# Internationalisation of Higher Education: Lived Experiences of International Students and Perspectives on the Global University

by

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# Contents

# Abstract

This thesis critically analyses the concept of internationalisation in HE based on the perceptions and lived experiences of a group of postgraduate students and staff in a post-1992 university in the United Kingdom. Specifically, it discusses the implications of the spatial nature of internationalisation practices and the extent to which marketised consumerist discourses affect academic life and shape the student experience.

Drawing on empirical data collected using participant observation and in-depth interviews, my thesis presents three main findings. First, analysis of the views and experiences of staff and students highlights the existence of a conceptual spectrum according to which internationalisation is projected and understood by both the institution and its staff/students. While the institution is driven by abstract contractual practices that make it look machinic, staff and students see it more as an ecological process (living organism).

Second, a spatial examination of the environment underlines substantial conflicts between the institution and students provoked by their distinct and incompatible needs and interests. For example, in the process of protecting its reputation, instead of working proactively and wholeheartedly on the lived experiences of students, the organisation has the tendency to shape its prospective students' perceptions with an idealistic self-image. The institution thus works more to attract students in meeting external marketing demands, and, I argue, fails to account for the diversity of students' experiences. This invites forms of discrimination with subtle characteristics that go beyond the traditional forms of racism and evoke types of xeno-racism which the thesis examines in depth.

Finally, drawing on my participants' perspectives, positions, and recommendations, I develop an ambitious model of internationalisation which aims to redefine the university's machinic views and practices in line with a more organic counterpart. My analysis of the data describes a simple, but sustainable, model with a powerful, meaningful approach that can bring stakeholders together through ongoing communication and intercultural dialogue.

# Preface (rationale)

The rationale of this research comes largely from my personal experience as an international student who started her journey in the UK as a pre-sessional student on a government scholarship, to end up as a postgraduate student on a PhD programme of three years length at Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU). This experience has been crucial for me in defining the terms of my thesis.

CCCU, in partnership with my home government, runs a 6-month pre-sessional programme in the UK. The programme has several aims including:

1. to ascertain the level of IELTS score required to study at a UK university (English language training and testing is provided for this);

2. to provide a developmental programme which assists the integration of the student into academic life (the intention is that all, if not most of the students will later pursue doctoral research in their own chosen university).

In the course of this preparatory programme, I have encountered many ambiguities that made me question everything I know, see, hear, and feel. From the start of the journey, even before I began to think of the topic of my thesis, there was this question in my head 'what is it like to be in an international community?' or 'what is it like to be an international student?'. Trying to answer this question, I started observing and analysing everything around me. I was in the middle of a highly diverse academic setting where I only knew a little about the operating environment. Students from different nations did not seem to mix. I heard people saying: "I want to go home" and saw others experiencing what they believed to be 'racism', and the most intriguing part was when I realised that what the university labels 'international students' actually refers to the 'other': the non-UK students and not the whole student population. I was so confused because I thought it was a word to use when describing cross cultural diversity just as is the case with any international event, where everybody is supposed to celebrate it.

It was only then that I felt othered, not belonging there. What I thought was uniting me with the other students was actually singling me out, making me, and probably many other 'international students', feel excluded.

Inspired by this, I decided to make internationalisation in HE my main research area. The key idea of my thesis was to investigate international students' lived experiences and understandings of the concept of internationalisation. As part of this investigation, it seemed natural to explore the views and experiences of staff as well, given their fundamental role in the academic sphere. I had to explore these areas to develop a holistic understanding of the phenomenon and, of course, to address concerns about: the lack of interaction between students; the forms of racism they experience; the inclusivity of universities; and what the labelling of students as 'international' reveals about the institution's mindset. Clearly, my interest was not in describing the cultural differences or learning difficulties between international and British students. I wanted to go beyond the institution's binary views and practices of internationalisation to a more meaningful approach that can unite the world and bring students together with all their differences.

# Chapter 01: Introduction

## 1.1 Research topic

Recent critics, such as Hayes and Cheng (2020) have argued that developments in internationalisation reflect neoliberal theory and the understanding that higher education is a market commodity. These institutions, it is argued, do not always respect ethical questions of, for instance, democratic plurality. Instead, they emphasise performance and competition and therefore "veer towards homogeneity" (Hayes and Cheng, 2020, p. 351).

This raises many important questions. First, it suggests that internationalisation may be perceived differently by institutions and their stakeholders, and that this may have ethical implications. Second, it raises the question of how these stakeholders respond to this climate of homogenisation. Finally, it asks us to consider the implications of these developments specifically for HE policy and practice with regard to sustainability.

These are not new questions. As Ball (2008) says:

> Education has become a crucial factor in ensuring economic productivity and competitiveness in the context of informational capitalism.
>
> (Ball, 2008, p.1).

However, the issue of universities' performance in an age of informational capitalism[1] and its ethical implications are more important today than ever.

Many studies have looked at this phenomenon of internationalisation based on questions around global, economic discourse. Researchers, for example, have studied how important

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[1] "Informational capitalism" is a form of economy based primarily on the act of selling knowledge instead of material goods. It is a widespread concept that is closely related to that of "Knowledge industry" introduced by Machlup (1972) or "knowledge economy" introduced by Drucker (1992). [See: Ignatow (2017, 2020) for more details]. Informational capitalism in the context of this study is regarded as a problematic issue that can not only lead to poor quality in HE but also, in some situations, to some quite ethically problematic forms of corruption. For example, the EHRC report into racism (2019), which I discuss later in the literature review, suggests that institutions deliberately avoid talking about their problems around racism or, in other words, create systems to reduce the importance of racism just because it is bad for their image.

international students' recruitment is for universities to make money. However, there has not been a lot of attention given to the spatial implications of internationalisation practices, and how internationalisation phenomena relate to "the substance of the university" (Zapp and Lerch, 2020, p. 1), meaning the pedagogy, study plans, and various degrees that make up the university curricula.

This thesis, therefore, examines the concept of internationalisation not only from the point of view of economy and neoliberal theory but also from the point of view of some spatial and pedagogical issues related to the academic environment, curriculum, teaching, and study courses.

In line with the inevitable impact of capitalism and global discourse on higher education, previous works on internationalisation also seem to have overlooked the fundamental role of the aspect of time and space in the creation of a proper international higher education institution. Hence, in the process of resolving the unsettled issues around internationalisation, this study draws particular attention to the concept of space and time and highlights them as key components of internationalisation.

The study proposes a holistic understanding of this phenomenon, through an in-depth analysis of the perceptions and lived experiences of a group of postgraduate students and staff, in the context of an institution of higher education in the south of England. By this method, the study aims to bring to light what is going on behind the scenes of an international higher education institution. In other words, it sets out to investigate what people's perceptions of international HE can reveal about this embodiment. As part of this, and in the context of the current ideological tensions over the credibility and transparency of the market mechanisms adopted in internationalised higher education, this research also aims to highlight the conflicting demands and challenges that higher education research is often less keen to discuss for reputational reasons.

## 1.2 Structure of the thesis

This thesis has six parts. The first part of my thesis discusses the background of internationalisation in relation to globalisation and marketisation. In my analysis of the existing literature in this field, I distinguish between two models of internationalisation:

1) the market-based model, a superficial form of internationalisation that universities adopt for financial and reputational reasons;
2) the value-based model, a less profitable one that uses internationalisation in pursuit of better teaching and learning outcomes, rather than income generation alone.

Drawing on this analysis, the second part of my thesis describes the challenges international students experience in an international community, one of which is racism but with a more sophisticated and nuanced meaning that I characterise as xeno-racism.

This brings us to the third part of the thesis which explores the concept of space and its implications in relation to the higher education system.

By this route, we come to the fourth part of the thesis which is the methodology chapter. Here, I briefly introduce my qualitative approach to the research. Then, I discuss the research methods I used in collecting my data, including participant observation and in-depth interviews, followed by a section in which I justify my choice of analytical tool: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) which, I believe, fits well with the phenomenological nature of this study.

The fifth part of the thesis is my data analysis. Starting with the students then moving to the staff, I discuss in more depth the issue of xeno-racism and highlight the participants' different conceptualisations of the term 'internationalisation' alongside the conflicting demands and challenges that handicap the functioning of the organisation.

These analyses structure the sixth part of the thesis which critically examines the current machinic form of the organisation and its abstract practices. Drawing on my participants'

recommendations, however, I develop a more flexible and ethical model of internationalisation which is able to redefine the whole discourse of global HE and make of the latter a better, sustainable space characterised by heterogeneity, individual reciprocity, and autonomy.

## 1.3 Research background

Being immersed in this informational capitalist environment (ICE), the higher education sector has become subject to many significant challenges, most of which are related to the rationale of HE, quality service, and student experience. Harvey (2007), Shaydorova (2014), Knight (2015), Strom and Martin (2015; 2017), Beighton (2017), Sharar (2016; 2018), Brady (2020), Hayes and Cheng (2020) and Smalling (2020) are among many who stress the shifting motivation of internationalisation from an academic rationale to a political rationale. They also sense a great deal of uncertainty in regard to the effectiveness of education and research conducted on an international scale. Specifically, they are worried that such a strategic step to politicise HE under the umbrella of internationalisation could be manipulative, leading to wider concerns about 'homogenisation', 'inequity' and 'marginalisation'. Although these issues seem separate, in fact, I want to suggest that they are strongly connected to marketisation in HE (see below).

### 1.3.1 Marketisation in HE

Marketisation is an integral aspect of HE that has long been the subject of debate. As part of the international approach to innovate HE, many universities implemented market principles[2] in their system of provision (Augar, 2020). While advocates believe that marketisation will help universities develop high quality provision, greater equity, and give students agency to make decisions and implement changes to their learning and education (see Delmonico, 2000; Furedi, 2011; Klemenčič, 2014; Tomlinson, 2014 and Bovill *et al.*, 2015), critics such as Naidoo (2005), Nixon, Scullion and Hearn (2016), Singh (2017), Sharar (2016; 2018) and Brown (2019) argue that commodifying the education sector will bring dire consequences both for the

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[2] See section on marketisation

institution and students. Naidoo (2005, p. 27), for example, warns that developing commercial mentalities in HE threatens to "deter innovation, promote passive and instrumental attitudes to learning, threaten knowledge creation, and entrench academic privilege". More recently, to avoid these types of risk and ensure successful teaching and learning outcomes, Singh (2017) calls universities' attention to the importance of reconsidering their course of action, and thinking more of implementing policies that would help students to successfully integrate in their community and have positive learning experiences:

> Universities should be committed to rethinking what counts as quality in teaching and learning and to implement policies to ensure successful engagement of the students in their academic community.

> (Singh, 2017, p. 639).

### 1.3.2 International students in HE

With the growing attention to the importance and implications of marketisation and internationalisation in the higher education sector, international students have become the building blocks of the UK's higher education economic growth. As I show below, this is mainly due to the significant and varied contributions they add to the country (Brandenburg *et al.*, 2019). In fact, thousands of students from all over the world choose the UK for higher education courses yearly. The UK is, undoubtedly, one of the top destinations for international students, claiming around19% of the global market for recruitment in 2017/2018 (UKCISA, 2018; Universities UK, 2019).

However, after the UK's vote to leave the EU, often referred to as Brexit, combined with the changes applied to the student visa system, a significant drop in students' applications (both EU/NON-EU) has been witnessed and high levels of complaints have been reported (OIA, 2017 and EHRC, 2019). This has led to the circulation of some unexpected impressions of the UK as a hostile "unwelcoming environment" for international students (see the EHRC report,

2019). To this end, the UK's position in the market is, currently, under threat and is even estimated to be overtaken by Australia if action is not taken (CGHE, 2018). Accordingly, with an eye to compensate for shortages and secure more competitive advantage over the other countries, UK universities, in September 2018, called for the government to collaborate with the education sector by allowing the expansion of international students' recruitment (Higher education mass), and the adjustment of their visa instructions.

With increasing economic pressures on UK universities and the insecurity and uncertainty surrounding Brexit, universities seem to have no choice but to recruit international students. This, therefore, leads us to question the universities' marketing materials and admission processes, for instance, in relation to the actual space and experience provided for those students. It is interesting, because even before the recent economic and political crises, critics, such as Harris (1997, p. 38), highlighted the impact of such tensions between universities "promoting themselves attractively and giving honest information to prospective students".

In fact, a university, to secure its place in the market, has to project what the participants view as an attractive 'window shopping', or a tempting front image that is expected to reflect actual HE provision. These often involve providing students with a positive learning experience, a great sense of engagement and, most importantly, commitment to teaching and learning humanistic values (De Wit and Altbach 2020). The latter, though, has raised many questions and criticisms related to the discourse of 'racism'. Universities, for example, are said to homogenise students by means of "a one-size-fits-all educational prescription" (Sidhu and Dall' Alba, 2012, p. 415). Moreover, international students in a climate of internationalisation, it is argued, are subject to exploitation, manipulation, and market abuse (Chowdhury and Phan, 2014). In this respect, Sharar (2016, p.1) argues:

> Universities respond to pressure as higher education becomes redefined as
> a commodity and reduced to a series of marketable products to be branded,
> kite-marked and sold to those who can afford to pay for them.

In this respect, Brady (2020, p. 35, 129) also highlights that UKHE is treating international students merely as "cash cows", or cash machines wanted only for their money. For these critics, HE risks becoming a headquarter for worldwide investments, or simply a shopping mall where courses and certificates are being sold to students at the highest prices, rather than a space for learning or creating knowledge.

The current study explores all these dilemmas and attempts to offer suggestions for new paradigms and new solutions which will help to relieve the tensions that exist in this 'organisational field[3]' (institution, staff, and students).

## 1.4 Significance of the study

Much of the research on the experiences of international students in the UK focuses on the learning difficulties and cultural differences between them and their domestic counterparts (Welikala, 2015, para 07). This research focus on the differences rather than the similarities between home and international students, for Welikala, has contributed to many misleading assumptions and counterproductive narratives that led to the trivialisation of internationalisation and international student experience.

Indeed, although our understanding of the term 'international' is different (see the preface), Welikala's thoughts about international student experience in the UK have a special significance in the context of my study. Welikala in 2015 argued that university strategies do not work and fail to take the heterogeneity of international students into consideration. She also highlighted that "higher education research cannot call itself inclusive until it addresses the needs of all students" (para, 10).

While Welikala is not a recent source, what she is saying here is still problematic in 2020. Hayes and Cheng (2020), for example, stress the abstract nature of universities' neoliberal policies and their tendency to homogenise students experience as a result. Ford and Cate

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[3] Organisational field is a term Bushra Sharar uses to describe the holistic structure of an institution including teachers, students, managers…etc.

(2020), on the other hand, emphasise the discursive style of universities in framing and reframing international students in accordance with their organisational goals. When it comes to prestige and economic gain, they argue, universities frame international students as key partners, but when it comes to community and cultural diversity, they are viewed as rivals: they are never taken as an integral part of the diverse student body:

> We also find that they [international students] are rarely presented as ordinary or unremarkable participants in a campus community alongside their domestic counterparts, marked instead by these exceptional narratives that reframe them in ways that serve institutional goals (p. 1).

These critical parameters, therefore, suggest the need for a more effective, inclusive, life-changing, institutional approach that, I believe, could only be informed through research that values students' voice, and addresses individual needs and interests, hence this study.

The context of the present study is higher education in the United Kingdom. My thesis is interested in understanding universities' practices of internationalisation by analysing the views and experiences of staff and students, more specifically their perceptions of the marketised image of internationalisation in comparison to its reality. It aims to uncover the hidden meanings and attitudes being developed regarding internationalisation. I am also interested in examining the nature of the service and space provided for students in an international community in order to identify the level of inclusiveness in a typical UK higher education institution. Coinciding with the current protests in America and the global unrest around racism, this research highlights one of the biggest issues that universities are often less keen to discuss which is racist abuse: social injustice, inequality, and forms of discrimination that, I believe, deserve more attention in future research.

Indeed, this study critically challenges certain conceptions of racism and highlights its traditional forms as part of a wider, deeper problem of xeno-racist attitudes and practices. Some argue that when people talk about racism in HE, they almost immediately start polarising

based on ideas that are really about skin colour (see Madriaga and McCaig, 2019; Smalling, 2020). This is understandable, yet, as these critics suggest, this polarised way of seeing racism does not help with the sophisticated and complicated HE world and is not reflected in my data because it misses out the nuanced senses of rejection: strangeness, foreignness, otherness, alterity, xenophobia, essentialism with all its forms and categories (see Revell and Panjwani, 2018; Dippold *et al.*, 2019; Madriaga and McCaig, op.cit; Smalling, op.cit). Therefore, to converge with the complexity of this world and cover the attitudinal and behavioural nuances of rejection, my study proposes a new, complex form of racism with less obvious characteristics, namely xeno-racism, which goes beyond the traditional forms of racism.

It also questions the term 'internationalisation' which, according to the data, triggers rejection and aggression, and thus suggests new alternative ways of thinking about these problematic mechanisms. Universities may think that they are being inclusive, but my data questions this belief, at least in this case study.

A central aspect of this issue is that of space: I show below, in a discussion of the spatial implications of internationalisation practices, how difficult it is to create the right space for students.

Moreover, analysis of the data revealed a machinic organisation form characterised by almost unhealthy student-institution relationships. Students seemed to lose their faith in international HE, and staff were unhappy with the current university-imposed restrictions and practices. It was clear in the data that the organisation's needs and interests were in conflict with the individual's. The former's focus was on promoting itself attractively using an idealistic self-image of internationalisation for economic gain, whereas the latter wished to see more efforts on the ground: they wished their individual differences to be respected and their voices to be listened to. Based on my participants' perceptions and recommendations, this study proposes a healthy, organic management approach through which the university can:

- create the change needed for more inclusive forms of internationalisation;

- normalise equality and create an effective space of heterogeneity;

- maintain its integrity and autonomy;

- work creatively and interdependently through interpersonal communication and intercultural dialogue;

- build international trust;

- pave the way for more honesty, acceptance, transparency, credibility, and sustainability in HE;

- mange the tensions between the inside and the outside, virtual and real, space and time in HE, and think of them as key components of internationalisation.

Overall, the conduct of this qualitative inquiry is highly significant. It will help to bridge the existing gap between stakeholders; raise awareness on the importance of voicing students opinions and providing them with the right space of learning; develop a more problem-solving mindset and redefine the global discourse of HE with a more meaningful model of internationalisation.

Therefore, drawing on Welikala's (2015), Singh's (2017), Ford and Cate's (2020) call for urgent reconciliation and reorientation of universities' international policies and attitudes towards international students, the current study takes a step towards building a healthy organisational field through the promotion of "intercultural dialogue"; i.e. "a process that comprises an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals or groups with different ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds and heritage, on the basis of mutual understanding and respect" (White Paper on intercultural Dialogue, 2008, para 46). This is a process that is currently being undermined, I believe, by certain practices. This study shows, however, that it can help to bridge the gap between the institution and its staff and students. It can help keep the institution in touch with its students and develop a more problem-solving mindset. It can also pave the way for more honesty, transparency, and credibility in their relationship, provide

more effective understandings of how the spaces and experiences of international students are developed.

## 1.5 Research aims and objectives

The primary aim of this case study is to examine the lived experiences of international students and highlight the different meanings embedded in the concept of internationalisation through the perceptions of staff and students in the context of an institution of higher education in the United Kingdom. To achieve this aim, the study investigates in depth the perceptions and experiences of a group of international students and staff involved in a post-1992 university. Contrary to much of the existing research that explores the experiences of international students as 'outsiders', my research questions the term 'international' and hopes to use it as a symbolic label for students' diversity instead. In fact, the population of my study came from a wide range of backgrounds and different nations. For instance, in terms of 'international student experience', my interest was not in the experiences of foreign students but in the diverse experiences of cross-national students as individuals. This could be anybody: EU, non-EU, British, or oversea students. I wanted to collect data which can illustrate an organisation as holistically as possible.

In the process of analysing the participants' perceptions, the study sheds light on the type of attitudes being developed by stakeholders (staff, students, and institution) and their different conceptualisations of the term 'internationalisation'. These conceptions are crucial to approach a thorough understanding of the operating environment, including the level of inclusiveness; the nature of the service delivery; the nature of the space provided and the institution's international practices. By bringing these areas to light, the study aims to highlight the conflicting demands and challenges which are often embedded in international HE. As part of this, the study seeks to raise universities' awareness on the importance of listening to and valuing students' voice through ongoing communication and intercultural dialogue. Therefore, another objective of the research is to offer suggestions, based on the participants'

recommendations, for more effective paradigms and infrastructures that may relieve the tension between stakeholders.

In order to address these goals, this study answers the following three main research questions in the context of an institution of higher education in the United Kingdom:

1. How is internationalisation perceived and what attitudes are being developed in this climate?

2. What are the implications of these perceptions and attitudes for HE policy and practice with regard to sustainability?

3. What gaps can be identified in the current conceptions and practices of internationalisation and how can we complement them?

Asking these questions aims to have impact in three main areas. The first of these areas is understanding and awareness: the study will provide a new understanding of the concept of internationalisation and shed light on the overlooked, spatial, temporal issues around it. It will raise universities awareness on the importance of valuing students' voice and creating the right space of HE. The second area is attitudinal and behavioural: it will, hopefully, lead to a change in the institution's discursive attitude and sceptic behaviours towards international students. The third area is practical and is the contribution to the development of a new effective model of internationalisation that is at once profitable and ethical.

# Chapter 02: Literature review

## 2.0 Introduction

This chapter explores areas relevant to the internationalisation of higher education in an era of globalisation. The purpose of this chapter is:

- to provide a brief, historical view (synopsis) of globalisation and internationalisation, and their evolution;
- to introduce the meanings of these complex concepts;
- to discuss their different approaches, and identify some of the world-wide trends and concerns related to higher education;
- to identify areas of current research where gaps exist and questions about internationalisation remain.

First, the concept of globalisation and its impact on higher education is analysed. Second, the concept of internationalisation and its different meanings are explored. This includes: a distinction between the key terms; discussion on the different rationales and motivations of internationalisation; a description of the various strategies and forms of internationalisation in higher education; a short discussion of the existing myths developed in relation to internationalisation; and finally, an exploration of the new emerging value-based version of internationalisation in higher education. Third, trends and challenges related to marketisation in higher education are discussed.

## 2.1 Globalisation

Given that universities are now regarded as both economic goods and key knowledge producers, a growing body of literature addresses the intense development of globalisation and its impact on higher education. This section explores the concept of globalisation, including its definition and impact on higher education.

## 2.1.1. Definition

Globalisation is a term that has been used since the early 1960s. It first emerged from the development of transportation and communication networks (Litonjua, 2008; Varghese, 2011). These two transforming technologies have made the world a "Global village". Also referred to as "Digital Community", it is an interconnected sphere more defined by technology (McLuhan,1996).

The notion of globalisation has been defined and examined in various ways. From a neutral perspective, it is usually referred to as "the widening, deepening and speeding up of world-wide interconnectedness" (Held *et al.*, 1999, p. 2); on the other hand, in a more comprehensive description, Knight and De Wit (1997, p. 6) define it as the "flow of technology, economy, knowledge, people, values, ideas ...across borders". According to Steger (2003), globalisation is a multifaceted conception that is typically embedded in every aspect of life, and a holistic definition of it would involve at least four different aspects: political, economic, ideological, and cultural. First, the political aspect refers to the increasing trend toward 'multilateralism': the emergence of 'transnational state apparatus', with the advent of national and international nongovernmental organisations (Moghadam, 2005, p. 35). Second, the economic aspect refers to the intensification of a worldwide network of economic activities, and the overflow of significant international monetary trade organisations. The ideological aspect, on the other hand, focuses on the belief in building up a powerful interconnected world united by a shared system of values. Finally, the cultural aspect of globalisation refers to the intensification of physical mobility across the world: the massive influx of people from different cultural backgrounds in response to western privileges, whether in terms of business, trade, commerce, or even education. In this respect, Altbach (2007) agrees that the debate around globalisation is held on what is beyond the academic institutional power including: the diffusion of world economy, global knowledge trade, technology, and international English language viability. Another cultural definition of globalisation is made by Wood (2012): he depicts this

phenomenon as an international mechanism that enhances the integration of societies by pulling down capital control and removing geographical restrictions between countries.

## 2.1.2 Globalisation and Higher Education

As the world is being inescapably reshaped by advanced digital technology and a global economy, one sector in which globalisation has had a significant impact is higher education.

In this era, the debate lies mainly in making English a common international language; enhancing physical mobility; developing new alternative strategies to finance higher education; generating an advanced information technology; integrating market and commercial forces in educational systems (Altbach and Knight, 2011). With this, higher education has come to face drastic transformations to an extent HEIs have become not only products (objects) but also producers (agents) of globalisation (Scott, 1998). This has, consequently, given rise to a broad range of thoughts and understandings with regard to the impact of globalisation on HE. The latter is discussed in depth in the following section.

## 2.1.3 Globalisation's impact on Higher Education

While proponents argue that developing a global perspective in HEIs is vital, opponents believe that it is rather detrimental (Sen, 1970). However, according to Altbach *et al.* (2010) both sides are reasonable.

For some scholars, the impact of globalisation on higher education has brought significant contributions to the sector. For example, it has enhanced academic exchange and cooperation between universities across nations, created opportunities for students to study abroad, and improved the content along with the quality of service from the institution (UK, 2013). Advocates also add that, thanks to globalisation, higher education institutions, today, contain more socially and culturally diverse student populations than ever before.

Given that globalisation enforces uniformity and promotes students' flow across borders, this concept has been vividly described as a phenomenon of massification[4] in higher education (see Altbach *et al.*, 2010; Calderon, 2012; Beighton, 2017; 2018; 2020). In addition, Wood (2006, p. 26) argues:

> Realities about globalisation (greater competition, relentless pressures to innovate, new worldwide markets and production options, growing concerns over cultural and environmental degradation) has (sic) resulted in a common perception that 'knowledge societies,' those that constantly develop new ideas, technologies, methods, products and services, are crucial for future prosperity.

As we will see later, adopting a consumerist mentality in higher education institutions has seemingly made of education a key economic asset, where knowledge resources turn out to be as critical as economic resources. In this respect, some theorists interpret globalisation as a neoliberal economic policy that emphasises global competition through removing imposed restrictions between countries and running *laissez-faire* trade regimes (Shield, 2013, p.3). This fact has further stimulated initiatives for collaboration through the creation of transnational co-operations on a very large scale with innumerable subsidiaries (Maringe, 2010; Monbiot, 2017).

Because these views depict globalisation as benevolent to society, the perspective of neoliberalism was tacitly supported by some academic literature that hoped it would bring about prosperity, freedom, peace, and democracy. Having said that, some critics have viewed globalisation as a destructive force threatening social well-being (Sen,1970), and more recently argue that the challenges that may result from globalising HE can never be perceived as long as this concept is not understood properly (Scott, 2000). For them, a *laissez-faire* world economy is, rather, subverting the essence of democracy, promoting exploitation and

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[4] The term "massification" is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as: "the action of promoting or enforcing uniformity in a society; the process of becoming a mass society, especially through development of the mass media" (https://www.lexico.com/definition/massification).

social injustice, and abusing the national culture and autonomy (Altbach *et al.*, 2010). They thus conclude that global processes are more likely to create inequity, cultural destruction, and social conflicts instead (Harvey, 2007; Shaydorova, 2014; Strom and Martin, 2015; 2017).

Economically, there is an argument that the concept of globalisation is changing the objective of higher education for market purposes, what is referred to as 'academic capitalism' (Slaughter and Rhoades, 2004). For example, Marxist scholars and 'anti-globalisation' activists assert that the major goal of this process is not to diffuse knowledge, ideas, and technology across societies but, rather, to convert the higher educational system from a public service to a business commodity exchanged for profit (see Korzeniewicz *et al.*, 2001; Bakari, 2013). In this respect, McBurnie (2001) claims that such a perspective is only exacerbating some of the already existing issues in the sector which necessitate instant higher education reform. Commenting on this, Teichler (2004, p. 23) says:

> It is surprising to note how the debate on higher education suddenly focuses on the global competition and management while other terms such as knowledge, society, global village, global understanding or global learning are hardly taken into consideration.

Dixon (2006), on the other hand, points out that global competitions are reshaping the standard purposes of universities, and argues that international students risk being affected by this reshaping process. By this, we can argue that a student, in the midst of all these transformations, may be more of a financial contributor, who would benefit the economy of a country, than someone who is looking for knowledge and expertise.

Globalisation has also been criticised on the grounds that the increasing demand for higher education globally may divert the mainstream of globalisation from the economic sphere to the cultural sphere of higher education (see Marginson *et al.*, 2007; Marginson, 2010). This can, thus, generate a constant institutional disability in meeting students' needs and ensuring quality (Ibid). Similarly, Furedi (2011) asserts that universities' competition for funds and

resources is not what led to 'academic disquiet', but most commonly 'the cultural', 'intellectual', and 'pedagogic' outcomes of marketisation which symbolise causes for concern as they attempt to 'commodify' academia. Moreover, Calderon (2012) estimates that if the demand continues to increase, taking into account the limited number of institutions, infrastructure and resources, there might be a risk that the number of students in HE worldwide exceeds 520 million by 2023, leading to further problems of this kind.

Overall, these incongruent views, related to globalisation and higher education, are the result of the negative impact of globalisation on HE as an economic and political process. The dark side of globalisation, it is argued, disregards human values and led many universities to stop using the term globalisation in HE and replace it with a more proper concept that would map out only what is positive about it, that is internationalisation (Brandenburg and De Wit, 2011). This in turn, has stimulated discussions about a new era of higher education referred to as 'internationalisation of higher education'.

## 2.2 Internationalisation

In the next few paragraphs, I explore in more depth the different meanings, definitions, and terminologies related to internationalisation as well as the difference between globalisation and internationalisation. The diverse rationales and strategies of internationalisation on both national and institutional levels are then summarised. This analysis is followed by a synopsis of the existing myths about internationalisation, and an exploration of the different trends of internationalisation in higher education.

### 2.2.1 Lexis of internationalisation

Internationalisation is one of the most popular concepts that has marked the history of higher education since the late 1980s (Şendağ, 2014). Like globalisation, internationalisation is another complicated and multi-layered term that has been communicated quite differently across countries (Knight, 2015). For example, according to the political and academic discourse of this area (see Teichler, 1996; 2004; Kehm and Teichler, 2007; Teichler, 2010),

there exist at least six different meanings assigned to the word internationalisation (Teichler, 2017). These include:

- transfer of knowledge across borders;

- physical cross-border mobility (staff, students);

- international cooperation and communication between countries, institutions of higher education, and individual scholars;

- 'international education and research' (intercultural learning, socialisation for international understanding);

- 'international similarity' (convergence, globalisation, Europeanisation);

- 'international reputation': 'world-class universities', 'international quality'.

Curaji *et al.* (2015), on the other hand, address the most frequent characteristics of internationalisation so far and came up with: student mobility, 'internationalisation at home', international strategies, 'intercultural competence', international funding and quality review, to cite only a few. Another striking feature of internationalisation is that academic leaders have adopted a wide range of different labels to describe their international institutions such as 'transnational university' (Lehman, 2004), 'cosmopolitan university' (Tilghman, 2007), 'global university' (Levin, 2010), and 'ecumenical university' (Sexton, 2010a; 2010b). This is not to mention the wide range of vocabulary being used to refer to international education like multicultural education, international education, transnational education, intercultural education, comparative education, global education, and world education (Knight, 1999).

## 2.2.2 Definitions

Despite the absence of consensus on what is meant by internationalisation, efforts have been made to draw a widely accepted definition. For instance, in theory, the "most commonly accepted definition of internationalisation", according to De Wit and Hunter (2015, p. 45), is "[t]he process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education" (Knight, 2003, p, 2-3; 2008, p. 21).

Here, Knight describes internationalisation as a dynamic process that has three dimensions: one of them is global, another is international, and the other is intercultural. She sees internationalisation as the case of transforming the behaviour of an institution by incorporating cross-national elements.

In practice, the most frequently used definition is "[t]he process of commercializing research and postsecondary education, and international competition for the recruitment of foreign students from wealthy and privileged countries in order to generate revenue, secure national profile, and build international reputation" (Taskoh, 2014, p. 158-159).

In this concept, internationalisation is depicted in more commercial terms as the act of selling knowledge, using the recruitment of international students as a tool for business and economic purposes. Another attempt to define internationalisation was made by Hawawini (2016). He argues that internationalisation is, historically, presented in a very shallow and restrictive way outlining only the 'in-ward looking' aspects of the process (i.e., the ability of an institution to integrate international dimensions into the educational system), while the 'out-ward looking' elements (i.e., the aspect of accommodating to the growing global knowledge economy), are totally ignored. For this reason, he suggests an alternative definition, which he considers 'deep' enough to capture both the inward and outward dimensions of internationalisation. He says:

> Internationalisation is an ongoing process of change whose objective is to integrate the institution and its key stakeholders (its students and faculty) into the emerging global knowledge economy.
>
> (Hawawini, 2016, p.5).

In this definition, Hawawini calls on institutions to modify their structures and change their mindsets in ways that would help to reinforce the global knowledge economy. His key point here is that internationalisation is a process rather than a product or end goal. It is ongoing and emergent, making definition very difficult.

Thus, with regard to the various terminologies, views, and definitions cited above, it is clear that the term internationalisation is measured differently and through different lenses, which are closely connected to worldwide border crossing or 'diversification' (Teichler, 2017). These existing nuances in meaning, according to Knight (1999), are more likely related to the different approaches of internationalisation being adopted at the institutional level in an attempt to internationalise higher education. Such approaches, for her, encompass:

- activity approach which is the most common approach used in reference to specific activities and programmes including academic mobility and curriculum;

- competency approach which is more interested in the outcomes of internationalising HE and is central to the development of knowledge, skills, values, and mindset in students, staff, and faculties (intercultural competencies);

- ethos approach which supports and promotes the international, intercultural initiatives of change in higher education through the creation of new cultures and climates on campus;

- process approach which focuses on the institutional policies and procedures that underpin the integration of international dimension into academic activities (Knight, 1994).

Undoubtedly, the variety of these approaches is an indicator of how complex, dynamic, and multifaceted internationalisation of higher education is. Such mutually inclusive complexity and dynamism together with globalisation invite, therefore, a succinct comparison of these two concepts.

### 2.2.3 Distinction between globalisation and internationalisation

The vagueness of these terms, implied in the diverse ways they are perceived, often results in 'internationalisation' and 'globalisation' being confused or used interchangeably (Knight, 1999; 2003; Yang, 2002). Therefore, a coherent distinction and comprehension of these terms is of paramount importance.

Before moving to the distinction between internationalisation and globalisation, it is important to acknowledge, based on the definitions pointed above, the notable correlated links of the concepts. For example, like globalisation, one of the leading purposes of internationalisation is to intensify student mobility by recruiting international students. Moreover, both concepts tolerate the implementation of market forces in higher education and making knowledge an alternative source of revenue. Another point worth noting here is that the concept of internationalisation supports the use of advanced digital technology in higher education (see Kropf, 2013; Siemens, 2005; Downes, 2012; Beighton, 2018a) and cross-border collaborations (see below 'internationalisation abroad').

Although the globalisation discourse may look similar to that of internationalisation and *vice versa* (Maringe and Foskett, 2010), some scholars could, in fact, identify some fine lines that make them different from one another (Altbach *et al.,* 2010). One of the predominant distinctions that has been marked is "control", assuming that globalisation is the steering wheel of internationalisation.

For example, according to Knight (1999), what distinguishes the term 'globalisation' from 'internationalisation' is that "[g]lobalisation can be thought of as the catalyst while internationalisation is the response, albeit a response in a proactive way" (p. 14). Teichler (2009), on the other hand, argues that the term 'globalisation' symbolises the decline of national powers between countries, while 'internationalisation' represents the strategies, targeted activities being adapted to achieve more 'internationality'. In another distinction, considering the higher education perspective, Knight (2003, p. 38) argues that "[g]lobalisation is a process which is affecting many sectors and disciplines, and higher education is no exception. Internationalisation of higher education is both a response to globalisation as well as an agent of globalisation. Internationalisation is changing the world of higher education and globalisation is changing the process of internationalisation".

Paradoxically, however, critics from a more historical perspective contend that the phenomenon of internationalisation cannot be a response to globalisation because the former

is older than the latter. This argument is based on a published written source dating back to the early 12<sup>th</sup> century mainly in Europe, where students and scholars were said to move between nations looking for universities long before internationalisation became a strategy (Van Wende, 2001, p. 432). They suggest, instead, that the sole potential globalisation could have is its actively detrimental effect on national identities (Scott, 1998), and that modern internationalisation is more of an alternative "safe method of broadening one's horizons through intellectual sampling and reflective comparison" (Teichler, 2004, p. 11). Based on this, Nileson (2011) argues that despite being recognised as a leading actor, institutions seeking to internationalise their systems remain 'unconscious' of how internationalisation can actively reinforce the forces of globalisation *per se*.

The key issue, though, is not a question of who existed first and who is second, but, rather, the nature of our attitudes towards internationalisation, the attitudes of faculties, administrators, staff, and students: do they still think in a global perspective? Or, rather, in an international perspective? These are the questions that this study seeks to investigate with a clear focus on staff and students' perspectives.

### 2.2.4 Rationale and motivation for internationalisation

Changes in government policies, and the social-economic context within which universities operate, have resulted in increasing pressure for them to internationalise their curricula, says Leask (2000, p.1).

When the intensification of globalisation exploded in the 1980s, further major concerns on the sector have been imposed, and, in an effort to mitigate the severity of these challenges and secure more sustainability, transparency and international reputation in the future, institutions saw an urgent need to recall internationalisation. That is when internationalisation stumbled to a different level, moving from a simple mobility to a strategy (Huang, 2007).

Historically, a body of literature on the internationalisation of higher education, exploring the different arguments hidden behind the incorporation of international dimensions in the

curricula, has identified four distinct rationales mutually inclusive on a national and institutional level. These range from economic, political, social/cultural, and academic rationales (De Wit, 1995; Knight and De Wit, 1997; 1999).

On a national level, the leading reasons for internationalisation often encompass building up a nation; developing human resources; enhancing social and cultural development, which is the need to develop intercultural understanding and promote indigenous people's culture and identity; setting up strategic partnerships, which in turn highlights the need to facilitate students and staff mobility, and boosting world economy for more trade and commerce (Knight, 2004). Similarly, on an institutional level, internationalisation is likely adopted for more democracy, equity, quality, profit transparency, attraction, mobilisation and reputation across universities, transnational cooperation, cross-border activities, grading systems, diversification and expansion of higher education, intercultural understanding, and income generation (ibid).

From a philosophical and critical perspectives, these rationales have been classified into three further categories: idealism, instrumentalism, and educationalism (Stier, 2004; Knight, 2004).

While the idealist rationales are consciously related to democracy, equity. and international cooperation, instrumentalists are more driven by the economic and practical goals including commercial trade, strategic alliance, transnational corporation, income generation, promoting reputation, and mobilisation. For them, higher education institutions are huge, money-making machines or engines for economic growth, which likely draws an implied link with globalisation (Stier, 2004; Knight, 2004). Educationalists, on the other hand, recognise internationalisation in higher education as the broadening of students' and scholars' experiences. Based on this, we can argue that internationalisation of higher education is driven by economic motives.

Thus, higher education, within the context of globalisation, which is supposed to symbolise the homogeneity of worldwide national identities (Teichler, 2009), has become a market-driven activity (Yang, 2002), and international education ended up as a tradable commodity in the

major English-speaking nations such as Canada, the USA, Australia, and the UK (Binsardi and Ekwulugo, 2003).

However, from a pedagogical perspective, the plausible rationale for integrating international dimensions into higher education should be academic in nature. In this case, internationalisation risks being interpreted as a tool for countries to intensify their funding and national identity, or even as "a way to find solutions for global concerns" (Knight, 1999, p.18) instead of adding value to the quality of higher education.

If it is the case, this might mean that we are actually moving beyond the neoliberal and global power into a world more defined by a Trump-type politics of nationalism and authoritarianism (Strom and Martin, 2017, p. 5). In this vein, literature shows a growing debate on the shifting motivation of internationalisation from an academic rationale to a political rationale which has led to the creation of a great deal of uncertainty about how effective education and research provided through international cooperation are. An example of this is the internationalisation of the curriculum. Given that internationalisation is a process of change, internationalising the curriculum would, in theory, open teaching and learning to change as well. Yet, there is no 'one-size fits-all' approach because curriculum never stands still. This suggests that the internationalisation of curriculum is actually more of a political rhetoric than fact (Caruana and Spurling 2007). It is used as a propaganda to suggest that students are respected, while the abiding purpose is to boost financial income. Consequently, ambivalent interpretations, inconsistencies, contradictions, unclear aims and objectives continue to raise concern over 'inequity' and 'marginalisation' (Harvey, 2007; Shaydorova, 2014; Strom and Martin, 2015; 2017; Smalling, 2020).

## 2.3. Internationalisation of Higher Education

Despite the blurred picture underlying the implications of internationalisation, a growing body of institutions worldwide seem to welcome its embodiment in higher education territory (Trends, 2015). Several recent events demonstrate this fact, for example, in the 15th General

conference of IAU organised in Thailand by November 2016, which covered 400 presidents and leaders of universities from more than 80 countries around the world. This event was calling for global institutional collaboration to make higher education a catalyst for innovative and sustainable societies, and it was a great success. Similarly, the British Council report (2016), on national policies for international engagement in higher education, states that 23 out of 26 studied countries consider internationalisation as having increased in importance within their institutions. This is not to mention the 4th Global Survey Report[5] (2017) of IAU (International Association of Universities), on higher education and research for sustainable development. It is based on the analysis of survey responses from 120 institutions worldwide. The results show that 45% of higher education institutions were committed to integrating international plans and initiatives into their academic settings. Moreover, the results highlight 70% of HEIs interested in working together with other universities for sustainable development (IAU annual report, 2017).

The galvanising adherence to internationalisation and the increasing demand for higher education have given rise to two important versions of internationalisation. Version1 refers to the three salient worldwide models of internationalisation: 'internationalisation at home' (Knight, 2004), 'internationalisation abroad' (Marginson and Van der Wende, 2007; Knight, 2007) and internationalisation online. Version2 is a response to the challenges of the first version. In other words, it is an updated form of version1 that is typically committed to academic values

### 2.3.1 Models of internationalisation

#### 2.3.1.1 Internationalisation at home

According to Altbach (2004) internationalisation at home is the very first form of internationalisation adopted by a great variety of institutions in response to the challenges of globalisation.

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[5] See: IAU annual report: https://www.iau-aiu.net/IMG/pdf/2017_iau_annual_report.pdf

English has become a language of prestige and studying abroad is largely seen as a stepping stone for a better academic progress (Skinkle and Embleton, 2014). This is basically how internationalisation at home flourished. Many English-speaking universities started off internationalising their teaching and learning activities by means of recruiting foreign students to their home campuses. In other words, internationalisation at home is crucially dependent on the physical mobility of students to the host countries so that they can benefit from their services. This has often been regarded as a targeted source of revenue and an alternative stream of income for many universities (Shin, Welch and Bangall, 1999). Another label for this form of internationalisation is 'export education'. As far as the latter is concerned, the most advanced export education countries are the UK with over 21.1% of enrolled students, followed by Australia with 20.7%. This compares to 8% in Germany and 5% in the United States (Trends, 2015).

### 2.3.1.2 Internationalisation abroad

While universities' competition is getting more and more essential, higher education institutions have turned to generating cross-border activities as an alternative way to diversify universities' revenues (Healey, 2015). These activities are usually referred to as 'transnational education', a rival term used to describe the higher education programmes and services provided for students in a country other than the one in which the awarding institution is located (British Council, 2012; Bordogna, 2020; Healey, 2020).

Interestingly, transnational education continues to be significant year after year, and this is basically due to the new and intriguing student mobility it aims to bolster – students who want to study abroad but close to home. Here, students do not need to travel abroad because the institutional programmes go to their countries instead – a striking strategy developed to attract as many international students as possible, with an eye to enhance their visibility in the global market and, essentially, bridge the gap engendered by reduced government funding (Sidhu, 2007; Vincent-Lancrin, 2007; Lien, 2008; Lien and Wang, 2012; Tsiligiris, 2013; McNamara and Knight, 2014). This form of internationalisation is mainly evident in the policy of

establishing branch campuses, international research collaboration, twinning, franchising, and distance learning (Altbach, 2004, p.15; see also Healey, 2020).

The above strategies (see appendix1) seem to have matured enough to meet the growing demands of students, who want to study abroad without having to move physically across countries. However, when it comes to revenue, they are often much riskier than export education because providing cross-border education, where little is known about the operating environment, may put the institutional investments and reputations at risk. After all, such partnership is seen as 'more of a competition than cooperation' (Universities UK, 2018).

### 2.3.1.3 Internationalisation online

Talking about competition, one should add that the institutional efforts to internationalise HE did not end here. They continued, but, this time, the tendency went back to 'expert education': an import-oriented type of internationalisation.

A new ideological assumption about internationalisation has recently burgeoned. The latter is built on the basis that the more we recruit, the better we perform and the stronger we become (Knight, 2015). This means that the percentage of internationalisation in higher education and the national reputation across countries is, by now, socially, culturally, and academically measured by the number of foreign students that institutions recruit. Such ideology has, consequently, led to the emergence of new international strategies to strengthen recruitment. These strategies include: online advertising, commission-based agents, and third-party recruiters, whose core job is to affect the decisions of prospective students to study abroad by providing general information about the universities they work for and helping them through the admission process (see Choubha,2012, 2015 and Altbach, 2013). This problematic trend has proliferated particularly in the US, the UK, and Australia (Altbach, 2013), which are the top three most popular students' destinations in the world. For example, Fischer (2010, para 05) in the Chronicle of higher education, has quoted Marlene M. Johnson, the executive director and chief executive officer of NAFSA, saying in her words: "There's clearly an acceptance of agents or counselors that there wasn't five years ago, or even one year ago".

However, Rahul Choudaha (2011) argues that the growing competition for foreign students, followed by a radical change in the funding model of public higher education such as "budget cuts" and higher "costs justification", has contributed to the expansion of education and self-sufficiency, on one hand, and increased an intense pressure for pursuing quantity at the expense of quality, on the other hand (IHE, no. 62, 2011).

Given the context of competitiveness attached to internationalisation, this process undermines the values of cooperation and collaboration which universities often declare. Despite claiming to develop policies and practices of internationalisation, which entail spreading knowledge worldwide and satisfying the needs and interests of individuals in every single HEI, practices and policies are developed to guarantee "ranking" and "branding" as we have seen in their concern for "kite-marketing" practice (Sharar, 2016, p. 01). Thus, many argue that internationalisation has become devalued in terms of being a marketing exercise rather than something that is, genuinely, concerned with academic benefits (see Cheng *et al.*, 2015; Knight, 2015 and Dash *et al.*, 2017).

### 2.3.2 Myths and concerns

In discussing the concept of internationalisation, Knight (2011; 2015) refers to five of the most common myths and misconceptions of the notion of internationalisation that has been developed throughout the international trajectory:

| Myth | Meaning |
|---|---|
| **International students are agents of internationalisation** | This is, for Knight, a very common assumption which means that the more institutions recruit international students the more they internationalise the sector. |
| **International reputation as a proxy for quality** | That is, the more international HE is, the better its reputation. |
| **International institutional agreements** | This relates to "the greater number of international agreements or network memberships a university has, the more |

| | |
|---|---|
| | prestigious and attractive it is to other institutions and students" (Knight, 2011, p.14). |
| **International accreditation** | This means that "the more international accreditation stars an institution has, the more internationalized it is" (Knight, 2011, p, 15), |
| **Global branding** | This assumes that universities' motive to internationalise higher education is typically related to branding and global standing (ibid). |

For Knight (2011; 2015) none of these perceptions is representative of internationalisation because they all back the challenged global assumption of quantification and control. The authentic meaning of internationalisation, for her, cannot and should not be about quantity (ibid). Internationalisation in HE, the Author advocates, involves promoting diversity, intercultural understanding, and global mindsets. Yet, these meanings, she argues, are often obscured by the above misleading assumptions. For example, she points to the "ironic" fact that international students in most universities are subject to racism, social and academic exclusion, having almost no intercultural integration. As such, Knight (2015) argues that the purpose behind spreading such dogmatic thoughts about internationalisation is more likely to hide the unethical economic and political rationale of it.

Uwe Brandenburg and De Wit (2012), Altbach (2013), and Welikala (2015) have also expressed their concern on the potential risk of losing the meaning of internationalisation. Uwe Brandenburg and Hans De Wit (2012), for example, highlight the striking shift of internationalisation from "substance" to "form". They argue that over-recruiting students is, roughly, killing and deteriorating the altruistic values of internationalisation which can eventually bring it to an end. Talking about values, Altbach (2013) stresses the risk of handing over power to external agents and recruiters, and questions the credibility of information students might be provided with, as well as the methods such businesspeople might be using.

Such activities, it is argued, are unethical because they use unethical methods to attract students, and binary (biased) because they target only international students and forget about domestic ones (British students).

There are two possible explanations for what is happening. First, universities may be acting unintentionally: there may be a misunderstanding of the term internationalisation and a potential confusion with globalisation, the thing that probably engendered the above misconceptions, which are all quantity-based. Second, they may be acting intentionally: universities may be aware of the exact meaning of internationalisation, but they are not fully committed to it. So, they rearticulate it in a way that serves their economic and political needs. In either case, internationalisation seems to be a manifestation of globalisation (Sharipov, 2020). It disregards both human and teaching/learning values. Consequently, as we have seen, many recognise the need for an urgent reconciliation and reorientation of internationalisation.

### 2.3.3 Internationalisation: Call for commitment

Given that internationalisation has become a 'catchall' term that risks losing its meaning and its value(s) (Knight, 2011; 2015), Uwe Brandenburg and Hans De Wit (2012), Knight (2015) and Welikala (2015) are among many who call for a powerful institutional and individual commitment to the quality of teaching and learning. This is to draw a new beginning for internationalisation in HE genuinely based on the affirmation of academic values and the improvement of quality service. In this regard, an arising endorsement that universities must primarily put an emphasis on improving the internationally mobile students' skills and make sure their integration in the global community, is seen as primordial. That is, quality assurance is viewed as the only key to move beyond the traditional concepts of internationalisation, which are no different to globalisation, and pave the way for more transparency, integrity, and sustainability in the future. Consequently, a new refined definition of internationalisation in HE has been adopted. The latter consists of the following:

the intentional process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions and delivery of post-secondary education, in order to enhance the quality of education and research for all students and staff, and to make a meaningful contribution to society.

(De Wit *et al.,* 2015, p. 29, European Parliament Study).

This definition depicts internationalisation as a proactive experience that must be embedded in every aspect of HEIs, and as a flexible way to achieve better quality that would work not only for the benefit of individual people but the community as well.

The point behind this definition, I argue, is that the actual form of internationalisation is lacking clarity and meaning. For example, the term 'international' literally means 'between nations'. It does not single out a particular nation, yet it is often used to identify the non-UK students, which is meaningless. Also, internationalisation is set up as a solution to the unethical, dehumanising, money-based concerns of globalisation, but it ended up with the same challenges. So, what we need, according to the above definition, is a meaningful approach to internationalisation with holistic changes and clear values central to everybody. In this respect, and back to 2012 in an article entitled "Affirming academic values in internationalisation of higher education", the International Association of Universities (IAU, 2012, para 07) writes:

Internationalisation today is remarkably different from what it was in the first half of the 20th century, in the 1960s or 1980s…The resulting changes in goals, activities and actors have led to a re-examination of terminology, conceptual frameworks and previous understandings and, more importantly, to an increased but healthy questioning of internationalisation's values, purposes, goals and means.

In light of all these discourses about internationalisation in HE, and in terms of transformations and modifications, the questions that do not seem to be addressed in this debate, and that, I think, we must be asking are: do universities currently put these changes into action? If so,

how committed universities are to this new form of internationalisation? This is what the current study is aiming to uncover, through a thorough investigation of the quality of service provided to diverse international students enrolled in a UK university.

Internationalisation has been criticised for being an economic, oriented strategy actively reinforcing commodification and commercialisation of higher education. Others, however, stress that it is a competitive instrument devoted to income generation, reputation, students' attraction, and nation-building through soft power (Khorsandi, 2014; Battistella, 2020).

As such, two orientations of internationalisation appear to exist. On one hand, institutions seem to be based on developing internationalisation as a goal in itself. This is by using a range of institutional systems and bodies that underpin the population of a given international office for financial and competitive reasons. On the other hand, critics of this discourse suggest that an alternative model can and should exist in order to reorient the distorted meaning of internationalisation. They argue that people are being driven away from the real meaning and value(s) of internationalisation as well as those of the institution and its practices. They, therefore, suggest a value(s)-based model of internationalisation based on a holistic, mutually developed institutional programme, highly committed to teaching/learning outcomes and how to make of students 'global citizens'. In other words, analysis of the literature suggests that under the concept of internationalisation, two opposite understandings can be distinguished. As pointed out above, and as we can see in the table below, one is typically market-based and the other is value-based.

| Meanings | Market-based internationalisation "M-model" | Values-based internationalisation "V-model" |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Ascendancy | A goal to be achieved. A means in itself. | A tool to achieve another goal – a means to an end |
| In practice | **Finite**: A range of institutional systems and bodies (an actual apparatus) already exist to reach this goal. | **Non-finite**. This remains an objective (virtual) |
| Telos | Largely financial in response to competition | Commitment in response to particular values |
| Locus | An office | Dynamic, diffused, and networked. |
| Relationship | Divided | Collective |

Table: Different meanings of internationalisation

The market-based model is the current form of internationalisation that institutions create through a range of systems and bodies, to achieve their economic reputational goals. Spatially, it is limited to a single office in the institution, known as the international student office, and is therefore characterised by a divided, often, self-centered institution-student relationship.

The value-based model is the opposite of the 'M-model'. Here, internationalisation is not an end but actually 'a means to an end'. It is a tool to achieve more commitment to teaching and learning outcomes through collaborative work with stakeholders. Unlike the 'M-model' which seems to be simplistic and binary, the value-based model is very dynamic and thus requires internationalisation to be embedded or diffused in the whole institution (see Brandenburg *et al.*, 2019).

Having analysed the story of internationalisation in an era of globalisation, both at national and institutional level, I now consider the contemporary developments and further transformations that have cropped up in higher education sector ever since.

With internationalisation being firmly established in higher education agenda, and with regards to the increasing economic pressures placed on universities, higher levels of competition were then required to keep up with the ever-changing global knowledge economy. Consequently,

further transformations have been introduced in the sector, setting up a new trend towards marketisation.

