

**TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING
OF THE MANAGEMENT
CONTRIBUTION IN POST-92
UNIVERSITIES**

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JANUARY 2016

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements of

Edinburgh Napier University,

for the award of

Doctor of Business Administration

Copyright Declaration

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Dedication

To Rona, Euan and Katie,

With thanks for your love and patience.

I hope to spend much more time with each of you now.

Iain

Abstract: Towards an understanding of the management contribution in post-92 universities

Over recent years there has been considerable debate about the purpose, value and expectations of higher education. The relationship between government and the higher education sector has become focussed on the efficiency and effectiveness of the sector and on the experience of students as customers. These notions are contested, and sit within a broader context that includes consumerism, marketization, globalisation, and public sector reform more generally. In higher education, this debate has been polarised and sometimes characterised within institutions as “collegiate” versus “managerial”. These tensions are explored not simply as competing perspectives but as ciphers for competing ideologies. The study considered how academic managers have negotiated this terrain, and the contribution of management to the health of an institution.

Qualitative interviews were carried out with senior academic managers in 12 post-92 UK universities, which were regarded as particularly susceptible to economic pressures affecting the public sector following the financial crash of 2008. Conceptual and practical issues relating to the use of interviews were addressed, and the limitations of the study explored.

A number of broad themes were identified: management orientation, about how the organisation is run; institutional orientation, about institutional purpose and journey, past and future; orientation towards academic staff and students; and, student related performance measures. The inter-relations between themes, and the patterns in participant responses were examined.

Management actions can affect institutional performance for good or ill, and the bounded nature of the relationship between academics and managers is acknowledged. In this context, advice is offered that may be of benefit to university academic managers balancing competing expectations in complex and challenging financial times.

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Acknowledgements

I am very grateful for the advice, challenge, flexibility and patience of Dr Janice McMillan and Professor Paul Barron, my supervisory team.

I have often, but not always, taken their advice. I would not, however, have made it to the end without them.

Errors, omissions and logical inconsistencies remain mine alone.

Iain McIntosh

Jan 2016

1. Chapter 1 - Introduction to the study

1.1. Introduction

Higher education systems around the world face a number of universal challenges. These include, the transformation from elite to mass higher education; globalisation and marketization of higher education; concerns with quality; a focus on the experience of students as consumers; multiple stakeholders, arguably with competing interests; and concerns with cost-containment. While these are not new developments (Teichler, 2001; Oldfield and Baron, 2000), the pace has quickened, the terrain looks considerably more uncertain (Barber et al, 2013; Shattock, 2010), and conceptions of the purpose and expectations of universities are contested (CDBU, 2015; Collini, 2012; Duderstadt, 2012; Gibb et al, 2012; Holmwood (ed), 2011; Ryan and Guthrie, 2014).

As part of a sectoral response, Universities UK (UUK), the representative organisation for UK universities, established an 'Efficiency and Modernisation Task Group' to better understand the drivers for efficiency in Higher Education (UUK, 2011). In the foreword to the report of the Task Group published in September 2011 the convenor, Prof Ian Diamond, Principal and Vice Chancellor at the University of Aberdeen, acknowledged that,

“Across the UK we will all be facing increased pressure to demonstrate efficiency and effectiveness, and above all that we are providing value for money” (UUK, 2011, p5).

The report was referred to in the White Paper for England, *Higher Education: Students at the Heart of the System* with an explicit expectation that universities would continue to seek efficiencies (BIS, 2011).

Subsequent output from UUK, including their submission to the 2013 Spending Review (UUK, 2013), indicate that efficiency, effectiveness and value for money are at the core of the current relationship between universities and government in all parts of the UK. While there is divergence

in funding mechanisms, including the introduction of fees in parts of the UK, the direction of this relationship has not changed. Arguably, it is the levers of control that are different. The emphasis on accountability through the market and student fees in England, for example, is matched by more direct government intervention in Scotland (McIntosh, 2011; Scott, 2014)

The interim report of the New Joint Negotiating Committee for Higher Education Staff (New JNCHES) Sustainability Issues Working Group concluded that the financial health of the university sector was less robust in 2011 than it had been in 2008, with the outlook being even more challenging (New JNCHES, 2011; Shattock 2010; Morgan, 2013).

The financial and political context provides a complex, uncertain and demanding terrain for universities to navigate. This terrain is externally imposed and requires university management to respond (Shattock, 2013). The overall purpose of this study is therefore to understand better how university management can make a positive contribution to institutional performance in such circumstances. The study is set in the context of post-92 UK universities and the complex and contested nature of the higher education environment is acknowledged.

1.2. Rationale

1.2.1. Academic rationale

It has been argued that there is a limit to what even good management can achieve in a university, with the following quote being illustrative of this view:

“Successful universities are successful primarily because of their teaching and research, not because of their management, but good management can over time provide the conditions in which teaching and research can flourish, just as, more usually, poor management can undermine teaching and research and precipitate institutional decline.” (Shattock, 2003, p ix)

Reflecting a decade later, Shattock (2013) identified continuing dangers for institutions adopting a managerial orientation. The notion of success in higher education, however, is not entirely straightforward. Its features are complex, contested, and subject to multiple competing perspectives. While each institution may wish to establish its own success criteria, increasingly these are set or moderated externally by government and its agencies, such as the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), or funding and research councils. The focus is often on rewarding 'excellence' in teaching and research, and promoting 'value' for the student as consumer. Considering how success is judged, and by whom, leads us in a somewhat circular manner back to the competing and contested notions of the purpose of universities (Collini, 2012; Gibb et al, 2012; CDBU, 2015; Naidoo, Shankar and Veer, 2011; Ryan and Guthrie, 2014). These different perspectives lead to a variety of indicators of success being promoted and valued, and instil tensions into the higher education system. While the specifics may change over time, such indicators are likely to include financial measures; student-related measures, including student satisfaction; evidence of academic achievement; adaptive capacity; efficiency; effectiveness; and, signs of standing or prestige. (New JNCHES, 2011; Shattock, 2010; UUK, 2013)

The hierarchical arrangement of HEIs in the UK can lead to institutions being differentially susceptible to consumerist pressures (Jamieson and Naidoo, 2004). Changing approaches to funding both teaching and research have increased the differentiation between research intensive and other universities. In parallel there is increased public (governmental) control over the HEIs through accountability measures, with the curriculum driven by governmental priorities focussed on skills and a vocational agenda, widening access, and employability. If achieving institutional success is a complex matter, and the financial environment uncertain, then it is likely that this is particularly acute for post-92 institutions as they are seen as more susceptible to government interference (Jamieson and Naidoo, 2004).

In identifying the nature of institutions that are most likely to be sustainable through an economic downturn, Shattock (2010) suggests that,

“They will be institutions that have had a well-balanced budget, are not overly dependent on the whims of public expenditure policies and have been able to sustain their core business of teaching and research and the morale of their staff.” (Shattock, 2010, page 28)

University success matters: it matters to students; it matters to the staff of the institutions; it matters to the myriad communities and businesses universities engage with; and, it matters to the local, regional and national economy (Scott, 2014). If ‘good’ university management can contribute to that success, or at least to the avoidance of failure, it is worth examining what ‘good’ management might look like. As well as an interest in the contribution of management to institutional success, this study is interested in how things might go wrong, and the management contribution to such an outcome. It has been suggested, in an international context, that institutional responses to the recession of 2008 have not always been effective (Leonard, 2014; Shah and Nair, 2014). The study therefore considers whether and how management actions might be related to institutional decline and whether post-92 universities can be regarded as avoiding the “dirty dozen” indicators of reduced performance? (Ashraf and Kadir, 2012; Cameron and Smart, 1998)

Examining the contribution of management to institutional success and failure could, with some justification, be criticised as reflecting a managerialist agenda that affords managers and management special status in the organisation. This might be criticised as proposing the solution to all ills to be ‘better management’. There have been significant challenges to this standpoint, not least from within the academy (Alvesson, 2013; Giroux, 2014; CDBU, 2015), which preference collegiality and academic autonomy and see managerialism as part of a wider neo-liberal agenda. These positions are polarised, but bounded within the same context, and there is limited evidence of positive attempts at reconciliation (Ek et al, 2013; Kligyte and Barrie, 2011). As an output of the study, some advice aimed at university managers is offered which acknowledges the bounded nature of opposing ideological positions.

1.2.2. Personal rationale

When I started this project as researcher, I was working in a post-92 university as Deputy Dean of a faculty that had a diverse mix of academic disciplines. I had some responsibility for academic workload, and for balancing resources and activities around the faculty, hence an interest in 'efficiency and effectiveness'.

As the fallout from the banking crisis began to have affect, and the economic uncertainties grew, it became evident that universities would not be immune from the changes associated with public sector funding. Our university responded with a voluntary severance programme, and then a redundancy programme. My role became redundant, though I survived in a new, cheaper role. Personal survival was down more to good luck than to any personal attributes, and I was struck by the randomness of it all.

It became very clear to me that academic management roles could be a force for considerable disruption and upset, and that wasn't likely to be a guarantee of future success. There was a careful path to be trodden between management and managerialism, and I wanted to know I was on the right one.

I was appointed Dean part of the way through this project and felt a considerable personal responsibility for supporting all the staff of the faculty to achieve their professional aspirations. This project helps me to better understand how others are coping with the changes that are affecting the sector, and will perhaps allow me to provide some helpful insights to others.

1.3. Aim and objectives of the study

The overall aim of the study was to consider the contribution management action might have on post-92 UK universities.

1.3.1. Research Objectives

The research objectives for the study were as follows:

1. To examine relevant debates in the higher education, management, and public administration literature;
2. To understand how post-92 universities are balancing the demands of efficiency and effectiveness, from the perspective of managers;
3. To explore the extent to which managers perceive universities are driven by their own values and mission rather than being subject to the whim of public policy;
4. To consider ways in which senior university management might contribute to creating an environment that facilitates academic success.

1.4. Structure of the thesis

Following this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 provides a review of relevant literature. The literature reviewed is necessarily selective given the volume and breadth of literature available and has been drawn from a number of distinctive academic fields. A justification for this approach is provided, with a wide range of topics from fields such as organisational and management studies, public policy and education addressed. Historical and international comparisons are drawn on where relevant. Chapter 2 finishes with a summary that places the project in the context of this literature.

Chapter 3, Research Methodology and Methods, covers the landscape of research philosophy, and then explains why a critical realist research

approach was adopted. The research method is discussed, and the chapter provides a detailed look at the qualitative research interview. Potential ethical issues are examined, and their resolution described. A brief report of a pilot study precedes the description of the main study. The chapter also describes the approach to data analysis, and finishes with a consideration of quality in qualitative research, discusses some limitations of the study, and locates the researcher in the research.

Chapter 4, Findings, provides a detailed examination of the findings from the study. The themes, sub-themes and categories derived from data analysis are described. These are: management orientation, about how the organisation is run; orientation towards academic staff and students; institutional orientation, about institutional purpose and journey, past and future; and, student related performance measures.

Chapter 5, Discussion and Evaluation, serves to locate the findings in the context of the literature. As the chapter develops, relationships between themes, and links and patterns in the data are revealed and examined. Specifically, in this chapter, advice for university managers is presented based on the patterns of participant response and their relationship to the broad research questions. There is also consideration of the potential contribution of the study to management practice in higher education.

Chapter 6, Conclusions, considers the extent to which the study achieves its aim and objectives, and whether and how the research questions have been answered. A possible direction for further research is also considered here.

2. Chapter 2 – Literature Review

2. 1. Introduction

2.1.1. Context and background

Universities in the UK are complex and diverse organisations, with most of them reliant to a greater or lesser extent on a mix of direct grants, other public funding such as from research councils or the NHS, student fees, and other charitable and commercial income. The mix varies between institutions; between research-intensive universities and others; between larger and smaller institutions; and between the nations of the UK (Grant-Thornton, 2014). Contrary to expectations about the exposure of the sector following the financial crash of 2008 (Shattock, 2010), recent reports suggest that, overall, the sector is in reasonable financial health (Grant Thornton, 2014). Not all institutions, however, could be said to be in robust health and there are challenges just over the horizon given continuing uncertainties on both income and costs (Havergal and Morgan, 2015).

A past Chairman of the Center for Research in Management at the University of California, Berkeley, could have been writing about UK universities today when he said,

“In these difficult circumstances, it will not be surprising if the first aim of institutional management is to find a strategy simply to survive.”

(Balderston, 1974, page 103)

Financial performance is likely to form at least part of any institution’s success criteria and universities do appear still to be following Balderston’s (1974) advice and trying to achieve a better understanding of their costs and controlling these in a systematic and strategic way (Grant Thornton, 2014).

Concern with managing the costs of higher education has a long history in the UK. Managing costs through efficiency savings, however, came to

sector-wide prominence following the publication of the Report of the Steering Committee for Efficiency Studies in Universities (The Jarratt Report) (CVCP, 1985). The report identified a number of funding challenges facing UK higher education. These included, salary settlements above the rate of inflation, incremental drift, the real costs of books and other commodities rising at a faster rate than university income, and VAT and National Insurance changes not compensated for in grant increases. The report concluded that,

“It is in the planning and use of resources that universities have the greatest opportunity to improve their efficiency and effectiveness.”
(CVCP, 1985, p16)

The Jarratt Report’s prescription was to improve university effectiveness through an efficiency drive and a concentration on value for money. Universities would be expected to generate a greater proportion of their income from non-governmental resources. Research excellence would be rewarded through funding mechanisms, and teaching paid for by formulaic teaching grants (CVCP, 1985).

More recently, the conclusion of the interim report of the New Joint Negotiating Committee for Higher Education Staff (New JNCHES) Sustainability Issues Working Group was that the financial health of the university sector was less robust in 2011 than it had been in 2008, with the outlook being even more challenging (New JNCHES, 2011). While there was some evidence of a recovery in 2012-13, the outlook remains uncertain (Havergal and Morgan, 2015; Grant Thornton, 2014).

It has been noted already that Universities UK (UUK) established an ‘Efficiency and Modernisation Task Group’ and that efficiency, effectiveness and value for money are at the core of the current relationship between universities and governments in the UK. This message has been reinforced in UUK’s most recent report on efficiency which makes it clear that the drive for efficiency is for the long term, not just during the period of austerity following the financial crisis of 2008 (UUK, 2015). The divergence in funding

mechanisms and the introduction of fees in parts of the UK has not yet fundamentally changed the direction of this relationship, though the expressed policy priorities of governments may vary considerably between England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (Simkins, 2014). This context contributes to a complex and demanding terrain for university managers to navigate.

2.1.2. Introduction to Chapter 2

This chapter presents a critical review of relevant literature drawn from a wide range of disciplinary areas, including the fields of Economics, Education, Management, Marketing, Politics, Public Administration, Quality Management, and Sociology. Given the focus of the study on the impact of management in universities, literature from higher education (HE) specific journals has been utilised, though not exclusively, including from such specialist fields as HE Management, HE Marketing, HE Policy, and HE Quality.

Different disciplinary areas have distinct literatures. These are not just differentiated by the topics they cover or by the perspectives they take. They have different philosophical backgrounds, articulate a different purpose, and are built on different taken-for-granted assumptions. They also represent different models as to what can and should be written about. The lens through which each discipline examines the higher education sector provides a distinctive, though always partial, picture that leads to overlaps and blank spots. There are occasions when it is apparent that authors in a tradition are unaware of, or choose to ignore, the literature in another tradition within the same disciplinary field. For example, in the field of 'organisation and management' research different authors have taken irreconcilable positions in the same year on what is or is not the dominant paradigm in the discipline (Reed, 2005; Contu and Wilmott, 2005). This variety of literatures, and the tensions within them, creates some challenges in crafting and delivering a review that does justice to the different perspectives, presents a coherent and credible picture, and balances breadth and depth.

The literature review is presented in five main sections. Section 1 provides some context, background and a general introduction to the chapter. Section 2 provides an overview of how issues such as efficiency, effectiveness, and quality have been addressed in a university context. Some definition of terms is presented in this section, and we begin to examine how these are contested notions in higher education. Even before the banking crisis of 2008 and the subsequent financial crash, interest in understanding the cost and cost-effectiveness of higher education had grown, and three dimensions by which cost-effectiveness in universities can be evaluated had been proposed (Cohen and Nachmias, 2006). These dimensions provide a useful organising framework for the early part of the chapter. The first of these dimensions is *efficiency*, measured in terms of time and money. The second dimension is *quality*, which refers to the quality of teaching and learning. While efficiency and quality might appear to be objective, technical measures, things are not entirely straightforward. In this section, as a link between *efficiency* and *quality*, we also examine how the concept of *effectiveness* has been applied in higher education, and consider the relationships between efficiency, effectiveness and quality and notions such as value for money.

The third dimension of Cohen and Nachmias' (2006) framework is *affect*, which relates to student or customer satisfaction and to other abstract concepts such as standing or prestige. This provides the core of Section 3, which also explores further the notion of quality as user-defined rather than as an objective measure. This discussion takes us into areas that are contested from within HE and beyond. In particular, questions are raised about the concept of students as customers. Related themes such as consumerism, marketization and globalisation in higher education are examined.

Section 4 considers the evolution of public sector administration and management. The route from 'public administration' to 'new public management' and 'new managerialism' is traced, and the terms defined. Consideration is then given to how this impacts on the higher education

sector. In Section 5 the challenges facing higher education managers are revisited and attention is paid to how management is acting in such circumstances. It is in this section that an attempt is made to reconcile different perspectives in the context of management practice. The chapter finishes with a brief summary and identifies key themes drawn from the literature.

2.2. Efficiency, effectiveness and quality

If the relationship between the higher education sector and governments in the UK tends to be focussed on 'efficiency, effectiveness and value for money' (UUK, 2011; UUK, 2013) it is worth exploring how these concepts have been applied in higher education. Assertions have been made as to the efficiency of the university sector in the UK (UUK, 2013). This is by no means universally accepted, and the extent to which a university education is effective and represents 'value for money' has also been questioned (Barber, Donnelly and Rizvi, 2013).

This section begins by defining efficiency and examining the variety of approaches that have been applied to measuring efficiency in universities, and findings and limitations are considered. Attention is paid to the impact the concept of efficiency might have at the level of the individual academic as well as the institution. Attention then shifts to the means that have been applied to increase efficiency, including the application of 'lean' management approaches. The concept of effectiveness, and how it has been used in higher education, is then assessed. The section also provides a brief discussion of the use of technology in learning, in the context of the debate about efficiency and effectiveness, as this helps illustrate some of the real and conceptual difficulties.

The section continues by probing what 'quality' means in the context of Higher Education. There is some exploration of how service-encounter models of quality have been applied to the higher education setting, and their applicability is challenged. Finally, some of the tensions that might present in

trying to achieve organisational effectiveness are examined, as are indicators that suggest downsizing in universities to cut costs carries potential risk.

2.2.1. Efficiency

Measures of economic efficiency are concerned with the relationship between the resources applied and the outputs achieved. In simple terms, efficiency is about minimising inputs and maximising outputs. Efficiency is not a single concept, however, and studies differentiate between *technical efficiency*, which relates to closeness to the minimum predicted cost (Johnes, 2009; Palmer and Torgerson, 1999); *productive efficiency*, which is about achieving the greatest output for a given cost, or achieving the desired outcome at the lowest cost; *allocative efficiency*, which is about the (socially) right distribution of outcomes and outputs for a given cost (Palmer and Torgerson, 1999); and *economic (overall) efficiency* (Horne and Hu, 2008).

Higher education may appear to offer a rich environment for understanding institutional efficiency (Agasisti and Johnes, 2010). Measuring it, however, is not a straightforward task (Horne and Hu, 2008; Johnes, 2006a; Kosor, 2013; Taylor, 2001). Universities are multifaceted organisations, with distinctive internal organisational structures that map on to different financial and governance frameworks. The university sector is characterised by complex and multiple inputs and outputs, and the analytical technique adopted to measure efficiency leads to different results (Johnes, 2006b). The indicators on cost and profitability that are available to private sector firms are also largely absent from universities (Oldfield and Barron, 2000). While common reporting requirements through Higher Education Statistics Agency are intended to provide comparability between institutions this may be illusory. The focus on monitoring key performance indicators, and better understanding of the relationship between costs and activity across the sector through consistent and comparable reporting and analysis, may change that somewhat (HEFCE, 2015; Grant Thornton, 2014). The level of analysis of economic studies also impacts on the conclusions that can be

drawn, and literature drawing on studies relating to institutional, departmental and teaching delivery levels is considered here.

It is useful to start with how efficiency has been measured and to consider what these studies have uncovered. Generally, studies of UK universities suggest they are remarkably efficient, with evidence of significant growth in productivity in recent years (UUK, 2011). Essentially this means more students go through the system annually without a proportionate increase in the available resource. Deeper analysis reveals, however, that where improved efficiency is found, it has generally been driven by technological innovation and that technical efficiency is stagnant or decreasing (Johnes, 2009). Using DEA (data envelopment analysis) and MLM (multilevel modelling) to assess the efficiency of UK universities, Johnes (2006b) found no significant difference at an institutional level, but demonstrated variation across departments both in and between universities. A glance at the distribution of subject-based costs as calculated through TRAC (T) (Transparent Approach to Costing for Teaching) demonstrates continuing wide variations (HEFCE, 2012). Johnes (2006a) also used DEA to determine whether overall efficiency scores represent the efforts of the students or the efficiency of the department.

Stochastic frontier analysis (SFA) has been used to assess the relative cost and technical efficiency of Australian universities over the period 1995 – 2002. Wide variation between universities was found and it was suggested there is some room for improvement. The findings come with a warning, however about drawing too firm a conclusion given the changing funding circumstances most universities faced over the period (Horne and Hu, 2008). Horne and Hu (2008, p268) suggest it might be difficult for external agencies, including government, to impose efficiency on universities while they retain significant autonomy over internal decision-making.

Similarly, a “frontier cost function” approach has been used to assess the actual and relative efficiency of universities receiving varying degrees of state funding in the United States (Robst, 2001). Frontier estimation calculates the

minimum cost for a given output, and is comparable to technical efficiency. The difference between the predicted minimum cost and the actual cost can be used to compare relative efficiency. The study focuses on changes in efficiency within an institution over a short time period, as it was argued these are unlikely to be linked to quality. No relationship was found between the proportions of funds an institution receives from the state and efficiency, but the scale of reduction in funding did impact on efficiency. Universities that suffered a larger drop in state funding were found to be less efficient than those that suffered a smaller reduction (Robst, 2001).

In an examination of the relative efficiency of Italian universities using a stochastic frontier model, regional and inter-institutional differences were identified. It was particularly noted that there were some strikingly inefficient outliers in an otherwise reasonably efficient system. It was suggested that there is a strong indication that some Italian universities are too big and have “exhausted scale and scope economies” (Agasisti and Johnes, 2010, p1374). An Australian study, however, found no clear relationship between size and efficiency in universities, and questioned the received wisdom that larger universities will inevitably be more efficient (Patterson, 2000). The underlying drivers may be complex, but might include the high costs of maintaining a large organisation. The study also suggests that mergers do not necessarily lead to economies of scale, and usually do not lead to economies of scope. Recent data suggests that, in the UK, smaller specialist institutions have better control of staff costs (Grant Thornton, 2014). Optimum size then is likely to be institution specific, and will depend on the mix of subject disciplines, the balance between research and teaching, and location factors (Patterson, 2000).

Kempkes and Pohl (2008) tried to unravel the determinants of efficiency rather than inefficiency in the context of a changing German HE system. Findings of this econometric study suggest that university autonomy is positively correlated with efficiency, whereas universities operating under a more restrictive regulatory regime are more likely to be inefficient. This may have implications for the UK, where autonomy is asserted by the university

sector, but governments increasingly apply accountability measures. A number of limitations to the study are acknowledged. Firstly, it cannot explain the mechanisms linking more liberal regimes with increased efficiency. Secondly, there is a need to consider outputs as well as inputs – as indicators of teaching and research quality. It is also suggested that institutions should be followed over a longer period of time (Kempkes and Pohl, 2008).

Counter-evidence suggesting a positive impact of governmental (state) oversight on cost-efficiency was provided by a study focussed on the public university sector in the US (Robst, 2001). In a study of not-for-profit higher education institutions, the assumption that externally imposed restrictions on resource allocation by a donor causes 'allocative inefficiency' was found to be unsupported (Mensah and Werner, 2003). Comparing the level of financial flexibility that an institution has, higher flexibility was associated with reduced efficiency (Mensah and Werner, 2003). These findings might provide a challenge to notions of institutional autonomy and devolved management accountability. Again there are implications for the relationship between institutions and governments in the UK. Limitations relating to sample size, and the reliance on non-validated measures of academic quality are acknowledged.

Having considered some issues relating to efficiency at the institutional level there is value in considering what it might mean in terms of the behaviour of the individual academic. Taylor (2001) adopted Leibenstein's (1978) 'X-efficiency model' as the theoretical basis for examining the impact of research performance indicators (PIs) in Australian universities. She suggested that there is little empirical evidence for the impact of PIs on efficiency, and little impact on the behaviour of academics. X-efficiency theory (Leibenstein, 1978) proposes that costs in an organisation will tend to rise if unchecked. A variety of factors are assumed to impact, but employee effort in amount and focus is seen as central to this phenomenon. X-inefficiency is the difference between minimum and actual cost, and will tend to rise where the Effort Responsibility Consequences (ERC) are relatively

loose (Leibenstein, 1978, p331). Leibenstein (1978) believed this effect is likely to be observable in public sector organisations where increased funding did not translate into proportionately increased outputs, which would have implications for universities. X-efficiency theory assumes there is an optimal pressure that can be applied to improve performance, after which performance tails off (Leibenstein, 1978). Most academics reported feeling that additional pressure was being applied, particularly to publish and to apply for external funding for research. Taylor (2001) found that academics did change behaviour, and there was an increase in the number of outputs. She does, however, suggest that there may be trade-offs for this increase by a decline in other activities and some balancing in the pursuit of self-interest. There is a risk that those areas of university activity for which PIs are not articulated, even where important, may be ignored. She suggests that there would be benefit in ensuring that a collegiate approach is taken to developing and delivering against PIs to better align personal and institutional priorities (Taylor, 2001).

PIs are not the only approach to improving efficiency in higher education. Interest has been shown in process improvement methods such as 'lean'. This derives from the Toyota motorcar production system, which demonstrated considerable efficiencies over traditional mass-production systems Comm and Mathaisel (2005). In a preliminary study of 18 US universities intended to evaluate the implementation of 'lean' sustainability practices, it was concluded that, while there was clear evidence of attempts to ensure the efficient utilisation of resources, this was essentially focussed on short term cost savings rather than being truly 'lean' initiatives. While there is continuing interest in how universities and colleges can reduce costs and maintain or improve learning for students, however, there is some evidence that,

“The application of 'lean' sustainability to higher education is faced with a unique problem. There are no commonly agreed upon metrics for institutional efficiency, and especially lacking is a metric for student

learning and teaching effectiveness.” (Comm and Mathaisel, 2008, p184)

The potential contribution ‘lean’ approaches can make to improve efficiency is acknowledged, but the readiness of the public sector to adopt ‘lean’ has been challenged. Radnor and Walley (2008) specifically caution against using the ‘tools of lean’ without adopting the underlying philosophy.

Increased productivity through growth, an increased output per unit of input, is sometimes promulgated as an alternative to cost saving. In higher education some of the solution is seen as resting at least in part with technology-enhanced learning (TEL), applied strategically where it can make most difference. The advice given is to focus TEL on high volume classes where individual student contact with lecturers may be most limited, rather than on high contact low volume classes (Twigg, 1999). MOOCS (Massive Open Online Courses) are a relatively recent, extreme expression of this (Daniel, 2012). Twigg (1999) engages in a bit of myth busting around the relationships between costs, technology and quality. Quality is assumed to be cost-dependent, technology is assumed to add cost, and technology is assumed to threaten quality. Twigg (1999) argues that these are all possible but not necessary relationships. She advises that a strong institutional commitment to cost-control and quality, and a strategic approach to innovation, is essential to achieving benefits from TEL.

Having been commonplace in the private sector, downsizing has become increasingly prevalent in the public sector as a way to achieve efficiency. This has been especially the case in the university sector in the US and Canada (Applebaum and Patton, 2002). Applebaum and Patton are not convinced it is a reliable approach, with the risk that in downsizing an organisation loses sight of its primary purpose. Downsizing in universities is usually intended to reduce or remove debt rather than to maximise profit, and there are particular difficulties as decision-making is often complex and prolonged. The bulk of expenditure is on salaries and these are traditionally last to be cut. The activity of downsizing is not always linked to maintaining

the university's primary purpose and goals, with the risk that efficiency becomes an end in itself. Three main types of downsizing are identified (Applebaum and Patton, 2002). 'Retrenchment', where the scope of the business is maintained and the scale maintained or even enhanced. 'Downscaling', where scope is maintained and scale is reduced, and 'downscoping', where the scope and range of product lines is reduced and effort concentrated. In the university context this may be a reduction in the number of subject or discipline areas accommodated. Any approach to downsizing can be tackled through a combination of workforce reduction; redesign of work processes; or through broader culturally focussed continuous improvement programmes (Applebaum and Patton, 2002).

Measuring efficiency in universities is considered by some to be beyond the scope of the commonly applied measures, including some of those described here, due to a failure to apply clear and consistent definitions and take full account of the complexity of inputs and outcomes (Kosor, 2013). This might suggest that 'efficiency' is sometimes being used in a figurative, rather than a technical, sense. In the context of the relationship between the university sector and the government this is often framed as efficiency 'savings' – efficiency through cutting costs – rather than growing returns. Having covered some of the approaches to measuring efficiency and enhancing efficiency at the process, educational input and institutional level we now move on to consider what effectiveness might mean in the context of higher education, and what the relationship is between efficiency and effectiveness.

2.2.2. Effectiveness

Effectiveness in higher education can also be considered at a number of levels, from the individual teaching interaction, through programmes of study, to university and sectoral level. The focus could be on different outcome measures, for example, student success to institutional sustainability and resilience. There is also a question over who decides what is effective and whether it is effective or not. This starts to get to the heart of the function and purpose of higher education.

Universities are likely to test their effectiveness against their strategic intent; governments will be focussed on their policy priorities – such as widening participation, skills and employability. Students, perhaps, will be most concerned in judging against their experience of being a student and the award they achieve. Arguably, newspaper league tables, for example the Guardian University Guide (Guardian, 2014), also provide a measure of the relative effectiveness of universities in the UK across a range of factors such as teaching and research performance, graduate employability, that are defined by the newspaper from a consumer perspective.

There are suggestions that the real classroom experience of students does not match the idealistic notions sometimes used in describing the nature and volume of learning-focused interactions in modern higher education (Gillie, 1999). Robertson et al (2005) found that students rated the quality of web-based teaching and learning as highly as or better than traditional classroom instruction. In an attempt to test the value of 'traditional' teaching in an otherwise distance programme, Gillie (1999) examined the contribution that attendance at summer school made to the final marks of students taking an Open University summer school. With access to a rich data set for every student, he was able to compare the contribution of a number of internal and external factors. He also elicited the assumptions that academic staff made about the efficacy of summer school. These assumptions significantly overestimated the impact of summer school on student performance. The conclusion is drawn that relying on subjective assumptions about the impact of particular inputs on outputs may prove unhelpful, and that knowing the value of outputs as well as the cost of inputs is likely to be important in evaluating efficiency and effectiveness (Gillie, 1999).

It has been argued that high quality education is based on a relationship that cannot be developed at a distance. This relationship needs both “a low teacher student ratio and a significant interaction between teacher and student” (Noble, 2002, p5). This argument pits efficiency against pedagogy, and contends that obsessive focus on increasing efficiency will reduce the effectiveness of the education provided (Kenny, 2008). Noble (2002) sees

distance learning as an integral part of the marketization and commodification of higher education, which requires the breaking up of learning into manageable and affordable chunks in such a manner that ultimately it leads to deskilling of the academic workforce. He identified deliberate market manipulation by the US government in making the US Defense Department the main customer for the distance learning provision of US universities, and argued the military played this kind of role before in relation to other sectors. Noble (2002)

Organisational effectiveness is a slippery concept, particularly in the sense that most definitions include an element of continuous renewal of goals and purpose to meet ever changing external requirements. Ashraf and Kadir (2012) have reviewed models of organisational effectiveness that have been applied to higher education, in various international settings, from the late 1970s to the present. From this it is evident that there is no one definitive approach to assessing effectiveness. Measures include various elements of student outcome factors, including satisfaction; faculty factors, including staff satisfaction and quality of outputs; and organisational health. They conclude that Cameron's (1978) model continues to serve well and is comparable to other models (Ashraf and Kadir, 2012). Building on earlier work, including the 1978 model, Cameron and Smart (1998) reviewed the financial trends and effectiveness of 334 US colleges and universities. They evaluated the comparative effectiveness of institutions across nine dimensions, spread over three domains, and ordered them into three categories of high, medium and low performance. They concluded that a reduction in revenue did not inevitably lead to a reduction in effectiveness, with management behaviour a much stronger predictor of the likely outcome (Cameron and Smart, 1998). A number of indicators, referred to as the 'dirty dozen' (see Table 1, below) were shown to be associated with reduced institutional effectiveness or performance.

Characteristics of institutional decline	
Centralization	Decision-making is pulled toward the top of the organization. Less power is shared.
No long-term planning	Long-term planning is neglected. The focus is on immediacy.
Innovation curtailed	Trial and error learning is curtailed. Less tolerance for risk and failure associated with creative activity.
Scapegoating of leaders and managers	Leadership anaemia occurs as leaders are scapegoated, priorities are unclear, and a siege mentality prevails.
Resistance to change	Conservatism and the threat-rigidity response lead to 'hunkering down' and a protectionist stance.
Lack of teamwork	Individualism and disconnectedness make teamwork difficult. Individuals resist cooperation and involvement.
Low morale	Infighting and a 'mean mood' permeate the organization.
Restricted communication	Only good news is passed upward. Information is not widely shared because of fear and distrust.
Interest groups are more vocal	Special-interest groups organize and become more vocal. The climate becomes more politicized
Loss of leadership credibility	Leaders lose the confidence of subordinates and distrust among organization members increases.
Non-prioritised cuts	Across-the-board cutbacks are used to ameliorate conflict. Priorities are not obvious.
Conflict	Fewer resources result in internal competition and fighting for a smaller pie. Restricted communication with only good news is passed upward. Information is not widely shared.

Table 1: Characteristics of institutional decline.

This is consistent with Shattock's (2003) view on the limits on what can be achieved by management in a university context.

“Successful universities are successful primarily because of their teaching and research, not because of their management, but good management can over time provide the conditions in which teaching and research can flourish, just as, more usually, poor management can undermine teaching and research and precipitate institutional decline.” (Shattock, 2003, p ix)

Poorly performing institutions might not show all of these characteristics and, conversely, the characteristics might become evident before decline is evident. Effective downsizing depends on planning, understanding all the costs, linking service change and workforce reductions with process redesign, and communicating all of this effectively (Applebaum and Patton, 2002).

If achieving organisational effectiveness were easy, it wouldn't be too big a step to imagine that Cameron and Smart's (1998) 'dirty dozen' could be readily avoided. McCullough and Faught (2014), however, have developed a model of 'paradoxes of organisational effectiveness', based on points of tension that managers need to be alert to. Essentially the model is about moving from static approaches to achieving organisational effectiveness, in terms of structure process and outcomes, to more fluid, flexible and adaptive approaches.

This is illustrated in Table 2, which is included on page 24, over.

Paradoxes of organisational effectiveness: points of tension		
<i>External processes</i>		
Organisational self-absorption	v	Contextual identification
Organisational focus on 'avoidance of death'	v	Pursuit of life
<i>Goals</i>		
Backward-looking view of effectiveness	v	Forward-looking (future-oriented)
Cost-avoidance	v	Possibility exploration
Output maintenance	v	Output innovation
<i>Internal processes</i>		
Process control	v	Process flexibility
Structural integrity	v	Structural adaptability
<i>Human relations</i>		
Authority-relationship enforcement	v	Authority-relationship extension
Role definition	v	Role examination
Performance rigidity	v	Performance expression
Individual self-absorption	v	Organizational citizenship

Table 2: Paradoxes of Organisational Effectiveness (McCullough and Faught, 2014, p264)

We have heard earlier that value for money is at the heart of government relationships with universities, and it is perhaps in the relationship between

effectiveness and efficiency that value for money can be found. This is explicit, for example, in the 'Letter of Guidance' issued by the Cabinet secretary to the SFC (SG, 2013) in Scotland, and in the relationship between universities and HEFCE in England (HEFCE, 2015). In assessing 'value for money', the National Audit Office links three criteria, set against the delivery of intended outcomes. These are: economy – spending less; efficiency – spending well; and effectiveness – spending wisely (NAO, 2015). HEFCE, who use a similar definition, acknowledge that,

“Some elements may be subjective, difficult to measure, intangible and misunderstood. Judgement is therefore required when considering whether VFM has been satisfactorily achieved or not. It not only measures the cost of goods and services, but also takes account of the mix of quality, cost, resource use, fitness for purpose, timeliness, and convenience to judge whether or not, together, they constitute good value.” (HEFCE, 2015)

There is something cyclical in defining value for money in terms of efficiency and effectiveness. Both term can be defined in a technical sense, but this is rarely how these terms are used in a policy context, or in the exhortations of governments or their agencies.

