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**Exploring the interface of marketisation and
education for sustainable development in English
higher education**



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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the ideological and the practical relationship between Marketisation and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in English higher education (HE) – focusing on the political-economic ideology of Neoliberalism and associated public sector management philosophy of New Public Management (NPM) – in order to reveal how this relationship has influenced the pursuit, practice and development of ESD within England’s HE sector. This relationship is explored both in terms of the contradictions and challenges, as well as the synergies and opportunities, presented to the Higher Education for Sustainable Development (HESD) agenda within the prevailing marketised context. Justification for this research was a lack of studies which have *explicitly, specifically and empirically* explored ESD in the context of increasing neoliberal marketisation. A unique research design was employed, consisting of a single embedded case study of the HESD movement and community of practice in England, using a theoretical framework which combines tenets of both Pragmatist and Interpretivist theoretical traditions. Fifty-four semi-structured interviews were conducted with sustainability/ESD active staff across eight universities and five HE bodies in England, as well as a small number of HESD key informants. Results of this thesis suggest that there is an intrinsic ideological contradiction between ESD and marketisation in the contemporary HE environment in England, yet the practical relationship is much more complex. Findings point to an entrenched theory-practice gap between the ‘transformative’ HESD ideal found within mainstream HESD literature and the pragmatist reality of HESD developments occurring within English universities, which are largely incrementalist, reformist and deeply entwined within the marketised reality. Epistemological and value pluralism is offered as a way of appreciating that the marketised, liberal/traditional and sustainability roles, purposes, ideologies, values and realities of English HE are incontrovertibly conflicting, yet symbiotic in equal measure, and that marketisation and sustainability are separated by ideology, but not by practice.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU)
Agency Theory (AT)
Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL)
Centre for Sustainable Communities Achieved through Professional Education (C-SCAIPE)
Centre for Sustainable Futures (CSF)
Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals (CVCP)
Community of Practice (CoP)
Competition and Markets Authority (CMA)
Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS)
Department for Education (DfE)
Department for Education and Skills (DfES)
Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS)
Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)
Development Education (DE)
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
Education for a Sustainable Future (ESF)
Education for Sustainability (Efs)
Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)
Environmental Association of Universities and Colleges (EAUC)
Environmental Education (EE)
Environmental Management System (EMS)
Equality Challenge Unit (ECU)
Higher Education (HE)
Higher Education Academy (HEA)
Higher Education for Sustainable Development (HESD)
Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE)
Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW)
Higher Education Institution (HEI)
Higher Education Quality Council (HEQC)
International Association of Universities (IAU)
Key Performance Indicator (KPI)
Leadership Foundation for Higher Education (LFHE)
Leadership, Governance and Management Fund (LGM)

Local Education Authority (LEA)
Master of Science (MSc)
National Advisory Body (NAB)
National Student Survey (NSS)
National Union of Students (NUS)
New Economics Foundations (NEF)
New Public Management (NPM)
Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO)
Northern Ireland Department of Employment and Learning (DELNI)
Office for Fair Access (OFFA)
Office for Students (OfS)
Office of the First and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM)
Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)
Organisational Change (OC)
Organisational Learning (OL)
People and Planet (P&P)
Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council (PCFC)
Quality Assurance (QA)
Quality Assurance Agency (QAA)
Quality-Related Research Funding (QR)
Research Assessment Exercise (RAE)
Research Excellence Framework (REF)
Scottish Funding Council (SFC)
Scottish Higher Education Funding Council (SHEFC)
Sustainability/Sustainable Education (SE)
Sustainable Development (SD)
Sustainable Development Commission (SDC)
Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF)
Times Higher Education (THE)
Transition Management (TM)
UK Professional Standards Framework for Teaching and Supporting Learning in HE (UKPSF)
UK Research and Innovation (UKRI)
Unit of Assessment (UoA)
United Kingdom (UK)

United Nations (UN)
United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED)
United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD)
United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (UNCHE)
United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (UNDESD)
United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
United States (US)
Universities Funding Council (UFC)
Universities UK (UUK)
University Grants Committee (UGC)
World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED)
World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD)

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CHAPTER 1) INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Role and Purpose of Higher Education in the Context of Sustainable Development

What is the role and purpose of Higher Education (HE) in England? This is an underpinning question which runs through this thesis from start to finish and one which I asked all fifty-four interviewees who took part in this research. There are multiple visions of ‘the university’ – what *it is* and what it *should be* – and indeed many overlapping layers of tension between different conceptualisations of higher education’s role and purpose and the ways in which universities provide societal benefits and ‘goods’. Three principle models of higher education, detailed throughout the academic literature, which are of relevance to this thesis are: the ‘Humboldtian’, ‘Liberal’ or ‘Traditional’ model; the ‘Economic’ model; and the ‘Sustainability’ model.

1.1.1 Conceptualising models of higher education

The Humboldtian model of higher education which held sway as the overarching vision of university education in Europe from the early 19th until the late 20th century, stems from the theorising of Prussian philosopher Wilhelm von Humboldt and was supplemented by the ideas expressed in John Henry Newman’s eminent 1852 volume, *The Idea of a University* (Anderson, 2004; 2010). This liberal/traditional ideal of higher education, depicts universities as self-governing communities of scholars upholding unqualified academic freedom, in the pursuit of objective, disinterested knowledge, i.e. knowledge is seen as an end in itself and valuable for its own sake. Students, as members of this knowledge community of ‘higher learning’, were to be provided with a broad-based, generalist and liberal education free from religious, ideological, economic (vocational/professional) and political influence (Anderson, 2004; 2010; Reed, 2004; Henkel, 2007; Deboick, 2010; Collini, 2012; J. Williams, 2016). Indeed, the Humboldtian university

was the place for ‘...systematic education of the next generation of scholars...’ (Collini, 2012, pg. 24), where ‘...the enlightened and knowledgeable pass[ed] on their wisdom to their successors’ (G. Williams, 2016, pg. 133) and where new generations were ‘inculcated’ ‘...into the pre-existing knowledge of society...’ (J. Williams, 2016, pg. 619). The enduring nature of this ideal into the 20th century is demonstrated by the two core principles of the International Association of Universities (IAU)¹ laid down in 1950, which are: ‘The right to pursue knowledge for its own sake and to follow wherever the search for truth may lead’ and ‘The tolerance of divergent opinion and freedom from political interference’ (IAU, undated, pg. 1). As J. Williams describes in her (2016, pg. 629) paper, *A critical exploration of changing definitions of public good in relation to higher education*, the broader societal benefits generated by higher education in the Humboldtian university were found through the role of academically free scholars creating and transmitting knowledge, and serving as ‘...critical ally to government, professions and society as a whole’. The liberal/traditional ideal has also commonly been referred to as the ‘elite’ or ‘ivory tower’ view of higher education (Trow, 1974; Gough and Scott, 2007; Collini, 2012).

One of the first signals of change away from this elite model of HE in the United Kingdom (UK), towards a democratised, inclusive and ‘mass’ model open to all, was the publication of the *1963 Robbins Report* of the Committee on Higher Education and the professed ‘Robbins Principle’ that university places ‘...should be available to all who are qualified by ability and attainment to pursue them and who wish to do so’ (Robbins, 1963, paragraph 31; Kogan and Hanney, 2000; Anderson, 2010; Collini, 2012). Indeed, the age participation rate for eighteen year olds in UK higher education up until this point was only around 5% (Brown and Carasso, 2013). This was the first time that UK government policy explicitly pointed towards universities having a role and purpose which served the general ‘public good’, by stating: ‘...higher education is so obviously and

¹ The **International Association of Universities (IAU)** is the UNESCO-based worldwide association of higher education institutions which, in its own words: brings together institutions and organisations from some 130 countries for reflection and action on common concerns and collaborates with various international, regional and national bodies active in higher education (IAU, undated, pg. 1).

rightly of greater public concern' (Robbins, 1963, paragraph 19; J. Williams, 2016). Furthermore, as J. Williams, (2016, pg. 625) notes, this report provided the first policy suggestion that public funding to universities should henceforth be seen as contingent upon broad economic and/or social returns being delivered to the nation and society as a whole (non-graduates *as well as* graduates); an epistemological shift away from the Humboldtian era: '*... [In the Robbins Report] the assumption that knowledge can be linked to a pursuit of truth or considered an end in itself is questioned. Instead, the pursuit of knowledge is considered to need instrumental justification*'.

It wasn't however until the inception of Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government in the late 1970s that there was a *decisive* shift away from the historic Humboldtian ideal. Most notable has been the movement towards an instrumentalist economic view of higher education's purpose in contributing towards national economic competitiveness, and the expectation that as recipients of significant public funding, universities will provide appropriately trained and skilled graduates to drive the national economy, i.e. the economic model of higher education (Kogan and Hanney, 2000; Olssen and Peters, 2005; McArthur, 2011; McCaig, 2011; Brown and Carasso, 2013; J. Williams, 2016). Since this time, we have seen the sector gradually move away from the traditional conception of an autonomous self-governing system, towards a set-up where the 'buffers' between government and universities have been 'steadily eroded' and the state increasingly shapes and steers universities towards national policy goals, in a competitive and marketised mass HE system (Middleton, 2000, pg. 540; Ferlie, Musselin and Andresani, 2008). The process of ongoing and ever-increasing marketisation and massification of UK HE under this economic model, has led to another conceptualisation of higher education's public good role, that is, one of a 'collective private gain' via the individualised goods (i.e. increased earnings and job security) afforded to graduates (who now make up a much greater proportion of the population) and the knock-on implications of these private goods for society as a whole (G. Williams, 2016; J. Williams, 2016, pg. 629). The inherent tension in HE's role and purpose highlighted through the title of this thesis – between universities as servants of the national economy and universities as

leaders of a more socially equitable and environmentally sustainable future for all – is a cornerstone of debate in the field of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD); a field which upholds the third model of higher education – the sustainability model.