## 2.4 Marketisation

Given the inevitable contemporary developments in higher education institutions driven by a worldwide knowledge-based service economy, universities have been recognised as key catalysts to fundamental national economic success and social change. Regardless of the benefits this has brought to the sector, it is worth emphasising that with the enrolment rise resulting in the expansion of higher education, serious concerns about value and quality assurance have gained traction. At the heart of these issues, there has been a perspective that using market mechanisms would be a key route to expanding higher education effectively and efficiently (Foskett, 2011). To this end, the incentive of exposing universities to the marketplace has grown significantly and marketisation, in turn, has become an integral concept in the sector (ibid).

### 2.4.1 Definition

Marketing is defined by the Chartered Institute of Marketing as "the management process responsible for identifying, anticipating, and satisfying customer requirements profitably"[6] (CIM, 2015, p. 3). It is also viewed as an ongoing activity companies uphold to "create value for customers and build strong customer relationships to capture value from customers in return" (Kotler and Armstrong, 2005, p. 41-43). Marketing originally comes from the word market, and usually conjures up the process of selling a product in the market. It has been argued that for this process to be successful and rewarding, it requires a powerful business plan that includes the following steps: extensive market research of the targeted area; market segmentation; developing communication tactics; pricing and promotion strategies; budgeting and contemplating long-term market goals[7]. The concept of marketing, according to Smith (1776), suggests that the producers' goals are only achieved if the organisation succeeds in

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[6] CIM: The Chartered Institute of Marketing, see: Marketing library resources – content, knowledge databases".
[7] See: 10 Steps to Creating a Marketing Plan for Your Small Business".

defying its competitors by better anticipating and satisfying its customer's requirements. While this conception has been remarkably consistent in marketing, it was widely adopted only 200 years after his published book 'the Wealth of Nations'[8].

Therefore, as a business discipline, competitiveness, efficiency, co-created value, and customer satisfaction are literally crucial (Lesnik-Oberstein, 2015). In this respect Grŏnroos and Voima (2013) describe marketisation as a value-based and mutually coordinated subject area that reckons on generating profits through the satisfaction of customers. With this in mind, and in relation to the students' education, a marketised HE should be legally autonomous, competitive, goal/student-oriented with a guaranteed and protected service quality (Molesworth *et al.*, 2011). This is to make sure it perfectly matches with the realm of the market. However, critics argue that HEIs are neither legally autonomous nor genuinely competitive (Brown, 2010; see also Augar, 2020). As far as quality is concerned, Cave *et al.* (1992) states that HEIs often share a symmetric common-sense of quality service which does not make of quality that concrete product which could be purchased repeatedly, or even disseminate proper and distinct information about it. Despite the absence of such homogeneity between the two parties (HE and marketing), this did not prevent HEIs from adopting market principles.

### 2.4.2 Marketisation of Higher Education

With the emergence of marketisation in higher education, governments world-wide have begun implementing funding and new governance frameworks based on market principles. Within this new 'ideological landscape', where higher education is now delivered, it happened that institutions and staff turned into providers, and international students into key consumers (Maringe, 2009; Beighton, 2016a), who choose which university they want to study in and eventually pay for it. This insidious change has radically reshaped the arena of education contributing to a highly complex, empirical, and multidimensional service (Woodall *et al.*, 2014) driven by a consumerist perspective (Brooks, Byford and Sela, 2016), that relies primarily on

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[8] See*:* "Marketing Concept". *www.netmba.com.*

providers and students' choice to achieve better quality and value for money. Currently the government charges higher education students an estimated 9 billion tuition fee a year up from 6 billion in 2007/2008. Loans of the same value are also provided to students with an average of 85% up from 23% of up-front public funding over the same period (NAO, 2017).

Traditionally, universities were viewed as training centers in the sense that they provided training for thoughts and morals that pave the way for more democracy and innovations (Tilak 2009). The HEI was seen as a learning community where administrators and staff were the leaders and the decision-makers. Yet, this is no longer the case. Today, education has become, rather, an investment and faculty members agents of this business industry, whose roles and responsibilities are being shared with students as consumers (Bishop, 2017; 2018). Engaging students in institutional governance is something that was promoted quite deliberately in response to the increasing demand of various agencies, such as the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), to make of student voice a means to quality enhancement (Neary, 2016).

Indeed, the so-called student-as-customer approach was first emerged in the UK since the 1970s (Dearing 1997) when higher education institutions (HEIs) became subject to the laws and policies of marketisation. The commercial pressure HEIs had to operate with led the UK government to think about diversifying this brand-new marketplace via the promotion of tangible, promising services like accommodation, information technology, conferences, careers…etc. By this, they can attract and bring as many customers (students) as possible to their campuses (Chapleo 2010; Dearing 1997; Gokcen 2014).

### 2.4.3 The negative impact of marketisation on Higher Education

While HEIs seem to be fully engaged in this process, analysis of the existing literature shows a wave of debate around its often-contested benefits. Negative consequences include a turn to increased surveillance and ethically questionable pedagogical practices, a problem that we now discuss.

In terms of benefits, the proponents of marketisation believe that this process will highly increase institutional efficiency, responsiveness, and student satisfaction (Furedi, 2011). They argue that placing students in a decision-making centre is a powerful argument for better accountability and quality assurance, and that student voice can help in creating a more 'democratic relationship' between students and their institution (see Delmonico, 2000; Klemenčič, 2014; Bryson, 2014; Tomlinson, 2014 and Bovill *et al.*, 2016). Paradoxically, however, critical commentaries emphasise that this shifting paradigm dismisses what was once thought to be an ethical humanistic era of knowledge and draws attention to a problematic 'darker side of marketisation' which involves trivialising education by reducing it into an attraction venue, where courses and certificates are sold to customers at the highest prices possible (Nixon, Scullion and Hearn, 2016). Besides, critics contend that there is no evidence marketisation will improve the quality of higher education provision. They believe that satisfying students' interests is not necessarily what institutions intend to work out. In other words, the greater competition for students between providers is not seen to be a concept of a 'status market', where institutions compete for value, but rather an 'economic market' where they compete for resources instead (Sharar, 2018; Brown, 2019). Critics also view the placement of students as partners, producers, or even co-creators of their own learning, as a big mistake because it takes their role beyond consultation to a more powerful position that gives them the authority to control and dominate the heart of the system (Bovill *et al.*, 2011; Healey, Flint and Harrington, 2014).

Analyses of the consumerist approach, therefore, raise several concerns. One such concern is that the adopted market mechanisms 'corrupt' the higher education system and its academic standards (Furedi, 2011), through an implied drive to implementing unethical procedures to make sure the process is in progress (Driscoll and Wicks 1998; Emery, Kramer, and Tian, 2001; Brown, 2019). For example, universities may use unethical admission practices by providing students with offers which will "back them into a corner and prevent them from considering potentially better alternatives" (Weale, 2019, para 01). Similarly, there is a sense

that lecturers could do anything just to gain their students' satisfaction (Driscoll and Wicks, 1998; Emery, Kramer, and Tian, 2001). In this respect, some researchers have examined the social impact of the SAC (Student As Customer) approach on academic leadership through the lens of destruction. The findings reveal that this metaphor has a negative effect on both staff and students to an extent that the role played by academic leadership became under 'surveillance' (Laing and Laing, 2016).

It has also been suggested that customer orientation can crudely impair the pedagogic relationship between institutions and students (Barnett, 2009). In this vein, Natale and Doran (2011) comment that instead of "guiding and supporting the student in becoming more intellectually complex, universities and colleges that are highly commercialised serve to prepare the student to become a participant in the consumer culture and no longer strive to encourage the student's reflection and critical thinking" (p.188). This means that by commercialising HE, universities' role risks to veer from creators of knowledge to just sellers of knowledge which is problematic. In this respect, Ecclestone (2002) warns: rather than being provocative and stimulating, learning might end up as a series of "instrumental, individualistic and self-regulating experiences" (Ecclestone, 2002, p. 12), an issue that continues to be debated (See Brunila and Sivonen, 2016).

Another concern is the potential shifting motivation from 'learning for the sake of learning to learning for external purposes' which also might create a passive learning environment where learners may show more interest in securing a degree instead of adjusting and engaging in their learning process (Naidoo and Jamieson, 2005; Molesworth, Nixon, and Scullion, 2009; Finney and Finney, 2010; Williams 2010; 2013; Woodall, Hiller, and Resnick, 2014). This mechanism is often described by McMillan and Cheney (1996, p. 150) as a "push button democracy" lacking in-depth analysis of the ultimate goal of the educative process. For them, an educative process is not a 'pleasure-filled' experience to be evaluated by instant informed satisfaction, but a tough path full of 'pain' that students must undergo to feel the change. Socrates has also been noted for his criticism to the practice of treating students as customers

and describes, in his turn, student satisfaction as being "irrational" (Furedi, 2011, p. 2). Agreeing with McMillan and Cheney, Socrates believes that in order for students to experience the intensity of problem solving, they need to be engaged in intellectual pressure to challenge themselves. This engagement, he argues, may not necessarily promote customer satisfaction. Although these critiques may distinctly be outdated, the accuracy they convey is still being proved to be true.

In a case study about the impact of customer orientation and fee responsibility on academic performance and learner identity, Bunce, Baird, and Jones (2017) surveyed about 608 undergraduates in a UK higher education institution. They concluded that "high-grade goals and lower learner identity are positively associated with higher customer orientation", and "high customer orientation, in turn, is associated with lower academic performance" (pp.1969-1970). Therefore, the influence of the SAC (Student As Customer) approach is apparent in the students' trade centre and reflects negatively on students' mentality by distracting them from achieving a successful, intellectual engagement (Finney and Finney, 2010 and Tomlinson, 2014).

The point we could draw here, though, is that in a contemporary international HE, the shaping of students' identities is seen as strongly driven by the ideology of choice. To say it differently, by developing a customer-based attitude in HE, the institutional service is meant to be customised to the students' choices – more precisely to their needs and interests.

Yet, as we saw earlier, many argue that this is not the case. Molesworth *et al.* (2011), for example, argue that such a premise cannot be true because it is barely realised. Moreover, according to the National Audit Office (2017) only 32% of higher education students believe that their courses offer value for money. The report highlights, in the words of the head of the National Audit Office Amyas Mose, that "[y]oung people are making complex choices about higher education without much effective help and advice, and the institutions concerned are under very little competitive pressure to provide best value" (para, 01). In addition, the public accounts committee (2018) also asserts that while in a regulated financial market, customers

have the right to switch providers in case they are unhappy with the quality of the product, only 2% of students do switch providers yearly. The committee adds: "students are more likely to drop-out altogether if they are dissatisfied with their course rather than switch providers because they have a very limited chance to get their money back" (para, 04). Consequently, Curnow (2019, para, 04) describes the marketisation of higher education as an unethical "crazy, dysfunctional system" and, thus, sees an urgent need for a more "comprehensive, needs-led" approach (see also Brown *et al.*, 2019; Brandenburg *et al.*, 2019).

The problem, here, is not only in the institution failing to keep the promise of fulfilling students' choices, but also in the absence of awareness of this ideology of choice: what are the identities international students ought to develop to foster their engagement? What do they need to do? How should they act and react? In a highly complex arena like international HE, which is the topic of the current study, it seems reasonable that while some home students may be aware of this ideology, and the different identities they need to adopt to challenge it, an international student may not. Thus, when trying to come out of their comfort zone in an attempt to integrate and 'fit in', as my data shows below, the only choice they have is to act like customers. Because they are new to this, and they lack knowledge about what is going on in that environment, they risk becoming subject to interpellation.

Interpellation is defined as a subtle process of transforming individuals into subjects unconsciously through an ''imaginary'' relation that gives them a misleading or illusory freedom, which is in fact controlled by the institution *per se* (Althusser, 1971, p.182). On this view, it can be observed that all these efforts to marketise HE in general, and perpetuate customer-oriented models in particular, may not necessarily be made for the sake of students' satisfaction but for ideological interpellation instead. In other words, the purpose of the whole process of marketisation is, possibly, not setting out freedom but basically ''subordination'' in the shape of apparent freedom (Althusser, 1971, p. 181).

To put it more simply, universities, it is argued, use sophisticated marketing materials with tempting content that gives students the impression that their services will be tailored to their

needs, interests, personal choices, and apparent freedom. But when the students experience it physically, they realise that their lived experiences, actually, tell a different story. On this view, such a marketing is no more than a stratagem, or interpellatory propaganda that aims at misleading students with the fantasy of freedom and power to make them 'play the game' they themselves (institutions) structured. As a result, many students, as the data below shows, feel lost and confused, they ask endless questions about who they are: what to be and what not to be, what they should do and what they should not do.

### 2.4.4 Quality and quantity

As long as we are viewing the concept of marketisation through the lens of internationalisation, it is also worth drawing attention to the big issue of quality and quantity in this context. While institutions are competing for resources and research funding using marketing as a vehicle to reach their goals, international students expect to see high quality in return. But unlike quantity, quality in HE is often identified as an 'imaginary' concept that is neither tangible nor guaranteed, or as a common factor that carries almost the same criteria among universities. Quality in HE is often viewed as problematic, bringing up too much uncertainty for students and, often, distrust (Pucciarelli and Kaplan, 2016). In view of this, it can be observed that international students' integration within these conditions is easier said than done. How can we, for example, expect students from the outside to deal with the unknown of the inside, or how can we encourage them to manage uncertainty without giving them certainty? By this, I can argue that the commercial incentives for education using interpellation under the guise of the ideology of student choice, together with the uncertainties around quality, could only generate alienation and deception for students, which may, eventually, push them to publicly comply and reticently defy the actual institutional *fait accompli* policy.

It appears like a marketised HE is reducing quality into quantity, and we all know that quantity does not make quality. Hence, while the purpose of doing business is that both sides should benefit, institutions seem to take the leading position in this business operation. So, we are missing a salient ingredient here for a successful business relationship which is reciprocity

and ethics, which are the cornerstones of the entire discrepancy, and the ones worth caring about if we are to ensure a successful, international convergence with better learning experience.

Overall, in order for institutions to achieve a successful higher education service, full of transparency and integrity, I argue, it is important to establish firm, healthy relationships with their students, be they prospective or 'In' students by making of internationalisation not an immediate goal but a 'means to an end' – an instrument through which they can respond proactively to/and enhance individual, societal developments in parallel with the economic outcomes, a tool that will help institutions build a service that is at once value-led and cost-effective. To put it simply, universities must keep their promises and do what they say to avoid any form of conflict with their students.

## 2.5 How international students are perceived

With nearly 458,520 international students attending university (International Students Statistics, 2019), the UK is already making a great progress in its quest to become global and thus secure its place in the market. But what is unclear is how British universities respond to such diversity and what a real international community really looks like. Having discussed the developments that have marked the process of internationalisation in HE, we now turn to perceptions of these changes.

Trying to understand what it is like to be an international student in a foreign country, Jacob Beneveto (2018) suggests that one of the potential aspects of living in a country other than yours, and being exposed to a new culture is feeling like an 'outsider'. Beneveto sees studying abroad away from home and family as an 'uncomfortable stage' where international students can easily experience alienation. Similarly, Cardwell (2016, para, 02) highlights that despite this category of students are officially recognised as "international" or "overseas", academics and the wider world often refer to them as "foreigners", which indicates, in his words, that "they are [perceived as] outsiders rather than an integral part of our strong academic traditions"

(Cardwell, 2016, para, 02). This suggests the existence of a big issue of otherness that may lead people or societies to be self-centered. For Cardwell, perceiving students as "foreign" is the result of some adhesive stereotypes which assume that "such students bring down standards" (para, 05). To back up his opinion, Cardwell draws attention to the students' enrolment gap in terms of where they come from and argues that what an average of 19% of non-UK students alongside 81% of British students conveys is that education in the UK is basically designed for national students (UK students). The point we could draw here though is that the type of competition into which universities have been squeezed is one for labels instead of radical change. In other words, the famous statement of embracing change, universities make in their attempt to internationalise their education systems, does not certainly mean that they want to change (to be the change). This, again, supports my argument that the internationalisation of today is no different from the globalisation of yesterday, in the sense that internationalisation is just an empty rhetoric that universities use to achieve power and control.

### 2.5.1 Brexit

International students enrolled in UK universities, undoubtedly, make crucial contributions to the whole country (see appendix 2 and also section about international students and space-time gap of postmodern higher education). More recently, however, in June 2016 an unprecedented event in the history of British partnerships coined "Brexit" has destabilised the country and had a significant impact on students mobility.

### 2.5.2 Definition

The term Brexit is a combination of 'Britain' and 'exit'[9], a symbolic expression that represents the historic movement of the UK from the European Union. This started off on the 23rd of June 2016 when the UK held a referendum ending on its membership of the EU, resulting in 51,9%

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[9] Definition of Brexit: https://www.grin.com/document/365529

of Britons saying 'yes'. Brexit was eventually officialised by the government on the 29th of March 2017[10].

Up to 2016, UK has held a very consistent, strategic alliance with Europe including a European Union student exchange programme (EU funding programme), known as Erasmus plus scheme. This is a catch-all scheme for education, training, sport, and youth, started in 1987 with the purpose of globalising European education (British Council, 2017; European commission, n.d.). It provides students and staff with opportunities to attend international training courses, and undertake work placements abroad. So far, it has been claimed that over 200,000 UK students have benefited from the programme, with their grants paid by the EU funding (Erasmus Scheme, 2016). Approximately 17% of UK's academic staff are Europeans, this compares to 12% originating from outside the EU. Besides, UK universities earn about 16% of research income contributed from the EU funding (Mayhew, 2017a). With this in mind, Brexit is perceived by many as a threat to the country's reputation, given that this may "undermine the financial sustainability of UK universities as well as the overall quality of their scholarship" (Scott, 2017, para 01).

### 2.5.3 The implications of Brexit for UK's Higher Education

In 2016/2017, 19% of students in the UK were non-British (this percentage refers to the tertiary student population), 6% of them were from Europe and 13% from the rest of the world (UKCISA, 2018). However, after the launch of Brexit, with regard to the legislative changes to the students' visa system, a significant drop in students' applications (both EU/NON-EU) was witnessed. This, consequently, led to the circulation of some unexpected thoughts about the UK as an unwelcoming environment for international students.

In an analysis of the applications made on the 15th of January, UCAS figures (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service) have pointed out a drop of 7% in applications from the EU and 5% from outside the EU (Morgan, 2017). On top of that, according to HESA, the Higher

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[10] HC Deb, 29 March 2017, col 251

Education Statistics Agency (2017), the number of international students applying for postgraduate study has dramatically decreased to 38% down from 58% in 2016. Not to mention, the high levels of complaints reported by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator in 2017. The latter asserts that 29% of international students were complaining about issues related to "academic misconduct, visa issues, financial matters and others related to academic status" (p. 20).

That is not all, a year after the launch of Brexit, statistics from the ONS (Office for National Statistics) quarterly report (2017), reported a further significant drop of 106, 000 in net long-term international migration – meaning people who come to live in the UK minus those who leave it. According to this report, over three-quarters of the decrease (80,000) were the European citizens who left UK right after the launch of Brexit, whereas the rest was non-European citizens. A similar scenario has been evident in migration for the sake of study, the second most common reason for migration to the UK, with a decline of 23,000 student compared to the previous year (White, 2017). With these significant falls in the scale of migration, it was clear that Brexit was seriously affecting people's decisions to come to, or leave the UK (ibid). Aside from that, it is also worth mentioning that in an analysis of the potential economic impacts of the UK's exit from the EU, particularly on the financial services (FS) sector, the Confederation of British Industry in 2016 highlighted a noticeable stagnation in the level of economic growth in comparison to 2015, and estimated a decline of 5.7% to 9.5% in the sector by 2020, with a further reduction of 70,000-100,000 in UK FS employment (PwC report, 2016). Considering the prospects of Brexit implications on the international standing of UK institutions, Mayhew (2017a) comments:

> My analysis indicates that the main threats to the sector come not just from Brexit itself, but also from the fact that it is likely to be accompanied by government reforms to the way the sector is regulated and by a general tightening of immigration controls.

(Mayhew, 2017b, para 04)

Surprisingly, British universities in 2018 saw a significant increase in the total number of international students (11%), and in the number of applicants from EU [3.4%] (UCAS, 2018). This increase was attributed to the high quality of education and service provision in UK institutions, along with the importance of English in global economy. However, according to a 2018 study by the Centre for Global Higher Education, the UK's total market share slightly declined due to a sharp drop of 11% in the share of Indian students choosing the UK for higher studies since 2010 (MAC, 2018). To this end, the study warns that the envious position of the UK in the global market is currently under threat as there is a big chance that Australia may overtake its place in the near future especially after Brexit. Supporting this, the Confederation of British Industry complains:

> Our share of the global market in international students is under threat as our competitors increase their efforts to recruit international students.

> (MAC, 2018, p. 33).

Accordingly, the British Council adds:

> The fact that international student growth to the UK continues to stagnate even when compared to other 'traditional' international study destinations is a matter that should attract some concern and if this trend continues, will reduce the comparative soft power and influence benefits that the UK gains.

> (op.cit, p. 34).

This concern was discussed in the MAC, Migration Advisory Committee, report (2018) which was a response to the call of the home secretary commission for evidence on the impact of international students in the UK. The report emphasises the significant contributions international students present to the local economy and, thus, suggests that the government, for further successful, industrial mechanism and more welcoming environment, should collaborate with the sector. That is to say, it should intensify the recruitment of international students, and introduce a new pilot scheme which would offer students the opportunity to stay

in the country for a year, or more, after completing their studies instead of the usual six months. This is  to give a competitive edge to the country over the others. The report, on the other hand, warns that any imposed barriers to student mobility, after leaving the EU, would only have a negative impact on the sector. Related to this, the Higher Education Policy Institute speculates the loss of 57% (31,000) of EU students with about 39.5million after Brexit.

All in all, Brexit does not only seem to bring uncertainty to the higher education sector but also sets in place new mechanisms that UK universities have to adjust to, or else risk losing what they most value: their prestige and their competitive status in the market. Again, this raises concern about the impact of these new regulations on international students' experience and on the higher educational quality assurance that UK institutions promise them. Increasing the number of international students can be a profitable economic strategy, but it is also worth emphasising that this may shift the global competition for talented students to a competition for just students who can simply afford to pay for their studies, which is again problematic (see Sharar, 2016; 2018). Further questions can also be asked as universities are currently facing a real global crisis generated by the recent developments and changes caused by the global pandemic of Covid-19 (see Tran, 2020). Coronavirus is undoubtedly part of this problematic climate; however, it is not a question I answer in this study.

The current study is quite significant as it analyses the experiences of international students enrolled in a UK higher education institution. The findings will uncover the quality-of-service provision as well as the implications of the spatial nature of internationalisation practices, and the extent to which marketised consumerist discourses affect this academic life and shape the student experience.

## 2.6 International students' challenges

Regarding their significant contributions to the UK's industry, economy, and education, international students, surely, deserve to have a positive learning experience in the country. Nevertheless, research undertaken in this area shows a rather complicated, adversely

challenging student trajectory in the academic environment, which is often related to the assumption that international student may be regarded as "economically important but academically deficit" (Coate, 2009, p. 277; see also Lee, 2020).

Undoubtedly, the transition to university, in an English-speaking country like the UK, is a new experience for all students, be they international or home students. However, for international students, it is even more complex. Their journey may not only be confusing but also traumatising because they are in an environment where they are expected to develop new ways of learning, communicating, and most importantly, thinking. They also have to face another challenge which is to adjust to a new, independent lifestyle away from home and the usual support networks. All these things can make their learning experience even more difficult and stressful (Ryan and Carroll, 2005). Regardless of how difficult this journey can be, international students must find a way through for a number of reasons. First, they pay a huge amount of money for their studies, including the tuition fees, and everyday expenditure – not to mention, the visa implications they have to face in case they fail (ibid). The second reason is related to the intense pressure from their families and friends, who highly expect them to succeed (ibid). As such, for international students to embrace a literally new environment with new culture and new academic values, a significant amount of time, persistence, and most importantly, support are crucial (Singh, 2017). However, institutions, it is argued, often fall short in providing enough support and guidance for their students, despite them not being familiar with the sector. For example, as Pilote and Benabdeljalil (2007) highlight, international students may not be familiar with the universities' curriculum, technology use, teaching and evaluation methods, and different instructor-student relationships. Therefore, without appropriate guidance and support from the universities, their experience may not be positive.

### 2.6.1 Academic engagement

Among the key elements of this study is students' academic engagement because this qualitative research focuses primarily on the challenges faced by international students in

terms of academic adaptation, coping strategies as well as their agency and resilience in adjusting to the new environment.

Within the literature on students' academic engagement, a number of synonymous expressions have been adopted. These range from: academic engagement, academic adaptation, and academic acculturation.

Academic engagement is usually defined as the quality of students' participation or connection with the schooling endeavor in terms of activities, values, people, goals, and place (Skinner *et al.*, 2009). Academic adaptation, on the other hand is described by several scholars as a process of appreciation and acquisition of the target culture in an academic situation (Kashima and Loh, 2006; Wang and Mallinckrodt, 2006; Kim, 2012). As far as academic acculturation is concerned, Morita (2000) defines it as "a complex, locally situated process that involves dynamic negotiations of expertise and identity" (p. 304). Also pointed out by Cheng and Fox (2008) as "the dynamic adaptation processes of linguistically and culturally diverse students engaging with the academic study" (p. 309).

As the number of international students in English-speaking countries grew, so did their challenges in dealing with entire changes. Panels of studies have investigated the major issues international students experience while studying abroad (Kashima and Loh, 2006; Wang and Mallinckrodt, 2006; Poyrazli and Grahame, 2007; Ren *et al.*, 2007; Cheng and Fox, 2008; Wadsworth *et al.*, 2008; Yuan, 2011; Kim, 2012; Yu and Downing, 2012; Campbell, 2015). In the following paragraphs, we are going to explore some of these challenges in order to see exactly what sort of problems they are, and what that can reveal about the institutions' practices.

Based on a documentary analysis of a published literature, Wenhua and Zhe (2013) set apart a collection of difficulties that international students encounter in the four leading English-speaking countries (the United States, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, and Australia). These difficulties include personal psychological issues; academic issues; social and cultural

issues; general living issues; and English language proficiency issues. Moreover, in a systematic review of 18 studies Liu *et al.* (2014) recognise three separate factors which have a great influence on the psychological status of Chinese students: multicultural competence (e.g., English proficiency, intercultural competence), sociocultural factors (e.g., acculturation, discrimination), and psychological factors (e.g., anxiety, homesickness). Accordingly, Ryan (2005) suggests that foreign students may lose some of their self-esteem and self-concept due to the physical, social, cultural, and academic impediments they face when they first come to the UK. Subsequently, she identifies three potential types of shock that these students may experience: culture shock, language shock, and academic shock.

### 2.6.1.1 Culture shock

Culture shock[11] is defined as the sense of confusion and uncertainty that make students feel anxious once they are exposed to a new environment (see Merriam-Webster). The term 'culture shock' is commonly used in literature to describe the process of adaptation and adjustment predominantly in psychological studies (Ward and Kennedy, 1993), and is often used to describe and explain the psychological state of international students during their cross-cultural transition. Pattison (2003), Brown and Holloway (2008), and Schartner (2015) have explored the adjustment of international postgraduate students in a UK university, and they all agreed that culture shock (homesickness, loneliness, fear, disorientation, depression, vulnerability) is the number one issue in their list of challenges. However, for Brown and Holloway (2008), this kind of shock is experienced differently as it may be more frequent, or may diminish. In this respect, Schartner (2015) highlights how important emotional and academic support are to overcome such difficulties, and suggests co-national collaborations as a coping strategy to undergo acculturative stress.

Schartner's suggestion, that emotional and academic support are important, echoes Brown's 2009 ethnographic study of overseas postgraduate students in a British university. Brown

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[11] Merriam-Webster defines culture shock as "a sense of confusion and uncertainty sometimes with feelings of anxiety that may affect people exposed to an alien culture or environment without adequate preparation". See https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/culture%20shock

reports that international students show a great passion for mixing with other cultures, yet they tend to go towards the co-national and mono-ethnic groups, or what he calls a "ghetto pattern". He contends that their "willingness to leave the confines of the monoethnic group is a rare phenomenon" (Brown, 2009, p. 185). Consequently, Brown concludes that this issue makes students feel rather frustrated, disappointed, and most importantly, undesirable regardless of the huge amount of money they bring to the institutions.

This lack of contact between home and international students was also reported in the UKCOSA study (2004). The study covers a large number of international students (about 4,796) in a wide range of UK institutions. They were given an extensive questionnaire regarding the adaptation issues experienced on their study time. The report indicates that 70% of taught international students proclaimed that they had no contact with UK students. This compares to 7% of those who did. Predominantly, 59% of their friendships were made with students from the same cohort. While the study at hand links such a dearth of contact primarily to the lack of support and cultural differences, Merrick (2004) relates it to the big number of international students in schools. He presumes that if the ratios of overseas students were smaller, cross-cultural interaction would be much easier. By this, we can argue that the huge number of international students, which is massively increasing in the UK's HEIs, just like in any other country, may only worsen the situation, and erode the students' sense of inclusion. In contrast, Montgomery (2010) believes that international students could create their own support and learning networks, even if they do not mix with UK students. In a study of Chinese students in the UK, Gu and Maley (2008), though, come up with the understanding that this pattern of friendship is a survival strategy that students opt for to appease their struggles. That is, instead of embracing the culture and learning from others, they, rather, stick to their comfort zone, or their home-like environment that they build up themselves to stay away from the host community. In their description of Chinese students facing similar issues, Gu and Maley (2008) put it this way: "now it may be that the Chinese students are trying to do that [bridge the cultural divide] but I think that if we are honest, we have to say we don't feel that they are trying to

adjust. What they are more likely to do is to keep together as a group and to plug in as soon as they can to the local Chinese community…they are living in China psychologically, socially and culturally, and they just come out of that world in the university for a few hours every day….Then they go out of the classroom and they are back in China"( op.cit, p. 233).

In view of these analyses, what likely matters, according to Brown (2009), is not how good or how bad co-national ties could be for international students, but, rather, their presumed intercultural benefits that remain just as lip service. If there is no intercultural interaction, there would be no language improvement, and less language improvement would lessen the academic success (ibid). This brings us to the second type of shock that is language shock, which mirrors the challenges of understanding and communicating in a foreign language.

### 2.6.1.2 Language shock

Language shock is defined as "the challenge of understanding and communicating in a second language in an unfamiliar environment, and confusion about the norms of behaviour in a new cultural setting" (Jackson, 2016, p. 143).

Language plays a significant role in the experiences of international students (Montgomery, 2010). It is often regarded as the heart and the basis of our interaction with others. It is likely to influence the way we are perceived by others (Sysoyev, 2002), and a lack of language proficiency can result in lack of understanding and sometimes misinterpretation of concepts.

Thus, for Trahar (2007), international students with such low language proficiency could be viewed as lacking knowledge, or as having 'lower academic potential'. McMahon's (2011) study reveals that a huge number of international students suffer from language shock[12] due to their lack of confidence when speaking English. This was also supported by Ramachandran (2011, p. 203):

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[12] See https://www.igi-global.com/dictionary/encountering-unfamiliar-educational-practices-abroad/56153

> Their confidence is shattered when they find their earlier training in English
> […] does not help them to resolve practice issues that arise in a classroom
> environment.

In addition to this issue, as Dao, Lee, and Chang (2007) report, international students who lack language proficiency are likely subject to acculturative stress and depression. Consequently, this makes English competency a crucial factor that affects students' academic adjustment (Poyrazli and Kavanaugh, 2006). Indeed, according to Singh (2015; 2016) academic success can only be achieved if students master the language.

### 2.6.1.3 Academic shock

Among the key challenges international students encounter in UK universities is that of meeting their academic expectations as well as integrating in their educational system, which is significantly different from theirs. This is probably where they come to face what is called academic shock,[13] defined as the hurdles new students face in their attempts to cope with new teaching and learning approaches (Ryan, 2005), or "the experience a learner may have when exposed to highly technical, complex, or voluminous information, or knowledge which is way above a person's own comprehension, or level of education, training, or experience" (Ferdinandude, 2017, para, 01). Coming from diverse backgrounds, with an assortment of different learning experiences makes international students unfamiliar with the teaching and learning patterns developed in British schools – particularly, the learning pattern which is expected to be self-directed instead of teacher-centered. To put it differently, students are required to be autonomous, flexible, and responsible for their learning. In this context, literature highlights the issue of dependency in the way new sojourners approach their learning.

This issue is said to be directed by students' cultural differences because international students are likely used to receiving more support and direction from their teachers back home, while it is not the case in western universities. For example, Bartram (2007) explored

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[13] See https://www.collinsdictionary.com/submission/18870/academic+shock

the viability of this assumption and found that foreign students lack the ability to manage their studies "independently" (p. 212). This was further confirmed by Tian (2008) in his investigation of what Smith (2008) calls 'spoon feeding' in HE. Paradoxically, however, Gieve's and Clark's (2005) study challenges the above assumption and describes international students as flexible with high interest in self-directed learning. The point here is that these assumptions of independency made against international students cannot be approved as long as there is contradictory evidence. By this, Andrade (2006) suggests that successful, independent learning necessitates adequate support coming from the academic staff to help students bridge the gap of being different and unfamiliar. He believes that institutions must provide oversea students with appropriate support and guidance if they truly want them to adjust effectively. Similar to Andrade (2006), Christodolou (2014) argues, in her book entitled: 'Seven Myths about Education', that teacher's instructions are vital for a successful, independent learning.

### 2.6.2 Academic writing challenges

In addition to independent learning, there exist other serious academic challenges that international students encounter recurrently, particularly in academic writing. A growing body of research, on academic writing in English as a second or third language, has been widely recognised (e.g., Ruggles, 2012; Young and Schartner, 2014; Singh, 2015). The impetus behind such interest is likely to be the serious writing-related problems that non-native-English speakers struggle with. Given that writing is considered as a significant "measure of competency" (Royer and Grilles, 2003, p. 88) in western universities, international students, it is argued, experience different challenges in developing their writing performance.

Many of these challenges have been discussed in literature over many years, covering both ESL/EFL undergraduate and postgraduate students. This encompasses linguistic-based difficulties: problems with grammar, vocabulary, and sentence construction (e.g., Qian and Krugly-Smolska, 2008; Zhou, 2009; Chan, 2010 ); difficulties with interpreting academic writing

requirements such as their unfamiliarity with the form of assessment, and the writing conventions (see Wang, 2010; Ruggles, 2012; Young and Schar tner, 2014).

Some studies highlight the concept of plagiarism (e.g., Deckert, 1993; Chandrasoma *et al.*, 2004; Pecoraro, 2006); others shed light on the aspect of criticality in students' writing (e.g., Chanock, 2000; Woodward-Kron, 2002; Durkin, 2008; Floyd, 2011), a very common challenge, in the account of international students, that I discuss now.

### 2.6.3 Critical thinking

Critical thinking is an intellectual standard of excellence and mindful commitment (Paul and Elder, 2006). The value of teaching and learning in higher education is measured by this type of thinking (Danvers, 2016). It is often understood as an intensely affective experience (Ringrose and Renold, 2014), and a crucial aspect of argumentative writing. It is such a complex term that it became the heart of academic debate for many years. In fact, there is no single agreed definition of critical thinking (Moore, 2011).

While Mitchell *et al.* (2004), for example, position critical thinking as a social practice rooted in the relations and contexts in which it takes place, Paul and Elder (2006) consider it as a tool of knowledge transaction. Edwards and Fenwick (2013), on the other hand, characterise critical thinking as a network of interrelated knowledge practices. The conception of critical thinking as a generic skill is also present in literature; this appears in theories of criticality (e.g., Halpern, 2003), study skills guides (e.g., Fisher, 2001; Cottrell, 2011), and higher education pedagogies (e.g., Leicester, 2010). This diversity in terms of meanings and enactments led to a lack of consensus about what skills students need to master, and how to do so in order to be good critical thinkers. In this regard, there is a famous assumption that claims that criticality never exists in universities outside western education systems — a rhetorical statement which is not based on evidence but lays out a deficit approach that views international students as rote learners, "canaries in the coalmine", plagiarisers, and not having critical thinking skills" (Ryan and Carroll, 2005, p.9).

Ryan (2005), Brown and Holloway (2008), Marlina (2009), Coate (2009), (Welikala (2011), Lee (2013), Lindsay (2015), Douglas *et al.* (2016) are among the famous researchers who have tackled this topic and have developed distinctive understandings about the identity of international students at the educational level.

While Welikala (2011) and Marlina (2009) assume that international students are much more passive and often regarded as having a 'lack' compared to their domestic counterparts, Brown and Holloway (2008) draw attention to the dangerous inconsistency of making generalised assumptions about international students. Coate (2009), on the other hand, argues that assuming knowledge about international students is a form of violence or emotional manipulation (mental abuse) that serves to diminish students' capacities. A similar point is made by Ryan and Carroll (2005, p. 6), who seek to recognise the efforts and intellectual capacities of international students. This was clearly expressed in their words: "this model [of international student non-competence] is hard to sustain" as "they have been successful in their home countries and have shown initiative in trying to succeed in a foreign environment". Ryan's and Carroll's view, here, points out an important, positive side of international students which can be easily overlooked by researchers. Indeed, Lindsay (2015) and Douglas *et al.* (2016) also critique the perceptions of international students which drive the view that they are defined ─ and define themselves ─ by lack. They argue that it is not the learners that have a lack, but actually the negative stereotypes, preconceptions, which are sufficiently debilitating that they themselves may create the lack and the suffering as their deficit is interpellated (see Phan, 2019; Quinton, 2019). This suggests that some of the challenges that international students are said to have ─ their weaknesses and their deficits, which are meant to be the student problem ─ may actually be partly created by the institution. If we take critical thinking as an example, international students are often said to not have critical thinking skills. Yet, the latter, as I show above, is a very complex term that teachers and academics still find it hard to define or even to agree on.

My point here is that the problem of 'lack' often linked to international students is possibly a problem of the organisation itself, and it reflects the institutions' xeno-racist[14] attitudes towards the 'other': it is a problem created by an environment that refuses to accept the 'other', to recognise the competencies of the 'other', and to treat the 'other' as no different from the British. In the coming paragraphs, I address the issues of racism, xenophobia, and otherness in UKHE as part of a much bigger deficit model of rejection which is xeno-racism.

## 2.7 Racism and international students in the UK

Among the biggest challenges facing international students studying abroad is racism. Previously, in a section about how international students are perceived in a real international community, I highlighted that perceiving international students as 'outsiders', instead of an integral aspect in the whole international academic system, is potentially a racist move: a clear social act of othering that could also, easily, be associated with the concept of xenophobia. That is, behind such perceptions may lay an intense fear of the 'other' particularly in terms of national identity (see below).

Analysis of the literature reveals a serious matter of otherness related to international students. For example, based on the growing body of literature on the experiences of international students, it is seen that much of the research done in this area breaks into the holistic challenges and cultural differences of international students compared to domestic students. This binary divide, for Welikala (2015), has been followed by a wave of counterproductive narratives, bias, and misleading assumptions regarding international students as 'outsiders'. Two more recent events from 2019 support this analysis: The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) report into racism on campus and the Liverpool university incident of racism in the same year.

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[14] See below "Xeno-racism"

### 2.7.1 The EHRC report

In December 2018, following what the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) reported as a "growing body of evidence" that students and staff are being subject to racism at universities, a national inquiry into racial harassment was launched in UK universities which lasted until the 15th of February 2019. The inquiry seeks to gain information about the extent of racial discrimination in UK universities using data collected from 141 out of 159 university in London, Wales, and Scotland. The universities responded to an online survey that sought information on experiences of racial harassment among staff and students from 2015 upwards. Based on this enquiry, the EHRC, in October 2019, published a report, under the title "Universities Challenged". The report reveals alarming figures about different forms of racism in UK higher education institutions. According to this report, out of 845 student and 571 staff, who responded to the survey, 69% of the students and 66% of the staff experienced racial discrimination (EHRC, 2019, p. 21).

The report shows that "about 13% of the students questioned had experienced racial harassment, rising to about a quarter of students from minority ethnic backgrounds" (Burns, 2019, para. 2). Based on the report, international students say that they often feel "unwelcome, isolated and vulnerable, treated like commodities only wanted by universities for their fees" (EHRC 2019, p. 28).

The findings show that the highest rate of racial harassment is reported by black students with 29% followed by 9% of white British students, including the anti-English, anti-Welsh, and anti-Scottish. Furthermore, the inquiry found that about 20% of the students reported cases of physical attack and 56% experienced "racist name-calling, insults and jokes". Some other common experiences, according to the report, included "subtle and nuanced acts, often known as microaggressions, being ignored or excluded from conversations or group activities, and being exposed to racist material or displays" (EHRC, 2019, p. 6). In line with this, the EHRC reports that "[i]n most cases students said their harasser was another student, but a large number said it was their tutor or another academic" (ibid).

Students who experienced racial harassment, it is argued, "were left feeling angry, upset, depressed, anxious and vulnerable [with] 8% said they had felt suicidal" (p. 7). As far as the staff are concerned, the report adds that 50% of the staff experienced incidents of bias and exclusion because of their race, and "more than a quarter said they experienced racist name-calling, insults and jokes. Much of this harassment [the report states] took place in office environments, frequently in plain sight of their colleagues" (ibid).

These statistics indicate that racism, including verbal and nonverbal abuse, is a serious issue which is not only deeply embedded in the HE system but also widely spread across the UK. The EHRC, in its attempt to understand the key issue of racism in UKHE, found a large gap between the number of complaints reported in the inquiry and those recorded by universities.

The universities, it is argued, were often unaware of the true extent of the problem on their campuses. In this respect, BBC News (2019a) comments: "[o]ur report reveals that not only are universities out of touch with the extent that (sic) this is occurring on their campuses, some are also completely oblivious to the issue". However, based on what the staff and students reported, the EHRC states that "[t]here was a strong perception that universities too often place their reputation above the safeguarding and welfare of their students and staff" (p. 12).

This suggests that what is happening in UK universities is not a question of lacking awareness or obliviousness but a mere denial of the reality as it strongly affects their image. The EHRC, therefore, urges universities to "enforce their dignity at work policy commitments and create environments that nurture talent and potential" (p.103).

### 2.7.2 Liverpool university: 'racist email'

Similar to the EHRC report, BBC News (2019b) reported a viral incident of racism against Chinese students in Liverpool university. According to the report, the institution's international advice and guidance team, in a note addressed to international scholars to remind them of the exam guidelines, assumed that Chinese students do not know what the word 'cheating' means

and eventually showed their concern with a Chinese translation of 'cheating' that singled out this particular group of students (ibid).

The whole discourse around racism has often been a conversation about 'black' and 'white'. Yet, the data (EHRC report and Liverpool university incident) suggests that racism is actually a very complex and multifaceted problem that is often nurtured by institutions that care about their image more than anything else (EHRC, 2019, p. 103). In other words, the concept of racism, according to the above examples, is definitely not limited to the issue of skin colour. It takes different forms and shades which could in some cases be "subtle and insidious", leaving the affected person in a state of confusion, frustration, and distress ─ like is the case with the so-called "micro-aggressions" (EHRC, 2019, p. 24, see also Advance HE 2019). It, therefore, requires attentive "listening ears" and total neutral behaviours from universities to first grasp it and then deal with it (EHRC, 2019, p. 54-55). These recommendations, I argue, could only be achieved if universities recognise the dark side of their policies and practices, which are often coated with layers of discrimination and often fear of the 'other' (see Beighton, 2020).

Relating the above accounts of racism with that of xenophobia, highlighted earlier, indicates that in the process of building an international space of diversity, of knowledge and cultural exchange, seems to grow a new, compound, form of racism that combines between xenophobia and racism, which is xeno-racism.

### 2.7.3 Xeno-racism

Xeno-racism is a new form of racism that involves characteristics peculiar to both xenophobia and racism (Sivanandan, 2001).

Xenophobia is a term we, often, use to describe a strong feeling of dislike or simply fear of the other (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary,2004, p. 502; Taras, 2012), However, for some, it is much more complex. For example, Yakushko (2009) defines xenophobia as "a form of attitudinal, affective, and behavioural prejudice towards immigrants and those perceived as foreigners" (p. 43). This implies that xenophobia is not just a feeling but a way of thinking that

can be translated into actions creating an atmosphere of rejection, hostility, and aversion (Taguieff, 1987).

Racism, on the other hand, is a form of discrimination made up of establishing superiority over the socially disadvantageous 'other'. It is directed against people of a different race and often arises from practices of political and economic control, including colonialism, slavery, and segregation. For example, according to Yakushko (2009, p. 48), racism in western Europe is associated with anti-Semitism, the Nazi era, and the Holocaust. For him, racism envisages "individuals found on a socially constructed notions of group differentiating visible phenotypical markers" such as colour.

Distinguishing xenophobia from racism, Yakushko (2009, p. 49) states that:

> Both xenophobia and racism mutually support forms of prejudice, [but] xenophobia does not always include racial attitudes.

Despite the fact that xeno-racism is a term that combines xenophobia and racism, its markers, however, are said to be less obvious than those of these two latter forms of prejudice. There exist different interpretations of xeno-racism:

Sivanandan (2001, p. 2), for example, describes xeno-racism as:

> a racism that is not just directed at those with darker skins, from the former colonial territories, but at the newer categories of the displaced, the dispossessed and the uprooted, who are beating at western Europe's doors, the Europe that helped to displace them in the first place. It is a racism that cannot be colour-coded, directed as it is at poor whites as well, and is therefore passed off as xenophobia, a "natural" fear of strangers. But in the way it denigrates and reifies people before segregating and/or expelling them, it is a xenophobia that bears all the marks of the old racism. It is racism in substance, but "xeno" in form. It is a racism that is meted out to impoverished strangers even if they are white.

Sivanandan, here, presents the term 'xeno-racism' as a xenophobic form of racism directed at strangers with a poor socio-economic status. Di Wasso *et al.* (2014, p. 343), on the other hand, define xeno-racism as "a more nuanced ideology of rejection constructed around the figure of the impoverished stranger, not necessarily 'racially' different, but marked by socio-economic disadvantage and other social or cultural signifiers of alterity" (see also Del-Teso-Craviotto, 2009; Fekete, 2009).

Contrary to the above interpretations, Fekete (2009) sees xeno-racism from an even wider perspective that involves, in addition to the traditional forms of racism, islamophobia (Fekete 2009, pp. 43-4; p. 69) and anti-asylum-seeker racism (Fekete 2009, p. 15; p. 19; pp. 41-2).

While Sivanandan and Fekete, as presented above, refer in their interpretations of xeno-racism to European migrant workers, asylum seekers and darker skinned people from the former colonies and so on, I associate it in this study with international students.

There are two main reasons for referring to xeno-racism in this context. First, internationalisation at home, which is the underlying research area of the study, is crucially dependent on the physical mobility of international students. Universities worldwide are impelled to international policies that require them to recruit a number of students for financial gain. Second, internationalisation is neither nation nor religion specific: international students come from a wide range of cultural and religious backgrounds; from different countries with different social statuses, and of different colours — their stay in the UK could be temporary as it could be permanent. These criteria can form a perfect atmosphere of xeno-racism if proper measures are not taken. Indeed, as the data shows, there is abundant evidence (see above) of xeno-racism, including forms of attitudinal prejudice towards international students, negative stereotyping, misleading assumptions, binary research, social rejection (issues of otherness apparent in perceiving international students as foreigners or outsiders), and racial harassment of both black and white students.

Besides, with the increasing economic pressure for international competition, further developments have spurred on critical commentaries pointing to a discourse of 'market abuse'. The discourse contends that international students, in a climate of internationalisation in higher education, are being subject to exploitation, manipulation, and market abuse (Chowdhury and Phan, 2014; EHRC, 2019). It stresses that universities are treating them as a homogeneous group by means of "a one-size-fits-all educational prescription" (Sidhu and Dall' Alba, 2012, p. 415). As such, Welikala (2015) argues that universities do not understand how international students learn, and their strategies fail to take the homogeneity of international students' experience into consideration. To this end, she believes that international student experience is now losing its meaning to become a 'catch-all term'. Furthermore, the UK is currently going through a critical period regarding Brexit and Covid-19. These unprecedented events engender a great deal of uncertainty with endless concerns about the future of higher education and students' inclusion, especially now that some negative thoughts about the UK as an unwelcoming environment for international students began to circulate, and the national inquiry (2019) is a further indicator of that.

To sum up, I use the concept of xeno-racism, in this study, to refer to the 'nuanced ideology' of racism that anchors the rejection of the other, whether consciously or unconsciously, by means of endless substantial or insubstantial criteria (physical appearance, race, culture, religion, economic disadvantage…etc.). This is all in a very complex and sophisticated world misled by ideas of 'good capitalism' (See Sivanadan, 2001), which promise, according to my data, an ideal space of unity, integrity, inclusiveness, and reciprocity (mutual respect and understanding).

Drawing on Fekete's (2009) perspective, xeno-racism, in this context, can represent a connotation of threat against the local culture and/or the national identity of the host country, as it can also genuinely incorporate islamophobia, given the fact that racism of this form is quite common in foreign countries, and is often connected to physical appearance such as wearing a veil (see the data): a serious issue that I discuss, later, in the data analysis section.

The data suggests that much of what is happening between an institution and its international students is a problem of space, in-between the inside ('the us') and the outside ('the other'). A spatial issue often provoked by practices of global capitalism and national supremacy, aiming at promoting and imposing the politically powerful host culture over the other cultures. To better understand this concept, a theory of what space is, how it is made, how it is used, and how it affects us is needed. This section, therefore, explores in depth the concept of space and its implications in relation to the higher education system. I first start with a discussion about the background of space, where I highlight the different theories relating to it. Then, I move to the most important section, where I discuss the concept of space in terms of UKHE and thus identify the space gap that exists therein.

## 2.8 Space

Many important thinkers place a great value on space and stress its importance in our times. Doreen Massey, for example, mentions that "it is space rather than time which is the distinctively significant dimension of contemporary capitalism" for Urry (1985); that "it is space not time that hides consequences from us" for Berger (1972, p. 40); that "all the social sciences must make room to an increasingly geographical conception of mankind" for  Fernand Braudel (1958); and for Foucault (1967) that "the anxiety of our era has to do fundamentally with space, no doubt a great deal more than with time" (Massey, 1994, p. 249).

More recently, thinkers such as Bhander (2010), emphasise the importance of space instead of time in understanding the world, including people's differences and relations:

> It is space, rather than time, that allows us to recognise the very multiplicity
> of our being and our relations to others.

> (Bhander, 2010, para. 2)

The point here is that we often talk about academic life and the education system, based on questions of time while questions of space seem to be forgotten. With technological innovations, including developments in transportation and communication networks, space

may seem to be no longer a problem: we can travel easily, we can contact people around the world in no time, as we can study or work without even having to move physically. All the facilities and opportunities new technology provides us with foreground the notion of time and obscure the notion of space.

While the above thinkers all agree on the importance of space compared to time, their understandings of this concept remain different, ranging from those who perceive it as a concrete material to those who see it as abstract. However, unlike the above proclamations, Kant (1781), believes that space and time are inseparable concepts, without them nothing exists. He argues that space is not real but fundamental for us to think and to experience the world.

Analyses of the literature, therefore, reveal three distinct forms of space: space as an absolute material, space as constructed through conceptual and spatial scales, and space as a multiplicity. Given that today's universities fall into a limbo of physical and virtual practices, investigating the nature of space in this context is critical in order to better understand students' learning trajectories, which is a key element of the present study.

### 2.8.1 Background

Because space is a contestable term that is often confused with place, this section examines the notion of space by splitting it into two: space, on one hand, is discussed as a broad concept, whereas place is discussed as an integral aspect that is strongly related to the concept of space.

#### 2.8.1.1 Space

Space is viewed as a very contestable term. While some confuse it with place as static, totally opposed to time (Laclau, 1990), others relate it to mental cognition that requires both time and space as unitary forms (Kant, 1781). In between these two positions, and in favour of the debate about cultural identity, exists a room for what Bhabha (1994) coins 'third space', that is where people would position themselves relatively in-between the two former positions. So,

if there is a problematic around this notion of space, in reference to contemporary higher education, then it is because of these different interpretations and conceptualisations of space that depends on once's positioning. My question, here, is: what position do universities occupy? And what are the consequences? Before we answer these questions, an overview of the different conceptions and implications of space is needed for better understanding.

## 2.8.1.2 Space and Place

The concept of space has been addressed in many disciplines and, especially, approached from different perspectives, many of which are grounded in the idea of investigating the influence of aspects like globalisation and history of colonisation on our conceptions of space and place. The story of this concept began in 1980s when the French, Marxist, philosopher, and sociologist, Henri Lefebvre published a book entitled *The Production of Space*. A book in which he discusses space, from a Marxist standpoint, as "a social product" affected by many factors such as place, power and so on (Lefebvre 1991, 26). According to him, space is fundamentally social, and is produced by people through complex, social relations influenced by economic and political mechanisms.

Lefebvre argues that the concept of space has the same peculiarities of the concept of production and is produced in the same process as money and capital, except that space can serve as both a tool of thought and action. Besides, the produced space, for him, is fundamental for the reproduction of a society – of its social class, its dominance, and power (capitalism). He says:

> [Social] space is a (social) product [...] the space thus produced also serves
> as a tool of thought and of action [...] in addition to being a means of
> production, it is also a means of control, and hence of domination, of power
> (ibid).

The assumption behind this premise is that space is 'a living organism' that is actively engaged in the everyday life. In his analysis, Lefebvre (1991) distinguishes between three forms of space: physical, mental, and social:

> The fields we are concerned with are, first, the physical-nature, the Cosmos;
>
> secondly, the mental, including logical and formal abstractions; and, thirdly,
>
> the social. In other words, we are concerned with logico-epis- (p. 11).

First, physical space refers to what Lefebvre assigns to as the "inception point" or "root": namely, places from the heart of nature where people can be gathered. Explaining the distinctive meaning of this form of space, Lefebvre states that:

> [n]ature creates and does not produce; it provides resources for a creative
>
> and productive activity on the part of social humanity (p.70).

Second, mental space, according to Lefebvre, is the opposite of physical space. He refers to it as a "logical" and "formal" abstraction: that is, the virtual and cognitive form of the representational.