In this section, it has been suggested that estimations of the effectiveness or value for money of higher education, or any individual university, will depend on the standpoint of the observer. Judgments of effectiveness are contested, and derive from different perspectives on the purpose of the university and the contribution of higher education in society.

Institutions, governments, and students have different and competing priorities, and the purpose of higher education is contested as much from within the academy as out (Collini, 2012; Alvesson, 2013; CDBU, 2015; Naidoo, Shankar and Veer, 2011; Ryan and Guthrie, 2014). Consideration has been given to the relationship between efficiency and effectiveness in the use of technology in teaching and learning, and of the relative effectiveness of distance learning. Some of the pitfalls that might face

institutions that are downsizing have been examined, and it is not difficult to conceive of a relationship between the 'dirty dozen' indicators of institutional decline, declining quality and student or customer satisfaction, which are the focus of the next section.

2.2.3. Quality

This section briefly tracks the journey in higher education from the notion of quality as determined by the supplier, to an externally applied measure or standard, through the concept of service quality, to the notion of customer satisfaction as the indicator of quality. In the context of this study, quality, and how it is evaluated, is important because it affects and perhaps drives the behaviour of university managers and academics (Jarvis, 2014; Lucas, 2014).

UK universities have relatively sophisticated quality controls in place (Brown, 2010). Many of these are longstanding, involve academic judgement, and usually include some element of peer review. These internal measures, along with some form of external audit, are required to satisfy external agencies such as the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), discipline related professional organisations, and funding bodies. While individual UK HE institutions have considerable autonomy in the design and application of their quality assurance processes, these must be consistent with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (QAA, 2015). While Jamieson and Naidoo (2004) caution against confusing quality and quality assurance, there are multiple perspectives on quality in higher education and it is an elusive concept defying easy definition. In a discussion about the international quality improvement agenda, Quintanilla (1999) defined quality as both objective and measurable, but went on to caution that it should not be seen as a fixed attribute as universities need to adapt to changing expectations. Quality, in that case, should be a driver for change in circumstances where the relationship between academic disciplines and the organisation of knowledge is changing (Quintanilla, 1999).

The development of the quality agenda cannot be separated from the wider contextual forces affecting higher education (Stodnick and Rogers, 2008). Concern with quality is growing as universities face increasingly competitive markets for students and research income. Changes in funding and increasing competition are making universities behave in more business-like ways. The quality agenda in higher education is developing to serve the interests of specific stakeholders and as part of a wider agenda of public sector reform. In this scenario, quality is increasingly customer defined rather than based on any objective technical measure (Eagle and Brennan, 2007). Quality therefore tends to be more frequently defined in terms of customer service and meeting stakeholder expectations.

Taking a broader and historical perspective, the change from firms having an internal focus on quality control and technical reliability to an external focus on customer and consumers is tracked by Cochoy (2005). He places this development in the post-war reconstruction effort by America and Japan, particularly placing the development of quality as a management process as emerging in this environment –principally through the work of quality specialist William E Deming. The link between quality and marketization is illustrated by the following quote.

“Quality was no longer merely a means of technically controlling inter-industrial orders, but became a commercial argument in conquering markets.” (Cochoy, 2005, pS48)

The same trends can be identified in higher education. Redmond et al (2008) accept quality as fundamental to higher education, arguing that it needs to be designed in rather than relying on an inspection model. They go on to suggest that continuous improvement should be embedded in the system.

Higher education is regarded by some as a distinctive service industry, a ‘pure service’, with a multiplicity of stakeholders (Redmond et al, 2008). Measures of service quality that were developed in the for-profit service

sector have been adopted by the public sector, including higher education (George, 2007; Meirovich and Romar, 2006). Fountain (2001) identifies three main characteristics of services: intangibility; production, delivery and consumption can be simultaneous; and customers are directly involved – as co-producers – in the service encounter. These characteristics make any evaluation of quality highly subjective. Additionally, customers have difficulty in separating the quality of a service from the service encounter (Fountain, 2001).

Pariseau and McDaniel (1997), in a study limited to two small US business schools, tested a service quality model in higher education. They argued that service quality is a competitive priority and that service quality is customer defined. Their study suggested that student expectations were not met at two business schools, and student expectations were not well understood by faculty. Questions have been raised over the value of measuring customer expectations rather than performance or outcomes (Oldfield and Baron, 2000). Johnston (1995) acknowledged some of the service quality debates including those relating to the difference between service quality and satisfaction and the shift to performance measures of service quality rather than the expectation-perception gap favoured by Parasuraman et al (1985).

Voon (2006) proposes ‘market orientation’ as the appropriate response to the challenges facing higher education. The study found that the level of market orientation of universities was related to the service quality delivered and that service quality directly impacted on student satisfaction. Yeo (2009) suggested that support services, overall customer orientation and the quality of course design have a direct impact on the total experience of students. Service quality measures have also been used to test the “quality of the classroom encounter” (Stodnick and Rogers, 2008, p116). This is an area that some commentators have suggested should be immune from this type of intrusion (Meirovich and Romar 2006). Expectations, perceived service and performance can vary over time and service quality measures have been

criticised as unable to take account of service encounters that are spread or repeated over a longer timescale (O'Neill, 2003).

This focus on service quality is often linked to suggestions that management action is key to achieving quality (Brochado, 2009). This, however, is a contested notion. Though managers may be able to set the conditions in which quality can thrive, Yorke (2000) cautions against accepting definitions of quality in higher education that are based on what an 'evaluative state' (Neave, 1998) chooses to measure. Yorke is not arguing against 'quality' in higher education, indeed he suggests that "quality as a moral purpose" may be an underpinning requirement of a culture that aspires to the best outcomes. Yorke points to the role that leaders and managers can play in supporting such a positive quality culture, through for example encouraging a collegiate, reflective approach, and draws on Cameron and Sharp (1998) in considering what might go wrong, linking internal dysfunction to the lack of a quality culture (Yorke, 2000, p21).

Voss et al (2007) draw on service literature as the conceptual basis of quality. They focus on the comparison between customer expectations of service quality and their perception of the service received. They adopt a 'means-end chain approach' that attempts to map the cognitive framework linking the means (products and services) with desired outcomes (and values and beliefs) of the consumer. They regard higher education as a 'pure' service with the service experience comprising wholly or largely of direct personal contact. Students' expectations are supported as an appropriate driver of academic behaviour and the competitive environment in recruiting students drives the quality agenda. Voss et al (2007) take an instrumental view of university education. They argue that students want good teaching, so they can pass examinations, so they can enter chosen professions or careers. Though the study is limited in scale, it does not tend to support the notion that students do not take responsibility for their contribution to learning, but they do have fairly clear expectations of academics (Voss et al, 2007).

The applicability of Total Quality Management (TQM) to the instructional process has been contested (Meirovich and Romar, 2006) on the basis that the duality of student roles (customer and 'grade-seeker'), and the duality of instructor roles (supplier and 'retention-seeker' willing to keep students at all costs) undermine any effort to apply TQM. They claim empirical support for this duality and associated behaviours (Meirovich and Romar, 2006) but Eagle and Brennan (2007) suggest there is no evidence to support any relationship between grades and the 'student as customer' and suggest that this is just one of the ways in which the debate has become polarised. Meirovich and Romar (2006) suggest student evaluations of teaching are inappropriate as part of TQM, and want to apply a statistical device to deal with that part of the evaluation that comes from 'student as grade-seeker.' It could be argued that this looks a touch defensive and self-serving.

The student as customer debate is one we will turn to in a more detailed way in the next section, but it is worth briefly exploring the relationship between the concepts of 'quality' and 'customer' here. It has been argued that the concept of the customer has been constructed through technical, legal, marketing and other devices (Cochoy, 2005). These are the very devices through which the concept of quality has developed. The development of the customer, in France and US mainly, is tracked through legislative change and standardisation to the emergence of the 'quality customer' (Cochoy, 2005, pS46) in the late 20th century.

According to Cochoy (2005), the most influential role of the customer is as a rhetorical device. It has an impact on policy, markets and marketing, and management. The name of the customer is called on to legitimise government actions and managerial authority. There is evidence of this effect in briefing papers from the cabinet office on public service reform and the role of the state in the UK (Cabinet Office, 2002, 2007). In the US, 'Executive Order 12862: Setting Customer Service Standards' (Clinton, 1993) explicitly required agencies to identify customers then establish their preferences and respond appropriately. Specifically service standards were to be set and benchmarked "against the best in business."

Fountain (2001) suggests that the setting of service standards and benchmarking against other provision, without any reference to price is untenable. Brown (2010) also argues that comparability of degrees may be an unrealistic pipedream where inputs, intensity of tuition, access to funding and resources available across the system are so diverse. If no meaningful objective measures of quality are readily available, and inputs vary greatly, it is worth examining whether student or customer satisfaction bears fruit. This is the focus of the next section.

This section has traced the development of concepts of quality, including in HE, and the move from internally defined or expert-defined to 'customer'-defined. It has also touched briefly on the notion of quality as a marketing device. In parallel, a growing tendency to describe HE as a service industry has been identified, amenable to the same measures of quality as any service industry. While this is contested, from within and outwith the academy, it does have some traction. Some specific models have been considered, including how these have been applied to HE. The notion of student, or customer, defined quality leads us to an examination of student and customer satisfaction in the next section.

2.3. The student relationship

In this section factors influencing customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction, and ways these have been measured, are considered. This leads into a debate about the student as customers and consumers. Specifically the extent to which the student is a real, metaphorical or rhetorical customer is examined, and the appropriateness of applying a customer concept in higher education is considered. The section closes with a consideration of the impact of consumerism on higher education, and changing concepts of the student relationship.

A competitive marketplace for goods or services demands the adoption of a market orientation by providers (DeShields et al, 2005) and drives organisations to focus on providing customer satisfaction (Munteanu et al, 2010). Given the challenges facing universities around the world, there has been considerable interest in customer satisfaction in higher education (DeShields et al, 2005; Douglas and McClelland, 2008; Gruber et al, 2010; Munteanu et al, 2010; Navarro et al, 2005). Research has focussed on factors that may impact on student satisfaction (DeShields et al, 2005; Munteanu et al, 2010), including the relationship between service quality and student satisfaction (Johnston, 1995; Douglas and McClelland, 2008).

Navarro et al (2005) argue that not all aspects of the university service processes have the same impact on student satisfaction. They suggest institutions might want to focus efforts on the quality of academic staff and the quality of teaching and learning processes for the best return. Athiyaman (1997) examined eight characteristics of the service relationship in higher education. These are: good teaching; staff availability; class sizes; recreational facilities; course content and level; library and computing services (Athiyaman, 1997, p532).

The considerable growth in the higher education sector has not reduced the pressure on individual institutions to improve recruitment and retention, and preserve market share in an increasingly competitive market. Having applied 'importance-performance analysis' to the study of the service factors leading to satisfaction for postgraduate students in a UK university, Angell et al (2008) acknowledge that the notion of the student as customer is contested, but come down clearly on one side of that debate.

“It is time for educational institutions to face two facts: that they are in a competitive battle for students, and students are customers.”

(Sines and Duckworth, 1994, p2, cited in Angell et al, 2008, p239)

Svensson and Wood (2007), however, consider the use of the customer metaphor as a thoroughly bad thing. They assert that students are not customers, and that,

“The customer metaphor is inappropriate to describe students’ relationship to universities.” (Svensson and Wood, 2007, p18)

Essentially they argue that students are not customers because a great deal is expected from the student contribution if they are to be successful, it is not simply a financial purchase transaction. Diefenbach (2009a) considers the notion of students as customers wrong but relatively harmless in the context of universities, suggesting it is ‘simply ridiculous’ (Diefenbach, 2009a, p896). He finds, however, customer-orientation in public services more generally to be pernicious and undermining of the citizen concept.

Eagle and Brennan (2007) believe that the debate as to whether students are customers or not is polarised and unhelpful in that a simplistic interpretation could have negative effect on students’ interests. Some of the assertions made in the debate can tend towards caricature rather than the real experience of students. A more sophisticated ‘student as customer’ concept can be helpful to students, managers and policy makers (Eagle and Brennan, 2007). Recognising the complexity of the student role in higher education, Gabbott et al (2002) choose to focus on student as ‘client’ of a professional service, and student as ‘product’. Gabbott et al (2002) assert that,

“As clients students are concerned with process, while as products, students are concerned with outcomes.” (Gabbott et al, 2002, p171)

This student as client model, however, has been criticised on the basis that academics have not traditionally adopted the equivalent role as a professional providing a direct service.

The concept of service-user as customer has been widely adopted by public sector managers, and at a surface level it is an appealing concept encapsulating a desire to serve the public (Fountain, 2001). She suggests, however, that it is an under-developed concept and the full implications are

perhaps unknown. Fountain argues that the replacement of 'citizen' and 'client' by 'customer' has an impact, which is likely to be negative, for less powerful consumers and "threatens political equality" (Fountain, 2001, p56). Even if it is simply a metaphor it becomes part of a particular discourse that will have impacts on understanding, beliefs and behaviours (Cochoy, 2005; George, 2007; Naidoo and Jamieson, 2005; Freeman and Thomas, 2005; Tight, 2013).

The purpose of private sector firms is to generate profit and satisfy shareholders. Customer satisfaction is a device that may help businesses grow through improved market share or profitability, but it is a means not an end (Fountain, 2001, p59), and there are examples of both excellent and really poor customer service from the private sector: reality does not always match the rhetoric. Fountain identifies two types of challenge in delivering public sector customer service, operational and political. The operational challenges include identifying the customer. Policy statements often assume this to be the direct recipient, but public services must also serve the public good, which might be in conflict. Fountain goes on to argue that,

"The absence of prices renders decisions regarding appropriate levels of service difficult." (Fountain, 2001, p71)

It is also argued that higher education has social and economic benefits beyond the individual recipient (Freeman and Thomas, 2005).

The political challenges for consumerism in the public sector include the potential to exacerbate inequalities, acceptable in a private sector where ability to pay can differentiate service received, but not usually acceptable as the basis for delivering public services. There may also be an illusion of choice where this is not in reality available to all. It also undermines the ethos of public service, of stewardship and altruism (Fountain, 2001, p70).

Consumerism tends also to be based on the assumption that ever increasing consumption is economically desirable. This notion is contested (Freeman and Thomas, 2005) even for the private sector, but does not stand up as the basis for operating public sector services on scarce resources. While

consumerism is often presented as a wholly negative concept, other perspectives on consumerism emphasise the regulatory and protective role consumerism can play for the vulnerable or poorly informed public service user. From either perspective there is usually little disagreement that public services should be responsive to the views of service users, but considerable differences on how that might be operationalized through customers (Jones and Needham, 2008).

We began this section by considering approaches to understanding customer and student satisfaction. This led to questioning the utility of the concept of 'student as customer' in higher education, and the tendency for opinions to become fixed and divergent. It has also taken us into the debate about the effect of consumerist influences on universities, including the marketization and commodification of higher education. The origins of these forces are examined in the next section.

2.4. Public administration to new managerialism

In this section, the origins of managerialism are examined and the relationship between new managerialism and New Public Management (NPM) are explored. The impact on higher education of wider public sector reform and the expression of managerialism in higher education are also considered. The effect on higher education of related forces, such as neo-liberalism, consumerism and globalisation are raised. Criticisms that New Public Management is doomed to fail, even by its own criteria, are also aired, and some initial consideration is given to what might follow NPM.

Taking a historical perspective, the development of public administration in the US can be traced through classical (from late 19th century) and neo-classical (post WWII) phases. The theoretical underpinnings are traced through 'public choice theory', which developed as a competitor to classical and neo-classical theory in public administration from the 1960s. Other emerging economic theories were also critical of classical and neo-classical approaches and provided an appropriate environment for change.

Underlying these theories is a conception of free will, individualism, a limited role for the state, and the assumption of deficiencies and inefficiencies in the administration and delivery of public services (Gruening, 2001). In parallel to the development of public administration, was a shift of focus from administration to management. This drew from private sector notions of management and leadership. This period also saw changes in management theory from 'rational or mechanistic' management styles and instruments to 'humanistic or organic' approaches, sometimes referred to as new managerialism (Gruening, 2001; Deem and Brehony, 2005).

The origins of New Public Management and new managerialism in the UK are located in the government of Margaret Thatcher in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Gruening, 2001). The government's approach to managing the public sector by appointing private sector bosses and imposing private sector management techniques illustrated this change from administration to management (Lapsley, 2009). In a paper that explores ideological notions of management, Deem and Brehony (2005) provide a useful distinction between 'New Public Management' and 'new managerialism,' differentiating between NPM as a "technical administrative orthodoxy" (Deem and Brehony, 2005, p220) and new managerialism as an ideological and political activity. Deem and Brehony (2005) maintain it is ideological in the Marxist sense of operating in the interests of a class or group, managers, and establishing or maintaining their power and dominance over other groups.

The characteristics of NPM include: budget cuts; privatisation; producer-provider split; contracting out (of provision of services); user charges; introduction of the customer concept; competition; increased management freedom; decentralisation; separation of politics from administration; performance measurement and audit; more sophisticated accounting; strategic planning; humanistic management and leadership; and large scale IT projects (Gruening, 2001, p18). NPM is more or less ubiquitous in the industrialised west and is becoming global. It applies to all types of public services, and has been adopted in its essentials by all major political parties in the UK, the US, and continental Europe (Diefenbach, 2009a).

Four main models of new managerialism have been suggested. These are, the 'efficiency drive' in which value for money is emphasised; 'downsizing and decentralisation' in which large organisational units are split into smaller units to improve their permeability to market forces; the 'excellence model' that places the customer – real or rhetorical - as the focus; and 'public service orientation', which is intended to reconcile the values of public service with managerial techniques of business and industry (Johnson and Deem, 2003), including such devices as Total Quality Management (Eagle and Brennan, 2007). In this final model, consumers tend to be considered at a collective rather than an individual level. In reality organisations are likely to display characteristics of a number, perhaps all of these models, dependent on its stage of development. Common to all will be a policy focus on efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery (Deem and Brehony, 2005, p220; Diefenbach, 2009) through the application of private sector management and accounting approaches. Four key features of this are identified: a reliance on external management consultants; computerised information management; compliance audit processes; and obsessive risk management (Lapsley, 2009).

The New Labour government, led by Tony Blair, continued with the reform of UK public services commenced under earlier, Conservative governments (Jamieson and Naidoo, 2004). Four main thrusts of public services reform were promoted as appropriate for an 'enabling' state. These were: increased marketization focused on delivering efficiency and service quality; top down performance management associated with regulation and an emphasis on targets; increased capacity and capability built through workforce redesign and leadership; and, service-users shaping the service from below thereby establishing the primacy of the customer (Cabinet Office, 2007, p32).

NPM has been justified through a discourse of epochal change, such as globalisation, and the inevitability of competition and funding pressures that portrays these as unavoidable, natural forces (Diefenbach, 2009a, p 895). He points to ethical changes that accompany the re-orientation of public services, and the negative impact of these on public sector employees. It is

also argued that globalisation undermines the relationship between the national economy and the geographical boundaries of the nation state, thereby lessening politicians' grip on national economies and leaving them to make an impact through reducing cost and increasing the efficiency of their public sector (Lapsley, 2009). The links between nation-states, national identity, national culture and the place of universities are loosened through marketization and globalisation. The purpose of cultural replication has been replaced in a post-modern world by the wholly instrumental purpose of economic generation and regeneration (Kwiek, 2005).

Johnson and Deem (2003) point to the recent collapse of the 'perceived autonomy' of universities, but it would seem that autonomy may have been more imagined and asserted than real, and lasted only so long as it suited government. In a confidential memo three weeks ahead of publication of the Robbins Report, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury and Paymaster General (1963) asked "Who should pay for higher education?" Ministers were advised to leave this issue completely open in any public examination. On university autonomy, the memo states that,

"It is also desirable to leave open for the time being the delicate issue of public accountability in the light of the proposal that the freedom at present enjoyed by the universities from investigation of their books by the Comptroller and Auditor-General should be extended to the other components of the new extended system of higher education." (Chief Secretary to the Treasury and Paymaster General, 1963, p3)

Kwiek (2005) identifies a trend towards the redefinition of education, and higher education particularly, as a private rather than a public good. Alongside this is a shift to payment directly by the student through fees or loans. While not universal, this pattern is evident in most nations of the UK, Canada, the US and Australia (Tight, 2013). The shift from an elite system to a mass system of higher education, and the associated expenditure, brought higher education firmly into the line of sight of policy-makers. The Jarratt Report (CVCP, 1985) helped establish executive rather than collegiate

decision-making in universities and, it is argued, promoted managerial values over academic values. More recently, in a keynote address to European Conference on Educational Research, Kwiek (2005) argued that the universities cannot but be affected by the wider, global pressures on the nation state, including globalisation, aging societies, consumerism and commodification.

It has been suggested that HE essentially has been swept along without any specific policy intent (Shattock, 2008) and in debates on shrinking public expenditure higher education has been rarely even a footnote (Kwiek, 2005). This can be tracked through the changing funding arrangements since the 1960s [UGC to 1989 – UFC to 1992 – the HEFCs, and in Scotland latterly the SFC] and their relationship to government and the sector. Deference to university autonomy evaporates in the 1980s under Margaret Thatcher’s conservative government and public sector reform started in this period continued under successive New Labour governments. The briefing developed for the Prime Minister’s Strategy Unit on the role of the state in delivering public services illuminates the priorities (Cabinet Office, 2007).

Deem (2007) reports the findings of an ESRC project established to,

“Examine the extent to which ‘new managerialism’ has permeated the management of UK universities.” (Deem, 2007, p1)

Some features of new managerialism were found – including funding regime changes, greater control over academic work and workloads, productivity pressures, performance management, and an increase in the number and proportion of managers. Acknowledging that new managerialism has been externally imposed, through funding and regulatory requirements, rather than internally generated, it is proposed that it does not reflect adherence to the ideology across the sector (Deem and Brehony, 2005). The main drivers for the academic manager are instead assessment of research and teaching quality, funding pressures, increasing student numbers. Three types of manager-academic are identified: career track, more prevalent in the post-92 sector; reluctant, in that they often have to abandon research to take on

managerial roles; and good citizen, usually towards the end of their career, and to give something back to colleagues and the institution (Deem and Brehony, 2005).

Further issues affecting higher education include, the change from an elite to a mass system; the development of international markets for HE; the imposition of quality assurance regimes; the development of competitive market between existing institutions; and, challenges from new entrants (Johnson and Deem, 2003, p290). These changes impact on academics, manager academics and, the culture of higher education. The notion of students as customers has implications for academics as professionals. A critical issue is that it appears to remove from universities the right to define what the relationship between an academic and a student should be (Johnson and Deem, 2003).

Jamieson and Naidoo (2004) refer to the “neo-liberal project”, suggesting a deliberate political act of government, but introduced through market as the mechanism rather than by government diktat. There are a series of linked elements. The imposition of fees positions students as customer-consumers, customer-consumers require choice, and therefore a competitive market is established. The market develops to be competitive on, at least some of, price, quality, and products. Government, through quality audit and satisfaction surveys such as the National Student Survey (NSS) and the Research Excellence Framework (REF), intervenes to protect consumer interests. These changes alter what is valued in higher education in terms of skills and knowledge (Olssen and Peters, 2005). Through these processes, higher education is defined as, and becomes, a private rather than a social good (and vice versa – because it is defined as a private good, consumerism applies). This is fuelled by a concentration on the individual as beneficiary, as in common current discourse, rather than the more general social and community value from education.

Gibbs (2008) believes that government sees the expansion of higher education in the UK as a marketing issue rather than an educational one.

There is a desire to increase the number of people with any given level of outcome awards – degrees – but less concern about the state of knowledge and creativity. Education marketing presents higher education as functional and instrumental, a means to an end rather than an end in itself. The effect is to undermine creativity and focus on skills acquisition for work in the shortest possible time frame. Education is therefore marketed as a utility rather than as wisdom with a limited concern with what has occurred within the student. The relationship between student and teacher changes and managers focus on performance, individual and institutional, in all measurable forms (Gibbs, 2008; Jamieson and Naidoo, 2004; Naidoo and Jamieson, 2005).

Links have also been made between the teaching of entrepreneurship and neo-liberalism. Lambert et al (2007) are critical of attempts made to associate the higher education curriculum and economic development, specifically through expectations of developing entrepreneurial graduates. Links to the World Bank, UNESCO, the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and similar organisations are identified as key features of this push. They argue instead that higher education should develop and utilise social entrepreneurship in teaching and learning. From this perspective he argues that these are the very forces that are,

“As much of a problem as a solution to the major issues of modern social life.” (Lambert et al, 2007, p 528)

New managerialism is intended to improve efficiency and effectiveness of public services, including higher education, but Johnson and Deem (2003) suggest that there is no evidence that it is achieving its goal. The Prime Minister’s Office of Public Services Reform (Cabinet Office, 2002) acknowledges that the private sector motivation for customer satisfaction is increased use of the service, or increased customer loyalty. In the public sector this may run counter to service aims, for example in health care where a reduction in service use could be considered as a success (Cabinet Office, 2002). Lapsley (2009) finds the legacy of NPM a “cruel disappointment”

(Lapsley, 2009, p5). The four key features all show signs of failure. Management consultancy costs soar with little tangible evidence of service improvement. IT projects fail, sometimes spectacularly as in Connecting for Health, the NHS IT project. Quality audit encourages compliance, but mutates to a tick in a box. Risk orientation tends to contribute to,

“Defensive and timid rather than entrepreneurial management.”

(Lapsley, 2009, p18)

Jamieson and Naidoo (2004) also argue that the neo-liberal project in higher education is doomed to failure. They assert that, as consumers, students fail to take responsibility for their own learning and academics play safe to avoid criticism through endless performance measures. Johnson and Deem (2003) are perhaps more measured when they conclude that manager-academics need to spend more time with and listening to the real issues of students. Student customers are used rhetorically, but this may not capture the authentic voice of students. This is a voice traditionally ignored by the academy, though there is some evidence that post-1992 institutions' manager-academics have more contact with and are more concerned with the experience of students. On the whole, however, the concerns of manager-academics were about financial and resource issues, and perhaps the impact on students, rather than directly on students (Johnson and Deem, 2003).

Critiques of managerialism are many and generally condemnatory. In these critiques, managerialism is regularly contrasted with collegiality as an unproblematic alternative (Alvesson, 2013; Ek et al, 2013; Clegg, 2008; Teelken, 2012). Teelken, for example, provides an account of how academics deal with managerialism in ways that are both (or either) principled and pragmatic (Teelken, 2012). Kligyte and Barrie (2011), however, are critical of this position arguing that it is both a false dichotomy and that collegialism is under-defined, and can be all things to all people. Bezes et al (2012) also offer a more nuanced approach, acknowledging the

tensions for professionals working in a NPM environment but suggesting that collegialism and managerialism can co-exist.

While the trappings of NPM have not disappeared, there appears to be greater divergence between countries, even within the UK (Connolly et al, 2014; Simkins, 2014), and alternative theories of public administration are gaining traction. Amongst these, and variously named, are approaches such as 'new governance' and 'public value pragmatism', which have been identified as post-NPM forms of organisational arrangement with a focus on service and quality rather than efficiency and effectiveness (Bao et al, 2012; Bryson et al, 2014; De Vries and Nemec, 2013). Emerging approaches to governance emphasise collaboration in the delivery of services, where public value approaches emphasise outcomes for the public good (Alford and Hughes, 2008). These two aspects are sometimes synthesised as New Public Governance (NPG) (Weisel and Modell, 2014), but it is acknowledged that NPG is an elusive concept. Models of citizen participation and involvement in the design and delivery of public services are beginning to replace the customer-oriented model of NPM (Farrell, 2010) though this is far from universal. In higher education, this might be seen in the form of the student-as-customer concept replaced by co-production (McCulloch, 2009). Examples can also be seen in diverse public sector services (Morris and Farrell, 2007), including railways (Weisel and Modell, 2014), and Further Education (Hill, 2014).

Taking a case study approach, Delbecq et al (2013) find support for a collaborative approach to governance in a university. They also position governance as setting the strategic direction, delivered through management, with leadership bridging strategy and delivery (Delbecq et al, 2013). The concepts of efficiency, effectiveness and value for money that are central to NPM, were shown in earlier sections of this chapter to be used discursively rather than in a technical sense. There are similar definitional problems in NPG (Rutgers, 2015) and concepts such as governance are somewhat vague (Steurer, 2013). Alford and Hughes (2008) also argue that

'public value' is politically defined and will vary according to political standpoint.

In this section, the genesis of New Public Management has been discussed. The main characteristics have been described, and the relationship between NPM and managerialism examined. How this is being played out in higher education has been considered, with particular emphasis on institutional management, the impact on academic managers and their relationship with academics, and the effects on the relationship between academics and students. The section finished with a brief consideration of alternatives to NPM that emphasise value, citizen involvement and collaborative networks (Rutgers, 2015).

2.5. Managing in a university context

Management tends to be presented as a rational and orderly undertaking, but Segal (2011) points to the inherent messiness of the practice of management, specifically in the context of uncertainty. There are advocates of an evidence-based approach to management (EBMgt), which has its intent in the development of evidence-based medicine (Briner and Walshe, 2013). This comparison has been criticized, as EBMgt tends to ignore the ethical dimension that is central to evidence-based medicine. The relationship between research and practice in management is also more tenuous, and what counts as evidence is often contested (Morrell, 2008).

Alvesson and Sveningsson (2003) consider the ambiguity of leadership and management, with management and leadership regarded as under-defined concepts often unrelated to real management practice. Leadership tends to be promoted as unproblematic, concerned with vision and strategy and voluntary followers, and sometimes contrasted with micro-management as morally inferior. In practice, however, managers find it difficult to identify when they are doing 'leadership' and when 'management', and tend to describe operational management in terms of vision and strategy.

The 'how to' of management literature tends to be dominated by 'gurus' and fads and is often light on an evidence base (Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2003). Johnsen (2015) hints that the ambiguity may be inherent to management. Taking the example of innovation, managers are seen as '*toxin*', hindering innovation, and '*cure*', providing an appropriate environment for innovation (Johnsen, 2015). Giroux (2006) suggests that some of the ambiguity in management may be pragmatic, in that it is of logical and rational benefit to the manager. Diefenbach (2013), argues that managers act in their own interests when selecting a particular course of action. While there is some acknowledgement that managers may act from an ethical or altruistic standpoint, Diefenbach concentrates on what he refers to as the 'darker side' (Diefenbach, 2013)

It is worth revisiting briefly the background for the practice of university management. The late 20th and early 21st century saw an accelerating growth of publicly funded higher education in the developed world. This growth was accompanied by increasing expectations of knowledge as the basis for economic generation and regeneration, though this may not always have been borne out in reality. The Report of the Great Britain National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education (Dearing Report) assumed the connection between mass HE system and economic success (National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education, 1997), but the post-war evidence is limited and contradictory as economic growth in both Germany (West) and Japan outstripped countries with mass HE systems (Jamieson and Naidoo, 2004).

Earlier in this chapter, it has been argued that globalisation undermines the autonomy and scope for freedom of action of the nation-state, which has no choice other than to join the globalisation game. As the influence and span of control of government shrinks so the welfare-state element, including education, comes under increasing scrutiny. As the university sector grows in scale, and the costs and expected contribution of higher education increase as a proportion of state activity, scrutiny of the sector also grows (Kwiek, 2005).

Downward pressures on lecturer-student contact time continue (Kenny, 2008; Yeo, 2009) as institutions focus on cost-containment and these are contrasted with, and conflicted by, increasing expectations of the quality of education offered (PA Consulting, 2014). It has been argued that HEIs must focus process improvement on those elements students deem most important (O'Neill, 2003), but these can be unclear and complex. Cheaper can appear more efficient in terms of Student Staff Ratios and financial measures – but how is customer or student value protected and enhanced?

Arguably too, the pressure intensifies for a more individualised educational experience in the context of mass delivery. Formulaic funding, as was practiced by Higher Education Funding Councils in the UK, rewarded conformity and does not fit with a scenario where higher education institutions differentiate their offer in a mass system. It remains to be seen how the changes to the fee regime, which differ from nation to nation within the UK, will work themselves through the sector. The intention, however, is clear in strengthening the student voice in expecting higher quality (Barber, Donnelly and Rizvi, 2013). It also provides an opportunity for institutions to differentiate themselves, and compete for students. Arguably, formulaic funding worked against the former polytechnics exploiting their relative strength in delivering effective student employability and career development in circumstances where other domains of effectiveness, such as research and citations appear more highly valued (Baty, 2010; Lysons et al 1998). While survival is the ultimate test of effectiveness, effectiveness is multi-dimensional and links to sectoral and institutional values and mission (Lysons et al, 1998).

Tiechler (2001) argues that three key challenges face higher education in Western Europe. Firstly, following a period of rapid expansion, appropriate adjustment to the significant change in size and nature of the student population in a mass system. Secondly, responding adequately to changes in technology, and specifically understanding the impact of new technologies on the balance between teaching and learning, and the nature of these activities. Thirdly, Tiechler (2001) suggests the time has come to evaluate

both the strengths and shortcomings of the widespread introduction of managerialism to higher education. The context that drives managerialism in higher education is the same context that drives public sector reform more generally. An opt-out will not be available for universities. The challenge to be effective, in terms of efficiency, quality and performance, is more likely to intensify in the current context. Ireland entered the period of public sector austerity earlier than the UK. In an examination of the impact on and the prognosis for higher education there, Shattock (2010) anticipated challenging times. Rising participation rates that are not met anywhere by similar rates of funding growth drives an increasingly precarious system. Though the worst of the predictions for UK HE have not come to pass, there remains continuing uncertainty about the future (Barber et al, 2013; Grant Thornton, 2014). It could be argued the manager-academic needs to operate in the “real” world, rather than the world of rhetoric and theory. This real world for university managers and managed is one of inherent conflict, tension and ambiguity (Braun et al, 2014; Delbecq et al, 2013). Not all of this is externally generated, with academic restructuring now endemic in universities (Hogan, 2012).

There is, however, some evidence that good management, at departmental level particularly, can make a difference to university performance. After measuring management practice in the domains of operations, monitoring, performance, and incentives, McCormack et al (2014) show that higher scores on management practices correlated with improved performance measures on NSS, RAE 2008, CUG ranking. Russell group universities had best management at departmental level, with differences between university groups best explained by ‘incentive’ scores. The incentive score relates to how well an organization is attracting, retaining, developing and rewarding staff. In the context of managing research, Deem (2010) argues that there are benefits in administrators (managers) and academics working together. Others see collaborative governance as an alternative to the tension and conflict they see in hierarchical forms of university management (Delbecq et al, 2013). In a university, managers and academics are interdependent: they

are in a bounded relationship where institutional success depends on both (Braun et al, 2014).

2.6. Emerging themes and summary of Chapter 2

This chapter ends by identifying some of the broad themes emerging from the literature and relevant to the study. A brief summary is provided to close the literature review.

2.6.1. Broad themes emerging from the literature

In the context of the overall aim and objectives of the research study a number of broad themes, emerging from the literature, were identified as relevant to this study. These themes are summarised below:

- *Definition of concepts*

Terms such as efficiency, effectiveness and quality are used inconsistently and without precision, but this will not be resolved simply by better definition. Technical definitions do exist for concepts such as efficiency, but that is not how the term seems to be used in policy pronouncements or within universities, where rhetorical and metaphorical use predominates.

- *Management and leadership practice*

Higher education has multiple stakeholders whose interests are different, sometimes conflict and defy simple resolution creating tension. The environment is dynamic rather than static, and management practice is characterised by complexity, ambiguity and uncertainty.

- *Bounded academic and management communities*

While many of the concepts considered in this chapter are contested, including the purpose of a university, academic and management communities are interdependent and require a bounded resolution to

points of difference, though they may not themselves identify that constraint.

- *The limitations of management*

Good management can provide an appropriate environment for good teaching and research, but cannot deliver it. Poor management can undermine that environment.