The sustainability model of higher education finds its antecedents in the post-war environmentalism era of the 1960s, the 1972 United Nations² Conference on the Human Environment (UNCHE) held in Stockholm and the emergence of the Environmental Education (EE) movement of the 1970s. It wasn't though until the early 1990s and the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, that education for sustainable development, as an autonomous concept, international educational movement and normative educational quest, really emerged on the global stage (Sterling, 2004a; Wade, 2008; Ryan and Tilbury, 2013; Michelson, 2016; Wals, Tassone, Hampson and Reams, 2016) (this policy history is expanded in more detail in Chapter 3). The public good role of universities within the sustainability model, is one in which HE provides collectivised social and environmental benefits to society as a whole, at the local, regional, national, intra-generational and inter-generational level, through: the adoption and promotion of more sustainable operations across all aspects of campus life; the fostering of sustainability literate, competent and conscious graduates; the production and dissemination of sustainability-related research, technology and innovation; and the broader contribution towards sustainability-based values shifts in society. Academic freedom in this model thus incorporates a moral and ethical obligation and responsibility to contribute towards the enhanced wellbeing of people and the planet.

² The **United Nations** is an international organisation founded in 1945, made up of 193 Member States, guided in its mission and work by the principles contained in its founding Charter, which are to: maintain international peace and security; develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples; to achieve international co-operation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms; and to be a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations in the attainment of these common ends (UN, 1945, article 1).

1.1.2 Higher education's moral responsibility towards sustainability

The concept of Sustainable Development (SD), its offshoot Sustainability, and the complex challenge to humanity that these terms represent, is by no means new. As Gough, Mor, Sowter and Vare (2016, pg. 114) have recently described, *'The perception that human societies are damaging their environment, and that there is something potentially catastrophic about this situation from a moral, ecological, economic, spiritual and/or social point of view, has been with us for a long time'*. There are articles, theses and entire books which deal with the history and conceptual evolution of the sustainable development and sustainability movements. The most common distinction drawn between the two terms, lies with the emphasis on ongoing economic growth within SD, and upon the reconciliation of economic development and environmental protection, as opposed to 'sustainability' which places prominence on environmental concerns and the long-term goal of working towards a more socially and environmentally balanced, equitable and sustainable future; an analogous argument is between the notions of weak vs. strong sustainability³ (Dresner, 2008; Neumayer, 2010).

Within this thesis I have chosen to use the words interchangeably, as is so often the case within the education for sustainable development literature. As such, my own definition, which underpins my theorising in this thesis, is that sustainable development/sustainability represents:

The continuous endeavour at local, national and global scales, to systemically recalibrate the balance between economic development and prosperity, socio-political equity and justice, and environmental health and conservation, to assume a stable and manageable balance which ensures a good quality of life for all people and preservation of the natural environment and ecosystems, both for present and future generations.

³ **Weak vs. strong sustainability** is based upon arguments regarding: whether man-made and natural capital are substitutable in the long term; the extent to which advancing technology will enable man-made capital to replace natural capital; and if there are types of 'critical' natural capital which need to be conserved indefinitely (Dresner, 2008; Neumayer, 2010).

It is a journey and an ongoing global challenge to address extensive and unprecedented anthropogenically-induced problems, crises and pressures (Waas, Verbruggen and Wright, 2010; Sterling and Maxey, 2013). It represents a '*...set of conditions whereby human and natural systems can continue indefinitely in a state of mutual well-being, security and survival*' (Jones, Selby and Sterling, 2010b, pg. 19). It is also an 'innovation agenda', '*...inviting us rethink how we organise our lives and work so that we don't destroy our most precious resources*' nor transfer our problems to other parts of society, either in the present day, or the future (DfES, 2006, pg. 4). The idea that formal education processes and systems are crucial in this drive towards sustainability is also well-established. Scott, Martin, Dillon, Higgins and Peters (2013, pg. 1523) have detailed (and Scott, 2015a has argued elsewhere) that this is premised on three key propositions:

(i) humans are increasingly living on the Earth in ways that are over-taxing the biosphere's ability to support life; (ii) the growing inequalities between people across the world in terms of access to resources and achieving well-being are both an affront to human dignity and a source of international and intercultural instability. ... (iii) if the first two issues are to be successfully addressed, education, viewed broadly, is a critical social process, and hence there is a need for culturally and contextually-relevant education for sustainable development (ESD).

Higher education's moral responsibility towards the socio-sustainability public good (as per the sustainability model of HE) has been broken down into many categories of reasoning over the years; particularly prevalent is the rationalisation surrounding higher education's critical role as a societal leader and innovator. Indeed, universities are unique institutions where powerful theories about the world and research into contemporary global phenomena and crises, are formulated, challenged and disseminated widely across society. They contribute actively to local and national policy-making, have vast intellectual influence and thus have the ability to play a pivotal role in catalysing new paths towards sustainability (CRE-Copernicus Charter, 1994; Fridell, 2004; Stephens and Graham, 2010; Broadbent, Laughlin and Alwani-Starr, 2010; Waas, et al.,

2010). The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE)⁴ has also reasoned that this significant future-shaping role of universities, should be premised on the expectation that they respond to the priorities of the societies within which they reside (and which publicly fund them): *'It is indisputable that social values are undergoing a profound shift towards a new perception of the importance of SD. HEIs are substantial recipients of public funds and as such might be expected to reflect this shift at least to some extent in their work'* (HEFCE, 2008a, pg. 4). Cullingford (2004) and Hulme and Barry (2015) have also surmised along these lines, that universities always reflect wider society and contemporary societal mentalities, as such, they should embody a sense of purpose fit for the times, evolve as societies evolve and respond to the changing needs of populations.

An interrelated rationale links to HE's role in educating and moulding the next generation of global citizens and future leaders. As outlined in the *Blueprint for a Green Campus* from the Campus Earth Summit held at Yale University over twenty years ago: *'Since colleges and universities educate most of the people who run society's institutions and train the teachers who educate children, it becomes clear that transforming campuses into catalysts for environmental sustainability is a very good first step toward changing the world'* (HFF, 1995, pg. 2). Stephens and Graham (2010, pg. 612) have also more recently detailed: *'Universities have distinctive organizational cultures that value and promote learning and thus can play a vital role in processes of societal transformation that are reliant on educating new generations of citizens and leaders'*. In the sustainability model and ideal of higher education, students do not only see themselves as individuals responsible for themselves and their own careers (the economic model of employability-ready graduates), but as citizens of a global community (the sustainability model of citizenship-ready graduates). They are able to understand the links between their own lives, the

⁴ **HEFCE** is a non-departmental public body (NDPB) which distributes government funding for higher education in England. The block grant given to HEIs comprises funding allocated for teaching, general research and some specific funding streams, and is spent on HEIs individual priorities within broad guidelines. HEIs must fulfil a number of regulatory requirements, as per the terms and conditions set out in the annual grant memorandum to receive their funding allocation (HEFCE, 2010a, pg. 4 – 7).

lives of others and the natural environment, they have the opportunity to involve themselves in pressing societal and environmental issues and they learn how to take action and make decisions to promote democracy and equality (Giroux, 2002; Fridell, 2004; NEF, 2008; Hursh, Henderson and Greenwood, 2015). As universities globally have begun to operationalise and embed the principles and practice of sustainability within their operations, research and curricula over the past few decades, there has been much scholarly discussion about the nature of higher education's sustainability role and purpose, and how this notion fits with both liberal/traditional and economic/marketised conceptualisations of HE. Commitment and drive towards higher education's sustainability role in the English HE sector, can be seen in the changing foci of policies, strategies, missions and activities of many universities over the past two decades or so. The growth of this sustainability agenda, in parallel with its ideological opponent, the economic model of universities, forms the core focus of this thesis.

1.2 My Educational Journey: from Water, Sand and Ice, to Education for Sustainable Development in the Marketised University

My personal interest in higher education's role in the global sustainable development agenda was spurred around a decade ago whilst studying at The University of Nottingham, UK. As an undergraduate Geography student my academic passion was, as it had been since my early teens, centred around the physical processes of the earth's surface, in particular rivers, deserts and glaciers; water, sand and ice. In my final undergraduate year, I studied two sustainability-focused modules (*Ecology, Conservation and Management* and *Global Issues and Problems*), which significantly opened my eyes to the nature of human-environment interactions and importantly, introduced me to the concept of sustainable development. My newfound interest soon translated into further study in the form of a Master of Science (MSc) degree in Environmental Management and it was whilst learning about the role of Environmental

Management Systems (EMS)⁵ as strategies for managing the environmental impacts of organisations, that I began to wonder about the environmental impact of the institution within which I was studying. A research-intensive Higher Education Institution (HEI) set over five Nottingham-based and two international campuses, employing nearly 10,000 staff and with over 35,000 students registered on its programmes of study; surely this institution must have an environmental footprint similar to that of a small town? It was this one thought that led me to the literature on sustainability in higher education and began the academic journey that I have remained on ever since. Fittingly, I am thus living proof that exposure to sustainability-focused curricula whilst studying as an undergraduate, can lead to a life-changing shift in one's personal, professional and academic values and interests.

My MSc dissertation was entitled *Environmental Sustainability and Higher Education Institutions in England*. Through semi-structured interviews with sixteen environmental and sustainability-focused staff across four English universities, this project aimed to: *'Investigate the approaches and progress of higher education institutions in England towards the management of environmental sustainability within university physical operations and factors influencing successful management'* (Bessant, 2008, pg. 16). Although my primary focus was upon environmental issues in relation to university estates and campuses, e.g. carbon reduction, waste management, campus biodiversity, etc., a new area of interest started to emerge through my reading of related literature; a so called 'corporatisation' of higher education in the UK, the United States (US) and Australia under 'neoliberal economic reforms' (Castree and Spark, 2000; Jarvis, 2001; Devaney and Weber, 2003; Reed, 2004). The more I read about 'corporatisation' and 'neoliberalism' in higher education, the more intrigued I became. A key tension highlighted

⁵ **Environmental Management Systems (EMS)** are structured frameworks for managing the environmental impacts of organisations. They are a *practical tool* – to help organisations understand and manage their impacts on the environment; a *framework* – to continually improve environmental performance; and a *process* – through which organisations can engage with employees, customers, clients and other stakeholders (IEMA, undated, pg. 1).

through the literature I discovered, was a perceived clash of interest between the corporate university model underpinned by neoliberal values and practices and the perceived social and environmental responsibilities of HE, as Saravanamuthu and Tinker (2002, pg. 546) have summed up, '*...prioritization of the University's financial interests before socio-environmental ones clashes with our value assumptions about its place in society*'. These readings collectively prompted me to define an additional research objective for the project: *To critically evaluate the effect of neoliberal economic reforms and university corporatisation on the environmental sustainability agenda of HE*. With limited scope to explore this objective within the study, I concluded that the impact of neoliberal corporatisation was likely to be a significant contributing factor in higher education's stilted progress towards sustainability goals and that there was considerable scope for further investigation into this relationship. Joining Keele University as a Sustainability Project Officer and part-time PhD student in 2011, I was able to reignite my interest in this topic, with my initial interest in environmental sustainability in university estates slowly morphing into a focus on ESD specifically, and particularly in relation to the ongoing marketisation of HE in England.