Finally, social space or the so-called lived space, also referred to as "logico=epis". Lefebvre explains this as the third space where all the spaces interact to produce strong social relations, without which the symbolic meaning of a society remains meaningless. As such, Lefebvre sees that social space ought to be investigated on two scales: conceptual and spatial.

According to Lefebvre, two types of illusion can prevent people from seeing space as a social product that is abstract but also real, involving concrete social relations. First, "illusion of transparency", that is thinking of space as something clear and comprehensible, an empty space where nothing can be hidden about it because everything is out there. Second, "realistic illusion*":* an illusion that reflects space as definitely real and that does not need to be explained.

### 2.8.1.3 Implications about space

Among the implications Lefebvre suggests about space is that the physical, or natural, space is impermanent, it disappears gradually. For Lefebvre, every object in the physical space procures value and then becomes a symbol. It is, therefore, viewed as the raw material people use to produce a certain space. Moreover, Lefebvre argues that "every society – and hence every mode of production…produces its own space" (p. 31). As such, for Lefebvre, if a society declares itself as real, thinking of space as a pre-existing, unchanging, empty box which people fill up and move around, it fails to produce its own space and thus loses its meaning. He states that:

> [c]hange life! Change Society! These ideas lose completely their meaning without producing an appropriate space. A lesson to be learned…is that new social relations demand a new space, and vice-versa.
>
> (op.cit, p. 59)

Another implication is that the space produced in a capitalist process can be measured both qualitatively and quantitatively: qualitatively because it is shaped by/responds to people's needs and interests, and quantitatively because the produced qualitative space serves as a tool for income generation. For instance, when people want to go on holiday to have some leisure time, they apply for a qualitative space that would suit their needs and interests. Lefebvre calls this "space of consumption", a productive form of space that represents the space production and produced space in which states control market space. Then, comes the "consumption of space", a space where there is no longer production but consumption of the produced space (Lefebvre, 1991, pp. 111-112, pp. 280-281; see also Lefebvre, 2003; 2009; 2014).

This overall activity, including its relations with consumption and production, for Lefebvre, makes of tourism, or other similar activities, a profitable investment.

Lefebvre's view about space has widely been accepted in geography and sociology, especially in studies of human environment (Buchanan, 2005, p. 16). For instance, a similar point to that of Lefebvre was made by Entrikin (1991) in the context of phenomenology and humanistic geography. Like Lefebvre, Entrikin (1991) divides space into two opposite sides: subjective and objective, and links them together in what he calls "the betweenness of places". While space subjectivity, for him, lies on the personal representations and understandings of a place, space objectivity covers, rather, the 'naturalistic qualities of place'. The betweenness, therefore, refers to the intersection of the two binary notions of space as subjective and objective (Saar and Palang, 2009). Following Lefebvre's conception of space as both abstract and concrete, Edward Soja (1996) also used the term "Thirdspace" to illustrate his vision of space as the meeting point for what he calls "Firstspace", space as an object, and "Secondspace", space as a subject. In his book *Thirdspace*, Soja criticises humanities and social sciences claiming that their studies of our lived experience are dominated by historical and social measurements, while they seem to overlook the spatial ones. For him, space is fundamental if we are to explore how we live in, navigate, and make sense of the world.

Another "Third space", different from Soja's "thirdspace", has been developed in post-colonial theory by Homi Bhabha (1994). Third space, in this vein, signifies what Bhabha (1994), in his work *The Location of Culture,* describes as "hybrid" cultural forms, or in simple words, the blend of different cultural identities, which might occur as a result of some colonial forces when the coloniser and the colonised meet.

Interestingly, the different conceptions of space discussed so far, despite being constructed and approached differently, seem to share a common articulation of space and place as inseparable characters. However, in post-modern approach, space is, rather, seen as separated from place (see Anthony Giddens,1990) and connected to time, instead. A new formula has arisen known as time-space compression: an important form of space, defined by technology, that we now discuss.

### 2.8.1.4 Time-space compression

Space in post-modern theory is often attributed to the impact of technological advances, globalisation, and time-space compression on our understanding of the world (see Agnew, 1987; Massey, 1994; Harvey, 2001; Martin, 2003). Time-space compression first emerged in 1989 in David Harvey's work *The Condition of Postmodernity.* Harvey argues that the development of transportation and communication networks has squeezed our perception of time, space, and distance, breaking the world into a small community without geographical boundaries. In other words, technology has reduced the entire physical world into a small, imagined space that is accessible to everyone without physical mobility. Similarly, the cultural speed theorist Paul Virilio states that "[t]oday we are entering a space which is speed-space…This new, other time is that of electronic transmission, of high-tech machines, and therefore, man is present in this sort of time, not via his physical presence, but via programming" (quoted in Decron, 2001, p. 71). Virilio, here, describes space mainly as an imagined electronic site which transcends national boundaries and time constraints. Harvey and Virilio are clearly looking at the phenomenon of space-time compression in different ways. However, space, for both of them, is no longer geographical but relational: it is generated by actors and environments, not simply a given thing.

This time-space compression and shifting thoughts with regard to place (world) as an imagined space have been debated by many theorists, mainly geographers, on the grounds that time-space compression engenders a sense of disorientation and subversion of the identity of place, the so-called sense of a "place-called-home" (See: Massey, 1994: 162). For example, Edward Casey (1993) argues that the idea of living or even imagining that we are living in an imagined world is impossible. He states that:

> [o]ur lives are so place-oriented and place saturated that we cannot begin to comprehend, much less face up to, what sheer placelessness would be like
>
> (Casey, 1993, p. 11).

Casey, clearly, defies Harvey's theory of space. He sees that his understanding of space is not realistic, and that makes it impossible for people who believe that space is real to adopt such a theory.

Another side of the debate shed light on the consequences of globalisation. For instance, Sheppard (2002) argues that transforming the world into a common space may create issues of inequality and difference on a long-term basis due to global economic forces. In the light of these debates, the most sensational case remains that of cultural identity and its alliance with place. A presumed relation which has also been challenged is that the identities of people who travel abroad (migrants) or are enforced to leave their home countries (diaspora), stay connected to their homes through imagination: more precisely through memory which is a cognitive process that again necessitates a conceptual space and time. In this respect, David Morley and Kevin Robins (1993) write that "[p]laces are no longer the clear supports of our identity" (p. 5).

With this said, Doreen Massey (1994), in her discussion about how globalisation affects our society, joins Virilio's and Harvey's account of time-space compression as a key aspect of contemporary life. However, unlike the above claims which view the world as enclosure, or an absolute flat surface, Massey describes place as constructed of socio-spatial relations and, therefore, as "areas with boundaries around [which] can be imagined as articulated movements in networks of social relations and understandings" (Quoted in Robins, 1993, p. 325). Similar to this, Benedict Anderson (1991, pp. 6-7), in his analysis of the concept of nationalism, developed a theory of what he calls "Imagined communities". By this, Anderson defines a nation as an "imagined political community" (Anderson, 1991). That is, a community which is socially constructed and imagined by people who think they belong to that community. As he puts it, a nation is a community because:

> Regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each,
> the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately
> it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so

many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings.

(Anderson, 1991, p. 7).

And imagined because:

[t]he members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion (ibid).

In his analysis, Anderson (1991) also draws attention to the significant role media play in creating those imagined communities through images and vernacular, which, he believes, pave the way towards the targets (people). Similar to Anderson's theory of imagined communities, Appadurai (1990) developed a theory of 'disjuncture', through which he depicts global cultural economy as an interlaced cultural activity of 'social imaginary' affected by five disjunctive essential facets: cross cultural mobility; media, which affects the way we understand the world; technology innovations; capitalism and income generation; globally spread discourses and ideologies. According to Appadurai (1990): "new global cultural economy has to be seen as a complex, overlapping, disjunctive order" (p.32). Describing his theory of social imaginary, Appadurai says:

The imagination has become an organised field of social practices, a form of work (in the sense of both labour and culturally organised practice), and a form of negotiation between sites of agency (individuals) and globally defined fields of possibility […] The imagination is now central to all forms of agency, is itself a social fact, and is the key component of the new global order.

(Appadurai, 1990, p. 31).

The above theoretical understandings, though they are contextually different, commonly credit Kant's doctrine of transcendental idealism developed in his *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781),

which identifies space and time as indispensable cognitive entities that cannot exist independently of each other. Echoing the Kantian theory, Massey (2005) states that:

> [n]either time nor space is reducible to the other; they are distinct. They are, however, co-implicated. On the side of space, there is the integral temporality of dynamic simultaneity. On the side of time, there is the necessary production of change through practices of interrelation.

(Massey, 2005, p. 55)

Kant in his distinction of space from place, asserts that space is "not objective and real" but "subjective and ideal" (Kant, 1770, p. 403). That is, like time, space is conceptual. It does not really exist outside subjective apperception. It is nonetheless fundamental to our way of seeing the world and thus our cognitive make-up, without which the experience of a given place is impossible. Kant believes that the concepts of space and time are deeply connected and are indispensable for thinking to take place.

### 2.8.1.5 Place as part of space

That said, Jessop *et al.* (2008), stress the importance of approaching the notion of place through an interdisciplinary lens. For them, place is not only geographical but also created through "interaction between people and groups; institutionalised land uses; political and economic decisions; and the language of representation" (Quoted in Saar and Palang, 2009, p. 7).

Indeed, they argue that place should be viewed simultaneously as a broad territory, or as a particular location made up of networks which grow over time. Researchers interested in studying place meanings highlight that meaning construction is relative and is influenced by myriad complex patterns, including priorities, thoughts, beliefs, values, memories, feelings, and aims related to the place (Vorkinn and Riese, 2001). These meanings, according to Auburn and Barnes (2006), could be allocated at four different levels: personal (how it is

perceived individually), local (its local position), national (its importance on a national level), and supranational (its power beyond the national boundaries).

So much attention, in literature, has been given to the individual meanings people attach to the place they are in, and how these lead to forming their identities (see Manzo, 2005). Since the present study tackles the subject of students' lived experiences, and the meanings they generate, this area also needs to be reviewed.

### 2.8.1.6 Place attachments

It has been argued that a strong connection exists between individuals and the places in which they live. This connection is often determined by the nature of their lived experience, whether it is positive or negative (Manzo, 2005). Places, therefore, could be meaningful for people in many circumstances: for instance, when interacting and having social relations with others (see Gustafson, 2001); when a particular place reminds us of a particular experience or event at a given time (Shamsuddin and Ujang, 2008); when it evokes certain emotions such as feelings of belonging, fear, safety, and security (Smaldone *et al.*, 2005), depending on the activities people get involved in (Tuan,1977). All these elements, simultaneously, play an active role in defining the ways in which an individual could value and make sense of the environment as well as their reflections and positions therein (Manzo, 2005). For example, whether they consider themselves as insiders or outsiders, this is basically related to the above connectors and the types of evaluation they may draw accordingly. To say it differently, just as these evaluations could be positive in a way that would strengthen their relationship with a given place, they could also be negative, which may result in dislocating them from that particular place (see Manzo, 2003). Personal identities, in this case, are closely related to place, especially to what we think place is, and what makes us think about it as such. Place meanings, then, are the product of tangible and intangible spaces, and are directly defined by the individuals with their unique interpretations — aspects of their identities are emphasised in those different spaces.

As you may have noticed, this review somehow brings us, again, to the conception of space and place as inseparable characters pointed out earlier, and that confirms how these two notions along with time are intimately connected. However, in the process of connecting them with human identities as individuals and social agents, it turns out that identity construction is also bounded by this dynamism, as it is concurrently affected by real (extensive) and virtual (intensive) spaces. That is, identity is defined by external tangible boundaries which might be imposed by the society through power relations for example, or as product of internal processes of intensive, intangible, differences that are unique to every individual with their unique conscious and personal experience. This could involve emotions of love, hate, grief, joy, feelings of safety, security, desires, beliefs, preferences, or memories (see Delanda, 2005, Deleuze, 1993). Identity is, therefore, a reflection of the environment one lives in and the effect of virtual differential relations (cognitive processes), which eventually create spaces (executive phase) relevant to those individuals and their social relations.

Overall, the above review makes us distinguish between three different forms of space. First, space as static, physical material. Space, here, is viewed as an empty box that needs to be filled with people to be identified as so. Second, space as constructed through what people say, do, feel, believe…etc (through conceptual space and time as unitary forms). Here, the usefulness or effectiveness of such spaces often depends on the individual choices and meanings they attach to their settings. Finally, space as a multiplicity, a space that is constantly changing. Perhaps, the closest, theoretical understanding that better pictures the dynamism of space is that of Doreen Massey (2013), who brought physical space "alive". Massey, in an interview with Social Science Space, argues that space is not a static enclosure with a clear inside and outside, but a living organism that is constantly growing through time, developing multiple identities, and bearing myriad spaces, in which each space represents a story.

Now that we have reviewed the different implications of space across different theories and conceptions, in relevance to time and place, in the next section we examine the notion of space in the context of higher education.

## 2.8.2 Space in Higher Education

Traditionally, higher education was viewed mainly as a physical place, made up of buildings and classrooms, where students go to earn a degree (Rolfe, 2013). However, with the massive advancement of technology, pursued with an increasing interest in internationalising higher education (Albatch and Knight, 2007), the definition of university as a pure material is hard to sustain. Yet, different models of internationalisation have been adopted almost everywhere, which can be viewed on a continuum between two ends: one 'at home' and the other 'abroad'. In-between these poles exists another form of internationalisation known as online internationalisation. That is when learning takes place online, whether the student is at home or abroad. The changing landscape of education has, therefore, evoked the hybridity of students' learning experience (Pitts and Brooks, 2017), and thus made of HE not just a physical but, rather, a mixture of physical and virtual spaces.

Given that today's universities exist in a limbo of physical and virtual practices, rethinking the nature of space is crucial to better understand students' perceptions and learning trajectories.

### 2.8.2.1 Space-time gap

With the technological development of our time, it is not only the concept of the institution that has changed, but also the education system, including teaching and students' learning.

Among the key characteristics of the modern education system is the use of technology to impart education. Traditional teaching has evolved to bear "the implementation of learning activities which draw upon students' experiences, both in and out of the classroom, thus helping them to recognise that they are developing specific skills which they perceive to be significant for the world outside of school as they see it" (Saunders, 2006, p. 3). In this account, contemporary learning is assumed to be personalised, tailored to individual students' learning

needs, interests, and experiences. As such, modern higher education should be conceptualised not as an absolute independent dimension but, rather, as a constantly changing space: a socio-spatial organisation that is constructed socially through social networks and understandings, that are inherently dynamic (Massey, 1991, 1994; Lefebvre, 1991; 2003; 2009; 2014), its practices focus mainly on the students' everyday learning experiences with all their individual differences, whether in terms of needs, interests, or choices, to echo Lefebvre's (1991) conception of space as an integral aspect of everyday life. However, according to Barbara Adam (1998), higher education is fundamentally concerned with the factor of time more than anything else, an assertion that the French philosopher Henri Bergson developed exactly 88 years earlier, in his thesis published in 1910. Following Bergson's argument on time, Adam (2006, p.123) relates the issue of time to the inevitable impact of capitalism and global discourse on the higher education system:

> When the invariable time of the clock is imposed on living systems, it tends
> to be the living systems that are required to adapt to the machine-time rather
> than the other way around.

In her discussion of the implications of industrial time on higher education, Adam (2002, p. 15) notes that this kind of time is there for a purpose which is "human design". Therefore, institutions working under this condition will end up designing their students. In more market terms (since marketisation is an integral part of higher education, today), universities will be creating their customers. In other words, higher education institutions will be interpellating students' learning identities and academic life in the same way they, themselves, are being interpellated by capitalism and the global discourse.

Adam argues that higher education activities are so time restricted that a certain "power is being imposed on all stakeholders" – mainly students whose experiences remain denigrated within the order of priorities (Adam, 2002, p. 15). She also states that:

> [i]t is the time values and the social relations of industrial time that are being adopted as well as imposed [..] To be 'modern', 'progressive' and even civilised means to embrace the industrial approach to time.

(Adam 2003, p. 71).

So, while institutions, normally, need time and space to progress as socially constructed entities that respond to the routes of everyday academic life, they end up spending a lot of time trying to conform to the demands of an external, unknown, world, whose core objective revolves around money or capital, and leaves no time for the internal demands. The conceptions of contemporary learning and teaching mentioned earlier, the call for freedom and individuality embedded there, therefore, remain questionable. In fact, the new regulations brought about by the western ideologies of modernisation, globalisation, and recently internationalisation, under which higher education is compressed, paralyse its functions and thus make it fail to put into action those promises that media help to disseminate on a wide scale, one of which is diversity and the ideology of choice. Education, in the midst of these transitions and commodification, remains a simple spoon-feeding process and students recipients of knowledge, which is no different from the traditional education format (see Ritzer, 2013).

What we may notice here, though, is that universities, probably with all the external pressure they are exposed to, and the time restrictions they have no choice but to adapt to, are sticking to the traditional conception of higher education, as an empty vessel that needs to be filled with students (the old view that says space is real), as the only applicable solution. But the problem is that space, in this case, is dislocated from place and reduced to time, while they are supposed to be connected. That is, the students who would be recruited from inside or outside the country would come with an understanding (conceived space) that western education is the best they could ever have and would expect their learning space to be co-constructed in a way that fits their needs and interests (their choices) because they are influenced by the picture media project to them. Thus, bringing these two sides together may

engender a big gap in their relationship: a space-time gap which, I assume, is up to the students to bridge with certain survival strategies.

This, therefore, raises questions about concepts like students' space-time representations and representational space: what meanings, symbols, or signs do students generate from the higher education space?  How are time and space experienced by these individual actors? And how do they affect them and their academic life? What decisions and actions do they make to bridge the time-space gap?

With the time-space gap identified, the question of space clearly remains problematic: how do students deal with this paradoxical atmosphere? What is the nature of their relationship with such an environment? And what identities does it lead them to develop?

Most studies conducted around this area of space in the higher education context fall in the phase of space management. This encompasses how higher education institutions manage space (see: HEFCE, 2005; Ibrahim *et al.*, 2011; Ibrahim *et al.*, 2012); the use of technological devices inside and outside classrooms (see: Schepman *et al.*, 2012; Zarraonandia *et al.*, 2013; Fonseca *et al.*, 2014), or the spatial implications of teaching and learning, investigated on a personal level (Beighton, 2018b). Yet, issues around the changing processes through which international students adopt and adapt to their academic life, the identities they develop in those environments, and meanings they attach to their places, remain undiscussed.

### 2.8.2.2 International students and space-time gap of postmodern higher education

With the constant changes taking place within the education sector, keeping up with those in the world economy, international students become, more and more, part and parcel of the western higher education community. This is part of a global strategic project that consists of transforming higher education institutions from spatial to transnational socio-spatial organisations, shaped by "cultural, economic and political policies" that aim at creating 'links' spanning territorial boundaries (Faist, 2016, p. 4). As such, the social relations out of which a particular form of higher education is constituted would involve individual social actors who

have bonds with other nations (from the outside as part of the inside). That is to say, the spatial construction of these organisations is not unique to the national but is also part of the transnational. For example, the physical space in this environment may raise, for some students, the image of place as home, or for other students the image of place as the non-home (Host), and possibly for some other students an image of something that is in-between home and non-home (see the data below).

To put it simply, the notion of space in a transnational environment will undoubtedly be interpreted differently depending on the meanings the various bodies of students will attach to it. My argument, here, is that space in this context does not imply the existence of anything static. On the contrary, everything seems to be inherently dynamic: there exist different spaces through different relations across different scales, all interconnected simultaneously. Higher education, then, should be conceptualised as a space of difference, a space of heterogeneity. Foucault (1970; 1975; 1986; 2008) describes this type of space as "heterotopia". The latter is composed of two Greek terms: 'hetero' which means 'other', 'another', or 'different', and 'topia' or place, meaning 'another place', or 'different place'. Foucault developed this concept following the same form as 'utopia' and 'dystopia': while utopia is defined as "a place where everything is good", and dystopia as "a place where everything is bad, heterotopia is "where things are different" (see Foucault, 2008, pp.16-29). Foucault uses the term to describe the physical spaces that have other meanings or links with other places. Another difference between 'utopia' and 'heterotopia', for him, is that utopia is unreal: it is an imagined community that is meant to be the ideal version of a society, and heterotopia is both real and unreal. To explain this, Foucault uses the metaphor of a physical mirror that reflects or creates a space-less space (the reflected image on the mirror) of a real space (the real world surrounding the mirror). It is like a world within a world.

With this, any place-oriented positioning or binary division in the institutional service, behaviour or attitude would be a form of resistance to such contemporary operations and, of course, prejudice against the 'other'. The following section looks closely at the implications of this view.

At the present time, many developed countries receive huge numbers of students coming from around the world to do their higher studies in universities which are among the most highly reputed in the world. The UK is one of these countries.

In a recent policy paper, *International Education Strategy: global potential, global growth*, the UK's Department for Education and Department for International Trade (DfE and DIT, 2019) argues that:

> UK hosts the second-largest group of international higher education students in the world. [and] international students make an invaluable contribution to British society, bringing with them new knowledge, cross-cultural understanding and global friendships, enriching the education experience of domestic students. International students play an important role in maintaining the viability of certain courses so that our domestic students can continue to access them. They also bring important revenue to the UK higher education sector and to the UK economy. International students have the potential to become some of the UK's best advocates overseas (p.13).

Following this, it adds:

> The global market for international student recruitment is changing. The British Council suggests that, as international student numbers continue to grow, so too do the number of competitors. In the face of such challenges, we cannot afford to be complacent, and we must do more to ensure that a high-quality student experience remains at the heart of our offer, and that international students continue to see a UK higher education as a valuable, long-term investment. That is why this strategy sets out an ambition to increase the numbers of international higher education students studying in the UK to 600,000 by 2030 (p.11).

Here, DfE and DIT make it clear that international students are a winning card for the whole country, whether in terms of education, economy, and even soft power (see: Battistella, 2020). The benefits they bring are so valuable that their ambitions to strengthen their competitive edge with an unlimited number of international students are increasing dramatically. Therefore, in order to maintain this profitable market, and ensure it lasts for a long time, the British Council stresses the need to provide these students with a high-quality service and ensure they get a positive learning experience in return. However, many research findings contradict this discourse. For instance, Castro *et al.* (2016, p. 430) reveal that: "student mobility is mainly positioned within an instrumental ideology and an economic rationale" and that "informants perceive the institution as prioritising increasing students' numbers for economic motives" while "an attention to the content and the quality of international learning and experience is not addressed in programmes and courses at the institutional level".

Dippold *et al.* (2019, p. 324) also write that:

> [p]rocesses within the internationalised neoliberal university – in administration, research and teaching – reinforce or even create essentialist discourses. For instance, students are categorised and labelled from the outset (as Overseas students, international students, EU-students, home students, non-native speakers, native speakers etc.), often for invoicing and administrative, but also for academic purposes.

In this respect, Collins (2018) states that:

> the hegemonic form of the intercultural will be framed in primarily economic and essentialist terms, which reinforces national and psychological boundaries between people and has little concern for social justice (Collins, 2018, p. 180).

Moreover, following Saunston's and Morrish's (2011) observation, that "universities are now competitive, global, profit-seeking, avaricious brands, with mission statements aligning

themselves with the values of business and industry" (p. 83), Alex Ding (2019) also draws attention to the shifting position and transformation of traditional higher education values (cultural, educational, humanistic, spiritual, virtuous, pious values) into one purely economic value that prioritises the measurable.

While it successfully captures people's spatial representations (their knowledge about western HE) through media, which play a central role in disseminating the altruistic ideological conception of internationalisation (social coexistence, global friendships, intercultural understandings… etc), it falls short of the required space-time representations due to its non-relative position, which reduces space into time, on one side, and separates space from place to be like an absolute location that underpins its national identity, on the other side. This is a position that allows universities to achieve something (local) at the expense of something else (non-local), impeding the way for any form of cross-cultural negotiation/intercultural dialogue (third space).

With this in mind, it seems clear that, an international HEI is using its power and external relations to achieve its goals, which are merely economic, whereas the human scale is disregarded. Saunston's and Morrish's (2011) criticism, that "[u]niversities are now competitive, global, profit-seeking, avaricious brands, with mission statements aligning themselves with the values of business and industry" (p. 83) still seems true.

With HEI as a realm of simultaneity and multiplicity across different spatial scales (inside/outside), it is important to know that this does not make it the outcome of transnational socio-spatial relations but, rather, integral to the production of those relations, without which its symbolic, competitive power becomes meaningless (see Massey, 1994). Its biased positioning, then, would not only throw its international policies into confusion on a long-term basis but also disrupt the spatial dynamism of its constituent social relations. This raises the question of how far the space-time gap of its neoliberal system would inevitably be reflected in the everyday academic life, in the institution's culture, behaviour, and attitude, and would create further gaps both at the individual (cognitive process) and social level (executive

process, in terms of actions). Internationalisation, the cross-national approach that is supposed to unite different nations and cultures in a common international community would end up being the thing that divides them.

## 2.9 Conclusion

The purpose of this review was first of all, to view the events that have marked the story of internationalisation in UKHE; second, to understand the different meanings and orientations of this phenomenon; third, to see how the higher education provision has transformed and is still transforming, and, finally, to draw attention to the implications this has for international students' experiences and staff. It was clear from the research reviewed that the growing global competition for international students, together with the insecurity and uncertainty that Brexit and Coronavirus continue to generate, place UK higher education institutions under increasing pressure to meet external marketing demands. However, this course of action, to which universities are compelled to commit, raises further tensions between promoting themselves attractively by using an idealistic self-image of internationalisation for financial gain, and retaining transparency and credibility by giving students honest information and positive learning experiences worth the money they pay. Along with this, it was also clear that issues of otherness and racial harassment were firmly embedded in UKHE, and with universities turning a blind eye to what is happening on their campuses for the sake of their image, this gave birth to a more nuanced model of racism with more subtle, often insidious, forms of othering characterised as xeno-racism. Moreover, the spatial implications of internationalisation practices and policies (issues of inside/outside), as seen above (and as will be seen later), are still being discussed and continue to be problematic in the global discourse of HE. More research is required to gain a better understanding of the current institutional practices and policies of internationalisation, and their impact on students' and staff's perceptions of them.

# Chapter 03: Methodology

## 3.0 Introduction

Internationalisation has become a key strategic goal for many universities in the world, and the UK is no exception. It is widely recognised as part and parcel of the education agenda, and the international student experience is one of its manifestations. The present study seeks to gain an in-depth understanding of international students' experiences in UK higher education. This involves exploring their thoughts, feelings, reflections, and perceptions of the concept of internationalisation in order to reach a deep understanding of their lived experiences, and how they make sense of them. To gain this knowledge, which I argue is qualitative in nature, the study engages in an interpretive research design to analyse in depth individual accounts of international students and staff. This is with an eye to uncover the spatial nature of internationalisation practices, their impact on students' trajectories and on their overall perspectives. Because the present study is not about testing hypotheses or drawing a pre-existing theory, the process of analysis can be described not as deductive but, rather, inductive, and thus driven primarily by the data.

The purpose of this chapter is to address the methodological choices and procedures that inform this study. The chapter demonstrates how the chosen methodology helped to investigate the following research questions in a UK higher education institution.

- How is internationalisation perceived and what attitudes are being developed in this climate?
- What are the implications of these perceptions and attitudes for HE policy and practice with regard to sustainability?
- What gaps can be identified in the current conceptions and practices of internationalisation and how can we complement them?

I will first outline the philosophical underpinnings: that is, the epistemological and ontological stances that directed the research. I will, next, justify the chosen methodology with a number

of discussions regarding the theoretical underpinnings, the rationale for selecting this approach, and the limitations associated with it. The procedures that were followed will, then, be described, and their ethical considerations discussed.

## 3.1 Epistemology

Different epistemological theories are often viewed as part of a continuum between realist and constructivist extremes (Madill *et al.*, 2000). While the realists assume that knowledge is objective and has an absolute existence, strict constructionists believe that knowledge is socially constructed with respect to social conventions (ibid). In between these two distinct positions exists another perspective which is contextual constructionism, and is the one adopted in this study.

Contextual constructionism is rooted in the work of the influential theorist Ian Hacking (1991). The core belief that contextual constructionists hold is that knowledge production is context-based, and is led by individual perspectives (Jaeger and Rosnow, 1988). In this vein, Madill *et al.* (2000) assert that the ways people understand or make sense of a particular phenomenon vary in accordance with their unique positions and standpoints. According to Larkin *et al.* (2006) contextual constructionists argue that what we think is true is not supposed to be validated by the way we socially deal with it. Truth is, rather, relative. It differs from one person to another, and is influenced by many variables related to the individual interpretations of it, its particular context, and its particular time. This means that unlike realists, contextual constructionists view knowledge as a dynamic process which cannot be approached from an objective, passive outlook (Jaeger and Rosnow, 1998). If we relate this perspective to the current research, the produced knowledge will relatively depend on the researcher's attempt to fathom how the participants try to make sense of their experiences and perceptions of internationalisation. This means that the researcher plays an active role in the interpretation of data (Jaeger and Rosnow, 1988). Indeed, in their discussion of the diverse conceptions of contextual constructionism, Pidgeon and Henwood (1997) identify research findings as being

a complex outcome of both participants' and researcher's understandings, which are rooted in a given cultural context.

As discussed further in appendix 3, the epistemological stance of a researcher is often related to what he/she thinks reality is. This, therefore, brings us to the second philosophical position that directs the research process, which is ontology.

## 3.2 Ontology

As pointed out earlier, the undertaken study is not about producing an absolute reality using an objective approach nor about constructing knowledge validated by social conventions. It is, rather, adopting a relativist position (Willig, 2013), which necessitates the researcher's subjectivity in attempting to make sense of the participants' understandings and conceptions of the phenomenon under study.

## 3.3 Methodological choices

The current study falls into the phase of qualitative approach driven by the interpretive paradigm because the aim of the research lies mainly in better understanding the lived experiences of international students in a UK university. This is through identifying their issues, and interpreting their individual behaviours and perspectives. A qualitative approach is appropriate as it allows for greater analysis of individual depth and detail (Patton, 1990; 2010). A fuller understanding of student and staff attitudes towards internationalisation in such an environment requires a deep analysis of the 'emic' perspective, also referred to as the 'inside' perspective of the participants. This means that the primary focus is on studying the subjective meanings international students bring to their experiences. Moreover, the current investigation addresses only a small number of participants, who were selected purposively from a particular context (See below).

Furthermore, this study was built around a case study. Case studies are often best suited to studying a particular phenomenon, individual experiences, or organisations (Yin 2003, p. 1, 13). When using case studies as a form of research design, it is important to determine what

the case is (Bryman 2008, p. 53). In this study, the case concerns international postgraduate students in the UK, who have been enrolled in higher education at Green-field University (GU). Even though the focus of this study lies primarily on the international students' lived experiences, viewpoints from teachers and academics about the concept of internationalisation in HE were also incorporated to make sure I get a holistic picture of the phenomenon.

Most case studies aim to generate knowledge about a particular issue or phenomenon happening in a particular environment and at a certain period of time (De Vaus 2001, p. 237). With this in mind, and given the relativist ontological position of the thesis that covers a small sample of 8 participants (see section about IPA), it is clear that the aim of this study is not to generalise the findings with other institutions in the UK or elsewhere, but to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon. Yet, in the data analysis, the staff's views on internationalisation and the issues around its practices arose from a wider perspective. The staff have worked in various universities, and have contact with academics from around the world. Their wide experience of other universities helped them to develop more critical awareness of internationalisation (what it is and how it is understood by universities), and thus to feel comfortable to talk about it from a wider perspective.

Maykut and Morehouse (1994, p. 46) state that "the data of qualitative inquiry is most often people's words and actions, and thus requires methods that allow the researcher to capture language and behavior". From this perspective, qualitative methods are clearly expected to be "interactive and humanistic" (Creswell, 2003, p. 181). This brings us to the research methods of this study.

## 3.4 Research methods

To answer the above research questions, which are exploratory and inductive in nature, a variety of different qualitative methods have been considered. These include interviews, participant observation, focus groups, and analysis of written documents and online marketing

materials. However, to gain broader understanding with much reliable data on each research aspect, I decided to focus on two research mechanisms: participant observation and in-depth interviews.

### 3.4.1 Participant observation

Participant observation has been the hallmark of anthropological and sociological studies for many years, and recently the popularity of this method has increased in the field of education. Bernard (1994) describes participant observation as a process of establishing rapport with the people concerned, as it allows researchers to immerse themselves in the participants' community, and create a friendly atmosphere to make sure the participants act naturally. Accordingly, Dewalt and Dewalt (2002) believe that "the goal for design of research using participant observation as a method is to develop a holistic understanding of the phenomena under study". As Zikmund (2000) noted, being part of the social setting under investigation, seeing what the participants see, and feeling what they feel, allow the observer to gain an understanding of the participants' actions and reactions. Therefore, since the principal goal of this research is to develop an in-depth understanding of the participants' perceptions and attitudes towards internationalisation, participant observation seemed appropriate.

I used participant observation as a key type of research for many reasons. First, the main emphasis of participant observation is to uncover the meanings people attach to their actions, and this is fundamental to the understanding of the students' lived experiences and attitudes. Second, it allowed me to build close relationships with the participants, which paved the way for more authentic, accurate and precise data, either in terms of academic life in general, or the meanings they try to bring to their experiences. What is even more interesting about participant observation is that I was not just able to observe what happened around me, but also to feel it (Gill and Johnson, 2002). Another reason for choosing this method is the fact that it requires flexibility, open mindedness, and interest in learning about others. It is often used with unclear topics when researchers have no idea where the data will lead them. Given that the present study is dealing with an unclear topic that covers a wide range of narratives,

every single detail about the participants matters, and helps to decode a range of meanings and conceptions being developed towards this phenomenon. It also allowed me to incorporate varied methods such as informal conversations and audio recordings, which gave more validity to the data. This method helped me in understanding the students' experiences: their challenges, views and behaviours. It played an important role in bringing sense to the students' perceptions and attitudes, highlighted in the first research question (how is internationalisation perceived and what attitudes are being developed in this climate?), and identifying some of the existing gaps in the third question (what gaps can be identified in the current conceptions and practices of internationalisation and how can we complement them?).

The whole data collection process took place at Green-field University[15] (GU), where I already had some good contacts which helped me have easy access to participants and information, and thus save plenty of time. Most of my participants were on a similar course and often had the same background as mine. Therefore, it was easy for me to mingle with and observe their social activities. Moreover, being familiar with the group was really motivating and helped stimulate a mutual understanding between us.

The observation lasted for almost three months and half, starting from December 2018 to mid-March 2019. I began writing my field notes on January 2019. As an observer, I participated in the participants' activities (conferences, international events, poster presentations, seminars), and attended their research development sessions, which allowed me to get a clear insight into their behaviours, their actions, and reactions. I felt that I was able to do more than just observe their behaviours, but often felt that I shared many of their feelings and reactions. Analysing the data, below, largely supported this view.

The table below summarises the important field notes I came out with from this participant observation.

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[15]  See pages: 122-123.

| Observations | Notes |
|---|---|
| General observations | <ul><li>Lack of diversity in classrooms and, therefore, absence of intercultural communication.</li><li>Most of the students attending sessions were from the same nation.</li><li>The students often use their native language after class or in tea breaks.</li><li>The students often study in their offices along with their co-national friends.</li></ul> |
| Informal conversations | <ul><li>On my visit to Lisa's house to conduct the interview, I noticed that all her flatmates were Algerians, and the Algerian flag was also present (hanging on the wall).</li><li>I have had the opportunity to ask them a few questions as part of an informal conversation. I asked them questions like: how do you feel living and studying here in the UK? And why the Algerian flag? What does it represent for them? Their answers were as follow:</li></ul> *"We don't feel at home! We don't have friends from here [..] we feel lonely! So, we brought Algeria here [..] we feel like living in Algeria; we hang out with Algerians, we study with Algerians, we cook Algerian food, we eat Algerian food."* |
| Events | <ul><li>Katia reported that she often goes to London to participate in the peaceful demonstrations of the Algerian community, regarding their political system, programmed for each Sunday.</li><li>Jane participated in a conference organised at Greenfield University, where she confidently shared her personal experience as a PhD student. She talked about her challenges and the things she believes the university needs to improve, including its attitude towards BME students, the provided space, support and needs, things she all highlighted in the interview.</li><li>Lisa was involved in a number of Q&A (Question and Answer) videos that the university made to celebrate diversity and its international community. Like all the other international participants, Lisa represented students of her nation, and gave her opinion about the</li></ul> |

| | |
|---|---|
| | university's academic performance, her feelings…etc. (see section about game playing) |
| Anecdotal records | • Lisa had faced a serious issue with her supervision panel in her first year, which engendered some negative consequences both at the psychological and educational level. After having noticed that her supervisor was, as she says, "ignorant" and not helpful, she decided to go to the administration to ask them to change her supervisor with another whose area of expertise matches with her research area. However, for some administrative reasons, she describes as "unreasonable", she did not get what she wanted. They tried to convince her, she says, to stay with her supervisor, but she refused. She insisted on having another one who is apparently from a different faculty. Because the latter, she states, is not from the faculty of linguistics, the administration refused to make him her first supervisor. Consequently, Lisa began feeling even more socially distant and lonely in her words: <br><br> *"I feel like everybody is against me. Normally, they should be doing everything to make us feel comfortable and not the opposite. They don't listen to me. They just do what fits their needs. It's very disappointing. It's been almost two months, now, that I have this issue and during these two months, I didn't do anything. I can't study. I called the consulate and told them everything, but they couldn't do anything. So, I'm suffering. I don't know what to do."* |

### 3.4.2 In-depth interviews

Given the interpretive nature of the research questions, and the type of knowledge being sought in this study, in-depth interviews seemed an appropriate research method to complement participant observation, and make the credibility of the data even stronger.

Like participant observation, In-depth interviews have also been widely used in the sociological and educational territory. They are acknowledged as the most powerful tools of data collection in qualitative studies. Hesse-Biber and Leavy, (2006) describe in-depth interviews as  special

kind of knowledge-producing conversations best used when dealing with, again, unclear topics, and where significant depth is required, which is the case with the current study.

I adopted this research method for a number of reasons. First, as pointed out above, the study is concerned with exploring the esoteric experiences of international students in a British academic setting, and analysing the participants' conceptions of internationalisation in higher education. The investigation also draws attention to the perceived challenges the participants encounter in this climate. With regard to this, interviewing is said to be very useful especially in "studying people's understanding of the meaning in their lived work" (Kvale, 1996, p.105). Second, interviews helped me to uncover what I was not able to observe (Patton, 1987, p. 196). Third, I was able to use probing when it was appropriate, which helped me to gain a thick description of the underlying phenomenon (Kvale, 2006; Merriam, 2002; Lincoln and Denzin, 1994). In-depth interviews were basically the main research tool from which most of the data was collected.

In conducting the interviews, I used a semi-structured interview guide of open-ended questions with "considerable flexibility over the range and the order of questions" (Parsons in Wellington, 2004, p.74).

### 3.4.2.1 Data collection: procedure

Information was gathered through individual semi-structured interviews made up of 4 questions, designed to elicit data about the staff's and students' perspectives and attitudes in a climate of internationalisation in higher education. All interviewees were asked 4 main questions: first, to facilitate free flow of information, I started the interviews with a neutral question in which I ask them to describe their experience in the UK; second, to define internationalisation as they understand it; third, to identify any challenges or issues arising from studying/working in an internationalised university; and finally, to suggest possible solutions to overcome those challenges, and recommendations to improve HE provision.

The field work was carried out at Green-field University (GU), during October and November 2018. The interviews were conducted with students and staff from a wide range of backgrounds, as I wanted to collect data that would illustrate an organisation as holistically as possible. All the cases were treated individually. The transcribed narratives were read, manually coded, and categorised into broader thematic units.

Purposive sampling was used taking a "selective", "non-probability" sample which best fits with the characteristics of the population along with the objective of the study (Bryman 2008, p. 458). The sample consisted of 8 participants: 4 PhD students (3 international and one British) and 4 staff. I came into contact with the informants as an insider at the institution (see pages 113-114).

Clearly, my thesis does not represent all international students in the UK and is not even meant to do so. Choosing to focus on one subgroup of PhD students is a strategic choice I made for a number of reasons. First, having interviewed about 15 students across different levels, including students in their foundation year, undergraduates, and postgraduates (see pilot study), I realised that the students enrolled in a PhD programme were best suited to the focus of the study because they have experience, and develop more critical awareness of the phenomenon under study compared to the other students. Second, in my analysis of this group, I was looking for a term that could equally identify postgraduate students with their diverse experiences. This led me to question the term 'international' whose use, according to the data, is problematic. Third, IPA, which is the adopted analytical tool, does not cover a wide group of participants. Adhering to the instructions of the IPA guide, and given the objective of the study which aims to discredit the assumption of quantification attached to internationalisation, analysing data of 4 students and 4 staff was optimal.

| Students | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Pseudonym** | **Level/role** | **Institution** |
| Katia | Second year PhD student | Green-field university |
| Lisa | Second year PhD student | Green-field university |
| Amita | Third year PhD student | Green-field university |
| Jane | Post-PhD student | Green-field university |
| Staff | | |
| Harry | Teacher/PhD programme director | Green-field university |
| George | Teacher/ BA Programme Director | Green-field university |
| Chloe | Senior lecturer | Green-field university |
| Oliver | Faculty director of international development | Green-field university |

**Table of the participants, including staff and students**

During the data collection phase, I faced an inherent problem regarding my quest to interview British students. It was hard for me to access them because they did not see themselves as concerned with my topic. After two months of searching, I was able to interview only three British students, two of whom were undergraduates while the other was a PhD (Jane). Because my research focuses on PhD students, I had no choice but to rule out the undergraduate students, as they do not match with the population of my study. That is why I ended up with only one British participant.

## 3.5 Phenomenology as a research approach

Although this could have been a purely ethnographic study of the lived experiences of a group of international students in an international higher education sector, its holistic, culture-based foundation, unfortunately, could not stand the philosophical stance of this research.

The study at hand addresses a small number of participants from a single university, using participant observation and semi-structured interviews to draw an in-depth understanding of their individual experiences and attitudes towards internationalisation – the main phenomenon from which essential meanings were brought to the participants' experiences and perceptions. The present study is deemed phenomenological in that exploring the participants' lived experiences, and how they make sense of them, is its main concern (Smith *et al.*, 2009).

While phenomenology focuses on the individual experience and the individual meanings, ethnography looks at the collective experience and the collective meanings of a group of people from a particular cultural background. What distinguishes phenomenological research is, therefore, its focus on describing individuals' personal meanings based on their lived experiences, with a commitment to a detailed examination of the particular case (Qutoshi, 2018). It is usually conducted using in-depth interviews with relatively small corpuses (Smith *et al.*, 2009).

Phenomenology, according to Qutoshi (2018), is "an intellectual engagement in interpretations and meaning-making that is used to understand the lived world of human beings at a conscious level" (p. 215). It relies on both common and distinctive characteristics of individuals' experiences to attain an inclusive representation and broad understanding of the inner world of every single participant (Clandinin and Johnson, 2014). Thus, the key value of a phenomenological study is that it provides a rich descriptive account of someone's lived experience, which can pave the way for a better examination and comprehension of the situation (Smith *et al.*, 2009, p. 11). My interest in phenomenology as a research approach (See the following paragraph) was also prompted by its quality-based structure, which relies

on a small number of cases, unlike ethnography which is known for its demanding field work, and its focus on large sample sizes (Clandinin and Johnson, 2014). As a researcher, I argue that using phenomenology as a qualitative research approach, while undertaking a phenomenon that is deemed to be quantitative in nature (internationalisation), is a way of rejecting the widely spread assumption that internationalisation is about quantity – the presumption that says: the more we recruit international students the more internationalised institutions become (Knight, 2015).

### 3.5.1 Phenomenology (terminology)

The terminology of the term phenomenology is composed of the prefix 'phenomenon', derived from the Greek word *phainómenon,* which refers to 'that which appears', and the suffix *logos* or 'study of' (Larsson and Holmström, 2007). Despite its diverse bodies of thought and focuses, phenomenology is commonly described as a philosophical approach to the study of experience. More precisely, it is the study of how individuals make sense of a particular phenomenon, experience, or situation (McMillan and Schumacher, 2010; Barnard, McCosker and Gerber, 1999; Larsson and Holmström, 2007). As a research approach, phenomenology is quite new. It was first developed in the early 20th century by Edmund Husserl (the founder of this movement), then, later on, further developed and extended by his fellows (Zahavi, 2003). Phenomenology in Husserl's conception is mainly descriptive in that it is concerned with describing a given experience in its own terms instead of interpreting it. The description of the experience is argued to be deep and rigorous in order to uncover the essential qualities of the phenomenon, the *essence* or universal structure of the experience (Langdridge, 2007). For Husserl, to adopt a phenomenological attitude, the researcher is required to *bracket off,* or put aside his/her taken-for-granted, pre-existing, knowledge (what he calls "natural attitude") so as to avoid any possible prejudices while examining the participants' experiences, the famous transcendental view known as *epoché*. (Giorgi, 2009 and Smith *et al*., 2009). However, the latter was widely criticised, and thus further developed by Husserl himself and many of his followers such as Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Jean-Paul

Sartre, to cite only a few. Many phenomenologists believe that Husserl's view of stepping outside our taken-for-granted world is not practically achievable (Dahlberg *et al.*, 2001). Instead, the researcher's subjectivity is believed to play an important role in the understanding of the phenomenon, which, according to Heidegger (1927), must be interpreted taking into consideration the quality of our knowledge about the world, rather than just described (Langdridge, 2007). For Heidegger, a phenomenological researcher engages in a double hermeneutic process while attempting to make sense of the participants' lived experiences and their sense-making. Like Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty (1962) also challenges Husserl's transcendental view and supports the idea of using our knowledge about the world in the interpretation of a given phenomenon. However, in his approach to Heidegger's theory of "being in the world", he focuses more on the embodied nature of our relationship to the world:

> All my knowledge of the world, even my scientific knowledge, is gained from
>
> my own particular point of view, or from some experience of the world without
>
> which the symbols of science would be meaningless (p. 9).

According to Merleau-Ponty (1962), people's perceptions of the 'other' (subjectivity) are primarily backed by their embodied position (embodiment in the world).

Overall, these claims, and many others, have led to a major shift from the descriptive form of phenomenology, and its transcendental interests, to a more interpretive, hermeneutic phenomenology, which seeks to interpret individuals' lived experiences in relation to the world they live in and others (people around them), instead of describing them separately as single entities. That said, the analytic approach adopted in the present study is Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, or what is known as IPA.

In the following paragraphs, I explore, in more depth, the analytical framework adopted in this study. I start with a section that deals with the general conception and theoretical foundation of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. Then, I move to the rationale for choosing IPA

as the most appropriate research approach. Finally, I end with a section that highlights the main limitations of IPA.

## 3.6 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

IPA is a recently developed approach to qualitative, empirical, and psychological research that has its roots in health psychology. In a short period of time, this approach could spread to reach further disciplines such as social and health sciences (Smith *et al.*, 2009). After many years of considerable quantitative research in psychology (Smith, 1996), and in a desperate attempt to take psychological knowledge to the next level, IPA was launched to mark a significant stage of transition that calls for the use of more qualitative approaches in psychological research (Smith, 1996). IPA is argued to be committed to "the detailed examination of human lived experience" (Smith *et al.*, 2009, p. 32) — namely, their idiographic meanings and self-reflections within a particular context in relation to their everyday life (ibid). For IPA, research is deemed dynamic in that the contributed knowledge is the result of an extremely flexible, cyclical, and interactive process that joins the researcher and the participants in a joint, interpretive endeavour. As Smith *et al.* (2009) put it, the researcher plays a dual role "as both like and unlike the participant. In one sense, the researcher is like the participant, is a human being drawing on everyday human resources in order to make sense of the world. On the other hand, the researcher is not the participant, she/he has only access to the participant's experience through what the participant reports about it, and is also seeing this through the researcher's own experientially informed lens" (p.35-36).

IPA, therefore, stems from the interpretive, hermeneutic phenomenology described earlier. To explain further, according to Smith *et al.* (2009), IPA is theoretically underpinned by phenomenology, hermeneutics, and ideography. For them, IPA is phenomenological in its commitment to the in-depth examination of participants' lived experiences; hermeneutic in that the visibility of the phenomenon under study is limited to a 'double hermeneutic' explained above (Smith and Osborn, 2003); and idiographic as it provides a rich, detailed, and nuanced

account of a particular experience and meanings developed from the individual's particular perspective (Smith *et al.*, 2009).

Overall, the main objective of an IPA is to gain a comprehensive and thorough understanding of someone's personal experience, how they perceive things, and what meanings they make of their experiences (Smith and Osborn, 2008). As the aim of the current study is to examine the lived experiences of international students, IPA seemed applicable.

### 3.6.1 IPA as analytical framework

I adopted Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as an analytical tool for many reasons. According to Reid *et al.* (2005), IPA is very pertinent when one is to investigate an area that is lacking research. This seems to correspond to the present study as there is no research that aims to investigate in depth the experiences of international students and staff with a particular focus on space, diversity, and potential discrimination, and also from the perspective that everybody should be international in an international higher education, including foreign, EU and home students. IPA, though its origins which rest in health psychology, has increasingly been stretched to reach many other fields, such as educational, social, clinical, and counseling (Smith, 2004). Following Goodall (2014), I argue that using this approach to study the experiences of international students in the educational context would be successfully relevant.

Given that IPA is idiographic, a flexible data collection method that grants the participants "an opportunity to tell their stories, to speak freely and reflectively, and to develop their ideas and express their concerns at some length" (Smith *et al.*, 2009, p. 56) is, therefore, required. Although there exist a number of means through which one can access people's detailed accounts of their experiences, such as diaries, and focus groups, Smith (1996) argues that semi-structured interviews are optimal for IPA studies, which is why this was the main data collection method of the present study. In addition to its idiographic focus, Smith (2004) describes IPA as a form of thematic analysis that is 'inductive' and 'interrogative' in nature. First, it is inductive in the sense that the emergent themes within an IPA study are not

predictable, and the study itself is not about testing hypotheses. It is, rather, directed by the participants' data which is, in turn, led by the participants' concerns. My position of contextual constructionism is, therefore, highly compatible with the IPA's philosophical underpinnings. The inductive nature of this approach means that, as a researcher, I am not supposed to rely on any existing literature to shape my analytical process. It is open for/and driven by the unexpected.

Second, IPA analysis is said to be interrogative in that the covered themes and patterns could critically supplement existing theoretical knowledge while discussing the findings. That is, while the thematic comments will result from an inductive exploration, there is a possibility that they inform an existing theoretical foundation, which is the case in this research.

### 3.6.2 How IPA differs from other qualitative approaches

IPA is different from other qualitative approaches in that it is a combination of psychological, phenomenological, idiographic, and hermeneutic components. It is distinctly idiographic in its commitment to 'the systematic' exploration of personal experience (Tomkins, 2017). It is particularly useful for the exploration of topics that are complex and ambiguous. IPA is often used to address issues of people suffering with psychological burdens such as: emotional anguish, depression, anger, agony, distress. This kind of experience was commonly articulated in both staff and students' accounts and, therefore, part of this cyclical process whereby IPA emerged as the best approach.

IPA is commonly used to examine the "uniqueness of a person's experiences, how experiences are made meaningful and how these meanings manifest themselves within the context of the person both as an individual and in their many cultural roles" (Shaw, 2001, p. 48). IPA is, therefore, "able to reveal subtle, intimate, and nuanced accounts of teaching and learning experiences from the standpoint of those experiencing it" (Noon, 2018, p. 80).

Its main goal is to understand lived experiences and explore how individuals make sense of their personal and social worlds. The meanings participants attach to particular experiences are considered the 'main currency' of IPA research (Smith and Osborn, 2003; Noon, 2018).

In line with the objective of IPA, the latter has two "complimentary commitments: 'giving voice' and 'making sense'" (Noon, 2018, p. 75). Through these key elements, researchers often aim to gain an 'insider' perspective of individual experiences (ibid). However, in this case study, I sought to attain both an 'insider' (emic) and 'outsider'(etic) perspective of the participants' lived world (Willis, 2007; James, 2014; Beighton and Poma, 2015; Brian *et al.*, 2018). I used participant observation, particularly, to gain access into the studied group: I got involved in their social world, I lived and shared their experience trying to get to know them and, therefore, uncover the meanings of their space as well as their voices that may otherwise go unheard. This approach allowed me to get an insider view of the group through rich 'emic' detail: personal stories, narratives, explanations, and an outsider perspective, as I questioned everything related to the participants (during and after the in-depth interviews) and analysed the data as an outsider.

Moreover, as noted by Noon (2018, p. 77), "IPA is characterised by a set of common principles which start with, but go beyond, a standard thematic analysis". That is, an IPA analysis, unlike any other approach that follows standard operating procedures, can never be predicted. It is rather "fluid, iterative and multi-directional", driven primarily by the data (ibid).

IPA is also different from other qualitative research methodologies in terms of sample size. According to Smith *et al.* (2009, p. 51) "there is no right answer to the question of the sample size". For them, "[i]t partly depends on the degree of commitment to the case study level of analysis and reporting". However, it is commonly recommended to use a small sample of participants because the primary concern of IPA is with the 'texture' and 'depth' of the individual experience, which is often very complex and time-consuming. So, as Hefferon and Gil-Rodriguez (2011) state: "fewer participants examined at a greater depth is always preferable to a broader, shallow and simply descriptive analysis of many individuals" (p. 756).

### 3.6.2.1 Emic and etic perspectives

Given the inevitable subjectivity that researchers bring to the agenda of qualitative research in general and IPA in particular, 'emic' and 'etic' perspectives play an important role in the history of phenomenological research. The terms 'emic' and 'etic' were first emerged in studies of cultural anthropology (Pike, 1967), and were later diffused in a variety of other fields and branches of qualitative research.

An emic view, also known as 'insider perspective', it is argued, results from the study of a specific group as an insider, "from inside", using emic detail that is relevant to members of the group. An etic perspective, on the other hand, results from studying human behaviour "as from outside" the group, as an outsider (Pike, 1967, p. 37).

Within qualitative research, the notions of insider/outsider are quite problematic in the sense that they are far too simplistic and even binary: it is either one thing or the other, and that does not describe reality. For example, if I focus purely on the insider perspective of my participants, the contribution to knowledge risk to be biased. And if I undertake it from a solely etic perspective, I risk the possibility of overlooking the hidden nuances, concepts, and meanings of their lived experiences (James, 2014). Therefore, to avoid the issues of favouring one perspective over the other, I approached this case study from both an emic and etic perspective (as both insider and outsider).

