with visa regulation rules imposed on students and HEIs.

DEFINING MIGRANTS: STUDENTS

The power of the state through discourses to define and socially categorise groups of people (Foucault 1982; Moscovici 2000; Fairclough 2003) is highlighted in the debates over whether students should be officially classified as migrants (MAC 2010; Home Affairs Committee 2011; BIS Committee 2013; Home Office 2013d). The Government's position is that in reporting data to international organisations, it conforms to the UN definition of a long-term migrant—someone who remains in a country for 12 months or more (Home Office 2013d). This formal definition underpins the use of the term migrant to apply to students in less formal contexts.

Firstly, the rules by which this statement has been made (Foucault 1972) rely on a shared understanding that this "someone" is not a citizen of that country—a legal alien (Marginson et al. 2010). This has become an unquestioned common-sense assertion but it speaks to a mono-national singular understanding of citizenship, at odds with the cosmopolitan vision of the global citizen. Secondly, this demonstrates how global governance can operate through requirements on data reporting, and how the collection of statistics as a source of knowledge

can have material effects (Rose and Miller 2008). In this case, the categorisation of students as migrants means that their numbers decrease because overall migrant numbers must decrease. Thirdly, it demonstrates different interpretations of compliance with this requirement. The Government argues that it can *only* report net migration in terms which conform to the UN definition. Universities UK in their evidence to the Home Affairs Committee (2011) and indeed the committee itself in their conclusions, argue that while this data can be reported to comply with international requirements, other definitions can be used to inform domestic policy. These alternatives seek to disrupt the representation of students (Bacchi 2009, Q6). Universities UK (cited in BIS Committee 2013) refer to Australia, Canada and the USA, which distinguish for the purposes of domestic policy guidance between permanent and temporary migrants, while still reporting internationally in compliance with global definitions (Cavanagh and Glennie 2012). Changing this technical label would potentially filter through into the public discourses, offering greater nuance. The Government's response (Home Office 2013d, p. 6) argues that the quality of existing data sets in the International Passenger Survey (IPS) adequately disaggregate categories of migrants for policy purposes, and reiterates their intention to "comply with the international definition".

This is justified with reference to the social impact of immigrants. The Immigration Minister stated that:

> to say somebody who comes here for three years as a student is not here, so doesn't count, is just absurd…The idea that somebody can be here for three, four, five years or longer but in some way do not have an impact. They are living somewhere, so they are having an impact on housing. They will be taking public transport. If they are here for three years, it is quite likely they use the health service. All the immigration pressures on the public services, which we all know about, are as affected by an individual student as they are by an individual on a work permit. (BIS Committee 2013, p. 5)

A "migrant" here is defined on the basis of their social impact. The implication is that social pressures on public services are a key part of being an immigrant, as will be further explored below. The definition of students as migrants is consistent with discourse from the PMI era (Home Office 2002, 2006; Blair 2004; UKBA 2008). However,

during this period, they and other skilled immigrants were defined as "contributing" rather than "impacting", and are seen as desirable. Thus, while the formal definition may be the same, associated meanings have changed.

Another key facet of the understanding of a "migrant" is their border-crossing: a foreign citizen entering the UK is an immigrant. However, this is belied by the methodology of the data collection. The International Passenger Survey collects data on everyone who crosses international borders to enter the country with the intent to remain for over a year. This includes British citizens returning from a stay abroad (Blinder 2012). In 2010, this category constituted 16% of immigrants to the UK. Net migration figures therefore include the movement of UK citizens, which is rarely highlighted in policy discourses. This suggests that the technical collection of data relies on understandings of "migrant" which are not commonly shared by the public, yet the statistics themselves have the discursive power to impact how the public perceives the problem (Bacchi 2009, Q5).

Conceptually, it is problematic to categorise students as immigrants, as it reduces their experiences and individuality to a single dimension: their border-crossing (King and Raghuram 2013). As with the categorisation of students as international, the distinction fundamentally "others" them, creating a binary (Bacchi 2009) in student populations between the norm—home students—and the Other—international migrants. In consequence, they are subjected to a range of additional technologies of government. The effect on students is clear: they are made to feel insecure, frustrated, and disempowered by immigration processes (Marginson, et al, 2010). They report feeling insulted, humiliated, and being treated "not treated like a student but rather as a potential criminal" (UKCISA 2011, p. 27). Justifying this point of difference with reference to the social and economic impacts of immigrations (on housing, transport, health care, etc.) implies that students do not have the right to use such infrastructure in the host country. It also implies that migrants use make disproportionate use of services. This generates insecurity for students who have no entitlement to access essential services, which could potentially be withheld.