1.3 Key Terminology used in the Thesis

Before I outline in more detail the theoretical framework and aims and objectives of this doctoral research, I wish to briefly signpost and define some of the key terminology used throughout the thesis. All of these terms and ideas are explored in more detail in later chapters.

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is a term which is used interchangeably with several other terms, which include but are not limited to: Education for a Sustainable Future (ESF), Education for Sustainability (EfS) and Sustainability/Sustainable Education (SE). Individual scholars hold a variety of preferences in using these terms, specifically in relation to nuances which they deem to represent different emphases and values, for example, regarding the use of the word 'development' and its association with economic growth. I choose to use ESD simply because it is the most commonly used term internationally. A recent international volume on ESD,

which includes chapters from many notable ESD scholars from across the globe, was published in early-2016 and is entitled: *The Routledge Handbook of Higher Education for Sustainable Development*. I have chosen to include the overview of ESD given in the introduction to this book (written by the books editors), as the first definition of ESD used in the thesis, as it reflects an up-to-date, internationally applicable and representative conceptualisation of the notion of ESD:

...education for sustainable development (ESD) emphasizes aspects of learning that enhance the transition towards sustainability, 'translates' research outcomes of sustainability science into educational practices and is an integrative approach to teaching and learning. Thus, it represents a changed educational paradigm, rather than yet another 'adjectival' education. ESD supports individuals in reflecting on their own actions by taking into account their current and future social and environmental effects – from a global perspective – and to intervene productively in shaping them in a sustainable manner. ...Therefore, ESD aims to develop competencies that enable individuals to participate in socio-political processes and hence to move society towards sustainable development (Barth, Michelsen, Rieckmann and Thomas, 2016, pg. 1).

The distinction made here (and inherent tension) between 'adjectival' or 'add-on' sustainability education and a 'changed educational paradigm', is a key theme explored in this thesis.

Higher Education for Sustainable Development (HESD) is a relatively new phrase which simply describes the long-standing agenda of ESD within higher education specifically, as opposed to within schools for example. Although there has been no precise definition of HESD provided, HESD has a specific focus on the plurality of conceptualisations and approaches to researching and understanding ESD in HE, as Lotz-Sisitka (2016a, pg. 207) describes, it is the '*...project of researching and coming to understand environment and sustainability education and social change in higher education*'. Therefore, HESD implicitly includes deeper questions about the ontology and epistemology of ESD research and theorising, it draws upon policy and politics and it analyses current and future trends within what is now seen as an academic research realm in its own right (Barth, et al., 2016). For me, HESD thus provides a broader umbrella within which to

frame discussions about ESD in higher education, allowing broader appreciation of the policies, politics, trends and factors which influence the trajectory of ‘sustainability in higher education’, to frame how we think about *ESD specifically* within higher education. Although my primary focus in this thesis is upon ESD, discussions and theorising are set within these broader debates about the sustainability model and ‘sustainability agenda’ of higher education and universities.

In the aims and objectives of this thesis I refer to HESD in England as a **movement** and a **Community of Practice (CoP)**. I use the word ‘movement’ in the context of social and educational, rather than a political movement (although ESD does have clear political-ideological underpinnings), to characterise ESD as an *educational reform movement* or a *social movement within academia*. Social movements can be described as:

...loosely organized but sustained campaign[s] in support of a social goal, typically either the implementation or the prevention of a change in society’s structure or values. [resulting from the] coming together of people whose relationships are not defined by rules and procedures but who merely share a common outlook on society (Killian, Turner and Smelser, 2009, pg. 1).

The notion of communities of practice was first introduced by Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger in their 1991 book, *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*, and was later expanded in detail by Wenger through his 1998 volume, *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*. For Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015) communities of practice are groups of people who share a common concern or passion and who regularly engage in a process of sharing information and experiences to collectively learn how to advance their endeavours. A community of practice can also be viewed as a social learning system with an ‘...*emergent structure, complex relationships, self-organization, dynamic boundaries, ongoing negotiation of identity and cultural meaning*’ (Wenger, 2010, pg. 179). For me, all of these characteristics reflect the nature of the national HESD movement in England. Three further defining features of CoPs, as outlined by Wenger, help us to draw parallels with the HESD movement. Firstly, *the domain* denotes the fact

that CoPs are not merely groups of friends but groups connected by a shared domain of interest (i.e. sustainability in higher education), and with membership implying commitment to and competence within the domain. Secondly, *the community* implies engaging in joint activities, discussions, helping one another and sharing information; this happens both within and across universities through ESD-focused teams, working groups and committees, conferences, seminars, blogs, webinars, mailing lists, publications and general academic discourse. *The practice* describes CoPs as comprising groups of *practitioners* with a shared repertoire of resources and ways of addressing issues (Wenger, 1998; Wenger, 2010; Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner, 2015). Developing and sharing practices is common within HESD, which is by-and-large a collegiate and communal movement. Wenger's ideas have roots in the classic American Pragmatist philosophical tradition, which as we will see underpins the theoretical framework of this thesis.

Neoliberalism is a political-economic ideology which has swept across governments of many OECD⁶ nations since the late 1970s and has underpinned the process of ongoing marketisation of UK higher education since this time. The term **ideology** is used throughout this thesis, to describe systems of ideas and ideals, with socio-political underpinnings and intents to create societal and/or educational change. Neoliberalism has been defined as:

... [an] ideology and policy model that emphasizes the value of free market competition. [It is] most commonly associated with laissez-faire economics. In particular, neoliberalism is often characterized in terms of its belief in sustained economic growth as the means to achieve human progress, its confidence in free markets as the most-efficient allocation of resources, its emphasis on minimal state intervention in economic and social affairs, and its commitment to the freedom of trade and capital (Smith, 2016, pg. 1).

⁶ The **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)** is an intergovernmental economic organisation of 35 countries which was founded in 1961 to encourage economic progress and world trade. The stated mission of the OECD is: to promote policies that will improve the economic and social well-being of people around the world (OECD, undated, pg. 1).

The term **Marketisation**, used in relation to higher education, was coined by Gareth Williams in his 1995 book chapter, *The 'marketisation' of higher education: reforms and potential reforms in higher education finance*. In the 2015 publication, *The Marketisation of Higher Education: Issues and Ironies*, eminent Professor of Higher Education Policy, Roger Brown, defines marketisation as:

...the attempt to put the provision of higher education on a market basis, where the demand and supply of student education, academic research and other university activities are balanced through the price mechanism (Brown, 2015, pg. 5).

A third related area of theorising linked to neoliberalism and marketisation is **New Public Management (NPM)** or New Managerialism, a phenomenon which (like corporatisation) entails management discourses based on the private/corporate sector, being introduced into the public sector, i.e. universities, with the aim of improving 'efficiency, effectiveness and excellence' (Deem, 2001, pg. 10). Within the thesis, the phrases 'marketisation' and 'neoliberal marketisation' are used interchangeably to denote the body of changes, trends and reforms to English higher education under the economic model of HE, which have grown since the late 1970s. The overall process of marketisation has been underpinned by neoliberal ideology, employs NPM practices and processes, and promotes the economic model of higher education.

The phrase **Higher Education Institution (HEI)**⁷, which is used throughout this thesis, comes from the *1992 Further and Higher Education Act* and denotes '*...any provider which is one*

⁷ A **Higher Education Institution (HEI)** is any provider which is one or more of the following: 1) a UK university: UK universities are diverse, ranging in size, mission and history. Nowadays, the Privy Council and Companies House have the power to grant use of the title 'university' to an institution, on the advice of government. There are certain prerequisites, including the need to have degree awarding powers. Universities are all higher education institutions, although not all of them choose to apply to be authority funded; 2) a higher education corporation: Higher education corporation status can only be granted by Parliamentary Order. These providers were all further education corporations or part of local authorities, but have since moved into the higher education sector. The large majority are now also UK universities. Higher education corporations are all HEIs, although not all of them choose to apply to be authority funded; or 3) a designated institution: This is a technical term for an HE provider which has been designated by Parliamentary Order as eligible to be grant funded by one of the UK higher education funding bodies, as set out in the Further and Higher Education Act 1992. Designated institutions are a subset of higher education institutions, and the majority of them are now also universities (HEFCE, undated, pg. 1).

or more of the following: a UK university; a higher education corporation; a designated institution' (HEFCE, undated, pg. 1). Theoretically and methodology speaking, the term HEI is used in this thesis to represent all HEFCE-funded HEIs in England; which at the time of data collection in 2013/14 totalled 129 institutions. Given that over 100 of England's HEIs have the word university or university college in their title, the term **University** is also used interchangeably with HEI. It is also important to highlight that the core focus of this thesis is on the marketisation of **English Higher Education**, which accounts for over 80% of the UK's higher education student population, over 80% of UK HE income and where the marketisation trend has had the greatest impact (in comparison to Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland) (Brown and Carasso, 2013). Though higher education in the UK is technically a devolved responsibility of the four UK administrations, there is a large degree of entanglement within this devolution due to the dominance of the English HE sector and the impact of UK-wide HE institutions which are coordinated from England, for example the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and the Research Excellence Framework (REF) (Bruce, 2012). Thus, although some trends in relation to marketisation and ESD in English HE can be isolated and analysed separately from the rest of the UK, overall the picture is complex and intertwined; this is reflected within discussions in the thesis, specifically in the literature review chapters (Chapters 2 and 3), which draw upon broader UK-wide and international HE trends and literature. The research aims and objectives of this thesis (and data collected) focus specifically on English HE, therefore the core themes of the results and discussion chapters (Chapters 5 and 6) take a more exclusive English HE lens. A final point of clarification, relates to the predominant and implied emphasis on **undergraduate**, rather than postgraduate education, due to the fact that undergraduates account for over 75% of all UK HE students (HESA, 2016). Additionally, HESD research more often focuses on undergraduate rather than postgraduate provision, or otherwise, takes a university-wide approach to conceptualising the sustainability model of higher education, encompassing all university teaching and learning activities collectively within its theorising.