### 1) Emic (insider) perspective

I placed myself within a specific group of participants that I selected purposively and dealt with individually. I got involved in many of their activities (conferences, events, seminars) and shared their feelings and emotions. Through these, I was able to gather rich, credible, descriptive reports about their personal views and opinions, feelings, stories, values, priorities, meanings, actions, and reactions.

I was an outsider because, in terms of belongingness, I did not belong to the British culture or to the institution, where I conducted my study. I just had some contacts from the university, which helped me to have easy access to information and the physical location.

Moreover, I explored the data and analysed it from an outsider perspective because during the process of analysis, I was engaged in what Smith *et al*. (2009, p. 84) call "an analytic dialogue" with each of the transcripts, where I questioned what the individual meanings, key terms, concepts, expressions mean to me as an outsider, and double checked what they mean for them to draw the common and distinct characteristics between the cases. This is to be able to uncover the hidden nuances of their experiences and the meanings they attach to them.

The common challenge of being both an insider and outsider researcher, according to Patton (2010, p. 268), is "to do justice to both perspectives during and after fieldwork and to be clear with one's self and one's audience how this tension is managed". Therefore, in my endeavour to address this tension and balance the two perspectives, I used a number of techniques:

- As I highlighted earlier in the preface, the present study was mainly inspired by my personal experience: more precisely from the questions I was asking myself regarding the course of action and belief to which I was committed. As such, I clearly became part of the phenomenon under study, and even considered myself a member of the studied group. So, just like I was questioning everything about me, I questioned everything about them.

- I provided rich, in-depth, descriptive accounts about each of the individual cases to reduce the level of my subjectivity in the analytic process (Patton, 2010; Yin, 2010; James, 2014).

- I committed to the use of the participants' voice: words, expressions, and extracts "to increase participants' sense of being in control of, deliberative about, and reflective on their own lives and situations" (Patton, 2010, p. 269).

- I worked collaboratively with them to identify the meanings they attach to their experiences, understand their concerns, and try to resolve their problems.

- To maintain constant critical distance, I also solicited the assistance of my supervisor who was like the critical friend onto whom I could offload my problems and worries.

Regardless of how useful these steps were in addressing the tensions between the emic and etic, when it comes to the final analysis, it is argued, "researchers cannot … avoid their own research lens in rendering reality. Thus, the goal is to acknowledge that multiple interpretations may exist" (Yin, 2010, p.12).

### 3.6.3 What IPA adds to the inquiry

IPA is a research approach that requires the researcher's subjectivity in the interpretation of the data. Therefore, as a researcher, I have been able to collect data that other people would not have been able to get, and I have been able to make meaning of the data in a way that other researchers would not have been able to make. This is by drawing on my own experience, feelings, and most importantly, my position, as both insider and outsider, which played an important role either in the collection or interpretation of the data.

Although, for some, this approach might seem too subjective, or biased for the researcher to be involved in the story (Hammersley, 2007). I believe, based on my experience, that it is strategically a privilege, and an important feature that paves the way for more rich and authentic data for several reasons.

First, it allows the researcher to gain access into the studied group; observe them in their natural setting: see what they do and what they say; gain an insight into their meanings, problems, viewpoints and, therefore, produce a rich, qualitative data that shows a picture of how the participants really live and feel, act and react (Parrott, 2019). The role of the researcher here is to question everything related to the participants and search for connections to be able to comprehend the nuances of their experiences and the meanings they convey.

Using IPA, as a qualitative analytical tool that is inductive in nature, helped me in rethinking 'internationalisation' by suggesting another way of looking at it: a way that is already in the minds and practices of staff and students. However, most of them struggle to voice their

opinions due to a xeno-racist institutional mindset that is still stuck with old, often, binary concepts such as structural racism, the binary concepts of the 'us' and the 'other', British, non-British, national, international, which are very convenient for marketing, as they make it easy to think about what the university should be. The problem is that, as the participants report below, this has got no connection with reality: there is this nice, attractive image that the university has, where everything is simple and beautiful, but reality is completely different. It is much more complex, much messier, and, therefore, disappointing which engenders feelings of anger, grudge, and hatred in the participants accounts against their institution and the service provision (see the data analysis).

The evoking interest in giving voice to individuals (Noon, 2018), is, I believe, what made of IPA a very useful methodology for exploring the lived experiences of such a seriously marginalised group of individuals, who were silenced, as the data shows below, by discourses of internationalisation, and images of high-quality provision.

Although IPA seemed to be the most appropriate research approach that has the potential to uncover the meanings and nuances of the participants' lived experiences, it also has some methodological limitations that needs to be taken into consideration.

### 3.6.4 Limitations of IPA

There are four main methodological limitations to IPA, some of which are conceptual and others practical.

First of all, critics argue that IPA is lacking certainty and "standardisation" as it is "open to a number of epistemological positions" (Goodall, 2014, p. 33), and is directed by an ever-changing data (Tuffour, 2017). However, while some would view this as a potential weakness, others see it as a strength (see Larkin *et al*, 2006) – an opportunity that, I believe, may lead the way for new circuits of creativity through an even more dynamic process that bears an intimate relationship with the data.

Next, IPA has been criticised for its relationship with language. As pointed out earlier, IPA is fundamentally concerned with the participants' sense-making of their experiences. To understand such personal meanings, the researcher needs to gain access to the participants' 'inner world'. This is via the analysis of the language (words, expressions, metaphors, narrative) the participants use to describe their experiences. In this case, the participants need to have high communication skills to be able to well articulate the nuances of their experiences. However, according to Willig (2013), communicating experiences is extremely hard and intricate particularly when one is not familiar with the language. Moreover, Smith *et al.* (2009) argue that "our interpretations of experience are always shaped, limited, and enabled by language" (p. 194). Here, they draw attention to another issue about language, which is that language is itself limited. So, as people can communicate their understanding of some parts of their experiences, they may not have the right words or expressions to describe the other parts. This linguistic boundary, therefore, may hinder the participants from giving a complete picture of their experiences and their understandings (Jaeger and Rosnow, 1988). The interpretations of those experiences would eventually be partial as well.

Another side of this criticism questions the way in which language is used, and the role it plays in the analytical process. For example, while some would argue that through language analysis one can gain knowledge about the content of people's experience (like in discourse analysis for instance), others believe that language can only help us know about the form: the way people talk about their experiences (Willig, 2013). Smith and Osborn (2008), however, explain that form and content are directly connected to one another. That is, by studying the way people communicate their experiences, one can gain an insight into the content of their experiences: their feelings, inner perspectives, reflections and so on (Smith, 2011). Agreeing with Smith *et al.* (2009; 2011), in the present study, I believe that analysing the participants' language will help me to gain knowledge about their experiences even though they are reported partially.

Additionally, IPA has been criticised for being mostly descriptive and not sufficiently interpretive (Larkin *et al.*, 2006; Brocki and Wearden, 2006; Hefferon and Gil-Rodriguez, 2011; Tuffour, 2017). That is, as IPA attempts to generate a rich, descriptive account about individual experiences and personal perceptions, the approach may fail to provide enough explanation of why the participants experience a given phenomenon in a particular way. Such a lack of meaning, for Willig (2013), can create potential boundaries that may affect our understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. Besides, given that IPA necessitates the researcher's prior knowledge in the interpretation of the participants' experiences, critics also question the communication skills of the researcher and his/her ability to bring the nuances of the cases to light. Although this might be a potential weakness for me as a novice researcher, following the structural guidelines that IPA offers to help novice researchers work their way through (Smith *et al.*, 2009) has given me a sense of comfort and confidence that none of the limitations cited above can impede the conduct of the present study.

## 3.7 Pilot study

To familiarise myself with the research protocol, and make sure I developed a firm research design, a pilot study was conducted across two different scales (internal and external).

On the internal scale, the study involved conducting semi-structured interviews with several students across different levels (students in their foundation year, undergraduates, and postgraduates). This was mainly to assess the adequacy of my research tools, the feasibility of the study, and particularly to develop, what Smith *et al.* (2009, p. 195) highlight, a "certain level of cultural competence [..] in order to properly understand our participants' terms of reference". That is, to familiarise myself with the participants' opinions and ideologies about internationalisation in HE, and to spot the key elements of their experiences. It was also an important step to adjust the interview questions, making sure I used proper, open, non-leading questions couched in appropriate language (simple and understandable language for all the participants).

Contrary to what I had expected, the answers of the postgraduate students seemed more rich, credible, and promising than those of the other students. For this reason, I decided to focus my study on postgraduate students. Moreover, I noticed that the number of British students, who participated in the pilot study, was very low in comparison with international students because they did not see themselves as concerned with my subject area (the concept of internationalisation in general). Nevertheless, I did not retract my decision to involve at least one student from this category as they are, in my opinion, an integral aspect of this phenomenon (see page 105).

In the process of interviewing the students, I realised that this was, actually, only one part of the whole story. So, in order to have a comprehensive image of the phenomenon, I decided to interview some staff as well. After all, they are also crucially involved in this social phenomenon, and play an active role in the education system.

Conducting face-to-face semi-structured interviews with staff and students from different backgrounds was very helpful. It gave me the chance to practise my interviewing skills (for example, how to be an active listener throughout the interviews), and helped me to try out the initial interview questions. Moreover, transcribing the interviews was very useful because it helped me single out the irrelevant (less pertinent) questions on one side, and identify the challenging areas that needed more probing on the other side. A data analysis draft of three interviews was made following the IPA analytical process, and was proof-read by my supervisor. This not only helped me familiarise myself with the analytical tool but also learn more about how to keep certain academic distance while analysing, taking into consideration my supervisor's constructive feedback. The draft also gave me an insight into "how complex, challenging and time consuming the analysis can be" which made me think of some "appropriate time scales for completing the analysis" (Goodall, 2014, p. 38). One of these time scales was to rely on a relatively small sample of no more than 10 participants ─ especially because IPA is more about quality than is about quantity.

On the external scale, I had intended to interview staff and postgraduate students from other universities in order to compare between two or three institutions. However, after initial interviews, I noticed what I call the 'Disneyland factor'. That is, the participants' motivation to participate in the project was driven by an attempt to promote the image of their institutions in the sight of others. This image, often proved to be a superficial, idealistic display of the institution as a kind of beautiful Disneyland. These depictions of a fairy-tale world of perfection, of beauty, of dreams come true seemed free from any sort of critical view or evaluation.

With hindsight, this was perhaps inevitable since my interviewees, understandably, saw me as an outsider. On one hand, they had no reason to trust me; on the other hand, my research provided an opportunity to promote their institution's brand image.

So, given the competition currently running between universities along with the lack of trust they had towards me as an outsider researcher, the data gathered from outside the institution was unreliable. Therefore, I decided to turn my research into a case study focusing on one institution to ensure I got more rich, in-depth, and credible data.

## 3.8 Ethical considerations

Once the thoughts started to clarify, an application form of ethics was submitted to the university Ethics Committee for ethical review, and approval was obtained before the data collection began. The table below summarises the key ethical considerations and challenges for the present study, and the steps that were taken to address them.

| Ethical consideration | Steps taken to address it |
|---|---|
| **Consent** | Written informed consent forms were obtained voluntarily and smoothly. The participants were provided with an information sheet (Appendix 5), which describes the content of the study, including its aims and objectives, and explains the process of data collection (the procedure and requirements). They were made aware of how the data would be protected, who would have access to it, and how it would be reported. The participants were given the opportunity to ask questions, raise concerns, for further clarification before they finally gave their written consent. |

| Feedback | Participants were asked at the end of each interview whether they wished to have sight of and agree on their interview transcripts before starting the analysis. They were also asked if they wanted to be informed about the findings of the study after completion. If they asked for the transcript, I sent it to them. |
|---|---|
| Confidentiality | To ensure confidentiality, random pseudonyms were assigned to each participant. Codes were used to link them to personal data. Their real names were stored securely and separately from the research data. It was made clear to the participants, in advance, that there were some potential risks(sensitivities) that might crop up in the interviews so that they could make a judgement on whether or not they wished to participate, and, therefore, give valid consent to taking part. The participants were also reminded that they could withdraw anytime they wanted. Moreover, at the beginning of each interview, the participants were reminded that the data would remain confidential, and were encouraged to mention anything that might hurt their feelings, or that they preferred not to tackle during the interview in order to report it. The interviews took place in quiet places where the conversations could not be overheard or disturbed, and where the participants could not be viewed taking part, in order to ensure confidentiality. |
| Anonymity | The present study involves conducting face-to-face interviews, something that the participants were clearly informed of by email and in the participant information sheet they were provided with before they were asked to give their consent. Therefore, anonymity could not be offered, and the participants had absolutely no issue with that. |
| Risks to participants | Because the present study involves carrying out semi-structured interviews with both students and staff, potential risks were considered for both parties. For students, the interview questions addressed the students' lived experiences. Thus, there was a risk for some potentially problematic, ethical declarations (homesickness, alienation, inequality). For example, they could have reported examples of bad teaching and discrimination, especially disclosures of discrimination which needed to be reported confidentially to an appropriate member of the university's equalities unit. As far as staff were concerned, a risk of disclosure which could lead to further professional and reputational risks was possible. To afford this privacy, I decided not to conduct focus groups and stuck to individual semi-structured interviews instead. Potential distress with all participants, regarding the sensitive themes discussed in the interviews, was taken into consideration<br><br>Overall, all the potential risks for both students and tutors were addressed in my plan which was conveyed very clearly to each of my participants when gaining initial consent to take part. |

| | The plan consisted of the following: |
|---|---|
| | <ul><li>If participants felt uncomfortable/ distressed, a break would be taken, or the interview would be postponed to another day. If necessary, participants would be provided with contact details for the support services available at the university</li><li>If a staff name was mentioned in the student interview, then the interview would be concluded at that point.</li><li>If any of the students' names was mentioned in the discussion, then the interview would be stopped.</li><li>If students complained of poor teaching, then they would be reminded of the university mechanisms to report that.</li><li>If the participants seemed to have adverse reactions, then the study would be discontinued.</li></ul> |
| **Right to withdraw** | The participants were made aware of the right to withdraw from the study without having to give any reason. They were encouraged to state their withdrawal, if any, at least before the data had been analysed. However, none of the participants withdrew from the study. |
| **Privacy and safety** | A quiet place, where the conversations could not be overheard or disturbed, and where the participants could not be viewed taking part, was required to ensure confidentiality. Therefore, in order for me to ensure their safety, and especially their comfort, the places in which the interviews were conducted were suggested by the participants themselves. While the staff suggested their personal offices, some of the students preferred their houses. Of course, there were some exceptions. For example, one of the students suggested conducting the interview via Skype because of her busy schedule, and another one preferred to do it in the library. |
| **Data management** | As pointed out earlier, the participants' identities were not revealed to anyone except me. None of the staff names was mentioned during the students' interviews, and none of the students' names was mentioned during the discussions as well. All the information they provided me with was kept strictly confidential. All the data were stored securely in a locked locker so that only I could access it, and electronic documents were protected with a password. |

**Table: Ethical considerations**

### 3.8.1 Green-field University

The present case study contains highly sensitive material regarding the institution's overall attitude and performance. Therefore, keeping the university's identity secret was necessary.

Green-field University is a pseudonym I used to refer to the academic setting where the data was collected.

GU is a post-1992 UK university in Southern England. The university is located in a relatively small but historical city. Like many similar 'new universities' in the UK, GU was granted university status in 2005, and the power to award research degrees in 2009. About 18,000 student attend Green-field university, including a significant number of international students from across the world.

Post-1992 universities, also known as 'modern universities' or 'new universities', are polytechnics converted to universities through the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 to fit into the ecology of globalisation. Unlike the Russell group universities, or pre-1992 universities such as Oxford, Cambridge university, whose main emphasis is on research, new universities are more focused on employment. In fact, they have a particular interest in the international market from this employability perspective and are often viewed as 'business facing' institutions (see Scott, 2012). Moreover, post-1992 universities are the organisations that have transformed higher education with the idea of student expansion, or 'mass higher education', which consists of increasing access to higher education by attracting countless international students from around the world for financial gain (see also Brady, 2020).

### 3.8.2 How were the participants selected and what is the rationale for their selection in the study?

The participants were selected using a purposive sampling strategy that stemmed from the conceptual framework as well as the research questions addressed in the study.

I used purposive sampling because I wanted to access a particular subgroup of people and give voice to a seriously marginalised group who had been silenced and marginalised.

My selection was based on the following principles:

- participants who had international experience either as students or staff;

- Individuals with a base understanding of what internationalisation is, and those who have a thorough understanding and critical awareness of the phenomenon;

- those who had defined opinions about the subject matter and showed greater engagement in the discussion;

- cases drawing clear inferences, critical evaluations and credible explanations, illustrations, and personal stories. Clarity was an important element in the sampling process because the cases needed to be clear enough for me to be able to understand what they were trying to convey, and thus communicate the nuances of their experiences, and transmit their voices in the exact same way they were reported;

- particular focus on the cases showing clear depth, frequency (repeated language), and discrepancy: the similarities and the differences that exist between the participants' opinions, attitudes and lived experiences (see Kemper *et al*, 2003). This is all to achieve an in-depth understanding of the participants' lived experience: their individual values, challenges, meanings, feelings, and reflections.

The sample selection involved several stages. First, I gained access into the institution (GU), where the data was conducted. This was to ensure I was able to reach participants who had a clear insight into the current practices and/or experiences of internationalisation, mainly PhD students and staff; make sure I gain their trust, so they genuinely provide authentic data.

As a sidenote, I removed the participants who had taken part in the pilot study, those from other universities, and those who highlighted issues that were outside the context of the study (for example: issues with academic writing, panels of provision, proofreading). It was important to exclude these otherwise interesting groups because I was not physically involved in their social environment, and, therefore, I could not gather enough data to attain an insider perspective of their lived experiences. The answers were often shallow and irrelevant, lacking credibility and depth (see pages:118-120).

I then spoke to the education programme director and the responsible for PhD research programme to identify which of the remaining participants fit into the profile of the study:

- postgraduate students (international/British) at Green-field university;
- academic staff at the same institution with international experience.

After the discussion, 12 potential participants seemed to meet the criteria of the study population. I then contacted them via email with information about the research, including the participant information sheet. They were informed that their identities will remain confidential and that they were required to sign a consent form to participate in a face-to-face interview at a convenient time and place. Priority was given to those who showed an interest in the study and agreed to sign the consent form.

Given the idiographic nature of IPA which, according to Reid *et al* (2005), "challenges the traditional linear relationship between 'number of participants' and value of research" (p. 20), and also according to Hefferon and Gil-Rodriguez (2011) who argue that "more is not always more" (p.756), my small sample size of 8 (4 students and 4 staff) seemed appropriate to this type of study, which aims for an in-depth analysis of individual cases and experiences of internationalisation.

## 3.9 Transcribing and preparing the data for analysis

Before the interviews were transcribed, I first considered reviewing the notes I made during the interviews along with the observation comments I associated with each interviewee. I, then, moved to the second phase where I listened to the recordings and began noting down the important points that caught my attention. These initial notes, which served as a form of pre-coding (Layder, 1998), helped me to locate the interesting points in the data which I later highlighted while reading through the transcripts. The other point worth noting is that when transcribing each interview, I wrote down every thought or question that came to my mind so that I could explore it further in the following interviews. Concerning the coding and in relevance with the research questions that aim to voice the participants' opinions, uncover the

nature of their experiences and their attitudes, my data coding was categorised into four main units:

- Interesting language use. I decided to focus on this particular element for two reasons. First, because language use is a key analytical element on which to focus when using IPA to explore "how the transcript reflects the ways in which the content and meaning were presented" (Smith *et al.*, 2009, p. 88): that is, language and content are closely related in a way that each one complements the other. Second, language is an important connector that defines the meanings students attach to their space: their evaluation of that space and thus how they classify themselves in society (see section about space). The linguistic elements highlighted in the coding involved repetition, metaphors, tone, feelings, and linguistic identifications (e.g., insider/outsider).

- References to students' experience. Since the qualitative approach adopted in this study is committed to the exploration of individual students' experiences, and the meanings they try to bring to them, a major part of the coding was devoted to this area. The experiences varied from one person to another, so I distinguished between three different forms which I highlighted using different colours (see appendix 8):
    - green for chunks that inform positive experience;
    - blue for chunks that inform negative experience;
    - yellow for in-between positive and negative.

- Examples of activities students engage in. Aiming to uncover the participants' attitudes, an examination of their actions was also seen to be appropriate, particularly after the recognition of their distinctive experiences.

- Interviewees' suggestions for a better institutional service and space. As is noted earlier, the main objective of the present study is to voice the participants' opinions

(students and staff), so bringing students' and staff's recommendations to light was crucial.

It is also worth pointing out that extracts of the interviews were used to illustrate almost every point I make to avoid losing the detail of the speaker's content. It also helped to avoid the potential risk of using summaries, which could be affected by my personal belief and thoughts, and thus change the direction of the analysis (Antaki *et al.*, 2003).

In presenting the data, I decided to divide the analysis into two sections. The first section is devoted to student data. I chose to first discuss the students' experiences to bring out the individual particularities, highlighting three emerging themes in each. Then, I focused in more depth on the commonalities that exist between the different cases. Recurrent patterns were, then, noted, and conclusions eventually drawn.

The second section is devoted to staff data. Here, I chose to first highlight the superordinate themes: the key themes that bring together all the related subthemes. I then moved to the subordinate themes of each theme: a series of themes with patterns related to the superordinate themes. I then discuss the findings, and finally draw the conclusions.

### 3.9.1 How I analysed my data

After having read, reread, and listened to the audio-recordings for several times, the next step of the analysis was to closely examine the transcripts, mainly ''the semantic content and language use'' on a more exploratory level. I chose to first comment on the similarities, differences, echoes, and contradictions that exist in each case. Then, I engaged myself in a sort of ''analytic dialogue'' with all the transcripts (Smith *et al.*, 2009, p. 84). Following Smith *et al.* (2009), I questioned what the participants' key terms, expressions, figures of speech, emotional responses meant to me and then double checked what they meant for them. The objective was to understand their personal meanings and the context of their concerns, identify more abstract concepts, or patterns, that would help to make sense of the participants' lived world, and then search for connections across the emergent themes.

My exploratory comments were, therefore, divided into three types: descriptive, linguistic, and conceptual.

1) Descriptive comments

Here I described the content of what the participants had reported. In this stage I highlighted the key elements that structured the participants' thoughts and experiences. This involved examining each of the participants' experiences in terms of their relationship to the environment and the new culture they were exposed to, with a particular focus on the spatial, social, academic, and emotional implications, thereby, identifying a story of either negative, positive, or in-between experience.

2) Linguistic comments

To develop a richer account of the meaning of the key elements identified in each case, my next focus was upon exploring the participants' specific use of language (see the table below).

| Linguistic elements | Extracts | Conceptual meanings |
|---|---|---|
| Tone | "I was like WHAT?! He was teaching like straight! Do this exercise, I give you time. Ok, when the time is done, let's correct together. He was SO ORGANISED [high tone]. I was like WHAT! And we were all saying: why don't they do this on the usual days?". "My god! I feel like it's kind of cheating". | High angry tone for feeling cheated |
| | "This is what it is [ frustrating tone, pointing to her negative experience] Students from other countries in a strange country… They make it just to fit their interests not ours. They need to put in mind that we are international" | Frustration, deception |
| | "even if they are treating us like a product in their business, I won't give up.  we have bright brains…we are capable of studying…we DESERVE IT. They treat us as PRODUCTS; we treat ourselves as INTELLECTUAL BRAINY PEOPLE… like a rebellion with my own knowledge". | High tone expressing resilience |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | "I feel that people, like, avoid talking to me or just SUPERFICIALLY [high tone]" | high tone expressing anger and grudge |
| | "I HATE it when people say: "we should have different standards for international students because they have a different cultural background". We HAVE to treat EVERYBODY EXACTLY the same [high tone] harry" | |
| | "we feel like they are underestimating our educational level because they gave us kind of exercises, I would say, I'm sorry, but it's like **CHILDISH**. I'm completely honest with you. It's **CHILDISH**! Give me something challenging! Something beyond my level [..] I'm going to be a PhD student, and you expect me to do this exercise about **CONNECTORS! ARE YOU JOKING!** This is something I can do at home when I revise **OK!** To be honest, I felt that they are **trying to make fun of us**, or something. This is what everybody thought. I wasn't the only one". | Underestimation, mockery, entitlement |
| | "Do we have only Algerian students in this university? What a pity! [..] They make it [the curriculum] just to fit their interests not ours, while we should be the focal point". | |
| | "We are paying a lot of money anyways but for what SAKE?! I don't see it. If we are paying a lot of money, we are supposed to feel psychologically relieved!". | |
| Repetition | • "immediate need", "priority", "short-term" | Temporal terms echoing a conceptual time gap. |
| | • "wearing white wings" | Metaphoric expression that reflects an act of 'angelism' (see page 248). |
| | • "predominantly white area" | Racism, discrimination, feeling inferior. |
| Metaphor | "wearing white wings", "they are very white winged" | Describes the fake image the institution projects in terms of hospitality and tolerance. |
| Laughter | "everything terrifying [laughter]. It's being abroad, not being in your country, not with your family, not with your friends". | Alienation |
| Words | "advertise", "slogan", and "label" | Marketing terms used to refer to internationalisation as a market commodity. |

| | “outsider”, “foreigner”, “inferior”, “strangers”. | Otherness: feeling othered. |
|---|---|---|
| Expressions | “you have to be like us”; “you have to do things like us”. | Control (soft power). |
| | “giving students an identity, they did not ask for” | Manipulation and interpellation. |
| | “internationalisation is not just about recruitment of international students, this is a very **narrow** conception of internationalisation [..] the institution should be seeing internationalisation as a multifaceted **construct** that involves a number of key dimensions, and **these dimensions mutually inform each other”** | Spatial language echoing the theory of space as a living organism. |

### 3) Conceptual comments

It is another stage of my analysis that is more interpretative as, here, I dealt with the transcript data at a conceptual level. It is an interrogative form of coding where I drew the overarching themes discussed by the participants. Here, my focus was more on the connections that exist between the cases (see appendix 8).

Once I had identified the above linguistic elements and themes, I started to see an overall analytical approach which started to lead me into these bigger concepts of racism, xeno-racism, and an even bigger concept around space.

When I started conducting this study, I was quite interested in the international students' experiences in the UK, but I did not know on which elements of their experience should I focus. It was only when I began analysing the data that I realised, for example, how powerful the experiences of racism, marginalisation, and otherness were. Also, I had no idea that space was going to be an important theme in the study. However, in the data, there were so many references to time and space that I became interested in reading and knowing more about these concepts.

In the process of reading, I was first intrigued by Henri Lefebvre's idea of space as a "social product" that needs to be created. Then, I became more interested in the spatial theory of Doreen Massey who views space as a complex process of multiplicity defined by its relations rather than its terms. These relations, for her, are constantly changing and evolving over time developing multiple identities and spaces.

Although this appeared to be completely different from that of Lefebvre in that Massey's processual space differs from the idea of Lefebvre's conceptualisation of space as product, further readings revealed that both Lefebvre and Massey conceptualise space as a living organism that is changing and developing over time. This contrasted with the institution's view of space which, according to the participants, was static: it looked more like an existing entity that just needed to be filled with people to have a meaning.

This eventually gave rise to the need to go back to the data and look for the characteristics of what was thought to be the right space for the participants, and double check the information with them. Based on those characteristics (see section: internationalisation from machine to organism), I developed a new model of internationalisation with features of an organism. The advantage to doing so was that it allows for the creation of a more heterogeneous space of difference, where it would be possible to enhance intercultural communication, mutual respect and understanding – or what Foucault describes as space of heterotopia (see Foucault, 1970; 1986; 2008).

In other words, the whole thesis, including the data analysis and the contribution to knowledge, was the result of an iterative process based on a cyclical development of analysing, reading, reflecting, and double checking the findings with the participants (Noon, 2018).

## 3.10 Limitations of this research project

There are three main potential limitations to my research methodology. First, in terms of the analytical framework, the analytical tool that I adopted in this study (which is IPA) is a subjective research approach that requires the researcher's subjectivity in the interpretation of the participants' experiences. Thus, my interpretation of the data may differ from someone else's interpretation, depending on their position and pre-existing knowledge. Second, in terms of language choice, I decided to conduct my interviews in English despite the fact that English is not the first but, rather, the third language of some of my participants. So, there was a potential issue around the communication skills: that is, the participants' abilities to report their ideas and experiences as well as those of the researcher in communicating the nuances of their experiences, given that English is my fourth language, raise potential issues. Third, this research, as pointed out earlier, was mainly triggered by my personal experience as an international student exposed to a new cultural background a few years back. As an observer, I shared the same academic life as my participants, and the same educational background as most of them as well: we were all PhD students, and attended the same sessions and events, which possibly suggests lack of critical distance.

While these are potentially weaknesses, they are actually strengths:

Working on a topic that reflects my personal experience, and with participants that I am more or less familiar with made me more passionate and more committed to my research, regardless of the obstacles I came across all the way through. This topic made me consider myself a

member of the studied group (Adler and Adler,1994) because while I was questioning everything about the participants, to find out about their experiences, I was also questioning everything about me, trying to understand mine as well. Moreover, the subjectivity of IPA remains rigorously and ideographically committed to the participants' revealed data. That is, the analysis is closely and intensively related to the data. My prior experience allowed me to better understand the participants' experiences, as I could easily relate to them. My familiarity with the cultural, educational, and linguistic background of some of the participants helped me to comprehend their thoughts and the ideas they were trying to communicate. Furthermore, my contacts at this university helped me gain easy access to information, and thus save time, especially in attempting to approach international students and staff (see Saidin and Yaacob, 2016).

## 3.11 Conclusion

This chapter set out the methodological approach of this study. It presented the research procedures, methodological choices (sometimes decisions), and ethical considerations that shaped the philosophy of this study. A discussion of the theoretical foundation behind phenomenology and its further developments, in this section of the thesis, was important to mark the subjective epistemology of the research and its relativist ontology. The chapter also drew the analytical framework of the undertaken study, which forms the following chapters.

# Chapter 04: data analysis

## Section 01: student data

### 4.0 Introduction

This section is about analysing the students' lived experiences, their perspectives, and attitudes towards internationalisation.

Theoretically, internationalisation imparts an ideological perspective that carries altruistic principles and moral practices, which aim at providing students from different nations with a common space, where they can mix and learn from each other. This is to broaden their horizons and inculcate a further sense of coexistence. However, on the practical side, many paradoxes, underpinned by market-like principles, make that benevolent rhetoric hard to sustain. For my interviewees, such paradoxes involve lack of honesty, ignorance, and social injustice, which have, according to the data, a distorting effect on both education and students' experiences. International students seem to become subject to a drastic "ontological foreignness" (Saunders, 2011, p: 40) that engenders a sense of alienation and loss of who they are, on one side; subjugation, manipulation, and exploitation, on the other side.

The analysis highlights seven major themes commonly shared by all the participants: inequality, otherness, quality deficit, internationalisation between the virtual and spatio-visual space, resilience, game playing, and identity and sense of belonging.

| Superordinate Themes / Cases | Inequality | Otherness | Internationalisation virtual vs spatio-visual space | Quality deficit | Resilience | Game playing | Identity sense of belonging |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Katia** | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| **Lisa** | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| **Jane** | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| **Amita** | | | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |

In presenting the data, I chose to first highlight the themes that emerged in each individual case. Then, I move to the second section where I discuss the commonalities and disparities that exist between the participants. In the final section, I highlight the findings and conclusions that can be drawn from this data.

## 4.1 Case 1:  Katia

Katia is a fulltime first year PhD student from the Faculty of Media and Cultural Studies. She is fully funded by her international government, which granted her a 3-year scholarship for a PhD degree in the UK. The interview was conducted in her house to make sure that she felt comfortable, and everything went smoothly.

> They are trying to build and recruit a promotional, capable, and intellectual teachers and professors in order to go back and teach at the level of the universities [sic]. That is why I'm here abroad (p. 1).

In her answer to my question about the importance of studying abroad, Katia highlights that the point of international partnerships with western universities is to improve education in the less developed countries, using their own students to achieve that. For her, applying for further education in a developed country like the UK, is seen as a dream come true, given all the facilities, she believes, such environment can provide students with, and an opportunity to get a full picture of the western world. She thinks that this experience will help her test the validity of all the information she knew and heard about regarding the education system and western society in general.

> I've always dreamed of going abroad because I know that there are more resources here, more books to study, and what we know about the western society to be honest: better life conditions [..] I wanted to have a better view of the world. Also, about what we hear people talking about: the successful educational system. I wanted to see how it is like here. So, I'm trying to see if it's true or not (p.1).

### 4.1.1 Inside/ outside image

Like any prospective student, Katia browsed the university website to get more detailed information and virtually explore the site before physically heading to the destination. However, after having experienced the surroundings of the university, Katia noted that the information communicated on the website did not necessarily match with what she experienced in real life:

> I tried to look online for information. I first thought that Oh! It's a British university, and they are all successful universities and so on. But, when I came here, I think that the information provided on the website are not the same as you are here, and you see with your own eyes. It's something different. It's not always that perfect (p. 1).

Supporting her statement, Katia cites some living examples that happened to her, where she highlights the discrepancies within the environment in general and the institution service in particular.

First, in terms of choices, Katia states that some potential supervisors, from other universities, tried to make her change the area of her research topic to meet their interests and expertise so that they could supervise her. She did not appreciate this because she wanted to work on something that fits her personal interests:

> some supervisors from other universities tried to change my topic to meet their perspectives, their expertise, but that was not what I wanted to work on. I wanted to work on something more personal. The way I see my research (p.1).

Second, in terms of words and actions:

> For example, if you want a book, they say: "if you ever need a book or something, we will bring it for you for sure!". It's been two months now that I've asked for a book, but they still didn't bring it for me (p. 1).

She also reported that she is being exposed to a "stressful", "messy" programme where there is no systematic organisation to the sessions provided and is feeling lost as a result of that. Having said that, Katia expressed her disappointment in the situation by frequently saying that her eyes are currently seeing a picture other than the one the institution has drawn online:

> I think, they should be more organised. I feel like it's a mess [..] It's just quite disappointing because, on the website, they try to draw this perfect image about the university, but when you are here, you see the reality with your own eyes (p. 5).

Having heard this, I decided to ask her more questions to delineate the framework of her expectations so that I could better understand her perspective, and she answered as follow:

> I thought of the library to be huge with many books, computers. It was the case when I came here. Yeah! I could see the technology, the books all provided and so on. It was behind my expectations to be honest. Concerning the university, I thought that the teachers would be so skilful that we cannot keep up with them, but I was wrong. It was not that hard as I drew it. I could understand them. The homework they were giving me is sometimes a piece of cake… we feel like they are underestimating our educational level because they gave us kind of exercises, I would say, I'm sorry, but it's like CHILDISH. I'm completely honest with you. It's CHILDISH! Give me something challenging! Something beyond my level! I'm going to be a PhD student, and you expect me to do this exercise about CONNECTORS! ARE YOU JOKING! This is something I can do at home when I revise OK! To be honest, I felt that they are trying to make fun of us, or something. This is what everybody thought. I wasn't the only one (p. 1).

As we can see, Katia's reply not only shows high expectations but also carries a lot of mockery towards the academic sector (staff and teaching). While highly pleased and fascinated with

the technological development, she sounds very dissatisfied with the education process. She sees it as underestimating her skills and capacities. Indeed, she recurrently used the term "childish", to describe the activities she was asked to do, to indicate the incompatibility on the academic level.

Talking about disappointment, Katia did not hesitate to share what she described as "a funny" event that happened to her class when the British council came to evaluate the teaching standards of the course:

> The funny thing that happened when the British Council came: usually they teach us CARELESSLY, but when the British Council came, they provided us with this fascinating and beautiful classroom in an old building, where we have flowers, books on the shelves, and a huge round table, and the teacher told us: "when they come, let's all act so professional". I can say that like 360 degrees, he completely changed his character, and I was like WHAT?! He was teaching like straight! Do this exercise, I give you time. Ok, when the time is done, let's correct together. He was SO ORGANISED [high tone]. I was like WHAT! And we were all saying: why don't they do this on the usual days? (p. 2).

From the way she tells the story, we can notice the mixture of feelings expressed here: feelings of shock, of surprise, of anger, and disappointment with regard to the unusual scenario that happened in front of the British Council, when the teacher apparently tried to create a fake image of perfection and care about his way of teaching. It is interesting because Katia used the expression "funny story" ironically to express an opposite meaning. The scenario, for Katia, involved a beautiful, well-equipped classroom with an unusually professional teacher's character showing a careful, well-organised way of teaching. What is even more interesting, in this story, is the teacher's statement: "when they come, let's all act so professional". This shows how engaged the lecturer was in this unethical activity to the point he invited the students to take part in the acting — to "act" like professionals.

Katia describes what happened here as "cheating" because everything was prepared for in a way that does not represent the actual behaviour, or teaching, they get on a regular basis. As such, she states, on behalf of the whole cohort, that their success was only the result of individual efforts, as if she no longer trusts, or relies on what is provided in class.

> My god! I feel like it's kind of cheating. If we didn't work hard on ourselves
>
> […] we would be doomed. That's it (p. 2).

### 4.1.2 Inferiority

In addition to these feelings of disappointment, Katia highlights her feeling inferior as a result of a poor service provision, on one hand, and people's unpleasant gaze, on the other hand.

First, she draws attention to how stressful international students' journey ─ PhD students in particular ─ is and the support they need to survive it. She, then, comments about the lack of educational and psychological support, the poor mental health care present in the sector, and the feelings of otherness engendered therein. Besides, Katia adds that working in these conditions derails her progress and makes her less productive. She, therefore, suggests the need for staff to care more about their students' wellbeing, valorise them, and make them feel welcome in the community:

> I think as international students and as PhDs, we feel stressed most of the
>
> time, and it affects our psychological/ mental health. Also, I am feeling like
>
> we are strangers in an entirely different country. So, we need educational
>
> and psychological support. I believe that staff should worry more about
>
> psychological health. Like for me, I couldn't study for three days because of
>
> stress. They should make us feel more important. We are paying a lot of
>
> money anyways but for what SAKE?! I don't see it. If we are paying a lot of
>
> money, we are supposed to feel psychologically relieved! (p. 5).

In the last part of this extract, Katia refers to the large amount of money students of her cohort pay, and the value they get. For her, the institution's service is not sufficient to count as value for money. Or, in other words, they do not see value worth the money they pay.

As far as feelings of otherness are concerned, Katia also reported some issues of social acceptance, especially with those wearing a veil like her:

> I'm a veiled international student. It's kind of ODD for them. I feel annoyed when they give me that look because I'm just a normal human like them. If they are not totally covered, I don't mind. It's their thing. It's personal, and my veil is also personal, so don't give me that look. Those things affect you psychologically as a student (p. 3).

It may not be communicated clearly, but there might be an account of Islamophobia related to people's unpleasant gaze towards veiled students, which make them feel alienated. Katia highlights the frustration and the psychological suffering she experiences from that, and most importantly, calls people to accept her difference just like she accepts theirs.

Surprisingly, according to Katia, such pressures do not only affect her morally but also physically. Her physical appearance, she says, makes her feel insecure, especially at night when she leaves the library, walking home. This feeling in danger, seemingly, made her reach a point where she began to see her veil as "a religious barrier". She even tried to hide her identity. She tried to wear hats instead of a veil just to avoid people's gaze, to feel accepted and safe, but her faith was stronger. Katia felt like she needed to get back to her identity, so decided not to wear hats anymore and impose her identity instead:

> I feel that I'm in danger when coming back from the library. So, I stopped going out at night BECAUSE of the veil. Because of this religious barrier, I mean, it's not a barrier, but here I would call it barrier. I was so afraid. I started wearing hats, but I said NO! it's not me. I should stop doing that and go back to my veil. I don't care what they're going to do (p.04).

She argues that what is happening to her, and maybe to other students like her, is the result of jumping to conclusions, judging people by their appearances without getting to know them, or their culture:

> I think, they should know more about us because it's not fair. We came here, we try to know about their culture and so on. You should know about me so that you can understand me. Don't just judge me (p. 3).

For example, she reported how she used to go to "international students' meetings" where, for her, students are supposed to mix for networking and cultural exchange. But, because the meetings were dominated by "Christian students", Katia says that their talk was only about Christianity, and nobody cared to know about her religion or culture:

> I feel like an outsider. Yes, I want to learn about your culture. I'd like to know more about the Bible but hello! You call it international students' meetings! We are supposed to talk about different cultures. I think it's a bit offending because all the things they were talking about were about Christianity (p. 3).

What Katia appears to convey, here, is that international students are not all Christians: they have different religions and different cultures that need to be taken into consideration. So, by attending the international students' meetings, she expected to see a space of heterogeneity, of difference, where she can learn about various cultures and religions, and to expose and introduce hers to others as well. However, this did not happen. The students were apparently addressing only one culture. The thing that made her feel offended and also marginalised. As she says, she feels like an "outsider", a word that literally shows her feeling excluded, not belonging to that group of students, or to that community.

Based on this, Katia reports that the concept of internationalisation, for her, evokes unpleasant memories. It reflects, she argues, the experience of foreign students in a "strange country". She sees it as a selfish process that ignores others' differences, favouring nothing but the western culture and economy:

This is what it is [frustrated tone, pointing to her negative experience]

Students from other countries in a strange country [..]They make it just to fit

their interests not ours. They need to put in mind that we are international

(p.6).

With this said, two important points about Katia are worth noting. First, she is clearly aware that internationalisation is about diversity, yet the international community she got involved in does not understand or respect her differences. This makes her think of internationalisation as a one-way exchange that benefits one side over the other. Second, the expression "strange country" suggests that Katia, after being othered in society (see above), others the host culture in turn. This means that, if any given culture, engaged in a process of internationalisation, excludes other cultures, the latter may end up doing the same, which may, therefore, lead to an empty relationship between them.

### 4.1.3 Reification

By the end of the interview, Katia summarises her journey by describing herself, and all the students of her cohort as "products" in a business affair between the UK and the home country. She depicts the situation as a commercial activity that is dehumanising international students:

it is like the home government is paying for the institution to form a product

it (the government) can later use in the home country [..] The government

is just putting money for like making products. So, the government would

benefit from us, and UK would benefit from the money we pay [..] it's a lot

of money ─ Lots and lots of money[..]they are treating us like products in

their business (p.06).

In other words, Katia views herself, and students like her, as goods that are sold and bought for money: a human reification that points out the oppressing, dehumanising aspect of a typical international student's experience.

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The other thing about Katia, which is worth mentioning, is that she faces the dark reality with a strong sense of resilience, self-confidence, and self-orientation:

> even if they are treating us like a product in their business, I won't give up. we have bright brains…we are capable of studying[..]we DESERVE IT! They treat us as products, we treat ourselves as intellectual brainy people… like a rebellion with my own knowledge (p. 06).

When saying the above statement, I noticed that the tone of Katia's voice, again, began to rise gradually to carry with a bout of anger, grudge, and a bit of hostility.

## 4.2 Case 2: Lisa

Lisa is a foreign student who started off her journey in the UK as part of a 6-month pre-sessional programme, or what is known as PhD preparatory programme, to set up her PhD thesis in the Faculty of Applied Linguistics. We met in her house, where she suggested conducting the interview for safety reasons that I will explain later in the analysis.

### 4.2.1 Expectations vs reality

Talking about her overall experience in the UK, Lisa says that she has had a wonderful time meeting diverse people from different cultures and making new friends, most of whom were co-nationals. However, when she moved on to talk about her experience in the institution, Lisa added that her experience was quite challenging.

First, in terms of expectations, she echoes Katia's perception of reality:

> I thought that it's going to be kind of, I mean in the educational side, like a paradise having all the things that I've dreamed of, but it was not like what I expected. Some things are good, and some other things are not like that I wished (p.1).

Second, in terms of what was academically valuable, Lisa identified the library, the different resources available and people's kindness. However, she seemed to be more critical about

the quality of education, particularly that of the subjects provided which, she thinks, are lacking consistency:

> for instance, you get attracted by the purpose of the subject, whatever it is, but once you get to the classroom to attend the session, sometimes they talk about something different than what was written in the description. It's not something that I really appreciated. Some subjects were good enough, and I really got benefit from them, but some others were really a disappointment for me (p. 1).

Like Katia, Lisa also pointed out issues of support and poor institutional organisation in her statement:

> [t]here is not that huge support [..] it's just like: "if you need anything just contact this or that person", but nothing in action! (p. 3).

Again, as we can see, Lisa, here, refers to the same discrepancy between words and actions that Katia highlighted in the first case. She adds:

> [t]here was no systematic way of getting through things, it was not that good or well organised. You can feel the gap (p. 2).

Lisa, here, uses an important sentence that is worth pondering on which is "you can feel the gap". Previously, in the first case, Katia reported that the real life, or her lived experience, did not match the image she had in mind before coming to the UK. Relating Lisa's statement to Katia's, it seems that Lisa is also engaged in a process of investigation or testing the environment: comparing the ideal conceived image (she referred to it by using the terms: "paradise", "dreams") with the lived experience. She apparently came up to the same conclusion as Katia.

Accordingly, Lisa, mentions the absence of intercultural communication with other students, as she is attending sessions where she is surrounded only by students from her country, which makes her feel like she is not living up to that intercultural aspect of studying abroad:

> you won't feel like you are abroad or doing something different, you're being like indulged within a new culture, and getting acquainted to new people. So, for me, it's better if there were some other international students from other countries (p. 2).

### 4.2.2 Marginalisation and compression

Like Katia, Lisa has also been through some awkward situations that made her feel socially marginalised. One cited example, according to her, is being recurrently insulted, when she goes shopping, for wearing a veil. Another example, Lisa states, is that people avoid talking and getting engaged in long discussions with her. This latter, she claims, has compelled her to go against her normally sociable character, to be isolated instead.

> When I go shopping, I meet people who always, I mean sometimes, talk about me or some other people who insult me with some words because I'm wearing a veil. It happened to me twice or three times. One time, it was a family: a grandmother and a daughter, and the other time, was a man in his 30s […] I feel that people, like, avoid talking to me or just SUPERFICIALLY [high tone] asking me some questions, and that's it. If you opt for making the discussion longer, they just keep saying: "yeah", "alright", "that's ok", "yeah, yeah". You don't feel like something is authentically done. So, {speaking slowly feeling sorry} I started like being isolated, and not that sociable person as I used to be (p. 2).

Having no sense of belonging, "feeling isolated" and "homesick", Lisa thought of giving up her studies and going back home, but thanks to the help and support of her co-national friends, she managed to overcome those boundaries:

> my friends kept telling me that "this happens, "don't take it critically" [don't
>
> take it to heart], "just forget about it"," it happens". It was SO BAD for me (p.
>
> 2).

Having said that, Lisa comments that she is currently under intense pressure from two different sides. On one hand, the home government, that is paying the tuition fees, is expecting her to complete the PhD degree within exactly 3 years, and, on the other hand, there is the institution: no matter how difficult or traumatising it is, she has to survive, overcome the boundaries, cope with the good and the bad to find her way through. These pressures, Lisa states, prevent her from making the most of her experience abroad, and make her feel manipulated, or in her word "controlled". More precisely, she no longer feels like a human being, but a commodity, a robot manipulated "with a remote control", which is a clear example of individual reification:

> I feel, like, I'm a robot. I feel like I'm controlled with a remote control. Even if
>
> you are not satisfied about your work, and even if you believe that this work
>
> doesn't reflect you, but you have to do it and you have to give it to them. I
>
> feel like I'm not a human being (p. 4).

What Lisa seems to convey here, and later in the extract below, is the need for a more inclusive, tolerant, respectful, and compatible academic space where the government, the institution, and the staff should prioritise quality before quantity, and address the students' individual needs alongside the organisational ones:

> the staff, the institution, and the government should think about the abilities
>
> of the person delivering the programme to, their social and personal, and
>
> medical situation. They have to look after all these things, and to look at them
>
> as a person, as human beings before an amount of money (p. 4).

### 4.2.3 Personal vs institutional perspectives towards internationalisation

Based on her experience in the university, Lisa, interestingly, distinguishes between two opposite meanings of internationalisation:

Everything terrifying [laughter]. It's being abroad, not being in your country, not with your family, not with your friends. Being by yourself fighting to live. That's from my point of view, but if we talk about internationalisation the way they portray it: internationalisation is a big door to be opened to different people from different countries, to be raised properly, to be supported, to be provided with good services. But all in all, no country accepts foreigners if there is no benefit from them. That's my belief. For instance, at any time, if my government stops funding my research or my study, I would directly get home. There is no discussion. Nobody would care about the worth of my research or my efforts. So, all they say is "we are very sad of having that issue, but we don't have any other thing to offer, sorry for this". So, I take my baggage, and I go back home, that's internationalisation (p. 3).

As cited above, Lisa seems to be quite convinced that her presence abroad is genuinely built on a profit basis, and her negative conception of internationalisation, as a form of economic exploitation, is echoed by the dark reality defined by her counterintuitive experience, an issue that also came up in Jane's transcript (see below).

## 4.3 Case 3: Jane

Both previous accounts stimulate a quite negative picture of student experience from an international perspective. However, it is not only the international students who seem to struggle, as Jane, a black, British student, also reported, in the following extracts, that her experience had taken an unexpected negative dimension.

Jane is a black, British post-PhD student from North London. She did a four-year degree in business studies and digital communications at Green-field University (GU) using a student loan. Her field of interest is more in EDI: Equality, Diversity, and Inclusive policies. That includes migration groups and student attainment gaps. As a fulltime student, Jane managed to get involved in different activities like sports societies and international conferences. She

was an environment officer in 2016, and BME officer in 2017. The interview was conducted using Skype due to her busy schedule.

My first question to Jane was about her journey in the UK:

> I grew up in north London. Then, I moved to Essex. It's been like a weird journey from like a really base area [..] Essex is predominantly white, conservative area. So, that's really weird cultural shock and obviously that formed a lot of my formative years. So, I'm going from that environment to XXX which is still a very predominantly white conservative area. I'd kind of learned from my experiences I just know how to exist in it (p.01).

From this extract we can see that Jane has lived in three different places: starting from North London, moving to Essex, and, finally, to XXX where she did her higher studies. The reason why I highlight this information is to show that Jane, like all the other participants, is a mobile student. She studied at different universities, in different locations away from her family.

Jane used the word "weird" to describe her journey: a word that reflects primarily the cultural shock she had faced while living in communities depicted, in her statement, as "predominantly white, conservative areas", and that goes precisely to both Essex and XXX, where she had most of her experience.

Jane's utterance suggests that as a black, British student in such a diverse country, she was not expecting the British people (white) to make her feel like she is different, especially during her formative years, which caused her many problems in the academic sphere.

The above answer smoothed the way for a long discussion about the difficulties that spanned across her overall life in the UK, and that was headed with what she expressed as "weird cultural shock"

### 4.3.1 "I've had a lot of people thinking that I'm foreign just because I'm black. Like I wasn't born here"

One of the first issues that came up during the discussion is that Jane, as a black, British student, was treated as if she was foreign:

> people were very clueless! You have like a lot of small things like people saying:" Ow, where are you from?" I've got great English but I'm not UK born? Umm, assumptions like, all black people are this, or all black people are that [..] cultures having these ideas on things like immigration. So, like if you go to XXX and you look at, or basically if you scroll through the XXX [online platform], every post on Brexit, or immigrations, or asylum seekers are all wearing white wings [..] you hear things like: "they should go back to their own country". I've had like a lot of people thinking that I'm foreign just because I'm black. Like I wasn't born here. It's like very white winged (ibid).

Here, Jane briefly cites some of the challenges that shaped her academic experience due to people's racist behaviour. That includes negative stereotypes of black people, which she does not specify at this stage of the conversation but will do in the coming extracts: the social rejection or refusal of her true identity and being treated as an outsider while she is supposed to be an insider. The other constant challenge that Jane highlights at the university is being surrounded by "fake" people in a "fake" environment, who, according to her, pretend to welcome and accept differences, while in fact they do not. In this context, and like Katia, Jane also made a reference to a misleading online platform. For her, this site projects an image that does not reflect reality. This meaning was conveyed repeatedly using the metaphor "wearing white wings" which, I assume, describes the fake angel-like front, or image exposed, and the actual hidden prejudice. In addition, Jane sees that the academic sector is lacking diversity, mostly in terms of culture in her words: "still have that sense of lack of diversity in my culture".

Her talk on this subject did not end here. Jane, unlike the other interviewees, spent a considerable amount of time giving me a rich account on this area, which indicates how hard and how difficult it was for her. For example, an extended version of the above answer was given in the following extract:

> I've always felt uncomfortable [..] my difficulty is around race. I think a very common thing when you come to a predominantly white area, you always notice yourself more. So, you're always[..]like the talking or the one person in the room, and when everyone else has a different mindset to you, you have no one to share your views with, and bounce back and forth and that's quite difficult because I played sports for three years, and I was the only black person in the team for the whole three years. So, one of the main difficulties has been finding black spaces that I want to be a part of our existence because it's not widely available (ibid).

Jane here rearticulated the previous answer using the word "race" ("my difficulty is around race"). Again, the expression "predominantly white area" was repeated in a way to emphasise the fact that black people are a minority dominated by the white community. She lets us know that as a student she was always feeling lonely, whether in class or outside. For instance, she says that she was the only black person in her sports team, and that she was struggling to find spaces designed for people of the same culture as her to make her feel comfortable and feel her presence. It appears that the account of racism together with the lack of diversity mentioned earlier made it hard for her to fit in the white community (see chapter about space).

Another academic challenge for Jane was related to the teaching and the curriculum in general, which she described as very "Eurocentric" and again "white-dominated":

> I found that most of our teaching, most of our case studies, are based on European countries and there wasn't a lot of transnational. So, there was one assessment, they wanted us to do a comparison between France and the

UK, but it's just like – you're not really comparing much because there were so many similarities. There is not a lot of small micro changes and like communications in culture. Europe has a very western idea of what things are and how it should be. So, one of the difficulties was just the teaching. It was just very Eurocentric and white-dominated and doesn't engage me as a person (p.2-3).

Jane, in the account reported here, shows the contradiction that exists on the pedagogical level, which is supposed to be transnational, while it is white-colonised instead. Jane, consequently, states that the teaching was disengaging and disconnecting for her because she had a more international drive in doing her writings.