- *The student relationship*

The claims made about the place of students in higher education are important. Students are variously viewed as customers, clients or co-producers (amongst others), and how this relationship is described relates to a standpoint on the wider discourses in and about higher education and society.

To help inform later parts of the study, a number of broad research questions were developed within these themes. There were as follows:

Definition of concepts

- Are efficiency, effectiveness and value for money part of the everyday considerations of managers? (UUK, 2011);

Management and leadership practice

- Are post-92 universities driven by their values and mission, rather than by the whim of public policy? (Shattock, 2010).
- Are post-92 universities avoiding the “dirty dozen” indicators of reduced performance? (Cameron and Smart, 1998, p78; Ashraf and Kadir, 2012);

The limitations of management

- Are managers “providing the conditions in which teaching and research can flourish?” (Shattock, 2003; Shattock, 2013);
- *Bounded academic and management communities*
- Are tensions evident that might be characterised as between managerial and collegial standpoints? (Deem, R., Hillyard, S. and Reed, M., 2007; Kligyte and Barrie, 2011);

The student relationship

- Are students considered as customers? If so, is this considered a complex rather than a transactional relationship (Eagle and Brennan, 2007) or are these merely rhetorical customers? (Cochoy, 2005) or are other metaphors prevalent? (Tight, 2014).

These themes and broad research questions were subsequently used to guide the semi-structured interviews and are revisited in Chapter 5 as part of a framework for discussion of the findings.

2.6.2. Summary of Chapter 2

This chapter has presented a wide-ranging and critical review of literature covering 'efficiency', 'effectiveness', 'quality', 'student and customer satisfaction', 'management and managerialism' in the context of higher education.

Despite efficiency in universities being central to the relationship between the higher education sector and governments in the UK, and notwithstanding efforts to measure it (Agasisti and Johnes, 2010; Johnes, 2009; Kempkes and Pohl, 2008; Patterson, 2000), efficiency remains an imprecise concept (Kosor, 2013). Evidence of continuing management interest in efficiency through the use of performance indicators and process improvements has been identified (Taylor, 2001; Comm and Mathaisel, 2005; Comm and Mathaisel, 2008), but concerns that the drive for efficiency undermines effectiveness were also raised (Kenny, 2008). Understanding the relationship between costs and activity, however, remains a significant management concern in universities (Grant Thornton, 2014; HEFCE, 2015; UUK, 2011).

University effectiveness is a similarly slippery construct (Ashraf and Kadir, 2012), with evaluation of the effectiveness of universities dependent on perspective and assumptions about the purpose of universities (Collini,

2012). A number of the risks to effectiveness that might accompany downsizing in colleges and universities have been acknowledged (Cameron and Smart, 1998; Ashraf and Kadir, 2012), and the inherent tensions in achieving organisational effectiveness in an uncertain world recognised (McCulloch and Faught, 2014). Value for money is defined in terms of both efficiency and effectiveness (NAO, 2015; HEFCE, 2015), which could indicate that it is most likely used in a rhetorical, rather than technical, fashion.

The challenges in finding objective measures of quality in higher education have been identified. It has also been noted that discussions about quality cannot be separated from the wider debates in, and about, higher education (Stodnick and Rogers, 2008; Eagle and Brennan, 2007). The journey from traditional approaches to academic quality, through service quality approaches, to customer-defined approaches has been traced (Cochoy, 2005), and the extent to which management action can drive quality has been considered (Brochado, 2009; Shattock, 2003; Yorke, 2000).

It was recognised that there has been considerable interest in understanding customer satisfaction in higher education (DeShields et al, 2005; Douglas and McClelland, 2008; Gruber et al, 2010; Munteanu et al, 2010; Navarro et al, 2005). This led to an examination of the extent to which the 'student as customer' concept is helpful in higher education (Angell et al, 2008; Gabbott et al, 2002), concluding that the relationship is complex and cannot be reduced to a simple transactional one (Gabbott et al, 2002; Eagle and Brennan, 2007; Tight, 2013). The student as customer metaphor was seen to be widely opposed from within higher education (Diefenbach, 2009a; Freeman and Thomas, 2005; Naidoo and Jamieson, 2005; Svensson and Wood, 2007) and it was noted that this is only one of several metaphors for the student role (Gabbott et al, 2002; Tight, 2013).

The extent to which concerns with efficiency, effectiveness and value for money reflect the effect of more general public sector reform working through to higher education was examined. In particular questions were raised about

the impact of New Public Management and new managerialism on the running of universities (Johnson and Deem, 2003; Jamieson and Naidoo, 2004; Teelken, 2012; Lapsley, 2009). Emerging approaches to public administration that may supplant NPM were considered. The notion that management and leadership practice is ambiguous, untidy and sometimes short on evidence was raised, and the idea that the academic and management communities are interdependent and bounded was introduced.

The future landscape for HE is described as complex and uncertain (PA Consulting, 2014; Barber, Donnelly and Rizvi, 2013; Grant Thornton, 2014), and taken for granted management assumptions, concepts and premises are contested and challenged (Diefenbach, 2009a; Lapsley, 2009; Jamieson and Naidoo, 2004; Telkeen, 2012; Kligyte and Barrie, 2011). This provides a complex, challenging and dynamic environment for HE managers to negotiate.

3. Chapter 3 - Research Methodology and Methods

3.1. Introduction

The beliefs that researchers hold about the nature of the world, what they believe counts as knowledge, and how it can be investigated, drives the topics of interest, the questions raised, the data collected, how data is collected and analysed, and the conclusions drawn. These beliefs and associated assumptions are not always made explicit, and may not always seem to be apparent to the researcher themselves. It is argued, however, that transparency and consistency in research philosophy is essential to good research (Bunniss and Kelly, 2010). The purpose of this chapter is to clarify and justify the research methodology and research methods adopted for this project.

This chapter will first survey the landscape of research philosophy, providing an evaluation of the relative strengths and limitations of the main approaches. An elaboration of the selected, critical realist approach will be provided, and this will be justified within the academic and disciplinary context of the study. The focus will then shift to the main features of the study as carried out, and compare what was done with what could have been done. This will provide a detailed discussion of the chosen method, and the consequences and limitations of the approach. The chapter will include consideration of ethical issues, the approach to analysis, and a brief discussion of a small pilot study that informed the final approach. The opportunity is taken in this chapter to locate the researcher in the research (du Preez, 2008).

3.2. Landscape of research philosophy

“The way we think the world is (ontology) influences: what we think can be known about it (epistemology); how we think it can be investigated (methodology and research techniques); the kinds of theories we think can be constructed about it; and the political and policy stances we are prepared to take” (Fleetwood, 2005, p197).

Grix (2010) argues that there is a directional relationship between 'ontology, epistemology, methodology, methods and sources' (Grix, 2010, pp67 - 68). The view we have about what constitutes reality shapes, and limits, our beliefs about how that reality can be known, and what we can know about it. In turn, beliefs about what can be known and how we can know it, lead directly to beliefs about how we can best access that knowledge. These patterned relationships within research philosophy are sometimes known as research paradigms (Bunniss and Kelly, 2010).

Paradigms are characterised and differentiated by their particular ontological, epistemological, and methodological approaches to conceptualising and conducting research. Bunniss and Kelly (2010) cite Weaver and Olsen (2006) in defining research paradigms as, "sets of beliefs and practices, shared by communities of researchers, which regulate inquiry within disciplines" (Bunniss and Kelly, 2010, p360). While paradigms may be subject to challenge and critique, and several may co-exist within disciplines, perhaps uneasily, they are each internally consistent, coherent and unambiguous.

Archer (2000) asserts that every social researcher has a social ontology. She states that this,

"May be quite implicit but is also unavoidable because we can say nothing without making some assumptions about the nature of social reality examined" (Archer, 2000, p464).

The main ontological positions in research philosophy are generally identified as objectivism and constructionism (or constructivism) (Bryman and Bell, 2007). Objectivism is based on the underlying assumption that there is an external objective social reality that "exists independently of social actors" (Bryman, 2004, p17), whilst constructionism is based on the premise that social reality is produced and reproduced through the actions of social actors, particularly through language. It follows, for the social constructionist, that there cannot be a single, definitive version of reality. Reality is seen as subjective and constantly changing (Bunniss and Kelly, 2010) with multiple

versions, all deemed equally valid and created through discourse (Fleetwood, 2005).

Bryman and Bell (2007) identify three main epistemological positions. The first of these is 'positivism' which has its roots in the natural sciences, and is linked to objectivist ontology. From this perspective, knowledge is considered to be value-free and objective (Bunniss and Kelly, 2010). The second main position, 'interpretivism', is based on the view that research in the social sciences "is fundamentally different from that of the natural sciences" (Bryman and Bell, 2007, p17) and is identified with social constructionist ontology.

Knowledge, like reality, is considered as subjective and contextual. In the most extreme versions, including postmodernism, it is assumed that, since the only tools available involve the use of language, objective knowing is not possible. Reed (2005, p1624) describes this as being "ontologically mute", in that reality is constructed through discourse and nothing meaningful can be said about any reality beyond the discourse that constitutes it. The third epistemological position identified by Bryman and Bell (2007) is 'realism', which in the particular form of 'critical realism' is generally regarded as having a separate ontological basis (for example, Fleetwood, 2005).

Positivism and interpretivism are generally presented as incompatible poles of an epistemological continuum, with the various shades of realism somewhere between (Grix, 2010). Some forms of realism, such as 'scientific', 'empirical' or 'classical' realism (Dobson et al, 2007), share ontological foundations with positivism and fit comfortably into what Bunniss and Kelly (2010) refer to as post-positivism.

'Critical realism', however, adopts a distinctive ontological position (Fleetwood, 2005) neatly summarized by Bunniss and Kelly (2007, p361) as, "reality may be objective but truth is continually contested by competing groups." Reed (2005, p1630) outlines a "stratified ontology" in which social structures and power relations impact on the observable world. This links to a particular epistemological position, which assumes that what passes as

knowledge is constructed, shaped and revised by individuals and groups under the influence of societal structures and mechanisms such as class, culture, and power relations. These mechanisms condition and influence, but do not determine behaviours (Mutch, 2005). They are not directly observable, and are always mediated, but can be revealed through the research process.

Grix (2010) describes three key research paradigms: positivism, post-positivism, and interpretivism. McGregor and Murnane (2010) differentiate only two, positivism and post-positivism, suggesting the key difference is the attachment to the scientific method in positivism and a belief that there are many other ways of knowing beyond the scientific method in post-positivism. Bunniss and Kelly (2010) present four, splitting post-positivism into a strand that shares the ontological assumptions of positivism and a strand based on critical theory or critical realism. It is Bunniss and Kelly's formulation that is preferred here.

Each paradigm is associated with a main purpose or intention for undertaking research. Positivists seek to explain, predict and control the world (McGregor and Murnane, 2010); interpretivists seek to understand the world; and critical realists seek to change it. While an oversimplification of all three positions, it does help to differentiate their methodological motivation. Manicas (2006), for example, promulgates a critical realism that is potentially emancipatory, but on the basis of a social science that values both understanding and explanation. Figure 1, over, draws on Ackerly and True (2010), Blaikie (1993), Bryman and Bell (2007), Bunniss and Kelly (2010), Grix (2010), and Weaver and Olson (2006). It is intended to provide a chart of the landscape of research philosophy, but this is partial and it would be important to acknowledge that boundaries are neither clear nor fixed.

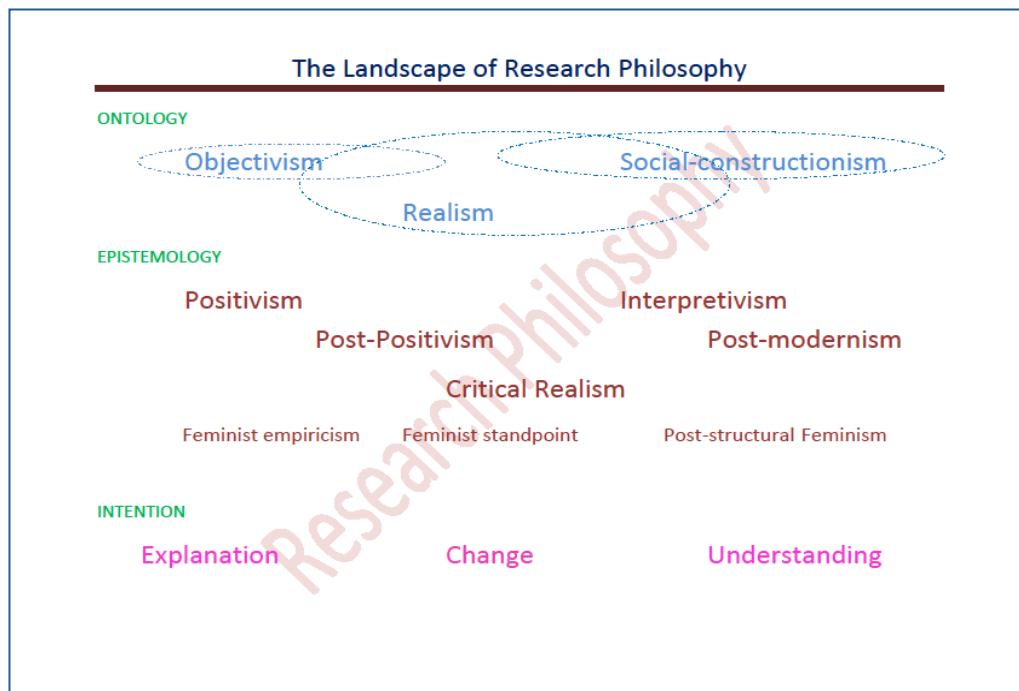


Figure 1: Representing the landscape of research philosophy

While there are some fundamentally incompatible approaches, positivism and postmodernism for example, Grix (2010) argues that some of the best research takes place on the boundaries between paradigms. While the borders between approaches are blurred and can have a degree of permeability, not all cross-paradigmatic configurations can work. Some, such as positivism and interpretivism, are just incompatible. Research studies will be judged on the coherence of their research approach. Philosophical inconsistencies lead to gaps or leaps in chains of logical argument that undermine the entire research project.

Each paradigm is also associated with a particular methodology or approach to investigation. Positivism is deductive, with the experimental method providing the basis for research in pursuit of universal laws. Variants of post-positivism that share objectivist ontology will tend to emphasize increasingly sophisticated measurement, well-defined concepts and control of extraneous

variables (Bunniss and Kelly, 2010). Positivism and post-positivism will tend to adopt quantitative methods, produce numerical data, and present results based on statistical analysis of the data. Experimental and survey methods are popular. There is considerable emphasis on the validity and reliability of the findings (Gibbert, Ruigrok and Wicki, 2008) and their generalizability beyond the specific. Interpretivism tends to adopt an inductive approach, and naturalistic settings. Methods tend to be qualitative, with emphasis on subjective, lived experience and reflexivity. There is often a focus on discourse, and meaning is constructed within the interactions. Reed (2005) argues that in extreme postmodernist approaches this verges upon discursive reductionism or 'abduction'. Reed (2005, p1631) promotes a critical realist methodology based on 'retroduction' as providing a way of "discovering the underlying structures or mechanisms that produce tendencies or regularities" in observable events. Critical realism in its broadest form adopts qualitative and quantitative approaches as are appropriate to the research context. It would be argued that the method adopted should be that which provides the best explanatory potential and develops understanding of social processes and phenomena (Manicas, 2006).

3.3. Adoption of a critical realist research approach

This project sits squarely in the academic field of organizational and management studies, and there has been significant recent debate about research philosophy in this field. A number of authors (Fleetwood, 2005; Mutch, 2005; Reed, 2005; Reed, 2005a) have argued that the proliferation of postmodern research based on an extreme social constructionism has been unhelpful in developing the discipline. In particular, they are opposed to the notion that social structures, institutions and organisations exist only through discourse, and that nothing can be known about them beyond that. For post-modernists social structures are constituted and maintained discursively. If they have any separate existence, we cannot know anything of it. Reed

(2005a) accuses social constructivism, as defended by Contu and Willmott (2005), of the “collapse of ontology into epistemology and discursive conventions” (Reed, 2005, p 1667).

Sayer (2009) continues the critique of postmodernist research. He calls for the promotion of a more genuinely *critical* critical social science, rather than simply *sceptical* as he considers is prevalent in post-modernist research. He argues that critical research should seek to explain, and not simply identify, the false beliefs that may sustain the dominance of particular worldviews. Critical realism offers an approach that provides for the possibility of change, and the opportunity to go beyond mere reportage. Sayer is also critical of positivism in that it tends to “naturalize” social phenomena as matters of fate (Sayer, 2009, p772). Critical social science should develop an argument that things can be other than they are and that change is an option (Sayer, 2009).

Support for a “realist turn” in organization and management studies (Reed, 2005, p1621) has been advocated to counter the perceived dominance of research founded on anti-realist ontology and epistemology, particularly post-modernist approaches, and to engage with classical research in management and organisations (Reed, 2005). Contu and Willmott (2005), however, are generally disapproving of critical realism and also hotly contest Reed’s assertion that social constructivist approaches have dominated management and organizational research in recent years. They suggest that ‘empirical realism’ or post-positivism based on objectivist ontology has continued to dominate. They base their criticism of the tenets of critical realism, however, on relatively early versions of critical realism, specifically as espoused by the late Roy Bhaskar (Reed, 2005a).

This project adopts a more nuanced and evolved approach as developed variously by Archer (2000), Fairclough (2005), and Fleetwood (2005). Mutch (2005) provides support for an evolved view of critical realism – getting beyond Bhaskar – such as that promoted by Archer. He points in particular to the value of critical realism in research in and on organizations and institutions. The ability, indeed necessity, to focus on both the structures and

actions of individual and groups of actors is of particular value to this project, where multiple layers of social forces, structures and power relations are played out in specific institutional settings. Carter (2002), who is a proponent of Archer's (1995) morphogenetic approach, argues that the,

“when’, ‘where’ and ‘how’ questions that concern social science require a stratified ontology, one in which the interplay of the distinctive powers and properties of structure and agency can be analyzed” (Carter, 2002, p141).

Critical realist approaches seem particularly well suited to considering issues where truth is contested. “Efficiency, effectiveness and value for money” in higher education are just such contested notions and are related to broader social processes, such as New Managerialism and New Public Management, which have their genesis outwith universities (Deem, Hillyard and Reed, 2007). It will be important to take a historical perspective to these issues, which can be helpful in revealing how the development over time of social structures and particular forms of institutions condition – but don't determine – social interaction and action (Mutch, 2005, p783).

Critical realism provides an appropriate philosophical foundation for this research because it is well suited to the complexity of the setting and the questions being raised. It's strengths, and flexibility in relation to method, address the ontological short comings of both positivism and of post-modernism founded in an extreme social constructionism, and there is an argument that it is through critical realism that the ontological incompatibilities of positivism and constructivism can be resolved in a genuinely social science (Manicas, 2006).

There is concern with both structure and agency in the project, and an acceptance of the,

“Ontological reality of organizational structures [and other contextual phenomena such as managerialism and market forces] as constraints

on organizational action and communication.” (Fairclough, 2005, page 917)

Universities as organisations provide a setting where actions are conditioned by social structures and powers, though not determined by them (Archer, 2000). Universities, as institutions and social structures, and perhaps particularly as at least partly public sector organisations, are subject to managerialism, marketization, and other power related phenomena which relate directly to the current discourses surrounding efficiency, effectiveness and excellence in higher education. Each of these factors leads towards the adoption of a critical realist philosophy.

3.4. Research method

The study adopted qualitative, semi-structured, telephone interviews as the approach to data collection. Respondents were academic managers who were Head of School, Assistant Dean or Dean at the time of interview. A total of 12 interviews were completed, with all respondents from different post-92 universities in the UK. Of the 12 respondents, 5 were in executive roles, 5 in other senior manager roles, and 2 in roles that were cross-university or partially executive. There was a good geographic spread of institutions included, and a wide range in terms of Guardian 2013 league table position (Guardian, 2012). No specific cut-off had been set for 12, but during analysis it was noted that no new codes or categories were identified after 9 transcripts had been reviewed. This provides some justification for stopping recruiting respondents at that point.

In the unstructured research interview, where the questions are not pre-specified and standardised, the research interview is the means of data collection and the interviewer the research instrument (Chenail, 2011; Poggenpoel and Myburgh, 2003). This, however, poses challenges in terms of the quality of the instrument and potential bias. Quality and appropriateness can be tested through pilot studies by checking whether the

questions elicit responses that contribute to meeting the research aim, and this was done in this case. This is not always feasible and Chenail (2011) suggests an alternative strategy of 'interviewing the investigator' (Chenail, 2011, p258). Effectively, the investigator becomes a participant in their own research, perhaps with the help of a colleague as interviewer, providing insights into the process and into their own perceptions, assumptions, and potential prejudices (Chenail, 2011; Roulston, 2010). This investigator-as-respondent interview was carried out as a post hoc process to encourage deeper reflection by the researcher in and on the process of the interviews.

Roulston (2010) states that the quality of the interview must be demonstrated by the researcher in ways that fit with their theoretical conception and assumptions about the use of qualitative research interviews. Rapley (2001) drawing on Seale (1999), for example, differentiates between "*interview-data-as-resource v interview-data-as-topic*" (Rapley, 2001, p304). The former is based on the idea that the data represents the interviewee's views – or some reality – beyond the interview, while the latter is founded in the notion of reality jointly constructed within the interview. Roulston (2010) provides a detailed "typology of conceptions of qualitative interviews" (pp205 – 216) in which she links the kinds of questions that might be asked within different conceptions of the interview to philosophical assumptions, methodological issues and criticisms that have been raised in the literature, and how quality can be approached in that tradition.

For Rapley (2001), there is a difference in the interviewer '*doing* facilitative and neutral' and 'being facilitative and neutral' (pages 310, 316). The interview may appear naturalistic, but it is not an everyday social encounter. Learmonth (2006) suggests that 'how to' manuals for 'non-directive unstructured interviews' (Learmonth, 2006, p 83 – 84) are based on the conception of the interview as a tool for extracting knowledge from the interviewee – whether of some external reality (positivist) or internal subjective states (symbolic interactionism) – and that this conception is flawed.

Svensson (2009), like Rapley (2001), provides a constructionist critique of the use of the qualitative interview in management research. He has four specific concerns. Firstly, he questions the extent to which the researcher presents interview data as representations of either an external organisational reality (events, situations, practices, routines, etc.) or inner worlds (emotions, intentions, hopes, etc.). Secondly, Svensson (2009) questions whether an 'ideal' interview free of 'performative' or 'constructive' elements on the part of interviewer or interviewee can be achieved, despite that sometimes being the intention of guidance on how to conduct interviews. He is also critical of research which accepts the social constructionist view of language in a superficial way, focussing only on the talk and not dealing with issues of power, dominance and why some discourses are present and others absent. Svensson (2009) expresses most concern about research that takes a 'pragmatic' stance to interviews. By this he means that it may be acknowledged that a representational view of language is problematic, but the interview is,

“Treated as a discourse-free zone from which other discursive practices can be spotted.” (Svensson, 2009, page 170)

Svensson (2009) prefers the notion of the interview as 're-creation' rather than 'representation' of organisational reality. Wang and Roulston (2007) express similar concerns to Svensson (2009) arguing that interview data is often reported as representational of reality. The role of interviewer and respondent co-constructing the interview is largely overlooked, with an assumption of the interviewer role as broadly neutral.

Though research interviews are sometimes described as dialogic (Foley and Valenzuela, 2005) they are not as cosy affairs as this portrayal would suggest. Kvale (2006) argues that interviews are purposive encounters, with power imbalances between interviewer and interviewee that are rarely made explicit or adequately addressed. The interviewer, rather than interviewee, controls the questions, the topic, when and how the interview ends, the analysis of data, and how and where the findings are presented.

Fontana and Frey (2005) state that the interview is,

“Inextricably and unavoidably historically, politically, and contextually bound. This boundedness refutes the whole tradition of the interview of gathering objective data to be used for neutrally for scientific purposes” (Fontana and Frey, 2005, p 695).

Kvale (2006) concludes that,

“A research interview is not an open and dominance free dialogue between egalitarian partners, but a specific hierarchical and instrumental form of conversation, where the interviewer sets the stage and scripts in accord with his or her research interests” (Kvale, 2006, p 485).

He goes on to assert that the process is no less legitimate for that, but that ignoring the inevitable power differential in design, analysis and the final report may undermine the validity of the research (Kvale, 2006).

3.5. Ethical Considerations

In social and business research, ethics is about the,

“Moral deliberation, choice and accountability on the part of the researchers throughout the research process.” (Edwards and Mauthner, 2002; cited in, King and Horrocks, 2010)

In this description of the ethical dimension of research, King and Horrocks (2010) go on to stress the importance of ethics to the whole research process, from design through data analysis to report, not simply the engagement with subjects or participants. Brinkmann and Kvale (2005) would concur with this view, characterising the focus on subjects as ‘microethics’, but add that the way knowledge derived from research might be communicated and used is a responsibility of the researcher. They describe this as ‘macro ethics’.

Di Cicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006) identify four ethical issues that are relevant to qualitative interviewing, and are applicable to this study. These are:

“Reducing the risk of unintended harm; protecting the interviewee’s information; effectively informing interviewees about the nature of the study; and, reducing the risk of exploitation.” (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006, p319)

There are a number of controls that can be applied to reduce the risk of harm to individual participants and institutions. These include ensuring that participants understand the purpose and limitations of the study, the extent to which anonymity and confidentiality can be assured, and their right to withdraw from participation at any time. Steps have been taken, in accordance with University data protection policies, to secure data, including encryption where appropriate. There are good research reasons as well as ethical ones for providing feedback to case study institutions and participants on the outcomes of the project prior to formal publication of any report.

The proposed project did not involve any vulnerable individuals. It did, however, involve academic staff of Edinburgh Napier University in the pilot study and for that reason required ethical approval. Additionally, a very small risk of professional harm to individuals and reputational risk to institutions was identified in the main study. This risk has been fully mitigated through procedures to protect both anonymity and confidentiality. Gatrell (2009) advises that participants in research interviews can use them as an opportunity for catharsis, and the interviewer is accountable for protecting the participant from harm in such circumstances. Controls do not provide, on their own, a guarantee of good ethical practice if they are mechanically applied. Integrity, a commitment to ethical research, and a vigilant and reflexive approach by the researcher will help mitigate risk (King and Horrocks, 2010).

An application for ethical approval was submitted to the relevant ethics committee, and a copy of the ethical approval application is included as

Appendix 1. When ethical approval had been confirmed, a request for research access to interview staff was submitted to the Dean of Faculty. A copy of the letter requesting access, initially for the pilot study, is included as Appendix 2. The study received ethical approval from the Edinburgh Napier Business School Ethics Committee (Approval number: ENBS/2011-12/029) (Appendix 3).

3.6. Pilot study

A pilot study was undertaken to test the interview prompts and process and to provide a basis on which to decide a suitable number of participants in the main study. Potential participants were approached by email inviting them to participate in the study. Each was provided with a standard information sheet on the project and a consent form. Volunteers who completed the consent form, or indicated their consent to participate by email, were accepted on a first reply basis until sufficient participants had been recruited.

Three interviews with academic managers were carried out. The interviews were held variously in the researcher's office, a classroom, and a public coffee outlet in a university. These various venues set different challenges in providing a suitable, distraction free setting for interviews. Though aware of guidance on preparing the physical environment and selecting an appropriate location for interviews (King and Horrocks, 2010), the researcher was keen to test a variety of settings to reproduce the reality of what may have been available during the main study.

The relationship of the pilot study to the main study was clarified. Specifically it was explained that the contributions of individual participants would be analysed and could contribute to the overall study. The interviews lasted between 40 minutes and 55 minutes each and were digitally recorded. Participants were asked if the information they had been sent about the project had been clear and if they could offer any advice to the researcher on

the process and style of the interview. On completion the participants were thanked for their contribution.

The recorded interviews were captured as MP3 files and transferred to a secure password protected laptop, and copied to an encrypted memory stick as a back up. Full transcription was not undertaken for the pilot study. The researcher, however, developed a reasonable degree of familiarity with the data through repeated listening to the interviews.

The pilot study provided a number of insights about the organisation and conduct of the interview process. The pilot interviews were broadly successful in terms of providing an opportunity for participants to talk about the topic and their experiences. A number of changes were made on the basis of the pilot study. The preparatory processes such ethical approval, access, and approaching potential participants took much longer than anticipated despite, what I believed to be, detailed and careful planning. It is clear that those issues, and the scheduling of interviews, will be time consuming and this was accounted for in the project plan for the main study.

The range of more and less suitable settings for undertaking the interviews was intentional. While I was clear that I would aim for relatively small, private rooms such as an office, I was reasonably confident that I could carry out successful interviews in more challenging settings if required. I was also confident that the digital recorder could capture the discussion more than adequately in a variety of circumstances.

3.7. Main study

Twelve (12) participants were recruited as respondents. Recruitment was by an email 'invitation to participate', with a follow-up email where no response was forthcoming within ten days. The wording of the invitation is included with Appendix 4. There was no follow-up to a second non-response. Participants were academic managers at the level of Head of School or

above in post-92 universities. Just over half of the participants (7 of 12) were members of their university's top management team. There was a good geographical spread across the UK, including universities from England, Scotland and Wales.

The researcher provided a brief description to participants of the purpose of the research project, based on the written material already sent, and confirmed their willingness to participate. Where signed consent forms had been received this was acknowledged, otherwise participants were explicitly asked about their consent. The steps taken to protect confidentiality and anonymity of institutions were explained, and permission to record the interviews was obtained.

Generally interviews were scheduled during office hours and were conducted from the researcher's office using a hands-free speakerphone and a standalone MP3 recorder. This provided a good environment as it was relatively free from interruption, and the interviewer could spread out the written introduction, prompts and other papers, including the 'indicators of decline' (Cameron and Smart, 1998). Interviews were scheduled for an hour, with 15 minutes before and after the interviews built in for preparation and initial reflection. Interviews lasted between 42 minutes (interview 10) and 60 minutes (interview 6), with a mean time of around 52 minutes. This is similar to the time of face-to-face interviews in the pilot study, and runs counter to the suggestion that telephone interviews are likely to be shorter than face-to-face interviews (Gillham, 2005)

The recorded interviews were captured as MP3 files and transferred to a secure password protected laptop, and copied to an encrypted memory stick as a back up. Full written transcripts were produced. These were limited to verbal content only; with the version of the transcripts used in analysis coded and redacted to provide confidentiality of the respondent and anonymity of the institution.

In the main, the interviews went well. There were a number of practical issues, some of which were particular to the medium and others were more

general. Respondents were not always available when I called. This was variously due to the interview not being in their diary and being replaced by something else, illness, or earlier meetings over-running. In the main these were resolved by rescheduling. The only significant failure was of interview 5. A perfect storm of scheduling and technical issues made recording of the interview impossible, and simultaneously disabled the hands-free speakerphone. Reasonably full notes were made of this interview, but the richness of a full recording was lost. Hindsight tells me that a fully charged smartphone could have saved the day!

The literature on telephone interviews is reported as being somewhat sparse, despite telephone interviews having a fairly long history in social science research (King and Horrocks, 2010; Irvine et al, 2013; Novick, 2008; Vogl, 2013). Face to face interviews tend to be assumed to be better, and are asserted as such. There is very limited evidence of difference in qualitative studies (Sturges and Hanrahan, 2004; Vogl, 2013), and it has been suggested that the assertion that face-to-face interviews are better is essentially due to researcher bias (Novick, 2008). Irvine et al (2013) and Vogl (2013) separately looked for interactional differences in telephone and face-to-face interviews. They found some small differences, but these could be considered as both helpful, such as less sentence completion by the researcher in telephone interviewing; or less helpful, such as less access to non-verbal cues. There are practical differences between the two modes, including cost and access. The reported differences in interactional terms, though critical in some types of study, do not seem critical to this study. Telephone interviews were therefore a positive choice allowing a much wider geographical spread than would otherwise have been possible.

3.8. Data Analysis

Lofland and Lofland (1995) refer to the “work” of qualitative analysis as creative and open-ended, but requiring concerted intellectual endeavour. Reordering and reworking the data, applying different perspectives during

analysis, and at the same time maintaining focus on the research questions may help impose order (Lofland and Lofland, 1995). Roulston (2010), however, emphasises the necessity of maintaining the relationship between the philosophical foundations of the study and the approach to analysis of qualitative interviews. An initial framework for analysis based on Cameron and Smart's (1998) "dirty dozen" indicators of decline, has also been identified to help relate data to theory and has been reproduced as Table 1 in Chapter 2, Section 2.2.2.

Analysis is not a distinct phase of the research process (Bryman and Burgess, 1994, p217), in that it is implicit in decisions made at other points of a research project. Miles and Huberman (1994) also argue that,

"How a qualitative study is managed from Day 1 strongly influences the kind of analyses that can be done and how easily." (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p43)

Rapley (2001) emphasises 'sensitivity to the accounting work of interviewees', the context of the interview, and the need to analyse the interviewer contribution to the process.

Drawing on the work of Braun and Clarke (2006) who consider the use of thematic analysis in psychology, King and Horrocks (2010) define 'themes' as,

"Recurrent and distinctive features of participants' accounts, characterising particular perceptions and / or experiences, which the researcher sees as relevant to the research question." (King and Horrocks, 2010, p150)

Wang and Roulston (2007) are critical of thematic analysis, which they argue tends to ignore the active role of the researcher and the discursive work going on in the interview. They recommend an ethnomethodological approach to data analysis (after Garfinkel (1967), cited in Wang and Roulston, 2007). They argue it is particularly appropriate for novice

researchers, as it encourages reflexivity and helps the researcher identify the role they have played in generating the interview data. Despite this, and other criticisms of thematic analysis, it does provide an accessible approach to analysis that is consistent with a critical realist epistemology.

King and Horrocks (2010) provide a basic three-stage model of thematic analysis that moves from descriptive coding, through interpretive coding to the identification of overarching themes. Braun and Clarke (2006) elaborate a six-phase approach to thematic analysis, the final phase being the report. They advise the report should,

“Provide a concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive, and interesting account of the story the data tell” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p96).

The report should therefore provide a compelling narrative that engages the reader, not merely a report of the data.

Whilst there was some reflection on the content and process of the interviews as they were undertaken, and during transcription, formal data analysis was only undertaken on the transcripts after they had been redacted to ensure confidentiality and anonymity. The final transcripts were spaced with a wide right hand margin and 1.5 line spacing to allow notes to be made. Initially, each transcript was read through and points of interest were underlined, with notes made in the margin.

After half the transcripts had been read for a first time, half of these were re-read and a second analysis was undertaken looking particularly for common issues or points of difference. These were marked using a different colour of pen. This process continued until all transcripts had been read through twice and marked. After a re-read of the literature review and a return to the research questions, the process was then repeated for a third time for each transcript. The data of interest was extracted and presented using 'post-it' notes on a display board. Respondent numbers and page numbers were added for each instance to allow a link directly back to the data.

After several re-orderings and re-grouping of the data notes, a categorisation was developed that made sense in terms of the data, and in terms of the literature. The display board is shown as Figure 2 below. A spread-sheet of themes, codes and exemplar quotes is provided as Appendix 5, Themed participant responses, and is used extensively in Chapter 4 - Findings.



Figure 2: Representation of coding process

3.9. Quality in qualitative research and limitations of the study

What is accepted as quality research will depend on the epistemological and ontological stance adopted by the researcher. Gummesson (2006) argues that the reductionist approaches most often associated with quantitative research tend to trivialise management research by counting what can be counted, avoiding complexity, and missing the questions and issues of most relevance. While Gummesson (2006) sees part of the solution in “embracing” qualitative research (page 178), he also argues for a closer

alignment with modern natural sciences (rather than their historical forebears), which he believes take a more flexible approach to examining and understanding important social issues.

Diefenbach (2009) considers the perceived shortcomings of qualitative case study research in terms of design, data collection, the internal validity of the research, its external validity, and the extent to which such research can impact social science and social practice. He is particularly critical of the widespread use of qualitative interviews (Diefenbach, 2009). It is argued that some of those shortcomings arise from particular philosophical perspectives on the nature of science, truth and reality. Diefenbach (2009) acknowledges that, even from a position that is supportive of qualitative research, legitimate concerns about the quality and value of qualitative research need to be addressed. Johnson et al (2006) argue that the quality of qualitative research is often judged against criteria based on “positivist philosophical assumptions” (Johnson et al, 2006, p133) of validity, reliability, generalizability, objectivity, and the relationship of the researcher to the research, rather than against criteria that are appropriate to the research. Morgan and Smircich (1980) based their support for the appropriate use of qualitative research methods in the social sciences on an examination of the underlying assumptions about reality and how and what can be known about it. Their approach pre-dates the development of critical realism, and Cunliffe (2010) produces a revised approach that, whilst paying suitable homage to Morgan and Smircich, reconceptualises and adds to the framework they developed.