1.4 Focus of the Thesis and Summary of the Theoretical Framework

For the vast majority of academics researching, writing and publishing about the neoliberal marketisation of higher education in England, the UK and further afield internationally, marketising and neoliberalising processes have been portrayed as antithetical to, and incompatible with, a whole range of collectivised societal public goods and benefits that higher education might/could/does/should provide to students, academics and the societies within which they reside. This **Mainstream Higher Education research/literature**, which is explored in detail in Chapter 2, points to a marginalisation and undermining of a whole range of values, roles and responsibilities of HE, which include, but are not limited to: social responsibility, social and economic equality, environmental sustainability, democratic citizenship, public morality, ethical conduct and critical thinking; a list which resonates identically with some of the core values of the ESD movement. Though a large proportion of the mainstream HE literature talks about the compromising of these values, roles and responsibilities which resonate with ESD, and indeed much of the **Mainstream HESD research/literature** critiques marketisation (both implicitly and explicitly) through its vision of an alternate sustainable university, there has been a surprisingly small amount of research which has *explicitly, specifically and empirically*, explored ESD in the context of the increasing neoliberal marketisation of English HE. Authors who have explicitly connected and discussed ESD, in relation to, and within the context of neoliberalism, tend to reside within the **Critical Environmental Education research/literature** realm; a research area which overlaps theoretically with the more critical and radical areas of HESD research and takes a highly ideological approach to questions surrounding education, politics, policy and the relationship and tensions between EE and ESD. It is within this niche area of research – which explicitly explores neoliberal marketisation and education for sustainable development within English higher education – that my thesis finds its home, albeit taking a substantially different theoretical stance to the critical environmental educationalists.

Critical EE literature which explicitly discusses the relationship between neoliberalism and ESD, has tended to take a Critical Theory approach to its theorising, drawing upon Marxist schools of thought and with a focus on overcoming oppressive, hegemonic and capitalistic societal structures. Critical theory research inherently challenges and seeks to bring about social change through revolution and paradigm change⁸ (Crotty, 1998). Drawn from critical theory, Critical Pedagogy is a daughter ideology which focuses on the use of education as a tool for radical social and political change, to help students (and by implication, societies at large) to resist oppressive societal forces (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 2006, Giroux, 2010). Mainstream HESD literature does also draw upon critical theory and pedagogy in its theorising, particularly those writers who evoke the need for an epistemic, paradigmatic and transformative reorientation of universities towards sustainability (Sterling, 2013; Tilbury, 2013); often referred to as the ‘transformative’ HESD vision. Lotz-Sisitka’s (2016a, pg. 220) recent chapter in the Routledge HESD handbook provides a comprehensive history of the influence of critical theory on HESD research and concludes that: *‘The sustainability challenges of our time, persistent poverty and climate change included, indicate the need for massive social transformation, and points to the need for carefully constituted forms of critical HESD research’*. The theoretical framework of this thesis offers a different lens through which to view the relationship between neoliberal marketisation and ESD in English HE, which is mapped out in detail in Chapter 4 but I will provide a brief overview here.

In contrast to the highly ideological and critical stances described above, this thesis takes a practical, pragmatic and empirical approach which combines elements of the Pragmatist and Interpretivist theoretical traditions and seeks to explore the *practical*, as well as the *ideological*,

⁸ **Paradigms and paradigm change:** according to Crotty (1998, pg. 34 – 35), one of the most influential books in modern-day philosophy is Thomas Kuhn’s *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* where the notion of paradigms and ‘paradigm change’ were proposed. Paradigms can be described as the overarching package of conceptual beliefs and background theory, about science and scientific knowledge, within which scientists make sense of the world. When there comes a time that scientific findings are proposed that cannot be explained within the context of the current paradigm, the paradigm is called into question and a new way of viewing reality becomes the norm; a paradigm shift has occurred. For Kuhn such shifts always occurred in a radical fashion rather than via gradual development of new theory.

relationship between marketisation and ESD within English higher education. Rather than concentrating on the ideological tension and theoretically constructed dichotomy between ESD and neoliberalism, which is receiving increasing attention in the literature, this thesis explores the practical day-to-day reality of HESD *within* the context of marketisation and provides a new line of debate, which steers us away from normative conceptions of what ESD ‘should be’ (highly prevalent within the transformative HESD literature), towards a realist picture of what ESD actually ‘is’ within the marketised reality. In true interpretivist fashion, I believe that the only way to truly understand this relationship in question, is through the eyes of the HESD practitioners who are working on the ground within the marketised university regime, backed up by tangible evidence, examples and real experiences. My rationale for taking this stance and the ultimate aim of this thesis is to generate theoretical insights, grounded in empirical enquiry, regarding the relationship between marketisation and ESD and the ways in which marketisation both constrains *and* supports the progress of ESD, in order to support practical and pragmatic trajectories for continuing to develop sustainability-focused education within English HE.

1.5 Doctoral Research Aims and Objectives

1.5.1 Research aim

This thesis aims to explore the ideological and the practical relationship between marketisation and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in English higher education (HE) – focusing in particular on the political-economic ideology of neoliberalism and associated public sector management philosophy of New Public Management (NPM) – in order to reveal how this relationship has influenced the pursuit, practice and development of ESD within England’s HE sector. This relationship will be explored both in terms of the contradictions and challenges, and the synergies and opportunities presented to the ESD agenda, as well as some of the key issues and debates within England’s Higher Education for Sustainable Development (HESD) movement, within the prevailing marketised context.

1.5.2 Research objectives

This thesis has five research objectives:

1. Review and summarize the history and characteristics of marketisation within English HE.
2. Review and summarize the history and characteristics of the HESD movement, with a particular focus on English HE.
3. Explore the ideological relationship between marketisation and ESD within English HE.
4. Investigate the practical relationship between marketisation and ESD within English HE, in relation to the following HE bodies and organisations and their influence on and involvement with the ESD agenda:
 - a. The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE);
 - b. The Higher Education Academy (HEA);
 - c. The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA);
 - d. The National Union of Students (NUS); and,
 - e. The Environmental Association of Universities and Colleges (EAUC).
5. Investigate the practical relationship between marketisation and ESD within English HE, through exploring some of the key issues and debates within England's HESD movement.

This thesis sets general time scales of focus both in terms of marketisation and HESD. Broadly speaking it focusses on marketisation within English HE since the commencement of the Thatcherism era of the late 1970s. Though it does also briefly map out the policy history and evolution of HESD from around the same period, it predominately focuses on developments within the HESD movement in England since around 2005 when the first wave of *significant* policy impetuses for driving sustainability and ESD within higher education, were felt at the national and the international level.

1.6 Summary of the Research Design and Methodology

This thesis takes a case study research design approach consisting of a single embedded case study⁹ of the HESD movement and community of practice in England within the context of marketisation. It consists of two principle subunit types: 1) Higher education bodies and organisations with a sustainability/ESD remit and sustainability/ESD-active staff; and, 2) Higher education institutions with a sustainability/ESD remit and sustainability/ESD-active staff. Other types of subunit were also considered but ruled out for inclusion within the study, including students, employers, environmental and sustainability charities and NGOs, as well as central government (justification for these choices are found in Chapter 4). Given the macro-level focus of the case study, a selection of HE bodies/organisations and a selection of HE institutions were sampled, and within these a selection of individuals, to take part in the research via semi-structured interviews. As you can see from Figure 1.1 which attempts to visually represent the case study, marketisation provides the background context within which the case study resides. The case study itself seeks to explore and characterize the HESD movement and community of practice as a whole, within this marketised context and through the lens of marketisation. The two principle subunit types overlap to represent the overlapping nature of the work of the HE bodies/organisations and institutions in relation to ESD in England. A range of HESD key informants who interact with/are involved with both of the two core subunit types (but do not necessarily work within either) are located in the overlapping region between the two subunits. Data for this thesis was collected via fifty-four semi-structured interviews with individuals spanning the two core subunits of analysis, as well as a small number of HESD key informants, in the academic year 2013/14.

⁹ An **embedded case study** is where the overall case contains multiple embedded subunits of analysis, whereas a holistic case study is a comprehensive entity which is not carved up into subunits (Yin, 2008).