Later in the discussion Jane adds:

[i]t's annoying because there are always race perceptions. No one looks why there has been always underlying tension between black and white communities [..] when you live in a white society always promotes the message that black people are like violent, or they are not educated [..] There is like a lot of preconceptions pushed out about what black people are, but you can't generalise a whole race [..] we're not all the same. A lot of people just never expected me to be smart and it comes out in what they say [..] why they are shocked when it's me and not shocked when it's not me. It's just weird. I don't know why they don't expect us to be different, and it doesn't help because they don't look at universities in general, and how they were always predominantly white-dominated spaces and like black minorities **have to fight to get in**. So, they're just very dismissive a lot of the time (p. 3).

Here, Jane expresses her feelings of deception and annoyance towards the racist behaviours she experienced in the deemed, white-dominated community. She contends that such race perceptions, against black people, are an undeniable fact within this environment, which

suggests that she is aware of the BME discourses that place them as outsiders. Her area of interest illustrates this point. Therefore, as we can see above, Jane questions this social academic injustice, and views the white community as "very dismissive".

Supporting her statements, Jane cites two living examples that happened to her with some staff at the university. The first one is about one of her lecturers who ignored her argument about the importance of decolonising the curriculum, and the other is about some staff who presumed that she is an "angry" woman:

> I had an argument; it was more for discussion with the geography lecturer. He had written a paper on why he doesn't believe that the curriculum needs to be decolonised, and he just seemed very dismissive because he sees himself as a person in high position of power, and just saw me as a student and he thought: Ow! she's just upset because she's black. I was talking in another discussion about universities afford, and I was talking about how you can't reach diversity when there were so many institutional barriers that are invisible but still exist, and those are the ones that've not been addressed. There were a number of staffs who approached me, and they were like: "Ow, yeah! I remember you from a talk, you've got quite angry, didn't you?" So, if you have this perception of all black women are angry, we just impose things without actually believing that I can be this way (p.3).

Relating these examples to what Jane said earlier, that "white society always promotes the message that black people are like violent, or they are not educated", it seems that there is another sign of human reification here. The white community, according to Jane, ascribes to black people the qualities of violence, anger, and poor education.

That is not all. Jane also states that the support she received was something that she had to fight for, as the institution was not supportive in the first place. She also comments that like

international students, black students are neither supported nor treated in the same way as white students:

> I think the support I received, I had to fight to get. I don't think it's just given to black students or international students the way it's given to white students. I think how staff members subconsciously treat their students is very different. Like black students who they taught in class are seen as not engaged and distractive. The white students are just seen [..] like gods, but there is a lot more harsh (sic) sentences if you're international or if you are a BME. So, a lot of the support I had to, I don't think, it was given to me in the same way it would have been given to me if I was white female (p. 4).

After having narrated the challenges faced in her academic life, the next question I put to her was about how she managed to cope with and adapt to the situation. Her answer was as follows:

> I think, it's the kind of want to make a difference because I'd spend mainly my first two, three years just doing the standard things [..] going to lectures like my standard social activity, but I never really pushed further. In my third year, I've just got a bit tired. So, I think that what pushed me or what kept pushing me was that I saw that things were wrong, and I just, you can't promote a message, and the university recruit more from London. So, they target BMA communities, and they bring them to XXX, and they have nothing in XXX for them. So, I expected to assimilate culture that fundamentally isn't welcoming. What gave me more confidence was being more involved in the student Union and being a BME officer and going to like national conference and talk to about these issues (ibid).

As we can see, her reply was again long and rich. She says that, for the first three years at university, she was just doing the regular things (what she was expected to do as a student),

but the difficulties she was experiencing, and the injustice she was seeing around pushed her out of her silence, gave her strength and confidence to voice her opinion, and make the change (to make things better). Thus, her adaptation strategy was to get more involved in that environment in a way that would help her to impose her existence, transmit her message and call for change.

### 4.3.2 "I think international students are easy money"

Like Lisa in the previous case, Jane views internationalisation as "a good experience" for cultural exchange and broadening once's horizons, a thought that she could realise and develop through the activities she was engaged in and the interactions she had. However, she assumes that the way universities approach it is far from that. She thinks that it is more from a monetary perspective, which aims to gain money and sell "a good image" of the universities to the outside world, in her words:

> universities look at it from a very monetary point of view. I don't think they
>
> really want to create this breadth of cultural exchange or inviting people to
>
> the same space as you. I think they just view it as a good way to make money
>
> and make universities look good (p. 3).

Like Katia, Jane also views internationalisation as a one-way exchange, limited to recruiting international students. In this context, Jane comments that international students are "easy money" because, she thinks, if institutions were committed to a mutual exchange (receiving international students and sending home students abroad), this would make them lose money:

> I think international students are easy money. They can promote it as this
>
> great experience and things like that, but if you had it reverse, they're more
>
> seen as trips away like you have more performing art people to use like go
>
> abroad. It's more common to do like a UN placement here but receiving
>
> money is easy than losing money (p. 4).

As such, Jane, like Katia again, sees that the changes brought to the sector of higher education work more in favour of the institution's needs than the students' needs. She thinks that most international students are subject to marginalisation and exclusion, the thing that pushes them to stick to their co-national groups, creating disconnected communities. These conditions, for her, make the cultural exchange that the institution is talking about, hard to achieve:

> I think, it meets the needs of the institution. I don't think, it meets the needs of students. A lot of international students feel isolated and because of that they are more likely to stay within groups of international students who come from the same country as them. So, there is a barrier to the sharing of cultures because there aren't a lot of them. I think the services offered to them might not be what they wanted (p. 5).

### 4.3.3 "I think universities need to get a bit more real"

Jane seems quite pessimistic about the future of higher education for many reasons. In sum, she sees the service as lacking equality, credibility, and value for the money students pay. These drawbacks, for her, will lead HE to "decline", or to lose its international students and thus its business. For this reason, Jane calls universities to be more realistic in their international practices and policies. According to her, universities need to stop thinking of students as money, and start setting up discussions with them instead, so that they can understand their individual needs, and thus tailor their services to that. She believes that universities need to be more welcoming, inclusive, responsive, and most importantly, transparent:

> I see it going in a decline. They will lose international students then universities are losing funding. Costs are going crazy anyway [..] it doesn't seem money's worth. I think, there needs to be more discussions [..] universities need to stop seeing students as like money. They need to start being more open and welcoming spaces [..] they always hit the talking. "You're always gonna come into this welcoming environment, and you're

gonna learn so much" but you're not really giving this space of freedom to grow and challenge things. Umm, so I think universities need to get a bit more real. You can't say you're one thing, and the actual package is something completely different because this then doesn't encourage people to stay or continue (p. 6).

In contrast with the cases above, Amita, another international student, reported an all-round positive experience that spanned both her academic and social life.

## 4.4 Case 4: Amita

Amita is a full-time PhD student from the Faculty of Applied Linguistics. Like Katia and Lisa, Amita has a scholarship granted to her by the Algerian government. The interview was conducted in the library, where she spends most of her time working on her thesis.

In contrast with the other cases, Amita's account is very positive, whether from the academic or social perspective. She talked about the privileges of studying abroad, particularly in the UK, the skills she gained, and how she developed as a person.

### 4.4.1 "I feel I'm lucky to be exposed to two different cultural backgrounds"

I think, it's a great opportunity to study abroad because you're going to acquire very high academic skills. I guess, UK is one of the most powerful countries in terms of HE. My previous lecturers back home did their PhD here in the UK as well. Some of them are really good. It's good to experience different things, different educational system, different culture. I feel lucky that I've two sorts of academic backgrounds. So, I feel I'm lucky to be exposed to two different cultural backgrounds. we are surrounded by British sometimes academics in our research meetings, but you'll feel that you are doing it by yourself, but again you are acquiring the skills with time through exposure and discussion with the research community (p. 01).

Talking about the privileges of studying abroad, Amita, in a detailed answer, cites different advantages, be they academic or cultural. Right at the beginning, Amita, like Katia and Lisa, states that studying abroad is a great opportunity that means a lot to her. According to Amita, doing a PhD abroad, particularly in the UK, is a chance for her to explore a new environment well-known for its highly reputed education system. It gives her the opportunity to learn about different cultures, meet different people, and develop high academic skills. She also seems to be influenced by some of her lecturers who had done their postgraduate studies in the UK. They were, apparently, giving a positive image of someone who studied abroad which is the reason why she feels extremely lucky to have such great experience in her life. Although a PhD is mostly an individual activity, Amita highlights that being involved in a research community is remarkably rewarding. She sees herself developing and gaining skills through time. This suggests that Amita is a patient person who does not expect to get everything at once.

In response to my general question about her overall experience, Amita, unlike the others, states that this was not her first time in the UK. She already came with her twin sister in 2015. Describing that part of her experience, Amita asserts that her feelings were neutral. She did experience some amount of stress, which came with a lot of curiosity to explore and discover the unknown (what she calls the other part of the world). Amita's evaluation of that experience is positive, and that is accentuated by the adverb "really" in her statement: "it was a really good experience". She also offers some reasons for her positive appraisal. In sum, Amita says that being alone is what made her stronger than before, and, here, I assume that by using the adjective "alone" she is referring to the fact of living away from her home country, her family, and friends because, as she stated before, her sister was with her. The other reason is related to what she sees as her "policy in the UK", meaning her positive attitude which mainly consists of being "open minded and tolerant".

Moving to the second part of her experience, when she came back to the UK to do a 6-month pre-sessional programme without her sister, Amita reports that her experience was a bit

different because she used to live on her own, far from the university, and thus away from the co-national students' community. She could not mingle with other students, and so decided to change her setting and live close to the university to make new friends and acquaintances. Amita adds that, once she changed the setting, she started her process of integrating in the new community by, for instance, going to the sports centre with her new friends.

## 4.4.2 "I don't have any personal challenges… I feel very, very comfortable, I don't have social challenges as well"

Next, I asked Amita if she faces any challenges in the academic sector or elsewhere, and she answered as follows:

> Trying to work out things. Trying to understand what you are doing, which I guess come through time. I don't have any personal challenges. So, I feel very, very comfortable, I don't have social challenges as well. Academically, the challenge, I guess, is the research itself [..] back home we have a different education system [..] and we just started the research directly. I'm not saying it in a way making it as a reason, but this is how it is. We just started the PhD from scratch. So, the research itself is a challenge. The way you deal with the research psychologically. So, you have to always be motivated, be strong and believe in yourself [..] so far, I've never been in a sort of bad situation I couldn't handle it (p. 03).

Her challenges seem to be all related to research due to the differences that exist in the education system of her home country compared to that of the UK, and, at the same time, being expected to write a PhD thesis "starting from scratch" ─ challenges which, she believes, need time, motivation, and strong belief in herself to be handled. Amita asserts that, so far, she feels comfortable because she has not been through a difficult situation that she could not handle.

In terms of support (see below), Amita sees that whatever she receives is more indirect and is implied in her everyday life (her supervisor, research community). For instance, she says that the difficulties cited above are sort of alleviated by the fact that the students around her are facing the same challenges, which is considered as an indirect support for her. Amita believes that support should not only come from the outside but also from the inside(self-support). For her, if an individual cannot handle his/her issues by themselves, the others also cannot do anything for them. Here, Amita projects herself as being actively involved in shaping her learning experience. This account reveals her sense of resilience and her mental ability to cope with the situation. She shows a strong sense of positivity, again, and self-reliance:

> it comes unconsciously from your supervisor, from the research community
> when we all meet and discuss, and you find other people are struggling as
> well with their research. So, makes you maybe subconsciously relaxed
> because you feel: Ohh not only me! I guess, it's good to be surrounded by
> people just in case you need that support, but it has to come from you as well
> because I believe that if you can't help yourself, people will not help you. So,
> I always keep it to myself, try to deal with it (p. 3).

Overall, Amita's positive experience proves that international students are not a homogeneous group, and that everybody experiences things differently depending on their outlooks and their circumstances.

### 4.4.3 Real vs virtual image of internationalisation

Like in every interview, I asked Amita about her understanding of the concept of internationalisation, and her answer was as follows:

> maybe the first thing that may come to my mind is diversity. Maybe
> intercultural exchange between people coming from different cultural
> backgrounds, representing different ideas, approaches, but, I guess, we can
> be international within the same community  because you still can have

different ideas, different approaches, different perceptions of things within the same people coming from maybe the same community, but maybe the way internationalisation is portrayed is that it implies going to the other side of the world, or maybe involving many countries, many people representing many societies with their cultural backgrounds, with their cultural package and all of that, and trying to find a way that might help them communicate together which I don't really think is the case because I guess we are international students and we are in a British educational institution, but what? (p. 5).

Like Lisa, Amita, in this extract, distinguishes between two different conceptualisations of internationalisation. One is personal and the other is institutional.

Internationalisation, according to Amita, conjures up diversity: "intercultural exchange between people coming from different cultural backgrounds, representing different ideas, approaches". The interesting point about this is that diversity, for her, is not only limited to physical mobility. She believes that people can be diverse, or heterogenous in any given community. Here, Amita draws attention to the internal diversities that exist within groups of people of the same nation (for example, the Algerian community). She sees that students can have ideas, perceptions, and approaches that are different from one person to another.

Talking about the institution, Amita asserts that internationalisation is projected as a cross-border activity that necessitates putting different nations together and finding a way to communicate between them. This is a conception that, she believes, is not true in her statement: "we are international students, and we are in a British educational institution, but what?" This suggests that Amita, as an international student, did not see or experience that international, intercultural features that the institution is portraying online. Indeed, Amita, subsequently, argues that people are being misled by a false image of internationalisation that looks like celebrating diversity, while, in fact, it is mentally colonising the 'other':

> [f]rom the surface, they say we celebrate diversity, we celebrate the other, but, within it, they want you to do what they want through this label of celebrating diversity. People think that the way it advertises, it implies being open to the other, being open to the different other, but, I think, it's not really working. It's just the slogan, the label, and what is behind is "you have to be like us" "you have to do things like us" (ibid).

Like all the interviewees, Amita also sees internationalisation as being used for something other than its original meaning. That is, the institution, for her, is using this concept as a good front, which gives the impression of celebrating social inclusiveness and diversity, to deflect attention from the actual commercial drives. Amita, in the above extract, uses many market terms, or language such as "advertise", "slogan", and "label", which all lead to the assumption that internationalisation in HE is mere propaganda, used to promote a political objective of power and control: "you have to be like us"; "you have to do things like us". This suggests that media is seen as an interface for another form of colonisation that targets students' minds.

Having heard that, I was curious to know about the background of her answer. So, I asked her to tell me more about this issue of diversity and its relevance to her personal experience:

> Last year in the research development sessions, at the very beginning, there were a good number of British people, and then they disappeared [..] they don't come to the Research meetings because they know that there is something going on in our research meetings. They think that these meetings are just made for Algerians. You know, they don't really meet their needs, and maybe they just try to avoid to cope up (sic) with the Algerian community, and they felt in a way excluded, which should not be the case because it's a research community, but maybe the way the research meetings are run, or they don't really match with their expectations. That's why they are not interested anymore (p. 6).

As we can see, lack of diversity and intercultural communication, mentioned by all the interviewees, are also noticeable in Amita' s academic experience. In addition to the examples illustrated, Amita gave us some assumptions about why, she thinks, British people do not interact with international students. First, she relates it to the possible lack of interest in knowing about the 'other', or even having sessions together. Second, the potential feeling of exclusion from the international community. Finally, she suggests that such behaviour might be a way of resisting the institutional policies of internationalising HE and enhancing diversity.

Following this, I asked Amita how she deals with this issue in her academic life. She answered by saying that she has not the "power" to make the change but to cope with the situation. However, her enthusiasm and determination to make the change, meet other people, mingle with students from different nations, pushed her to get out of the 'bubble', and thus create "the opportunity to meet others" and "make the first step" to friendships:

> Honestly, I don't have any power to influence. The only thing that I can think
> of is trying to cope with our situation now to forget that. Usually I'm not the
> kind of people who go to others but recently I've been doing it for different
> sort of reasons among them is I want a change. I want to have the opportunity
> to meet others (p. 6).

## 4.5 Discussion

The repeated patterns that have shaped the ideography of the above individual cases are framed in seven main categories: inequality, otherness, internationalisation between the virtual and spatio-visual space, quality deficit, resilience, game playing, and identity and sense of belonging.

### 4.5.1 Inequality

Almost all the students have made a reference to discrimination and/or marginalisation in their accounts, either implicitly or explicitly.

Implicitly, these appear as an aspect of feeling excluded, unwelcome, and sometimes underestimated in society and/or in the institution:

> The way they treat us makes us feel so **inferior** [..]They **underestimate** our potentials. When they pass by, they are like umm, they keep staring at you like "**you are weird, you don't belong here**" (Katia).

> I feel that people like avoid talking to me or just **superficially** asking me some questions and that's it [...] **You don't feel like something is authentically done** (Lisa).

Explicitly, they are evident through detrimental racist behaviours as is shown in Lisa's story, where she experienced verbal insults from people who were against her veil.

Racial segregation, separating one group of students from the other, was also recognised. Many comments were made complaining about attending meetings and sessions with the same students, who were often "Algerians": an undesirable situation seen as annoying and disappointing for all the students.

> Actually, I've noticed that most of the time, when we meet, it's only Algerian students. Do we have only Algerian students in this University? What a pity! (Katia).

> It wasn't good because Algerians studying together, you won't feel like you are abroad or doing something different (Lisa).

> Our research meetings are dominated by the Algerian PhD students, it's really hard to find British peers (Amita).

Interestingly, the unexpected racial segregation experienced in the academic sector has apparently spurred on a further self-segregation that extended to the social sphere, where they tend more to remain in a box with people who share the same culture and background (see

section about third space). However, international students are certainly not the only people facing such challenges as is the case with Jane.

Jane, even though she is British, places herself in the same class as an international student. Why? Because the colour of her skin apparently resulted in her being treated in the same way as a foreigner. For her, both BME and international students are subject to marginalisation, discrimination, and social injustice:

> I think the support I received, I had to fight to get. I don't think it's just given to black students or international students the way it's given to white students. I think how, um, staff members subconsciously treat their students is very different. Like black students who they taught in class are seen as not engaged and distractive. The white students are just seen [..] like gods, but there is a lot more harsh (sic) sentences if you're international, or if you are a BME. Umm, so, a lot of the support I had to. I don't think, it was given to me in the same way it would have been given to me if I was white female. So, yeah. It supported me enough to get my degree in this University, but I don't think it supported me how it should.

Jane's answer to the question of support mirrors a perceived dichotomy between white students and BME/international students in terms of the way they were treated and dealt with in the academic sector. This division was evident through the terms she used in comparing between the two parties. For example, in referring to the white British students, she used the term "gods" to describe how they were nicely supported and treated by the staff, while she used the expressions "fight", "not engaged and distractive" to highlight the injustice applied to the other students (BME and international students) who, she believes, are pushed to the margins, in her words: "there is a lot more harsh sentences if you're international, or if you are a BME". That is not all. As presented earlier in the descriptive section, Jane repeated several times the expression "predominantly white area", which reveals the extreme level of marginalisation she encounters. She also recurrently used the metaphor "they are very white

winged" to show the fake image the institution projects, in terms of hospitality and tolerance. Like in Lisa's and Katia's accounts, a close look at the language use reveals a surprising degree of anger and hatred towards the institution (the more discrimination they get, the stronger their feelings against the institution become).

This suggests that the negative experience Jane faced, as a black student, defined by cultural shock, racism, or inequality had engendered a significant shift of identity that dislocated her from the inside to the outside. This brings us to the next recurrent pattern which is otherness.

### 4.5.2 Otherness: Misconception of the term 'international'

In answer to the common question of my interviews: "when I say internationalisation what comes to your mind?", most of the answers designate a group of students who were "international students", either as outsiders or strangers. This indicates that the concept of internationalisation, for the interviewees, is a binary. It is thought to be representative of only the other, or the non-UK. For example, Katia comments: "they call us international students, it is like they keep reminding you that you are foreign" (Katia, p. 6).

That is, internationalisation is literally attributed to international students by virtue of its name, which implies a sense of foreignness instead of its ideological meaning that symbolises the exchange, or the interconnected relations that result in bringing different nations together. So, while everybody should be international in a university, internationalisation is, rather, seen as if it has an identity (see Knight, 2014). It is thought to have a foreign identity that distinguishes the insider from the outsider (the other). This misconception of the term internationalisation, according to the data, is something echoed by the contentious reality that reflects a sceptical space of hegemony with signs of dishonesty, ignorance, racism, and social inequalities highlighted in the students' accounts above.

### 4.5.3 Internationalisation between the virtual and spatio-visual space

The concept of internationalisation, in all cases, was approached in/and analysed across two different spaces: one is virtual and the other is spatio-visual.

1) The Virtual space

This represents the participants' understanding of the digital data that the institution provides to help them understand the concept of internationalisation, and the international community in the host culture. To say it differently, it is the image it creates in their minds through the information projected to them via social media. This can involve online advertisements, ideologies, global discourses available in the university's website, Facebook pages and so on. The participants' understanding of the notion of internationalisation is clear and meaningful. They all addressed the benevolence of its ideological content, including diversity, heterogeneity, personal development, and intercultural competencies. However, their conceived image of the international community does not seem to be realistic. They were expecting to see an idealistic community of perfection and high-quality provision.

2) The spatio-visual space

This is the space where they physically experience the actual image, or the real version of the imagined, international community. Here, their perceptions and conceptualisations are developed by means of what they see with their own eyes (gaze), and what they experience (their lived experience, whether it is positive or negative). According to the data, although students' evaluations of their lived experiences were different, they all seemed to agree on the idea that the institution's projected image does not necessarily match with the reality. As such, internationalisation is seen as misleading students, and is also viewed as another form of colonisation that aims at manipulating and interpellating students' minds. For example, Amita says:

> From the surface, they say we celebrate diversity, we celebrate the other, but, within it, they want you to do what they want through this label of celebrating diversity. People think that the way it advertises, it implies being open to the other, being open to the different other, but I think, it's not really

working. It's just the slogan, the label, and what is behind is "you have to be like us"; "you have to do things like us" (ibid).

Such duality indicates a significant imbalance in the students' relationship with their institution: an interesting point which is further explored in the following paragraph.

## 4.5.4 Quality deficit

Another common factor is the deterioration of educational provision. The findings indicate the absence of a long-term, value-based institutional service, evident in the participants' fluctuating levels of satisfaction as well as their frequent negative comments. A concrete example in the data is the failure of the university to meet some fundamental student needs, including social, physical, and moral. Lack of support is also commonly mentioned. As the data showed, many feel isolated and excluded because of the insufficient social contact and in-class student diversity. In addition, complaints about a British-colonised curriculum is commonly noticeable (see Katia and Jane). The students reported being exposed to teaching that was apparently "Eurocentric", favouring the host culture over the others: a fact seen as both discriminating and disengaging. Mismatch of expectations is also present. So, while the participants expect a constant – often idealistic – quality service that is ready to fulfil all their wishes, which are sometimes unrealistic, what they get instead is a product, or an immediate short-term service. And once the latter comes to an end, students start feeling neglected and, most importantly, deceived. This, therefore, leads them to evaluate the costs and benefits of the exchange. Here, the issue of money begins to emerge simultaneously with a high sense of entitlement, complaining about a non-reciprocal, social exchange with a service that is not worth the money they paid.

In George Homans' theory of social exchange, this process is often referred to as 'the honeymoon' phase: that is, when the benefits, at first glance, appear to be overwhelming to the point that the costs are dismissed. But once this fantasy period comes to an end, the

assessment of the exchange balance begins, weighing its benefits and costs (see Cherry, 2020).

In this vein, all participants agreed that the university's low performance is due to the hybrid of economy and education that made of this learning centre a headquarter for significant international investments, where international students are seen as an instrument to achieve market-based goals instead of human beings looking for knowledge. These bounded ramifications, referred to through the participants' expressions – "I feel like I'm a robot… I feel like I'm controlled with a remote control"; "treated as products in their business"; "international students are easy money"– imply that the new educational space defined by 'change for exchange' has become more complex, incomprehensible and, most importantly, unwelcoming for the 'other'. It is very dangerous because these quality deficits apparently make them lose the values and the characteristics of the learner to incarnate those of a customer instead, comparing the value of what they get with the money they pay. Given that they pay large amounts of money, they expect a sufficient service with a value worth the money they paid. However, the absence of that quality service has led to some reproaches, and a sense of entitlement where their self-confidence is often combined with mockery:

> I'm sorry, but it's like childish. I'm completely honest with you. It's CHILDISH! Give me something challenging! Something beyond my level [..] Do we have only Algerian students in this university? What a pity! [..] They make it [the curriculum] just to fit their interests not ours while we should be the focal point (Katia).

> Whether they like it or not there are always race perceptions and no one looks past the 16s or why there has been always underlying tension between black communities and white communities [..] I've always been so rarely of existing as a minority in a white culture and all that [..] whether they like it or not, they're always gonna have a perception of me, and they wouldn't understand cultural differences that exist between communities (Jane).

### 4.5.5 Resilience

Despite the difficulties encountered throughout their sojourn in the UK in general, and in the institution in particular, a strong sense of resilience is remarkable in all the cases.

All the interviewees appear to develop some mental, behavioural and, occasionally, social capacities that allow them to overcome the disruptive elements they encounter throughout their experience (Robertson *et al.*, 2015): an interesting sign of personal development and self-protection from the negative effects of everyday life tensions, which can bring their academic journey to an end at any time if not dealt with. Some examples from the data include:

> even if they are treating us like a product in their business, I won't give up. We have bright brains…we are capable of studying [..] They treat us as PRODUCTS, we treat ourselves as INTELLECTUAL, brainy people (Katia, p. 06).

> You have to always be motivated, be strong and believe in yourself [..] so far, I've never been in a sort of bad situation I couldn't handle it [..] I believe that if you can't help yourself people will not help you. So, I always keep it to myself, try to deal with it (Amita, p. 3).

These samples show the psychological resilience of these participants. They reflect the mental and emotional strength which helps them to remain stable or move on. Other examples (below) emphasise the behavioural processes students develop to cope with their negative situations:

> I was so afraid. I started wearing hats, but I said NO! it's not me. I should stop doing that and go back to my veil, and I don't care what they're going to do (Katia p. 4).

> I meet people who always talk about me or insult me because I'm wearing a veil... I thought even to go back home, but my friends kept telling me that "this happens, don't take it critically", "Just forget about it" (Lisa, p. 2).

What gave me more confidence was being more involved in the student union and being a BME officer and going to like national conferences and talk about these issues (Jane p. 4).

I started to know people and go to the sport centre together (Amita, p. 3).

Whether the hidden drives are personal (like Amita) or related to external pressures placed by the society (like Jane and Katia), or the home government and the institution together (as is the case with Lisa), adapting to those situations highlights the students' commitment to complete their courses, and their high problem-solving skills. It is also evidence that students decide to play the game instead of resisting it. Students are apparently working out the politics of the system so that they can figure out how to position themselves in a complex game of identity, practice, and interpersonal politics discussed in detail in the next section.

### 4.5.6 Game playing

While apparent in the narratives above, this game playing is also evident in the university's marketing materials.

Celebrating the intercultural diversity of the university, and promoting the idea of its globality, videos portraying the views of 20 international students towards their university performance and life in the UK were posted on one of the university's Facebook pages. Surprisingly, Lisa was among those students who voiced their opinions. However, in this case, Lisa sounded very positive, unlike in the interview, and gave the impression of living a perfect academic experience full of appreciation; bounded with lovely, helpful people in a warm, welcoming environment.

In these videos, it was clear that Lisa was speaking very carefully, describing her experience which created a perfect image and yet language which seemed scripted. For example, while some students have had the courage to raise some of the issues they think their university must improve on, Lisa, like a few other students, preferred to play safe with constant laudatory answers such as: "I appreciate and like everything in the UK", "my university is very welcoming

[..] providing numerous opportunities for international students [..] access to different services and equipment". She clearly skipped some critical questions like "what do you like the least about the UK?", "What do you think the university needs to improve?" Paradoxically, Lisa drew some similarities with regard to the UK education system in comparison to hers back home, in her statement:

> We are almost having the same educational system or regime; the only thing is that lecturers and teachers make use of more technological devices than we do. That is the only thing I noticed!

Undoubtedly, this is a dramatic answer where she normalises what she represented in the interview as the un-norm:

> They do anything just to deliver a session and that's it. They think they are doing this properly, but it's not the case. Only native speaker can understand them. So, we are doing a double thing. We are fighting with the research itself – like - triggering the thing: what we do, or we don't, and the other thing is that with the language and with the staff. We don't have any idea about. We have lots of things to do, and there is this lack we have to fil in. We didn't use to study using the references they have. So, that's a lack for us. We have to fight with both hands so that to reach at least 80% of the programme, not 10% of it (Lisa: 4).

What is even more striking is that she expressed her sense of belonging by saying "you don't feel like you are foreigner" which is completely the opposite of what she reported to me as is illustrated in the following extract:

> I feel that I can't integrate myself with other people from Britain or from other countries. Sometimes, I feel that people like avoid talking to me or just superficially asking me some questions and that's it. You don't feel like something is authentically done. So, I started like being isolated, and not that

sociable person as I used to be… when I go shopping, I meet people who

always, I mean, sometimes talk about me or some other people who insult

me (Lisa:2).

Explaining this contradiction and its meaning involves many factors. First, my data suggests that a transmitted sense of otherness, referred to in the interview, may be in operation. As we saw earlier, Lisa made a regular and explicit reference to a perceived sense of alienation, inferiority, and exclusion as a result of the social discrimination against her, on one hand, and lack of intercultural interaction with other students, on the other hand. This suggests that Lisa is actually feeling othered by the so-called international community she is in. Lisa says that she is naturally an extrovert person, who likes to mix and interact with people from different backgrounds, but her biased environment imposed her to introvert to avoid people's racist behaviour. Therefore, if Lisa chose to play safe in the videos, this is only sign that she decided to play the same game as the counterpart side in order to preserve her own identity. By this, she could both keep being sociable (to get to know the other students around), and at the same time gain people's attention and appreciation by saying that they (the institution, staff and so on) are performing well.

Another important factor is space, the different places where both the interview and the videos were conducted. For the interview, Lisa suggested voluntarily to conduct it in her house, which she shares with two other roommates of the same gender and of the same nation. More precisely in her bedroom. The reason for such a suggestion, Lisa says, is that she feels unsafe to talk about her experience outside. Lisa is the only participant with whom I had a follow up interview at her request. She contacted me and said that she has some important updates she would like to talk about. However, this time, I suggested meeting her at the university, and she accepted. In that interview, Lisa was narrating some unpleasant stories involving her supervisory panel, which I did not include in this study. What I noticed on that day was that Lisa was not feeling comfortable at all. She even told me that she felt monitored especially concerning the issues she was facing at that period. Therefore, I understand her first

suggestion of conducting the interview at home because if we relate to her narrative stories and what she has been through, the chosen space is probably the safest and most comfortable area for her, whereas the videos took place in a more formal and open academic setting: an average classroom equipped with the necessary photographic tools. Obviously, there were other people around including the students along with the agents doing the shooting.

Unlike in the videos, Lisa seemed more natural in the first interview. Her answers were not only quite lengthy and detailed but also full of emotions, as if she was living the moment again, which is the point of doing a phenomenological study. I got the feeling that she was confiding in me. My interviews usually last from 30 to 45 minutes, but with Lisa, it took us 1 hour and 18 minutes which evinces how highly engaged she was in the discussion. In contrast, Lisa's contribution in the videos was very short, dramatic, and most importantly, inconsistent.

The other factor is cultural, Lisa comes from a very conservative cultural background in a completely different part of the world, where education is free. Therefore, placing students in front of a camera and asking them to evaluate an institutional service is not part of the "norm" for her, and could possibly be alienating. Considering this abiding cultural background, Lisa's decision and demonstration are comprehensible, especially if it is to be put on social media. But what strikes me the most is that the videos were filmed in 2017. And at that time Lisa was doing her pre-sessional course. This means that, by then, she has been in the UK only for a few months. Isn't that too early for her to be involved in such a marketing tool that requires them to assess what cannot be assessed in such a short-term period?

In each case, if not all cases, the possibility of insinuating such students' category in a given game, seems to be quite easy. Their silence and fear of being marginalised, disidentified, or recreated can easily be taken for granted. This underpins the idea of how misleading the marketing materials that universities use to promote product selling could easily be. If universities are to mesmerise and capture people's attention, then they have to strike while the iron is hot. Using students in their early stages – a blurred stage, which is often coated with insecurity and uncertainty, as is informed by the participants – is a clear indicator of that.

### 4.5.7 Identity and sense of belonging

Having discussed the individual cases in the first section, and mulling over the points raised, it seems that the ways the participants experience their identities and perceive their place are different. Giddens (1990) envisions identity as a set of choices one makes about oneself unceasingly. But my data challenges this view. It is, rather, presented as a complicated process of decision-making. The participants seem to go through a set of situations and analysis of those situations to decide what to do and what not to do, what to be and what not to be. In this section, we take a close look at the students' sense of belonging and their attitudes to identity in relation to actions. We start with social identifications to see how they see themselves in relation to society, before moving to the examination of their behaviours, or actions and reactions.

#### 4.5.7.1 Sense of belonging

The interviewees used different categorisations and classifications to communicate a common social identity which is that of a foreigner, or simply the 'other'. That involves physical appearance (veil, skin colour), feelings, religion, space, and experience. For example:

- "I've had - like - a lot of people thinking that **I'm foreign just because I'm black**" (Jane, p. 2);

- "A lot of the support I had […] I don't think it was given to me in the same way it would have been given to me **if I was white female**" (Jane, p. 3);

- "**I feel like an outsider**" (Katia, p. 3);

- "We **always felt inferior** inside the classroom" (Katia, p. 3);

- "All in all, no country accepts **foreigners** if there is no benefit from them. That's my belief. For instance, at any time, if my government stops funding my research or my study, I would directly get home" (Lisa, p. 3);

- "Maybe they perceive us [overseas] as **international** [the other] and we perceive them [British] as *international* (Amita, p. 6);

- "For me, it's different because **I'm a veiled international student**. It's kind of ODD for them because they are not used to [it] here especially in this town as you see, not so many Muslims live here" (Katia, p. 3).

Although the participants agree on one common social representation which is that of being excluded, the attitudes developed around identity, however, are different. This is evident through the evaluations of overall experiences narrated in the interviews. While some were judgmental, expressing feelings of unrest, struggle and dislocation, the others seemed to enjoy every single moment of their experience, or at least try to do so. Some examples of those who developed a negative attitude are illustrated below:

- "I feel that I can't integrate myself with other people from Britain or from other countries… I started like being isolated, and not that sociable person as I used to be" (Lisa, p. 2).

- "I'm feeling homesick. I don't feel ok. I can't do my work, my assignments, and I can't go and talk about my problems [..] I feel like I grew up 10 years [more] than my current age [..] being by yourself fighting to live [..] we are doing a double thing [work]: we are fighting with the research itself, and the other thing is that with the language and with the staff. We don't have any idea about. We have lots of things to do, and there is this lack we have to fil in. We didn't use to study using the references they have. So, that's a lack for us. We have to fight with both hands - so that - to reach at least 80% of the programme not 10% of it.  (ibid:4)

- We always felt inferior inside the classroom" (Katia, p. 3).

- "As an international organisation for students, they are supposed to make us feel psychologically better. Get rid of the stress. Why don't we talk about different cultures, different religions? Why do we only have to talk about your culture, about your religion? Come on! I didn't feel comfortable. So, I stopped going anyway" (Katia p. 4).

- "I spent 3 days without even reading a word because I had a psychological disorder[stress]. I'm stressed. I can't study. I'm in a complete mess".

- "Not to my expectations, I would say, because I expected more than this" (Katia p. 5).

As two Muslim, veiled women, Lisa and Katia have been through some difficult situations where they were subject to discrimination and racism because of their physical appearance. This, eventually, had a negative impact on their feelings, behaviours, and outlook. For both, studying in the UK is a "dream come true" as a result of their hard work and success in the national contest undertaken in Algeria. They came with very high expectations based on the projected western ideology. For example, in their introductory utterances, they were both referring to the UK as the "ideal world", but this outlook quickly changed to the opposite side, knowing that their lived experiences told a different story.

It is interesting because in both accounts, there is evidence that they had a common objective in the UK which is that of testing the environment. This is clearly evident in the following statements:

> They are known as academically recognised, and they are also known for successful research here. I'm trying to **see if it's true or not** (Katia).

> There was no systematic way of getting through things, it was not that good or well organised. **You can feel the gap** (Lisa).

Coming with a mentality that consists of testing an environment with illusionary measurements, I assume, plays a key role in shaping the direction of their experience and, thus, justifies their actions: their decisions to not 'fit in'. As far as the latter is concerned, it is worth mentioning that unlike Lisa who decided to not be sociable anymore, Katia showed an attempt to integrate herself in the community through wearing hats instead of a veil, for example. However, hiding her identity did not last for a long time because of her strong belief on who she truly is:

I feel that I'm in danger when coming back from the library. So, I stopped

going out at night BECAUSE of the veil. Because of this religious barrier, I

mean, it's not a barrier, but here I would call it barrier. I was so afraid. I started

wearing hats, but I said NO! it's not me. I should stop doing that and go back

to my veil, and I don't care what they're going to do (Katia p. 4).

In contrast to Lisa and Katia, Amita, confidently reported an all-round positive experience:

My academic experience in the UK is perfect so far. Everything seems to

work very well. I mean, my supervisors, the way I'm dealing with my research

and the way I'm progressing as well, and the social network among the

Algerian PhD students. I'm in a very good track (p. 4).

An important aspect of Amita's talk is that she projected herself as a beneficiary. She acknowledges that living abroad allowed her to grow as an individual, granted her power and energy to deal with her distress. More importantly, she represented herself as an open-minded person who tolerates the other, yet expects them to do so as well:

It was really a good experience. Being here alone made me strong, and even

stick to the things that I believe which were not necessarily, back in Algeria,

that strong. But now, they are even stronger. I'm open. I tolerate others, but

I expect them to be open towards me and respect my own things as well. So,

this is my policy here in the UK. Be open, just embrace the culture, but at the

same time draw your own boundaries. But overall, it was a good experience

(p.1).

This account uncovers her positive attitude towards being an international student, on one side, and towards the host culture, on the other side. Of course, this positivity is reflected in her actions. Amita is engaged in different activities. For example, she co-organises seminars with some academics for monthly research meetings. She goes to the sports centre, and she attends international events.

Jane's account reveals a different type of positive attitude which I prefer to call 'intransigent positivity'. The strange thing about it is that it was provoked by intense social pressures to conform to discrimination, injustice (inequality), and stereotypes: tensions which, I assume, could easily degrade one's psyche. As we saw earlier in the report, Jane struggled so much in her environment (academically, mentally, and socially) due to people's racist behaviour towards her black skin. However, this did not affect her negatively. In fact, the more shocking her experience was, the greater her determination to make the change became:

> I think that what pushed me or what kept pushing me was that I saw things were wrong, you can't promote a message. And the university recruit more from London. So, they target BME communities, and they bring them to XXX, and they have nothing in XXX for them. So, I expected to assimilate culture that fundamentally isn't welcoming. Umm, universities aren't diverse. Even the professions we teach [..] needs to be very well-known for its racism. They wouldn't hire black nurses. patients are really racists to nurses. They recruit from a lot of BME communities, but they do not welcome them into. What gave me more confidence was being more involved in the Student Union and being a BME officer and going to like national conference and talk to about these issues (Jane p. 3 and 4).

As we can see in the extract, Jane was very eager to make the change through imposing herself on her society. Being a BME officer and environment officer and participating in national conferences was a key strategic step to achieve her objective.

### 4.5.7.2 Third space

In response to the lack of recognition, intercultural communication, stereotypes, and stances placing them as outsiders, an active turn to a comfortable third space (community) is noticeable. See the following examples:

Coming here again, it was a bit different because I was on my own, while at the first time I was with my sister, but when I came for the pre-sessional, I was by my own. I was a bit stressed because I lived in XXX, an hour of walk from here. I didn't really mingle with Algerian students during the pre-sessional because when I lived in XXX, I used to come here just for lectures and then go back [..] Then, I moved here to the city centre, and I started to know people and go to the sports centre together. That's how I knew the Algerian PhD community

It[support] comes unconsciously [..] from the research community (which consists only of Algerians as she reported in the interview) when we all meet and discuss, and you find other people are struggling as well with their research. So, makes you maybe subconsciously relaxed because you feel "Ohh not only me!". I guess, it's good to be surrounded by people so that, you know, just in case you need that support.

In the first extract, Amita states that her second time in the UK was different as it was coated with some stress as a result of her living alone away from the university and the Algerian community. However, as soon as she changed the setting, which was close to the university and co-national community, her life became more active and less stressful. Here, I specify the co-national community because when she was talking about meeting people and going to the sports centre with them, she was referring to her Algerian colleagues.

A similar point was made while answering my question about the given support. Amita asserts that being surrounded by students like her, facing the same difficulties, in research community meetings dominated by Algerians, was a sort of indirect support for her and a source of relaxation and comfort, knowing that she is not the only person struggling with her research.

Jane, as we saw in the interview, also reported experiencing a sense of isolation. She was the only black student in her class, and the only black person in her sports team. Her struggle to

find spaces for black students in the academic environment was a situation that she describes as not helping, annoying, and disappointing. However, thanks to her strong determination to assert herself and her culture, she could find her way through by becoming a BME officer in the Student Union (SU), in her third year: an activity that I assume would help her to meet other BME students, make friends and, thus, feel her existence – the feeling of belonging to a community.

As far as Lisa and Katia are concerned, my analysis of these cases in this context will take into consideration my observations in the fieldwork. For example, when I went to Lisa's house to conduct the interview, I noticed that there was an Algerian flag on the wall. Just as a reminder, the house was shared with two other Algerian students. All of them were very committed to celebrating their national events together in almost the same way they do back home. The interesting thing about these students is that when I asked them about the flag and life in the UK, they answered:

> We brought Algeria here [..] we feel like living in Algeria; we hang out with
>
> Algerians, we study with Algerians, we cook Algerian food, we eat Algerian
>
> food.

This suggests that despite living in a different country, their identity is still strongly connected to home (their home country). Katia is another person who has a very strong sense of national identity: what I noticed in the informal conversations we had was that she quite often praises her home country, and even favours it over the host culture despite its deemed technological weaknesses. Another aspect of Katia's life which caught my attention and, again, further supports her strong national identity is that she sometimes goes to London to participate in peaceful Algerian demonstrations for a better political system in her country.

The examples above confirm what Anderson (1991) describes as living in an "imagined community" where the participants evoke their home country, or old culture, while living in a different environment with a different culture: an imagined third space that re-invents the norm

(the traditional) in relation to the un-norm (the new host culture). As such, Caldas-Coulthard and Alves (2008) describe the present home, or host culture, as "materially real, but yet not real enough to feel authentic" (p. 134). Indeed, authenticity is among the important issues Lisa has referred to in the interview "[y]ou don't feel like something is authentically done".

It is interesting because while some would interpret such behaviours (sticking to groups of the same nation in particular) as insularity, ignorance, or lack of interest in embracing a new culture, meeting new people, and developing new ideas (cultural arrogance) – as is the case with Jane Daley (2005) in her assertion below – the data presents them not as personal choices but survival decisions that came up after long processes of analysis and problem-solving. They are the result of myriad tensions and feelings of exclusion.

> The migrants arrive fully aware of having made a conscious decision to take on a different life. Many of them never truly leave the home country in their hearts. They cling tighter in communities that resemble as closely as possible the old world and the old ties. They learn the new language as minimally as survival requires and adapt to the strange customs with reluctance. They are aware that their closed introverted culture incurs resentment, but this is necessary insularity…[they] know why they have come and who they still are.
>
> (quoted in Caldas-Coulthard and Alves 2008, p. 125-126).

If we relate the concept of third space to each individual experience, we can see that what drives them to make those decisions is actually the lack of safety and security resulting from the challenges encountered at some stages of their life, often related to their physical appearance. Sticking to their co-national groups is just a strategic step to survive in an unwelcoming, dehumanising environment, and a desperate attempt to achieve more safety, security and, thus, feel their presence which is crucial for them.

The participants were consciously aware of the fact that they are going to a different country or culture, a different university with a different educational system. Unlike Daley's account,

the interviewees see this as a great opportunity for them to explore the world, to be exposed to, and to learn about new cultures and meet new people. This is what they were expecting to see and how they imagined internationalisation. However, the mismatch of expectations, lack of intercultural communication, issues of otherness, and other challenges somehow engendered a big gap between the institution and the students, extended later to beyond the academic sector to include the whole host culture, dragging them to the margins where they had no choice but to stick to, or look for groups that would allow them to maintain their identity and feel important while being disidentified and devalued in the new culture.

### 4.5.7.3 Hybrid identity

Regardless of the causes, resorting to a third space is, in itself, evidence of the complex hybrid identity of students characterised by multi-positioning – going back and forth from the inside to the outside and *vice versa* (or from the norm to the un-norm). In other words, constructing a third space means that students are not fully rooted in the host culture but, rather, living in-between two worlds (the new and old culture), bouncing back and forth.

## 4.6 Findings

The aim of this section is to investigate the different perspectives of international students, based on their lived experiences in a typical UK university. First and foremost, the findings reveal how heterogenous students' experiences are. As we saw in the data, not all the participants have a negative experience. Positive feelings about the experience of studying abroad, going to higher education in a highly reputed country like the UK, also exist. The reported benefits differ from one individual to another and span: personal development, technological facilities and resources, western world exploration, and opportunity for intercultural communication.

Whether they reported a positive or negative experience, the data shows that all international students encounter challenges at some stages of their life, and British students are no exception. It is interesting because this denies the misleading assumptions distinguishing

between international and home students. Perhaps, because the focus is more on the differences than the similarities, people get blinded by the binary perceptions that make each group think it is different from the other, which is wrong. If we are to build a relationship with the 'other', I argue, there must be an equal quest for differences and similarities between the two parties.

The findings also reveal that in a process of constructing an international identity, students are prone to a complex game, where they seem to live in-between two worlds, bouncing back and forth between the old and the new culture: a complex hybrid identity of multi-positions which rotates between different but interconnected roles including:

- student as a game character (play the dictated game to engage in the new space);
- student as a learner (resorting to the traditional culture);
- student as a customer (sense of entitlement).

The data shows that neither the marketing discourse nor the conceived image of internationalisation matches with the students' lived experiences. What internationalisation reflects, according to the participants, is the business/economic dimension that makes it seem more of a commodity bought for profit than an opportunity. The meanings such controversial measures convey therein have, consequently, created bouts of insecurity and uncertainty that shaped each of the participants' experiences, identities, and perceptions of the 'other'.

Most of the informants in this study talked about how superficial, disappointing, and unfair their lived experiences were, when they had come to know the reality (the internal real image) of the institution. These experiences encompassed: 1) living in an environment where there is a lack of support, socialisation, and organisation; 2) feelings of being pushed and pulled at some stages of their life; 3) issues of belongingness, inferiority, alienation; 4) racism, discrimination, and segregation.

The combination of these negative experiences, lived from the 'inside' of the university, with the expectations they came with from the 'outside', have led to greater degrees of deceptiveness and discordance which, eventually, brought students' identities back to 'outsiders'. Looking more closely, the decision to internationalise higher education, from this lens, seems to be reluctant and the result of a set of contingent factors and policies dictated by a government whose ultimate objective is oneself (Bauman, 2001). The reported sense of otherness is a further indicator of this. Within such a sceptical model of change, there seem to grow a non-reciprocal, often agitated or even empty, relationship between the students and their institution. Indeed, as the data shows, the students' language reveals a lot of anger, grudge and hatred against either the institution or society. Hence, the data suggests that the more uncomfortable students feel, the more hostile they become. However, their hostility is not often exposed. In most cases, students prefer to keep it to themselves, leading them to develop negative thoughts towards the host culture (as if the more uncomfortable they feel, the more negative their way of thinking towards the actual environment is).

A conceptual spectrum of internationalisation was noticeable, ranging from the virtual idealistic conceptualisation (the ideal image the institution projects to the outside, portraying internationalised HE ideologically as an opportunity) to the spatio-visual one (the internal, real image which is depicted as a profitable business based on the students' counterintuitive experiences, involving variables such as lived space and gaze). However, neither the institution nor the students seem to be on the same side of the spectrum. For the institution, given the competition existing between universities, the external image is expected to be the same as the internal one. Therefore, in order for the institution to succeed, it needs to interpellate and homogenise the inside in the exact same way it is being interpellated and homogenised by global discourse. However, from the students' stance, we notice that this equation is not much of a success because for them, as the data shows, the institution is doing a good job only in meeting the external demands, while it practically misses out the internal ones.

With the students' lived experiences engendering a sense of critical awareness towards what is going on, the imposition of such 'capillary' tensions create a spatio-visual gap that makes students feel lost, deceived, unsafe, unwelcome, dis-centred, or simply othered.

Having this ideal image of a perfect western world creates a sense of insecurity when this ideal becomes unattainable i.e., when the students feel that they are not living up the expectations set by the conceived ideal norm. So, there is a deficit view of the 'other; that leads them to question their state of "being-in-the world": one that makes them question who they are and how they are perceived by the 'other'. Because they have a clear awareness of the capitalist neoliberal ideology, those feelings of exclusion and inferiority made them, somehow, believe that they are no longer seen as human beings who have feelings, voice, culture, religion, and identity, but as lifeless "products in their business" instead – products to be exploited, manipulated, pushed and pulled carelessly.

It is complicated because, naturally, these students have to adapt to the inside of the institution, which is the outside for them, to get what they paid for and reach what is expected of them regardless of how contradictory it is compared to the portrayed "fake image" – resonating with what Prazeres describes as making "the unfamiliar become familiar and the uncomfortable become comfortable" (2017, p. 920).

However, the question that arises again concerns how they can embrace the change and internalise the new if the territory they are in is, in itself, resisting it and perceives them as outsiders. According to the data, the answer is to 'play the game'.  But although the participants seem to play the game to survive, 'the play' is, rather, complex and differs from one individual to another depending on their interpersonal policies, goals, and attitudes.

Before we move to the differences that exist between the participants, it is important to keep in mind that all of them have a common objective which is to do what they are expected to do. Ultimately this is to get what they paid for by the end of their academic period (a degree). Apart from that, everyone has adopted her own adaptation or survival strategy. For example, while

some would both play the institutional game and at the same time impose themselves on the society somehow, the others prefer to stick to the former as is the case with Katia. But, again, her decision to not fit in was not made out of the blue. It was, rather, made in response to her failed attempts to integrate in the community. Unlike Katia, Lisa, in her early stages of study, seemed to maintain a double identity crisis in the activities she opted to engage herself in, where she decided to play safe (appraise or pretend to enjoy everything around her) so that she could secure a place in the society and protect her true identity (make people accept her veil). In contrast to Lisa, Jane's game playing sounds more agitated because she chose to voice her opinion, to talk about the injustice she experienced, aiming to raise people's awareness and thus make the change. This is a bold initiative which, according to her, was not taken seriously but still motivates her more to assert herself.

Regardless of the overall positive outlook she gave about her experience, Amita, like all the participants, pointed out the issue of intercultural communication. However, what distinguishes her from the others is that she could surmount this hurdle through working on herself (at a personal level): that is, she decided to get out of her comfort zone to take advantage of this opportunity and meet new people, making the first step towards the other, which is something that she did not do before.

The low academic performance reported together with the emerging quality deficit, the examples of racial discrimination and othering, all seem to signal the emergence of a further serious issue: an issue that characterises the whole Brexit environment which is xeno-racism (see section about xeno-racism).

Xeno-racism, a form of racism that implies a deep fear of losing national identity while competing for countless international students. In other words, beyond the institutional imperfection and sometimes inaction, there may exist an extreme sense of nationalism, intense resistance of the other and often cultural arrogance which can lead to potential dismissal of moral values. Namely, in a situation where self-interests outweigh and overlook everything else, there can't be an authentic relationship or even genuine care for the other because, for

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the participants, the primary concern is to generate income, and this perspective is hostile and dismisses human values.

## 4.7 Conclusion

This section focused on analysing the students' lived experiences in a UK university. The meanings they attach to their environment, their activities and, thus, the attitudes they develop towards internationalisation were analysed. The examination of students' perspectives and lived experiences uncovered a large discrepancy between the image and the reality of internationalisation in UKHE. The analysis stressed the impact of such disparities on students' experiences, particularly on their sense of belonging and the shaping of their identities in general. In analysing these areas, the data rearticulated the assumption that most of the challenges international students encounter in their everyday lives are not the students' problems but, rather, evoked by an institutional xeno-racist environment which fakes its inclusiveness to achieve its economic reputational goals (see page 67) – a point that was also supported by the staff data below.

# Chapter 04

## Section02: staff data

### 4.0 Introduction

The aim of this section is to cover the staff's views with regard to internationalisation and its impact on the institutional culture.

Five superordinate themes emerged from the interpretative analysis, and these were shared by all the staff: the institutional attitude, pseudo-internationalisation: a misleading image, marketisation: form of power and distortion. Each superordinate theme has a number of related subordinate themes, and these are presented in the table below.

| Superordinate themes | Subordinate themes |
|---|---|
| **The institutional attitude** | <ul><li>Lack of commitment:<ul><li>white-based curriculum</li><li>lowering standards</li><li>ambivalence</li></ul></li></ul> |
| **Pseudo-internationalisation: a misleading image** | <ul><li>*"Internationalisation is fake"*</li><li>*"Internationalisation is not just about the recruitment of international students"*</li><li>*"Internationalisation becomes a bit of a window dressing"*</li><li>Words vs actions</li></ul> |
| **Marketisation: form of power and distortion** | <ul><li>*"The problem with marketisation is very short term."*</li></ul> |

| | |
|---|---|
| | • *"Marketisation has corrupted the concept of internationalisation"* <br><br> • *"If we see the university as a business entity, then students are customers"* <br><br> • *"It's like somebody is giving you an identity which you haven't asked for"* |

The superordinate and subordinate themes will be presented and discussed in turn. Although the themes have been separated during the analysis process, many of them are related, and this is apparent throughout the narrative account. It is, therefore, important to consider each theme in relation to the whole. Due to the sensitive content, transcript extracts will be included in order to present the descriptive accounts from which my interpretations have developed.

## 4.1 The institutional attitude

All staff expressed their concerns regarding the mindset of the institution towards internationalisation which, according to them, is profit-oriented, lacking consistency and human values.

There seem to be many barriers to a healthy internationalisation of HE, particularly with regard to the institutional culture: its attitudes, ways of thinking towards internationalisation, international practices, and use of the term 'international'. These patterns will be highlighted and discussed in detail throughout the analysis below.