It is entirely possible to define students other than through their immigration status. Even Enoch Powell (cited in Acton 2011, p. 3), in his famous *Rivers of Blood* speech, differentiated between permanent settlement and students: "This has nothing to do with the entry of

Commonwealth citizens, any more than of aliens, into this country for the purposes of study or improving their qualifications…They are not, and never have been, immigrants". If he, the lodestone of radical opposition to immigration, identifies students as distinct from immigrants, this categorisation is not inevitable or "natural". The distinction between students and immigrants is consonant with public perceptions of immigration (Blinder 2012) as people also reported seeing a difference between students and immigrants. King and Raghuram (2013) propose an alternative: that mobility can be understood as a continuum from "local travel" to "global travel". This would emphasise the continued global movement that many international students are likely to experience, and the domestic or regional mobility experienced by home students. Such a redefinition would minimise the binary division created between "home" and "international" students, and could be combined with an increased emphasis on student rights to enhance the security of students who were not formally differentiated from their peers.

Reducing Immigration: A Numbers Game

The way statistics have been gathered informs the representation of the problem of "too many" international students. The collection of information is a key technology for governance, a way to control the population (Foucault 1977; Rose and Miller 2008). Yet here, available data is limited, and sources contradictory (MAC 2010). The most widely used source, the International Passenger Survey, samples travellers at a range of ports, and may significantly under-represent international students departing (Mulley and Sachrajda 2011). The UKBA records visas issued, but since not all students who apply for visas come to study (UKBA 2010), this likely overestimates potential entrance. Since paper-based exit checks were abolished in 1998, the Home Office has not been able to establish which visa holders left the country. Therefore, the Home Office cannot determine exact numbers of international students in the country (Achato et al. 2010; MAC 2010) and likely overestimates, given that departures are underestimated. In the policy discourse, it is the UKBA data most commonly referred to (e.g. Green 2010; Cameron 2011), meaning that inflated numbers are discursively dominant. These discrepancies are rarely mentioned in central policy documents. Exit checks were reintroduced in 2015, which may alter the representation of official statistics. Although if they do identify fewer students in the country

than previously estimated, this will no doubt be presented as a "fall in numbers" and attributed to the success of the policy rather than a simple change in the methodology of data collection.

Immigration is represented to be a problem when there is "too much" and when it is illegal. However, the Coalition Government solution was to reduce net migration, which counts *legal* entry (MAC 2010), and this is sustained in the Conservative Government commitments. Reductions in illegal immigration are by definition not calculated or measured, and would not contribute to achieving this goal (Mulley and Sachrajda 2011). The numbers of illegal immigrants cannot be known with any accuracy (Blair 2005). To attain immigration levels in the "tens of thousands", reductions have to occur in countable entry points, reducing legal net migration (Acton 2011). As the biggest category of immigrants, with high rates of compliance (Home Office 2010), students are a "soft target" (Cavanagh and Glennie 2012), easier to accessthan asylum seekers or illegal economic migrants. The discursive effect (Bacchi 2009, Q5) of reducing net migration is, therefore, to shift the burden onto reducing legal student migration, suggesting that the underlying political problem is the *public perception* of immigration numbers, not the numbers themselves. An alternative would therefore be to engage in a campaign to change the public perception of immigration, particularly with regards to international students, rather than changing international students.

Undesirable Migrants and Public Concern

The PMI and Coalition policies both concur in their representation of students as migrants. But under Coalition policies, they become represented as undesirable and causing public concern. This is a key subject effect, with a number of implications.

Both terms "migrant" and "immigrant", used often interchangeably in public discourses, carry negative connotations caused by a discursive association between "migrants" and "asylum seekers" (Blinder 2012). Throughout Blair's premiership, there was a perception of an uncontrolled influx of asylum seekers (Spencer 2007), often reported in the vocabulary of natural disaster—floods, waves and flows, for example (Philo et al. 2013). This hostility towards asylum seekers then spilled over to apply to all those categorised as migrants (Spencer 2007), including students. More recently, the vocabulary has taken an entomological

turn with David Cameron referring to "a swarm", as of insects (BBC 2015). The hyperbolic tenor of this dehumanising language has created a veil of legitimacy for xenophobic sentiment.