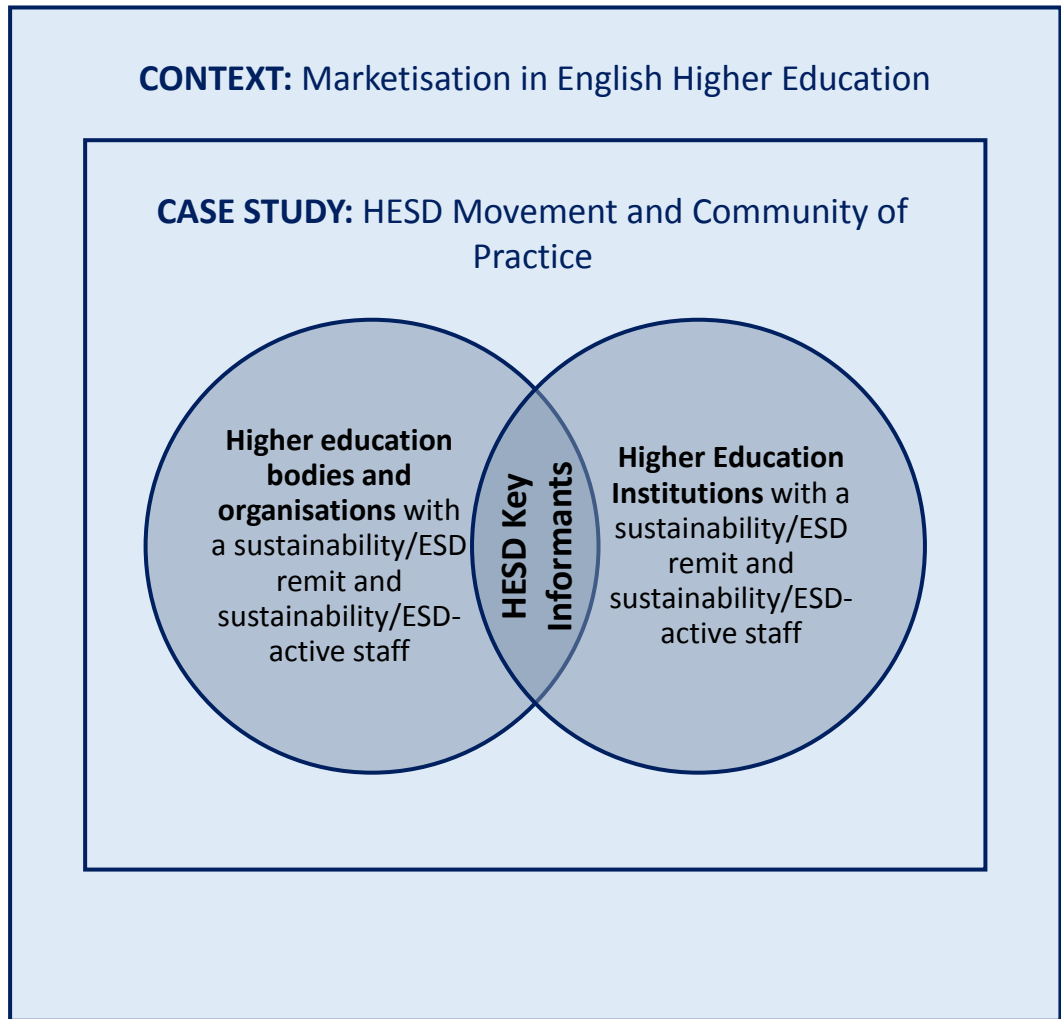


Figure 1.1 – Conceptualisation of the case study research design

1.7 Structure of the Thesis

CHAPTER 2) THE MARKETISATION OF ENGLISH HIGHER EDUCATION – is the first of the two literature review chapters of the thesis, which predominantly explores mainstream higher education research/literature, but also draws upon some mainstream HESD and critical environmental literature, as well as some publications from the fields of Politics. The overall aim of this chapter is to review and summarize the history and characteristics of marketisation within English HE (Doctoral Research Objective 1). Towards the end of the chapter the ideological relationship between marketisation and ESD within English HE begins to be explored (Doctoral

Research Objective 3) through an investigation of a range of objections and concerns surrounding the impacts of marketisation on universities, academic staff and students.

CHAPTER 3) HIGHER EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT – is the second of the two literature review chapters which predominately explores mainstream HESD and critical environmental literature. The focus of this chapter is to review and summarize the history and characteristics of the HESD movement, with a particular focus on English HE (Doctoral Research Objective 2), from both a policy and a theoretical perspective. Again, towards the end of the chapter, the ideological relationship between marketisation and ESD is picked up, building upon the perceived ideological tension highlighted in Chapter 2. This chapter finishes by theoretically justifying the aims and objectives of the thesis.

CHAPTER 4) THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY – details and justifies the theoretical framework, research methodology (research design), data gathering methods and data analysis techniques which underpin this thesis. The theoretical framework, which draws principally upon Constructionist epistemology and Interpretivist theoretical perspective and Pragmatist epistemology and Pragmatist theoretical perspective, provides the philosophical as well as the practical context for the case study research methodology, semi-structured interviews which were undertaken and the manual thematic coding of interview transcripts carried out, which produced twelve Data Analysis Core Themes (see Appendix D, Table 4.13, pg. 395, for a summary of all twelve core themes).

CHAPTER 5) THE ROLE OF ENGLAND’S HIGHER EDUCATION BODIES AND ORGANISATIONS IN THE HESD AGENDA – is the first of the two results and discussion chapters, which considers core themes one to eight of the thesis data analysis process. The principle focus of this chapter is how England’s HE sector bodies and organisations have influenced and impacted the pursuit, practice and development of England’s HESD agenda (Doctoral Research Objective 4); looking at both the challenges/contradictions and the synergies/opportunities presented by the influence of these

bodies in the prevailing marketised context. This chapter looks at the varied marketising roles of the sector bodies through analysing the legitimising, incentivising and steering impact they have had upon the sustainability and ESD activities of individual universities and HESD advocates. Core themes include: the relationship between central government and HEFCE regarding sustainable development; the history and approach of HEFCE's and the HEA's SD/ESD agendas; sustainability and ESD leadership from 'the top'; educational quality assurance (QA), quality-related research funding (QR) and ESD; and the role of competitive advantage within the HE sustainability agenda.

CHAPTER 6) KEY ISSUES AND DEBATES WITHIN ENGLAND'S HESD MOVEMENT – is the second of the two results and discussion chapters which considers core themes nine to twelve of the thesis data analysis process. This chapter aims to investigate the practical relationship between marketisation and ESD within English HE, through exploring some of the key issues and debates within England's HESD movement (Doctoral Research Objective 5). This chapter revolves around the challenges associated with broadening ESD engagement within the marketised university system to broad populations of staff and students, including: issues surrounding staff resistance to sustainability and ESD concepts and terminology; the role of values, politics and academic freedom in sustainability education endeavours; competing priorities and pressures in the marketised university context for academic staff; the impact of tuition fee increases, 'student as consumer' ideology and the relationship of these developments to ESD; tensions between transformative HESD ideology and pragmatist HESD reality in the marketised university; and interviewees perceptions of the role and purpose of HE in England.

CHAPTER 7) CONCLUSION – draws together the range of conclusions drawn throughout chapters five and six, as well as broad theoretical insights from across the whole thesis regarding the interface of marketisation and education for sustainable development in English higher education. This chapter demonstrates the key areas of original knowledge contribution from this study and potential future research avenues arising from my findings.

CHAPTER 2) THE MARKETISATION OF ENGLISH HIGHER EDUCATION

This chapter provides a detailed overview of the history of the marketisation trend in UK higher education, with a specific focus on English HE. It starts by outlining the characteristics of, as well as the differences and relationships between, neoliberalism, classic 'economic liberalism', capitalism, new public management, agency theory and marketisation (Section 2.1). Section 2.2 gives a potted history of marketising policy reforms in UK higher education from 1980 to 2016, including an exploration of governmental rationale for such changes. The complex relationship between, on the one hand, governmental use of non-interventionist decentralising market-based reforms, and on the other, interventionist centralising state-based reforms, in the overall marketisation process, is detailed through an exploration of 'quasi-market' theory. Section 2.3 then moves on to examine the various impacts of marketisation on the operation of the UK HE sector, including the effects on academic staff and students. Several major HE reforms are examined in more detail, including: the introduction of quality-related research funding and educational quality assurance; the proliferation of higher education league tables and the provision of publicly available information about HE quality; changes to university funding mechanisms via the introduction of, and increases to, tuition fees; and the characteristics of the heightened 'student as consumer' era since the 2010 Browne review. The final section of the chapter (Section 2.4) considers a range of objections to the neoliberalisation of universities in the UK which are prevalent within the mainstream higher education research and literature, including: tensions with the liberal/traditional HE model and academic freedom; concerns surrounding the political framing of HE in the UK and the instrumentality of the 'student as consumer' model; and the perceived contradictions with a range of social, public, ethical and moral roles and values of universities. Building on these highlighted tensions, critical pedagogy theory is briefly discussed as an approach which seeks to radically overcome neoliberalism

through emancipatory education approaches. Section 2.4.5 concludes the chapter by summarizing the overarching criticisms of neoliberal marketisation to elucidate the diametric *ideological* contradiction between marketisation and education for sustainable development.

N.B. The range of literature explored in this chapter is largely UK and England-focused, although some literature comes from further afield, from countries which have experienced similar governmental neoliberalisation processes and marketisation of their HE systems, e.g. Australia, New Zealand and the US. Discussion of papers from these countries are not highlighted separately but have been interweaved in to the general discussion of marketisation presented.

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2.1 Neoliberalism, New Public Management and Marketisation

The term neoliberalism is most famously associated with the 1980s governments of Ronald Reagan in the US and Margaret Thatcher in the UK, although its history stems back as far as the 1930s. Neoliberalism is a political-economic ideology and policy model based upon the principles of economic liberalisation and decentralisation, that is, the reduction of government intervention and regulation in relation to the national economy (i.e. smaller and less directive government), thus paving the way for an increased role of the private sector in a more market-oriented economy focused on sustained economic growth (Giroux, 2002; Peck and Tickell, 2002; Brenner, Peck and Theodore, 2010; Hursh, et al., 2015; Smith, 2016). Neoliberalism has been described as ‘...*the defining political-economic paradigm of our time*’ and has been adopted and upheld by political parties of the centre, the traditional left and the right, in many western nations since the 1980s (McChesney, 1998, pg.7). Thatcher’s neoliberal doctrine in the UK promoted, amongst other things: the privatisation of nationalised industries; limited trade union power; a decrease in the welfare role played by the state; efficient and economical public services; reduced inflation; tax cuts; financial discipline; free trade and open markets (Gamble, 1988; Reitan, 2003).

Neoliberalism has its roots in classic ‘economic liberalism’ and whilst the two ideologies have many similarities, they also have distinct differences, as explained by Olssen and Peters (2005) in their seminal paper: *Neoliberalism, higher education and the knowledge economy: from the free market to knowledge capitalism*. They describe values shared by the two ideologies as:

1. *The self-interested individual*: a view of individuals as economically self-interested subjects. In this perspective the individual was represented as a rational optimizer and the best judge of his/her own interests and needs.
2. *Free market economics*: the best way to allocate resources and opportunities is through the market. The market is both a more efficient mechanism and a morally superior mechanism.

3. *A commitment to laissez-faire*: because the free market is a self-regulating order it regulates itself better than the government or any other outside force.
4. *A commitment to free trade*: involving the abolition of tariffs or subsidies, or any form of state-imposed protection or support, as well as the maintenance of floating exchange rates and 'open' economies (Olssen and Peters, 2005, pg. 314 – 315).

The key ideological difference is found in the way in which the notion of state power and state control is construed. As Olssen and Peters (2005, pg. 315) describe, in classic liberalism a 'negative conception of state power' is evoked, in that individuals are seen as autonomous objects to be freed from state control and intervention. In neoliberalism a 'positive conception of state power' is portrayed in *creating* and *manipulating* the necessary conditions for individuals to become competitive and enterprising. The way in which *theoretically* neoliberal governments – i.e. who espouse a free economy and a decentralised state, as with the Thatcherite regime – in fact rely heavily on centralised steering, manipulation and regulation of market conditions, public institutions and individuals, in order to create 'self-interested individuals' and promote 'free market economics', has been the subject of much debate and discussion over the last 30 years; neoliberal ideology is by no means regarded as a unified or coherent doctrine. As Middleton (2000) describes, there is a tension caused by the juxtaposition of state control and market conditions, which are often taken to be incompatible approaches for the management of social and economic affairs. Neoliberal government regimes have thus been said to portray paradoxical characteristics, as they are simultaneously non-interventionist and decentralised in some realms (rolled back), and highly interventionist and centralised in others (rolled forward), which has been coined 'roll-back' and 'roll-out' neoliberalism (Gamble, 1988; Graefe, 2005; Hursh, et al., 2015).