### 4.1.1 Lack of commitment

All staff highlighted the complexity of the role many British universities play in internationalising the education sector. They identified the higher education system as "monetary" lacking "a clear rationale for internationalisation" which, they believe, is taken as "an immediate need" instead of "a priority". Through their descriptions, it seems apparent that the staff recognise

the need for more ethical commitment, effective engagement, transparency, and credibility in the institutional provision.

To start, I begin with Oliver:

**Oliver**

Oliver works as a director for international development in the Faculty of Education. His role consists of observing and directing the execution of all the international activities within the faculty. His interests include the internationalisation of the curriculum and international consultancy. He has 7 years of international experience as a member of a large, cross-border Teacher Education Reform project. Talking about the institutional barriers to a healthy internationalisation, Oliver states:

> The institution has a mindset that is outward looking [..] one of the barriers is moving beyond a simplistic view of internationalisation as just being about recruitment of students. In other words, just being about financial gain (Oliver, p. 1).

According to Oliver, the problematic issue around internationalisation in HE is merely ideological and is related to the institutional way of thinking, which is apparently treating a complex phenomenon like internationalisation as if it was much simpler than it really is. He indicates that the institution is not fully committed to a real, extensive internationalisation as its main attention focuses on the external demands – the recruitment of students from the outside for "financial gain", while probably the internal demands remain in the margin.

To put it simply, a pattern of thinking that is, for Oliver, "outward looking", suggests that the institutional mindset is one-sided or, in other words, fixed to one side over the other, in a way that it is most active when it comes to how to do it (how to make the organisation international) and less active in how well they can achieve it and improve it so that everybody inside the institution can benefit. The institutional focus on the recruitment of international students, for example, suggests that the internationality of a university is probably measured by the number

of international students on campus. The other point worth mentioning is that the word 'mindset' is an overarching term: it is not only about ways of thinking but also about beliefs, assumptions, legislation, behaviours as well as control over one's ability to do something. So, the problem raised, here, is actually deeper than it looks. However, Oliver, despite the depth of this problematic issue, highlights the institutional mindset as something that can be changed on the ground. Why and how is what we will see in the following extract:

> Internationalisation is not just about recruitment of international students – this is a very narrow conception of internationalisation [..] the institution should be seeing internationalisation as a multifaceted construct that involves a number of key dimensions, and these dimensions mutually inform each other. If we want to be considered an internationalised university then, of course, recruitment is one aspect but also the programmes that we offer should contain a very clear international dimension that enables our students, both home students and international students, to develop global international intercultural competences (Oliver, p. 1).

Oliver states that the recruitment of students alone does not make an institution international because it is just one aspect among many that need to be addressed simultaneously. Oliver, therefore, suggests the need to reconceptualise internationalisation as constructed through a set of interlocked dimensions without which the notion of internationalisation becomes meaningless. From this account, we can see that Oliver's language is clearly spatial. He seems to suggest that the concept of internationalisation is not only about place (bringing international students into a particular location) but also about spatial relations between home and international students, and between the institution and the students. For these relations to be constructed, there needs to be a holistic change in terms of the institutional attitude, behaviour, and service. This means that internationalisation is not static but inherently dynamic. Its meaning cannot be achieved by simply recruiting international students but is, rather, constructed through the influence of myriad complex patterns, including thoughts, beliefs, acts,

priorities (it needs to be a priority), feelings, values (unity and intercultural competencies) all to be allocated simultaneously at the individual and institutional level.

Oliver highlights that, in addition to the recruitment of students, the institution also needs to internationalise the curriculum so that all students can benefit. He suggests that with the current institutional mindset and its "narrow" conception of internationalisation, its programmes, if not internationalised, would work only in favour of one group of students – home students – and this is unethical. That is why he stresses the need for deep commitment that would create a learning space where both home and international students can learn from each other and "develop global intercultural competencies".

### 4.1.1.1 White-based curriculum

The simplistic view of internationalisation endorsed by the institution has further implications that the staff are not pleased with:

> I'm an advocate for internationalisation. I have support from a small number of colleagues, but I also face a lot of barriers in what I'm trying to do.

> For example, the internationalisation of the curriculum. One of the barriers is that my colleagues have many conflicting priorities when they design a programme or design a module, and what they have been thinking about is the immediate need. Internationalisation is not an immediate need for our students. So, they don't see it as a priority and therefore, it's become much harder to convince people that they really need to take this into account and that our students need to develop this global mindset and develop intercultural competence (Oliver, p. 5).

As a director for international development, Oliver's role consists of promoting internationalisation in the faculty where he works. However, this seems to be challenging for him, as he is supported only by a "small number of colleagues", who believe that internationalisation needs to be expanded to reach the institutional programmes, while much

of the opposite side (the opponents, other staff) appears to be in line with the simplistic view of the institution. Oliver states that the latter engenders huge inconsistencies particularly when it comes to designing programmes and modules because the opponents seem to take internationalisation as an "immediate need" rather than a "priority". And this "immediate need", for Oliver, is not for students but for the institution to achieve an international brand (Sharar, 2018; EHRC, 2019). Oliver, therefore, recognises the vulnerability of his party in trying to convince the other party of the importance of what they are attempting to achieve.

By this, we can already see that there is a sort of internal division at the staff level, between those who are for an inclusive internationalisation, and those who are against it. This point will be developed in more depth later, in a section about ambivalence.

Another point is that the opponents are apparently more numerous than the advocates which makes it hard for Oliver and his colleagues to restructure the dominant thoughts developed towards internationalisation. In addition to the institutional mindset, Oliver also sees the need for students to develop a "global mindset and intercultural competencies" for successful learning values. This means that a real, genuine conceptualisation of internationalisation is not only integral for the institutional mindset but also for students. Meanwhile, the misconception of internationalisation is an evidence for the absence of this "global mindset".

The other point worth noting is that Oliver's language in this extract is rather temporal and not spatial, as is the case in the previous extract. This is noticeable through the repetition of temporal terms like: "immediate need" and "priority". By this, Oliver indicates that internationalisation takes time to be achieved. However, this time, for him, is not respected. Relating this to the previous extract, it seems that neither space nor time is respected when it comes to internationalising HE, which confirms the space-time gap identified in the literature review (see section about space).

> We don't have programmes that contain a well-reasoned or a clear rationale
>
> for internationalisation. We don't have a clear approach to infusing the

international dimension within the programmes. So, what we have is a tokenistic approach. A tokenistic approach might be that – for instance, within this module all of the references are from England, all of the texts that the students read are from England. Maybe we put one or two international references in there. It's about 5% international. This is a tokenistic approach (Oliver, p. 5).

Oliver states that, currently, the institutional strategy to immerse the international dimension in its programmes is lacking clarity and logic. He uses the term "tokenistic" to describe the institution's unethical approach, which consists, as he states above, of including a few international references in its programmes in an attempt to give the impression of diversity (racial equality) and social inclusiveness.

Oliver underlines the restrictive nature of the designed programmes which apparently disregard the international students' differences and dismisses their needs:

I think it's really superficial on the whole, but the key thing I think is within the programmes. Most of the programmes, I think, are not designed in a way that they really accommodate the needs of international students, and also what international students have to offer. If I think about education, if we have international students coming into our faculty – they're coming from a different educational system, where what they value in or what they think is important in education could be quite different from what our students see (p. 3).

Another issue that showcases the shallowness of the institutional mindset, for Oliver, is around the staff abilities to work with and/or deal with international students which, he believes, is not given importance:

[...] they don't address the capacity of staff to be able to work with those students (p. 3).

Later in the discussion, Oliver denounces the defensive attitude of the institution which refuses any changes at the level of the curriculum:

> They are very happy to take the fee, but when it comes to changing the
>
> programme, they will be defensive (p. 3).

**Chloe**

Chloe is a British-born senior lecturer who comes from an international family. She has a doctorate in education with an expertise in critical race theory, and early childhood education.

Like Oliver, Chloe also strongly supports the internationalisation of the curriculum:

> It's not just western people that do research. There is research from all over
>
> the world that need to be implemented in every module (Chloe, p. 4).

Chloe appears to call for the decolonisation of the curriculum and more opening to non-western research. For example, she suggests involving diverse references and sources in the teaching modules.

As far as the programmes are concerned, Chloe also sees a need for diversifying staff in parallel with students for more effective support and students' wellbeing:

> It's important to have staff that represent where the students come from. So,
>
> if the student can't fit in, and they don't know what is going on, they can go
>
> to that person and use their own language, and they can feel more confident.
>
> That doesn't happen here (p. 3)

Chloe is a dark-skinned lecturer who has been through many difficulties in her workplace. The colour of her skin made her subject to verbal abuse as well as many obstacles in her work. It is also worth mentioning that Chloe was a victim of racism even in her childhood. Under these sensitive conditions, Chloe did not find any black person to talk to. So, she decided to be the person to whom black staff and students, who go through the same difficulties, can go. She joined the Student Union and became an equality officer who represents the black ethnic

minorities. By virtue of her personal experience and the effectiveness of the role she plays as an equality officer, she sees recruiting staff from similar backgrounds to the students as the best solution to bridge the gap between students and their new academic setting, as this, she believes, helps them feel more comfortable and "more confident in voicing their opinions and talking about their challenges". To explain further, Chloe provides an example where she highlights the significance of her experience and her cultural background in supporting and helping black ethnic minorities:

> There are lots of black students. They are going through difficulty, they find
> me because they know that we have something in common and, very often,
> I can give them advice in the way white colleagues can't because [..] I've a
> variety of experience [..] Some other things they are going through is racism.
> So, they can talk to me about it. The university needs to take more
> responsibility for the experiences of students in terms of not just what they
> say, in terms of what they do (p. 4).

For Chloe, students can experience sensitive issues and emotional harms, as is the case with racism, which they cannot reveal to anyone unless they feel safe. This safety, according to Chloe, can only be felt with trustworthy people of a similar background who have been through the same experience. Based on this, Chloe calls institutions to take more responsibilities for students' experiences and wellbeing. This is not only in terms of theory but also in practice. The latter will be addressed in detail in the second superordinate theme.

### 4.1.1.2 Ambivalence

Due to the "outward looking" mindset of the institution, staff perceptions of internationalisation seem to be divided:

> When I think of internationalisation, I think of an opportunity for different
> groups of people to mix together and for both groups to enhance, to be
> enhanced from each other's experience. That's what I would think of

internationalisation. So, for me I see it as a good thing. Right, when I think of

it in terms of education, I see it as exploitation (Chloe, p. 1).

The ambivalence here is revealing. Chloe highlights two opposite sides of internationalisation, one of which is positive and the other of which is negative. Starting with the positive side, she views internationalisation as an "opportunity" for both home and international students to mingle and to develop intercultural understanding: an opportunity to promote diversity and social inclusiveness which can also help to enhance students' experiences. However, on the negative side, Chloe identifies internationalisation, particularly in the context of education, as a form of "exploitation": for her what is happening in universities is not internationalisation but, rather, perfunctory efforts that target international students for tuition fees. That is, the internationalisation of HE is not being done authentically but, rather, superficially making international students believe that the institutions welcome diversity while their actual goal is mainly financial — they seek to generate income:

Because what I actually see, I mean, an international student if they come

here and don't like it, it is difficult for them to go back, isn't it? You know, you

paid your fees. Your parents have an expectation […] you can't fail, you can't

fit in (p. 3).

Because you are paying, there is a reluctance for you to fail. If you fail then

it means the university would not get the fees for the next year. So, it's best

to keep you on (p.7).

Chloe sees that international students are placed in a critical situation where they have no choice but to survive in whatever conditions. That is, whether they like it or not, whether they fit in or not, they do not have the right to fail. On one hand. they bear the burden of the huge amount of money they pay for their studies, which is often paid by their parents, and on the other hand there is the high expectation of their families to succeed. All these aspects, for Chloe, work in favour of the university. Given these internal and external pressures placed on

international students, it appears, for Chloe, that they are being used more as a source of income than anything. She also states:

> I seem to know the international committee here. Well, last year we've made so much and so much. We try to get more students here. So, that's what it's about really. I've never heard it said: "the students have had such a good experience here". The university has been so greedy in increasing the fees all the time. And home students aren't going to UK universities now as they used to. There's been a shortfall. So, international students would make up while there is a shortfall, you know, not very ethical (p. 4).

Chloe, here, appears to indicate that recruiting international students is all that the institution is focusing on while the quality of the service remains neglected. Such great interest in this particular aspect of internationalisation, for her, is mainly driven by an intense, selfish desire for money through which the university could compensate for the local students' shortfall (low percentage of home students going to universities), resulting from rising fees, which she clearly recognises as unethical.

In a further discussion, below, Chloe distinguishes between two distinct orientations to internationalisation: university and student orientations. While the university orientation is market-based, the student's orientation is, rather, value-based. This means that students expect high quality service and positive learning experiences from their university, which, according to Chloe, are not given as much importance as the financial gains. However, for her, in order for universities to, properly and sustainably, succeed in capturing international students' attention, there should be a compromise between the two poles from which both sides can benefit:

> I understand it from a business perspective: it's a good thing for universities to do. I understand it from the student perspective: I don't think it's a good thing to do. So, what I think is that if a university wants to attract international

students. I think it can be done in a way where the students can benefit, and the university can benefit (p. 6).

**George**

George is a programme director for a BA in Education and Professional Training: a two-year degree for novice teachers to work in post-compulsory Education. He also works in various, related programmes including teacher development; teacher training courses for a diploma in post-compulsory Education and Training (an initial teaching qualification that people complete once they are in the service); the postgraduate PGCE: a programme for postgraduate students.

George seems to have the same vision as Chloe does. While he believes that internationalisation is valuable in terms of diversity, he does not seem to be an advocate for the profit-oriented approach that the university adopts to internationalise the sector.

> I'm divided about it because I think it's very good to let people come to Britain to study. I think that's got to be of a benefit, but then of course, because it's a commercial thing, I become quite concerned about the things which I know go on at various universities (George, p. 1).

**Oliver**

> It [internationalisation] is fundamentally important. If you think about it at a very simplistic level, the world that we live in and the world that our students will graduate into. In this faculty our students will enter a sector where [thinking] Umm OK, children in schools – I think 32% of children in primary schools are from ethnic backgrounds, they are not English. Over 20% of children in primary schools do not have English as a first language... So, one third of the children that our students are going to be working with in the future are not from English backgrounds (p. 3).

Oliver had specified from the start that he is an "advocate for internationalisation", and that the institutional mindset towards internationalisation makes it hard for him and people on his side to convince opponents of the importance of rethinking this phenomenon. In the above extract, in the context of defending his position, Oliver, once again, stresses the risks the "simplistic view" represents, but this time, he seems to address the long-term effects. He believes that the simplistic view might engender further issues in the future especially in social and practical life. He argues that UK schools already educate considerable numbers of children from various non- English backgrounds, and these children in the future will become part of British society. However, if the institution does not move beyond its "simplistic view" to consolidate the relationship between the inside and the outside, it may lead to future social instability, inequality, and rejection of the 'other'. For this, Oliver suggests the need to focus and work on the positive, altruistic side of internationalisation for more acceptance and coexistence:

> Our students need to have the mindset, the values, the beliefs, acceptance, the intercultural competences to be able to deal with these children in a productive respectful manner. Not to see them as a problem but to see them as part of the rich diversity of their class. It doesn't come naturally we have to work at it. This is one reason why it is important (p. 2).

Interestingly, Oliver indicates that children from foreign backgrounds are seen as "a problem", and this is due to the institutional attitude. What this conveys is that there may be an existing binary division and racial segregation in schools which again explains why Oliver emphasises the necessity to promote the values of internationalisation between students throughout the education sector.

**Harry**

Harry is a programme director for the PhD in Education and Applied Linguistics. He supervises PhD students in different research areas such as English language education and intercultural communication. He comes from an international family. He spent half of his working life

traveling from one country to another and most of his career working with international students.

Harry also seems to be concerned about the current motives behind internationalising education, which he describes as neoliberal in nature. He appears to indicate that it is not institutions that are internationalised but, rather, internationalisation that is being institutionalised from a neoliberal perspective, which he believes is wrong and thus needs to be changed. For this, Harry suggests that it is necessary to think more about human values instead of just money:

> There is an institutional driver which comes from a neoliberal perspective, and it's quite false. There should be a more human driver, and it's good for a university to have a diversity of people. That's what it should be (p. 1).

### 4.1.1.3 Lowering standards

Three staff raised a serious issue within the institution, which is that of lowering standards with international students. They felt angry that the institution can benefit from their money while this is happening.

> International students pay lots and lots and lots and lots of money, and that has tempted people to drop standards. One of the worst sorts of stories I've ever heard is that somebody is examining a PhD student who is international, and they say: "OK we let her pass because she's just international; We don't expect anything more". And that's terrible because at that step, it becomes a dual standard (Harry, p. 1).

Harry emphasises the huge amount of money international students pay for their studies in the UK by repeating the word "lots" literally four times. He states that this is so financially remunerative that institutions are tempted to act unethically. To illustrate this point, Harry gave a real example that he witnessed himself as an examiner in an international PhD student's viva:

I HATE it when people say: "we should have different standards for international students because they have a different cultural background". We HAVE to treat EVERYBODY EXACTLY the same [high tone] …what happens unfortunately, is that people think they're helping international students because they got some sort of deficit by taking them on at a lower standard whereas in fact, this is just patronising. There are huge moral and Ideological issues around this notion of internationalisation (p. 1).

What this example implies is that students (both home and international students) in an internationalised university are not treated the same. It also indicates the presence of prejudice against international students as lacking competencies.

Signs of anger and depression are prominent, either in the words he uses (such as "hate" and "unfortunately") or simply the loud tone in which he expresses his feelings and his position towards the way international students are being treated. In other words, Harry strongly opposes differentiating between students, whoever they are, and thus sees an urgent need for the institution to treat its students equally and ethically, using one standard for all.

Harry uses the term "patronising" to describe the real attitudes laying behind such behaviour, which consists of giving an apparently helpful impression that bears a feeling of superiority and control. He, therefore, acknowledges internationalisation as a problematic concept that carries many moral and ideological issues, one of which, according to his account, is using the notion to hide the actual institutional neoliberal drives (see the next theme for more details). From these come the inequality and discrimination between home and international students borne out by lowering standards for international students to secure the huge amount of money the institution is gaining from them. The other issue is related to the apparent staff depression, anger and frustration towards the institutional treatment of international students, which, again, shows the lack of coordination between staff and their institution.

Highlighting the issue, George took the same position as Harry. However, this time the articulation of the problem was even stronger and sharper than that of Harry:

> It would appear that all universities are now prepared to bend rules, to not ask too many questions to attract people who pay the most fees, and I think that's a big danger long term… The leadership of British universities are quite happy to prostitute their university for foreign money, and that is very, very destructive (George, p. 1).

As we can see from this, George, unlike Harry, uses the concept of 'prostitution' to describe the current atmosphere in many universities competing for foreign money. In doing so, George compares what is happening in universities to a disrespectful, sexual activity for money to show how unpleasant and dangerous this is. The following extracts are real examples he used to highlight the consequences of lowering standards:

> […] if I could give you just an anecdote: umm, many years back, I had a son. He was at the university of XXX nursery. He made friends with a Malaysian boy in the nursery, and he wanted to invite this boy back to our house for tea and to play in the afternoon. So, I went up there and found out that both of his parents were in the final stages of PhDs in science. They were completing PhDs in science. One day, they were at the nursery, picking their son up, and I went up to them and said: "My son would like to invite your son to come to the house for tea, but these guys couldn't understand what I was saying to them as simple as that. I tried various ways to explain to them what I was talking about, but they couldn't understand. About two or three months later, they left with their PhDs, and you just find yourself thinking. "For heaven sake, how did that happen? What is going on here?". And you suddenly realise that what universities are saying is happening is not necessarily what's happening (George, p. 4).

What George appears to indicate through this anecdote is that the policy of recruiting students who can afford to pay the fees can be a problem because they risk not attracting the most talented students this way. So, while students are supposed to work hard to earn a degree, what happens is that they, simply, buy the degree. This resonates with the idea that marketisation is trivialising HE and reducing it to a shopping mall, where degrees are sold to customers (see Nixon, Scullion and Hearn, 2016; Sharar, 2018). Besides, there also seem to be an intercultural issue of communication that prevented the two families from getting to know each other better. The departure of the Malaysians after getting their degrees may also have caused frustration for the child. What this conveys is that the British cannot make lifelong friends with international students because they come only for a short period of time. George, once again, puts the blame on the institution in trying to project a pleasant image of internationalisation that opposes real life.

In further examples, below, George suggests that lowering standards has other side effects on the level of education. This is particularly remarkable in teaching because, he says, regardless of the degree students get, their qualifications remain weak which leads them to fail in the teacher training courses:

> We have had applicants come here. They wanted the teacher training courses, not recently, because I've felt that it's now a bit stronger, but I've had people come with PhDs and they've had to leave the teacher training courses [...]

> I have somebody who came here with an MBA from Leeds, and she had to leave at the beginning of a teacher training course because she didn't know how to word process. So, what is going on? You really find yourself wondering. I mean these are real examples (p. 4).

In an attempt to know more about his experience with international students, I asked George a question about how internationalisation affects him as a staff member, and the answer was as follows:

> In my case it's not creating a pressure. If I go back to the BA that I talked about […] if I think about that in terms of what I've described as internationalisation, they are not paying big fees. There are people who live in Britain, and it's really − really healthy and helpful, and I enjoy it. Actually, this makes it worthwhile. Also, the other thing which happens is that if you can talk in such terms on the BA which I teach on, the international students, the ones I call international, are more committed to genuine educational goals than perhaps many of the British students are (p. 2).

Surprisingly, George does not seem to be affected by the issues he raised earlier. On the contrary, he appears to work in a "healthy" atmosphere given that his teaching course involves a group of students who live in Britain, and, as he says, are not paying "lots" of money. The question raised here was: who are these students who live in Britain and pay less money?

George, interestingly, seems to have a special conception, and a particular view about the group of students he designates as 'international'. According to his statement, not all foreign students have the characteristics of an international. By this notion, George singles out the overseas students who are brought to the sector for their money and not for their talents: those who show no interest in the social life, their unique goal being to get a degree and go back home. If we relate this perception to the anecdote reported above, there seems to be a direct link between them. George's view of international students is a re-articulation of the bad experience he had with the Malaysian couple in trying to invite their son to come over for a cup of tea. In fact, he adopted as negative an image of international PhD students, who pay lots of money to come to the UK to do their advanced studies, as that he got from the Malaysian PhD students, who were not able to engage in a conversation with him. For George,

international students have no interest in socialisation – they come only for a degree – and the way he compares them with the British is indicative of that.

Chloe previously underlined the great pressure placed on international students both from inside and outside the institution. She sees that the university is using their situation to its advantage:

> Because you are paying, there is a reluctance for you to fail. If you fail, then it means the university would not get the fees for the next year. So, it's best to keep you on. It doesn't matter if you're not a very good student, and some students struggle, some students really should not be here. But the university gets the money (p. 7).

By this, Chloe suggests that the institution is recruiting students who can pay their fees instead of students who have talents and capacities, which leads students to struggle even more in their academic lives. So, the point here is that, for Chloe, the university is, again, responsible for what is happening to its students as it plays a key role in their suffering by lowering standards.

## 4.2 Pseudo-internationalisation: a misleading image

Answering the question, "When I say 'internationalisation' what comes to your mind?", there seems to be a general agreement that it is a misleading brand that does not reflect what is actually happening inside universities.

### 4.2.1 "Internationalisation is fake, completely Fake"

> […] one view is that internationalisation is fake, completely fake[..] because it belongs to the neoliberal ideology. Institutions would show their sponsors that they are open to international students in order to get money from their sponsors. So, it is put out as a brand to show what the Institution is doing and what it should be doing because the government said, "internationalisation is important". The implication of that is that there is an

appearance of internationalisation which doesn't actually match what people

really do and what people really feel, and that's really powerful. And that can

lead to a very simplistic view of what it is (Harry, P. 1).

Here, Harry introduces one of the most prevailing views of internationalisation in higher education, which is that "internationalisation is fake". For him, what is happening in universities is fake because it is a simple embodiment or manifestation of neoliberalism, whose major interest is in sustaining free-market capitalism. Harry appears to relate the "fake" image of internationalisation that institutions demonstrate to the government, in the sense that institutions only apply what the government dictates. In this case, the source of the problem seems to be the government's policies of internationalisation. This suggests that if internationalisation does not reflect real life in universities, it is because the British government does not urge institutions to do so. Harry, thus, highlights the risk for this phenomenon of internationalisation to lose its holistic meaning for a simple view limited to simply establishing and maintaining it as a part of a brand.

Harry believes that all stakeholders, including academics, researchers, and students, are highly critical of the neoliberal position universities occupy, and are in search of a more comprehensive conception of internationalisation:

Lots and lots of academics, researchers and students and all sort of people

are critiquing this neoliberal position and trying to find out something that's

more meaningful to actual people. The problem then comes in "Why would

we want to use the term international" because it implies that international

means foreign whereas in a University everybody should be international (p.

1).

Here, he appears to suggest that one step towards a more meaningful conception of internationalisation is to correct the institutional language use around this notion. He believes that the way universities use the term 'international' is inaccurate because it reinforces national

boundaries. This reminds us of Collins's (2018) statement that the "hegemonic form of the intercultural will be framed in primarily economic and essentialist terms which reinforce national and psychological boundaries between people and has little concern for social justice" (p: 180). So, while the term 'international' is supposed to delineate the ideological aspect of unity and co-existence between students, they practically use it in a way that highlights the perceived distance between home and international students instead. This, in itself, is a further indicator of the 'fakeness' of the current form of internationalisation and, probably, an indicator of unconscious bias towards the 'other' as well.

### 4.2.2 "Internationalisation is not just about recruitment of international students"

> The Institution has a mindset that is outward looking […] internationalisation
> is not just about recruitment of international students – this is a very narrow
> conception of internationalisation (Oliver, p. 1).

Oliver also expresses his concern about losing track of what internationalisation is truly about. He sees that the institutional mindset is driven by external demands while the internal ones seem to be neglected. Oliver appears to indicate that the institution perceives internationalisation as an absolute phenomenon of massification (Beighton, 2020). That is, the more they recruit the more internationalised they believe to become. Like Harry, Oliver argues that this conception is "very narrow" and does not represent what internationalisation is truly about.

### 4.2.3 "Internationalisation becomes a bit of a window dressing"

> I think the whole idea of internationalisation is a little bit tricky…. I really do
> feel that a very, very strong aspect of internationalisation today, the
> leadership of universities, is simply one of selling courses to people from
> overseas. That's their real interest. It's money. Then, internationalisation
> becomes a bit of a window dressing, if you like − makes it sound good
> whereas in fact, it's about selling courses (George, p. 1).

> The Institutions project an image of themselves outwards which is often not
>
> the case (George, p. 4).

George, like Harry, believes that internationalisation is a trick. For him, institutions use internationalisation in order to capture international students' attention, and, thus, their trust: to make them believe that they care about them and about the cultural values they bring to the sector while its real goal is in fact to "sell courses" – or in other words to generate financial income.

### 4.2.4 Words VS actions

Chloe, throughout the interview, analysed extensively the disparities that exist between what the institution is saying about internationalisation and what is actually happening. In different examples, cited below, Chloe highlights the inconsistencies that she believes the institution must sort out.

| Theory | Reality |
|---|---|
| *We talk about equality and diversity. The west has put themselves as being wonderful everywhere and everybody wants that experience.* | *They [students] don't even mix with the wide students.* |
| | *They feel uncomfortable…depressed.* |
| | *There are lots of students [..]going through difficulty […] Some other things they are going through is racism.* |
| | *A lot of black staff have had difficulty here, real difficulty. If you stand up them, they don't like it and if you don't stand up, they will just sit on your shoulder.* |
| | *[…] about 4 years ago, we had an international student, and she was on suicide watch because she was so depressed. She couldn't fit in.[..] It worried me that as an institution we will take students over here, and the students would be so isolated, miss their home country so much. We would not have supported them in any way to the point where they would attempt suicide. That bothers me. And we keep talking about diversity! We keep talking about equality! We keep getting more and more international students here and we are not really supporting them. That's not diversity!* |

| | |
|---|---|
| *It [internationalisation] is about the culture of the university. It's about how the university tries to make sure international students feel at home.* | *When you walk through the university, you see so many posters with just white faces on.*<br><br>*You come to this university. You want to get something to eat. If you don't eat bacon – I'm a vegan. I think, you can get Halal once in a while. You can but try and get vegetarian food. It doesn't happen. So, you talk about internationalisation but yet for one day or week you can't say that.* |
| *It's about the staff, making sure the staff is representative, making sure that the staff would not make statements that are basically inappropriate, making sure that the learning material is representative.* | *What you find is that if a member of staff has been here a long time and they are professors or they are senior lecturers often these people kind of feel that because they'd been here a long time, they don't need to be trained, and yet you'll find that they're the ones that would say the most racist, ignorant things.* |

**The table represents the disparities Chloe highlights in terms of words and actions.**

According to the table, there seems to be a huge gap between what the university is saying and what it is practically doing. While the institution seems to represent the notion of internationalisation in theory, it apparently fails to put that into action, and this is another indicator that internationalisation in higher education is a mere pretence, far away from reality.

In the quotes above, Chloe raises various issues among them:

- luring students with false promises in disguise of western ideology;

- false diversity (lack of intercultural communication);

- inequality (unequal teaching training, racism);

- lack of support;

- lack of flexibility and freedom of expression with regard to staff (staff have no choice but to comply to the imposed guidelines and structures);

- feelings of discomfort, depression, suicide attempts (issues that I discuss in more depth in the next chapter in a section about internationalisation from a machine to organism).

What Chloe attempts to convey through these issues is that there is a stubborn cultural arrogance against the other ─ the institutional culture is not representative of the other, which is clearly reflected in its actions and is, therefore, responsible for the difficulties and the discomfort stakeholders (students and staff) experience in the academic arena. Chloe calls the institution to take action. She sees the need for a radical change starting from the top of the university which, she believes, is the main source of the dilemma. She calls for more responsiveness in its services, and more inclusiveness in its attitude and demeanour towards the 'other'. Most importantly, Chloe stresses the need for the institution to listen to its students, to understand their actual needs:

> The university has to go beyond talking. What they have to do is to look at the structure not from the bottom-up but from the top-down. Make decisions at the top.

> People need to listen. If students are saying they are unhappy, students are saying they're uncomfortable. It is not about students being weak. It's about students being in a place where it does not represent them (Chloe, p. 4).

## 4.3 Marketisation: form of power and distortion

The staff commonly underline the unethical side of market-like policies permeating education. They highlight their role in distorting internationalisation and the intimate relationship between students and their institution. They also point out the manipulative dimension of commerce in turning students into customers.

### 4.3.1 "The problem with marketisation is very short term."

> [..] one of the problems with that is that there is nothing short term with respect to the sort of learning that goes on with PhD students. It's a long development. So, students go to research development sessions, and they are asked to evaluate it [..] But how could they possibly know? They are at the beginning of a long trajectory of personal development[..] The problem with marketisation is very short term[..] making education something you have to pay for at a full rate is not a good thing. Education has an intrinsic value. It's unethical (p. 3).

Harry, in the above quote, appears to indicate that pedagogy is too complex to be measured swiftly, in a short period of time. He uses the example of a PhD programme to show how impossible it is for students in their first year to assess PhD provision while they are still new to it. For Harry, a PhD is a long journey through which students develop personal skills, ideas, thoughts, and new ways of thinking. With such a process, any assessment by students who have not yet finished their PhDs would be unreliable because they are still progressing. They do not have a full picture yet, or a mature awareness about the service (how it currently is and how it should be).

What Harry attempts to convey, though, is that education is far from a product to be bought at a cash desk and then evaluated. Instead, it is a long-term process, constantly changing, that carries genuine human values. And because it is taken as a product, Harry defines this activity as unethical seeing that it dismisses human values.

### 4.3.2 "Marketisation has corrupted the concept of internationalisation"

Oliver, also, expressed his concern about marketisation in education. He believes that the distortion of internationalisation is all due to institutional dishonesty in acting for the sake of money instead of quality:

> I think marketisation has corrupted the concept of internationalisation. For the university, marketisation is a very narrow approach which is basically just trying to recruit students without thinking about other aspects (p. 3).

He states that marketisation has corrupted the concept of internationalisation (Ignatow, 2020). Knowing that the original concept of internationalisation that Oliver and all the staff were talking about has no physical or concrete existence — it has never been achieved or put into practice. So, if marketisation has corrupted something, then it is the pure ideological meaning behind the notion of internationalisation: the sense of unity, of co-existence, of altruistic and human values. This, again, proves that the source of the problem is more ideological than practical because the practices of internationalisation are only a shape of that corrupted ideology.

Oliver adds:

> Marketisation could be much more. It could involve developing new programmes. It could involve realising that there is a huge market for online blended courses and investing in that rather than buildings. So, creating virtual spaces for international students to be part of the university. Engaging in more partnership work, consultancy work (ibid).

Previously, internationalisation was analysed as an extended metaphor of space as a multiplicity: a dynamic process of interrelated spatial relations constructed simultaneously and progressively through time. Oliver said that internationalisation is not only about bringing international students onto campus. There was a sense that there should be concrete changes on the ground led not by a fixed mindset, whose ultimate goal is to have an international brand for the institution and a degree for students, but a growth mindset that is more concerned about how well they can achieve it and improve it so that everybody can benefit. In this case, new programmes and new spaces of learning need to be developed – virtual spaces for example. However, according to Oliver, universities' investment in education is fundamentally static. Most of their investment is limited to the physical territory (place), and that makes of a university

an empty box that needs to be filled with international students to be identified as an international university. The point one can make here is that institutions are engaged in a project which consists of making HE a source of money with the least changes and costs possible.

### 4.3.3 "If we see the university as a business entity, then students are customers"

Talking about education as a business market, Chloe draws attention to the concept of treating students as customers:

> Universities over the years have become more of a business. So, it's about making money. If we see the university as a business entity, then students are customers. But from my own academic ideology, I find that very difficult to rationalise because I don't see students as customers. I see students as students. You are here to learn, and you are here to understand, and you are here to apply, you are here to integrate, you are here to expand your memory and other things. It's just about: "Ok, you are a customer so let's have your money and we give you education". That's very cynical. It's like going to Asda, isn't it and doing your bag of shopping. Here is my bag of shopping. Here is your money. It's more than that! It misses the kind of personal and intimate relationship that you should have with the students. It doesn't happen (p. 6).

Chloe, here, highlights the shifting position of learners from students to customers, arising from the implementation of commercial perspectives, which she does not seem to advocate. Like Harry, Chloe considers the role of a student as more complex and multifaceted than that of a customer. She, therefore, sees the commercial equation between students and customers as cynical and irrational. Chloe views the relationship between students and their institution as superficial because she thinks that such an act disregards the personal and intimate aspects of a healthy relationship.

The point here, though, is that the actual form of internationalisation apparent in HE is not only shallow but also fundamentally unethical and unhealthy. On the institutional level, a complex of superiority and narcissism that appears to make the university lose contact with reality and logic was highlighted, while on the personal level, signs of depression, anger, and frustration towards the institutional position and its overall behaviour with international students were spotted in the staff's accounts. That is not all, George in the discussion below also refers to a potential personality disorder among students.

### 4.3.4 "It's like somebody is giving you an identity which you haven't asked for"

> I view it as an abomination. I think it's horrible. I think it's incredibly destructive. I would say it's a danger in our society. Students as customers, it's the same as when the railway company I travel with doesn't call me a passenger. It calls me a customer. It's like somebody is giving you an identity which you haven't asked for. They are changing your identity as a customer. I mean, Students should be students (p. 6).

George vehemently opposes the idea of perceiving students as customers. He uses terms like "abomination", "horrible", and "destructive" to indicate how noxious and detrimental he thinks it is. For him, by perceiving students as customers, institutions look like giving them an identity that they did not ask for. It is interesting because what this conveys is that institutions are seemingly manipulating students' identities and imposing their supremacy in a strategic way that may not be clear to students in the first place, which may cause some difficulties in their personal relationships and their functioning in the society on a long-term basis – a certain confusion on who they are and how they are supposed to be may crop up throughout their academic journey (Are they supposed to act as learners? Or as customers? Or maybe both?).

If we relate this to what Harry said earlier about marketisation, then students would need time to figure it out. However, with the current commercial matrix, it appears that institutions are using students' limbo (students in an uncertain period) to make a success of pseudo-

internationalisation, which is not ethical. But again, thinking about what Harry said in the previous theme, what is happening is not the institutions' fault because they are only doing what is being dictated to them, and what is thought to be useful to survive in the marketplace. This is, in fact, a reality imposed by a "bigger regime" (globalisation) with which they have no choice but to comply:

> That is out of the control of individual universities. all sort of things I am talking about are results of individual institutions having to struggle with the bigger regime that comes from somewhere else [..] It's what the institutions have to do to survive in this marketisation environment (Harry, p. 4).

Acting as customers, for George, is very dangerous because it has several side-effects which can lead the institution to collapse:

> The most important customers are the ones who pay the most which is not fair. You have the growing danger of students believing that as customers they bought something and so, they should get something. There is this "I can't fail the programme because I paid for this". It's increasingly becoming something which the British Government is promoting – the idea of student as a customer. That's not just foreign students. That's British students as well, and it is part of their thing to commercialise HE, which they like. I think, we really are one more military adventure away from the whole collapse of foreign students coming to Britain (P. 6).

George highlights two important drawbacks. First, social injustice by means of class stratification. This means that students (international and British) may be treated differently according to their financial state, which is not fair. Second, if students play the role of customers, then they would think they are buying their degree. In this case, no matter how incompetent they could be, failure is not acceptable: their degree becomes a product they have the right to get once they pay for it because commercialising HE means using market policies

and in a market 'the customer is always right' (Dalpes, 2021). Challenging their customers will only affect their university's reputation which is the worst thing they could risk in the marketplace. Bringing all these drawbacks together, it appears that success in HE would not be viewed in terms of the positivity of students' learning experiences but, rather, in the maximisation of profit-making. If their experiences are marginalised, students will surely notice that over time and the information will spread out. Thus, the number of students may diminish gradually, leading the institution to collapse. This implies that a market-based form of internationalisation is not sustainable.

## 4.4 Findings

A belief in the institution's lack of commitment towards an inclusive internationalisation in higher education was apparent throughout the staff accounts.

Analysis of the data reveals a restrictive institutional mindset that is most active in meeting the external marketing demands. Although recruiting international students is considered an important step in the process of internationalisation, overlooking the internal demands (the individual needs and interests) has led to many moral and health issues. Lack of coordination between students/institution and staff/institution were commonly noted. Issues of binary division, inequality, polarisation, and misconception of the term 'international' were highlighted. A complex of superiority and narcissism that makes the institution lose contact with reality and logic were detected. Signs of depression, anger, and frustration were present and potential personality disorders for students were noted.

The staff seemed to be concerned about losing track of the real meaning of internationalisation, given the shallowness of the institutional conception of this phenomenon, and the deceptive aspect that characterises the current version of it. I call it pseudo-internationalisation: a distorted form of internationalisation that is fundamentally unethical, being based on a typical commercial relationship between the institution, as a shopping mall, and students, as

customers, which apparently reduces the ethical humanistic values of a university into an instrumental economic value.

There seems to be a space-time gap in the institution's approach to internationalise HE: according to the data, neither space nor time is respected. In terms of space, the institution's approach is said to focus fundamentally on the physical space, bringing international students on campus; in terms of time, it is argued that education is far too complex to be assessed in the short term.

The staff appear to place emphasis on the importance of compromise between the commercial orientation of the university and the qualities and values students expect. There was a sense that if universities are to act as 'money making machines', recruiting a massive number of international students, then the institutional culture must be representative of those students. Otherwise, they will probably collapse. In other words, the actual form of internationalisation is viewed as unsustainable on a long-term basis, and a need for radical change is, therefore, necessary. Staff stress the importance of replacing the current approach to internationalisation with a more healthy, meaningful, and transparent institutional embodiment.

## 4.5 Conclusion

This section focused on analysing staff views on internationalisation in HE. The analysis confirmed the institutional issue of image projection, highlighted in the students' section, and revealed further serious concerns related to the institution's restrictive and market-led mindset.

Both staff and students underline the great disparities that exist between the institution's drives and practices of internationalisation, and the interviewees' conceptions of it. It is interesting that there seems to be a common enthusiasm, among staff and students, for a new model of internationalisation that would favour all stakeholders, including the institution, staff, and students. This aspect is discussed in more depth in the next chapter.

# Chapter 05: Internationalisation3 (The I3 Model)

## 5.0 Introduction

For my interviewees, the paradoxes of internationalisation involve lack of honesty, ignorance, alterity, racism, and social injustice. Recognising these paradoxes, the data suggests, has dire ramifications for both education and students' experience. So, although theoretically, internationalisation imparts an ideological perspective and altruistic principles, my data challenges this view. Internationalisation claims to promote moral practices aimed at providing students, from different nations, a common space of heterogeneity, where they can develop intercultural competencies and global mindsets. However, for my interviewees, many paradoxes, underpinned by market-led principles, make that benevolent rhetoric hard to digest.

Analysis of the data reveals a blurred, discursive, institutional mindset that is economically active but socially restrictive. Such discursive construction of internationalisation, according to the data, only promotes negativity and high levels of alterity between the local and international students. Instead of empathy and inclusion, it reinforces hate and division – anti-social behaviours which inform a violent environment of great inequalities and counterproductive narratives that put the sustainability of higher education on the line. Bringing students together in a particular place, for the interviewees, does not make the institution diverse or egalitarian. Real diversity is seen to involve the whole university culture, including the social activities, learning materials, and the staff. If students do not get a positive learning experience in what is promised to be a warm and welcoming environment where they can interact with other students, communicate, and study together, accept and respect each other, they risk feeling alienated and hating each other, and eventually, the international student mobility towards the country may decrease gradually, spelling the collapse of the organisation.

Each staff and student had diverse opinions and expressed their concerns differently. However, what brings them together is their call for a more authentic and meaningful form of internationalisation that would be bonded with a healthy relationship among the stakeholders

(the staff, students, and institution). In this part of the analysis, we shall consider this new model of internationalisation: what it is exactly, how it works, and how it should be achieved.

Analysis of the data of both staff and students reveals the presence of various gaps and vulnerabilities in the current institution's approach to internationalise the sector, all of which are space-related.

## 5.1 Students

To start with students, analyses of their individual experiences have demonstrated a complex journey that can be divided into four main phases, each representing a particular mode of space.

### 5.1.1 Phases of a student journey

**Receptive phase** (conceived space) is an important stage where students build a mental image about the western world and the international community therein, through information communicated to them through the media, university website, images, vernacular and global discourses of power, ideologies, etc, all directed at capturing students' attention. Lured by all these tempting parameters, students develop what Anderson (1991) calls an "imagined community", often considered ideal: healthy, welcoming, supportive, and inclusive. For instance, Lisa says:

> I thought that it's going to be [..] like a paradise, having all the things that I've
>
> dreamed of [..] internationalisation the way they portray it is a big door to be
>
> opened to different people from different countries, to be raised properly, to
>
> be supported, to be provided with good services (Lisa).

**Explorative phase** is where the students begin exploring and testing the environment physically. Here, students often compare the conceived ideal image with the real world confronting them.

**Cognitive phase** occurs when students cognitively process the meanings they generate from the place they are in. This often involves aspects related to the nature of the institution's service

(the nature of the space provided, support, the organisation, the quality of teaching and programme delivered), and their lived experiences, including their interactions and social relations, people's attitudes and behaviours, the emotions the place evokes, the feelings they develop towards the community, and the activities they are involved in. All these factors allow students to bring sense to their experiences and thus identify their social positioning therein. Weighing the pros and cons of this environment, students identify various spatio-visual gaps that make them feel socially, academically, and emotionally distant. This prompts them to consider possible alternative adaptation strategies for surviving in that environment. After this comes the executive stage.

**Executive phase** is another important stage where students make decisions and implement them. Such decisions, according to the data, are directly affected by students' attitudes of whether they want to fit in. All students showed significant interest in socio-cultural diversity. However, their failure to integrate with the new host culture, as the data shows, affected them differently. An interesting aspect of this phase, which I discuss in more depth later in this section, is that it is dynamic. Students, according to the data, go through a long process of decision-making full of ups and downs.

Throughout this journey, two opposing conceptualisations of the term internationalisation were underlined across two different scales: virtual and spatio-visual. In other words, based on their lived experiences, students recognise two distinct meanings embedded in the term internationalisation: the ideal and the actual.

### 5.1.2 Ideal conceptualisation (The virtual idealistic image of internationalisation)

Internationalisation is conceived as a great opportunity for students to explore the western world, to develop intercultural skills, to mix with other students, and to learn from one another in a wonderful environment of perfection. An idealistic image of internationalisation informed by media through empty rhetoric, impressive images, and the ideological discourses the university uses to promote itself – particularly the western ideology – which apparently gives prospective students an idyllic image about the host community. The problem with these

marketing tools is that they encourage students to come with very high and unrealistic expectations, buoyed up by the colourful brochures and the catchy rhetoric.

### 5.1.3 Real conceptualisation (The spatio-visual reality of internationalisation)

It is the opposite of the virtual image, based on the students' lived experiences (space and gaze). After the students arrived at the community and started experiencing and testing the environment, they ended up realising that the projected image of internationalisation was not real: what they considered was a valuable and altruistic opportunity, turned out to be a mere crass, commercial venture for money and prestige:

> Universities look at it from a very monetary point of view. I don't think they really want to create this breadth of cultural exchange or invite people to the same space as you…they just view it as a good way to make money and make universities look good (Jane, p.3).

> The information provided on the website is not the same as you find here, and you see with your own eyes. It's something different. It's not always that perfect (Katia, p.1).

The idea of devising the student journey stemmed from Appadurai's theory of social imaginary (the concept of imagination as an integral part of agency). For Appadurai, imagination is "central to all forms of agency" and is "a social fact" and "the key component of the new global order" (Appadurai, 1990, p. 31). Here, Appadurai is arguing that "new global cultural economy has to be seen as a complex, overlapping, disjunctive order" (Appadurai, 1996, p. 32) composed of "different interrelated, yet disjunctive global cultural flows" (Heyman and Campbell, 2009, p. 133). These include people migration across cultures and borders; variety of media that shape our understanding of the world; technology advancement; worldwide capital; global discourses and technologies.

My point here is that students' lived experiences and their sense-making should be seen as a complex, overlapping organism that needs to be examined on both conceptual and spatial scales. This is because, as the data showed, the students went through different phases (before and after the arrival to the new space/ host culture) and were involved in interlaced, cross-cultural activities, where they were affected by many factors: external and internal.

The external factors include student mobility towards the country where the participants were heading; technological and political power; western ideology; media: projected images and vernacular, which affected the way they understood internationalisation.

The inner factors, on the other hand, involve the elements that determine the nature of the relationship that exists between the individuals and the new place in which they live: visual experience, or gaze (what they see), social interactions, evoked emotions, feelings (fear, love, safety, insecurity etc.), memories, activities, priorities, and values. All these factors simultaneously shaped the way the participants understood their environment. Perhaps the most important feature of these overlapping systems, however, is that they are disjunctive, or mind-independent, as the participants' perceptions of the image and reality of internationalisation, in this case, are constituents of their individual, visual, and conscious experience.

Various issues were reported to indicate that neither space nor time is respected with students: One of the biggest spatial problems stressed is heterogeneity. While expecting to see a heterogenous international community that would grant them space for intercultural activities (cross-cultural communication, for example), most students found themselves facing a space of binary division, racism, segregation, and other forms of discrimination that signal alterity. Feelings of inferiority and exclusion, human reification (feeling dehumanised, controlled, pushed and pulled at some stages of their life), lack of support and disorganisation, were commonly reported. Beyond all these spatial issues lay another critical temporal issue regarding the quality of service. The findings show that while students expect to see a long-term value-based service, what they get is a product — an immediate or short-term service that

reeks of the market-based institutional approach. Such space-time issues not only reflect a quality deficit between two paradoxical poles with different ideologies, needs, and interests (students and their institution) but also denote a non-reciprocal relationship that generates insecurity, uncertainty, and sometimes even grudge and hostility in students towards the institution. This caused them to seek and/or create a third space, where they reinvent the traditional culture in relation to the new host culture, to compensate for the shortfall. Analysis of the data shows a common need among students for social and mental stability, putting them on alert. For them to adapt to the new atmosphere and move on, they had to build their own spaces, often with people they could trust and feel comfortable with. This is to feel safe, to feel important and self-worth, or simply to feel human (depending on their situations, or the type of challenges they face).

## 5.1.4 Space and students

When we consider what the participants say and do, we realise that much of what happens is mainly a question of space: how we make it, how we use it, how it can be opened or closed.

The interviewees seem very conscious that space is something they create through what they see, what they say, what they do, and the way they feel. They also know that the created space can be useful or effective depending on the choices they make. For example, do they choose to talk about their challenges in public or not? Do they choose to attend sessions or not? Do they choose to impose themselves on society or not? All these go towards creating a space — attitude, here, is very important because they may say something and do something else (see the analysis about gameplay). The institution, however, seems to treat them as empty vessels: not interested in their internal demands, emotions, differences, their individual needs, and interests, but solely in their money. This suggests that space for the institution is rather conceptualised as a physical place that needs to be filled with people to have an identity: this is a traditional view of space that says, 'space is real' and thus fundamental to shape an institution's identity, and for learning to take place. As such, an international university becomes just an empty box that we simply try to fill with international students to be recognised

as so, and students as receptacles we try to fill in with knowledge. This view is so old and superficial that it cannot coexist with the complex and sophisticated spatial nature of HE. It obscures the conceptual aspect of space, without which the experience of a particular place is impossible, as Kant argues.

Therefore, in the process of building space in such an environment that I describe as new in form and traditional in substance[16], it is no surprise that disillusioned students realise that the ideology of choice the university talks about is actually illusory: instead of changing the space they are in, or personalising it to fit students' individual needs and interests, the space was so static that it ended up changing students and what they do, making them different from their actual selves. For example, we saw how Lisa could talk freely in some spaces, but not in others; how she changed from a sociable to non-sociable person when she realised that people around did not accept her veil. Similar was the experience of Katia, who opted for hats instead of a veil to avoid people's racist looks. This issue of choice was highlighted in many other statements such as:

> I feel like I'm controlled with a remote control (Lisa, p.6).

> Some supervisors from other universities tried to change my topic to meet their perspectives, their expertise, but that was not what I wanted to work on. I wanted to work on something more personal. The way I see my research (Katia, p.1).

> Honestly, I don't have any power [...] The only thing that I can think of is trying to cope with our situation now, to forget that. Usually, I'm not the kind of people [person] who goes to others but recently I've been doing it for different sort of reasons: among them is I want a change. I want to have the opportunity to meet others (Amita, p. 6).

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[16] The institution projects a very ideal and sophisticated self-image (the form); however, its attitude and thus practices are very traditional (substance).

We have seen in the literature review that space and place are inseparable elements, both constantly growing and developing over time. Therefore, separating place from space, as the data shows, only causes disturbance and abnormality in the functioning of the whole organisation. Normally, each student has an identity needing a particular space of learning, which would represent them individually; and the role of the organisation, in this case, is to provide them the appropriate space that would fit their individual needs and interests, and the right support to help them be what they aspire to be. However, with the institution perceiving space as static, it is rather trying to preconceive the students' needs, without even listening to them or understanding their actual needs. It provides them service that meets the needs that the institution thinks the students ought to have, which is unethical.

This leads me to conclude that space is neither something we construct through what we say, see, do, and feel, nor static (or an absolute physical material), but a multi-faceted element, a complex constantly growing and developing dynamism affecting students differently, depending on their process of decision-making, their individual needs, and interests. Students try to create a certain space, and when they realise that it does not work, they choose other options depending on their situation.

The university's perception of space is crucial. We can understand why this is important by considering how internationalisation practices are fundamentally spatial, based on the staff's views and perspectives of international HE.

## 5.2 Staff

Interestingly, while this part of the data analysis confirmed the presence of an ideological conflict between students and their institution, it also highlighted another conflict between the institution and the staff, based on the assumption that the actual form of internationalisation in vogue at the institution is fake, irrational, and fundamentally unethical. It is worth noting that the staff's position against the current internationalisation practices is not limited to the single

case of this study. Their wide experience at other universities allowed them to talk about internationalisation from a wider perspective.

## 5.2.1 Fake

The institutional mindset is viewed as "outward-looking", mainly prompted by the external marketing demands which lie in attracting and recruiting a huge number of international students to gain money and become 'international'. The internationality of an organisation, in this case, is seen to be measured quantitatively by the number of international students recruited and not qualitatively by the quality of the service provided. However, according to Knight (2015), such a conception of internationalisation is only a myth because internationalisation, for her, is not about quantity as much as it is about quality, and the latter, for the interviewees, is dismissed. This suggests that internationalisation, for the institution, is understood as a process of quantification rather than a proactive approach to improve its performance.

The institutional approach is described as shallow, tokenistic, and misleading, lacking commitment to teaching and learning outcomes.

The original meaning of internationalisation, for the staff, needs time to take shape, and especially requires deep spatial changes in the institution's culture, starting from people's mindsets to the designed programmes, moving to the social activities and social life, all to be informed simultaneously and interconnectedly. However, according to the data, none of these changes seems to be respected. It is argued that the commercial mindset of the organisation and its greed for money have led the university to reframe the concept of internationalisation to fit its organisational goals. In fact, internationalisation, according to the data, is not taken as a priority but as an immediate need for the institution to reach its goals. Accordingly, the institution is engaged in a purely business operation that aims to achieve an international brand image, without making serious efforts to qualify for the same. Analysing this thought process suggests that the institution, in achieving its economic and reputational goals, relies mainly on its existing strengths, viz., political power, technological advancements, and strategic

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intelligence, (which alone, it believes, can lead to success) rather than concrete efforts. This interpretation indicates that the university's mindset is fixed, so much so that becoming an international brand is its main concern, thus regarding internationalisation not as 'a means to an end' but the 'end' itself. In this respect and in relation to the outward-looking mindset highlighted earlier, the staff view their organisation as merely "talking the talk and not walking the walk" (Chloe). The institution is viewed as lacking in transparency and sincerity, putting up a good facade or projecting an ideal image of internationalisation that has no relation with reality, to impress and attract students. Simply put, the organisation is seen as faking its way to success, which George defines as the maximisation of profit with the least possible changes or costs.