Whittemore, Chase and Mandle (2001) demonstrate how the concept of ‘validity’ can be applied to qualitative research. They place the criteria throughout the research process from design, through data collection and analysis, to the final report (Whittemore, Chase and Mandle, 2001). They propose credibility, authenticity, criticality, and integrity as primary criteria, and explicitness, vividness, creativity, thoroughness, congruence, and sensitivity as secondary criteria of validity. In keeping with others, their position is that it is the responsibility of the researcher to demonstrate the

research meets the criteria, rather than simply asserting validity criteria are met.

In the first editorial of a new journal devoted to qualitative methods in organization and management research, Cassell and Symon (2006) stated that they expect researchers to “account for their methodological approach” but do not expect that they will “have to defend that approach with reference to traditional positivist evaluation criteria” (Cassell and Symon, 2006, p6).

Pilnick and Swift (2010) also argue that it is the responsibility of the researcher to “demonstrate, rather than assert” (Pilnick and Swift, 2010, p209) the quality of their research. They go on to suggest that though the criteria often applied to quantitative research, validity, reliability and generalizability seem unproblematic establishing them is often more complex and imprecise than would be implied by positivistic approaches generally. They acknowledge the breadth of qualitative research and the difficulty in finding a single set of quality criteria. They do however suggest the following should be demonstrated in good qualitative research: clarity of methods of data collection and analysis, reflexivity, attention to ‘negative’ cases or data, ‘fair dealing’ in handling diverse perspectives, and the placing of the research in the existing knowledge of the topic (Pilnick and Swift, 2010). Roulston (2010) make a similar point about philosophical fit in relation to the use of qualitative research interviews.

Seale (1999) argues against the need for explicit pre-specified quality criteria for qualitative research, and argues for a conceptualisation of qualitative research as a craft skill, concerned with illuminating multiple perspectives and realities. He suggests that researchers need to,

“Develop skills from a number of genres . . . in much the same way as artists learn to paint, draw or sculpt in a number of different styles.”
(Seale, 1999, p476)

It could be argued, however, that while an artist's style and the media they work in may evolve over a career, adopting a 'Pick and Mix' approach may not lead to great art.

Tracy (2010) argues that despite philosophical diversity, inclusive quality criteria for qualitative research can be articulated that are consistent with a broad range of approaches. She states,

“High quality qualitative methodological research is marked by a worthy topic, rich rigor, sincerity, credibility, resonance, significant contribution, ethics and meaningful coherence.” (Tracy, 2010, p839)

While open to challenge, these criteria seem a reasonable starting point for evaluating this research project. This project has the potential to meet the broad quality criteria whilst remaining open to alternative explanations and competing perspectives throughout, and to clearly communicate the outcome.

3.10. Locating the researcher in the research

In keeping with the advice from du Preez (2008) about locating the researcher in the research, it is relevant to this study that the researcher held a variety of senior academic management roles in a post-92 UK university throughout the research. In adopting a critical realist stance, the researcher acknowledges the tensions between structure and agency in the context of a university, and how these might affect assumptions, beliefs and values. Being a senior university manager impacted on the research in a number of ways. It informed the topic researched, influenced the assumptions held about that topic, and about the role of managers in relation to the area of study. My roles probably made access to other senior managers more straightforward, but I am aware that the responses they gave, and the direction of the discussion, may have been shaped by their view of me as a fellow manager, rather than me as a researcher.

I believe the following reflective extract demonstrates my awareness of some of the main challenges.

“As I head towards the end of this research journey I am acutely aware of having changed. In the broadest of terms, I would suggest that I am more tolerant of difference and disagreement than I might previously have been; more critical of the contribution of ‘management’, and what might count as good management; and, more likely to listen and respond effectively to the advice, guidance and feedback of others. I am, significantly, much more aware of the contested nature of many aspects of higher education and of debates around the place of universities in society. This is particularly true of things that I might have ‘taken for granted’ when I started on the journey. I am surprised looking back at how naive and under-developed my thinking about the higher education sector was when I first applied for the DBA. I tended, for example to see issues like ‘efficiency’ as incontestable complexities simply to be managed. This was despite holding a reasonably senior management position and having had a fair amount of management and leadership development. I could not, for example, have imagined that a book with the title ‘The Triumph of Emptiness’ (Alvesson, 2013) would be a critique of higher education and a contested, but legitimate standpoint. Interestingly, as a manager, I stopped talking about ‘efficiency’ when I was appointed Dean. I knew that I’d need to work with scarce resources, but I understood much better that extolling the virtues of efficiency wasn’t going to engage the staff of the faculty in building a successful academic unit.”

4. Chapter 4 - Findings

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter, the findings from the project are presented. The practical process of analysis has been described in Chapter 3, and can be characterised broadly as thematic. In presenting the findings some selection has been made of excerpts from transcripts. The selected excerpts are illustrative of the themes, sub-themes, and categories derived from the data, and are presented as a descriptive narrative. In Chapter 5, a more discursive approach is taken to the data, but that is for later. The descriptive approach is intended to allow respondents voices to be heard, though clearly the researcher makes the selection, without overmuch interpretation. The coded outputs from analysis are presented as Appendix 5, and brief vignettes of the respondents are included as Appendix 6.

Two pieces of advice from Saldaña (2009) are acknowledged. He suggests that when there is a lot to write about, start writing about one thing at a time. He also advocates the liberal use of sub-headings to guide the reader. In fact, dear reader, the sub-headings and writing about one thing at a time are as much for the benefit of the author as the reader. It is intended to impose some order on the findings, but there is a risk that this approach will give an impression of tidiness when the reality is somewhat different.

4.2. Overview of themes, sub-themes and codes

From data analysis, four broad themes were identified: management orientation; orientation to staff and students; institutional orientation; and, student-related performance measures. These, and the related sub-themes, are illustrated in Figure 3 below. As we go through the chapter, this is further expanded to include the coding categories below the sub-themes as each theme is introduced.

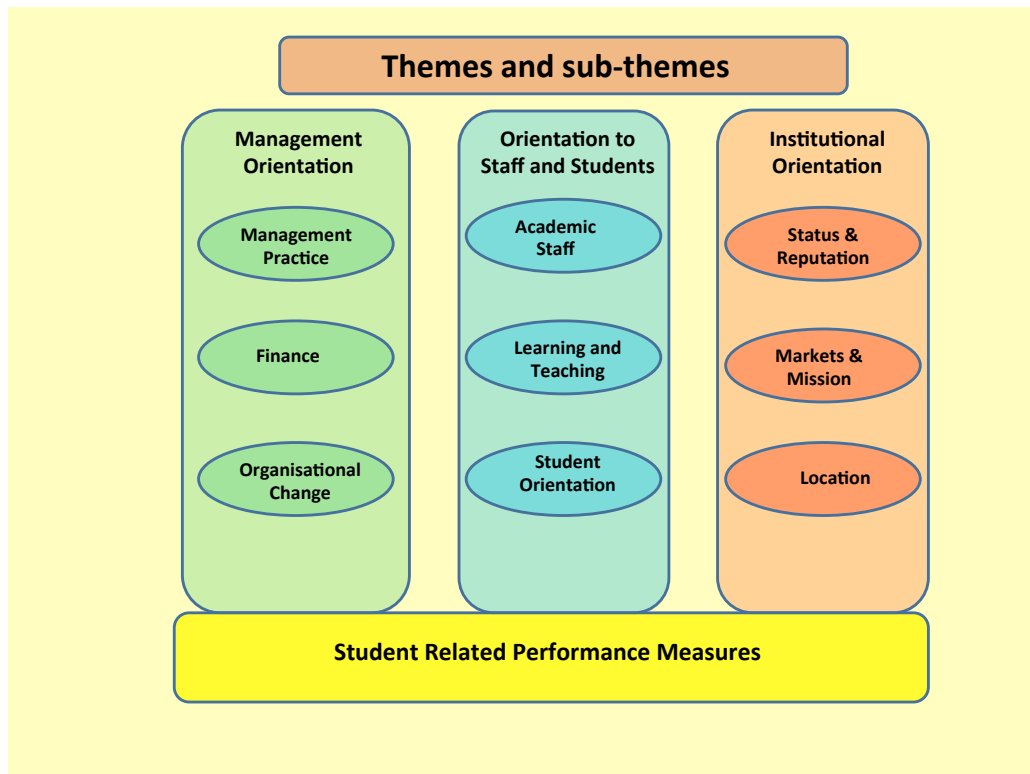


Figure 3: Themes and sub-themes

4.3. Theme 1: Management orientation

Theme 1 - Management orientation [about how the organisation is run]

- *Management practice*
Control to centre and non-academic managers; devolved decision making; management competence; disconnect with academic staff; purposeful engagement; performance indicators and performance management.
- *Financial management and investment*
Effective financial management; efficiency savings; micro-management; capital investment; risk aversion; cost control; growth.
- *Organisational change*
Consolidation of departments or disciplines; merger – with another institution; redundancy or severance; Vice-Chancellor (new).

Figure 4: Theme 1 – Management orientation

This theme is about how the university is run. Three sub-themes were identified. These are: management practice; financial management; and organisational change. In coding, a number of categories were recognised within those sub-themes. This section provides an illustration of each using direct quotes from respondents.

4.3.1. Management practice

Within this sub-theme the following coding categories were identified: control is held at the centre and by non-academic managers; devolved decision-making exists; management competence; disconnect with academic staff; purposeful engagement of management and staff; performance indicators and performance management.

A number of respondents identified a tendency for decision-making and control to rest with the university 'centre' and with non-academic managers.

"I think the strategy has been to centralise and control so that the deputy vice chancellors group which includes the VC, three DVCs and a director of services so the DVC to centralise and control everything so that they have clear oversight and control of things like admissions, international, student experience" (Respondent 6)

This centralisation was not found everywhere, with some respondents reporting more devolved decision-making.

"I would say it is much more the decision making is certainly shared or the process is shared much more than what it was say two to five years ago." (Respondent 2)

In some instances, the intention to devolve and de-centralise is evident, but cultural and historical forces within the institution undermine this.

"So it wants to be a very devolved institution. But it has a cultural tendency when things get a bit tricky to pull back into a central organisation to do more command and control but that is a wrestling match to see where it goes. It is trying to be less centralised and I

think its cultural norm still pulls it back to there and command decision making but it is trying very hard to reject that." (Respondent 10)

Some respondents were critical of the level of competence of senior managers.

"There would be some within senior management where staff really wouldn't have any confidence in and staff would openly say they held us back as an organisation and staff are quite vocal about that."

(Respondent 3)

While other respondents, who are themselves senior managers, were critical of management at different levels in the organisation.

"The people who were selected as middle managers, heads of divisions for example five or six year ago and before, many of these are struggling to become the kind of managers we need"

(Respondent 1)

A number of respondents reported a disconnection between managers and academic staff.

"There would be some within senior management where staff really wouldn't have any confidence in and staff would openly say they held us back as an organisation and staff are quite vocal about that."

(Respondent 3)

"So overall I understand the policy and the strategy for centralising and controlling in order to be swift in response to changes that need to be agile. The other part of me thinks that there is a lack of engagement with the very people who are pulling in the income which are the faculties which could avoided that under recruitment"

(Respondent 6)

A disconnect was sometimes apparent between the expectations of managers and the perceived feedback from academic staff.

"We went hi-tech so we put in all sorts of flash podiums and all sorts of exciting things and reduced time for academic staff . . . and reduced cost from a green and environmental perspective because we got rid of flip charts. Good ideas but the majority of academic staff have gone mad because they don't know how to use the stuff, they haven't been to the training that's been put on so in the short term it's a nightmare but in the long-term it will be more efficient and more effective - but it's not in the short run" (Respondent 9)

"I was just trying to think what has come back on our staff engagement survey, I think I was a bit disappointed in staff trust with senior management." (Respondent 4)

Despite the possibility for disconnection, respondents saw communicating and involving people as essential.

"Because unless you have a proper engagement and dialogue and people can clearly see that direction of travel, you can end up you know not taking the majority of staff with you." (Respondent 3)

Respondents reported a sharper focus on measurement and management of performance. This might be performance at institutional, departmental, discipline, or individual levels, or any combination of these. In some instances this was novel for that institution, and appeared to be concentrated on working together to achieve higher-level institutional outcomes.

"Much closer monitoring of performance, we have a strategic plan with performance indicators so this is pretty much revolutionary for this university. It has never had anything like that before but it is a three year rather than a five plan with very tight goals associated with it" (Respondent 7)

In other cases the focus was much more on individual performance, sometimes in the wake of a crisis in recruitment, for example, or in lieu of genuine engagement between staff and management.

"It is really an emergency situation and because it involves a degree of interrogation of what staff spend their time on that has the consequences of challenging people . . . personally" (Respondent 1)

It was also seen as a way of dealing with those who are resistant to change.

"You start as I say with the people interested and helpful but actually ultimately we are ending up using appraisal to say you know, you will go on training sessions, you will demonstrate you can do this . . ."

(Respondent 9)

Performance management, when mentioned, did seem to be about dealing with under-performance, rather than about helping people to achieve the best they could.

"You have about six objectives each year. If you persistently don't achieve those objectives without good reason you may become performance managed. If you were, if there were a lot of complaints for staff and students about you failing to be organised or delivering to an acceptable level or standard you would be performance managed"

(Respondent 6)

4.3.2. Financial management and investment

Within this sub-theme the following coding categories were identified: effective financial management; efficiency savings; micro-management; capital investment; risk aversion; cost control; and, growth.

Generally respondents reported effective financial management, often over a significant period of time.

"I would say we have a history of very good effective management and we have got a tremendous capital investment programme going on now until 2020 and we have been really successful in the way we manage and we have built up a really good surplus to help us sustain that" (Respondent 2)

Scale was seen as an important contributor to a healthy balance sheet, though there was some recognition that that might not always be enough.

"It's large and actually I think if you're run well one of the benefits of large institutions is that you've got the money coming in. So we are very large. We're financially sound but we recognise the increasing competition. 2012 . . . was a challenging year for everybody and no less challenging for us" (Respondent 9)

Sound financial management has enabled organisations to invest.

"The university, the full time I've been with it, has never had a debt which is a nice place to be and has secured investment, it longs to be able to build the infrastructure because you know the majority of the university is kind of 60's 70's buildings many of them are ex-polytechnics so there's a lot of investment going on in improving the infrastructure but there's also an enormous amount of energy been put into improving the student experience and engaging the students really positively." (Respondent 8)

But not all have taken advantage of healthy surpluses to invest in their estate.

"What we haven't done so well as a university over the last 10 years is invested in our infrastructure. We are reasonably cash rich, we've got not huge borrowing and all the rest of it, but we also have an estate that desperately needs some work done to in order to make sure that we are in line with our competitors if not better than them because that's part of what attracts students to come here and we are behind the times with that we've been too cautious." (Respondent 9)

Most respondents reported 'efficiency' as an explicit driver in their organisation. This was sometimes at the strategic level and fairly sophisticated in its manifestation.

"One of our key drivers, one of the strategic drivers is operational efficiency and effectiveness . . . as a key driving strategic outcome - is new - in the last year. It is a part of everything that we do now you know you are looking at everything to become more efficient"
(Respondent 11)

"We are continually asked to look at our margin in terms of staff return probably one of the other metrics we look at is the percentage of staff proportionate to income: staff cost versus income and that is another area looking at efficiencies. And another area is around IT and looking at a stronger and more cohesive infrastructure to help support our efficiency activity. We don't tend to talk about it in terms of a headline. We talk about it in terms of innovation, the enterprise agenda and how you continue to drive better productivity and how can you reinvest and how you can invest them into those activities that are more productive"
(Respondent 10)

Respondents did also report an implication of efficiency drives for learning and teaching.

"What we have done, and it should be easier is if we can get the new module to work easier in some respects, is look at our most expensive modules and our least expensive modules and try and see whether that is right. So you might want you research module to be your most, you know your research projects to be the most expensive module and you are fine with that. But you might look at a level four module that is actually costing too much" (Respondent 4)

It was not always clear, however, that efficiency savings were either welcomed or well understood.

"So for example we have some lean projects going on which you would know about from the health sector if nothing else and people don't understand that terminology, they don't understand what's trying to be done so they're more complicated. So everybody knows we've

got to be more efficient, more effective, better value for money, but I don't think people understand how to choose it." (Respondent 9)

The relationship between efficiency and quality or effectiveness did not always seem apparent.

"I think that effectiveness and you know whether there has been too much of a leaning to the efficiencies and maybe losing sight and maybe too much of a focus on the targets around efficiency and the impact on quality." (Respondent 3)

Some respondents reported a top-down, micro-managing approach.

"Because of the interventionist and micro-managing way that directorate work, they insist on certain decisions. And so the art of managing upwards becomes, presenting things in such a way that they think that they think they are responsible for those ideas simply because it's less likely that it will be turned down" (Respondent 1)

Generally, respondents reported their institutions as being somewhat risk averse. This was sometimes reported as conflicting with expressed values.

"We are not very risk tolerant. We have been doing some work around trying to be more risk tolerant in order to try out some brave new things but we are not, we are very risk averse. I would describe us as risk averse, although one of our values is to be creative" (Respondent 4)

While risk aversion was seen as a bit of a brake on progress it was rarely regarded as a complete block.

"And I still think that we are a little bit risk averse, well there are pockets where we have been slightly risky but as an organisation we are risk averse but that will possible slowdown some progress but I think that it is about being cautious and optimistic. Where I know some

organisations are a little bit more gung-ho and I don't think we are"
(Respondent 11)

Efforts to control costs were pretty universal. What might differentiate institutions, however, is where the responsibility for cost control lies. In some instances this is clearly with the academic units.

"I think it is wholly with academics in this institution and I think that as part of, as we call it corporate services, would prefer to have more control of that but what we did a couple of years ago was establish an academic portfolio review group which is chaired by a Dean"
(Respondent 4)

In other instances control sits more centrally, and is exerted in ways that do not always make sense to academic managers.

"We did have for how we hired hourly paid lecturers but in recent times they have decided they want to approve everything again and we are spending too much. But in fact hourly paid lecturers is a dirt cheap way of not just giving people time but those hourly paid lecturers in general are very motivated people who do more than they are asked to do. But no we don't. We have lost that as part of the effort to try and control the costs" (Respondent 1)

While growth was a driver for most institutions, the nature of that growth was complex, and might include some shrinkage of conventional provision.

"We recognise that probably that for the traditional student experience we are at the saturation point and I think if I was looking at it which I am not, I would probably look at to take on board decisions to see if sustain the size and or drop and look at quality and that is probably that we will want to considered in the near future I think so that we get the quality high. You know get the quality and say well are we slightly big and do we replace and diversify some of our traditional student

body to make space for international and post graduate" (Respondent 10)

4.3.3. Organisational change

Within this sub-theme the following coding categories were identified: consolidation of departments or disciplines; merger – with another institution; redundancy or severance; Vice-Chancellor (new).

Consolidation of departments or disciplines appears commonplace, having occurred in the recent past, planned for the future, or on-going.

"Of course we have also consolidated internally our structures so schools are merging so we have less school and so that our faculty is receding completely. I am merging with the school of health professionals this year for example we are going to triple in size" (Respondent 7)

For some institutions, and respondents, this is a recurring theme.

"We are having to make some radical decisions, not all of which are palatable to everyone. We have done a few. I have been here on my third faculty in four years in terms of restructuring and tweaking it. We don't sit that long and people get a bit change weary" (Respondent 10)

Generally, the direction of travel seems to be to reduce the number of business units, whether these are schools or faculties.

"In the last couple of years I would say no but three or four years ago the university looked at itself and sort of reduced the number of departments and we did sort of lose some staff and have compromise agreements and I think since then we have, you know the way the university works and the way each of the schools work in the university is that we are a strategic business, each school is a strategic business unit." (Respondent 2)

While institutional mergers are relatively uncommon, where they happen they do seem to have an impact on the whole organisation

"We are also merging with a smaller institution called [university]. We might take the whole thing to reorganise our administration so we will centralise more of the administration." (Respondent 1)

"This current role as head of school, I've been in this role for four years come August, and that was following sort of reconfiguration after a merger. I had previous roles like acting dean, vice dean before that." (Respondent 3)

Redundancy, early retiral or voluntary severance schemes have not been uncommon.

"I guess about sort of three years ago we did an enormous amount of work taking staff out of the university and we have other the last three maybe four years done a lot of work to stream-line the portfolio." (Respondent 4)

A common thread was that this was not simply about reducing staff numbers, but about changing the nature of the staff.

"With a reduction in undergraduate numbers we did lose staff but it was staff who were not maybe be able to move to the next level, those who could not embrace the new post-grad portfolio that included research and internationalisation." (Respondent 3)

"We were a very middling university and to be able to get people to recognise there needed to be a step change we needed to swing the pendulum quite far so there was severances voluntary severances that other people chose to leave and there was a lot of reinvestment in a different kind of academic." (Respondent 8)

The outcome of downsizing is not always what was hoped, as this respondent described in the context of a 25% reduction in central services staffing.

"Well I think my take on it, and it is my take, is while centralising professional services can work well, if you're going to do it centrally and you're going to strip out cost at the same time, and that's your driving factor, what makes it work is having good IT systems and processes which actually take on a lot of the work that people would have done and we didn't have the IT systems and processes in place before we centralised. So we centralised took out the costs, reduced the people and the rest is history as they say." (Respondent 9)

A change of Vice-Chancellor (Principal) can be the catalyst for organisational change.

"It started originally with the new Vice-Chancellor. That seems to be what they do really. The most recent change is actually with an existing vice chancellor and it is about bringing it together and what we were finding hard was getting people to work together across the schools. What we are trying to is make units better for sustainable, organisational management size so that is what the most recent move has been towards." (Respondent 4)

Though sometimes it takes a little longer for them to get into their stride.

"The VC over the last few years has come out of his box a bit and is now having meetings and indeed there was quite a great deal of opportunity to meet and discuss the new strategic plan that I was talking about across the university so there is that sort democratic approach to listening to people and he now has open meetings a few times a year and holds them on all of the sites" (Respondent 7)

4.3.4. Summary of Theme 1

Generally, respondents were reporting good financial management of their institutions, but perhaps affected by some risk aversion. Despite this, there were more mixed reviews of how institutions were run, with a number of respondents indicating top-down management, with a lack of devolved decision-making. Downsizing, at least of academic staff through redundancy or severance schemes, was not uncommon. Structural change seemed almost endemic, and was often reported as following change of institutional leadership.

4.4. Theme 2 – Orientation towards academic staff and students

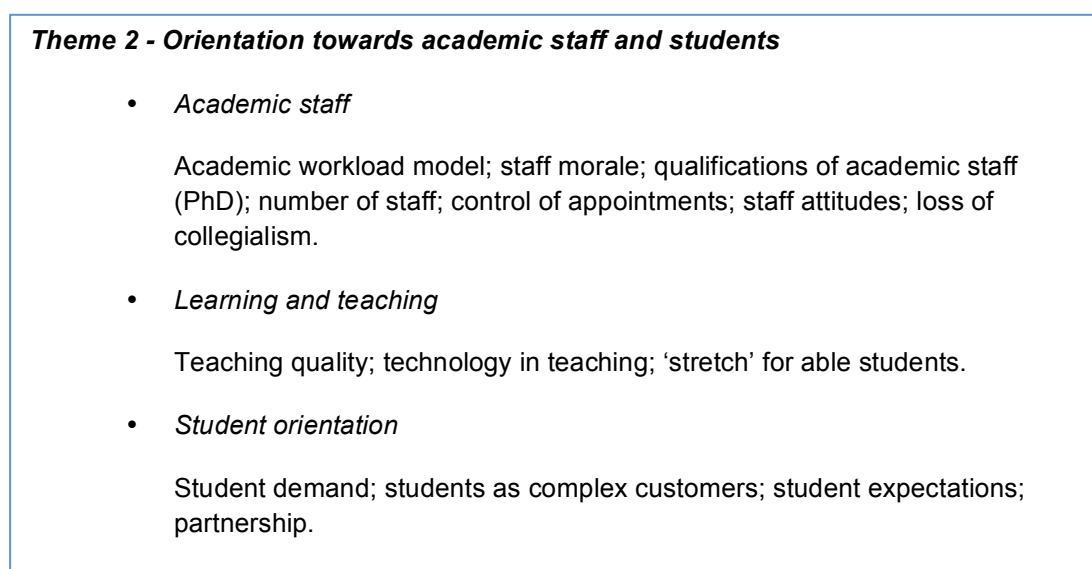


Figure 5: Theme 2 – Orientation towards academic staff and students

This theme is about how the organisation regards its academic staff and students. Three sub-themes were identified. These are: academic staff; learning and teaching; and, student orientation. In coding, a number of categories were recognised within those sub-themes. This section provides an illustration of each of these categories using direct quotes from respondents.

4.4.1. Academic staff

Within this sub-theme the following coding categories were identified: number of staff; control of appointments; qualifications of academic staff (PhD); workload model; academic staff morale; staff attitudes; loss of collegialism.

There was seldom a clear indication of whether respondents believed their domain was adequately staffed. One respondent demonstrated the paradox therein.

"I'm looking at SSR as well and does that actually work or have we got too much work and not enough staff or have we got too much workload and not enough staff" (Respondent 9)

Perhaps more frustrating was the process for replacing posts even where managers believed they had a good case.

"And part of the trouble is that they have difficulty in distinguishing good ideas from bad ideas. My view would be that they should avoid doing that altogether for example they have this monthly ceremony in what we call the 'star chamber' and they look at perhaps 60 applications from parts of the university for new lecturers or admin teams or whatever and obviously half way through that process they get pretty tired and my view is that they shouldn't be making those decisions." (Respondent 1)

In some instances, the process is acknowledged as working in favour of those areas that can justify the appointment.

"If I go back to last September to give you an example the university recruitment was sort of under than what we were expecting so there was a freeze, well there wasn't a freeze on academic posts but a central panel was set up and any post put forward was scrutinised

very closely and I have to say that we act as a corporate body and we didn't get any posts actually cut down because we did recruit well"
(Respondent 2)

Though others report growth at the centre at the expense of academic staffing.

"Well the staff resource is growing within the centralised services. But it is not growing, in fact we are always having to rationalise our staffing, within the faculties" (Respondent 6)

Whatever the position on numbers of academic staff, it is clear that many universities are re-profiling their academic workforce.

"A number of academics have gone. We haven't lost positions as the people that have gone have been replaced with a more research-intensive individual. So it hasn't been about cost saving but it is definitely been about changing the shape and culture of the academic staff" (Respondent 11)

Generally, this means more academic staff with PhDs, though this approach doesn't always have universal support even from academic managers.

"The problem we have is it that one of the universities strategies is, Vice-Chancellor Group strategies, to expand the growth in research has been to insist that no job application can go out without a PhD essential. That has created huge problems for courses like nursing."
(Respondent 6)

But the focus isn't only on PhDs; evidence of accreditation for teaching is on the agenda for some institutions.

"Looking at the academic work force the aim is to get 80% of our staff with PhD's that's a nice measureable one. To get all of our staff HEA accredited or equivalent" (Respondent 8)

Allocating academic workload is an emotive issue for some respondents.

"Oh god! Well! In life sciences I had my own informal workload model which was quite efficient and effective and that went alongside the setting of key objectives for staff for the year. We are just introducing a new workload allocation model and I have severe doubts as to how effective and certainly how efficient it is going to be. So it is trying to do the same sort of thing that we did do in life sciences but in a much more complex way and I am just wondering whether the additional complexity is really a bridge too far for us" (Respondent 4)

The workload model some institutions have seems to work for them.

"There is a workload allocation tool which having been involved in developing that type of thing in the past it is, it's fairly, not too burdensome really. We have a system which is a derivation of TRAC and its called TASS and it gets completed over periods in the year and there is an attempt to try and collapse those into one process. But when people are doing their performance review which is quite a structured process when they're doing that they have to express their percentage of workload just across the, I think, four variables which are teaching, admin, research and I can't remember the other one" (Respondent 12)

This is not however, always the case, with other universities wishing they could change the model they currently operate.

"If I'm really honest it's a total nightmare. I've used one before in my previous role and let me say for the record I am not anti-academic workload models, far from it, I think they can be very helpful, they can certainly flush out those who are significantly underworking and it can help you manage those who are significantly overworking. So in principle I am comfortable with the idea of an overarching model that helps you plan work load, I think it can be helpful but we have a model that has tied us absolutely in knots so there hasn't been any flex in the model." (Respondent 9)

The notion of a balanced academic workload, rather than an allocated workload, appears to have considerable traction in some universities.

"So rather than hours there is a concept of a balanced work load there is a whole set of principles that you would expect people to be engaged in teaching and supervision and research, consultancy, enterprise and professional practice in a way that that meets their personal skill set to the best advantage." (Respondent 8)

Though a hybrid approach to academic workload is also evident.

"So that model has been around for a while but we are now looking at establishing a new academic employment framework where previously all staff, academic staff, were entitled to 178 hours for every research or scholarly activity roughly would be about five weeks and now what the university is trying to focus it on is a 40 40 20 model. Which is 40% spent on academic research 40% learning and teaching 20% is on administration and managerial issues." (Respondent 11)

Staff morale, particularly for academic staff, appears to be mixed at both a sectoral and institutional level.

"I think people are really feeling pressurised by the work coming on and I wouldn't say that generally for the whole institution that morale is 100% or whatever that is, I think there are pockets where it is good and pockets perhaps where people are feeling the pressure a bit" (Respondent 2)

"There are some near here and I look at how adversarial the changes are and we don't seem to have that. We have a good relationship with staff body and interestingly relationship with the student union so I think in all of those the changes it would be wrong to say that change is consensual but it is driven by strong strategic mission and beliefs but seem to be good at communicating the necessity for change and

contextualising that in the external environment and people understanding and working with us." (Respondent 10)

Despite a period of significant change, there is some evidence of institutions and individuals emerging happier and more fulfilled.

"We went through a process four years ago now and we called it the big re-think because there was a culture of people who just taught, or researched and people feeling that they weren't being measured in the same sort of way and there was a kind of not an opportunity of their professional cycle as other academics at the time were structured around certain things and we deconstructed it all so now we now have a school that doesn't have a line management structure Remarkably the business still gets delivered and people are happier but some feel a bit lost in it and would like more command and control but it is the minority." (Respondent 8)

Though some hark back to 'better times.

"I can remember a time where you would be offended if someone asked you who is your line manager? Because we didn't regard those who were head of school as our line manager: we saw them as a senior academic colleague." (Respondent 1)

4.4.2. Learning and teaching

Within this sub-theme the following coding categories were identified: teaching quality; technology in teaching; 'stretch' for able students. It is worth remarking that this is probably the sub-theme with the least content. Why that might be so is an issue to revisit in Chapter 5.

One respondent, however, did believe that innovative and high quality teaching was important to university management.

"I don't think they have moved to the Oxford model with small tutorials. I think they have looked at the quality of the learning experience

particularly around centralisation and the quality of the environment for students and the quality of the teaching and the innovative teaching they think there should be for students. I think that is what they pride themselves on." (Respondent 7)

Technology in teaching and learning is sometimes seen as a bit of a mixed bag, with some recognition of it's, sometimes unfulfilled, potential.

"We do have within the university the centre for excellence for teaching and learning. They tend to be obsessed with technology. So they will say we have got money for projects you can do, you can have a couple of grand for this but it tends to be technology-based stuff. And sometimes the best teachers, for example we have a range of what we call foundation years which are level three courses as part of a four year programme and some of the best teachers, I'm using that word deliberately, on those courses don't use modern electronic, I mean they may use power-point but they don't, but actually those students need something a kin to a school environment or college environment. We do insist that every module is represented on the environment called Blackboard." (Respondent 1)

This is another area where some disconnect can be identified between the aspirations of managers and academic staff.

"We are talking a lot to our staff about flipped classrooms and trying to get the staff to think about what they use the IT for to help students prepare how they then learn in the classroom with the students what the students do beyond the session and again that's a real challenge because we can be cost effective we can be much better but the staff really struggle, not all of them but a lot are struggling with all these concepts." (Respondent 9)

While the purpose of innovation wasn't always clear, in at least one case it was about helping students achieve their full potential.

"Trying to consider approaches that would improve the effectiveness or improve the engagement of students in those modules so for example at the final year level six we have actually streamed some of the modules, but they know that. We had to, we were forced by lecture constraints to run it twice so we thought we would make a virtue of that to try and improve. We are very keen to stretch the strong students and there has been a bit of an emphasis historically on supporting the weaker students, we are very keen to stretch the strong students." (Respondent 4)

4.4.3. Student orientation

Within this sub-theme the following coding categories were identified: student demand; students as complex customers; student expectations; partnership.

Some institutions are experiencing significant changes in student demand.

"I have to say that in common with other institutions that things have changed rapidly in the finances with the sector deteriorating so much. Basically we are looking at a lack of student demand across the board really." (Respondent 1)

While others believe that they need to make internal adjustments to match student preference.

"The drive isn't to increase size but to maintain size and adjust the portfolio as the market beds in really because we know that students will start to choose different subjects or we may get exponential growth in psychology for example whereas other things like archaeology are on the way out because there aren't as many jobs associated with them." (Respondent 8)

Some universities are reported as seeing students as customers.

"The students are very much seen as a customer and everything is that the customer has to be satisfied and there is a lot of peripheral

activity to providing students with a course going on to try and make sure that they are satisfied" (Respondent 6)

Even in such institutions, however, academic managers are not always fully bought in to the concept.

"They are not really customers you can't treat them like customers and my view is that we are spending a lot of time and money on fluff but actually students don't care about it. There is a very different relationship but the word is they are our customers, if the customer isn't satisfied heads will roll" (Respondent 6)

Some respondents, however, see some value in the student as customer concept.

"I think there is more focus around them being a customer and expecting a quality provision and I think they are much more discerning students about what they should and shouldn't get and I think academics need to be clearer and at the forefront about what we are offering the students in terms of experience and to have real clarity and honesty and integrity that actually and what you are offering is a service of, X and not expecting that we are going to meet all of your needs all of the time but I do think students are becoming a lot more discerning and are asking and expecting individuals to be here but in a different way and I don't think that that is a bad thing." (Respondent 11)

Other respondents articulated more complex constructs of the student as customer, sometimes at some length.

"Clearly we have a consumer ethos that is through the sector. I think there is an uncomfortableness and yes it is something the sector is grappling with and individuals have different views. My view is that they are customers to a certain extent but I do not want a transactional relationship with them. So we, the uni, talks about not about

transaction but about transformation and it talks about how we work collaboratively to get the best experience and how we recognise and rejoice our own expertise and we recognise that students are experts on themselves but we have our own expertise in HE to offer, so in terms of allowing the customer to entirely drive the experience I do not think that we are going to go there so although the customer to have a voice as to what it should be yes but I think we are positioning that more of a partnership relationship where we engage them to have more ownership of the experience and how we can share that and I think we will invest that in customer relationship ironically as in how we know them and how we manage them and I would like us to invest more in the academic tutor role to navigate that partnership in their experience but I think we will always try to keep it on the level that we are going to work together to transform this isn't something you buy and you can't just give us 9 grand a year and expect a good degree; it doesn't work like that so we are not having a Tesco model"

(Respondent 10)

Whether or not students were regarded as customers, there was a clear motivation to take much greater account of student expectations.

"It is driving us to be a more and more looking at ways to engage with students at all levels of the institution. I think there is still a lack of understand across the broad academic staff regarding managing the expectations of students so it is not about bending over backwards and doing everything that they want but it is about their expectations and I think we still have work to do there. But at all levels whether it is the VC or porter, anyone else it is all about how we engage with the students and how we do more of it but I the way it manages their expectations but not in a way that I sets us up to fail" (Respondent 9)

In this context, it is clear that some universities are forging new and stronger relationships with students, particularly collectively through partnerships with student associations.

"I think we have a very strong focus on the students through the students association. I think we have that strong link into the whole broader area through the staff student liaison groups. So there is a good two way dialogue and I think there is a responsiveness to students and their opinions are valued, their opinions are then taking up to court level and issues are discussed at the university court"
(Respondent 3)

"The student union here is the interface between the university executive team and the student union, the whole student representation system. [name] as our student union is called they aim to be the best student union in the country and they're on a good trajectory for it, so there's an exceptional relationship and mutual respect between the university leadership and the students generally so the student experience is really positive" (Respondent 8)

4.4.4. Summary of Theme 2

Overall, respondents commonly reported some re-profiling of the academic workforce. This usually focussed on building research capacity, and with setting a PhD as the minimum entry qualification for an academic role. In the main, and there were exceptions, respondents reported relationships with students that were described in complex rather than transactional terms. A number of respondents reported well-developed or developing partnership models of student engagement. There was limited mention of teaching and learning by respondents, and this will be picked up again in Chapter 5.