Neoliberalism is also often conflated with Capitalism, although again there are subtle differences between the two. Whereas neoliberalism is a government-imposed political-economic *ideology*, Capitalism is not an ideology but an *economic system*, in which capital goods are owned by private individuals and businesses and channelled through markets, rather than state owned

and distributed for public benefit. In reality, these terms represent almost identical values and ideals and many countries with capitalist national economic systems, also have governmental regimes underpinned by neoliberal ideology, and vice versa. For this reason, neoliberalism and capitalism are often used interchangeably or combined as *Neoliberal Capitalism*.

Centralised state dirigisme and control of the public sector within the neoliberal climate is commonly known as New Public Management (NPM) or New Managerialism; a movement which began in the UK with the installation of Thatcher to power, but also swept across governments of the US, New Zealand, Australia and most other OECD countries in the 1980s (Gruening, 2001). NPM basically entails a market-oriented approach to managing the public sector, whereby management discourses derived from the private, for-profit sector, are mobilised within public services in order to modernize, reduce spending costs and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of such services (Deem, 2001). NPM is characterized by the use of quasi-markets to drive competition between public sector organisations, and to drive competition between individuals *working within* public sector organisations, through the use of: empowered entrepreneurial 'hands-on' management driven by explicit standards, measures of performance, goal setting and quality assurance mechanisms; frugality, discipline and planning in resource use; and a focus on outputs (Hood, 1991; Gruening, 2001; Chandler, Barry and Clark, 2002; Deem and Brehony, 2005; Ferlie, et al., 2008). Agency Theory (AT) is a key concept associated with NPM control of the public sector, and the control of individuals within public sector organisations, under neoliberal governmental regimes. AT is conceptualised around chains of authority and command within management hierarchies, with individuals in charge being called the 'principals' and those further down the chain of command being known as the 'agents'. The so-called 'principal-agent problem' revolves around how to ensure that agents act in accordance with the wishes of principals (Olssen and Peters, 2005). Using NPM discourse, neoliberal governments (the principals) exert control over the public sector (the agents) and ensure that public institutions (such as universities) move in desired policy directions, through the use of varying NPM

mechanisms of control, such as quality assurance regimes, audit and linked funding (Eisenhardt, 1989; Williams, 1997; Goedegebuure and Hayden, 2007). In essence Thatcher's time in power (1979 – 1990), which kicked-off the neoliberal era of UK politics, was characterised by a mixture of both neoliberal and new public management philosophies insofar as her decentralising neoliberal ideals were backed up by centralised control tactics (Gamble, 1988).

The term marketisation describes the deliberate exposure of a public industry, such as higher education, to competitive market-based mechanisms and forces, via governmental approaches which usually combine decentralising neoliberal ideologies and centralising new public management control tactics (Williams, 1995; 1997; 2016). Reforms to higher education since the late 1970s, have been part of a broad marketisation trend which has impacted and shaped all corners of the UK public sector. Indeed, all public services have been subject to marketisation and/or privatisation to varying degrees since the installation of Thatcher to power (Williams, 1997), although there are key differences between marketisation and 'real' free-market privatisation. As Brown (2011, pg. 12) describes, privatisation involves '*...the penetration of private capital, ownership and influence into what may previously have been publicly owned and funded entities and activities*', as we have seen with the rail industry, public utilities such as gas, water and electricity, and telecommunications. In public welfare services such as health, education, including higher education, and social services, we have witnessed a process of 'quasi-market' marketisation through the use of market mechanisms and forces (Williams, 1997). Such quasi-market approaches have been introduced by successive UK government regimes aiming to reap supposed free-market benefits, such as increased efficiency, innovation and value for money, without forsaking the traditional public welfare benefits of such services (Le Grand and Bartlett, 1993). Quasi-markets in the public sector thus differ to free-markets in the private sector, insofar as they are artificial, induced and highly regulated by government (Dill, 1997), rather than unfettered and unregulated. The use of quasi-markets has been the principal mechanism of change in the overall marketisation of UK higher education.

2.2 The Marketisation of UK Higher Education

Higher education in the UK has undergone a period of rapid and significant change over the last few decades. Kogan and Hanney (2000) have commented that there is perhaps no other area of UK public policy which has been subject to such sweeping and radical reforms. Indeed, from the late 1970s onwards a series of financial, managerial, governance, teaching and research reforms were set into motion and the marketisation doctrine (under neoliberal ideology and NPM practices) flowed into the sector (Harland, Tidswell, Everett, Hale and Pickering, 2010; Waitere, Wright, Tremaine, Brown and Pausé, 2011). As Foskett (2011, pg. 25) describes of these changes:

...the British university system may be characterised as changing from a small collegium of medium-sized, research- and education focused organisations to a knowledge-based service industry of medium and large enterprises with diverse missions, profiles and character.

The nature of these changes is explored in meticulous detail in Brown and Carasso's (2013) book *Everything for Sale? The Marketisation of UK Higher Education*. They illustrate the sheer extent of changes witnessed through a selection of key statistics in their introduction (pg. 5 – 6): In 1979/80 there were 777,800 students in UK HE (7.6% from outside of the EU), the age participation rate was 12.4% of UK 18 years olds (which had risen from the 5% in the post-war era), there were 48 universities, 30 polytechnics and 61 colleges of higher education, and the majority of students were male and studying for full time first degrees. Fast forward to the present day, there are over 2.5 million students (14.5% from outside of the EU), the age participation rate is nearly 50%, there are 165 higher education institutions, of which 115 are universities, the majority of students are female, and there are many more part-time, mature and postgraduate students, as well as a much broader range of ethnic minorities represented. Governmental desire to enhance the number and diversity of students at university, the number of HE providers, and to significantly enhance competition within the sector, has been quite clear in the decades since the *Robbins Report* and since the installation of Thatcher to power (Scott, 2005; Giannakis and Bullivant, 2016).

2.2.1 The rationale for marketisation

Governmental rationale for the recent large-scale marketisation and massification of higher education in the UK, is a ubiquitous topic of scholarly discussion. Commentators have described how up until the 1970s UK government had strong faith in the ability of public sector education professionals and university academics, to guide national teaching and research in a way that was beneficial for society. However, by the late 1970s, this confidence had begun to decline and government sought to blame the overall ‘economic malaise’ of the decade on the failure of the UK’s education systems to generate sufficiently skilful, knowledgeable and economically competent young people (Salter and Tapper, 1994; Kogan and Hanney, 2000; Foskett, 2011, pg. 28). Advocates of HE marketisation have argued that the massification of HE and the expansion of market mechanisms within the sector will ensure that, amongst other things universities are: more economically efficient and provide better value for money; more flexible and responsive to the needs of society and the economy; that academic productivity and innovation is enhanced and the quality of teaching and research driven up; and that ultimately, a larger number of highly skilled university graduates are turned out of the system (Dill, 1997; Ferudi, 2011; Foskett, 2011). Increasing the volume of highly skilled young people at the national level has been viewed by governments all over the world, as key to ensuring the economic competence of nations in the global marketplace (Kogan and Hanney, 2000). As Henkel (2007, pg. 80) describes: *‘Governments increasingly characterize the societies over which they preside as ‘knowledge societies’, in which knowledge is the primary driver of national and international economic and social prosperity’*. Mendivil (2002, pg. 353) offers a similar view:

One basic element in the dynamics of change of the world’s HE systems is the recognition of its role as a protagonist in the training of productive intellectual resources; i.e. the training of people and the generation of knowledge that can produce riches convertible into technology, organisational intelligence, productivity and rational consumerism.

Knowledge has thus been recast as the central commodity in the 'knowledge society', whereby universities, as knowledge generating institutions, and their graduates, as knowledge bearing individuals, are seen as critical for contributing to national economic success (Henkel, 2007).

Drawing upon principles of inclusion and equity, an interrelated governmental rationale in this massification and marketisation process, has been to widen participation in higher education and increase the diversity of university attendees in terms of social class, ethnicity and age, amongst other factors (Foskett, 2011). As Collini (2012, pg. 35) describes: *'...the two most frequently reiterated goals of official [HE] policy have for some time been, first, to make universities more responsive to the needs of the economy, and, second, to expand numbers and achieve a 'truly democratic inclusiveness' while simultaneously promoting 'social mobility'*'. The creation of the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) following the introduction of variable tuition fees via the *2004 Higher Education Act*, is testament to this aim. As OFFA state on their webpages, their principle objective is to: *'...promote and safeguard fair access to higher education for people from lower income backgrounds and other under-represented groups'* (OFFA, undated, pg. 1).

Notwithstanding the social mobility, justice and equity benefits that have ensued from opening up UK and English higher education to larger and broader populations of students, the overarching rationale for HE marketisation under neoliberal ideology (drawing on dominant themes which emerge from the mainstream HE literature), has been for universities to provide societies with an appropriately trained and skilled workforce to drive the national economy (Kogan and Hanney, 2000; Scott, 2005; Brown and Carasso, 2013). Indeed, governmental desire to drive competition for resources between universities, to shape customer-provider relationships between students and HEIs, and for the costs of HE to be shared between government and students (rather than being provided to students for free), is enshrined in the various higher education policy documents, white papers and reforms which have shaped the sector over the last three and a half decades (Foskett, 2011).

2.2.2 Marketising policy changes

Table 2.1 provides a chronological overview of key higher education policy changes from 1980 to 2016 which have led to an increasingly marketised and enlarged higher education system in the UK, with a specific focus on changes that have significantly shaped English HE. This table has been constructed using three key texts: Williams' (1997) paper, *The market route to mass higher education: British experience 1979-1996*; Kogan and Hanney's (2000) book, *Reforming Higher Education* and Brown and Carasso's (2013) book *Everything for Sale: The Marketisation of UK Higher Education*. Additional references are included within the table towards the end which link to more recent changes within the sector.