## 5.2.2 Irrational

It is irrational due to the organisation's discursive attitude. Whilst it sells an idealistic self-image of internationalisation to fulfil its economic and reputational goals, it displays minimal interest in developing its service quality, which prevents students from realising or living the conceived ideal norm that the institution instilled in their minds. Thus, building an international reputation for the organisation is more of a perception-shaping activity than a proactive practice to improve its product quality to fit the students' diverse individual needs and experiences. Spatialising internationalisation practices this way does not help because it gives the lie to the reciprocity of this exchange that the university promises students. Again, the institution can control students' perceptions of its image on the virtual scale but, as the data shows, not on real life. It involves a diverse student body that has different needs, attitudes, and engaged in different activities which cannot be fully controlled (Silbershatz, 2017).

This leads me to question the term 'international'. Internationalisation is a concept derived from the term 'international' composed of **inter** (or "between") and **nation**: defined by Anderson (1991) as "an imagined community conceived by people who believe they belong to it". In more spatial terms, internationalisation means the space in-between nations. It is the equivalent of what Doreen Massey (1991) describes as a living space: a place that carries multiple identities

and develops over time bearing a myriad of extensive spaces, each space representing a story. Likewise, an international university is also a social space comprised of strong socio-spatial relations produced through the interaction of different nations. From each nation, the university recruits many international students, with each student having his/her individual needs and interests. The problem we have with this structure is that the institution which plays an integral role in the production of these social relations, given the competitive advantage they bring to the sector, is occupying a non-relative position that is place-oriented and limited to the recruitment of students. Recruiting international students is undoubtedly essential but is not enough because the institution overlooks the internal demands which necessitate crucial spatial changes on the ground, which are supposed to make the difference. Dismissing these parameters and taking internationalisation for a simple practice of global branding and accreditation demonstrate a serious space issue reflecting the institution's disrespectful attitude towards the 'other'. It seems apparent that there is an internal resistance and reluctant acceptance of the 'other', stemming from the restrictive institutional mindset which again justifies the state of students feeling othered, highlighted in the students' section.

Another sign that the institution's approach is irrational is the communicative meaning of the term international. Harry for example asks: "why would we want to use the term 'international'? […] International means foreign, whereas, in a university, everybody should be international". It is argued that the institution is using the term international, supposed to represent all the students from different nations including British and non-British students, to identify only the 'other'. The concept of internationalisation, in this case, becomes a hegemonic, political policy of othering. Although these are just words people use to distinguish between students, they have a powerful, detrimental, and concrete effect on students, as such usage creates a disrespectful space of exclusion. It highlights the perceived distance between the locals and the non-locals and reminds the non-British students that they are strangers (aliens).

When we consider the ideological meaning behind the concept of internationalisation, it is clearly meant to bring students together in a collegial environment that promises heterogeneity,

diversity, interculturality, positive learning experience, and better life. However, what the institution does, according to the data, is disconnecting students. It provides a static space of disunity that encourages students to develop negative attitudes towards the western world. To describe this phenomenon, internationalisation is certainly not the right term to use, and 'counter-nationalisation' may be more suitable, because it is separating nations, putting nations against each other, and not the opposite. It is creating a space of powerful nationalism and xeno-racism: a space where embracing the new is perceived as a threat to one's national identity (see the section below for more details).

### 5.2.3 Unethical

Another aspect of this analysis underlines the immoral aspects contributing to the spatial-temporal issues highlighted above. First, the data determines that "internationalisation is put out [touted] as a brand to show that the institution is doing what it should be doing because the government said [that] internationalisation is important". The implication of this is that "there is an appearance of internationalisation which does not actually match what people really do and what people really feel, and that leads to a very simplistic view of what it is" (Harry). Second, it is argued that the organisation is more interested in making money than nurturing students' talents, and because international students pay a huge sum to study abroad, many organisations were tempted to lower standards with them. Third, as mentioned earlier, internationalisation is not prioritised. It is, rather, institutionalised in a superficial way to fit the short-term market parameters the institution brought to the education agenda. I analysed this as a space-time issue because, on the one hand, the staff do not seem to adhere to the idea of an organisation rushing a product to be able to compete with other universities. As part of this, reframing students as customers and making them believe that they can evaluate the service provision from a customer perspective is problematic. The short-term nature of marketisation, for the staff, is incompatible with the complex long-term student learning development. Harry, for example, confides:

There is nothing short-term with respect to the sort of learning that goes on

with PhD students. It's a long development. So, students go to Research

Development sessions, and they are asked to evaluate…But how could they

possibly know, because they are at the beginning of a long trajectory of

personal development? The problem with marketisation is very short-term.

You as a customer would have very little data at the place where you are to

evaluate something which is much longer term. If the marketisation ideology

leads students to believe that they can assess everything they are exposed

to at a short-term level – this is not right. It's actually unethical.

On the other hand, the superficial space the institution provides, as a result, is disrespectful to the other. The staff contend that it does not promote diversity as it should. The institutional culture is seen as not representative of all the students but only the British, and that includes staff, programmes, social activities, social life, food, posters, etc.

## 5.2.4 Implications

Analyses of the institution's commercial perspective and its impact on the relationship among the stakeholders (staff, students, and institution) have revealed many health problems, ranging from signs of superiority and narcissism in the organisation, depression, and anger in the staff, and potential personality disorder in students.

By meeting the external demands and overlooking the internal ones, the institution is using its territorial and technological power to achieve its egocentric objective of forming an international brand, with which they can generate income and compete in the market, with the least changes possible. The objective of the organisation, for the staff, is oneself. Its place-oriented perspective, which ignores others' differences and cultures, or simply resists the change, suggests an intense fear of the other. Following the conception of space as static, massive numbers of international students in the UK would, probably, be perceived (as Massey, 1994 argues) as a threat to the local culture. They may represent a sense of disorientation and

subversion to their place identity (a threat to the sense of a place-called-home, see page 80) and that fairly justifies the institution's discursive mindset.

The staff do not seem to uphold the same values as the institution. Signs of anger, frustration and depression towards its behaviour were commonly noted either in terms of the tone and tenor, their words or language use. They strongly oppose the current neoliberal perspective of universities because it makes the institution look machinic and thus unethical, disregarding human values.

As far as students are concerned, all the staff expressed their concerns about the institution treating students as customers, which is again another sign of superiority, "giving students an identity they did not ask for". The latter is highlighted as extremely "dangerous" and can lead to dire consequences such as social injustice, class stratification, students' suffering (morally and physically), and entitlement, which were already noticed in students' accounts.

These spatial implications were estimated to bring the HE to collapse because the advancement of technology and student mobility make it difficult for universities to keep their profitable game and their negative reality secret. We have seen from the data that deciphering the institution's game is only a question of time. Once the game is revealed, the situation only gets worse because it directly affects students' perceptions and attitudes towards the host culture, and that can decrease student migration, leading to the collapse of the whole institution's business. The bottom line then is that the institution's model of internationalisation, which is market-led, is not sustainable. It has more cons than pros and that is unhealthy.

## 5.3 Internationalisation from a machine to organism

A further problem apparent in the data concerns the ecology of internationalisation. It was clear to the interviewees that institutions are using internationalisation as an apparatus for controlling student behaviour and influencing their choices through abstract images of high-quality provision. Amita, for example, highlighted such a goal-oriented function of internationalisation in HE. What the latter implies, she says, is "you have to be like us", "you have to do things like

us" ["us" here refers to the host culture]. Lisa, too, expressed feelings of manipulation and subordination vis-à-vis the contractual obligations of the institution on the one hand and the home government which is paying for her studies on the other hand: "I feel like I'm controlled with a remote control".

The other mechanical function identified in the data is making money. According to the participants' views, making money is perceived by higher education institutions as an immediate need and synonymous with success:

> Universities look at it from a very monetary point of view [..] they just view it
>
> as a good way to make money and make universities look good (Jane, p.3).

Although it is possible to think of internationalisation as a mechanical structure, understanding it as such, according to the data, obscures many important aspects about the actual function of internationalisation. The mechanistic system of a machine, for instance, fails to account for the humanistic side of internationalisation. If internationalisation is taken for a machine[17], we can understand that it is 'something created by us and controlled to achieve something for us' and, therefore, it excludes the other, which applies entirely to our case study.

The structure of a mechanistic organisation is often pyramid-shaped, converged to a single point at the top, which is the centre of authority and power. In this form of organisation, "employees tend to work separately on their tasks, which are handed down through a chain of command. Company-wide decisions are left to employees who reside at the top of the hierarchical chain and communication is passed from the top down" (Hunsaker, 2018, paragraph 3). In such a rigid top-down management approach, employees have no right to negotiate the decisions and procedures issued by the superiors, who they rarely interact with (Burns and Stalker, 1961; Hunsaker, 2018). With this structure, organisations commonly have

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[17] Merriam Webster defines a machine as (1): "an assemblage of parts that transmit forces, motion, and energy one to another in a predetermined manner".
(2): "an instrument designed to transmit or modify the application of power, force, or motion" (3): "any of various apparatuses formerly used to produce stage effects" (https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/machine)

a greater attachment to the local culture than the general, including knowledge, employees, experience, and skills (Burns and Stalker, 1961). And that is problematic in an international environment, where cultural diversity is the key: we are supposed to mix and learn from each other's differences and cultures and not the other way around.

The above characteristics were all identified in the data, both with the staff and students. Oliver, for example, stressed how it was almost impossible for him to convince his colleagues about the importance of developing the regular, white-based curriculum which, for the interviewees, prioritises only the western culture, to a more international curriculum that would help all students to develop intercultural skills:

> Internationalisation is not an immediate need for our students. So, they don't
> see it as a priority and, therefore, it's become much harder to convince
> people that they really need to take this into account and that our students
> need to develop this global mindset and develop intercultural competence
> (Oliver, p. 5)

Chloe, on the other hand, stated that, in an international HE, respect is gained through obedience. For her, staff are respected only when they do not take a stand against the dictated tasks:

> If you stand up to them, they don't like it and if you don't stand up, they will
> just sit on your shoulder.

As far as the 'internal' and 'external' are concerned, our analysis reveals an intense différend[18] between the institution's culture and that of the students provoked by their distinct and incompatible needs and interests (see McLennan, 2015; 2018). While the former is inclined to

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[18] "Différend" is a French word coined by the French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard to refer to a conflict between two or more parties that have different rationales, opinions, or interests. See https://frenchjournalformediaresearch.com/lodel-1.0/main/index.php?id=1437&lang=fr

homogenisation as an easy way to fulfil its monetary and reputational interests, the latter expects more heterogeneity and respect to individual differences.

Because of this, internationalisation indeed seems machinic. However, according to the participants' recommendations, articulated in the I (3) model below, it is much more complex. The data suggests that internationalisation is a dynamic organism[19] interconnected with many elements across the sector, including stakeholders (staff, students, institution), space, time, attitude, behaviour, feelings, needs and interests, culture, values (instrumental and humanistic values), inside/outside, and image (virtual and real).

Organic organisations are often best described in biological terms since they have a particular morphology that embodies the properties of life such as growth, self-maintenance, reproduction, sensitivity, or ability to respond to external stimuli, which allows them to be more autonomous, flexible, and thus capable of coping well with dynamic environments. Unlike the divided structure of a machine, in an organic system, we often find a network of people working together freely, with mutual respect, and interdependently. The individual tasks are more realistic because they are constantly redefined and set by the total situation of the concern, instead of the top-down technical method (Burns and Stalker, 1961; Engeström, 2010).

Considering internationalisation as an organism, rather than a machine, allows us to see that there are at least three different ways through which an organism operates as internationalisation. In these ways, which I explain below, it can be highly useful and beneficial to an institution to understand its working:

First, in terms of form, an organism is a complex assembly of many interconnected parts which work simultaneously, forming a living structure with the quality of self-control and self-maintenance (Durkheim and Parsons, 2016; Pradeu, 2010). Contrary to a machine that relies on external interventions for its construction, organisation, propulsion, maintenance, and

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[19] Merriam Webster defines the term organism as "a complex structure of interdependent and subordinate elements whose relations and properties are largely determined by their function in the whole" https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/organism

repair, an organism is intrinsically self-sufficient: it can regulate, repair, and regenerate its system like a living being (plant, fungus, human body, etc.). Its power lies in its holistic integrity and unity, which make it last longer than a machine designed for consuming resources (Durkheim and Parsons, 2016; Jain, 2016; Nicholson, 2013; 2018).

Like an organism, internationalisation is also seen as comprising a myriad of different individual entities that are strongly connected. Oliver, for instance, highlighted this organic aspect of internationalisation in this extract:

> Internationalisation is not just about the recruitment of international students – this is a very narrow conception of internationalisation[..]the Institution should be seeing internationalisation as a multifaceted construct that involves a number of key dimensions, and these dimensions mutually inform each other. If we want to be considered an internationalised university then − of course, recruitment is one aspect but also the programmes that we offer should contain a very clear international dimension that enables our students, both home students, and international students, to develop global international intercultural competencies.

Here, Oliver defines the machinic structure of the organisation, which tends to focus on a narrow span of control, i.e., recruiting students. As an expert in international development, Oliver was mindful that the recruitment of students alone is not enough for an institution to be international. Internationalisation, for him, is more profound and requires more time and care. Oliver's description of internationalisation, therefore, supports its organic aspect. He calls the university's attention to the importance of widening its span of control and rethinking its international policy to embrace the feature of simultaneous multiplicity that exists in the process of internationalisation.

Second, in terms of structure, the structure of an organism is non-linear, which creates a more collegial atmosphere in an organic organisation, with decision-making being more

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decentralised. This allows all members of the organisation to participate in the process of problem-solving; they can communicate their thoughts and share their ideas continuously without any restrictions, allowing for the synchronisation of individual and organisational goals. Internationalisation as an organism, through ongoing communication and interaction between stakeholders, can retain this collegial atmosphere for staff and provide a way for students (British and international) to integrate with the international community (Sas, 2018). With this structure, internationalisation also offers the ability to constantly adjust the diverse individual and institutional needs and interests, thus bring more harmony and consistency to the education system. Perhaps the best example of this is that of the student placed on "a suicide watch" (see section: words vs actions). In this example, Chloe highlighted two important points: first, the urgent need for institutions to listen to their students and understand their needs. She sees that the present hierarchic structure of control and authority in universities is only exacerbating students' problems, putting them at risk of committing suicide; second, Chloe's reaction towards the student indicates that sometimes we need to break the rules, or be less rigid, to help someone in need:

> I contacted the international office, and I said: look! Can I take her home because I'm worried that we're gonna come back, and she will kill herself! So, she came and spent two days in my house with my family. She was a different person. She didn't want to go back, and I said you have to go back!

This leads us to the third aspect of an organism, which is function. In terms of function, an organism does not work in just a single place; it roots out and branches out a bit like a fungus. Thus internationalisation, for example, cannot and should not be reduced into a single office in a university, as it tends to happen at least in my case study. The data confirms that it is not possible to isolate it in one place, while it is supposed to embody the entire university, if not the society at large (country). After all, as we saw in the data, students' experience is not limited to academic life. PhD students live in the UK for at least 3 years. So, the social sphere is also important.

As part of the function, thinking of internationalisation in terms of an organism highlights the fact that internationalisation is about culture, or at least has an important cultural element that needs to be respected. The term culture, in biology, refers to organic growth, and this in itself challenges the machinic view of internationalisation that makes it look like something we can predict, control, and use for the single extrinsic purpose of making money. Indeed, we have seen that most of the participants were struggling to cope with the institution's predetermined services which, according to the data, attempt to homogenise and particularly manipulate students' identities. The data also highlights the presence of binary preconceptions and racist attitudes towards international students, due to a complex issue of othering interpreted as xeno-racism.

Conceiving internationalisation as an organism, however, can help develop powerful ethical components in the education sector:

- for example, it can change the institution's restrictive attitude towards the 'other' and redefine its machinic view of the world to a more organic view;

- it can inculcate the missing sense of humanity, coexistence, and, thus, respect for all parts of the organism;

- it can strengthen the institution's relationship with its staff and students through ongoing communication and intercultural dialogue;

- it can help bridge the space-time gap apparent in the data and develop a more realistic space of heterotopia (see below for elaboration);

- these components together, I argue, can largely help to overcome xeno-racism, and eventually ensure a more sustainable model of internationalisation [the I (3) model].

The other aspect of the function of an organism that seems to fit the realistic nature of internationalisation is that it is analogue (Durkheim and Parsons, 2016). In contrast to the binary/digital system of a machine which allows it to distinguish between two or more values (economic, reputational, and competitive), an organism is always developing, such that you can never label anything in an organic world. It is always in-between: the size of organic fruits

and vegetables, for example, is never the same; the human body too is growing in a way that makes it different from anybody else, our fingerprints are never identical. They differ from one person to the other and so are our individual needs and interests. This eventually explains the problematic issue around the institution's binary label of 'international students' highlighted at the beginning of this chapter.

Like an organism, our findings suggest that internationalisation is working like a human body. Staff and students in an international university are like the organs of this body: each performs specific tasks that first need to be assigned to them not according to their financial status but according to their skills and capabilities; second, their functions should contribute to the maintenance of the whole body, instead of just the head.

A human body, like any living being, is constantly growing and, therefore, it is impossible for an institution to predict it or control it with a certain predetermined one-size-fits-all approach. In this respect, the study provides evidence that essentialisation and students' categorisation in an international community are problematic for two important reasons:

First, it is dehumanising. Students feel they are just being used as tools to achieve the institution's self-interests. Second, it marginalises students, making them feel socially, academically, and emotionally distant. The accumulation of such feelings, according to the data, leads to intense mental pressures that can ignite hatred, grudge, and hostility, which are unhealthy for a living body. Therefore, to deal with such a complex environment, I argue that universities need to cross their boundaries (Beighton, 2018a; Engeström, 2007; Engeström and Sannino, 2012; Lippke and Wegener, 2014), go beyond the machinic view of the world and its global uniformities, and start developing their own ways of being together with their students and staff (Beighton, 2015, 2016c, 2018a; Durkheim and Parsons, 2016; Lefebvre, 1991).

Internationalisation looks machinic but is a very unhelpful model and it does not reflect reality. On the contrary, internationalisation (3) really works in an organic way formed of many parts that work creatively and interdependently.

## 5.4 What is this I3 Model and how does it work?

Previously in the literature review, two different models of internationalisation were identified:

Market-based Model

"M-Model"

Value-based Model
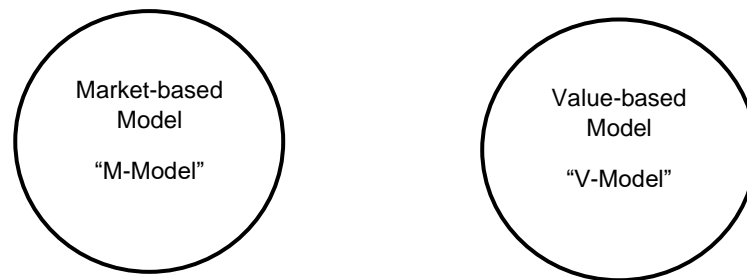
"V-Model"

The market-based form of internationalisation is the current institutional model, a profitable model mainly driven by financial, reputational, and competitive objectives. Spatially, it is limited to a single office in the institution and is characterised, as the data shows, by a divided relationship among the stakeholders.
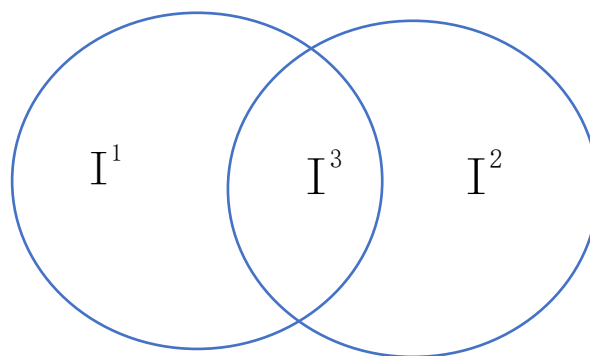
The value-based form of internationalisation is the opposite of the "M-model". It is a model that I generated based on the call of Uwe Brandenburg and De Wit (2012), Knight (2011, 2015), and Welikala (2015) for greater commitment to teaching-learning outcomes and students' experiences. Central to this model is the use of internationalisation as 'a means to an end' or an instrument to improve educational provision. This form of internationalisation could be achieved if universities value students' learning experiences and act accordingly.

These two models make perfect sense with the data because they demonstrate the exact discordance and imbalance that exist between the institution, whose adopted model is market-based, and both staff and students, who rather support/demand the reconsideration of the M-model for a more value-based infrastructure. The difference between these models is that the former is profitable but unethical, whereas the latter is more ethical but probably not profitable since it is based on educational values, which is not enough in a capitalist environment.

A third, compromise model is therefore demanded by the interviewees. According to the participants' recommendations, a compromise between the M-Model and the V-Model leads to a third new model, that would be at once ethical and profitable. For example:

> If a university wants to attract international students, I think it can be done in a way where the students can benefit, and the university can benefit (Chloe, p. 6).

> They have to look at them [students] as a person, as a human being before an amount of money […] it's not a problem to value money but value the quality as well (Lisa, p. 4-5).

$$I^1 \qquad I^3 \qquad I^2$$

The I3 Model

This diagram shows how internationalisation3 (I3) is represented in relation to the other models. I1 represents the machinic form of internationalisation that bears the actual financial and reputational values the institution upholds. I2 represents the second form of internationalisation that covers the teaching-learning humanistic values the institution dismisses (De Wit and Altbach, 2020). I3 is the intersection of I1 and I2. In other words, it is the overlapped/ in-between space that shows the logical relation between quantity and quality.

The interesting thing about this model is that it is not a fixed form of internationalisation, but a dynamic process that produces a meaningful space of multiplicity that could be measured both

quantitatively and qualitatively: quantitatively because the produced space is profitable, and qualitatively because it is responsive and representative to the diverse experiences of students and especially respectful to their individual needs and interests (Lefebvre, 1991).

### 5.4.1 Characteristics of the I (3) model

As a result of my study, my theoretical involvement, and my conceptual framework to their experiences, I have come up with this model. I invite the reader to explore the extent to which this model would be useful in their own particular context.

With the I3 model, the participants hope to see a more transparent, comprehensive form of internationalisation. They hope to see in higher education a space where it is possible to be different, where it is possible to respect difference, and most importantly, where it is possible to change: they want an environment of high quality, of wellbeing, of healthy relations, of welcoming communities and social justice. This is all with a safe link between business and academia. The participants made it clear that they were not against the idea of higher education as a source of income but against thinking of internationalisation as just a money-making machine (see below). They were not against recruiting international students but against treating them as agents of internationalisation and global branding (Knight, 2015). They were against the selfish position of the institution and its overwhelming commercial mentality that makes HE looks machinic and disregard human values. Internationalisation, according to the data, is not nation-specific, or culture-specific, as the university understands it. It is, rather, about diversity, knowledge exchange, unity, integration, and coexistence.

So, the first thing that a university needs to change with the I3 Model is the perception and use of space.

#### 5.4.1.1 Perception of space

Currently, the university has a very static perception of space that reflects its fixed mindset and sceptic behaviours in respect to students' learning experiences. Therefore, with the I3 model, an institution, first and foremost, should not be perceived as a pre-existing space that we fill

with people to have an identity, but a dynamic social space that needs to be produced through the interactions of multiple other spaces that are strongly connected. With the I3 model, an institution should be the physical representation of the students' imagined community (the image they conceive throughout media: pictures and vernacular). Simply put, the virtual image, or the placeless space the institution creates through media and projects to the outside to attract students, should reflect the inside and *vice versa*. As part of this, it is commonly argued that the institution's space is neither safe nor welcoming and does not represent the backgrounds of all students. This argument was identified in the accounts of both staff and students. Yet, the students were much articulate in this sense because everything was backed by their lived experiences. Jane is a powerful example in describing the institutional space. She calls it "a predominantly white space" and that basically because, as a black student, she finds it hard to find "black spaces". By white space, Jane means that in the university there is:

     a. Lack of BAME staff and students.

     b. Lack of representation of BAME culture.

     c. Lack of respect for difference.

In other words, the current space of HE is seen as closed, static, and linear: it does not allow communication to take place, it does not respect differences, and does not represent the cultures of all students.

Therefore, as part of the dynamic structure of space, the data suggests, the institution should be respectfully representative of the diverse experiences and cultures of students. As such, an institution becomes a place with different meanings, different identities, and different relationships to other places. A space that Foucault (1970; 1975; 1986; 2008), as highlighted in the literature review page 90, describes as 'heterotopia'. Drawing on Foucault's theory of heterotopia, international higher education does not need to be perfect but simply realistic, particularly in its projections to the outside, so that incoming students will not develop high expectations regarding the actual place (see also Foucault, 2008, pp. 16-17).

### 5.4.1.2 How is space used?

Currently, internationalisation resembles a linear static object, which is put into a space container. It is located in just one place that I call 'the international office'. The university looks at internationalisation from a very superficial perspective as the job of one department, which does not help because students' experiences are so complex and sophisticated that they cannot confine them to a single office. Chloe, for example, echoed this in her statement about what the university must do. She argues, "the university as an institution needs to take more responsibility for the experiences of students in terms of not just what they say [but also] in terms of what they do; for the learning material [she suggests] students need to go to the library and need to go to the bookshop and see a variety of books. It's not just western people that write books! It's not just western people that do research! There is research from all over the world. That needs to be implemented in every module".

Here, Chloe makes a series of concrete points: first, she reminds the institution that it is responsible for its learners, not simply an empty space in which paying subjects are placed and left. This could mean, for example, that the university is not really thinking like an institution. It is thinking of itself as a marketing machine, rather than a whole organism. The university lures students in, takes their money, and then forgets about them. Chloe, therefore, suggests the need for a more holistic view of this organisation. She calls on the university to perform its duties of being in the service of its students, of supporting and helping them. Second, she points out that the institution needs to be consistent in what it says and what it does. We have seen previously in the analysis (see section: words vs actions) that Chloe's major argument is around the institution "talking the talk and not walking the walk". While she thinks that the university is doing a good job in documenting its reality for marketing purposes, she does not see it implementing it in the real life, which creates this world of emptiness: an empty picture of the university that works for marketing, but, not for students. For Chloe, what the university is doing is not enough because there must be concrete actions on the ground. By this, we can understand that if the university just did what it promises, it would solve so

many of the problems it faces today. Third, Chloe highlights the importance of decolonising the curriculum and looking beyond the western culture to develop a more global mindset.

As part of this, Chloe also stresses the importance of social activities in internationalising and bringing all students together, making them learn from each other's differences: "The university should put a social activity to make sure that they are embracing diversity, let people come together**",** she says.

What Chloe means is that internationalisation is not just a simple tool for income and cannot be reduced to a single office. It is more complex than that: "it is about the culture of the university. It's about how the university tries to make sure international students feel at home by the social activity that they have. It's about the staff. Making sure the staff is representative. Making sure that the learning material is representative. Making sure that the staff would not make statements that are basically inappropriate".

Having said that, Chloe highlights that the university is also inconsistent in how it trains staff for international service delivery: "if a member of staff has been here a long time and they are professors or senior lecturers, often these people kind of feel that because they have been here a long time, they don't need to be trained, and yet you will find that they're the ones that would say the most racist, ignorant things". This issue of lack of experience was also echoed by Oliver. He argues that the institution does not address the staff capacities to deal and work with international students:

> They don't address the capacity of staff to be able to work with those students
> (Oliver, p. 3).

Consequently, my data shows that many students feel that their space is not being understood or respected. Students, Chloe reports, do not feel comfortable talking about their difficulties with staff who do not represent them, and that is problematic because if students do not feel safe, they will never reveal their real boundaries, and if they do not voice their opinions, universities will never understand them and thus the service provided will never be compatible. This will exacerbate the students' suffering, putting them at the risk of committing suicide (see

pages 238-239). It thus seems clear that students are the only victims of the university's machinic and maladaptive behaviours. Therefore, with the I3 model, this study suggests a more organic way of internationalising HE. We cannot talk about space in the I3 model without talking about time: they are both important and inseparable.

### 5.4.1.3 Time in the I3 model

Like space, time is an important factor in the I3 model. For the interviewees, any time restrictions, whether in terms of programme design or students' evaluation of the service provision, is incongruent. The institution should genuinely work on internationalisation not only in terms of money but also quality and ethics. Its time and efforts should be devoted to expanding the understanding of internationalisation and embedding it in every aspect of the organisation like programme design, space design, administration, teaching, admissions, and support services. The institution's service, according to the data, needs to be tailored to the students' needs and interests and for that, there needs to be a platform for intercultural dialogue between the university and its students. This can happen only if the organisation changes its fixed mindset and understands that its service can be developed only through change. This leads us to the second main characteristic of the I3 model, which involves the institution's mindset and its relationship with students.

### 5.4.1.4 The institution's mindset

The institution's static perception of space profoundly affects the way it conducts its business. The latter focuses on one consuming goal, viz., proving the organisation's identity repeatedly, using what it believes are 'fixed traits': western ideology, political power, strategic intelligence, technology, and competitiveness. To be what it wants to be (for example, becoming an international organisation, which is one of the characteristics the institution is attempting to prove in this context), the university, like all other organisations, is required to provide constant confirmations of its qualities, which are based on students' evaluations of its services. In other words, the fixed mindset of this organisation creates a sense of urgency to prove its potential

to become international and compete with other universities. This goal, according to the data, is achieved through two manipulative activities:

### 1) Perception-shaping activity:

For Silbershatz, (2017) any organisation, to do business, needs to have a good reputation, and to build this reputation, it has to convince its clients of the quality of its products and the "integrity of its business" (para 07). This is often done through media (advertisements). Organisations create a form of virtual propaganda which helps them to control people's perceptions of their reality. My data shows that the university, in its attempt to attract international students, uses the same perception-shaping activity. On the virtual space, it portrays an angelistic[20] self-image of high-quality service provision, making it look ideal. Yet, it does not reflect reality. In fact, the angelic act of the organisation did not go unnoticed: when the students arrive at their destination and start living the experience, they soon realise the unpalatable reality of the institution. Jane, for example, explains this activity as an act of angelism. She described the organisation metaphorically as "wearing white wings", implying that the university is using the media to present a misleading and benevolent image of respect, tolerance, and care for the 'other' to hide its deficiencies, the dark reality of otherness, exclusion, racism, and discrimination, or simply xeno-racism:

> Basically, if you scroll through XXXX [the university website], every post on
> Brexit or immigrations or asylum seekers are all wearing white wings… [in
> reality] you hear things like they should go back to their own country... It's
> like very white-winged (Jane).

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[20] This term comes from the French word "Angelique". It is derived from the term "Angel" and evokes perfection and innocence. However, in this context, it is used ironically to mean the opposite or pretending to be something good while they are actually not. Merriam Webster defines angelism as "the regarding of human affairs from an unrealistically sanguine point of view as though human beings were angels" (https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/angelism).

### 2) Reconstructing student identity:

The second manipulative activity of the institution consists of reframing students' identities such that they suit its organisational goals. As pointed out, there is an urgent need for the institution to prove its qualities, and the way all other universities do this is through evaluation. However, the problem with this is that when we have a fixed mindset, our thinking becomes restrictively binary: everything is seen as black or white and never in-between. So, for the university, its performance must be evaluated positively by students to succeed or it will fail. Therefore, to avoid any risk of failure, the university frames students as customers and makes them believe that they have some autonomy in defining their learning and thus, "can assess everything they are exposed to at a short-term level". Harry, however, describes this as "wrong" and "unethical" because, for him, a student "as a customer would have very little data at the place where you are to evaluate something which is much longer-term". George too commented angrily on this, comparing it to "giving students an identity they did not ask for".

A further aspect of this analysis is the institution being discursive in the way it frames students' identities. While it supports the idea of increasing access to HE by recruiting more international students and theoretically recognises the cultural, educational, and economic values they bring to the sector when it comes to real life, it resists change and is arrogant, narcissistic, and self-centered:

> They are very happy to take the fee, but when it comes to changing the programme, they will be defensive (Oliver, p. 3).

The university's treatment of international students is very machinic. As we have seen in the section on internationalisation from machinic to organic organisation, it was revealed that the institution not only sees international students as static products with fixed needs, that it can apparently preconceive before they even come into the university, but also treats them as different from national students:

> […] they are treating us like a product in their business (Katia, p.6).

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I think, how staff members subconsciously treat their students is very different. Like black students who they taught in class are seen as not engaged and distractive. The white students are just seen …. like gods, but there is a lot more (sic) harsh sentences [words] if you're international or if you are a BME. So, a lot of the support I had to −I don't think, it was given to me in the same way it would have been given to me if I was white female (Jane, p. 4).

From these, we can clearly see that the institution's approach to internationalise HE is not much of a success, in the sense that its machinic policy of control is counterproductive, unethical, and most importantly, unsustainable in the long term.

Instead of wasting time in proving its identity over and over again, trying to control the uncontrollable, hiding deficiencies, sticking to standards and everything local, the I3 model suggests a more challenging process of development, that will help to:

- take the university out of its comfort zone 'to be the change';
- change its fixed mindset to a flexible (growth) one;
- shift from a machinic organisation to a more organic one;
- create its own space distinct from other universities;
- help the university be less individualistic but much more connected, much more processual about its own identity.

To achieve this level of flexibility, the institution needs to understand that space is more complex than a pre-existing, unchanging empty container. It needs to understand that space is a 'social product' that needs to be produced and constantly adjusted to fit the diverse needs and interests of its students.

The institution needs to be less rigid and more flexible in the way it conducts its business. Its perception of international students as products must change. Students are not 'objects' to be

used carelessly or preconceive their needs and assume a certain deficiency in them without even seeing them. They are human beings with distinct identities that need to be respected. Students must be perceived as growing individuals because if we postulate that students are fixed objects, that means that we cannot teach them anything, and they cannot learn anything. They should have the capacity to change to be able to learn (Beighton, 2016c). The university too must have this capacity to change to overcome its deficiencies and develop its services. The latter, therefore, should be produced and synchronised regularly through collaborative work with its stakeholders. The organisation should understand that internationalisation is not a static space of individualism but a reciprocal process of individuation, where the organisation needs to be in the service of the individual, so that the latter, in turn, will be of service to the organisation. Reporting Simondon's (1964) most basic argument on individuation, Shaviro (2006) states:

> the "individual" is never given in advance; it must be produced, it must coagulate, or come into being, in the course of an ongoing process. This means, first, that there is no "preformation" [..] on the second place, this means that an individual is never final; there are always untapped potentials, additional possibilities for metamorphosis, further individuations. "The living organism conserves within itself a permanent activity of individuation" (p.16).

Shaviro's point here is that Simondon, in his theory of individuation, challenges the traditional view of the individual as just one single thing. For him, an individual has to be produced or come into being through a process which is never fixed and thus cannot be given in advance (there is no preformation). This means that, for example, the university can never preconceive students' needs. This involves a long and complex process that happens at the university and requires persistence and an intense relationship with students.

My argument here is that what happens at the university really matters. We do not just recruit existing objects that we could buy, sell, and reproduce all the time. The activity at the university is what shapes the student to be good or bad (or creates the student for good or for bad), and

until the university understands that it will never understand its students. For instance, we have seen in the data how students develop different attitudes towards their university, depending on the activities they are involved in. While some would develop a positive attitude, others develop a negative attitude, and sometimes it is something in-between. Students need to develop a healthy relationship with their organisation which needs reciprocal trust, credibility, transparency, and powerful interconnectivity to ensure a more enduring international community. In other words, instead of imposing one's individualistic culture, thoughts, or perspectives on the international community, the institution has to come out of the bubble of identity and ponder how to overcome its boundaries, stretch its capacity for change and be more creative in the conduct of its business.

### 5.4.2 What should be done?

My data suggests the following changes:

- Analysis of the data showed how powerful and devastating language use can be. Misusing the term international to represent the other is not only illogical but also unfair, and that has a concrete effect on students. Therefore, with the third model, the first priority is to correct the meaning of the term. Everybody in the institution should be international. The term international must be used to represent all students equally and all staff from different nations. A neutral label will help us reduce discrimination and binary division. Teaching students the benefits of being part of an international community will develop more sympathy than hatred between students and between nations.

- Internationalisation is not about status, but talents. By considering it a status symbol, institutions risk not getting the best students in the world. What they may get instead is just somebody who can afford to pay (Sharar, 2018), and that (for the staff) is problematic because it can engender further learning difficulties and enhance the ratio of students' failure.

- Internationalisation is not a one-way exchange, but a two-way exchange where there is both give and take; we should give as much as we take and *vice versa*. In this respect, the institution needs to be passionate in meeting the internal demands as much as it is in meeting the external ones. Further, I think, British students should also be allowed to go to other countries, to explore the world and have some international exposure (e.g., Erasmus programme) which I believe can help them develop more sympathy towards international students.

- Internationalisation should be a priority. It needs to be transformed from a single office, or the job of a department to everyone's job and have more diverse people involved in it.

- All students must be treated the same, applying the same standards without exception.

- The institution must treat students as students and never as customers.

- All staff must be trained and/or encouraged to have an international experience to develop a global mindset.

- The environment needs to be welcoming, which can be achieved through simple changes. For example, it is strongly recommended to have more diversity in terms of staff, to have staff who would represent the backgrounds of all the students, especially in the sector of student wellbeing. This will encourage students to talk to people like them about their difficulties and their struggles, making them feel supported and most importantly, safe.

- To have diversity in terms of food, in terms of posters, and social activities.

- Provide a platform for dialogue: to have more contact and more conversations with students. Articulation of students' opinions is the key to set up a democratic space that would fit all students' needs and interests.

- Provide opportunities for students to network, share experiences and learn about each other's culture to develop intercultural competencies.

## 5.5 Conclusion

The organisation's ostensible purpose in implementing market principles in education is to customise the service for students through the ideology of choice and student voice. However, the data shows that the real purpose is interpellation with a hidden policy of presenting students with a *fait accompli.* The study shows that while the interviewees were conscious that space is something that ought to be constructed depending on people's choices, the institution takes it for an empty vessel, disregarding human values, students' choices, and individual differences. Nevertheless, in the process of interacting with the latter, it turned out that the students go through a thorough process of analysis and decision-making based on a set of available options, making space a realm of multiplicity (Massey, 1994), constantly changing, and affecting the students differently.

According to the data, the shaping of students' identities is definitely not driven by choice (as Giddens, 1992 envisions) or students' voice (Delmonico, 2000; Klemenčič, 2014; Tomlinson, 2014 and Bovill et al., 2015) but by a process of decision-making, over what has been imposed on them, instead.

The data indicates that much of the highlighted discordance between the students and their university is due to the absence of a space wherein they can develop mutual understanding and respect towards each other's differences: a space where they can set aside preconceptions and all forms of prejudice to see the world, not from a national but rational lens; and a third space where both the institution and students can benefit from the underlying exchange, a space where both parties can grow freely and properly over time. Therefore, to bridge the gap between them, and based on the recommendations of the interviewees, the study suggests a third model of internationalisation that would serve as the meeting space for the M-Model and V-Model identified in the literature review.

Internationalisation (3) is a model that institutions can employ to overcome xeno-racism and to maintain a sustainable future of HE with a healthy student-university relationship, shaped

by a constant level of engagement. The key characteristics of this relationship are reciprocity, individuation, trust, credibility, and transparency which could be built only through an ongoing process, involving constant relationship management in a proper space of heterogeneity. Central to the I (3) model is redefining the global discourse of HE with a meaningful international approach based on intercultural dialogue.

# Chapter 06: Conclusion

## 6.1 Conclusion

Globalisation has raised many questions about the higher education sector. With internationalisation, considered to be a proactive approach to banish its dark side, issues of quality, equity, and service delivery, are growing significantly. To address these issues, the present study proposes a holistic understanding of this phenomenon using data obtained from participants from a wide range of backgrounds and across different levels, with an eye to uncover the hidden meanings and attitudes being developed regarding internationalisation.

This study examined the concept of internationalisation in HE based on the perceptions and lived experiences of a group of postgraduate students and staff in an institution of higher education in the south of England. It discussed the implications of the spatial nature of internationalisation practices and the extent to which marketised consumerist discourses affect academic life and shape the student experience.

Drawing on empirical data collected using participant observation and in-depth interviews, my thesis presents three important findings: first, analysis of the views and experiences of staff and students reveals an interesting conceptual spectrum according to which internationalisation is projected and understood by the institution, its staff, and students. While the institution is driven by abstract contractual practices that make it look machinic, the staff and students see it more as an ecological process that offers the university the ability to work creatively and interdependently like an organism.

Second, a spatial examination of the environment highlights substantial conflicts between the institution and students provoked by their distinct and incompatible needs and interests. For example, the organisation, in its attempt to promote itself attractively, has the tendency to shape its prospective students' perceptions with an idealistic self-image, which suggests that the institution works more to attract students in meeting external marketing demands, and thus fails to account for the diversity of students' experiences. This, therefore, engenders forms of

discrimination with subtle characteristics that go beyond the traditional forms of racism and evoke signs of xeno-racism: a more sophisticated and nuanced form of rejection that is not just based on ideas around racism which are about colour but also about alterity, otherness, strangeness, and economic disadvantage.

With this in mind, it can be concluded that racism is an integral feature of internationalisation, and that its traditional forms are actually part of a wider, deeper problem of xeno-racist attitudes and practices that lead the university towards idealism in the internationalised institution's self-image, portraying internationalised HE in an idealistic but disingenuous way for financial gain. The data suggests that the concept of internationalisation has two opposite meanings. The positive meaning, in the participants' conceived image of internationalisation, implies the university becoming more connected with other countries around the globe; creating a more friendly, international, cosmopolitan world; enabling the exchange of knowledge and qualifications, whereas the negative meaning, which pictures what is actually happening in the real world, is that internationalisation is a form of exploitation. More precisely, an economic exploitation of cognitive capital in other countries: a superficial one-way exchange through which money and ideas are being extracted so that the university can provide competitive marketing techniques that will help to promote its product and service.

Finally, based on the analysis conveyed, this study proposes a new model of internationalisation that aims to redefine the university's machinic, xeno-racist views and practices in line with a more organic counterpart. My analysis of the data describes a simple, but sustainable model with a meaningful approach that can bring stakeholders together through ongoing communication and intercultural dialogue.

The important thing about the I3 model is that it has a complex, interconnected structure that comprises several different components, including stakeholders (staff, students, institution), space, time, attitude, behaviour, feelings, individual and organisational needs and interests, culture, values (instrumental and humanistic values), inside/outside, and image (virtual and real). This approach offers higher education the opportunity to create new ways of 'being' with

personalised content to help strengthen its efforts to positively engage with its staff and students and develop deep, intimate relationships with them (Sas, 2018). It also suggests some practical actions for it to build up a genuine commitment to the needed actions and 'be the change', instead of just talking about it. Internationalisation (3) has the potential to redefine the whole discourse of global HE and lead the way for a better and sustainable future.

This model is extremely useful in three ways. First, it provides a new understanding of one of the most important features of HE, viz., internationalisation. Second, it can be used by universities to examine their own processes and environments and the lived experiences of their students. Third, it is very useful to researchers who can use this model and test it to see how internationalisation is developing in different contexts.

The study has essentially raised many ethical issues that reflect the institution's machinic view of the world. If universities are to be "places of freedom, open-mindedness, and self-discovery" (EHRC, 2019, p. 4), they must go beyond the assumption of internationalisation as a selfish, money-making machine and understand it more as an organic, reciprocal process of individuation that necessitates ongoing interactions and constant relationship management between stakeholders. Universities, in their efforts to achieve their economic reputational goals, should remember that they are responsible for their learners and understand that neither teaching nor learning is a pre-determined activity. Universities must expand their boundaries and start developing their own ways of being, creating their own spaces by not repeating common hierarchies of knowledge. They can do this by avoiding preconceptions of students' needs and assuming that they are "cultural givens" (Beighton, 2016, p.19).

## 6.2 Recommendations for further research

Today's institutions rely on the power of information technology to establish international relations and maintain student retention. However, as the data shows, the fantasy of this virtual imaginary world makes them lose contact with the lived experience. For this, a further possible area for exploration is to make a documentary analysis of the institutional discourse including

marketing materials, university mission statements, images, and posters on the online platforms, to explore whether or not this matches students' lived experiences, and to investigate what the accounts of the staff, students and institution could reveal/ conceal about the nature of the HE sector.

As we saw in the methodology section, this study has some limitations in terms of the analytical framework and its sample which is more about qualitative depth. However, all these can be addressed by further research. For example, one possibility for future research would be to do the same study but in a different context with a much bigger sample, and, if possible, conduct it in more than one institution (collaborative research) to compare the data and draw a much broader conclusion.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Transnational activities

### A1.1 Distance learning

With the advance of technology and communication networks, students from all over the world can have access to learning more quickly and in a less complicated way using the internet. Distance learning is namely a way of delivering education virtually through online programmes, which do not necessitate the physical presence of students in the course. Distance learning has been used by many universities since the 19th century, but now with the advent of technology, it became even more popular and accessible for all students' levels. Indeed, this was clearly highlighted by Midgley (2019) who says that "more than 270,000 undergraduate students are currently taking their first degrees via distance learning, together with some 108,000 postgraduate students".

### A1.2 Franchising

Franchising is a licensed teaching programme delivered in partnership with a foreign provider. By this method the franchisor authorizes the franchisee to teach the domestic university's degree under the operation of a franchise agreement (contract). Within this contract the partner is required to supply the underlying features of the operation including: the teaching buildings, library, and computing facilities). In addition, the franchisee is expected to pay a fee for each enrolled student and is responsible for any financial risks these programmes can bring to their institution (British Council 2013).

This model of TNE is now applicable in more than 100 countries headed by US and Australia (Edwards, 2009, p. 8). Likewise, validation is another form of franchising, with a slightly different character which has to do with the curriculum. In this case, it is up to the foreign partner to design the study programme, then the awarding university validates the programme, but only if it meets the required degree standards (British Council 2013). Unlike franchising,

validation is increasing tremendously in the UK, and this is due to its previous deemed experience in validating degrees of small local colleges (Silver 1990).

## A1.3 Branch campuses

Also known as offshore campuses; it denotes "an entity that is owned, at least in part, by a foreign higher education provider; operated in the name of the foreign education provider; and provides an entire academic program, substantially on site, leading to a degree awarded by the foreign education provider" (Kinder and Lane, 2012, p. 02). Brunch campuses are described as "the third wave" of internationalisation in higher education (Altbach and Knight 2007; Altbach *et al.*, 2010), and the most arising transnational education strategy so far. Brunch campuses were first established by western universities, and then extended to Russia, India, China and other developed countries. According to Lawton and Katsomitros (2012), in their survey for the Observatory on Borderless Higher Education, there exist about 200 IBCs in the world, with 37 other subsidiaries on way of construction (see also British Council, 2013; C-BERT, 2017).

## A1.4 Twinning

Twinning, or 'joint programmes', is a collaboration of two or more higher education institutions aiming to design a powerful shared curriculum leading to joint degree. The interesting thing about twinning is that it can be a combination of the above-mentioned strategies, like franchising and validation. In this context, the early years of the degree are likely to take place in the foreign provider while the final year of the degree should be in the awarding country. This means that students will have to move from one country to another to get their degree. This model was first issued in Europe as part of Bologna process launched in 1999, which is meant to ensure more compatible and coherent higher education systems in Europe, and then became "one of the most integrated forms of internationalisation (EAIE, 2016).  An example of a popular European joint programme is Erasmus plus.

## Appendix 2: International Students

The following review explores themes relevant to international students in a UK higher education context. It discusses the growing literature on international student mobility including their numbers, destinations, motivations, and contributions.

### A2.1 Students Mobility

While traditionally, transfer of knowledge across borders was the main purpose of higher education's internationalisation, today, it's so much taken for granted that we no longer find it in the public discourse (Teichler, 2017) as much as we find student mobility. This, in turn, has made the latter the new benchmark of internationalisation.

At the 2009 world conference on higher education, the United Nations of Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) reported that over 2.5 million students were studying in a country other than their own, and by 2013 the number increased significantly to 4.1 million, with an estimation of 8 million by the end of the year 2025. According to the OECD's 2010 report, the most preferable destinations for international students are: The United States of America, United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, France, and Canada. However, in this current research our area of interest would be the UK.

In the UK's Competitive Advantage report (2017) based on the findings of the International Student Barometer (ISB), the world's largest survey of international students collected from over 3 million students across 33 countries, UK was ranked first by international students for recommendation and overall satisfaction across all levels. Moreover, the United Kingdom was always, and still remains, one of the world's leading destinations for international students (OECD, 2014), and is also ranked first by field-weighted citation impact, ahead of USA and other competitive countries such as Australia and Canada. Adding to that, the UK produces over 15.9% of the world's most highly cited articles (Elsevier, 2013). Therefore, it is no surprise to find that the UK holds an enviably strong position in the global market, as it attracts many thousands of students from around the world.

## A2.2 Student motivation to study abroad

One of the key aspects of internationalisation in the field of education is international student mobility. With the highly increased number of international students attending HE institutions abroad since 2000, the notion of ISM (international Student Mobility) has become a crucial indicator for global HE landscapes. Analyses of the existing literature reveals that ISM has been studied thoroughly across different academic fields such as: education and sociology, particularly in migration studies (Wells, 2012). Such studies focus primarily on examining the impetus behind students' international moves. However, when it comes to students' motivations to study abroad, we are likely subject to more complex reasons which are often heterogeneous in both scope and experience.

International students' motives to study abroad are often linked with the privileged status of English as the international language of academia, and the prestige of degrees from western universities. Vandermensberugghe (2004), for example, states that international students choose to study abroad to acquire the internationally recognised linguistic and cultural competencies, which can be very useful in a global context. He believes that degrees from western universities could be their "passport" to the world (p. 418). A highly reputed degree is undoubtedly a good reason to study abroad, but this is not the only reason. In fact, there are plenty of other motivations. These can range from future career enhancement and prospective employment (Findlay *et al.*, 2005; Robertson, Hoare, and Harwood 2011) to opportunities for adventure (Waters and Brooks 2010; King *et al.*, 2011) and personal development (Gmelch 1997; Lesjak *et al.*, 2015). In this respect, Van Mol and Michielsen (2014) argue that personal development often comes first followed by academic and professional goals within short-term international student mobility. Indeed, the main objective of studying abroad for international students is often to get out of their comfort zone to challenge themselves to establish who they are and what they wish to become.

Having said that, a salient investigation guided by UK higher education statistics distinguished between three types of students' mobility: degree mobility, (so-called diploma mobility where

students travel abroad for an entire programme of study); credit mobility (where students travel for just part of the programme) and voluntary mobility, which is related to a variety of personal reasons (HEFCE, 2004, p. 11). In this present study, our interest is in degree mobility.

## A2.3 Statistics of international students

By 2012- 2013, the UK accounted for 13% of international students, second only to the USA (16%) followed by Germany, France, Australia, and Canada each with 6% (OECD, 2014). The number continued to grow gradually and reached 2.28 million students between 2015 /2016, 5.6%of whom were from the EU (127.440) and 13.6% (310.575) were from non-EU countries. In addition to this, statistics also show that over 58% of UK postgraduate students were international; 46% were non-European and 12% were from Europe (HESA, 2016). That is, international students make up a significant portion of the UK's student population which eventually affects both the economy and financial assets of British universities. Thanks to the tuition fees they pay, and the economic impact of their spending, the global profile of UK universities has increased tremendously (Alex, 2007). Indeed, in 2014/2015 the UK's income from tuition fees totalled £4.8 billion, which accounted for 14% of the universities income, and the off-campus spending alone contributed £25.8 billion. Furthermore, statistics from HESA (2015/2016) presents that the total income of the two last academic years stood at £34.7 billion by 2016 including 46% of tuition fees, 15% of research income and 6.8% of expenditure (£2.3 billion). What is more, international students do not only provide a valuable supply of financial gain to UK universities and economy, but also bring cultural and social diversity to the campus which adds more value to the UK's higher educational sector (Universities UK, 2014; MAC, 2018).

# Appendix 3: Research philosophy

When undertaking any research project, there are two fundamental elements to take into consideration: research philosophy and research paradigm.

Research philosophy, or simply methodology, is the theoretical or philosophical stance that signals the researcher's claims and opinions throughout the study (Sapsford and Jupp, 2006), and delineates which architectural design the researcher should follow to address the research questions (Buckley, Buckley, and Chiang, 1976). Research paradigm, also referred to as research design, is the phase where a variety of viable research methods, techniques and instruments are implemented so that the researcher can access and analyse reliable data with relevance to the research objectives. From a philosophical perspective, it is considered to be "a combination of a metaphysical theory about the nature of the objects in a certain field of interest and a consequential method which is tailor-made to acquire knowledge of those objects." (Harré, 1987, p. 3). That is, choosing a research design comprises not only what the researcher aims to uncover but also the way they view the world. In this vein, Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 105) claim that research questions are secondary to research paradigms and define paradigms as "basic belief systems driven by ontological and epistemological assumptions".

## A3.1 Epistemology

Epistemology first and foremost is a study of knowledge concerned with theories related to the nature, sources, and validity of our knowledge. It addresses queries such as "what might represent knowledge or evidence the social reality that is investigated?" and "what is counted as evidence?" (Mason, 2002, p. 16). In other words, if the researcher is to think epistemologically, he/she is supposed to be answering questions like what is the nature of knowledge? and how is knowledge produced? (Willig, 2013).

## A3.2 Ontology

Ontology is widely known as a branch of metaphysics related to the nature of being and of reality (Thomas, 2009). Thinking ontologically, the researcher should be answering the

question "What is reality?" referring to what we think reality looks like and how we view the world (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008, p. 31). At this stage in the formation of a research design, the researcher decides on whether he/she views the world as an "object" that could be measured and tested, or as "subject" made up of perceptions of and interactions with living subjects (O'Gorman and MacIntosh, 2015, p. 56).

## A3.3 Research paradigm

Given that methodology is always embedded in the ontological and epistemological beliefs that underlie our research, Guba and Lincoln (1994) distinguish between four main paradigms: positivism, post-positivism, critical theory and interpretivism (constructivism). They argue that there is no way to prove that one paradigm is superior to the other. This is hotly debated, but because the purpose of this paragraph is to create a foundation for the current study, these paradigms will not be discussed in detail. Particular attention, though, will be given to positivism and interpretivism.