This leads to the assumption that student immigration causes major public concern. Research for the Oxford University Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (Blinder 2012) confirms a high level of public concern, potentially influenced by intensive and hostile media coverage (Philo et al. 2013). This suggests that the discursive power of the media is potentially significant in the creation of this problem (Bacchi 2009). However, when thinking of students, members of the public were more likely to be positive than if considering permanent immigration (Blinder 2012). There are also significant critiques and attempts to disrupt this association between immigration and students (e.g. Milligan et al. 2011; Cavanagh and Glennie 2012; Universities UK, 2011). Therefore, the assumption in policy discourses that public concern about immigration encompasses students maybe called into question.

Public concern is typically linked to long-term or permanent migration. In categorising students as migrants, the aspiration to permanent residency is assumed. However, international students may alternatively be represented as planning a temporary stay (Mazzarol and Soutar 2002). Students frequently state that they hope to gain short-term work experience prior to returning home (Milligan et al. 2011). According to Home Office data, the 3% of students who reach permanent settlement after 5 years typically do so via work or family routes—legally, in other words (Achato et al. 2010). None of these particular situations cause public concern and most would accept that marriage, for example, is a valid reason for long-term migration (Blinder 2012). Yet these findings are not widely reproduced in the discourse. When thinking of immigration, most people do not think of temporary immigrants or students (Gilligan 2015). Instead, the numbers of those who stay for longer than 5 years—"more than a fifth"—are the focus (e.g. Green 2011; Cameron 2011), although these students are all doing so legally, through graduate work or continued study (Achato et al. 2010). Suter and Jandl (2008) estimate that typical global stay rates are between 10 and 30%, but may be higher for higher education levels and in particular subjects. The IPPR estimates 15% stay over 7 years in the UK (Cavanagh and Glennie, 2012). Therefore, comparatively the UK is on a par with, or lower, in terms of permanent student migration than other countries. Although the policy discourse reports this as excessive (e.g. May 2010b), it can

also be understood as a small minority of the total population. For many countries, such stay rates are desirable and sought after, not problematic. The categorisation of students as migrants, therefore, has negative connotations of permanence, but can be thought about differently, as short-term migrants. As Universities UK (2011, p. 39) states, "International students are not permanent migrants to the UK".

The public concern also rests on the perception of a burden on social services, which is represented to be a problem. Citizenship and permanent residency confer the right to accesshealthcare, education, social services and welfare benefits, while temporary or illegal migration does not (with the exception of health care) (Blinder 2012; Philo et al. 2013). Such access is seen as generous and students are assumed to burden public services to the same extent as permanent settlers (e.g. Cameron 2011; Home Office 2011). There is little accurate data on this question, but it is likely that in the short-term international students use health services, social services, and school-level education proportionately less even than their domestic counterparts (MAC 2010; George et al. 2011). Students are estimated to generate around 40% lower public costs than their UK equivalents (George et al. 2011), which could be seen as outweighed by their fee contributions. The assumption that students "take" in using public services during their stay, and more fundamentally, that they do not have the right to do so is, therefore, open to question. An alternative argument might be made that as they contribute so substantially to the economy and universities by internationalising the classroom, they have a right to use public services (e.g. UKCISA 2013b).

Indeed, it is possible that the public concern itself is overstated, a victim of political over-extrapolation. Instead, many studies find "public opinion regarding immigration is complex, ambiguous, malleable, volatile and divided" (Gilligan 2015, p. 1376). Different opinion polls ask different questions, making longitudinal comparison difficult (Ford et al. 2015). In the UK, the public distinguish between immigrant groups, differentiating between skills levels, regional origin, race and motives. Opinions also vary by the respondents' personal experiences and the level of immigration in their immediate vicinity—the higher; the more positive attitudes tend to be (Gilligan 2015). In addition, there is a relationship of mutual influence between public concern and media attention: the media reports on matters of interest to the public, but the public determines which issues to be concerned about based on what they see in the media (Ford et al. 2015). This indicates that "public concern" is itself a

discursive object, created within policy discourse as an object. It may be real, and certain people are clearly worried, but it does not exist independently of the way that policy and media construct it.