Table 2.1 – Marketising reforms to UK higher education since 1980

Year	Details of marketising reforms
1980	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removal of subsidy for students from outside of the European Community which led to a rigorous recruitment drive by universities to increase numbers of overseas students who now brought significant income with them.
1981	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Expenditure White Paper announced cuts of resources which would mean HEIs losing between 11 and 15 percent in real terms between 1980/81 and 1983/84. Universities reduced student enrolments to maintain teaching standards. Polytechnics, which competed for resources from a fixed resource pool based largely on student numbers, were forced to start a huge recruitment drive in order to maintain current income levels. The University Grants Committee (UGC), the body responsible for distributing HE grant funding at that time, applied the cuts unevenly across universities to protect the highest quality teaching and research, but did not make its funding allocation criteria public knowledge. There was enormous opposition from all HEIs to the lack of transparency in the funding system. • Creation of the National Advisory Body (NAB) which coordinated policy for all non-university HE provision, including polytechnics. The polytechnics now had a voice to air their disgruntlements with the inequality between funding per student for universities and polytechnics.
1984	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The UGC released a document entitled A Strategy for Higher Education into the 1990s which explained a new approach to the determination of universities' funding allocations, which would involve selective allocation of research funding and would distinguish its allocations between teaching and research.
1985	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Development of Higher Education into the 1990s Green Paper was released, which emphasized the need for universities to serve the economy. • Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals (CVCP) Jarratt Report of the Steering Committee for Efficiency Studies in Universities was released. This document promoted value for money in the HE system; a more streamlined managerial structure and the corporatization of governance; vice-chancellors to be chief executives; universities to work under a corporate plan; students to be customers of higher education; and the development of sector-wide indicators.

Mid 1980s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government continued to reduce general funds for HEIs whilst making other funds available on a competitive basis. • There had previously been a long-standing policy by the UGC of offsetting universities' income from external sources against the UGC allocation and polytechnics were required to transfer any external income to the Local Education Authority (LEA) who owned them. A policy was introduced so that henceforth universities would receive matched grants for external income and polytechnics would retain external income and receive some matched funds. As a result commercial income rose rapidly in the sector. Where previously there had been no real incentive to seek this income, there was now explicit encouragement by government for universities, polytechnics, and colleges to generate income from non-government sources.
1986	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UGC separated institutional funding for teaching and research. Teaching funds would henceforth be allocated broadly in accordance with student numbers, while research funds would be based on peer review of research quality. • The first Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) was conducted (subsequent exercises in 1989, 1992, 1996, 2001 and 2008, and REF in 2014) which encouraged universities to concentrate on improving their research at the expense of teaching as large amounts of university finance would now depend on these research assessment surveys.
1987	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White Paper Higher Education Meeting the Challenge announced government's intention to incorporate polytechnics into same system as universities and create new and separate funding councils.
1988	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education Reform Act of Parliament was passed which included: the abolition of lifetime tenure for academic staff; the abolition of any LEA control of polytechnics (giving them autonomous legal status equivalent to universities); the creation of the Universities Funding Council (UFC) and the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council (PCFC) to replace the UGC and NAB. Financial allocations to individual HEIs would henceforth be accompanied by Financial Memoranda that specified what was expected by HEIs in return for funding in terms of teaching and research activities.
1989	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speech at Lancaster University by Secretary of State (Kenneth Baker) setting out the governments vision to expand higher education along the lines of the American higher education model, i.e. with greater engagement in a variety of private enterprises. • The Treasury and Department of Education developed a mechanism to encourage HEIs to expand student enrolments at a very low cost to public funds. Treasury agreed to pay fees to universities up to about 30% of teaching costs of an unlimited number of students. As a result, many institutions increased their enrolments spectacularly from 1990 onwards. For many institutions, this was the only way to maintain total income at a time when general income from the funding councils was being reduced. By 1993 enrolments over the whole system were growing by more than 10% a year.
1990	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of student loans for maintenance, supplementing maintenance grants.
1992	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further and Higher Education Act was released which created new funding councils: Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE); Scottish Higher Education Funding Council (SHEFC) (now the Scottish Funding Council, SFC); Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) (HEIs in Northern Ireland are funded directly by the Department of Employment and Learning). Funding councils were required to set up Quality Assessment Committees concerned with maintaining teaching quality in a period of rapid expansion in student numbers. • University status for polytechnics was granted which saw the end of the binary line between universities and polytechnics.
1993	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HEFCE Circular 3/93, HEFCE Assessment of the Quality of Education was released. • The introduction of Teaching Quality Assessment and establishment of the Higher Education Quality Council (HEQC) as a sector-owned quality assurance body.
1993	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further Education Colleges joined universities and polytechnics in having full legal independence (although technically the term 'polytechnic' ceased to exist after 1992).
1994	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of Maximum Aggregate Student Numbers (quotas) for undergraduate places at individual institutions.

1997	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dearing Report Higher Education in the Learning Society recommends undergraduate fees to help meet institutions teaching costs. Government announces intention to introduce means-tested top-up tuition fees and to abolish maintenance grants.
1998	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching and Higher Education Act passed and the introduction of top-up tuition fees of £1,125. The Act granted unprecedented powers to the HE secretary of state to prescribe all fee levels for students via the funding council and to make annual regulations setting out the support available to students going into higher education, including how and when student loans would be repaid. • Secretary of State requested to bring quality audit and assessment closer together. Staff from HEQC and HEFCE worked together to form the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA).
1999	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scotland and Northern Ireland obtain powers to determine some elements of higher education policy within their devolved nations. • Publication of Performance Indicators Steering Group First Report which led to the production of a set of indicators of institutional performance for the entire sector across the UK for the first time. The indicators were based on factors such as: access of under-represented groups, non-continuation rates of students, projected student outcomes and institutional research output.
2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher Education Act announced that up-front fees of £1125 would be replaced by an income-linked deferred payment once students graduate. Fixed rate of £1125 to be replaced by variable fees (based upon degree subject, institution type, amongst other factors) of up to £3000, although most HEIs chose to charge the full amount. • Changes in the rules for university title to enable institutions without research degree awarding powers to obtain a university title.
2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The first National Student Survey (NSS) was carried out. The rationale for the introduction of the NSS was to provide a new layer of quality assurance for teaching and learning in UK universities; to provide a new package of public information about teaching quality; and to inform prospective students and their advisers in choosing what and where to study (HEFCE, 2004, pg.2).
2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The introduction of variable fees capped at £3,000 and income-contingent fee and maintenance loans for full-time Home and EU undergraduates. • Creation of the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) as the independent regulator of fair access and equal opportunity in HE as a reaction to heightened fees and the risk of disadvantaging students from lower income backgrounds. • Office of the Independent Adjudicator created to handle student complaints not resolved through institutional procedures.
2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White Paper Higher Ambitions: The Future of Universities in a Knowledge Economy proposes closer links between HEIs and skills needs in the economy, as well as an amplification of information for students regarding details of programmes of study, average contact time with staff, graduate destinations and linked salaries, etc. • Browne Committee is established to lead an independent review of higher education funding in England and to make recommendations for the future direction of funding.
2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government accepts recommendations of the Browne Committee that in the future most teaching in English universities should be funded through student tuition fees, with direct teaching funding to HEIs from HEFCE confined to a small number of priority areas (such as very high-cost science, technology, engineering and mathematics subjects) and that the cap on tuition fees should be raised to £9,000 from 2012.
2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government publishes White Paper Higher Education Students at the Heart of the System which, along with the changes to student tuition fees and funding outlined above, also recommends the following reforms (BIS, 2011, pg. 8 – 12): • Student loans (for tuition/living costs) to be repaid at rate of 9% of earnings over £21,000; • Information for prospective students and their advisors to be enhanced to enable students to make more useful comparisons between subjects at different institutions. HEIs asked to provide standard sets of information about their courses. Unistats website to be enhanced;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Graduate salary information to be added to Unistats website; HEIs to publish staff teaching qualifications; Changes to student number cap to allow unrestrained recruitment of roughly 65,000 students scoring the equivalent of AAB or above at A-Level, as well as the creation of a flexible margin of 20,000 places for universities and colleges charging £7,500 annual tuition fees or lower; Removing barriers to entry to HE sector and changes to the rules for degree-awarding powers/university title, to facilitate market entry of private providers and FE colleges.
2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase of the maximum full-time undergraduate tuition fee to £9,000.
2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The first Research Excellence Framework (REF) exercise is carried out in place of the former RAE. Changes from the RAE to the REF include: a reduction in the number of Units of Assessment (UoA) from over 67 to 36 and the number of main panels from 15 to 4; the introduction of an assessment of research ‘impact’ outside of academia to account for 20% of quality-related research funding; and a change to only directly fund research judged as 3* and 4* (REF, 2012).
2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring a successful UK research endeavour: A review of the UK research councils by Paul Nurse. Recommendation to amalgamate all seven UK research councils into one body, Research UK which would also replace the coordinating body, Research Councils UK (RCUK) (Nurse, 2015). Green Paper Fulfilling Our Potential: Higher education: teaching excellence, social mobility and student choice proposes the introduction of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) to link assessed teaching excellence to tuition fees and enable higher performing HEIs to charge higher fees to students. It also proposes that a new ‘Office for Students’ should take over the functions of HEFCE and OFFA (BIS, 2015). Publication of a series of memoranda by the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) aiming to boost students’ legal rights as consumers in a market-place and advise HEIs on their associated legal obligations: UK higher education providers – advice on consumer protection law (CMA, 2015).
2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> White Paper Higher education: success as a knowledge economy key outcomes include (BIS, 2016a, pg. 18-20): Student number controls will continue to be lifted; Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) implementation via a phased approach; Office for Students (OfS) to be created as new market regulator, in place of HEFCE, and merged with OFFA. OfS will be a non-departmental public body with ministers responsible for appointing the Chair, Chief Executive and non-executive Board members. It will primarily be funded by registration fees from HE providers and will be responsible for allocating teaching grant funding and for monitoring the financial sustainability, efficiency and overall health of the sector. UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) to be created which will be a new research and innovation funding body that will allocate funding for research and innovation and act as a champion for the UK’s world class system. UKRI will incorporate the functions of the seven Research Councils, Innovate UK, and HEFCE’s research funding functions. Higher Education and Research Bill currently in progress, but will ultimately confirm details of and implement the reforms laid out in the above, White Paper. Overall it aims to: create more competition and choice that will promote social mobility; boost productivity in the economy; ensure students receive value for money from investment in HE; and strengthen the UK’s research/innovation sector (BIS, 2016b, pg. 1). REF review conducted to inform developments ahead of REF 2021, Building on Success and Learning from Experience: An Independent Review of the Research Excellence Framework setting out 12 key recommendations. Report of the review group on UK higher education sector agencies (UUK, 2016) recommends that the core functions of the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU), the Higher Education Academy (HEA) and the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education (LFHE) should be merged into a single body to create a new, more responsive and holistic sector agency (UUK, 2016, pg. 6).