4.5. Theme 3: Institutional orientation

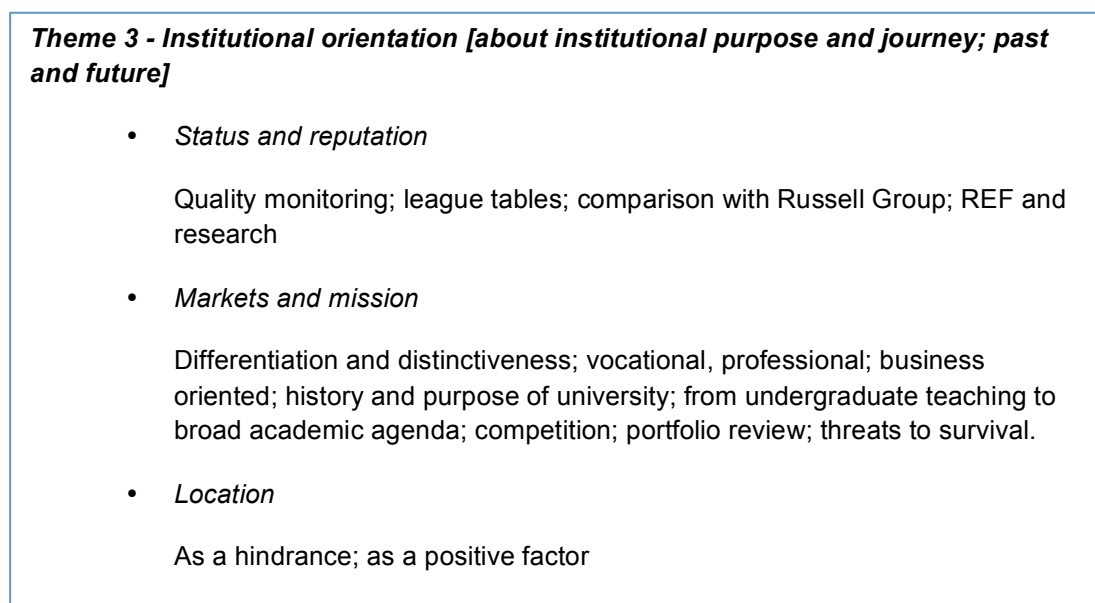


Figure 6: Theme 3 – Institutional orientation

This theme is about institutional purpose and journey, past and future. Three sub-themes were identified. These are: status and reputation, markets and mission, and, location. In coding, a number of categories were recognised within those sub-themes. This section provides an illustration of each using direct quotes from respondents.

4.5.1. Status and reputation

Within this sub-theme the following coding categories were identified: quality monitoring; league tables; comparison with Russell Group institutions; REF and research

Though ubiquitous, external quality monitoring is perhaps most intrusive when two parts of the public sector collide. In this instance, education and healthcare.

"I think in our circumstances we are quality monitored so much by three major parties: university quality, NMC, and we have the local

trust what we now call Health Education England. They all monitor us so quite a lot of the scrutiny comes from within that.” (Respondent 7)

For almost all respondents another form of external scrutiny, league tables, was high on the agenda

"And one of the strategies that we have used this year is to increase our tariffs across all of our courses which I think has been a very successful strategy . . . The anxiety they wouldn't recruit, that anxiety hasn't been realised but they are still recruiting and that increase in tariff increases your chances of having people with a 300 tariff, which allows you to expand your numbers. So one area expansion and of course that has shifted us up the league tables as well so I think that has been a really reliable strategy” (Respondent 6)

For some, this has a competitive edge to it.

"With that push towards moving and improving the collaboration and improving systems to really ensure, I mean the university I work in is going up the league tables and improving our reputation and standing" (Respondent 11)

Comparison with Russell Group universities was a recurring theme, generally in the sense of not being part of it.

"I suppose we are not a Russell Group university. Although we have got areas of research that would be Russell type for example our [subject] is one that comes to mind." (Respondent 2)

Some respondents were more and some less comfortable with that reality.

"I think there is a fine line to be trodden but we don't feel as an institution that we are the bottom of the new university pile which I guess is feeling the heat; neither, as you put it, at the top of the research intensive pile. I think that we are diverse enough that we can

steer our way through the future changes and challenges."

(Respondent 4)

"And that is related to league tables and it's the old Groucho Marx thing you wouldn't belong to a club who would have you as a member and they double entry points and the Russell group position is used as a proxy for quality. So we have no choice but to try and go up the league tables as much as we can." (Respondent 1)

For a number of respondents, the institutional orientation to research and league tables were closely related.

"We are never going to go up the league tables due to research as in REF-able research is becoming more selective not less selective, there are a few players." (Respondent 1)

"It sits in the middle of most of the league tables you know you could say that is ok and comfortable. They are not that pleased about that because we are aspirational and most certainly within its research objectives it is very aspirational" (Respondent 7)

For others, research is becoming an increasingly important part of their distinctiveness.

"I think we do see ourselves as a strong regional university with, I think we have got areas that are very strong. Certainly our research areas . . . some areas of our research is four star as they were in the last RAE. I think we see ourselves as having a bright future and I would say that that comes back to the way you are managed financially." (Respondent 2)

Some respondents report significant research investment, while acknowledging an uncertain return.

"I think it is going to be interesting regarding the Research Excellence Framework. The university has invested a huge amount of energy in

terms of making sure we put forward probably relatively small number of units of assessment but they are critical in mass and strength and I think to be honest we have done a great job of really putting our best forward but we still don't know how that will pan out in terms of funding and whether or not the big guys will get the funding in the future and that does leave the post 92s and others seriously thinking about what their portfolio will be in the future." (Respondent 8)

4.5.2. Markets and mission

Within this sub-theme the following coding categories were identified: differentiation and distinctiveness; vocational, professional; business oriented; history and purpose of university; from undergraduate teaching to broad academic agenda; competition; portfolio review; threats to survival.

Respondents report their university as taking steps to differentiate it from other universities.

"In a large number of areas we are increasingly looking at deeper partnership with whoever industry is and particularly in social enterprise. And I think we are the only university to still to get the social enterprise mark. So that is largely how we started differentiating in terms of mission." (Respondent 10)

There is sometimes a geographical element that is revealed in an expressed desire to be different from a near neighbour.

"I think that is quite clear it knows where it sits in relation to another university in the city. It doesn't see it as a competitor but it sees it working very much complimentary with that particular university but also it has very very strong links with local industry" (Respondent 12)

While others benchmark their distinctiveness against the sector.

"I guess truthfully the added dimension for me is that we do an awful lot of organisation development, service improvement and practice

development work that can be through consultancy or through student projects and so on. That adds a real robust dimension to the research and education side and it's a little bit distinctive in the sector I'd say, I'm not aware of other universities that have the same amount of activities and impact as a result of that dimension." (Respondent 8)

Some respondents see a university mission that encompasses vocational and professional programmes as a strength.

"I think and that fact we are largely vocational qualifications. That in a way strengthens our position because I know BPP, one of the private universities, has actually started a nursing course. And I am not so sure that they will be able to sustain it because the quality assurance measures are so expensive I can't imagine that they will be able to sustain that provision so I think there are certain types of provision that is so costly and requires such investment and only a big organisation can take the big numbers to justify the investment that they are going to be able to deliver" (Respondent 6)

"The university sees itself as in line with the professions. It has a number of professional regulated degree programmes so it sees itself as a modern forward thinking university." (Respondent 7)

While others report a broader, but business-facing mission.

"In [year] we won the award for the entrepreneurial university of the year. So we say we are business facing and business like" (Respondent 2)

"The strap line is you know research rich, business focused, professional university with a global reputation for academic excellence so that is the vision that we are working towards." (Respondent 11)

Respondents tended to describe the development of their university in terms of its history, and their view of what a university is.

"This university has got a very extensive community partnership programme. . . . and we believe that it should be integrated like the European model because unis came out of the trades and the guilds as part of the community and in parts of Europe they are small, and huge ones here. [University] has really centred itself around the community and what it contributes" (Respondent 7)

"So we are probably more vocational now than we were and the irony is that the papers say bring back the polytechnics and when we were a polytechnic we were just a clone of [university]" (Respondent 1)

Whatever the focus, many institutions are reviewing their portfolio.

"We have over the last three maybe four years done a lot of work to stream-line the portfolio. So where there might have been like six courses, slight variations on a theme you know we have been pulling them back to like two or three courses so still taking in the same number of students but really focussing on those courses. And then within courses we have been trying to run a more stream-line sort of module so over the last couple of years for example the life sciences integrated with the health mix, we now for example have one level four like first year physiology course across the whole of that school" (Respondent 4)

While the direction is not identical for all, there is a trend towards a broader portfolio.

(Int: with a focus on teaching and learning?) "Yes, and I think yes we want research and we want international, we want global citizenship but we must have that quality, we must have that integrity around academic standards." (Respondent 3)

And with that comes a reshaping of the profile of the academic staff.

"There has been quite a change in the academic staff the seven years I've been here but also a huge amount of development and support for

the individuals who were here to get their PhD's to get skilled in a rounded academic portfolio rather than just coming to work and teaching under grads." (Respondent 7)

Respondents suggest not all institutions are concerned with getting bigger for the sake of it.

"The drive isn't to increase size but to maintain size and adjust the portfolio as the market beds in really because we know that students will start to choose different subjects or we may get exponential growth in psychology for example whereas other things like archaeology are on the way out because there aren't as many jobs associated with them." (Respondent 8)

But some institutions are reported as struggling to attract sufficient students.

"I have to say that in common with other institutions that things have changed rapidly in the finances with the sector deteriorating so much. Basically we are looking at a lack of student demand across the board really." (Respondent 1)

A number of respondents report a competitive environment.

"It's large and actually I think if you're run well one of the benefits of large institutions is that you've got the money coming in. So we are very large we're financially sound but we recognise the increasing competition last 2012 when you see was a challenging year for everybody and no less challenging for us, but this year we've seen recovery in student number significantly" (Respondent 9)

"We have got (competitors), in different subjects, for education and sport there is the new university of [university] where we share facilities on certain things but we do compete in certain areas. We have got [university] and again it's very bespoke and that competes strongly with our arts. Direct competitor is five miles away, [Russell Group university]." (Respondent 10)

With some respondents indicating that, while they support the direction of travel for their university, the future remains uncertain.

"There is an optimism that we are heading in the right direction and we will remain buoyant but having said that no-one has a crystal ball and you don't really know how things unfold but the things that has been in the Higher the last two weeks regarding UCL and the rest. It was saying a further 800 ABB students and that is going to destabilise the sector and we need to see how that plays out over the next few years. There are other universities that will fail I think but you just never know." (Respondent 8)

None of the respondents thought their institution was at immediate risk, but a number saw real threats to survival.

"I think because we are a big university in a very popular city and we are agile and responsive we have done everything we possibly can to survive and I think we probably will. In spite of the current government and its vague policy. I think if we were in somewhere like I don't know [place] I would be saying very different, I think our biggest strength is that we are in the centre of [place] and students want to come to [place] and that in itself will ensure our survival" (Respondent 6)

4.5.5. Location

Within this sub-theme the following coding categories were identified: location as a hindrance; location as a positive factor.

Respondents tended to report their location as either strength or weakness, though it would be difficult to identify any objectivity in that evaluation. The value of place perhaps being related to how well things are going more generally.

"We happen to have a wonderful location no two ways about it and I think others have struggled this and last year due to recruitment numbers we are ok we have met, we were down last year but so was everyone but we met our target" (Respondent 8)

Though some feel they are doing well despite their location.

"It has got to be a hindrance. If I am honest it is a two edged sword. I would say that there is a lot of benefits, it is a nice . . . city. There are some nice bits; some bad bits and is near [place]. For those who want the lifestyle it is a boon, but I think the government investment into the [region] . . . is appalling" (Respondent 10)

4.5.4. Summary of Theme 3

Respondents commonly reported significant institutional energy and effort being expended trying to manage and improve their status and reputation. Their relationship to research and the place of research in the university mission was commonly referred to. Comparisons were sometimes drawn with an acknowledged peer group, and critically with the Russell Group of 'elite' universities. Respondents reported their university as differentiating themselves from competitors. While some respondents focussed on local competition, others saw this as at least national. Geography and location was regularly, but not universally, identified as a benefit.

4.6. Theme 4: Student related performance measures

Theme 4 - Student related performance measures

Employability, retention, National Student Survey (NSS), accessibility and diversity

Figure 7: Theme 4 – Student related performance measures

Within this theme the following coding categories were identified: employability; retention; National Student Survey (NSS); accessibility and diversity.

Respondents commonly reported a strong orientation to helping their graduates into work.

"It's a new university, it's very applied in its nature so its whole focus is about application, enabling graduates to be ready for the world of work employability at the heart of all that we do" (Respondent 9)

"You know this university doesn't see itself as an ancient or as [university] wants to see itself as the university that's got a focus and you know . . . that employability across the whole university is one of its key goals really." (Respondent 12)

Retaining students to successful completion is reported as a priority, and celebrated when achieved.

"It is still I think that 94-95% of our student that come through from the lower social-economic classes are actually completing which is a phenomenal achievement" (Respondent 10)

Though it is not going well everywhere.

"I think that with health and social work students and education, the staff have done everything possible to keep them here on the programme, and supporting them and understanding their needs.

Where I think the traditional student is . . . maybe the support, the facilitation, could have been stronger." (Respondent 11)

Similarly, performance on the NSS is sometimes seen as providing useful feedback and a stimulus to improvement.

"I think the sorts of things around learning and teaching have been more driven around the NSS than the customer culture if you like. We have a kind of strategic focus student centred learning and trying to improve that and for the learning and improve the resources to be offered to students." (Respondent 4)

Particularly, perhaps, in institutions that had felt fairly comfortable until faced with the evidence.

"A bit of a self-congratulatory between you and me that "we're doing fine, we don't need to worry about this" whereas truthfully the evidence wasn't that strong with things like the NSS and so on we were a very middling university and to be able to get people to recognise there needed to be a step change we needed to swing the pendulum quite far" (Respondent 8)

Some respondents reported the centrality to their mission of making higher education accessible to the broadest possible range of students.

"It is a diverse institution. We have students from like 150 countries but also very diverse sector within the UK as well. Students from ethnic groups tend to feel very comfortable here and I think that probably drives you to understand that we are really diverse." (Respondent 4)

4.6.1. Summary of Theme 4

Reports of a focus on externally moderated and measured student-related performance were ubiquitous. Some institutions are reported as having used

these to promote strengths and celebrate success. Others have used the feedback on performance to question narratives of success.

4.7. Summary of Chapter 4

In this chapter the findings of the research project have been presented, largely through the respondents' own words. A thematic approach had been taken to data analysis, and the broad themes and sub-themes have been described here. The themes identified were management orientation, orientation to staff and students, institutional orientation, and student related performance measures. In Chapter 5, the themes will be revisited in the context of the literature, and the relationship between themes identified from the data and themes identified for the literature will be compared and contrasted.

5. Chapter 5 - Discussion and Evaluation

5.1. Introduction

In this chapter, the themes identified in the literature are revisited in the context of the findings, and the findings presented in Chapter 4 are set in the context of the literature. A number of themes, relevant to this study, were drawn from the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. These were: definition of concepts; management and leadership practice; the limitations of management; and, the student relationship. The themes are considered here in the context of the findings. Additionally, through data analysis, four broad themes were identified: management orientation; orientation to staff and students; institutional orientation; and, student-related performance measures. These themes were presented in Chapter 4, and this current chapter moves from description to discussion, identifying patterns and surprises in the data, and searching for coherence, consistency and inconsistency. In this chapter the relationships between the themes and broad research questions identified as emerging from the literature and the themes arising from the data are also examined.

Following the presentation of comparative participant profiles, the relationship to an idealised profile based on the assumptions underlying the broad research questions is explored. The implications for management practice in universities are also considered.

5.2. Themes identified in literature

In the context of the overall aim and objectives of the research study a number of themes, emerging from the literature, were identified as relevant to this study. Broad research questions were generated from these themes and these are also discussed in this context. The themes, *definition of concepts*, *management and leadership practice*, *the limitations of management*, and *the student relationship*, were initially elucidated in Chapter 2, and are

summarised below. The broad research questions also presented there are reiterated and further explored.

- *Definition of concepts*

Terms such as efficiency, effectiveness and quality are used inconsistently and without precision, but this will not be resolved simply by better definition. Technical definitions do exist for these concepts, but that is not how the terms seem to be used in policy pronouncements or within universities where rhetorical and metaphorical use predominates. The broad research question linked to this theme asked whether efficiency, effectiveness and value for money are part of the everyday considerations of managers? (UUK, 2011; UUK, 2015).

The findings of the study are consistent with the notion that efficiency and effectiveness are used rhetorically. Respondents appeared to use the terms in a conversational, rather than a technical sense. Only one participant mentioned value for money, and that was in the sense of students expecting value for money, rather than in the context of the university providing it. Only one respondent linked the concepts of efficiency, effectiveness and quality (Cohen and Nachmias, 2006), and none linked efficiency and effectiveness with value for money, despite the ways it has been defined in HE policy contexts (Barber, Donnelly and Rizvi, 2013; NAO, 2015).

There was no mention of efficiency or effectiveness in the context of the relationship with government or its agencies despite similar Scottish Government (SG, 2013) and HEFCE (2015) communications with universities in the respective nations. In terms of compliance with government expectations, widening access was identified as a major issue by a majority of respondents. The establishment of a competitive market for students, and the removal of the cap on AAB ABB students in England, as part of more general marketization also loomed large – but not efficiency. Two participants, however, expressed concern that the focus on efficiency undermined effectiveness in their organisation, which is in line with the argument presented by Kenny (2008).

There was no common use of the terms efficiency and effectiveness, which relates to the argument that there is a failure to apply clear and consistent definitions of efficiency (Kosor, 2013). A couple of respondents, for example, noted a notional measure of income per academic, but one would need to work through how these terms are used in a specific university context to understand their meaning in context, which appears to be largely figurative.

- *Management and leadership practice*

Higher education has multiple stakeholders whose interests are different, sometimes conflict, and which defy simple resolution, creating tension in the system. The environment is dynamic rather than static, and management practice is characterised by complexity, ambiguity and uncertainty. The broad research questions linked to this theme asked whether post-92 universities are driven by their values and mission, rather than by the whim of public policy. (Shattock, 2010) and, whether post-92 universities are avoiding the “dirty dozen” indicators of reduced performance. (Cameron and Smart, 1998; Ashraf and Kadir, 2012).

Participant responses indicated some sense of the complexity, ambiguity and uncertainty associated with managing a university in today’s economic and political climate, though this was mixed. Some respondents appeared to be seeking stability, and were perhaps more focussed on survival than on higher aspirations. They could be seen as clinging to the left-hand side of McCullough and Faught’s (2014) ‘paradoxes of organisational effectiveness’ which was presented as Table 2 in Chapter 2, Section 2.2.2. Based on analysis and interpretation of participant responses, only five institutions were wholly or mostly avoiding the indicators of decline, whilst another five were close to achieving the full set.

- *The limitations of management*

It is argued that the best good management can do is provide an appropriate environment for good teaching and research, but cannot deliver it (Shattock, 2003; Shattock, 2013; Yorke, 2000). Poor management can damage that

environment and lead to decline. The broad research question arising in this theme asked whether managers are,

“Providing the conditions in which teaching and research can flourish?” (Shattock, 2003, page ix).

This theme is differentiated from the previous by its focus on teaching and research performance, rather than other institutional criteria such as financial stability. While Shattock (2003) provides a recipe for good institutional management, the evidence on which it is based is now, perhaps, both a little dated and focussed to a greater extent than is helpful here on pre-92 universities. He also gave considerable weight to RAE, now REF, outcomes and league table rankings as indicators of success (Shattock, 2003). Almost all respondents in this study had a focus on relative league table position, but not all seemed to be clear about the factors that led to their current ranking nor a coherent plan to address it. There was a tendency for participants to compare their institutional performance with Russell group universities, sometimes where this comparison was least realistic.

There is no objective basis by which to judge participants responses in this area, but it was noticeable that, in general, responses were much more heated about developing an institutional research profile than about learning and teaching. Eight of the respondents, however, told a fairly positive and convincing story about the extent to which the focus of the university was on delivering good teaching and improving research. They were also able to articulate that management activity, including at the highest levels was aligned to this. While none of the respondents indicated they had no focus on an academic agenda, there were three respondents where the institutional focus, for various reasons, seemed to be elsewhere. In the majority of institutions, there was some interest in the use of measures of performance and performance indicators (Taylor, 2001). It did appear that respondents from institutions that, by self-report, were finding things most difficult tended to see this explicitly as dealing with poor performance. There

seemed more of a focus on understanding performance and pushing for improvement in institutions that were reported as doing well.

- *Bounded academic and management communities*

While many of the concepts considered in this chapter are contested, including the purpose of a university, a university's academic and management communities are interdependent and require a bounded resolution to points of difference, though they may not themselves identify that constraint. The broad research question associated with this theme asked whether tensions are evident that might be characterised as between managerial and collegial standpoints (Deem, Hillyard and Reed, 2007; Kligyte and Barrie, 2011).

While 7 of 12 participants painted a picture that would suggest that such tensions were absent or well managed this was not always the case. 5 of 12 respondents indicated that tension was present, with one respondent relating something close to open conflict as their current institutional norm. Evidence of bounded relationships between management and academic communities was not always evident, with some examples of dysfunctional relationships that suggested this concept wasn't well understood.

- *The student relationship*

The claims made about the place of students in higher education are important. Students are variously viewed as customers, clients or co-producers (amongst others), and how this relationship is described relates to a standpoint on the wider discourses in and about higher education and society. This led to asking whether students are considered as customers, and, if they are, whether this is considered a complex rather than a transactional relationship (Eagle and Brennan, 2007). Additionally, a related question asked whether 'customers' is used rhetorically, and if other metaphors are prevalent. (Cochoy, 2005; Tight, 2013).

There were very mixed responses with regard to the notion of students as customers, with some very polarised views expressed on both sides of the argument. There was some evidence that most respondents held a nuanced view of the student as customer metaphor, even where the institutional pattern was more extreme. All but one respondent reported at least some alternative metaphor, with 9 of 12 reporting a relationship that involved some form of partnership or co-production in learning.

5.3. Themes identified through data analysis

Four broad themes were identified through data analysis, and these have been described in Chapter 4. The themes identified were: *management orientation*; *orientation towards academic staff and students*; *institutional orientation*; and, *student related performance measures*. These themes, and related sub-themes, are considered in turn here.

5.3.1 Theme 1 - Management orientation

This first theme is about how the organisation is run and includes three sub-themes: management practice; financial management and investment; and, organisational change.

It is here that one might expect to see indicators of institutional effectiveness (Cameron and Smart, 1998), or evidence of managerialism (see for example, Deem and Brehony, 2005; Gruening, 2001; Jamieson and Naidoo, 2004) and potentially how these challenges are being managed. It is also here that at least part of the prescription for surviving an economic downturn can be tested. That is, a “well-balanced budget” and “not overly dependent on the whims of public expenditure policies” whilst being able to maintain a focus on teaching and research and sustaining organisational optimism (Shattock, 2010, page 28 -29).

1a Management practice

Included in this sub-theme were issues such as a tendency for control to be held at the centre, perhaps by non-academic managers. In contrast with this are situations where decision-making is devolved. Other topics that were raised were the relationship between senior managers and academic staff, which ranged from purposeful engagement to being disconnected. The use of performance indicators and performance management were also covered here.

Questions were raised by four respondents about the competence and capability of managers, particularly the ability of senior and middle managers to cope with changing needs and expectations. Those respondents also identified a gap between management and the academic community in their institution. There was specific mention of a disconnection between academic staff and managers by 5 respondents. This is consistent with Cameron and Smart's (1998) model of reduced institutional effectiveness, with two of the twelve indicators being the scapegoating of leaders and managers and loss of leadership credibility. About half of the respondents did talk about devolution of authority, though this was not always achieved, despite the best intentions of senior university management, particularly when unforeseen difficulties had to be faced. This is consistent with typical pattern of risk aversion that is a defining feature of new managerialism (Lapsey, 2009)

Performance management is evident in most organisations, though the particular shape that takes is quite varied. For some it is about much clearer organisational plans and measures, where for some the focus is more clearly on individual performance. In the main this is a recent and changing focus, and might be considered as having the potential to contribute to good management, particularly at school or faculty level (McCormack et al, 2014).

1b Financial management and investment

This sub-theme was largely concerned with financial matters including reports of effective financial management, cost control and efficiency. Also included were micro-management and risk aversion, where these related to

finance. An intention to grow and a commitment, or otherwise, to capital investment also fits here.

All respondents mentioned effective financial management, with good systems of cost control in place in their institution. This is consistent with Grant Thornton's (2014) report on the overall financial health of the sector, and reflects a longstanding concern with cost control in higher education (Balderston, 1974; CVCP, 1985; UUK, 2011, UUK, 2015). Achieving efficiency and keeping costs under control was part of the everyday decision-making for most respondents. One respondent reported the use of 'lean' approaches to improving efficiency (see for example, Comm and Mathaisel, 2005 & 2008; Radnor and Walley, 2008). Another respondent mentioned that a nominal level of income per academic had been set as a measure of productivity. None of the respondents, however, reported efforts to apply technical measures of efficiency locally, so perhaps the term efficiency is being used rhetorically. This would be consistent with Kosor's (2013) observation that managers tend to use the concept in a variety of inconsistent ways.

For 7 of 12 respondents, efficiency and cost-control seemed to represent just one of the challenges in managing well. On the other hand, for a smaller number (3), the measures deployed locally were felt to be micro-managing, and undermining of effectiveness. This is consistent with the findings of Kenny (2008), who points to institutional approaches where efficiency drives undermine effectiveness. This micro-managing tendency was particularly highlighted by respondents in the context of staff appointment and replacement, and may indicate a lack of trust between senior managers and academic business units. While there were reports of investment in buildings and infrastructure for the future, this wasn't universal even for universities that were reported as holding significant cash reserves. This may reflect the risk aversion predicated as strongly associated with NPM (see, for example, Jamieson and Naidoo, 2004; Lapsley, 2009).

1c Organisational change

This sub-theme covered such issues as consolidation of academic departments or disciplines, merger with another institution, and redundancy or severance schemes.

Half of the twelve respondents mentioned recent organisational change or restructuring of academic departments. This was often linked with the arrival of a new Vice-Chancellor, and some respondents reported multiple restructuring in quick succession. A high frequency of change would have been anticipated from findings that recent restructuring of the main academic units is now ubiquitous in post-92 institutions and prevalent in all universities (Hogan, 2012; Shattock, 2013). Indeed it is perhaps on the lower side of what might have been expected, however, respondents were not specifically asked about restructuring and it cannot be concluded that none took place in organisations where respondents did not mention it. Two respondents mentioned mergers with other institutions as a trigger for internal reorganisation of academic and university services units. Mergers remain relatively uncommon in higher education, so this is as many as might have been expected (UUK, 2009).

Five of the twelve respondents reported redundancy or severance schemes, either to generate financial savings, to redesign services, or to reshape the academic workforce. There were very limited reports of investment in academic staff, usually following a severance scheme, with almost all respondents reporting downwards pressure on staffing. This is consistent with the claim that downward pressures on lecturer-student contact time continue as universities focus on cost-containment (Kenny, 2008; Yeo, 2009). Generally, respondents reported these measures as a necessary, but disruptive, management response to external pressures such as demands for efficiency savings or reduced student enrolments. On their own, the use of such schemes says little about the health of any particular institution, but they can be indicators of downsizing in decline (Cameron and Smart, 1998; Ashraf and Kadir, 2012) or of a managerialist orientation (Deem and Brehony, 2005; Diefenbach, 2009a; Kenny, 2008).

5.3.2. Theme 2 - Orientation towards academic staff and students

This second theme is about relationships with and between institutional management and the academic community of staff and students and includes three sub-themes: academic staff; learning and teaching; and, student orientation.

2a Academic staff

Contained in this sub-theme were issues such as whether there was a local or institutional academic workload model and how it was received. Also covered were managers' reports of staff morale, staff attitudes, and whether there was a loss of collegialism. The relative number of staff, their academic qualifications at entry, particularly including a PhD as a requirement, and how appointments were controlled, were also topics that are incorporated here.

Most participants reported the use of an academic workload model, though these varied from local school-based models to all-encompassing university wide approaches. Our interest here is not in the detail of any models, but about how it fits into the relationship between the academic manager and the managed academic. Varying degrees of success were reported, with at least a suggestion that the more detail that was specified in the model the less they achieved their desired effect. A broader notion of a balanced academic workload based on high-level proportions of teaching research and academic citizenship appeared to have merit for some respondents. One respondent reported that their V-C was absolutely opposed to the use of an academic workload model, as he believed that such an approach fundamentally undermined the academic role. Workload models appeared to be connected to both discussions about efficiency and to discussions about redefining the academic role. This redefinition was usually to include research as a core part of every academic's role, where this had not previously been the norm.

It seems that it is not in the existence or otherwise of a workload model that we will find the elixir for harmonious relationships, but in how the inherent

tensions are resolved. The issues raised about workload map on to some of the debates about managing in a university context surfaced by, for example, Alvesson and Sveningsson (2003), Deem and Brehony (2005) and Segal (2011). They also have resonance with McCormack et al's (2014) finding that management can make a difference to departmental (school or faculty) performance.

2b Learning and teaching

Participants said relatively little about learning and teaching. This is perhaps unsurprising given the observation that the focus of academic managers, though greater in post-92 institutions, tended not to be on student learning (Deem et al, 2007) but on resources and finance. This sub-theme did, however, include teaching quality, technology in teaching, and the notion of 'stretch' for able students. Alarm bells should perhaps be ringing when considered in the context of Shattock's warning that the institutions that would cope best in difficult economic times were those able to maintain a focus on their academic agenda (Shattock, 2010).

Relatively few respondents considered learning and teaching as an area where efficiencies could be found, the only mention of technology-enhanced learning being in the context of improving the student experience. For four respondents, however, there had been recent focus on reviewing the academic portfolio with the intention of creating efficiency in the delivery of teaching. Balanced against this was a desire not to reduce further the face-to-face time students had with academic staff, as there was a concern that it may impact on student satisfaction, which fits with recent reports (Barber, Donnelly & Rizvi, 2013) and responds to the concerns of others (Kenny, 2008; Yeo, 2009). The competitive battle for students and NSS scores seemed to be stronger drivers of management behaviour than efficiency when it came to addressing learning and teaching, which is consistent with the adoption of a market orientation by universities (Athiyaman, 1997; De Shields et al, 2005; Angell et al, 2008; Voon, 2006; Gibbs, 2008)

2c *Student orientation*

Participants generally saw themselves as involved in a competitive market for students. Wide swings in student applications and recruitment were reported, with some respondents expressing considerable concern about their organisation's ability to continue to attract students. This is causing some universities to review the mix of subjects they offer.

A full range of views on the extent to which students are considered customers were expressed. For some respondents, students are definitely customers, for others they are definitely not. For yet others, the relationship between student and university was seen as a more complex. This reflects the debates in the literature, with strong views expressed for (Angell et al, 2008; Navarro et al, 2005) and against (Svensson and Wood, 2007; Diefenbach, 2009a; Fountain, 2001; George, 2007; Naidoo and Jamieson, 2005) the student-as-customer concept, while others prefer a position that acknowledges the complexity of the relationship (Eagle and Brennan, 2007; Gabbott et al, 2002). Even where the dominant institutional metaphor was reported as students being customers, not all respondents accepted the university rhetoric on this issue. This is consistent with findings, reported by Deem (2007) and Deem and Brehony (2005), that academic managers were reluctant adopters of the trappings of new managerialism, and perhaps fits with Teelken's (2012) finding that academic staff simply pay no heed to the bits of managerialism they don't like.

Generally, and it would seem particularly where a simple student concept was rejected, there was considerable institutional effort in developing stronger, partnership relationships with students – individually and collectively. This would appear to be much more in keeping with participatory and collaborative approaches to the delivery of public services such as New Public Governance (NPG) than the customer orientation that, at least in part, defined New Public Management (NPM) (Bao et al, 2012; Bryson et al, 2014; Delbecq et al 2013; Farrell, 2010; Hill, 2014; McCulloch, 2009).

5.3.3. Theme 3 - Institutional orientation

This third theme is about institutional purpose and history. It includes how the university sees itself in comparison with other universities and colleges, and how managers view that relationship.

3a Status and reputation

Included within this sub-theme are issues such as external monitoring of quality and comparative league table position. Respondents tended to compare themselves, unfavourably, with Russell Group universities. This comparison was usually on the basis of the quality of research, as measured by REF, and the entry qualifications of students.

There was also limited mention of quality assurance, except in the context of external measures and indicators such as league tables. So while considerations of quality may drive manager behaviours (Jarvis 2014; Lucas, 2014), it does not appear to be based on technical measures of quality (Eagle and Brennan, 2007). This relates to the theme from data about how concepts are used discursively in universities, which tends to be figurative, rather than based on any technical definition. Arguably, figurative use supports the 'taken-for granted' approach to asserting the primacy of contested concepts that some see as prevalent in managerialism (Alvesson, 2013; Ek et al, 2013).

3b Markets and mission

Again, most respondents display a marked sense of their institution being in a competitive market. The nature of that market was markedly different for different institutions. Respondents variously reported being in competition with other local universities, or similar institutions, or around particular subjects. In the main this was seen as healthy, though two respondents indicated they believed that other institutions they were aware of would fail. One respondent believed that their university was at serious risk of losing the competitive battle to attract students.

From participant reports, significant efforts are being made by some institutions to differentiate themselves and provide a distinctive mission or purpose. There was considerable variation in expressed purpose and mission, which include vocational, professional, and business oriented approaches. Respondents generally place the institutional mission in the context of the history and purpose of the university, and it's local or regional economic and social context. Most respondents reported some form of review of their academic portfolio for a range of expressed reasons. Those reasons include remaining attractive to students, ensuring programmes are relevant to local business, creating time for research, and strengthening post-graduate programmes. These features fit with claims around increased marketization of higher education (De Shields et al, 2005; Angell et al, 2008; Voon, 2006; Gibbs, 2008).

3c Location

Geography was mentioned by most respondents, and was characterised as both help and hindrance. This was not a theme that had been identified in the literature, and was used by respondents to explain institutional performance and aspirations. Respondents expressed views on the strengths and weakness of city centre and out of town campuses, single and multiple sites in a single city, and campuses over a number of towns or cities. Whether any particular configuration was seen as help or hindrance appeared to be more related to the perceived overall performance of the institution, rather than any objective effect of the locale. Whatever the configuration, successful universities, as perceived by the respondents, were making the best use of their location and were engaged and embedded in it. This is in keeping with the view of Gibb et al (2012) of the potential contribution of universities to local and regional development. There was not much further discussion of the impact of location in the literature reviewed, although Shattock (2003) points to an institution's location as a potential constraint on university ambition.

5.3.4. Theme 4 - Student related performance measures

The fourth theme, measures of student performance, covers issues reported by respondents such as employability, student retention, the National Student Survey (NSS), wider access and diversity of the student body. A number of these measures are externally reported and contribute to league tables. They are also likely to feature in institutions own internal performance indicators, and in strategic dialogues they may have with government or funding bodies where these still take place.

It is little surprise that these measures loom large in the minds of senior academic managers. Such measures are central to debates on the value for money of higher education (Barber et al, 2013). They are also related to considerations of relative quality, and are therefore likely to influence management behaviour (Jarvis, 2014; Lucas, 2014). It is also possible that arguments about the purpose and public value of higher education surface these measures as points of tension (Holmwood, 2011).

5.4. Relationship between themes from the literature and themes from the data

It might be argued that the same themes should be uncovered in both literature and data, but there are many reasons why things might be packaged and presented differently in literature and in senior managers' accounts of local institutional practice. Neither literature nor respondent accounts can be uncritically accepted as representations of an objective reality. Respondents were senior university managers, and therefore were likely to have some shared experience and an overlapping perspective, even from different organisations. The research interview, as described in Chapter 3, may also involve the active presentation and re-creation of self. What gets into the literature will depend on journal editorial approaches, which may preference some standpoints over others, and tend to apply a level of abstraction that differentiates literature from personal accounts. Figure 8, below, demonstrates the links between the themes from the literature and from the data.