Where international students are exposed to this discourse of "taking rather than contributing" and see themselves depicted in public discourses as immigrants, they are likely to feel less secure and welcome in the country (Marginson et al. 2010). It is within the power of teachers and academic staff to mediate such perceptions, helping students to make meaning from them in the classroom. Having open, critical conversations to help contextualise public debates and xenophobic sentiment can help mitigate students' feelings of alienation. But it requires that academic staff are aware of such discourses and prepared to engage in such conversations, and supported in doing so by their institutions.

STUDENTS ABUSING THE SYSTEM: SURVEILLANCE, COMPLIANCE AND DISCIPLINE

Public concern also encompasses illegal immigration, which for international students means "abuse of the system", as presented above (Q1) (Spencer 2007; Blinder 2012). The consensus on reducing "abuse" of the system is clear, dominant and rarely challenged (Q6). Although there is widespread criticism in the sector of UKBA regulations and implementation (e.g. Jenkins 2014), there are few challenges to the need to reduce "abuse" (e.g. Universities UK 2011), or the right of the state to take such action, so the sector as a whole is compliant (UKBA 2010). Institutions comply by collecting and sharing attendance data, by maintaining documentation about students' accommodation and visa status, and by reporting students' academic status to the Home Office. Academic staff likewise comply with those institutional requirements. The explicit consequences of "non-compliance" are that institutions have their right to recruit international students withdrawn, as happened to London Metropolitan University. For universities that rely heavily on international student fees, such a result is potentially catastrophic. There is therefore little institutional will to resist compliance, or even to engage critically or theoretically with the disciplinary consequences.

Students pose a risk, which is represented to be a problem: "we need to know that (students) are behaving properly when they are here" (Green 2011). This construct appears to have developed through policy borrowing from the USA where after the 9/11 attacks (Borjas 2002),

perceptions of risk among international students increased significantly (Ewers and Lewis 2008). Security activities intensified as a result (Urias and Yeakey 2009). Terrorism per se is not typically associated with international students in British policy discourses, but the introduction of the Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS) (Merrick 2012) suggests a perception of related risks, namely the proliferation of "dangerous" knowledge (Urias and Yeakey 2009). The ATAS was established to monitor "postgraduate study in certain sensitive subjects, knowledge of which could be used in programmes to develop weapons of mass destruction or their means of delivery" (FCO 2013), evoking similar concerns in the USA about leakage of sensitive information (Borjas 2002). This programme was introduced in 2007, only a few months after the July 2007 terrorist attacks in London, although no explicit link between the two is made.

Such perception of risk and fear (Urias and Yeakey 2009) has underpinned increased monitoring and surveillance of international students and their academic activities in the UK (Ewers and Lewis 2008; Merrick 2012; Jenkins 2014). The range of surveillance technologies on students is significant. When applying, students are required to provide evidence of their English language levels, finance and academic qualifications (UKBA 2013). The risk is therefore represented to be that students with restricted finances and with lower levels of English may undertake illegal work. Student work is categorised as suspect because the binary categorisation between legitimate and bogus students relies on whether students work or not (Robertson 2011). That English levels are a risk factor and test results as a form of insurance is also widely unquestioned (Marginson et al. 2010). Students from many countries are required to complete police registration upon arrival (UKCISA 2013a). On the basis of which countries are included on this list (e.g. Yemen, Colombia, China, and North Korea), risk factors appear here to focus on geographical nexuses of organised crime (National Crime Agency 2014) and the potential for security risks (MI5 2015). Biometric residence permits require students to provide biological data which is then used to legitimate their activities (opening a bank account, for example) (Warren and Mavroudi 2011). In 2014, the Government established a requirement for landlords and employers to verify the immigration status of tenants and employees (Immigration Act 2014). In combination with the attendance monitoring in place at many universities through technologies such as swipe cards and attendance logs, the cumulative effect is one of intense monitoring and surveillance, largely unchallenged by the sector.