### A3.3.1 Positivism

Positivism is often seen as the core process for quantitative studies. Within the positivist paradigm, reality is assumed to consist of facts that can be measured objectively without the influence of the researcher on the results. However, positivism is often criticised for its assumption of objective measurement that separates facts from values in the process of data collection. Thus, it is considered to be value-free (Charmaz, 2006, p. 5). This point is very important for this study, because, from an educational point of view, values are fundamental. As the data below shows, respondents are often critical of the values of the institution. Thus, a research approach which claims to be value-free would make it difficult or even impossible to find out about this crucial element of the data. Another approach is therefore needed and can be found in interpretivism.

### A3.3.2 Interpretivism

The interpretive paradigm on the other hand, emphasises "the importance of interpretation and observation in understanding the social world, which is an integral component of

qualitative research" (Snape and Spencer, 2003, p. 7). It has typically emerged as a response to the drawbacks of positivism. In this respect, interpretivism questions the notion that research is value-free. Instead, the interpretive approach acknowledges that reality is socially constructed and subjectively interpreted through the understanding of people's perspectives and experiences. Unlike positivists, who view the world as an object, interpretivists look at it as a subject dealing with actions and behaviours generated from a lived experience (Weber, 1924). The key premise of interpretivism is rather the 'understanding' of what is happening in a particular context and not just its 'meaning' (Patton, 1990; Klein and Myers, 1999). However, there are important implications for research design.

## A3.4 Qualitative research

Qualitative research is viewed as an interpretive, inductive approach which is more interested in individuals, and in providing in-depth understandings of the addressed issues via the interpretation of their perspectives, beliefs and behaviours in their natural setting (Nunan, 1992). Unlike quantitative research, which is shaped by assumptions inherent in the positivist paradigm, whereby researchers quantify data collected from a large size of respondents selected randomly, the purpose of qualitative approach is often to interpret textual data, often gathered from a small size of targeted participants. Hence, qualitative research is flexible and most suitable for addressing 'why', 'what' and 'how' questions to explain and describe individuals' perceptions and experiences. Since the aim of this study is to gain knowledge about how international students experience their transition to HE, and how they make sense of that experience – including the participants' reflections, attitudes, influencing factors and decision making – an interpretive, qualitative approach to the study is applicable.

# CONSENT FORM

**Title of Project:** Internationalisation of Higher Education: Lived Experiences of International Students and Perspectives on the Global University.

**Name of Researcher**: Zahra Kemiche

**Contact details**:

Address:

| |
|---|
| North Holmes Road<br>Canterbury,<br>Kent |

Tel:

| |
|---|
| |

Email:

| |
|---|
| |

**Please initial box**

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

3. I understand that any personal information that I provide to the researchers will be kept strictly confidential

4. I agree to take part in the above study.

_____          _____
Name of Participant                    Date                              Signature


_____          _____
Name of Person taking consent        Date                              Signature
(if different from researcher)


\_Zahra Kemiche_____

                                       _____
Researcher                              Date                              Signature

Copies:        1 for participant/1 for researcher

**Participant Information Sheet**

My name is Zahra Kemiche. I am conducting my PhD research at Green-field university. For this purpose, I would like to invite you to voluntarily take part in this study. However, before taking any decision please take your time to read the content of the participant information sheet and familiarise yourself with the study.

**Background**

The present study is about the internationalisation of higher education and its impact on international students' lived experiences. It addresses the key challenges faced by both staff and students and what needs are to be met. The primary focus of this research is on understanding their views and experiences of internationalisation, marketisation, diversity and the challenges they raise for both parties.

**What will you be required to do?**

Participants in this study will be required to:

- Share their experiences, and talk about their issues and challenges, if any, e.g., expectations, quality of support and service provided, learning difficulties…etc.)

- To be honest, open, and ingenuous while answering the interview questions.

- To speak slowly and clearly.

**To participate in this research, you must:**

**For students:**
- Be an international/UK student enrolled in a UK academic course/programme.

**For staff:**
- An academic staff in a UK university.

**Confidentiality**

All data and personal information will be stored securely within CCCU premises in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and the university's own data protection requirements. Data can only be accessed by **Zahra KEMICHE**. After completion of the study, all data will be made anonymous (i.e. all personal information associated with the data will be removed).

## **Deciding whether to participate**

Your participation in the current study is completely voluntary. There is absolutely no pressure on you to take part in it. However, if you decide to participate in the study, you are required to sign a consent form that I will provide you with later when the first interview will take place. Signing the consent form means that you accept the terms and conditions of the study. Please note that you can withdraw at any stage of the study without having to give any reason for your withdrawal.

## **Procedure:**

In taking part in this study, you will be required:

1. To participate in a face to face or Skype interview with the researcher. The interview will take place at any time and place is suitable for you.
   Possibly, you will be asked for a second interview for further questions.

## **Dissemination of results**

The participants will be made aware of the results of the study via email.

## **Any questions?**

If you have any questions or concerns about the nature, procedures or requirements

for participation do not hesitate to contact me **on (z.kemiche40@canterbury.ac.uk)**

# Appendix 6: Interview questions

## A6.1 Sample of interview questions

The study is about the internationalisation of higher education as a market driven strategy and its impact on the lived experiences of international students. It seeks to examine what challenges are being faced by both staff and students, and what needs are to be met.

This interview is meant to gather data about your views and experiences of internationalisation, marketisation, diversity and the challenges they raise for you as an international student, if any. Our discussion will last for almost half an hour.

> ➢ **The interview will be recorded but, despite that, I would like to assure you that the discussion will be anonymous and subject to the usual ethical protection. The recordings will be kept safely, I will be the only one to have them until they are transcribed, then they will be deleted.**

Just to remind you, you can withdraw any time you want without having to give any reason.

**Warm up**

Could we start by you telling me some general information about yourself?

**Main questions**

- Tell me about your journey in the UK. Tell me about your experience in this university.
- When I say internationalisation, what comes to your mind?
- What are your views about internationalisation in HE? Can you define internationalisation for me, in your own words?

- What is the right way to do things for a better future and more effective HE? What do you recommend for a successful positive learning experience within these circumstances?

- Do you have any other comments or information you would like to add?

**Conclusion**

- Thank you for participating. This has been a very successful discussion.

- Your opinions will be a valuable asset to the study.

- I hope you have found the discussion interesting.

# Appendix 7: Sample interview

## A7.1 Student

Researcher: could we start by you telling me some general information about yourself?

Jane: I did a degree in Business studies and digital marketing communications. I was at GU for four years. I quite involved in sports societies, I was an environment officer in 2016 and () officer in 2017… I kind of involved a bit in everything, but it was like mainly in my third year… one of the main things that () was my interest in EDI. So, that's Equality, Diversity and Inclusive policies: migration groups, students, like, attainment gap, things like that. So, that kind of started in my third year which is why I've got more involved into the international conference. Then, I graduated last September.

Researcher: were you a full-time or part-time student?

Jane: Fulltime.

Researcher: was it self-funded or you've got a scholarship?

Jane: I've got the student finance. That's how I did the university.

Researcher: why did you choose GU?

Jane: Umm, I came because I've got an offer. So, it was mainly just −it seems like the best opportunity I had on my office.

Researcher: what were your expectations before you came here?

Jane: I didn't have a lot of expectations if I'm honest. Umm, it was kind of, I was just glad to get a place at a university. I didn't come with a lot of expectations. I just thought, it will be the standard university experience and the moving away from home, meeting new people, going to like lectures.

Researcher: tell me about your journey in the UK.

Jane: I grew up in North London, 10 or 11 years, and then, I moved to XXX when I was about 11 years old. It's been like a weird journey from like a really base area. It was just very easy to just get things like shops; you saw more diversity in the street. One thing about the XXX is that it's predominantly white conservative area, so that's really weird cultural shock and obviously that formed a lot of my formative years. So, the whole period … find out more about different things, like grow yourself. It was kind of shades from where like one certain viewpoint. So, I'm going from that environment to XXX which is still a very predominantly white conservative area. I'd kind of learned from my experiences like I just know how to exist in it and just be alright but still have that sense of lack of diversity in my culture. So, it's a bit of like a WEIRD journey, but… I just, like, expect a lot of things now. I can no longer surprise or chock about things. So, that's what happened.

Researcher: what shocked you the most?

Jane: mainly because people were very clueless? So, you have like a lot of small things like people saying: Ow, where are you from? […] I've got great English but I'm not UK born? Umm, assumptions like, all black people are this or all black people are that. Umm, cultures having these ideas or like […] on things like immigration. So, like if you go to XXX and you look at or – basically if you scroll through the XXX, every post on Brexit or immigrations or asylum seekers are all wearing white wings. So, it's always a lot of Christians and like a lot of – just these like: Oww, they should go back to their own country – I've had like a lot of people thinking that I'm foreign just because I'm black. Like I wasn't born here. So, it's more like yeah but we do so much across the world.

Researcher: As a student at GU, what difficulties, challenges have you been through?

Jane: My difficulty, I've got a lot of places I've always felt uncomfortable is around race. I think like a very common thing when you come to like a predominantly white area, you always notice yourself more. So, you're always… like the talking or the one person in the room and when everyone else has a different mindset to you, you have no one to share your views with and

bounce back and forth and that's quite difficult because I played sports for three years, and I was the only black person in the team for the whole three years. So, one of the main difficulties has been finding black spaces that I want to be a part of our existence because it's not widely available. I did business because I've had a very international view of business. So, one of the difficulties were that a lot of my modules or like assessments always very like Eurocentric. So, I was doing my whole marketing module, that was marketing culture and communications. So, I just thought: OK, if we look in that cultures and who we communicate globally, use white to construct like comparison. So, maybe compare how they advertise in Japan or Africa to have an advertise in like the same funs, but I found that most of our like teaching, most of our case studies were just based on European countries and there wasn't like a lot of transnational umm, it wasn't like very […] it didn't spread outside of Europe. Like a lot of the case studies. So, there was one umm, assessment, they wanted us to do a comparison between France and the UK, but it's just like – you're not really comparing much because there were so many similarities. There is not a lot of, like a lot of small micro changes and like communications in culture, but Europe has a very western idea of what things are and how it should be. So, it wasn't really comparing to how it existed outside of Europe. So, I thought doing and changing my case study to one between Nigeria and UK, how they advertise in market in Nigeria compared to the UK because for me that's where my interests were and that's what was going to motivate me to actually do my essay. So, yeah, one of the difficulties was just the teaching. It was just very Eurocentric and white-dominated and doesn't engage me as a person.

Other things, I have like a lot of experiences when people were shocked that I taught well and that I was so engaged in things. I think, with that it's annoying because I think, unconsciously, whether they like it or not there are always race perceptions and no one looks past the 16s or why there has been always underlying tension between black communities and white communities and when you live in a white society that always promotes the message that black people are like violent or they are not educated or … there is like a lot of preconceptions pushed out about what black people are. So, when they meet a black person, they likely take

that for face value, but it's very […] you can't generalize a whole race. Like we're not all the same. Just like you find like an English person will get offended if you call them Irish or Scottish or any other nations. So, like a lot of people just never expected me to be smart and it comes out in what they say… like why and how. why they are shocked when it's me and not shocked when it's not me. It's just a bit weird. You know, I don't know why they don't expect us to be different, and it doesn't help because they don't look at the histories of like universities in general and how they were always predominantly white-dominated spaces and like black minorities have to fight to get in. So, they're just very dismissive a lot of the time. I had an argument, not argument, it was more for discussion with the geography lecturer, and he had wrote a paper on why he doesn't believe that the curriculum needs to be decolonised and he just seemed very dismissive because he sees himself as a person in high position of power and just saw me as a student and he thought: Oww. she's just upset because she's black. I was talking in another discussion about universities afford, and I was talking about how you can't reach diversity when there were so many… and institutional barriers that are invisible but still exist, and those are the ones that are not being addressed. There were a number of staff who approached me, and they were like: Ow, yeah! I remember you from a talk you've got quite angry, didn't you? So, if you have this perception of this like all black women are angry, we just impose things without actually believe in that I can be this way. Yeah.

Researcher: how did you overcome these difficulties?

Jane: I think. It's the kind of like I want to make a difference because I'd spend mainly my first two three years just doing the standard: going to lectures like my standard social activity, but I never really pushed further. In my third year, I've just got a bit tired. So, I think that's what pushed me or what kept pushing me was that I saw that things were wrong, and I just, you can't promote a message. It's because, and the university recruit more from London. So, they target BMA communities, and they bring them to XXX, and they have nothing in XXX for them. So, I expected to assimilate culture that fundamentally isn't welcoming. Umm, universities aren't diverse. Even the professions we teach… needs to be very well-known for its racism.

They wouldn't hire Black nurses. Patients are really racists to nurses. They recruit from a lot of BME communities but they're not making (thinking) it's kind of − they're not(P) they do not welcome them into. They are expected to just FIGURE IT OUT. Umm, and that really annoyed me. Our attainment gap at the time was, I think 11% over the national average. Umm, business has one of the highest attainments like BMA attainment gaps at GU and they have a predominantly high BME population. So, it's always things − simple things like me having a lecture on culture and communication and always being taught from a white perspective. THAT angered me knowing the attainment gap angered me and pushed me to just do something about it. So, I ended up sending a letter to the Vice chancellor and a lot of members on the management team, and it was pretty much like you can't () about diversity and inclusion and how we have such a great sense community when BME students have the highest drop at rate at university. I think, you have an issue as a university, but you're just passing over. So, all of that was just, what gave me more confidence was being more involved in the student Union and being a BME Officer and going to like national conference and talk to people about these issues.

Researcher: tell me about the student support. Have you received enough support as a student?

Jane: Umm, I think the support I received, I had to fight to get. I don't think it's just given to black subtends or international students the way it's given to white students. I think how, umm, staff members subconsciously treat their students is very different. Like Black students who they taught in class are seen as not engaged and distractive. The white students are just seen …. like GODS, but there is a lot more harsh sentences if you're international or if you are a BME. Umm, so, a lot of the support I had to − I don't think, it was given to me in the same way it would have been given to me if I was white female. So, yeah. It supported me enough to get my degree in this university, but I don't think it supported me how it SHOULD.

Researcher: what kind of support would you have preferred to get?

Jane: I think if I see it from a BME point of view or as an international, I think what would have been more supportive is seeing more BME/ international members of staff in the management team in the mental health services or in the standard administrative support because I've always been so rarely of existing as a minority in a white culture and all that whether they like it or not, they're always gonna have a perception of me and they wouldn't understand cultural differences that exist between communities. So, they give me an answer that wouldn't worth/work in my scenario. So, a big support would've been () having more access to BME/ international members of staff, academics or even alumni because we are not really told of the successes unless they're promoting what I taught though – you want me to see the successes of people like you and then everyone always () when you haven't someone to look up to you or you see other people achieving what you wanted to do. So, yeah. It was just basic university services, not awful but not great.

Researcher: when I say internationalisation, what comes to your mind?

Jane: Umm, Erasmus scheme.

Researcher: why exactly Erasmus scheme?

Jane: because that's just the international programme I know of. That's where a few of my international friends have come through on. I know like universities open up campuses abroad. Umm, XXX University for example has a few campuses in Europe, or just recruiting students from Europe or Asia.

Research: Do you think that British Universities send students abroad as much as they recruit?

Jane: No, I think international students are easy money, and they can promote it as this great experience of region and its culture and things like that but if you had it reverse, they're more seen as trips away like you have more performing art people do use like use abroad. It's more common to do like a UN placement here but receiving money is easy than losing money. It's how, I think, they think of Erasmus.

Researcher: what are your views about internationalisation?

Jane: I personally think it's good, but I don't think how universities are doing it is good. I think universities look at it from a very monetary point of view. I don't think they really want to create this breadth of like cultural exchange or inviting people to the same space as you. I think they just view it as a good way to make money and make universities look good, but I just view it as, because I had a lot of cultural groups, because I was a BME officer and thinks like that you did have that diversity in all of my cultural interactions came from the activities I involved in. so that's my view but I think the university's view is very different.

Researcher: can you tell me more about the positive side of internationalisation?

Jane: I think it's good because being/ existing in a western culture, you have a very Eurocentric view of yourself. You see yourself as the centre and everything outside is different which is why umm. A tiny bit maybe, a tiny bit of the British culture is a bit obsessed of themselves. By that, I think it's things like its colonial past, the empire, the commonwealth and just these links with slavery, that's why the British see themselves as the main people and everyone outside is different. So, I think it's good because it challenges that viewpoint, and I think, when you're actually willing to embrace other cultures, it can be a learning experience and it's good because if you have…academics coming from Europe or outside Europe to come teach at universities, it broadens your knowledge because it's like saying that other cultures aren't smart when you have a very narrow view of the curriculum. So, having most of international students maybe come study here and decide to stay on and then end up become lecturers, they are more likely to make a change in the curriculum and make it inclusive and broaden out. So, I view it as a good experience because we don't just exist within this bubble. There is a lot out there and to limit yourself from that doesn't make sense for me.

Researcher: what do you see as the main challenges of internationalizing HE?

Jane: Umm, Brexit seems to be the biggest one.

Researcher: how can Brexit be a challenge?

Jane: I think it's the perception of Brexit, there is one of the very anti-immigration, anti… people coming to the UK kind of stance. So, I think it can be like a negative because I think, when you have that culture within like amongst people, you're gonna be less likely as international students to want to then come to the UK, if they 're not promoting an image of "you will be welcome here and we are accepting" then I wouldn't – it's like me personally, I would never go study in America because I know how they treat black people in America. I know it's not a safe welcoming environment, like I am a woman. I'm black and I'm, like, I'm not putting myself in the best most safe thing. So, that's how I view it as a challenge, people might be less willing to wanna come here.

Researcher: Do you think the changes brought the sector of HE work for the favour of students or the Institution?

Jane: I think. It meets the needs of the Institution. I don't think, it meets the needs of students. A lot of international students feel isolated and because of that they are more likely to stay within groups of international students who come from the same country as them. So, there is a barrier to the sharing of cultures because there aren't a lot of them. I think the services offered to them might not be what they wanted. they don't know where all these international stores to go buy their food is. I didn't know about the store by the station that sold things like Canty, Gury fish, until my second year of university. We are not really told what is here for you. You are kind of just being like "Ohh, if you need help of your English, then we have this service", but in terms of enjoying your time here, we can't offer you a lot".

Researcher: how do you see the future of HE if things continue this way?

Jane: I see it going in a decline. They will lose international students then universities are losing funding, they are not offered the same experience. Costs are going crazy anyway. Universities are no longer like incentives. There are lot of other ways that you can get things. Doing partnerships…Universities are pursuing a traditional root, and I think there is a shift away from universities being a positional root because you are getting yourself what is so

much there, and it's not even cheap…for coming international students anyway.so, you are not really getting a lot. It's not, it doesn't seem money's worth. Umm, I got a degree, but in terms of how much I'm using it or was worthwhile or worth the money, I am not seeing it.

Researcher: what is the right way for a better and more effective HE in your opinion?

Jane: I think, there needs to be more discussions. I think universities have to realise, you can't build things on a broken foundation, there are a lot of unsaid things about the history of universities and you Umm, you supported anti-immigration policy, or you want to implement things like prevent, you do want to be this welcoming environment, but you still keep bringing minorities in. universities need to stop seeing students as like money. They need to start being more open and … welcoming spaces because … they always hit the talking. "You're always gonna come into this welcoming environment, and you're gonna learn so much" but you're not really giving this space of freedom to grow and challenge things. Umm, so I think universities need to get a bit more real. You can't say you're one thing and the actual package is something completely different because this then doesn't encourage people to stay or continue. It encourages white students because they are having a great time at university, but international, BME students and basically any minority, they will tell you they have had one issue or another while at university.

Researcher: Do you have any other comments or information you'd like to add?

Jane: no.

Researcher: Could we start by you telling me some general information about yourself? What you're doing? your areas of interest? and how long have you been working here?

Interviewee: I've been at GU now for probably about 13/14 years. My main Job at the moment − the main thing I do at the moment − is that I am a Programme Director for a BA. It's called BA Education and Professional Training. It's a first degree for people who are teachers, who are working in post-compulsory education, and who don't have a first degree. That degree is a two-year degree because to work in post-compulsory education – till now – you really do need to have a qualification which is called a diploma in education and training. The people who come onto the BA have the diploma in education and training and then, they are going on to use the credits that they get from that () put them towards a degree. They do two years of degree study with us and then, they get a BA on us – the subject is Education and Professional Training. I also work in various – what you could call – teacher development, teacher training courses. One which is the diploma in Education and Training which is for people working in post-compulsory education – it's an initial teaching qualification which they complete once they're in the service. The other programme I work on here is the postgraduate PGCE.

Researcher: What does an international HE mean to you? OR How do you see internationalisation in HE?

Interviewee: I think the whole idea of internationalisation is a little bit tricky. I was thinking about: On the BA especially, the groups up in London – if I take an example there – the group which will mark in their work now and they just completed it. 15 people in () all of whom are from ethnic minorities. Probably a third of them would be called "immigrants" – they are from ethnic minorities. They were born outside Britain, and they come to Britain. For example, you can find Moroccan, African; various African nationalities, Eastern European, from the EU… quite a range, and I thought then {pause} yeah well, Is that internationalisation of those international students? There is a sort of emm, if you like, a stereotype of international students

being somebody who comes to Britain for the first time to study a degree or postgraduate qualification. So, there is that question, and then there are various things which I think go on with internationalisation. I really do feel that a very – very strong aspect of internationalisation today, the leadership of universities is simply one of selling courses to people from overseas. That's their real interest – it's money. Then, internationalisation becomes a bit of a window dressing, if you like − makes it sound good whereas in fact, it's about selling courses. I'm divided about it because I think it's very good to let people come to Britain to study. I think that's got to be of a benefit, but then of course, because it's a commercial thing, I become quite concerned about the things which I know go on at various universities. I think universities are going to do everything they can to make sure that they attract the most foreign students they can get. I have worked with various people. For example, who worked in university entrance, and it would appear that all universities are now prepared to bend rules to not ask too many questions to attract people who pay the most fees, and I think that's a big danger long term.

Researcher: What do you see as the main challenges or constraints or obstacles to achieving more internationalisation at Universities?

Interviewee: the biggest challenge is one that they don't talk about. It's going to take one trump war or one British adventure in the middle east again, or some idiot venture like that and I think that the whole international education thing in Britain could collapse. Any other military adventure could lead to the collapse of British education business. If there were to be say a clash between the US supported by the UK with China students for example that could effectively end the British education "business" internationally. That's the single biggest danger and that's not talked about. I mean that would just be – as far as I can see – if Britain, another adventure like the one in a rack I think could finish it, really. After that, the next danger is the lowering of standards and the messing about which could go on with efforts to attract more foreign students to Britain. My wife has worked with a lot of oversea students and she

says that it's very clear that in certain countries at least, British universities are selected on the basis that nobody fails in this place.

Researcher: What is the impact of internationalisation on staff and students? How do you see internationalisation affecting staff and students? Does it create any kind of pressure?

Interviewee: No, not for me. In my case it's not creating a pressure. If I go back to the BA that I talked about. I mean if I think about that in terms of what I've described as internationalisation, they are not paying big fees. There are people who live in Britain, and it's really − really healthy and helpful, and I enjoy it. Actually, this makes it worthwhile. Also, the other thing which happens is that if you can talk in such terms on the BA which I teach on, the international students (the ones I call international) are more committed to genuine educational goals than perhaps, many of the British students are.

Researcher: Does internationalisation remain important regardless the challenges talked about?

Interviewee: Yes! but I wish that it was far less commercial than it is.

Researcher: Tell me about your experience in HE?

Interviewee: My personal experience has been positive. I will describe it as positive. There are so many aspects to it. There have been programmes of what I've done in the past where there has been a very definite cultural problem. I worked at one university in the North of England – that would be an example of everything that can be wrong with internationalisation – it was the university of XXX. A lot of the students there are from the Middle east, and because they were recruited through – I am not quite sure what means, but I suspect that British embassies were involved in various countries – we would get Saudi or Gulf – Arabs – who were rubbish as students. They just could've stay because of money. If I think of groups of Saudis that I've taught, in the great majority of cases, they have been people that I suspect find it difficult to write in Arabic. They have no interest, but they were there, and they have to stay. I mean that would be at the very worst examples, and that creates a problem about what we are doing.

Because you can't function as a university. You can't run university courses to people who don't read or write. That would be at its worst. Other than that, I think if there are cultural problems in terms of genuine cultural differences between approaches to learning or what's understood by learning, I think that officially, universities tend to ignore it and pretend it doesn't happen.

Researcher: Tell me a bit more about the challenges you face with these students? Does it happen to you to teach classes where there is both British and international students? Or only international?

Interviewee: Yes, that happens. For many years, I worked in XXX in what we call pre-sessional English for Academic Purposes, and they were all foreign students who have come into Britain to study. Working with them would be only foreign students. Working on the mainstream university courses if you like, it's always been a mixture. Overwhelmingly, the foreign students have settled in and got on with people, but certain groups tend not to mix very definitely. Certain groups have an approach to education which I find difficult to accept. I think, we also have this problem of: where government is sending people to Britain and British universities respond to this. For example, I know that the Chinese government discourages people from attending courses which would deal with questions that the Chinese government doesn't want to discuss. So, the students won't be allowed. Then, you get into this thing of the Universities altering the curriculum – altering what they teach to suit foreign governments. Indeed, the example that I gave of the Saudis students in XXX which is very − very clear that a lot of things we weren't allowed to discuss with the students − things that should've normally been discussed in class.

Researcher: you have just said that some students tend not to mix with others. What do you usually do to help students in such cases?

Interviewee: First of all, if you have a mixture of students in the class, make sure that in activities, students are not allowed to stay in ethnic groups. That doesn't matter whether British

students are not interacting with foreign students or foreign students not interacting with British students. They must be mixed up and understand that they have to participate. In the past, I've been involved in trying to organise social activities, trips and things like that with people. Then, you get into the thing of emm, sort of comes down to individuals. Many individuals do make a real effort one way or another and others don't. It becomes a bit tricky to talk about particular nationalities or particular ethnic groups who don't mix. I could do it, but I'd rather not.

Researcher: If I ask you to give these students a piece of advice, what it would be?

Interviewee: Emm we get − sort of nonsense talk about toleration and being patient or understanding or cultural clashes or cultural differences, and I think people really need to think through that stuff. I actually don't like the idea of – sort of cross-cultural stuff. I think it's nonsense. If anyone stops and thinks about it properly and deeply, it's very – very clear that the so-called cultural contradictions between people are peripheral or should be peripheral and what makes people similar is far – far greater than what makes them a little bit different. That is also for British students to think through because they need to understand that. I don't know, I get very – very suspicious about the type of people who talk about cross-cultural understanding. For example, Chinese students are very quiet, and we have to understand that. That's rubbish.

Researcher: In your opinion what would be the ultimate or the major goal of a HEI towards its students? What it should be doing for them?

Interviewee: Emm, give them the absolute best educational experience that the Institute can manage.

Researcher: Is it the case now?

Interviewee: No!

Researcher: Why?

Interviewee: Once you have a commercial ethos dominating in a university, whatever people say the ambition becomes one that you provide students with the least that you can get away with because that is the most profitable.

Researcher: Do you see that there is something missing that these students coming from around the world should be aware of? What they should be aware of before they come to a different country for their studies?

Interviewee: it depends on the students. It depends on where they are coming from, and what they are going to find most challenging in Britain. I suppose the single biggest thing for many students − the one that most worries me − is I find it quite difficult when foreign students are coming to Britain, and they think they are going to Hogwarts or something like that. You know, this is a real place with a real thing. I think that at some level, British promotion of Universities abroad and the British council all try to sell the idea that Britain is a very special place. Umm, you know, the nonsense of Oxford and Cambridge and all that gets sold abroad. It's not like that. The other thing that foreign students need to think through when they are coming through – very deeply – is: what is the relationship between the country they are coming from – the history of the country they are coming from − and the one that they're going to.

Researcher: Does it happen to you to expect something from the students, and you don't get what you expected?

Interviewee: It can happen. It can happen that people who come here – at its worst – you find that something seems going wrong with the admissions, and people have arrived in their class in Britain, and they are not going to be able to cope with it. That's horrible. Again, if you're talking about what should students do and understand, I think they have to be prepared to open themselves as far as they can to what is actually happening, and to get the most of it themselves.

Researcher: How do you see the quality service in this Institution?

Interviewee: I wouldn't like to say anything about places that I don't know partly, because I think you have to be on the inside to know the reality. Because the institutions project an image of themselves outwards which is often not the case. For example, if I could give you just an anecdote: Umm, many years back, I had a son. He was at the university of XXX "Nursery". He made friends with a Malaysian boy in the Nursery, and he wanted to invite this boy back to our house for tea and to play in the afternoon. So, I went up there and found out that both of his parents were in the final stages of PhDs in Science. They were completing PhDs in science. One day, they were at the Nursery, picking their son up, and I went up to them and said: "My son would like to invite your son to come to the house for tea, but these guys couldn't understand what I was saying to them as simple as that. I tried various ways to explain to them what I was talking about, but they couldn't understand. About two or three months later, they left with their PhDs, and you just find yourself thinking "for heaven sake how did that happen? What is going on here?". And you suddenly realise that what Universities are saying is happening is not necessarily what's happening. We have had applicants come here. They want to teach training courses not recently because I've felt that is now a bit stronger, but I've had people come with MBAs, with PhDs and they've had to leave the Teacher Training courses … I have somebody who came here with an MBA from Leeds, and she had to leave at the beginning of a Teacher Training course because she didn't know how to word process. So, what is going on. You really find yourself wondering. I mean these are real examples.

Researcher: Is it the case in this Institution? Do you think that these cases could also happen in this Institution?

Interviewee: yeah, definitely. And I know they do. I absolutely know that year after year.

Researcher: Can you give me an example?

Interviewee: Applied linguistics. So many times, I've heard people on that course – applies linguistics MA, TESOL – say they that they had been in a course with students from the far east who get good marks and who can't speak and can't write. I've heard it many − many

years from different people who wouldn't know each other. So, I'm left wondering "Is this some type of story!? An urban myth!?" Or "Is it more than that?".

Researcher: Do you think that such cases can come up due to lack of support? or students themselves? Or both?

Interviewee: I've seen enough to know that some foreign students in XXX, they've paid their money. They genuinely believe that they should be able to do it, and in fact, if they'd been properly interviewed and examined the people should've known that they wouldn't be able to cope, but once they've paid their money, it's then left to the teaching staff to sort it out. Generally speaking, the teaching staff do try their hardest in that respect.

Researcher: When we talk about quality improvement in HE, what is it that we should improve in your opinion?

Interviewee: In terms of the BA that I work on, our students have to work hard, and the single biggest area where you can work with students to improve their work is when they've submitted an essay – an assignment to have the time to talk through it and to discuss it properly. That is expensive, but it is in my experience, by some measure, the most beneficial thing which students can have – foreign students or anyone else. I guess then, what happens is that you have a crap industrialised system of quality which is that −you know − somebody monitors the feedback that you put in alternative and for "Are you writing 200 words of feedback? Are students getting their work back in three weeks?" all of this type of stuff, which is not a real problem, but it's an attempt to industrialise the idea of quality. I would also say that − it would be my opinion now − the genuine lowering of standards within British Universities – the single most concentrated efforts to lower genuine standards come from quality departments.

Tomorrow afternoon, I will have to go for a waste of time training with Human resources. They are going to train me in leadership in terms of leading the course. As part of that course, on Friday afternoon, I had to do a psychological test which is of the very worst pathetic American

style psychometric testing. I was asked questions which I thought I am going to use this test with the students on the BA so that they could see how bad psychometric testing is. You can realise that what's actually happening, is that direction of courses is being taken over by Human resources. It's going to become a programme from human resources. I also saw that when I was completing it, Human resources have created a profile for me of training courses, that I've been on, and I didn't even know they were doing this. Their training courses have uniformly been awful, and there's been one that was quite good, but wasn't done by human resources. It was done by somebody who is an expert. Rather than that, they're very – very poor but they're taking control. So, that's the biggest danger to quality that we face.

Researcher:  In your opinion does it matter to have diversity in HE?

Interviewee: Yeah, it's extremely important.

Researcher: Why? What would make the difference?

Interviewee: I think, it's very important for all students in HE to learn about the diversity of the world, and they can do that best by having a diverse student body. I think, that's a massive part or should be a central part of HE.

Researcher: How can we make use of this diversity to help students engage in their new environment?

Interviewee: By encouraging all students to think about their culture and what is going on and encouraging all students to think about the culture of others as well.

Researcher: What are your views about the concept of treating students as customers?

Interviewee: I view it as an abomination. I think it's horrible. I think it's incredibly destructive. I would say it's a danger in our society. Students as customers, it's the same as when the railway company I travel with doesn't call me a passenger. It calls me a customer. It's like somebody is giving you an identity which you haven't asked for. They are changing your identity as a customer. I mean, Students should be students.

Researcher: What do you see as the side effects of this on students or even on the Institution?

Interviewee: first of all, at the level of an Institution, if they accept the idea of a customer the most important customers are the ones who pay the most which is not fair. You have the growing danger of students believing that as customers they bought something and so, they should get something. There is this "I can't fail the programme because I paid for this". It's increasingly becoming something which the British Government is promoting – the idea of student as a customer. That's not just foreign students. That's British students as well, and it is part of their thing to commercialise HE, which they like. What they would really like from HE is the intellectual culture which is incapable of challenging them.

Researcher:  Do you think that these new implementations work for the favour of students?

Interviewee:   No, not at all. It certainly doesn't work in the favour of the students or the Institution. Again, an anecdote. We have a student who made a complaint on the BA, and she got her money back. She complained after she'd finished a degree, that one of her papers had come back to her with food stains on − she'd handed it in an assignment. We were able to prove that, that student had handed that assignment in electronically. So, it'd been marked electronically and returned electronically. So, how you will get food stains on it, I really don't know. When she found out that the university had questioned us and have looked to blame us, the student has emailed me to say that she was really − really sorry. She didn't want this to happen. She was simply trying to get money back – she has made a complaint to get money back because it was a commercial relationship.

Researcher: In your opinion what is the right way to do things for a successful relationship between students and institutions? (What do you recommend?)

Interviewee: To ensure, especially in terms of international students, that people who arrive in Britain are able to do what should be expected of them. That's a very important thing. They must be able to read and write and to begin to study at the required levels. Then, after that, universities would have to understand that what they should be about is not being a big

commercial success. What it should be about is providing as far as they can the very best Educational experience for the students that are there. For the communities in which they are located. You can look at many Universities possibly even in XXX, you can see that they put on academic programmes to attract students, but they see the real business at the university as being a property and accommodation. Yea, you must put on the courses. You must have the training staff, the Educational staff to attract people to the accommodation. That is pretty much the model that they adopt. So, there is a real thing where they view success as being the maximisation of the profit-making part of the university, as they see it, and the minimisation of the costs of the education which they view as a cost.

In terms of British-international students, there should be cultural activities that everyone can participate in − genuine activities to promote participation and diversity. The university must also promote series of activities for students not directly linked to their courses. I understand now that the university has programs of showing films and discussing films with an international flavour. I think that could be much bigger but at least it seems to be some type of start. I suppose the single biggest thing must be again this abandonment of what is in fact a commercial approach to foreign students.

Researcher: How do you see internationalisation at your institution developing in the coming years?

Interviewee: It's very clear that the university leaderships all want to get more and more foreign students because of money. As it stands today that would be the driving force, but as I said we're just a big military adventure away from the whole thing falling apart.

Researcher: How do you see the future of HE if these issues won't be addressed?

Interviewee: a very strong divide which's already started, between poor universities and the rich ones. The rich ones will concentrate on the education of elite like Oxford, Cambridge. There is a stunning statistic. It's not to do with international students but it is interesting. There are more students at the university of east London from different ethnic minorities than there

are students from ethnic minorities at Oxford and Cambridge. One university in east London – a very poor university – has more students from ethnic minorities than all the elite universities added together.

Researcher: Do you have any other comments or information you would like to add?

Interviewee: yes, I do. It'd always bothered me, and it's become something which still does bother me. That is, "although I support the idea of internationalisation, I can in some cases with some students from some countries really resent the idea that it's only the elites of those counties that actually come to Britain. Very − very often, I know because of the countries that they've come from it must be corrupt money, that's financing them. I am not talking about people. I am talking about people being financed individually. For example, we only need to look at what I consider to be illegal salaries in china and British university fees to realise that those students that are coming to Britain from China, who are privately financed, MUST BE coming for money. I guess then, the leadership of British universities are quite happy to prostitute their university for foreign money, and that is very − very destructive. I have to give an example: the middle east studies at XXX university was a total scandal – it really, really was a scandal − of who and what it was. It's very − very strange. Who was paying us? and what they were doing? It wasn't university. My wife is a teacher at a private school in XXX, and she has helped people get into university – quite a lot of students – and she has been scandalised. Every year, people who get into Oxford, Cambridge leading our universities from her school because they are Russians or Chinese with a lot of money, and they are going to pay oversea student fees. She says that – very definitely – they will get in if they pay irrespective of their standard. Not completely irrespective of their standard, but you know. I don't know if you know it – the top Art school in London − would be one that is used to be called the Slade. It's near XXXX station, and she has seen students who – very definitely – do not get grades that they would need to get at A level, but they get in there because they are going to pay oversea student fees, and she's actually had students say that they will get into Oxford or Cambridge because they will pay.

There is also this thing, which is not talked about, the way I see it is "we really are one step more away from the whole collapse of foreign students coming to Britain. My wife has already seen that, and you get this very strange staff going on in Britain. Russian students, scholar students are paying a lot of money to go to six former schools being harassed over their visas. You can see that the racist agenda which goes on visas which is not fair to do this to people. This is idiotic. You know, universities are trying everything to recruit people whoever they are, and the visa people are trying to stop it. I have a brother-in-law who is a very successful textbook writer in EFL, and he went to a meeting with the British Council and top immigration people and bit from the civil service. The meeting was basically about what the British council needs to be doing in the next 20 years – because he was an expert writer, he was asked about that. In the lunch time, he was having lunch with civil servants and he said to them – just the point that I've made about: you invite people to come in and then hassling them over their visas, I don't understand that! And the civil servant said: it's very straight forward, foreign students are one group that we can reduce the numbers. You know, the British government has got targets for immigration. If people are here from Bangladesh and they marry somebody here, it's hard for the government to stop that person coming into Britain. Foreign students are one group where they can try to push to keep the numbers down so that's why they do it. it's really crazy. I mean the group that they really want to bring in. but it's just one part of the government working against another part.

The EFL example that I gave, year after year I would meet people who were doing a PGCE or an MA, and they would say that they were working and there were Chinese or Japanese students in their class who really didn't understand what is going on, and they were getting the same grades as everyone else. I just heard it so many times, you know you hear it one and you think ohm maybe it's just racism. And then, you hear it again and again and it's like emm this is a bit odd, and these people don't seem to be racist to me.

# Appendix 8: Worked transcripts

## A8.1 Extract 1: Coding

- Researcher: tell me about your experience in the UK?
  Interviewee: I came to the UK twice. The first time was in 2015. I remember at that time I had neutral feelings. It was the first time that I've travelled. I was with my twin. My feelings were neutral. I was stressed, but at the same time curious to know the other part [of the world]: I'm going to be alone. What I'm going to do and not do. How I'm going to behave, react and all of that. So, I guess, before even I come here, I started questioning who I am. It was really a good experience. Being here alone made me strong, and even stick to the things that I believe were not necessarily back in XXX [home country] that strong, but now, they are even more stronger. I guess now it depends on how people react and deal with things. So, I guess I'm open, I tolerate others, but I expect them to be open towards me and respect my own things as well. So, this is my policy here in the UK. Be open, just embrace the culture, but at the same time draw your own boundaries. But overall, it was a good experience... I didn't really mingle with XXX [students from the same nation] students during the pre-sessional because when I lived in XXX, I used to come here just for lectures and then go back. In the week-ends, I just come here to buy my own things shopping sometimes by myself, and then I go. I used to spend most of my time in XXX. They have wonderful green places. Then I moved here to the city centre, and I started to know people and go to the sport centre together. That's how I knew the PhD community but still I don't know all of them. It was good.

- Researcher: what are the challenges you encounter in this academic setting?
  Interviewee: trying to work out things, your ideas, and the ways you're going to communicate them. Trying to understand what you are doing which, I guess, come through time. I don't have any personal challenges. So, I feel very, very comfortable, I don't have social challenges as well. I'm very open to people. Academically the challenge, I guess, is the research itself. You know, back home we have a different educational system. There are things that we 've dealt with back home which are not really used here, and we just started the research directly. We just started the PhD from scratch. So, yeah. The research itself is a challenge. The way you deal with the research psychologically. So, you have to always be motivated, be strong and believe in yourself, and sometimes it happens to me I say: "I feel that I'm not moving, I'm not getting anywhere"... so far, I've never been in a sort of bad situation, but I guess, it comes unconsciously from your supervisor, from the research community when we all meet and discuss, and you find other people are struggling as well with their research. So, makes you maybe subconsciously relaxed because you feel Ohh not ONLY ME. I guess, it's good to be surrounded by people so that you know, just in case you need that support, but it has to come from you as well because I believe that if you can't help yourself people will not help you. So, I always keep it to myself, try to deal with it, and if I don't really, you know, I lose control, I go to my supervisor honestly, and I talk to my family as well a lot. So, so far, I'm lucky that I'm fine, but challenges always there.

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**KZ** Kemiche, Zahra (z.kemiche40@canterbury.ac...
Identity: who am I? what to do and what not to do. How to behave and react. Questioning who I am what I should be in this new place.

**KZ** Kemiche, Zahra (z.kemiche40@canterbury.ac...
Resilience, tolerance: accepting the other and expecting the other to accept her, open-mindedness.

**KZ** Kemiche, Zahra (z.kemiche40@canterbury.ac...
Her policy is to embrace the new culture and draw her own boundaries at the same time. What does she mean by "draw your own boundaries"? DOUBLE CHECK WITH HER.

**KZ** Kemiche, Zahra (z.kemiche40@canterbury.ac...
Some of her challenges are related to communication and coping with the education system, which is different from back home. Also doing a PhD without proper preparation

**KZ** Kemiche, Zahra (z.kemiche40@canterbury.ac...
Being in an environment where everybody is facing the same difficulties can be helpful, relaxing.

**KZ** Kemiche, Zahra (z.kemiche40@canterbury.ac...
Self-reliance

**KZ** Kemiche, Zahra (z.kemiche40@canterbury.ac...
She says that challenges are always there, but she tries to keep them to herself. She tries to deal with them by herself and in case things go over control, she talks to her supervisor. Self-reliance.
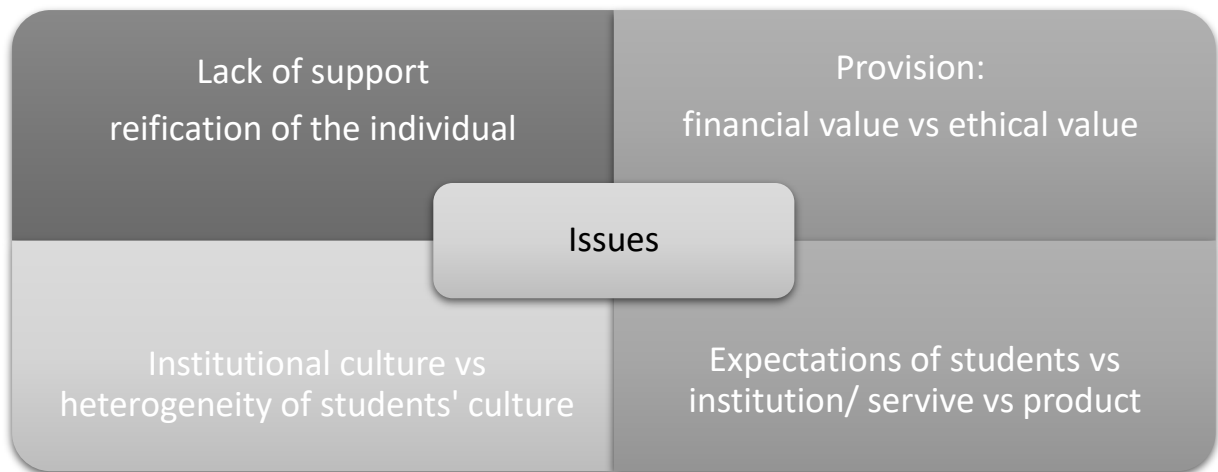
## A8.2 Extract 2

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| The importance of studying abroad | we are supposed to be here for a reason. First of all, we are like recruited by the government. For me, I think, they are trying to build and recruit a promotional capable and intellectual teachers and professors in order to go back and teach at the level of the universities. That is the general reason why I'm here abroad, but for me personally, I've always dreamed of going abroad because I know that there are more resources here. More Books to study, and what we know about the western society to be honest. I think better life conditions here. I wanted also to have a better view of the world. This is something that we can't have in XXX. Also, about what we hear people talking about: the successful Educational system. | **KZ** **Kemiche, Zahra (z.kemiche40@canterbury.ac…** On a practical level, studying abroad is meant to improve the educational level back home |
| | | **KZ** **Kemiche, Zahra (z.kemiche40@canterbury.ac…** At a personal level the importance of studying abroad is driven by the western ideology: better life, successful educational system |
| | • Researcher: why did you choose the UK? Interviewee: well, the choices that we had were between Tunisia and UK, and to be honest I placed UK the first choice because I've always wanted to go to an English-speaking country. Especially, the UK. They are known as academically recognised, and they are also known for successful research here. I'm trying to see if it's true or not. | **KZ** **Kemiche, Zahra (z.kemiche40@canterbury.ac…** Testing the environment: intention to test the validity of the projected image: ideas, thoughts, and ideologies regarding the chosen country. |
| Virtual vs real | • Researcher: Before you came to the UK, have you looked for some information about this university? Interviewee: I tried to look online for information. I first thought that Ohh! It's a British university, and they are all successful universities and so on, but when I came here I think that the information provided on the website are not the same as you are here, and you see with your own eyes. It's something different because they always try to draw the perfect image about the university and so on. When you need, like, a service from the Izone or the IT service or staff. They are there for you, especially in the library, but it's not that perfect as they draw it. It's not always that perfect. For example, if you want a Book, they say: "if you ever need a Book or something, we will bring it for you, for sure!", but is it actually the case? It's been two months now that I've asked for a Book, but they still didn't bring it for me. It's just quite disappointing because at the website they try to draw this perfect image about the university, but when you are here, you see the reality with your own eyes. | **KZ** **Kemiche, Zahra (z.kemiche40@canterbury.ac…** Real life does not match with the virtual image that the university is projecting online (marketing) |
| | | **KZ** **Kemiche, Zahra (z.kemiche40@canterbury.ac…** Feeling disappointed. |
| Underestimation? | • I can say that last year, we learned from social life more than academic life. We were always complaining about how they treat us… we feel like they are underestimating our educational level because they gave us kind of exercises "I would say: I'm sorry, but it's like childish". I'm completely honest with you. It's CHILDISH! Give me something challenging!. I'm going to be a PhD student, and you expect me to do this exercise about connectors!. Are you joking! This is something I can do at home when I revise ok! To be honest, I felt that they are trying to make fun of us or something. This is what everybody thought. I wasn't the only one. At first, | |

| Marginalisation | **We always felt inferior inside the classroom.** | |
|---|---|---|

when we first came, we were so fascinated about how clean the town is. The historical monuments, the people are so kind and respectful... speaking about the people. At first, you think that everyone is very nice to you. They are smiley. Only a few of them gave us the look and so on, but the more you live here the more you discover things. The more you learn that some people smile at you with fake smiles and have other thoughts behind it. It is kind of annoying.

... in this town as you see, not so many Muslims live here, I feel kind of annoyed when they give me that look because I'm just a normal human like them. **If they are not totally covered, I don't mind.** It's their thing. It's personal, and **my veil** is also personal, so don't give me that look. Those things affect you **psychologically as a student.**

... When they pass by, they are like emm they keep staring at you like "you are weird, you don't belong here".

We are just normal people. We live like normal people. These veils are just part of our identity as Muslims... We come here, we try to know about the culture and so on. You should know about me so that you can understand me. Don't just judge me. Even academically, they underestimate us, not just the staff, the teachers and so on, even others.

... what is it called *the international student meeting* ... what they do is *talking about Christianity, religion* and so on, and they talk about *the Bible. I mean, I feel like an outsider. I mean yes, I would like to learn about the Bible and so on, but you call it the international student meeting? Yes, I want to learn about your language when you talk. I want to learn about your culture, but what they mostly do is talking about Christianity. I mean, I don't mind going, I can make up my mind. I'm good at thinking. These things cannot affect me. I'd like to know more about the Bible, yes! But hello! You call it international students' meeting. We are supposed to talk about different cultures – you feel like, they are trying to affect you. They just talk about that. This is the only thing they do. I think it's a bit offending. I don't know if everybody would feel the case, but it's a bit offending because all the things they were talking about are about Christianity.*

*As an international organisation for students. They are supposed to make us feel psychologically better. Get rid of the stress. Why don't we talk about different cultures, different religions! Why do we only have to talk about your culture, about your religion! Come on! I didn't feel comfortable. So, I stopped going anyway.*

**Kemiche, Zahra (z.kemiche40@canterbury.ac...**
The main objective of internationalization is to learn about each other's culture. She says: *"You need to know me first before you judge me"*. Misconception of the other comes out of resisting the culture of the other, and that's not what internationalisation is about. Students must be prepared morally and socially. Internationalisation needs to be decoded for them because lots of students still ignore or lack awareness on what is it truly for, and how inclusive it is. Of course, to do so the whole institution including the staff, the administrators...etc- everyone- must believe on that and be sure, aware of that.

**Kemiche, Zahra (z.kemiche40@canterbury.ac...**
This student questions the international discrepancy

## A8.3 Thematising

### A8.3.1 An example of the emergent themes

1) Internationalisation: a misleading image: the data reveals that the participants believe that 'internationalization' is currently used as a misleading advertisement for a hidden political and economic power of necessity (money, reputation…etc).

2) Insider/outsider: one of the recurrent questions of my interviews was: "When I say 'internationalisation' what comes to your mind?" And surprisingly, most of the answers designate a particular group of students that is 'international students' either as outsiders or strangers.

| Lack of support reification of the individual | Provision: financial value vs ethical value |
| --- | --- |
| Institutional culture vs heterogeneity of students' culture | Expectations of students vs institution/ servive vs product |

Issues

3) Issues

a) Support: lack of support is commonly mentioned. For example, as we saw in the data, many feel isolated due to insufficient social contact as the students had no choice but to remain in a group.

b) Provision: institutional provision:

- pedagogical provision;

- feeling cheated;

- mismatch of expectations: what students expect is a service (long-term service), but what they get is a product (short-term service).

c) Institutional culture:

- lack of responsiveness: inability to cater for specific demands;

- lack of intercultural communication;

- examples of discrimination, marginalisation, racism.

These individual issues can be understood as the result of a basic dichotomy and internal resistance: a reluctant acceptance of the 'other' for financial income.

4) Student's resilience: regardless their current circumstances and the challenges they face, students still have faith in their potentials, capacities, and merit. They are fighting for their space.

| Themes | Data |
|---|---|
| **Internationalisation: a misleading advertisement** | • *I think the whole idea of <mark>internationalisation is a little bit tricky</mark>…. I really do feel that a very, very strong aspect of internationalisation today, the leadership of universities is simply one of <mark>selling courses</mark> to people from overseas. That's their real interest. <mark>It's money</mark>. Then, Internationalisation becomes a bit of <mark>a window dressing</mark>, if you like – <mark>makes it sound good whereas in fact, it's about selling courses</mark> (George, 2018).*<br><br>• *Internationalization <mark>is fake</mark> – Completely fake. Internationalisation <mark>doesn't match what people really do and what people really feel</mark>. International students pay lots and lots of money, and that has tempted people to drop standards… (Harry, 2018).* |
| **Marginalisation, discrimination, and racism:** | • *We always felt **inferior** inside the classroom. The way they treat us makes us feel **so inferior**. Not all of them but some of them. **They underestimate our potentials** (Katia, 2018).*<br><br>• *The more you live here the more you discover things. The more you learn that some people smile at you with **fake smile**…. I'm **a veiled** student. It's kind of **ODD** for them because they are not used to it, especially in this town. As you see, not so many Muslims live here. I feel kind of **annoyed** when they give me **that look** because I'm just a **normal human like them**. If they are not totally covered, I don't mind. It's their thing. It's personal, and my veil is also **personal**. So, don't give me that look. Those things affect you <mark>**psychologically**</mark> as a student (Katia, 2018).*<br><br>• *I've had a lot of people thinking that I'm **foreign** just because **I'm black**. I had a lot of experiences when **people were shocked** that I speak very well and that I was so engaged in things. It's **annoying** because I think, unconsciously, whether they like it or not, there are always **race perceptions**. Living in a white society always promotes the message that b**lack people** are **violent or not educated**…I don't know why <mark>they don't expect us to be **different**. They're just very **dismissive**</mark> (Jane, 2018).* |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Feeling cheated:** | • *The funny thing that happened when the British Council came… Usually they teach us **carelessly** … but when the **British Council** came, they provided us with this **fascinating** and beautiful classroom in an Old building where we have flowers, Books on the shelves, and a huge round table … and the teacher told us: "**when they come, let's all act so professional**". He completely changed his character, and I was like "WHAT?!" He was teaching **like straight**! He was **SO ORGANISED**. And we were all saying: "Why don't they do this on the usual days?" I feel like it's kind of <span style="color:red">**cheating**</span>. I can say that the academic programme they made is a **failure**. If we didn't work hard on ourselves…. **we would be doomed**. That's it (Katia, 2018).* |
| **Resistance** | • *The main drivers are **monetary**. Because the university thinks about it from a monetary point of view. It might say: "We **need to** increase the target for international students from X to Y", **but** they **don't address the capacity of staff to be able to work with those student**s. They don't change the programmes to be able **to accommodate** those students. They are <span style="color:red">**very happy**</span> to take the <span style="color:red">**fee**</span>, but when it comes to changing the programme, they're very <span style="color:red">**defensive**</span>. We don't have programmes that contain a well-reasoned or a clear rationale for internationalisation. We **don't have a clear approach to infusing the international dimension within the programmes.** <span style="color:red">**What we have is a tokenistic approach with about 5% of international references**</span> (Oliver, 2018).* |
| **Student's resilience** | • *If they are looking for money, we are looking for knowledge. Even if they're treating us like a product in their business and so on, I won't give up because of that. We can SEE that. We have bright brains here. We didn't come here for nothing … we are CAPABLE of studying.* <mark>*We DESERVE*</mark> *it. We are **smart**. They treat us as **products**! We treat ourselves as intellectual brainy people (like) a rebellion with my own knowledge (Katia, 2018).* |