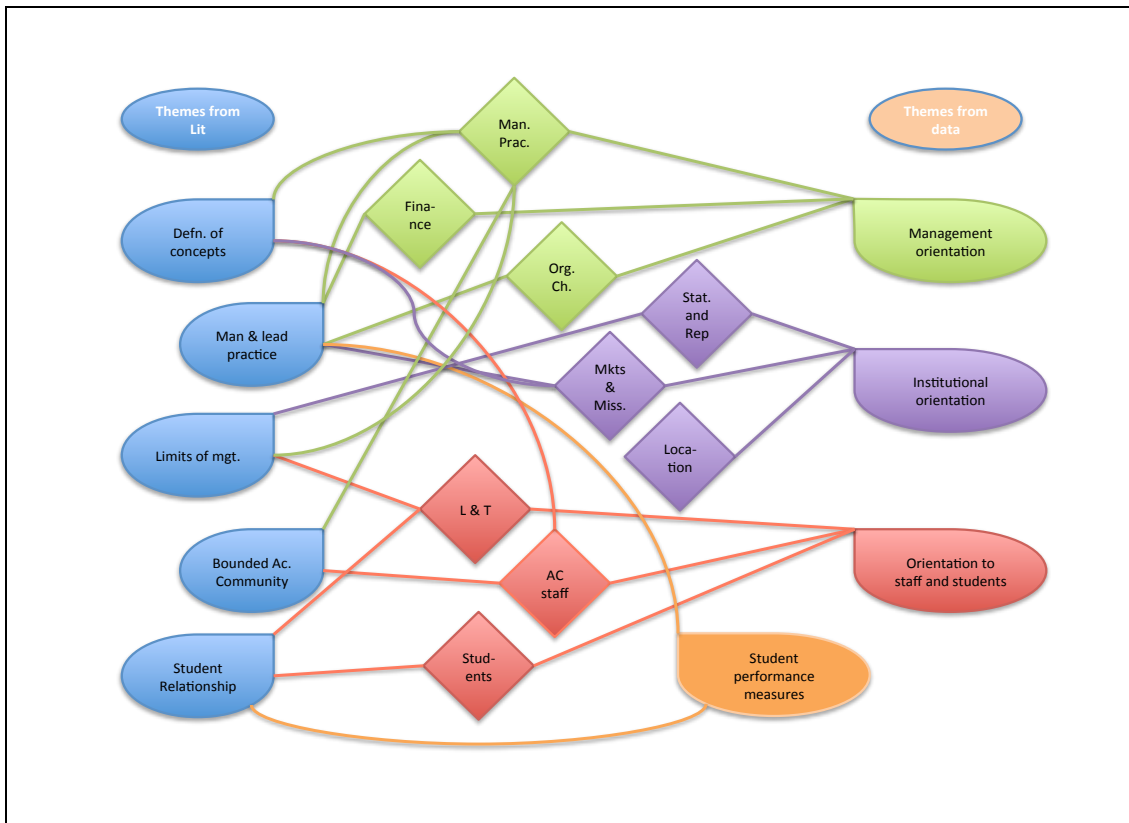


Figure 8: Relationship between themes from literature and from data

5.5. Patterns, links and interactions in the data

The search for patterns, links and interactions in the data starts at an examination of the patterns of response from individual participants. The broad research questions are used as a structure for comparing responses. Participants were not asked these questions directly, and Figure 9 therefore provides an interpretation by the researcher based on a full analysis of each transcript.

Comparative participant profiles					
	Yes	Tendency to yes	Partly	Tendency to no	No
Are efficiency, effectiveness and value for money part of the everyday considerations of managers?	1,2,5,9,11	4	3,6,8,12	7,10	
Is the university driven by its values and mission, rather than by the whim of public policy?	2,5,7,8,10	4,9,11,12		3,6	1
Is the university avoiding the “dirty dozen” indicators of reduced performance?	5,8	7,11,12	2,10	1,3,4,6,9	
Are managers “providing the conditions in which teaching and research can flourish?”	8	1,2,5,7,10,12	6,11	3,4,9	
Are tensions evident that might be characterised as between managerial and collegial standpoints?	6	1,3,4,11		2,7,8,9	5,10,12
Are students considered as customers?	6,7,11	4,10	9,12	2	1,3,5,8
Are other metaphors for the student relationship prevalent?	8	1,2,3,4,5,9,10,12		7,11	6

Figure 9: Comparative participant profiles

It may be helpful to the reader to consider the individual respondent vignettes provided in Appendix 6 at the same time as the comparative profiles, as this paints a richer picture of each participant and their university. It is important

to emphasise, however, that the profiles provided comparatively in Figure 9, and individually for each participant as Appendix 7, are drawn directly from the primary interview data and analysis.

It is interesting to observe that scores are widely spread for most questions, although the assumptions that underlie the broad research questions would lead to certain expectations of patterns of response. In relation to the first question, it would be reasonable to expect a degree of management focus on efficiency and effectiveness in a high performing organisation. This is based on the emphasis found in the literature on controlling costs, sound financial health as a foundation for institutional success, and the centrality of efficiency and effectiveness to the relationship with government (Balderston, 1974; JNCHES, 2011; Grant Thornton, 2014; Havergal and Morton, 2015; HEFCE, 2015; Johnson and Deem, 2003; Kenny, 2008; Yeo, 2009; Shattock, 2003; Shattock, 2010; UUK, 2011; UUK, 2015; PA Consulting, 2014; SG, 2013). All but two participants indicated at least some management focus on efficiency and effectiveness in their institution, with around half indicating that it was part of the everyday consideration of managers.

Similarly, in relation to the second broad research question, it could be anticipated that a university that was performing well would be largely driven by its own values and mission, rather than by the whims of public policy (Shattock, 2010). This element of the profile was considerably more polarised than the first, with three participants providing responses that would suggest they, and their institutions, felt at the mercy of volatile and uncertain public policy.

The third research question is concerned with whether the university is avoiding the “dirty dozen indicators of reduced performance. Again, it would seem reasonable to anticipate that higher performing universities would be avoiding the characteristics of institutional decline, illustrated in Table 1, page 23, and would be coping well with the paradoxes of organisational effectiveness, illustrated in Table 2, page 25 (Cameron and Smart, 1998; Ashraf and Kadir, 2012; McCullough and Faught, 2014). This does seem to

differentiate between two groups of respondents, with five respondents reporting a significant number of the indicators of decline in their institution.

With regard to the next research question, which asks whether managers are providing optimum conditions for teaching and research, a comparable expectation can be held. Logically, one would anticipate a greater focus on the academic agenda in universities that are, or are becoming, successful (Deem and Brehony, 2005; Shattock, 2003; Shattock 2010; McCormack et al, 2014). The interpretation of responses here elicits a spread, with most towards what might be considered the healthier end of the scale. It is not possible, on the basis of the analysis of participant responses, to reach a judgement here on the extent to which the reported institutional position, for good or ill, reflects management action.

Tensions arising from conflicts between managerial and collegial standpoints may undermine staff morale, and dissipate energy in both management and academic communities that could be more beneficially expended for personal and organisational return. An absence of such tensions could therefore be assumed to be positive in a university environment (Deem, 2010; Shattock, 2010; Delbecq et al, 2013; Braun, 2014; McCormack et al, 2014).

Responses here were somewhat polarised, with five respondents reporting tensions of this kind and seven reporting an absence of conflict or minimal tension.

Finally, there was a very wide range of responses relating to the questions concerned with the relationship with students. Given the diversity of responses, it is unlikely that this theme is a strong indicator of a managerialist standpoint, or contributes directly to university success. It can, however, feed into other discourses that underpin managerialism and may be relevant in a specific context (Cochoy, 2005; George, 2007; Naidoo and Jamieson, 2005; Freeman and Thomas, 2005; Tight, 2013). The majority of respondents reported alternative metaphors alongside, or in place of, students as customers. Some of the alternative depictions of the relationship involved partnership and co-production, which could be in keeping with

organisations moving beyond NPM (Alford and Hughes, 2008; McCulloch, 2009; Farrell, 2010).

Figure 10, illustrates the relationship between participant profiles and the notional 'best' (in green) or 'least good' (in orange) responses that that might be anticipated from the assumptions underlying the broad research questions. This has the potential to influence management alignment in a university. The profile is only 'ideal' in the sense that it maps on to a notional best response to each question. There is not a perfect profile, considerable variation is likely dependent on institutional context, and no single respondent would appear to have an 'ideal' profile, if such exists.

If we were able to assume that participants' responses, as summarised in Figures 9 and 10, map on to institutional reality, then universities 5, 8 and 12 might appear to be performing best. Conversely, universities 1, 3 and 6 (and perhaps 4) might be considered at most risk. When checked, post hoc, against the Guardian League Tables, universities 5, 8 and 12 are in the top quartile of post-92 universities and have maintained or improved their position from the 2015 to 2016 tables. Universities 1, 3 and 6 on the other hand, are in the bottom quartile of all universities, and in each case their position has deteriorated from 2015 to 2016 tables (Guardian, 2014; Guardian, 2015). It is important not to make too much of this apparent relationship. The direction of any effect is unknown, and indeed this may be an entirely random finding. It may, however, help set a suitable direction for further study.

Comparative participant profiles and relationship to idealised pattern of response					
	Yes	Tendency to yes	Partly	Tendency to no	No
Are efficiency, effectiveness and value for money part of the everyday considerations of managers?	1,2,5,9,11	4	3,6,8,12	7,10	
Is the university driven by its values and mission, rather than by the whim of public policy?	2,5,7,8,10	4,9,11,12		3,6	1
Is the university avoiding the “dirty dozen” indicators of reduced performance?	5,8	7,11,12	2,10	1,3,4,6,9	
Are managers “providing the conditions in which teaching and research can flourish?”	8	1,2,5,7,10,12	6,11	3,4,9	
Are tensions evident that might be characterised as between managerial and collegial standpoints?	6	1,3,4,11		2,7,8,9	5,10,12
Are students considered as customers?	6,7,11	4,10	9,12	2	1,3,5,8
Are other metaphors for the student relationship prevalent?	8	1,2,3,4,5,9,10,12		7,11	6

Figure 10: Comparing participant profiles against idealised responses

While it is difficult to discern any common pattern from the other respondents, the profiles provide enough information for a detailed,

diagnostic conversation and might provide an opportunity to re-evaluate current strategic direction and priorities.

There are limitations to the comparative participant profiles illustrated in Figures 9 and 10. These are based on individual self-report, moderated through researcher interpretation, and have not been tested against objective criteria of institutional performance. Participant responses reflect a point in time, and can be affected by a range of factors, which may be located in the participant, the researcher, the environment, or any interaction of these. There are also issues relating to the presentation of self, by both researcher and respondent, and all of this is subject to researcher interpretation and judgement (Rapley, 2001). In summary, interview data is not a representation of reality. It involves co-construction or re-creation, and the interviewer is not neutral (Wang and Roulston, 2007; Svensson, 2009).

From the comparative profiles, and acknowledging the limitations and the assumptions underlying the construction of the profiles, an ideal participant vignette has been developed and is included below as Figure 11, below. This is entirely illustrative, there was no Respondent 13, and it does not represent any particular institution. Again, 'ideal' is not intended to imply that there is one right approach, as context and institutional journey will be important.

Respondent 13

Respondent 13 is a senior academic manager in an executive role in a large university. The university is reported as having sound financial management but without an obsessive focus on short-term financial goals. The university is reported as delivering on its academic mission and purpose. The respondent is clear that it is avoiding the indicators of decline by: devolving decision-making; maintaining a long term perspective; encouraging innovation and developing tolerance of managed risk; ensuring leadership engagement; embracing change; developing teams and teamwork; discouraging dysfunctional internal competition or disputes; communicating widely and frequently; supporting inclusion and partnership in decision-making; and setting

clear priorities for cost-cutting or efficiency savings, which are well understood.

The focus of academic managers is reported to be on creating a fruitful environment for teaching and research. The bounded relationship between management and academic staff is reportedly well understood, and tensions that could be characterised as between managerial and collegial standpoints avoided.

Academic managers are reported as being alert to ways in which students may behave as customers, and this is accommodated in those parts of the encounter that are transactional. The respondent makes clear that alternative metaphors that support partnership and help students set and achieve high aspirations are encouraged and widely used.

Figure 11: Illustrative ‘ideal’ respondent vignette

5.6. Contribution to management practice

This study makes a contribution to the development of management practice in three complementary ways. Firstly, based on the findings and their relationship to the literature, it is possible to develop some advice for managers arising directly from the study. Secondly, reflections on the impact on my own management practice as a result of undertaking the study. Finally there is the potential for the study to make a broader contribution to the development of management practice in universities. These are examined in turn.

Based on a review of the findings, consideration of the comparative profiles presented in Figures 9 and 10, reflection on the data in the context of the literature, and in the spirit of offering advice, it is proposed that senior university managers may seek to ensure that:

- The university has a clear sense of purpose and is driven by its values and mission;
- The university avoids the 'dirty dozen' indicators of reduced organisational effectiveness;
- The university provides, as far as possible, optimum conditions for teaching and research;
- Action is taken to alleviate tensions that might be characterised as emanating from managerial and collegial standpoints.

Additionally, management and academic communities, working together, should seek to establish the university on a sound financial footing. This should not mean that efficiency, effectiveness, and value for money are obsessively pursued as an end rather than a means to academic and financial sustainability. This is particularly important where efficiency, effectiveness, and value for money are used figuratively.

It is probably an advantage not to subscribe strongly to a 'student as customer' metaphor, though this will depend on context. Managers should, however, understand the discursive context in which 'student as customer' is used, and recognise that this may undermine relations between management and academic communities. A nuanced student customer concept, a positive alternative metaphor, and a formal partnership with students seem to be associated with a more positive institutional profile.

At a more personal level, undertaking this study has transformed my beliefs about, and practice of, management and leadership in higher education. I have previously been told that I have fairly high emotional intelligence, though I am also aware that I sometimes completely misunderstand what people are feeling. I have had structured 360° feedback, on more than one occasion, which has provided rich material for me to reflect on. Despite that, my approach to management and leadership was founded on the notion that everyone could be convinced to do 'the right thing' through rational explanation and discussion. I didn't recognise that it was the very idea of 'the right thing' that was contested. I am sure I'm more inclusive now, I also

delegate more effectively and more often, and I better understand how trust can disappear. I have become aware that I don't need to be perfect, or heroic or particularly charismatic and I have tried to practice an approach to management that reaches out to all staff and is intended to build their trust. I am also following the advice that I would recommend to others, and trying to operate like the illustrative respondent in Figure 11.

At least in part, the originality of this work lies in applying this personal perspective as a manager to the issues surfaced in the study. While acutely aware of Diefenbach's (2013) argument that managers operate in their own best interests, the researcher has sought to remain open to the range of legitimate standpoints that might co-exist in higher education, the most pertinent for this study being managerialism and collegialism. For the responsible leader, however, there is benefit in recognising the bounded nature of the relationship between management and academic communities and working collaboratively towards those goals that are shared (Deem, 2010; Delbecq et al, 2013; Braun et al, 2014).

Finally, the juxtaposition of the findings, participant profiles and a pattern of assumptions drawn from literature, illustrated in Figures 9,10, and 11, have the potential to make an original contribution to both knowledge and management practice in higher education. This has been developed through the analysis and interpretation of primary data in the context of a wide-ranging literature review that illuminates the complexity, uncertainty and contested nature of management in higher education. It is evident that local context matters and that there are no off-the-shelf answers, with each university having to strike it's own path. An understanding of this landscape may help university managers deal with the messy reality and ambiguity of management and leadership, which is often presented in textbooks as logical and tidy (Segal, 2011; Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2003; Johnsen, 2015).

5.7. Summary of Chapter 5

In this chapter, the themes from both the literature and from the data have been reviewed and the relationship between these examined. Patterns in the data were also explored, particularly in terms of comparative participant response profiles and their relationship to the assumptions about management focus and behaviour underlying the broad research questions. The profiles drew on the pattern of participant responses to broad research questions that emerged from the literature, thus binding both knowledge and practice. This also provided the opportunity to consider participant responses and a notional ideal pattern of response. The contribution to management knowledge and practice have been examined in terms of advice to managers, development of the researcher's own management practice, and the more general contribution to understanding university management.

The study now moves on to the final chapter in which the extent to which the aim and objectives of the study have been addressed is examined and conclusions are drawn.

6. Chapter 6 - Conclusion

6.1. Introduction

Chapter 6 considers the extent to which the study achieves its aim and objectives and examines how the broad research questions outlined in Chapter 2 have been addressed. The limitations of the study are acknowledged, and suggestions for further study are advanced. This serves to illuminate further the potential contribution to knowledge and management practice in higher education that was introduced in Chapter 5. Finally, some brief concluding remarks, including proposals for dissemination of the findings, close the study.

The overall aim of the study was to consider the contribution management action might have on post-92 UK universities.

The research objectives for the study were as follows:

1. To examine relevant debates in the higher education, management, and public administration literature;
2. To understand how post-92 universities are balancing the demands of efficiency and effectiveness, from the perspective of managers;
3. To explore the extent to which managers perceive universities are driven by their own values and mission rather than being subject to the whim of public policy;
4. To consider ways in which senior university management might contribute to creating an environment that facilitates academic success.

6.2. Achievement of study aim and research objectives

6.2.1. Overall aim of the study

The overall aim of the study was to consider the contribution management action might have in the context of post-92 UK universities. This was achieved through a critical review of relevant literature; primary data collection from university senior managers, and analysis of their responses; reflection on the findings in the context of the literature; and, based on the above, the summary advice for university senior managers provided in section 5.6.

6.2.2. Research objective 1

Research objective 1 was *to examine relevant debates in the higher education, management, and public administration literature.*

Achievement of this objective is evidenced through Chapter 2, the Literature Review, which demonstrates engagement with diverse literatures from a number of disciplines and standpoints. Specifically, relevant debates in the higher education, management, and public administration literature were examined. While Chapter 2 is presented as if it preceded data collection and analysis, the reality is that engagement with the literatures was an iterative, cyclical and developmental process. This prolonged engagement had significant bearing on the final report of the study.

6.2.3. Research objective 2

Research objective 2 was *to understand how post-92 universities are balancing the demands of efficiency and effectiveness, from the perspective of managers.*

This was substantially achieved through primary data collection from university senior managers and through the analysis of interview data. In addition, on-going engagement with management literature ensured that this objective was achieved.

6.2.4. Research objective 3

Research objective 3 was *to explore the extent to which managers perceive universities are driven by their own values and mission rather than being subject to the whim of public policy.*

Primary data collection, data analysis and reflection in the context of the literature ensured that this objective was achieved.

6.2.5. Research objective 4

Research objective 4 was *to consider ways in which senior university management might contribute to creating an environment that facilitates academic success.*

The discussion in Chapter 5, including the idealised profiles presented as Figure 10 and the advice for senior university managers included in section 5.6, demonstrates the achievement of this objective.

6.3. Research questions revisited

A number of broad research questions emerged from the literature, and these have been considered in Chapter 5. It remains to provide closure on these questions by including reasonably concise answers to each of the questions, and these follow below. The answers are based on the researcher's interpretation of data gathered during the interviews, rather than direct participant responses.

Are efficiency, effectiveness and value for money part of the everyday considerations of managers?

This was strongly the case for 5 of 12 of the respondents, while for 2 of 12 participants efficiency, effectiveness and value for money were **not** a significant part of the everyday considerations of managers.

Are post-92 universities driven by their values and mission, rather than by the whim of public policy?

The majority of respondents, 9 of 12, felt their university had some control of its own destiny based on its values and purpose. On the other hand 3 of 12 participants felt that forces beyond their control drove their institution, including unpredictable changes in public policy.

Are post-92 universities avoiding the “dirty dozen” indicators of reduced performance?

There is mixed picture here, with 5 of 12 universities reported as mainly or completely avoiding the indicators of reduced performance. On the other hand, while none had quite the full set, 5 of 12 were striking many of the indicators.

Are managers “providing the conditions in which teaching and research can flourish?”

Based on analysis of responses, 7 of 12 of the participants provided responses that would suggest that their university management is providing a reasonably healthy environment for teaching and research to flourish, and of these one seemed to be outstanding. Based on an interpretation of the responses from participants, 2 of 12 institutions could only be said to be achieving this in part, and 3 of 12 were falling considerably short.

Are tensions evident that might be characterised as between managerial and collegial standpoints?

This was fairly evenly split with 7 of 12 of the participants providing responses that suggested little or no significant tension that might be characterised as between managerial and collegial standpoints. Conversely, 5 of 12 participants' responses suggested that there were tensions evident that could be regarded as managerial – collegial.

Are students considered as customers? If so, is this considered a complex rather than a transactional relationship or are these merely rhetorical customers? Are other metaphors prevalent?

Participants' responses in this area were fairly evenly split with 5 of 12 indicating that students were considered customers, at least in part, and 5 of 12 indicating they were not. Some strong opinions were expressed on both sides of the argument. Generally participants found the 'student as customer' metaphor partial at best, and more complex metaphors were preferred.

6.4. Limitations and areas for further research

6.4.1. Methodological issues

There are limitations to the study that emanate both from the chosen research method and from the enactment of the study. These are discussed in detail in Chapter 3, Section 3.9. While the research approach has been appropriate to the aim and objectives of the study, it is not possible to generalise from the findings, even to the respondents' institutions. At an early point, a case study approach involving one or two case study organisations had been considered. It is unlikely, however, that such an approach would have revealed the differences between participants, and the patterns of response that are uncovered here. There may, in retrospect, have been benefit in scheduling a second interview or conversation with each participant to test the researcher's interpretation of their responses. This can be factored in to the follow-up study, which will return to the notion of a case study approach, and limitations can be tackled through future research as described in Section 6.4.2.

Earlier, in Chapter 3, attention was drawn to Tracy's (2010) prescription for quality in qualitative research, whatever the philosophical standpoint and whatever the specific measure. That prescription is repeated here as a reminder,

“High quality qualitative methodological research is marked by a worthy topic, rich rigor, sincerity, credibility, resonance, significant contribution, ethics and meaningful coherence” (Tracy, 2010, p839).

Effective management of universities is a topic worthy of serious examination. The study has the potential to make a significant contribution to the professional development of individual university managers and university leadership teams. That the study has been developed from a management perspective, but is able to adopt a critical stance regarding the limitations of management, helps evidence credibility, sincerity and resonance. Ethics, as they relate to this study have been addressed in Chapter 3, while rigour and coherence can be found in the aim and objectives of the study, the approach to analysis, and the overall structure of the report.

6.4.2. Focus of further research

Whilst this study has achieved its original aim of considering the contribution of management action in post-92 universities, the analysed data has inevitably raised a number of issues that would warrant further study. Limitations related to method have also been considered that could be addressed through further study.

This research study has concluded that there may be approaches to management in universities that are more or less helpful, but that there is also considerable variation in patterns of response between participants. This may reflect institutional variation in management priority and focus and, based on the pattern of response, there may be healthier and less good profiles, as illustrated through Figure 9,10 and 11.

Consequently, a number of questions emerge that may form a basis for further research. This further research should examine which aspects of the profiles developed in Figures 9 and 10 differentiate most strongly between what might be higher performing and lower performing institutions. There are a number of ways in which the relationship between the profiles illustrated in

Figures 9 and 10 and institutional performance could be further examined and claims strengthened.

It would, for example, be possible to return to initial respondents and ask them to plot their institutional profile. That would enable the researcher to check the extent to which the profiles ring true for participants. It would also be possible to access publicly available data on university performance to rank order institutions. While that has some appeal, it does seem less important to rank order institutions, since a range of factors other than management action will affect ranking, than to test how the profile reflects management and institutional development over time.

The further research should also be concerned with the direction of any effect, and the extent to which the profile reflects intentionality and the action of university managers. It would be of interest to understand the direction of travel, and whether management action is instrumental in steering the institution towards or away from an idealised profile in a specific institution. This might be best addressed by considering management action in the context of institutional trajectory over time, which will lead to a case-study approach being suggested.

Accordingly, a case study approach, utilising a multi-case design and involving three post-92 UK universities, plus the researcher's home institution as a particular case, is proposed. It would be appropriate to select one case where the university has been performing well, over a number of years, on a range of measures such as NSS scores, League Table standing, RAE/REF, and broad financial measures. A second case would be selected on the basis of improving scores over time on the same indicators, and a third would be selected where scores on these indicators have not improved, or even declined over the same period. In addition, the researcher's home institution would serve as a particular case, where emerging ideas can be examined in a known context. Such a project has the potential to develop the notion of idealised profiles towards a conceptual framework for practice relating management focus to institutional performance.

6.5. Contribution to knowledge and practice

This study makes a contribution to the development of management practice in three complementary ways. Firstly, based on the findings and their relationship to the literature, advice for senior university managers has been presented in section 5.6. Secondly, reflections on the impact on my own management practice as a result of undertaking the study have also been acknowledged there. Finally there is the potential for the study to make a broader contribution to the development of management practice in universities through publication and dissemination of the findings and conclusions.

The originality of this contribution lies in the particular synthesis of concepts, from a management perspective, applied to acknowledging and addressing the limitations of management.

The *landscape of research philosophy* described in Chapter 3, Section 3.2, and displayed as Figure 1, provides a relatively simple visual aid for understanding the relationships between research philosophies and ontology, epistemology and intentions. This can be utilised in teaching and supervision. It would also be interesting to undertake a critical review of literature in a discipline, such as nursing, as a test of the philosophical consistency and coherence of papers, using the landscape to locate concepts and philosophical assertions.

6.6. Concluding remarks

This thesis has been prepared and submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of a DBA. The DBA is a professional doctorate characterised by combining the opportunity to develop and undertake a structured research project, intended to both develop new knowledge and influence professional practice. The DBA journey is also a lived experience, directly influencing the researcher's management practice, which in turn

affects the course of the DBA. The journey is covered in detail in the CPD Portfolio that accompanies the thesis.

It is important to consider at this point how and where the knowledge and implications for management practice can best be shared. I will seek a range of opportunities for dissemination. Specifically, I will take the opportunity to organise and deliver a seminar to interested parties in my own university. This fits well with my responsibilities for leadership and management development, and for cultural transformation. I have also been asked to present at a Council of Deans of Health conference, and I will follow up that invitation.

I have also been approached to develop the 'landscape of research philosophy', and would be pleased to seek out related teaching opportunities. It may also provide an excuse to undertake a critical review of nursing research literature to examine the philosophical consistency and coherence of papers, using the landscape as an organising framework. Finally, I will prepare a paper based on the findings of the study for submission to *Studies in Higher Education*, the journal of the Society for Research into Higher Education.

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Appendix 1: Application for ethical approval

BUSINESS SCHOOL RESEARCH & KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER ETHICS AND GOVERNANCE APPROVAL FORM
Section 1 – Research details
Name of researcher: Iain McIntosh
Staff: Yes, but undertaking project as part of DBA programme Student: 09018534
Title of project: Balancing efficiency, effectiveness and excellence in higher education
Aim of Research: To explore the concepts of effectiveness and efficiency in the context of the post-92 UK universities and consider the extent to which the instructional process is impacted by management action.
Research Objectives: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. To understand how, and to what extent, post-92 universities are balancing the demands of effectiveness, efficiency and the teaching and learning process in the context of cost-containment?2. To explore how value for the student or customer can be delivered, acknowledging that the notion of student as customer in higher education is contentious, complex and multi-layered. The role academic managers play in this process will be examined.3. To produce a conceptual framework for academic management practice that relates efficiency and effectiveness to the teaching and learning process and the student experience more generally.
Broad research questions: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. How, and to what extent, are managers “providing the conditions in which teaching and learning can flourish?” (Shattock, 2003)2. How, and to what extent, are efficiency, effectiveness and the student experience part of the everyday considerations of managers, academic staff and students in relation to the teaching and learning process? (Johnson and Deem, 2003)

3. What student concepts are prevalent, and is there a sophisticated model of students as customers - acknowledging it's a complex relationship rather than a simple transaction – and are these merely rhetorical customers?
4. To what extent are post-92 universities avoiding the “dirty dozen” (Cameron and Smart, 1998, p78) indicators of reduced performance? (Eagle and Brennan, 2007)
5. How and to what extent is the university driven by its values and mission, rather than by the whim of public policy? (Shattock, 2010)

Details of the research methods to be used, please consider all of the following in your response:

The study adopts a critical realist approach to understanding the contribution of academic managers to academic and institutional performance.

The project will utilise individual telephone qualitative interviews with approximately 24 academic managers (Deans or Heads of School or equivalent) in post-92 UK universities to collect data. A small number of the interviews will be conducted on a face-to-face basis to ensure that there are no unintended effects from the use of telephone interviews.

All participants will be invited to volunteer to participate in the study by email. Volunteers who complete a consent form will be accepted on a first reply basis until the categories are full.

Interviews will be digitally recorded and data transcribed to hard copy. Participants will receive a copy of the transcript of the interview and will be able to provide written comments on this.

A literature review has been undertaken to inform the broad areas that will be covered in the qualitative interviews. An initial framework for analysis has also been identified. A pilot study has been used to test the interview prompts.

Additionally, the study will be informed by an examination of institutional documents in the domain public. Specifically these will be drawn on to frame questions in the interviews.

<p>Who will be the research subjects in the research?</p> <p>a. Staff/Students of Edinburgh Napier (please give details)</p> <p>NO</p> <p>continue from section 2</p> <p>b. Vulnerable individuals (please give details e.g. school children, elderly, disabled)</p> <p>NO, but some participants may feel themselves to be vulnerable in the context of organisational change, restructuring or redundancy.</p> <p>continue from section 2</p> <p>c. All other research subjects (please give details)</p> <p>Academic managers (Deans or Heads of School or equivalent) in post-92 UK universities.</p> <p>continue from section 3</p>
<p>Section 2 – research subject details</p>
<p>Will participants be free NOT to take part if they choose?</p> <p>YES</p> <p>Explain how informed consent will be achieved.</p> <p>Information sheet and consent form sent by email.</p>
<p>Will any individual be identifiable in the findings?</p> <p>NO</p> <p>How will the findings be disseminated?</p> <p>Seminar and conference presentation, possible journal articles, submitted thesis.</p>
<p>Is there any possibility of any harm (social, psychological, professional, economic etc) to participants who take part or do not take part? Give details.</p> <p>There is a very small risk of professional harm to individuals and reputational risk to institutions. This will be fully mitigated through anonymity.</p>
<p>How / where will data be stored? Who will have access to it? Will it be secure? How long will the data be kept? What will be done with the data at the end of the project?</p>

Interviews will be digitally recorded and saved as mp3 files. These will be encrypted and held on a secure university computer and an encrypted memory stick. The interviews will be transcribed by the researcher and a hard copy produced. An encrypted electronic back-up of the transcription will be produced and saved alongside the mp3 files.

The hard copy of individual interviews will be shared with the participant for review and comment. A participant cipher will be used to protect anonymity in transcribed data. In this form, some data may be scrutinised by the research supervisor for the project. Data analysis will be undertaken by the researcher alone.

Contact information for participants will be encrypted and kept separately from interview data and transcripts. The contact information, and cipher, for participants will be destroyed on completion of the project to ensure no link can be made.

Transcribed records will be held securely for 5 years post-project in encrypted electronic form. Hard-copy records will be held securely and destroyed one year post project using confidential document disposal. Secure storage will be in the researcher's work office (or provided close by) and in the researcher's home.

Any other information in support of your application

A pilot study has previously received ethical approval and has informed the proposed study.

Continue to section 3

Section 3 – REG Advisors Approval

Delete as appropriate:

I approve this research / I refer this research to the FREGC (give reason for referral)

Name of REG Advisor

Signature of REG Advisor

Date

Signature of researcher/s to confirm understanding and acceptance of REG decision

Date

Section 4 – FREGC Approval

FREGC decision

Does this issue need to be referred to the UREGC?

If YES Secretary to forward to UREGC Secretary for referral with any appropriate paperwork

Date actioned

Reason for referral

Signature of Convener of FREGC

Date

Date researcher/s informed of FREGC decision – include copy of email to researcher/s

Balancing efficiency, effectiveness and excellence in higher education

Broad research questions:

1. How, and to what extent, are managers “providing the conditions in which teaching and learning can flourish?” (Shattock, 2003)
2. How, and to what extent, are efficiency, effectiveness and the student experience part of the everyday considerations of academic managers, particularly in relation to the teaching and learning process? (Johnson and Deem, 2003)
3. What student concepts are prevalent, and is there a sophisticated model of students as customers - acknowledging it's a complex relationship rather than a simple transaction – and are these merely rhetorical customers?
4. To what extent are post-92 universities avoiding the “dirty dozen” (Cameron and Smart, 1998, p78) indicators of reduced performance? (Eagle and Brennan, 2007)
5. How and to what extent is the university driven by its values and mission, rather than by the whim of public policy? (Shattock, 2010)

Interview questions

These are illustrative and intended as prompts to stimulate conversation and discussion around the broad areas of interest.

How is your university responding to the financial challenges that the HE sector seems to be facing? What sorts of changes have you seen, or are planned? What are your thoughts about this?

Are efficiency and effectiveness concepts that you're aware of in your institution? How are they used and how would you define them? In your experience, are concepts like efficiency and effectiveness more prevalent today? In what kinds of context are they used and by whom? Are these terms used in relation to teaching and learning? What are your thoughts about this? What contribution do you think managers can make to the process?

Is any form of academic workload allocation model used by your institution? In what ways, if any, does this impact on decisions about teaching and learning? Are there design norms for the academic time to deliver modules or programmes?

To what extent do you believe that your university has control of its own future? What makes you feel that way? How would you compare your institution to others in respect to this? To what extent do you believe individual academics have control over decisions about teaching and learning? How would you compare your institution to others in respect to this?

How do you think the current financial challenges are impacting on the relationship of universities with students? How would you describe the student-university relationship at your university? Do you think the concept of student-as-customer is useful? At your university are students generally seen as customers? For you, what does this mean? In what ways does this affect the way you work? What changes have been made to teaching and learning as a result?

Information Sheet for Potential Participants

Balancing efficiency, effectiveness and excellence in higher education

I would like to invite you to participate in a research study I am undertaking within the Doctor of Business Administration programme at Edinburgh Napier University.

The purpose of the research study is to explore the concepts of effectiveness and efficiency in the context of post-92 UK universities and consider the extent to which the instructional process is impacted by management action.

You have been invited to participate in the study because you may be able to provide helpful insights from your role in a university.

Please note you may not benefit directly from participation in this research study.

If you agree to participate in the study, you will be asked to take part in a qualitative, telephone interview lasting approximately 1 hour. Interviews will be digitally recorded and data transcribed to hard copy.

Participants will receive a copy of the transcript of their interview and will be able to provide written comments on this. The data will be analysed by the researcher alone. You will receive a summary of the key themes of the research, upon request.

You have the option to decline to take part and are free to withdraw from the study at any stage. If you decide to withdraw you would not have to give any reason. All data will be anonymised as far as possible, your name and institution will be replaced with a participant cipher and it will not be possible for you to be identified in any reporting of the data gathered. Specific roles will not be identified, though it is likely that broad categories such as “academic manager” will be used. All data collected will be kept in a secure place (stored on an encrypted remote storage device) to which only the nominated researcher has access.

The results may be published in a journal or presented at a conference.

If you would like to contact an independent person, who knows about this project but is not involved in it, you are welcome to contact Dr Janice McMillan, Lecturer, at Edinburgh Napier University (Tel: 0131 455 4340, Email: J.McMillan@napier.ac.uk).

If you have read and understood this Information Sheet and you would like to be a participant in the study, please complete the Consent Form overleaf.



Consent Form

Balancing efficiency, effectiveness and excellence in higher education

I have read and understood the Information Sheet and this Consent Form. I have had an opportunity to ask questions about my participation.

I understand that I am under no obligation to take part in this study.

I understand that I have the right to withdraw from this study at any stage without giving any reason.

I agree to participate in this study.

Name of Participant:

Signature of Participant:

Date:

Researcher Contact Details

Name of Researcher: Iain McIntosh

Address: The Business School,
Edinburgh Napier University – Craiglockhart

Campus Edinburgh
EH14 1DJ

Email / Telephone: i.mcintosh@napier.ac.uk
0131 455 5687

Appendix 2: Request for access to staff

Professor George Stonehouse
Dean of the Business School
Edinburgh Napier University
Craiglockhart Campus
Edinburgh
EH14 1DJ

26 April 2011

Dear George

Research access request

As you are aware, I am currently a 2nd year DBA student and I'm seeking your permission to approach a number of staff and students in the Edinburgh Business School to invite them to participate in the pilot study for my research project.