Although Warren and Mavroudi (2011) found that many migrants did not object to this experience, others found it alienating, creating a point of difference between them and British citizens—a dividing practice (Foucault 1988; Bacchi 2009). In an educational context, this creates a "two-tier student identity" (Jenkins 2014, p. 1), where a student's legitimacy rests on their physical presence and other behaviours rather than on their academic activities. The campus becomes securitised and academic staff are placed in the position of border guards through the act of maintaining attendance registers and reporting on their students' behaviour to the Home Office (Jenkins 2014). If students are seen as autonomous academic actors, rather than migrants, their physical presence at particular "checkpoints" throughout the academic year could be considered of secondary importance. The imposition of migration regulations threatens traditional student autonomy, which demonstrates that at other times in history, international students have been conceived of differently, not primarily through their status as border-crossers (King and Raghuram 2013). A key silence here concerns students' rights—whether they have the agencyto choose to attend certain parts of their course, to select which aspects they engage with or the right to privacy, to withhold some of their personal biometric data. The simplest, easiest thing that we can do as academics and teachers is to start discussing this with students: asking them about their experience, what they understood from it, whether they object to this securitisation, sharing our own concerns. These conversations can bring the discursive mechanisms to light, offering a teachable moment for the development of a critical social consciousness. If we can do nothing else, it is at least our ethical responsibility to illuminate the state power at work directly on bodies in our classrooms.

The emphasis in the construction of "risk" as a discursive object is on risks to the UK and the visa system, not to the student themselves and the risks they experience. With regards to work, the problem could be represented to be the exploitation of students rather than the visa system. Marginsonet al. (2010) give an account of the systematic discrimination and exploitation of the student workforce in Australia, and argue that policies do not adequately protect students' rights as workers. Instead, as in the UK, policy "equates 'work rights' only with the 'right to work'" (Ibid., p. 127). While in the policy discourses there is no definitive evidence of such exploitation in the UK, this rights-based critique represents an alternative understanding of students as workers. Further, by inverting the question of "risk", this places students at the centre of the

issue, asking what risks they experience not what risks they pose. This assumes that students are themselves ethical beings, not innate security risks. After all the vast majority of students are law-abiding citizens, posing no security risk and unlikely even to work illegally, not potentially violent radicals or criminals.

Conclusion

Thus, representing students as migrants has become a discursive barrier to their recruitment in policy, particularly after the 2010 election of the Coalition Government. In contrast to the economic rationale for migration presented in the previous chapter, it found that the migration was negatively framed, in relation to public concern, perceived "abuse of the system" and pressure on public services. Where immigration leads to "low skilled employment", "bogus colleges", or "risk" it is argued that it should be reduced. The Coalition Government's drive to reduce net immigration impacted students as the biggest category of legal immigrants. Student migration is represented as a problem where they are also assumed to generate public concern, exploit public services, abuse the system and seek permanent settlement. They are also seen as a risk, and surveillance is the solution. This discussion has highlighted these assumptions and has demonstrated that there are alternative conceptual and discursive possibilities.

Disjunctures appear in the intersection of the discourses of migration with those of education, and those of economics. Although students are rarely explicitly linked with the threat of terrorism or the exploitation of the visa system to their own economic ends, they are monitored and surveyed as if they were. Although they are described as "the best and the brightest", they are suspected of wishing to work on illegally on the black market for below minimum wage. Although they are sought out by the country and institutions for their economic and educational potential, they are thought to be exploiting health and social services. The discursive assimilation of students with migrants has, therefore, come into conflict with the economic and pedagogical rationales. Students who are valued for their academic contributions, through their embodiment of cultural diversity, are nevertheless suspected of violating immigration regulations. Students who are sought after for their financial contributions are nevertheless prevented from entering the country because they do not meet increasingly selective criteria. Students who are

supposed to be developing lasting respect and affiliation with the politics of a country are nevertheless interrogated by immigration officials and prevented from staying on after their degree, while experiencing increasingly hostile media representations. Policy discourses take too much for granted about the goodwill and predictable behaviours of international students.

What the policy discourse fails to consider is the impact of each rationale on the other, given students' agency. Why should a student who has been subjected to a rigorous and tedious biometric testing regime be positively disposed to the political values of a country? Why should a student who has been sent to stand in line at a police station for 3 h to register, and paid for the privilege, turn to the police as a safe institution? Why should a student who hears and reads hostile comments about immigrants seek out and build relationships with British people? Why should a student who has been offered a separate academic induction and has been subjected to different bureaucratic regimes to their domestic peers (and perhaps later sees extreme inebriation as part of Welcome Week) believe it to be their responsibility to educate their classmates? Students choose what to do, and they do so on the basis of what they see, hear and experience. When people are treated with suspicion rather than kindness, they respond with suspicion. That is not a conducive environment either for education or for the development of mutual respect, understanding and a sense of global citizenship.

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