The aim of the project is to explore the concepts of effectiveness and efficiency in the context of the post-92 UK universities and consider the extent to which the instructional process is impacted by management action. The role managers and academics play in this process will also be examined.

The pilot study will involve 3 or 4 members of academic staff and a single group of 4 to 8 students. At least one but no more than two of the academic staff should be a member of the Edinburgh Napier University Senior Staff Group. The remainder should be directly involved in teaching or teaching and research as a main role.

All participants will be invited to volunteer by email, and will be free to withdraw at any point. Data generated from interviews will be encrypted and held securely, and the anonymity of individual participants and institutions will be protected. Data will only be used in the context of the study. The proposed study has received ethical approval, and I attach a copy of the signed form as confirmation.

If you have any questions regarding the proposed study please let me know. If you would like to contact an independent person, who knows about this project but is not involved in it, you are welcome to contact Dr Janice McMillan, Lecturer, at Edinburgh Napier University (Tel: 0131 455 4340, Email: J.McMillan@napier.ac.uk).

I do hope you will feel able to approve this access request.

Yours sincerely

Iain McIntosh
DBA Student,
Asst Dean, HLSS

Appendix 3: Confirmation of ethical approval

From: Doyle, Jim
Sent: 30 August 2012 13:26
To: Mcintosh, Iain
Cc: McIntosh, Iain (staff); Munro, Anne
Subject: Ethics Approval Form

Dear Iain,

Your ethics proposal was considered at a sub-group meeting of the Business School Ethics and Research Governance Committee on 30 August 2012. The decision of the sub-group was to approve your project.

The sub-group commended the clarity of your application.

Your ethics application has been given the internal reference ENBS/2011-12/029.

Regards,

Jim

Jim Doyle
Research Administrator
Edinburgh Napier University Business School
Craiglockhart Campus
219 Colinton Road
Edinburgh
EH14 1DJ

t +44 (0)131 455 4117

f +44 (0)131 455 4479

[*j.doyle@napier.ac.uk*](mailto:j.doyle@napier.ac.uk)

Appendix 4: Invitation to participants and consent form

March 2013

Balancing efficiency, effectiveness and excellence in higher education

I would like to invite you to participate in a research study I am undertaking as part of a Doctor of Business Administration programme at Edinburgh Napier University.

The purpose of the research study is to explore the concepts of effectiveness and efficiency in the context of post-92 UK universities and consider the extent to which the instructional process is impacted by management action.

You have been invited to participate in the study because you may be able to provide helpful insights from your role in a university. Please note you may not benefit directly from participation in this research study.

If you agree to participate in the study, you will be asked to take part in a qualitative, telephone interview lasting approximately 1 hour. Interviews will be digitally recorded and data transcribed to hard copy. The data will be analysed by the researcher alone. You will receive a summary of the key themes of the research, upon request.

You have the option to decline to take part and are free to withdraw from the study at any stage. If you decide to withdraw you would not have to give any reason. All data will be anonymized as far as possible, your name and institution will be replaced with a participant cipher and it will not be possible for you to be identified in any reporting of the data gathered. Specific roles will not be identified, though it is likely that broad categories such as "academic manager" will be used. All data collected will be kept in a secure place (stored on an encrypted remote storage device) to which only the nominated researcher has access.

The results may be published in a journal or presented at a conference.

If you would like to contact an independent person, who knows about this project but is not involved in it, you are welcome to contact Dr Janice McMillan, Lecturer, at Edinburgh Napier University (Tel: 0131 455 4340, Email: J.McMillan@napier.ac.uk).

If you have read and understood this Information Sheet and you would like to be a participant in the study, please complete the Consent Form overleaf.

With thanks in anticipation

Iain McIntosh
Dean, FHLSS
Edinburgh Napier University



Consent Form

Balancing efficiency, effectiveness and excellence in higher education

I have read and understood the Information Sheet and this Consent Form. I have had an opportunity to ask questions about my participation.

I understand that I am under no obligation to take part in this study.

I understand that I have the right to withdraw from this study at any stage without giving any reason.

I agree to participate in this study.

Name of Participant: _____

Signature of Participant: _____

Date: _____

Researcher Contact Details

Name of Researcher: Iain McIntosh, DBA Delegate
Address: The Business School,
Edinburgh Napier University – Craiglockhart Campus
Edinburgh
EH14 1DJ

Email / Telephone: i.mcintosh@napier.ac.uk
0131 455 5687

Appendix 5: Themed participant responses
(following pages)

	Management orientation					
	Disconnect with academics	Purposeful engagement	Performance Indicators & Performance management	Control drawn to centre	Devolved decision making	Management competence
Respondent						
R1			"it is really an emergency situation and because it involves a degree of interrogation of what staff spend their time on that has the consequences of challenging people . . . personally"	"two things there, I think two different things. One is the centralisation of resources and administration which I have mentioned. But the other thing which [name] and myself are very animated over this, is the lack of trust."		"The people who were selected as middle managers, heads of divisions for example five or six year ago and before, many of these are struggling to become the kind of managers we need"
R2					"I would say it is much more the decision making is certainly shared or the process is shared much more than what it was say two to five years ago."	
R3	"There would be some within senior management where staff really wouldn't have any confidence in and staff would openly say they held us back as an organisation and staff are quite vocal about that."	"because unless you have a proper engagement and dialogue and people can clearly see that direction of travel, you can end up you know not taking the majority of staff with you."		"I think there is a very sort of central like I would say a control that is in through our planning quality department. And they do tend to drive things upwards in relation to more like strategic priorities and I suppose they're like the hub that brings things together"		"There would be some within senior management where staff really wouldn't have any confidence in and staff would openly say they held us back as an organisation and staff are quite vocal about that."

R4	"I was just trying to think what has come back on our staff engagement survey, I think I was a bit disappointed in staff trust with senior management."			"I think there is quite a lot of high level decision making and I should give you a bit of history here. We had a situation where the previous vice chancellor made all the decisions. We couldn't even switch the heating on and off. We are now pushing down and down and in fact one of the outcomes of the new restructuring should be pushing more decision making down through departments." "I think internal conflict within the organisation I have to say for us would be between the academic staff and what we would call our corporate service staff and that is where the major issues lie"		
R5						

R6	<p>"So overall I understand the policy and the strategy for centralising and controlling in order to be swift in response to changes that need to be agile. The other part of me thinks that there is a lack of engagement with the very people who are pulling in the income which are the faculties which could avoided that under recruitment"</p> <p>"And the problem we have with the international office is they don't communicate very well with the faculties which is a problem with centralisation"</p>	<p>(missing) "So we are trying to grow internationally and of course another area is research and enterprise. And the university's response to that is to put in another centralised service and they have now have an enterprise office led by the director and we are in the process of appointing business development managers for each of the faculties"</p>	<p>"you have about six objectives each year. If you persistently don't achieve those objectives without good reason you may become performance managed. If you were, if there were a lot of complaints for staff and students about you failing to be organised or delivering to an acceptable level or standard you would be performance managed"</p>	<p>"I think the strategy has been to centralise and control so that the deputy vice chancellors group which includes the VC, three DVCs and a director of services so the DVC to centralise and control everything so that they have clear oversight and control of things like admissions, international, student experience"</p>		
R7			<p>"much closer monitoring of performance, we have a strategic plan with performance indicators so this is pretty much revolutionary for this university. It has never had anything like that before but it is a three year rather than a five year plan with very tight goals associated with it"</p>			

R8			"you start as I say with the people interested and helpful but actually ultimately we are ending up using appraisal to say you know, you will go on training sessions, you will demonstrate you can do this . . ."			
R9	"we went hi-tech so we put in all sorts of flash podiums and all sorts of exciting things and reduced time for academic staff because they knew how to use it and reduced cost from a green and environmental perspective because we got rid of flip charts, good ideas but the majority of academic staff have gone mad because they don't know how to use the stuff, they haven't been to the training that's been put on so in the short term it's a nightmare but in the long-term it will be more efficient and more effective but it's not in the short run"we went hi-tech so we put in all sorts of flash podiums and all sorts of exciting		"you start as I say with the people interested and helpful but actually ultimately we are ending up using appraisal to say you know, you will go on training sessions, you will demonstrate you can do this . . ."			

R10				"So it wants to be a very devolved institution. But it has a cultural tendency when things get a bit tricky to pull back into a central organisation to do more command control but that is a wrestling match to see where it goes. It is trying to be less centralised and I think its cultural norm still pulls it back to there and command decision making but it is trying very hard to reject that."	"So it wants to be a very devolved institution. But it has a cultural tendency when things get a bit tricky to pull back into a central organisation to do more command control but that is a wrestling match to see where it goes. It is trying to be less centralised and I think its cultural norm still pulls it back to there and command decision making but it is trying very hard to reject that."	
R11						
R12						

	Financial Management and Investment						
	Effective financial management	Micro - management	Efficiency savings	Risk Aversion	Cost Control	Capital investment	Growth
Respondent							
R1		"Because of the interventionist and micro-managing way that directorate work, they insist on certain decisions. And so the art of managing upwards becomes, presenting things in such a way that they think that they think they are responsible for those ideas simply because it's less likely that it will be turned down"		"I think that the issue we have always had as an institution is the pump priming of things, we say that we are risk takers but risk takers mean that you sometimes have to accept that money may have gone down the drain. A big issue for the university, the central question and I haven't got an answer to it but it's a big question is I think that saving, or cutting waste, is what people say when they are too afraid to say what we are not going to do."		"We did have for how we hired hourly paid lecturers but in recent times they have decided they want to approve everything again and we are spending too much. But in fact hourly paid lecturers is a dirt cheap way of not just giving people time but those hourly paid lecturers in general are very motivated people who do more than they are asked to do. But no we don't. We have lost that as part of the effort to try and control the costs"	"building for the future' which is about growth and the efficiency side of it so for example we might as well take the opportunity, we also merging with a smaller institution"
R2	"well I would say we have a history of very good effective management and we have got a tremendous capital investment programme going on now until 2020 and we have been really successful in the way we manage and we have built up a really good surplus to help us sustain that"		"in the budget plan we have got to try and show where we are making efficiency savings and we have to justify reason for you know projected sort of staff increases we have to show the rationale for those and for replacement staff yeah so that is pretty tight in that sense"			"well I would say we have a history of very good effective management and we have got a tremendous capital investment programme going on now until 2020 and we have been really successful in the way we manage and we have built up a really good surplus to help us sustain that"	

R3		<p>"I think that effectiveness and you know whether there has been too much of a leaning to the efficiencies and maybe losing sight and maybe too much of a focus on the targets around efficiency and the impact on quality." "But I would say the financial efficiency is driven within [UNIVERSITY] from the top because our previous principal was an accountant. So it was very much that financial target driven and perhaps at the expense of all the broader softer things that need to be there to make an organisation work"</p>	<p>"I think around two years ago there was a real focus on efficiency. And then that in turn had staffing implications. Whether there was a tie up with the impact on effectiveness of things, from my point of view there was maybe a disconnect between efficiency drive and how effective we were actually going to be to really deliver a quality agenda."</p>				
R4	<p>"We are a large-ish organisation. We are reasonable sound financially and we seem to be reasonably good at responding to government agendas"</p>		<p>"what we have done, and it should be easier is if we can get the new model to work easier in some respects, is look at our most expensive models and our least expensive modules and try and see whether that is right. So you might want you research module to be your most, you know your research projects to be the most expensive module and you are fine with that. But you might look at a level four module that is actually costing too much"</p>	<p>"we are not very risk tolerant. We have been doing some work around trying to be more risk tolerant in order to try out some brave new things but we are not, we are very risk averse. I would describe us as risk averse, although one of our values is to be creative"</p>	<p>"I think it is wholly with academics in this institution and I think that as part of, as we call it corporate services, would prefer to have more control of that but what we did a couple of years ago was establish an academic portfolio review group which is chaired by a Dean"</p>		

R5							
R6							"with the HEFCE funded courses we have also got restrictions there on growth so we are looking at other ways of growing. And one of the strategies that we have used this year is to increase our tariffs across all of our courses which I think has been a very successful strategy."
R7				"it took some time because they are very cautious at this university as well as being aspirational to where they would situate themselves and they went for the top funding cost which of course means that the whole flavour and ethos of now trying to achieve the targets that were set and having control of the numbers that they are having to achieve has shaken up some of my colleagues"			

R8	"the university, the full time I've been with it, has never had a debt which is a nice place to be and has secured investment, it longs to be able to build the (can't make out audio) because you know the majority of the university is kind of 60's 70's buildings many of them are (can't make out audio) so there's a lot of investment going on in improving the info structure but there's also an enormous amount of energy been put into improving the student experience and engaging the students really positively."					"the university, the full time I've been with it, has never had a debt which is a nice place to be and has secured investment, it longs to be able to build the (can't make out audio) because you know the majority of the university is kind of 60's 70's buildings many of them are (can't make out audio) so there's a lot of investment going on in improving the info structure but there's also an enormous amount of energy been put into improving the student experience and engaging the students really positively."	

R9	<p>"It's large and actually I think if you're run well one of the benefits of large institutions is that you've got the money coming in. So we are very large we're financially sound but we recognise the increasing competition last 2012 when you see was a challenging year for everybody and no less challenging for us"</p>		<p>" so for example we have some lean projects going on which you would know about from the health sector if nothing else and people don't understand that terminology, they don't understand what's trying to be done so they're more complicated. So everybody know we've got to be more efficient more effective better value for money but I don't think people understand how to choose it."</p>	<p>"we haven't built anything here for years and we've got the cash and we are sitting on it and nobody will make the decision to push the buttons to go and we are going to get even further behind with our info structures estate wise and it's noticeable and we are fortunate because [place] is a city that still helps us attract students."</p>	<p>"So from a financial perspective although things are tight and we are looking at, constantly looking at continuous improvement and that includes value for money I think it does fashion our decision making but we're not in quite as much of an uncomfortable position as some places would be." "Faculties were different so we have, some make a huge surplus and we have at least well one faculty who every year I have been here has made a loss and one other that has been on bread line, nor above or below it and there does seem to be an appetite for sorting out the faculties that make a lose so they just preyed on the faculties that made a huge</p>	<p>"what we haven't done so well as a university over the last 10 years is invested in our infrastructure we are reasonably cash rich we've got not huge borrowing and all the rest of it but we also have an estate that desperately needs some work done to in in order to make sure that we are in line with our competitors if not better than them because that's part of what attracts students to come here and we are behind the times with that we've been too cautious."</p>	
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R10			<p>"we are continually asked to look at our margin in terms of staff return probably one of the other metrics we look at is the percentage of staff proportionate to income: staff cost versus income and that is another area looking at efficiencies. And another area is around IT and looking at a stronger and more cohesive infrastructure to help support our efficiency activity. We don't tend to talk about it in terms of a headline. We talk about it in terms of innovation, the enterprise agenda and how you continue to drive better productivity and how can you reinvest and how you can invest them into those activities that are more productive"</p>				<p>"we recognise that probably that for the traditional student experience we are at the saturation point and I think if I was looking at it which I am not, I would probably look at to take on board decisions to see if sustain the size and or drop and look at quality and that is probably that we will want to considered in the near future I think so that we get the quality high. You know get the quality and say well are we slightly big and do we replace and diversify some of our traditional student body to make space for</p>
R11			<p>"One of our key drivers, one of the strategic drivers is operational efficiency and effectiveness . . . as a key driving strategic outcome is new - in the last year. It is a part of everything that we do now you know you are looking at everything to become more efficient"</p>	<p>"and I still think that we are a little bit risk averse, well there are pockets where we have been slightly risky but as an organisation we are risk averse but that will possible slowdown some progress but I think that it is about being cautious and optimistic. Where I know some organisations are a little bit more gun-hoe and I don't think we are"</p>			
R12							

	Organisational Change			
	New Principal	Consolidation of Departments	Redundancy	Merger with other Institutions
Respondent				
R1		"We are about to reorganise again, the science part of this faculty is merging with engineering and that will be from the middle of the summer"		"we are also merging with a smaller institution called [university]. We might take the whole thing to reorganise our administration so we will centralise more of the administration. "
R2		"in the last couple of years I would say no but three or four years ago the university looked at itself and sort of reduced the number of departments and we did sort of lose some staff and have compromise agreements and I think since then we have, you know the way the university works and the way each of the schools work in the university is that we are a strategic business, each school is a strategic business unit."	"in the last couple of years I would say no but three or four years ago the university looked at itself and sort of reduced the number of departments and we did sort of lose some staff and have compromise agreements and I think since then we have, you know the way the university works and the way each of the schools work in the university is that we are a strategic business, each school is a strategic business unit."	
R3			"with a reduction in undergraduate numbers we did lose staff but it was staff who were not maybe be able to move to the next level, those who could not embrace the new post-grad portfolio that included research and internationalisation."	"this current role as head of school I've been in this role for four years come August. And that was following sort of reconfiguration after a merger. I had previous roles like acting dean, vice dean before that."

R4	"it started originally with the new vice chancellor. That seems to be what they do really. The most recent change is actually with an existing vice chancellor and it is about bringing it together and what we were finding hard was getting people to work together across the schools. What we are trying to is make units better for sustainable, organisational management size so that is what the most recent move has been towards."	"it started originally with the new vice chancellor. That seems to be what they do really. The most recent change is actually with an existing vice chancellor and it is about bringing it together and what we were finding hard was getting people to work together across the schools. What we are trying to is make units better for sustainable, organisational management size so that is what the most recent move has been towards."	"I guess about sort of three years ago we did an enormous amount of work taking staff out of the university and we have other the last three maybe four years done a lot of work to stream-line the portfolio."	
R5				
R6	"they did have a bit of a fall out with the vice chancellor who is now refusing to meet with them because they strongly opposed one of the changes. So there is some tension with the trade unions and the VC. She has turned the university finances around brilliantly but she has got a stubborn streak and it is that has resulted in the fall out"		"We have been through a review of administration and HR and marketing and all those sorts of things and we then had, last year voluntary redundancy and early retirement scheme and that was very much, it was looking at specifically the whole spectrum across the university. But in particular we hadn't had a reduction in the academic community looking particularly where we could lose academic staff without replacing them."	

R7	"the VC over the last few has come out of his box a bit and is now having meetings and indeed there was quite a great deal of opportunity to meet and discuss the new strategic plan that I was talking about across the university so there is that sort democratic approach to listening to people and he now has open meetings a few times a year and holds them on all of the sites"	"of course we have also consolidated internally our structures so schools are merging so we have less school and so that our faculty is receding completely. I am merging with the school of health professionals this year for example we are going to triple in size"		
R8	"So I think by dint of who's in charge now there is a much more explicit plan but it doesn't vary really from what the plan was the whole time I've been here because the previous vice chancellor was highly committed to taking what was a fairly successful, very pleasant place to be into what was seen as much more serious player in the field."		"we were a very middling university and to be able to get people to recognise there needed to be a step change we needed to swing the pendulum quite far so there was severances voluntary severances that other people chose to leave and there was a lot of reinvestment in a different kind of academic."	

R9			<p>"well I think my take on it and it is my take is while centralising professional services can work well, if you're going to do it centrally and you're going to strip out cost at the same time and that's your driving factor what makes it work is having good IT systems and processes which act[university]lly take on a lot of the work that people would have done and we didn't have the IT systems and processes in place before we centralised, so we centralised took out the costs, reduced the people and the rest is history as they say."</p> <p>"We have got rid of Senior members of staff we have had massive out fluxes either through natural wastage or through a culture shift and people have chosen to leave, severance etcetera and at the top level in terms of being risk averse it is also conflict averse. So actually the very senior team have grown because we have reduced faculties but we have not lost the very senior members of staff who weren't the best but have been given other jobs to do."</p>	

R10		"we are having to make some radical decisions and not all of which are palatable to everyone. We have done a few, I have been here on my third faculty in 4four years in terms of restructuring and tweaking it we don't sit that long and people get a bit change weary"		
R11		"the university went through or is still going through a restructuring process where the focus is on executives and management then on to services and then onto administration and processes and so my old role doesn't exist any longer in the new structure. They brought 8 schools together to make up 4 faculties."		
R12				

	Academic Staff						
	Academic Workload Model	Number of Staff	Staff Morale	Qualifications	Control of appointments	Attitudes	Loss of collegialism
Respondent							
R1	"we probably started it around three years ago but it was quite slow to take off. And it is evolving all of the time. My view about the value of it is that it has been invaluable in allowing the line managers to prioritise people's work and to find out what people are doing. The disadvantage though is that the staff are starting to see that this is the way their contribution is being measured"	"And the other thing is that if we put in for a new post, I don't know let's say biology say and we think we need a new lecturer because we have got enough student numbers to justify that, we put that in and the directorate would look at the total capacity of the division based on the workload model. And what the directorate would say and of course they might say we are not going to give you that extra lecturer because we have worked out you have got equivalent one staff FTE capacity."	"I think the morale has been slowly going down as academics have in particular realised that they haven't got that little bits of fat anymore to enrich their week. The time when you could say right this afternoon I going to go into the lab and so on and some staff come to us with pretty good research records and are frustrated and they can't do it because we are asking them to teach in their eyes too much."		"And part of the trouble is that they have difficulty in distinguishing good ideas from bad ideas. My view would be that they should avoid doing that altogether for example they have this monthly ceremony in what we call the star chamber and they look at perhaps 60 applications from parts of the university for new lecturers or admin teams or whatever and obviously half way through that process they get pretty tired and my view is that they shouldn't be making those decisions."		"I can remember a time where you would be offended if someone asked you who is your line manager? Because we didn't regard those who were head of school as our line manager: we saw them as a senior academic colleague."

R2	"we have quite a sophisticated model and it does allocate hours to teams for teaching and there is only so many hours available that you are allowed for a particular module. So if a team is maybe sharing, say 50 teaching hours for example that is what they have to do and then the assessment to that we seem to have a sort of guidelines you know like a 15 credit module will be called assessment A, but a 30 credit module might be called A plus B so we try to keep things balanced in that respect"		"I think people are really feeling pressurised by the work coming on and I wouldn't say that generally for the whole institution that morale is 100% or whatever that is, I think there are pockets where it is good and pockets perhaps where people are feeling the pressure a bit"	"in that area we did come out fairly high in the last research assessment exercise so I think we are going in the right direction but we have got to get more staff at doctorate level which is going to take a number of years to reach that ambition because people who come to work in universities especially from the health sector come from different career pathway from the majority of academics elsewhere"	"we have got to try and show where we are making efficiency savings and we have to justify reason for you know projected sort of staff increases we have to show the rationale for those and for replacement staff yeah so that is pretty tight in that sense but it doesn't say we can't have that it ultimately depends on you know the students and the income they bring" "If I go back to last September to give you an example the university recruitment was sort of under than what we were expecting so there was a freeze, well there wasn't a freeze on academic posts but a central panel was set up and any post put forward was scrutinised very closely and I have to say		

R3		"given the nature of our professional programmes it is not just efficiencies around staff to student ratios, it is a broader infrastructure we need to have in place to actually support that. And sometimes in a drive for efficiency staff can be missed out and as a result there is an impact on the whole effectiveness of what we are doing."	"I would say now that we know who our new principal is, staff morale will be heading upwards."	"with a reduction in undergraduate numbers we did lose staff but it was staff who were not maybe be able to move to the next level, those who could not embrace the new post-grad portfolio that included research and internationalisation."			
R4	"oh god: well. In life sciences I had my own informal workload model which was quite efficient and effective and that went alongside the setting of key objectives for staff for the year. We are just introducing a new workload allocation model and I have severe doubts as to how effective and certainly how efficient it is going to be. So it is trying to do the same sort of thing that we did do in life sciences but in a much more complex way and I am just wondering whether the additional complexity is really a bridge too far for us"						
R5							

R6	"if you are not working to deployment and you refuse to take on the work that is needed they actually reduce your hours so for example if you only have 1200 hours they say right this is the work that I need you to do and someone says no then the only alternative for that individual is to reduce contract"	"one of the teams that I have got are saying they don't have enough hours but on paper they do. So what I have done is that I have asked the principal lecturer to lead that team to in the first instance to deploy them into the teaching and nothing else. The moment we just want to get the teaching covered to see what is left. So it wouldn't impact on the teaching because we always make sure that is covered, that is the priority, so there are things that will slip off"		"The problem we have is it that one of the universities strategies is, VCG strategies, to expand the growth in research has been to insist that no job application can go out without a PhD essential. That has created huge problems for courses like nursing."	"Well the staff resource is growing within the centralised services. But it is not growing, in fact we are always having to rationalise our staffing within the faculties"		

R7	<p>"well I think that is one of the issues, the tension has been that the unions would like a prescriptive workload model but that could reduce the efficiency of the university you know stop at 5 and have an hour lunch break but on the other hand you have the end of the spectrum where you have people having academic freedom and managing their own time and in some cases that works well but not always"</p>			<p>"the university has played a part in some of this because of its research aspirations and how it has been shaping those things but also two years ago they made it quite clear that appointments to a new lecturing appointment needed to have a research profile and the process had to be conducted by the head of school and they are paying much more attention to that"</p> <p>"there is considerable recognition for profession recognition for their teaching. The old way was that if you are a professional within your field you can teach. The university is saying that is not the case you need to know how to teach and know the tools to let you teach. There is a very active sense for this"</p>			

R8	<p>"the previous vice chancellor would not hear of the word of hours, you know the 550 hours with the contract he just, he wouldn't play that game at all. That's the language of FE nobody here is counting hours . . ." "So rather than hours there is a concept of a balanced work load there is a whole set of principles that you would expect people to be engaged in teaching and supervision and research, consultancy, enterprise and professional practice in a way that that meets their personal skill set to the best advantage."</p>			<p>"looking at the academic work force the aim is to get 80% of our staff with PhD's that's a nice measureable one. To get all of our staff HEA accredited or equivalent"</p>		<p>"we went through a process four years ago now and we called it the big re-think because there was a culture of people who just taught, or researched and people feeling that they weren't being measured in the same sort of way and there was a kind of not an opportunity of their professional cycle as other academics at the time were structured around certain things and we deconstructed it all so now we now have a school that doesn't have a line management structure." "remarkably the business still gets delivered and people are happier but some feel a bit lost in it and would like more command and control but it is the priority"</p>	

R9	<p>"If I'm really honest it's a total nightmare. I've used one before in my previous role and let me say for the record I am not anti-academic work load models, far from it, I think they can be very helpful, they can certainly flush out those who are significantly underworking and it can help you manage those who are significantly overworking. So in principle I am comfortable with the idea of an overarching model that helps you plan work load, I think it can be helpful but we have a model that has tied us absolutely in knots so there hasn't been any flex in the model."</p>	<p>"I'm looking at SSR as well and does that actually work or have we got too much work and not enough staff or have we got too much workload and not enough staff"</p>	<p>"we had a staff survey 21 months ago and then a mini one in May of this year so a sort of interim and it was already bad but it got worse compared to the national average of staff surveys we are low and yet you can meet a lot of people going round who say it's a great place to work so I have had to dig into the faculty staff survey and in the end have a very frank discussion with lots of staff to say I'm really disappointed we are busting a gut to try to make things better and you're telling me it's terrible and put like that most people are saying to me it's not terrible in the faculty it's at university level where things are not good and that's interesting."</p>				

R10	"This faculty uses it specially to strategically plan rather than trying to drive productivity although the two go hand in hand, and we do use some of the data in our RPR appraisal type activities so that we, I don't think we do it as well as I have seen it elsewhere and as I have said we haven't really adopted it universally as there is a bit of suspicion about it and the academic community haven't picked up on it"		"there are some near here and I look at how adversarial the changes are and we don't seem to have that. We have a good relationship with staff body and interestingly relationship with the student union so I think in all of those the changes it would be wrong to say that change is consensual but it is driven by strong strategic mission and beliefs but seem to be good at communicating the necessity for change and contextualising that in the external environment and people understanding and working with us "			"we have got a mixture of what I would consider traditional academics who believe that they franchise their services into the uni and are free-lance and they are the ones that just consider themselves to be working in a regimented routine and miss the production line element and the culture is one that we tread somewhere down the middle"	

R11	<p>"at the moment we are using a sort of work load model that was developed a number of years ago about five years ago which used the national guidelines of what an academic work load should look like so focusing on the scheduling of teaching and teaching directives and related activity, research, public engagement, committees and so building on the objectives with the track return" "so that model has been around for a while but we are now looking at establishing a new academic employment framework where previously all staff, academic staff, were entitled to 178 hours for every research or scholarly activity roughly</p>			<p>"There is a big push about growing your own and trying to get, you know we have clear performance indicators for 2018 and the vision 2025 and the expectation is that the majority of the staff will already have a PhD" "a number of academics have gone. We haven't lost positions as the people that have gone have been replaced with a more research intensive individual. So it hasn't been about cost saving but it is definitely been about changing the shape and culture of the academic staff "</p>			

R12	"there is a workload allocation tool which having been involved in developing that type of thing in the past it is, it's fairly, not too burdensome really. We have a system which is a derivation of TRAC and its called TASS and it gets completed over periods in the year and there is an attempt to try and collapse those into one process. But when people are doing their performance review which is quite a structured process when they're doing that they have to express their percentage of workload just across the, I think four variables which are teaching, admin, research and I can't remember the other one"						
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	Learning and Teaching		
	Use of Technology	Stretch for able students	Teaching quality
Respondent			
R1	"We do have within the university the centre for excellence for teaching and learning. They tend to be obsessed with technology. So they will say we have got money for projects you can do, you can have a couple of grand for this but it tends to be technology based stuff. And sometimes the best teachers, for example we have a range of what we call foundation years which are level three courses as part of a four year programme and some of the best teachers, I'm using that word deliberately, on those courses don't use modern electronic, I mean they may use power-point but they don't, but actually those students need something a kin to a school environment or college environment. We do insist that every module is represented on the environment called Blackboard "		
R2	"we have to work within our budget as before in terms of learning and teaching we are pretty well ahead in terms of using educational technology, new technology so you know being smarter there is more efficient. I think it should probably be able to save some staff time etcetera by sort of being innovative in terms of assessment."		
R3			

R4		"trying to consider approaches that would improve the effectiveness or improve the engagement of students in those modules so for example at the final year level six we have actually streamed some of the modules, but they know that. We had to, we were forced by lecture constraints to run it twice so we thought we would make a virtue of that to try and improve. We are very keen to stretch the strong students and there has been a bit of an emphasis historically on supporting the weaker students, we are very keen to stretch the strong students	
R5			
R6			
R7			"I don't think they have moved to the Oxford model with small tutorials I don't think they have looked at the equality of the learning experience particularly around centralisation and the quality of the environment for students and the quality of the teaching and the innovative teaching they think there should be for students I think that is what they pride themselves on."
R8			

R9	"we are talking a lot to our staff about flipped classrooms and trying to get the staff to think about what they use the IT for to help students prepare how they then learn in the classroom with the students what the students do beyond the session and again that's a real challenge because we can be cost effective we can be much better but the staff really struggle, not all of them but a lot are struggling with all these concepts."		
R10			
R11			
R12			

	Student -related Performance Measures				Student Orientation		
	NSS	Retention	Employability	Access and diversity	Complex customer	Partnership	Understanding expectations
Respondent							
R1	"the Russell group position is used as a proxy for quality. So we have no choice but to try and go up the league tables as much as we can. The NSS is a very quick way of doing that in the sense that you are, you know your next year's placing will be influenced on this year's NSS."	"couple of things we have learned is that top down, not directives, but top down dictates as the best way to achieve retention often don't work. There isn't a magic bullet for retention and one of the most successful areas for us in terms of turn round retention is actually when the heads of the division have said to individual module leaders look there isn't a magic bullet so what works for your module might not work for someone else."			the students think that we have got plenty of money to spend. In fact we have the same amount of money or less money. What happens is that it tends to get mentioned if things go wrong like students will say look I'm paying this amount of money where years ago with the same complaint they would have just said I don't agree that should of happened." "no we deliberately don't talk about them as customers. We are just very conscious that we might get to the stage where it might be easier to retain students than it is to actually attract them in the first place."		"as far as the motivation of students their attendance and all the rest of it, I don't think the 3K fee or the 9K fee has made any difference. They are certainly more selective because they can be about where they go and why they go but once they come here I wouldn't say, well we are astonished sometimes like the students some of them here are building up these huge debts and you know the least you could do is make the best of it."

R2					"I have heard that used yeah, I think it is. You know there have been lots of things introduced I suppose. You see that relationship but the end of the day the students also come to learn and sometimes rather than them leading they need to be told what to do really and I think they accept that and I think it can go too far the other way in terms of client and customer relationship and I am a bit sort of wary of that in a way."		
R3			"there is the whole area of linking in to employability. It is a university that would pride themselves in having those transferable skills for people. And people being ready for the workplace."	"it is inclusive in terms of having programmes that bring in through wider access and encouraging that broader achievement of maybe people who would never think university is for them."		"I think we have a very strong focus on the students through the student like association. I think we have that strong link into the whole broader area through the staff student liaison groups. So there is a good two way dialogue and I think there is a responsiveness to students and their opinions are valued, their opinions are then taking up to court level and issues are discussed at the university court"	

R4	"I think the sorts of things around learning and teaching have been more driven around the NSS than the customer culture if you like. We have a kind of strategic focus student centred learning and trying to improve that and for the learning and improve the resources to be offered to students."		"I guess perhaps true to our polytechnic traditions really. A lot of the courses are focussed on getting students into work so we are very professionally focussed and very much engaged with the profession."	"it is a diverse institution. We have students from like 150 countries but also very diverse sector within the UK as well. Students from ethnic groups tend to feel very comfortable here and I think that probably drives you to understand that we are really diverse."	"I think that there is much more of a tendency for students to think in terms of the resource they have put in to in terms of money into a course and where there is issues they are likely to say I spent £100 on this session you know and I didn't get what I wanted out of it blah blah blah, so there is much more of a customer type of ethic coming perhaps not as quickly as I anticipated but definitely creeping in. I have done quite a few things to try and mitigate that so we have tended to try and talk about what we are doing here, a bit like a gym, you don't pay for a gym unless you go and use it."		
R5							

R6					<p>"The students are very much seen as a customer and everything is that the customer has to be satisfied and there is a lot of peripheral activity to providing students with a course going on to try and make sure that they are satisfied" "They are not really customers you can't treat them like customers and my view is that we are spending a lot of time and money on fluff but actually students don't care about it. There is a very different relationship but the word is they are our customers, if the customer isn't satisfied heads will roll"</p>		
R7					<p>"I don't know if the individual lecturers see it that way but certainly management structure does, and the students see themselves as customers"</p>		

R8	"a bit of a self-congratulatory between you and me that "we're doing fine, we don't need to worry about this" whereas truthfully the evidence wasn't that strong with things like the NSS and so on we were a very middling university and to be able to get people to recognise there needed to be a step change we needed to swing the pendulum quite far"		adjust the portfolio as the market beds in because we know that students will start to choose different subjects or we may get growth in psychology for example whereas other things like archaeology are on the way out because there aren't as many jobs associated with them.			"The student union here the interface between the university executive team and the student union, the whole student representation system. [name] as our student union is called they aim to be the best student union in the country and they're on a good trajectory for it, so there's an exceptional relationship and mutual respect between the university leadership and the students generally so the student experience is really positive"	
R9			"it's a new university, it's very applied in its nature so its whole focus is about application, enabling graduates to be ready for the world of work employability at the heart of all that we do"		I think if you think of them as customers and you help people to think through what they appreciate about good customer service then I think we can help with the communication and dialogue and give, it is easy to give experiences you every day we are customers whether shop banks and wherever you know and we know what floats our boat and we know what hacks us off." "but most of my academic staff don't see themselves as part of a business and that is where the customer service bit becomes more difficult. On the one hand they are right: education isn't a business in the true sense of the word but it is and at the end of the day if we do not get customer satisfaction part of it right	"a bit distant. I am used to a student union that is much more engaged with the VC office and the deans and all the rest of it. I used to more engagement. I find there is not enough here."	"it is driving us to be a more and more looking at ways to engage with students at all levels of the institution. I think there is still a lack of understand across the broad academic staff regarding managing the expectations of students so it is not about bending over backwards and doing everything that they want but it is about their expectations and I think we still have work to do there. But at all levels whether it is the VC or porter, anyone else it is all about how we engage with the students and how we do more of it but I the way it manages their expectations but not in a way that I sets us up to fail"

					<p>So at a simple level and that is where you need to start often, so helping people think about think as individuals it is useful but gets more complicated if you see education as a business. So I would say I am in the business of education. I have a budget, I have a surplus to make and all the rest of it but most of my academic staff don't see themselves as part of a business and that is where the customer service bit becomes more difficult. On the one hand they are right: education isn't a business in the true sense of the word but it is and at the end of the day if we do not get customer satisfaction part of it right then none of us will have a job and there won't be any students. So it is managing that sort of</p>		
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R10		"It is still I think that 94-95% of our student that come through from the lower social-economic classes are actually completing which is a phenomenal achievement"		we have some pockets of world class excellence particularly in research in [subject] but we still have a very high participation. It is still I think that 94-95% of our student that come through from the lower social-economic classes are actually completing which is a phenomenal achievement and that is the message we keep sending back so a very economically deprived like [university] is doing something very transformational.	"clearly we have a consumer ethos that is through the sector. I think there is an uncomfortableness and yes it is something the sector is grappling with and individuals have different views. My view is that they are customers to a certain extent but I do not want a transactional relationship with them. So we, the uni talks about not about transaction but about transformation and it talks about how we work collaboratively to get the best experience and how we recognise and rejoice our own expertise and we recognise that students are experts on themselves but we have our own expertise in HE to offer, so I terms of allowing the customer to entirely drive the experience I do not	"So at the moment it is good, at the moment we get on well and we engage our students in all aspects in uni life and I want to increase the sense of partnership. We talk about them as partners but there is still that sense in some areas where we don't engage fully and I think we could do more and I think that we probably will do more in terms of their formal representation and build bridges with the trustees."	
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R11		"it was fascinating looking at them and saying well what are we offering and what are we facilitating and why, and how did we lose that many." "I think that with health and social work students and education, the staff have done everything possible to keep them here on the programme and supporting them and understanding their needs. Where I think the traditional student is maybe they support the facilitation could have been stronger"			"I think there is more focus around them being a customer and expecting a quality provision and I think they are much more discerning students about what they should and shouldn't get and I think academics need to be clearer and at the forefront about what we are offering the students in terms of experience and to have real clarity and honesty and integrity that actually and what you are offering is a service of, X and not expecting that we are going to meet all of your needs all of the time but I do think students are becoming a lot more discerning and are asking and expecting individuals to be here but in a different way and I don't think that that is a bad thing."		
R12			"you know this university doesn't see itself as an ancient or as [university] wants to see itself as the university that's got a focus and you know . . that employability across the whole university is one of its key goals really."				

	Status and Reputation			
Respondent	League tables	Quality monitoring	Comparison (with Russell Group)	REF and research
R1	"So we are conscious that one of the toxic influences over the last ten years has been the idea of a good university. Because if people say who are so in so, is that a good university? That implies that there are bad universities and I don't think that that is the case. And that is related to league tables and it's the old Groucho Marx thing you wouldn't belong to a club who wouldn't have you as a member and they double entry points and the Russell group position is used as a proxy for quality. So we have no choice but to try and go up the league tables as much as we can."		"And that is related to league tables and it's the old Groucho Marx thing you wouldn't belong to a club who wouldn't have you as a member and they double entry points and the Russell group position is used as a proxy for quality. So we have no choice but to try and go up the league tables as much as we can."	"we are never going to go up the league tables due to research as in REFable research is becoming more selective not less selective, there are a few players."
R2			"I suppose we are not a Russell Group university. Although we have got areas of research that would be Russell type for example our [subject] is one that's comes to mind."	"I think we do see ourselves as a strong regional university with, I think we have got areas that are very strong. Certainly our research areas . . . some areas of our research is four star as they were in the last RAE. I think we see ourselves as having a bright future and I would say that that comes back to the way you are managed financially."

R3	"I think now the conversations are changing in terms of you know how effective are we in our progression, our retention strategy, how effective are we in relation to the NSS survey you know and where we are with the league tables. I think there needs to be a change of emphasis you know like what sort of outputs we are delivering so we are better placed to be more effective within the sector."			
R4			"I think there is a fine line to be trodden but we don't feel as an institution that we are the bottom of the new university pile which I guess is feeling the heat neither, as you put it, at the top of the research intensive pile. I think that we are diverse enough that we can steer our way through the future changes and challenges."	
R5				
R6	"And one of the strategies that we have used this year is to increase our tariffs across all of our courses which I think has been a very successful strategy." the anxiety they wouldn't recruit, that anxiety hasn't been realised but they are still recruiting and that increase in tariff increases your chances of having people with a 300 tariff which allows you to expand your numbers. So one area expansion and of course that has shifted us up the league tables as well so I think that has been a really reliable strategy			

R7	"it sees itself as a modern forward thinking university. It sits in the middle of most of the league tables you know you could say that is ok and comfortable. They are not that pleased about that because we are aspirational and most certainly within its research objectives it is very aspirational" "it is related to specific performance indicators and that wasn't done before. So that is how it is going to measure itself internally and externally it monitors itself against the league tables, the performance of other universities in the sector in the modern university and where it positions itself against those."	"I think in our circumstances we are quality monitored so much by three major parties: university quality, NMC and we have the local trust what we now call health education England. They all monitor us so quite a lot of the scrutiny comes from within that where the individual lecturers I might say to them to have the freedom"		"It sits in the middle of most of the league tables you know you could say that is ok and comfortable. They are not that pleased about that because we are aspirational and most certainly within its research objectives it is very aspirational"
R8		"We had our QAA institutional audit this summer and I'm led to believe we're the first and only university to be commended as a result of this round of QAA audits I think all the rest are getting satisfactory, so we've been commended really around the student experience."		"I think it is going to be interesting regarding the Research Excellence Framework. They university has invested a huge amount of energy in terms of making sure we put forward probably relatively small number of units of assessment but they are critical in mass and strength and I think to be honest we have done a great job of really putting our best forward but we still don't know how that will pan out in terms of funding and whether or not the big guys will get the funding in the future and that does leave the post 92s and others seriously thinking about what their portfolio will be in the future."
R9				

R10	"we have some pockets of world class excellence particularly in research in maritime etc. but we still have a very high participation. It is still I think that 94-95% of our student that come through from the lower social-economic classes are actually completing which is a phenomenal achievement"		"the taxi drivers and now aware that we are in the top 50 universities in the world under 50 years old. We consistently rank in the top 40 for research universities in the UK and those kind of metrics that people what [university] like that, and they have got that sense of pride that we are going in the right direction"	
R11	"With that push towards moving and improving the collaboration and improving systems to really ensure, I mean the university I work in is going up the league tables and improving our reputation and standing"			"But the reality is it is about we have been really looking at how do we bring in individuals with a research profile. So we have spent a great deal of money bringing in individuals here who are REF-able. We have increased the number of professors substantially over the latter two years."
R12			"there is a focus obviously on research and its focused research where research institutes here but the expenditure and the energy between the importance of learning and teaching versus the importance of research seems to be well balanced." "Whereas you know this university doesn't see itself as an ancient or as [university] wants to see itself as the university that's got a focus and you know I am not dissimilar to yourself that employability across the whole university is one of its key goals really."	

Markets and Mission					
	Vocational Professional	From UG focus to broad academic agenda & portfolio review	Research	Business orientation	Location
Respondent					
R1	"this university will always be here because it fulfils a very big need. But we are only quarter of a mile away from [name], which is a Russell group university we struggle head to head in terms of similar courses but we do have a market, a local market, so we are probably more vocational now than we were"				"we are based outside the city centre. And I think if you are comparing yourself with let's say Bristol, west of England which is the oldest poly, Leeds metropolitan, Sheffield you know the institutions that are based in cities even yourself because you are based in a major city I think that is a disadvantage for us."
R2			"I think our research, we have got a big movement to increase our research profile so I think so long as we continue to meet the performance indicators we have got a good future"	In [year] we won the award for the entrepreneurial university of the year. So we say we are business facing and business like	

R3		<p>(Int: with a focus on teaching and learning?)</p> <p>"Yes, and I think yes we want research and we want international, we want global citizenship but we must have that quality, we must have that integrity around academic standards."</p> <p>"we did lose staff but it was staff who were not maybe be able to move to the next level, those who could not embrace the new post-grad portfolio that included research and internationalisation. So every school at the moment will be undergoing like I would say like a refreshing of what they are currently doing"</p>			<p>"I think we must not be complacent, we must address the league table, we must maintain that geographical footprint which is really quite unique. And I would say that the future is within our hands but we have to address the challenges"</p>
R4		<p>"we have over the last three maybe four years done a lot of work to stream-line the portfolio. So where there might have been like six courses, slight variations on a theme you know we have been pulling them back to like two or three courses so still taking in the same number of students but really focussing on those courses. And then within courses we have been trying to run a more stream-line sort of module so over the last couple of years for example the life sciences integrated with the health mix, we now for example have one level four like first year physiology course across the whole of that school"</p>			
R5					

R6	<p>"I think and that fact we are largely vocational qualifications. That in a way strengthens our position because I know in BPP, one of the private universities has actually started a nursing course. And I am not so sure that they will be able to sustain it because the quality assurance measures are so expensive I can't imagine that they will be able to sustain that provision so I think there are certain types of provision that is so costly and requires such investment and only a big organisation can take the big numbers to justify the investment that they are going to be able to deliver"</p>				<p>"I think because we are a big university in a very popular city and we are agile and responsive we have done everything we possibly can to survive and I think we probably will. In spite of the current government and its vague policy. I think if we were in somewhere like I don't know [place] I would be saying very different, I think our biggest strength is that we are in the centre of [place] and students want to come to [place] and that in itself will ensure our survival"</p>

R7	"the university sees itself as in line with the professions. It has a number of professional regulated degree programmes so it sees itself as a modern forward thinking university."	"There has been quite a change in the academic staff the seven years I've been here but also a huge amount of development and support for the individuals who were here to get their PhD's to get skilled in a rounded academic portfolio rather than just coming to work and teaching under grads."	"It sits in the middle of most of the league tables you know you could say that is ok and comfortable. They are not that pleased about that because we are aspirational and most certainly within its research objectives it is very aspirational" "it has been cautious over the years and it is financially quite secure which is a big factor it also taking steps towards things like employability and it think it is starting to go towards a university of professions has edge it towards that. I think it Achilles heel is it research aspirations."		
R8		"what it did was put professional practice on a much more level playing field with the other dimensions, education and research, I think it, you know, our previous vice chancellor was research, research, research" "So rather than hours there is a concept of a balance work load there is a whole set of principles that you would expect people to be engaged in teaching and supervision and research, consultancy, enterprise and professional practice in a way that that meets their personal skill set to the best advantage."	"I think it is going to be interesting regarding the Research Excellence Framework. They university has invested a huge amount of energy in terms of making sure we put forward probably relatively small number of units of assessment but they are critical in mass and strength and I think to be honest we have done a great job of really putting our best forward but we still don't know how that will pan out in terms of funding and whether or not the big guys will get the funding in the future and that does leave the post 92s and others seriously thinking about what their portfolio will be in the future."		"we happen to have a wonderful location no two ways about it a and I think others have struggled this and last year due to recruitment numbers we are ok we have met, we were down last year but so was everyone but we met our target"

R9		<p>"we are in the process of moving from a 20 credit system to a 15 30 system and what we are pushing is 4 modules of 30 credits every year and it's not mandatory but its highly encouraged so we are having bigger modules and in some ways slightly more linear programmes to try and get programmes to hang together better. So that's one driver and as part of that also managing the assessment load for the students and the staff and all the other things that go with it."</p>		<p>"it's now accepted, I think, largely across the board but that is the way the university has fashioned itself and therefor it's important for everything. So in the new social sciences work that I did in the last few months for the university the heart of that vision is for graduates who are ready for the world of work whatever that means for a social science student."</p>	<p>"we are fortunate because [place] is a city that still helps us attract students." (Int: . . . it has a wonderful reputation.) "Yes but sooner or later that won't be enough and students will go elsewhere and see the fantastic facilities of our competitors and they will say well [place] is nice but actually it's not good enough so I am really worried about that."</p>
R10		<p>"I think that we recognise that probably that for the traditional student experience we are at the saturation point and I think if I was looking at it which I am not, I would probably look at to take on board decisions to see if sustain the size and or drop and look at quality and that is probably that we will want to considered in the near future I think so that we get the quality high. You know get the quality and say well are we slightly big and do we replace and diversify some of our traditional student body to make space for international and post graduate etcetera."</p>	<p>"we have some pockets of world class excellence particularly in research in [subject]"</p>		<p>"It has got to be a hindrance. If I am honest it is a two edged sword. I would say that there is a lot of benefits, it is a nice . . . city. There are some nice bits; some bad bits and is near [place]. For those who want the lifestyle it is a boom and I think we the government investment into the [region] like down into [place] and then into [place] is appalling"</p>

R11			<p>"the reality is it is about we have been really looking at how do we bring in individuals with a research profile. So we have spent a great deal of money bringing in individuals here who are REF-able. We have increased the number of professors substantially over the latter two years."</p>	<p>"the strap line is you know research rich, business focused, professional university with a global reputation for academic excellence so that is the vision that we are working towards."</p>	<p>"So I think although, I think this is the real fortune about the [region] is that there is similarities in [places] you know we are not saturated like the [region] where you have got another university 10 miles away."</p>

R12				"I think that is it trying to be a small nimble, lean university that knows its purpose and develops its links with key parts of its industry partners both locally and more and more so internationally."	"in a way [we are] geographically isolated in one respect in that we at a university level there may be one or two areas where there is some overlap between the two universities around law and I think around some engineering but by and large I think that there isn't a pressing need to eliminate duplication"
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Markets and Mission					
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Respondent					
R1	"this university will always be here because it fulfils a very big need. But we are only quarter of a mile away from [name], which is a Russell group university we struggle head to head in terms of similar courses but we do have a market, a local market, so we are probably more vocational now than we were"				"we are based outside the city centre. And I think if you are comparing yourself with let's say Bristol, west of England which is the oldest poly, Leeds metropolitan, Sheffield you know the institutions that are based in cities even yourself because you are based in a major city I think that is a disadvantage for us."
R2			"I think our research, we have got a big movement to increase our research profile so I think so long as we continue to meet the performance indicators we have got a good future"	In [year] we won the award for the entrepreneurial university of the year. So we say we are business facing and business like	

R3		<p>(Int: with a focus on teaching and learning?) "Yes, and I think yes we want research and we want international, we want global citizenship but we must have that quality, we must have that integrity around academic standards." "we did lose staff but it was staff who were not maybe be able to move to the next level, those who could not embrace the new post-grad portfolio that included research and internationalisation. So every school at the moment will be undergoing like I would say like a refreshing of what they are currently doing"</p>			<p>"I think we must not be complacent, we must address the league table, we must maintain that geographical footprint which is really quite unique. And I would say that the future is within our hands but we have to address the challenges"</p>
R4		<p>"we have over the last three maybe four years done a lot of work to stream-line the portfolio. So where there might have been like six courses, slight variations on a theme you know we have been pulling them back to like two or three courses so still taking in the same number of students but really focussing on those courses. And then within courses we have been trying to run a more stream-line sort of module so over the last couple of years for example the life sciences integrated with the health mix, we now for example have one level four like first year physiology course across the whole of that school"</p>			
R5					

R6	<p>"I think and that fact we are largely vocational qualifications. That in a way strengthens our position because I know in BPP, one of the private universities has actually started a nursing course. And I am not so sure that they will be able to sustain it because the quality assurance measures are so expensive I can't imagine that they will be able to sustain that provision so I think there are certain types of provision that is so costly and requires such investment and only a big organisation can take the big numbers to justify the investment that they are going to be able to deliver"</p>				<p>"I think because we are a big university in a very popular city and we are agile and responsive we have done everything we possibly can to survive and I think we probably will. In spite of the current government and its vague policy. I think if we were in somewhere like I don't know [place] I would be saying very different, I think our biggest strength is that we are in the centre of [place] and students want to come to [place] and that in itself will ensure our survival"</p>

R7	"the university sees itself as in line with the professions. It has a number of professional regulated degree programmes so it sees itself as a modern forward thinking university."	"There has been quite a change in the academic staff the seven years I've been here but also a huge amount of development and support for the individuals who were here to get their PhD's to get skilled in a rounded academic portfolio rather than just coming to work and teaching under grads."	"It sits in the middle of most of the league tables you know you could say that is ok and comfortable. They are not that pleased about that because we are aspirational and most certainly within its research objectives it is very aspirational" "it has been cautious over the years and it is financially quite secure which is a big factor it also taking steps towards things like employability and it think it is starting to go towards a university of professions has edge it towards that. I think it Achilles heel is it research aspirations."		
R8		"what it did was put professional practice on a much more level playing field with the other dimensions, education and research, I think it, you know, our previous vice chancellor was research, research, research" "So rather than hours there is a concept of a balance work load there is a whole set of principles that you would expect people to be engaged in teaching and supervision and research, consultancy, enterprise and professional practice in a way that that meets their personal skill set to the best advantage."	"I think it is going to be interesting regarding the Research Excellence Framework. They university has invested a huge amount of energy in terms of making sure we put forward probably relatively small number of units of assessment but they are critical in mass and strength and I think to be honest we have done a great job of really putting our best forward but we still don't know how that will pan out in terms of funding and whether or not the big guys will get the funding in the future and that does leave the post 92s and others seriously thinking about what their portfolio will be in the future."		"we happen to have a wonderful location no two ways about it a and I think others have struggled this and last year due to recruitment numbers we are ok we have met, we were down last year but so was everyone but we met our target"

R9		<p>"we are in the process of moving from a 20 credit system to a 15 30 system and what we are pushing is 4 modules of 30 credits every year and it's not mandatory but its highly encouraged so we are having bigger modules and in some ways slightly more linear programmes to try and get programmes to hang together better. So that's one driver and as part of that also managing the assessment load for the students and the staff and all the other things that go with it."</p>		<p>"it's now accepted, I think, largely across the board but that is the way the university has fashioned itself and therefor it's important for everything. So in the new social sciences work that I did in the last few months for the university the heart of that vision is for graduates who are ready for the world of work whatever that means for a social science student."</p>	<p>"we are fortunate because [place] is a city that still helps us attract students." (Int: . . . it has a wonderful reputation.) "Yes but sooner or later that won't be enough and students will go elsewhere and see the fantastic facilities of our competitors and they will say well [place] is nice but actually it's not good enough so I am really worried about that."</p>
R10		<p>"I think that we recognise that probably that for the traditional student experience we are at the saturation point and I think if I was looking at it which I am not, I would probably look at to take on board decisions to see if sustain the size and or drop and look at quality and that is probably that we will want to considered in the near future I think so that we get the quality high. You know get the quality and say well are we slightly big and do we replace and diversify some of our traditional student body to make space for international and post graduate etcetera."</p>	<p>"we have some pockets of world class excellence particularly in research in [subject]"</p>		<p>"It has got to be a hindrance. If I am honest it is a two edged sword. I would say that there is a lot of benefits, it is a nice . . . city. There are some nice bits; some bad bits and is near [place]. For those who want the lifestyle it is a boom and I think we the government investment into the [region] like down into [place] and then into [place] is appalling"</p>

R11			<p>"the reality is it is about we have been really looking at how do we bring in individuals with a research profile. So we have spent a great deal of money bringing in individuals here who are REF-able. We have increased the number of professors substantially over the latter two years."</p>	<p>"the strap line is you know research rich, business focused, professional university with a global reputation for academic excellence so that is the vision that we are working towards."</p>	<p>"So I think although, I think this is the real fortune about the [region] is that there is similarities in [places] you know we are not saturated like the [region] where you have got another university 10 miles away."</p>

R12				<p>"I think that is it trying to be a small nimble, lean university that knows its purpose and develops its links with key parts of its industry partners both locally and more and more so internationally."</p>	<p>"in a way [we are] geographically isolated in one respect in that we at a university level there may be one or two areas where there is some overlap between the two universities around law and I think around some engineering but by and large I think that there isn't a pressing need to eliminate duplication"</p>
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Appendix 6: Respondent vignettes (based on researcher interpretation of participant responses)

Respondent 1

Respondent 1 was a senior non-executive manager in an out-of-town university. The university had recently undertaken reorganisation of university services and restructuring of academic units. It was also in the midst of a merger with a smaller institution. Efficiency was important for the institution, with downward pressure on staffing levels and aspirations for growth of the student population. The institution, however, was suffering a serious drop in student demand and faced difficult financial decisions. They know what kind of university they would like to be, but feel constrained by the financial situation.

The institution is reported as being in a very competitive environment for students. It feels squeezed from both the college sector and other local universities. Trying to achieve distinctiveness, but not feeling it has much control over the external pressures. Despite this competitive environment, students are not regarded as customers. The university is reported as being constrained by its location, with a focus on league tables and other measures of standing. There has been a focus on rewarding research, with a move away from only teaching undergraduate programmes. This has also led to fewer academics willing to follow a management route for promotion.

There has been increasing centralisation of decision-making, and reports of conflict between faculties and central university directorates, characterised as interventionist and micro-managing. Resource decisions in particular are highly centralised. Morale was reported as being not great, and blame and dysfunctional communication was said to be prevalent.

Respondent 2

Respondent 2 was a senior academic manager in an executive role leading a large and diverse faculty. The university was reported as having effective financial management and a successful capital investment strategy, which had been in place for some years. Efficiency is built in to planning cycles, but income growth allows further investment in academic staff. Technology enhanced learning is widely utilised to support efficiency in teaching, and is generally well utilised.

There is an academic workload model that is mainly team based – rather than individual based. The university regards itself as business facing, with a strong reputation for entrepreneurship. It projects itself as a strong regional university, and is comfortable with its relationship to other universities.

Power and decision-making were reported as having been devolved significantly in recent years, and there is a sense of shared decision-making, though some decisions on staff appointments were recently centralised. Morale is reported as having been knocked by significant recent organisational restructuring.

There are changing expectations of academic staff, including recruiting more with PhDs. Students are not generally regarded as customers, with a more complex relationship being described.

Respondent 3

Respondent 3 was a senior non-executive academic manager in a multi-campus university spread over a number of towns in a region. Institution sees its distinctiveness in its locations and geography – which it regards as a strength. Generally the focus is shifting from purely financial measures of success to academic ones.

The university was reported as having undergone recent restructuring and reorganisation, with some loss of academic jobs and review of provision. The respondent reported a perceived disconnect between efficiency and effectiveness, and a lack of purposeful engagement between senior managers and academic staff. Trust was also reported as problematic. Control is reported as being drawn to the centre; however, this was contrasted with a higher degree of autonomy at school level.

The respondent suggested that there was a growing focus on an academic agenda, teaching, research and internationalisation. Alongside this was a focus on improving performance on measures like employability, widening access, student retention, league table position and NSS. Students were not seen as customers, with partnership being the preferred relationship.

Respondent 4

Respondent 4 was a senior academic manager in an executive role in a professionally focussed, city-centre university, which is characterised by a diverse student population. Historic downsizing was reported, with the focus now on efficiencies through streamlining the teaching portfolio, with the aim of providing time for research. A relatively new VC was in post and reorganisation of the academic units was underway. These changes were being viewed generally positively with morale on the up.

The university still considered itself to be predominately a teaching organisation, and somewhat threatened by changes in student choice, but confident that the future remained in its own control. The respondent indicated a belief that sound financial management, coupled with responsiveness to changing government agendas, and a focus on getting the academic basics right would stand them in good stead.

This respondent had a focus on improving student learning, with a particular focus on those that are doing well. While customer-type behaviour has been recognised in students, the respondent prefers the gym membership metaphor. NSS scores are reported as driving institutional behaviour.

The respondent had used a fairly flexible workload model, but a more constraining one was being introduced. The relationship between academic units and central services such as finance, were good, and though there was a tendency to centralised decision making this was reported as moving towards greater devolution. Trust and engagement with senior management is not as good as the respondent would have hoped.

Respondent 5

Respondent 5 was a senior academic manager in an executive role leading a large school on a single campus university. The university was reported as being financially sound and well managed, with an inclusive and consultative approach to management. Efficiency and effectiveness were key themes in the university strategy and part of the everyday vocabulary of senior managers. Significant emphasis on understanding the costs and return from teaching programmes was reported, with staff time and salary allocated against income streams.

The organisation overall was reported as being in a very positive state: successful, ambitious and largely in control of its own destiny. It was reported as having a good reputation for teaching and learning, high student satisfaction, pockets of excellent research, and being purposefully engaged with local community and business. Students were not regarded as customers, with the concept actively resisted, and the emphasis being on partnership and co-production of learning.

Based on the respondent's feedback, the organisation displayed none of Cameron and Smart's "dirty dozen" indicators of decline (Cameron and Smart, 1998), and was confident about its future.

Respondent 6

Respondent 6 was a senior, non-executive academic manager in a large city centre university. The location, in a popular city for students, was seen as very positive. The respondent described highly centralised control of decision-making, with apparent disconnect between management and academic staff, and between service directorates and academic units. With a history of strong, vocationally aligned teaching, including significant CPD, the university is reported as successfully growing research in those areas. This is leading to a changing profile of academic staff, including more emphasis on PhDs as an essential qualification at appointment.

The respondent reported significant focus on staff performance and performance management, and on deployment through an AWM. The university was also reported to feel a bit on the back foot in terms of responding to government policy. While there were concerns expressed about competition, this was more potential than actual.

A lack of long-term planning was reported, with some risk aversion and resistance to change also evident. Moral was generally seen as low, but with some improvements, though relations with TUs were rather strained. There was also a perceived lack of trust of leadership, perhaps due to lack of communication.

Students are regarded as customers, but this aspect of the relationship is reported as led by central services, deepening the disconnection between service and academic units.

Respondent 7

Respondent 7 was a senior academic manager in an executive role in a multi-campus university that is spread over a number of towns. The university was described as professional and vocational, deeply engaged with professions and embedded in local enterprise structures as part of extensive community partnerships. Some reorganisation and restructuring was planned to consolidate academic units

Efficiency and effectiveness were not part of the everyday discourse in the university, with the focus instead on academic programmes and quality. The university was described as being financially secure and aspirational. There is a specific aspiration to improve research and climb a bit higher in the league tables.

Trust in senior managers was described as good, with reasonably devolved decision-making. The university, however, was described as risk averse. Strategic planning had become more sophisticated recently, with targets and clear performance indicators. While the respondent saw the HE sector as competitive in a general sense, there was felt to be little direct competition, given its geographical location.

Students were widely regarded as customers, and the concept was perceived as being helpful.

Respondent 8

Respondent 8 was a senior academic manager in an executive role in a city centre university with one main campus and some satellite sites. The university is reported as particularly strong on employability and for a very positive student experience. The institution appeared to demonstrate none of the indicators of decline with considerable devolution of authority, good communication, high trust and no recent down-sizing.

The respondent pointed to a clear university mission, supported by detailed strategic and operational planning. The university was reported as financially strong, with significant investment in estate and in student experience. The university has been characterised by a consultative approach since appointment of new VC, but this period has also led to changes in the expectations of academic staff, particularly with regard to qualifications.

There was no academic workload model, but a balanced academic workload was expected, and line management was minimal, with appraisal of academic staff shared amongst promoted staff.

Students were not regarded as customers, the concept having been rejected in the university, and a strong partnership relationship with the student union was reported. Student placements were highlighted as a way of contributing to the development of professional and industry practice.

Respondent 9

Respondent 9 was a senior academic manager in an executive role in a large multi-campus university. It was reported as being financially sound with significant reserves, but rather risk averse. The respondent indicated it was not making the investment in infrastructure and buildings that the respondent would like if the institution were to attract students in a competitive market. The relationship with students was described as a 'bit distant' with not enough effort from the university to maintain and strengthen the partnership approach it espouses. Students were reported as being seen as customers to a limited extent, in that a more complex concept is preferred.

Efficiency and effectiveness were widely used, including the application of 'lean' in improving processes. Significant savings had recently been made through centralisation of services, but this had impacted on the quality of the service. There was direct engagement of senior academic managers with the curriculum, but efforts to improve the use of technology in learning had displayed some divisions between academic managers and staff. The university had an academic workload model that was described by the respondent as a 'total nightmare'. This had contributed to some tension in university/TU relations.

The respondent was confident about the university's ability to determine its own future, but there were some caveats around continuing to attract students in a competitive market, and improve staff morale. The institution flips between long and short-term planning, and showed a number of the indicators of decline including a tendency to blame managers, and poor relations with TUs.

Respondent 10

Respondent 10 was a senior academic manager in an executive role in a large university that had largely consolidated on a single campus. The university is reported as having a strong research profile and high participation rates through wider access.

Efficiency and effectiveness are not part of the everyday concerns of manager, though there is a focus on the academic portfolio in terms of relevance and attractiveness to students. There are close links with industry and business, and a particular interest in social enterprise. While there is some competition with local HE institutions, there is also a degree of collaboration. Engagement in the international market was seen as entirely competitive.

The university was reported as minded to devolve decision-making, but with a cultural tendency to centralise decision-making when things get even a little difficult. Despite that the respondent reported a positive narrative around change, positive staff engagement, and a partnership relationship with the student union, though this can sometimes be a bit paternalistic. While students are seen as customers and consumers, the respondent emphasised that the relationship was not considered to be transactional, but more complex and aimed at transformation.

Respondent 11

Respondent 11 was a senior non-executive academic manager in a large city centre university. While there were local competitors, direct competition wasn't particularly strong, with the respondent seeing the national and international market as more relevant. The university was reported as being confident about its future, and successfully recruiting high tariff students in challenging circumstances. Students are reported as seeing themselves as customers, and institutional narratives supported this view. Focus on the student experience was reported as being in the context of competition for students and league table standing.

Efficiency and effectiveness had been part of everyday considerations for some time, but were now reported as enshrined in strategic plans. The university was reported as having undertaken recent restructuring and consolidation of schools to faculties with the intention of strengthening research, forging links with business, and building academic excellence. The respondent reported a focus on changing the profile of academic staff, including a requirement to have PhDs and a research profile. The change had been supported by voluntary severance.

Considerable resistance to change was reported with communication tending to be one-way, and reduced trust in senior leadership evident. Significant downsizing of university administrative services was leading to savings but some loss of institutional memory. Performance against the other Cameron and Smart (1989) criteria was reported as mixed, with morale fairly low but improving team-working.

Respondent 12

Respondent 12 was a senior non-executive academic manager in a single site university that had consolidated over time from around eight distributed campuses to one on the outskirts of a city. The university was reported as having a clear sense of itself and its purpose, and confident in its relations with another local, older university. Strong industrial and business links are considered important and a differentiator from other HE institutions. Those industry links underpin international developments and aspirations.

A light touch academic workload model exists, which is reported as well received and not overly burdensome. Decision-making is reported as tending towards the top-down, but with genuine efforts to greater inclusion. Morale is seen as generally positive with reasonably high levels of trust and team work. The university is reported as encouraging innovation, able to accept and manage risk, and with low resistance to change.

The notion of students as customers is recognised, but doesn't dominate the relationship, though the respondent expressed a need to improve NSS scores significantly. While keen to develop research, it doesn't see itself as driven by a research agenda, with academic quality and NSS scores reported as stronger drivers.

Appendix 7: Respondents and research questions revisited

Respondent No 1					
	Yes	Partly yes	Partly	Partly no	No
Are efficiency, effectiveness and value for money part of the everyday considerations of managers?					
Is the university driven by its values and mission, rather than by the whim of public policy?					
Is the university avoiding the “dirty dozen” indicators of reduced performance?					
Are managers “providing the conditions in which teaching and research can flourish?”					
Are tensions evident that might be characterised as between managerial and collegial standpoints?					
Are students considered as customers?					
Are other metaphors for the student relationship prevalent?					

Respondent No 2					
	Yes	Partly yes	Partly	Partly no	No
Are efficiency, effectiveness and value for money part of the everyday considerations of managers?					
Is the university driven by its values and mission, rather than by the whim of public policy?					
Is the university avoiding the “dirty dozen” indicators of reduced performance?					
Are managers “providing the conditions in which teaching and research can flourish?”					
Are tensions evident that might be characterised as between managerial and collegial standpoints?					
Are students considered as customers?					
Are other metaphors for the student relationship prevalent?					

Respondent No 3					
	Yes	Partly yes	Partly	Partly no	No
Are efficiency, effectiveness and value for money part of the everyday considerations of managers?					
Is the university driven by its values and mission, rather than by the whim of public policy?					
Is the avoiding the "dirty dozen" indicators of reduced performance?					
Are managers "providing the conditions in which teaching and research can flourish?"					
Are tensions evident that might be characterised as between managerial and collegial standpoints?					
Are students considered as customers?					
Are other metaphors for the student relationship prevalent?					

Respondent No 4					
	Yes	Partly yes	Partly	Partly no	No
Are efficiency, effectiveness and value for money part of the everyday considerations of managers?					
Is the university driven by its values and mission, rather than by the whim of public policy?					
Is the avoiding the "dirty dozen" indicators of reduced performance?					
Are managers "providing the conditions in which teaching and research can flourish?"					
Are tensions evident that might be characterised as between managerial and collegial standpoints?					
Are students considered as customers?					
Are other metaphors for the student relationship prevalent?					

Respondent No 5					
	Yes	Partly yes	Partly	Partly no	No
Are efficiency, effectiveness and value for money part of the everyday considerations of managers?					
Is the university driven by its values and mission, rather than by the whim of public policy?					
Is the avoiding the "dirty dozen" indicators of reduced performance?					
Are managers "providing the conditions in which teaching and research can flourish?"					
Are tensions evident that might be characterised as between managerial and collegial standpoints?					
Are students considered as customers?					
Are other metaphors for the student relationship prevalent?					

Respondent No 6					
	Yes	Partly yes	Partly	Partly no	No
Are efficiency, effectiveness and value for money part of the everyday considerations of managers?					
Is the university driven by its values and mission, rather than by the whim of public policy?					
Is the avoiding the "dirty dozen" indicators of reduced performance?					
Are managers "providing the conditions in which teaching and research can flourish?"					
Are tensions evident that might be characterised as between managerial and collegial standpoints?					
Are students considered as customers?					
Are other metaphors for the student relationship prevalent?					

Respondent No 7					
	Yes	Partly yes	Partly	Partly no	No
Are efficiency, effectiveness and value for money part of the everyday considerations of managers?					
Is the university driven by its values and mission, rather than by the whim of public policy?					
Is the avoiding the "dirty dozen" indicators of reduced performance?					
Are managers "providing the conditions in which teaching and research can flourish?"					
Are tensions evident that might be characterised as between managerial and collegial standpoints?					
Are students considered as customers?					
Are other metaphors for the student relationship prevalent?					

Respondent No 8					
	Yes	Partly yes	Partly	Partly no	No
Are efficiency, effectiveness and value for money part of the everyday considerations of managers?					
Is the university driven by its values and mission, rather than by the whim of public policy?					
Is the avoiding the "dirty dozen" indicators of reduced performance?					
Are managers "providing the conditions in which teaching and research can flourish?"					
Are tensions evident that might be characterised as between managerial and collegial standpoints?					
Are students considered as customers?					
Are other metaphors for the student relationship prevalent?					

Respondent No 9					
	Yes	Partly yes	Partly	Partly no	No
Are efficiency, effectiveness and value for money part of the everyday considerations of managers?					
Is the university driven by its values and mission, rather than by the whim of public policy?					
Is the avoiding the "dirty dozen" indicators of reduced performance?					
Are managers "providing the conditions in which teaching and research can flourish?"					
Are tensions evident that might be characterised as between managerial and collegial standpoints?					
Are students considered as customers?					
Are other metaphors for the student relationship prevalent?					

Respondent No 10					
	Yes	Partly yes	Partly	Partly no	No
Are efficiency, effectiveness and value for money part of the everyday considerations of managers?					
Is the university driven by its values and mission, rather than by the whim of public policy?					
Is the avoiding the "dirty dozen" indicators of reduced performance?					
Are managers "providing the conditions in which teaching and research can flourish?"					
Are tensions evident that might be characterised as between managerial and collegial standpoints?					
Are students considered as customers?					
Are other metaphors for the student relationship prevalent?					

Respondent No 11					
	Yes	Partly yes	Partly	Partly no	No
Are efficiency, effectiveness and value for money part of the everyday considerations of managers?					
Is the university driven by its values and mission, rather than by the whim of public policy?					
Is the avoiding the "dirty dozen" indicators of reduced performance?					
Are managers "providing the conditions in which teaching and research can flourish?"					
Are tensions evident that might be characterised as between managerial and collegial standpoints?					
Are students considered as customers?					
Are other metaphors for the student relationship prevalent?					

Respondent No 12					
	Yes	Partly yes	Partly	Partly no	No
Are efficiency, effectiveness and value for money part of the everyday considerations of managers?					
Is the university driven by its values and mission, rather than by the whim of public policy?					
Is the avoiding the "dirty dozen" indicators of reduced performance?					
Are managers "providing the conditions in which teaching and research can flourish?"					
Are tensions evident that might be characterised as between managerial and collegial standpoints?					
Are students considered as customers?					
Are other metaphors for the student relationship prevalent?					