Looking at the detail provided in this table, up until the late 1980s, changes to the UK higher education sector were more incremental, involving softer forms of ‘prod and nudge politics’ in an attempt to shift the behaviour of HE institutions (Salter and Tapper, 1994, pg. 1). With the passing of the 1988 *Education Reform Act* and the subsequent 1992 *Further and Higher Education Act*, which brought the new HE funding councils, financial memoranda for universities’ grant allocations, the abolition of lifetime tenure for academic staff and the ending of the binary divide between universities and polytechnics, the pace of change sped up exponentially and the HE sector started to take shape as a fully market-oriented system (Salter and Tapper, 1994; Williams, 1997; Brown and Carasso, 2013). The 1997 *Dearing Report* and the subsequent 1998 *Teaching and Higher Education Act* which brought in the first student top-up tuition fees at £1,125 per year, sealed the deal on the marketisation of English universities. Williams (1997, pg. 282) has described these major HE policy changes as part of an all-embracing strategy developed by the 1980/90s Conservative Government (and which was taken forward by Blair’s Labour government from 1997 onwards and by subsequent governments thereafter) ‘...to reduce the power of professional suppliers of services, and transfer some of these powers to clients or consumers of services’. In other words, we have seen a slowly growing trend of power in the HE system being shifted away from university academic and managerial staff, towards the state, the HE bodies, and importantly, students. The appointment of the Browne Committee in 2009 (led by Lord Browne of Madingley, former chief executive of British Petroleum) by the then Labour government, to review the system of HE funding and student finance in England, and the subsequent publication of the 2011 White Paper *Higher Education Students at the Heart of the System* by the incoming coalition Conservative-Liberal Democrat government, which actioned many of Browne’s recommendations (most notably the introduction of £9000 tuition fees), has opened the door to a new accelerated and heightened period of marketisation in English HE; the ‘student as consumer’ era. Brown and Carasso (2013) have described the 2011 White Paper as the most radical in the entire history of English higher education.

Some of the most recent marketising activities taking place across the sector (laid out towards the end of Table 2.1), point to major shifts in the UK HE landscape and reforms to several of the sectors principle bodies/organisations. The most recent White Paper, *Higher education: success as a knowledge economy* (BIS, 2016a), is linked to the *Higher Education and Research Bill* (recently debated in the House of Lords), which has *explicitly* market-based aims to: create more competition and choice in the sector; boost productivity in the economy; and ensure students receive value for money from their HE investment (BIS, 2016b, pg. 1). One of the most significant outcomes of the Bill will be the creation of the new Office for Students (OfS), emphasising the increasingly prominent position of students within the HE marketplace, to replace and merge the functions of HEFCE and the Office for Fair Access. The White Paper and Bill have already triggered the implementation of the pilot Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), which will add to the range of new public management educational quality assurance structures already in place for HEIs. And in a separate development, a recent report by Universities UK (UUK)¹⁰ (tasked with reviewing the current operation of the UK's HE sector agencies), has recommended that the core functions of the Higher Education Academy be merged with the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU)¹¹ and the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education (LFHE)¹², into a single body which will '*...support institutions to meet strategic challenges as they relate to equality and diversity, learning and teaching, and leadership and governance*' (UUK, 2016, pg. 6). Indeed, it is a time of significant change for English and UK higher education. Although many of the most recent developments are still to come to fruition, through all of these changes, one message is clear, that is, the marketisation trajectory is enduring and stronger than ever.

¹⁰ **Universities UK (UUK)** (successor to the CVCP), is as an advocacy organisation for UK universities which helps to maintain the world-leading strength of the UK university sector and support its members (vice-chancellors and principals of UK universities) to achieve their aims and objectives (UUK, undated, pg.1).

¹¹ The **Equality Challenge Unit (ECU)**, is a registered charity funded by the SFC, HEFCW and Universities UK, and through direct subscription from HEIs in England and Northern Ireland, which works as a central resource supporting equality and diversity for staff and students in HEIs across the UK (ECU, undated, pg. 1).

¹² The **Leadership Foundation for Higher Education (LFHE)** is a UK organisation funded by the four HE funding councils, which provides support and advice on higher education leadership, governance and management (LFHE, undated, pg. 1).

2.2.3 State vs. market in the marketisation of English HE

The radical reforms witnessed in English HE since the 1980s have fundamentally changed the relationship between the state and universities in many (arguably irreversible) ways. Higher education commentators have explored the ideological and the practical role of the state in these reforms in detail, including the tension between market-based reforms (e.g. reducing direct teaching subsidies to HEIs and introducing student fees to drive a market for student recruitment, or encouraging HEIs to seek external income sources), alongside state-led control and monitoring of HEIs (e.g. implementation of quality-related research funding exercises tied to university income, or teaching quality reviews conducted by the QAA to monitor university teaching standards), in the overall HE marketisation process. These debates parallel those that have been seen within discussions of neoliberal political regimes more generally. Middleton's (2000) paper, *Models of State and Market in the Modernisation of Higher Education*, remains unrivalled in its detailed unpicking and theorising of this relationship. As he notes (pg. 545), while many academics and right-wing commentators might see '*...a state leviathan encroaching on the independence of universities*' others might be '*...more persuaded by evidence that the system is being opened up to market forces*'. He asserts that there is compelling evidence of *both* market-led decentralisation and state-led centralisation in higher education. Henkel (2007, pg. 92) echoes the same sentiment and has described universities as being more strongly rooted in state systems and yet more active participants in a range of markets. She has called these dual reforms 'managed markets', 'centralised decentralisation' and 'formalized freedoms'. Naidoo (2008, pg. 2) also agrees with this view and says there is:

...increasing evidence that higher education can be increasingly regulated by the state while simultaneously opening up to market forces. Furthermore, rather than pulling in different directions, increasing articulation between the two modes of co-ordination may occur. State intervention may help establish the conditions for the operation of a quasi higher education market.

The 2011 White Paper is a prime example of this tension. This quote is from a section of the publication entitled 'Competition and efficiency':

Enabling greater competition, while removing unnecessary regulations, is an important theme of this White Paper, because of the benefits for all users of higher education. We want to ensure that the new student finance regime supports student choice, and that in turn student choice drives competition, including on price. Chapter 4 sets out our proposals for freeing up student number controls as a first step to creating a more liberal system and for making it easier for new providers to enter the market by removing the barriers that currently exist (BIS, 2011, pg. 19).

This particular quote takes an explicitly *market-led* rhetoric with regards to encouraging competition between HE providers, removing regulations, opening up the market to new providers and freeing up Student Number Controls (SNCs)¹³. Yet by the same token, the same White Paper also enforced many *state-led* NPM-based mechanisms for controlling university behaviour, including: expecting HEIs to provide standard sets of information about their courses for student decision-making; encouraging HEIs to publish anonymised information about staff teaching qualifications; and expecting all universities to publish summary reports of their student evaluation surveys on their websites (BIS, 2011, pg. 9 – 10). All of these centralising mechanisms are covert (or not so covert) policy messages to drive HEI behaviour in certain directions, i.e. to increase the number of staff with formal teaching qualifications, to improve the results of student evaluations and to standardise aspects of their course information and administration.

The positioning of state and market in the reform of English HE clearly remains, as Middleton (2000, pg. 540) described over fifteen years ago, a 'complicated reality', with HE policies representing a complicated '*...mélange of diverse and often contradictory elements*' (both state and market-led). It is clear that the neoliberal doctrine, as it relates to higher education, is

¹³ **Student Number Control (SNC)** allocation is the '...total number of home and EU students starting full-time study (mainly at undergraduate level) and meeting certain criteria that a higher education provider is permitted each year. This control on student numbers operates in both the HEFCE-funded sector and in the privately funded sector' (HEFCE, undated, pg.1).

not simply a question of opening up the sector to unregulated market forces. The state has huge involvement in how these market forces operate and closely controls and steers many aspects of universities behaviour within the marketised landscape. The creation of a truly free market in HE would be, for government, too much of a risky business, as Foskett (2011, pg. 30) details:

While governments seek some of the benefits of the market (efficiency, choice, etc.) there are too many aspects of education where government is directly involved or where the downside risks of markets may be too damaging to mean that simply leaving things to classical 'free markets' is possible. ...Hence the market has to be constructed to be what has been termed a 'quasi-market', in which the hand of government provides significant guidance and influence on how the market operates.

Hursh, et al., (2015, pg. 301) attribute the contradictory dual-control of public sector institutions under neoliberal regimes to the fact that neoliberalism is primarily a political (or ideological), rather than an economic project, which they say: '*...better explains the conundrum of how it is that an economic philosophy that calls for a smaller role for government or the state and therefore reducing or eliminating governmental regulations can (more often than not) promote governmental re-regulation supporting market-based decision-making*'.

2.2.4 Quasi-markets in the marketisation of English HE

One of the distinct characteristics of public sector marketisation via the use of 'quasi-markets', relates to the mechanisms used by government to financially fund and support such services. The term quasi-market was coined by Le Grand in his 1991 paper *Quasi-Markets and Social Policy*, which explored the consequences of quasi-markets in the UK public sector. As Le Grand (1991) details, the essence of quasi-market reforms are that government ceases to be both the funder *and* the provider of public services, and instead becomes primarily a funder only through purchasing services from a variety of private, voluntary and public providers in competition with one another. Funding is no longer allocated directly to public service

organisations, such as universities, hospitals, social services, but instead the state ‘purchases’ services from providers in one of three key ways: through a bidding process; through earmarked budgets or ‘vouchers’ being given directly to potential users; or, as has been the case with UK higher education, funding is given to an agent (the HE funding councils) acting on the behalf of the main user group (students), who then allocate the budget between competing providers (the universities) (Le Grand, 1991, pg. 1257; Dill, 1997; Williams, 1997).

The quasi-market set-up of English HE specifically, has involved a shift from a situation in the early 1980s where government funded teaching and research by direct subsidies to HEIs, students did not pay tuition fees and government was essentially the public provider of higher education. To a situation from the mid/late 1980s onwards where government began to purchase research and teaching services from universities in a competitive marketplace via the Higher Education Funding Council for England; with HEFCE acting as the buffer between government and universities and the allocative channel for public funds. Policy changes which set this situation into motion were the separation (by the then University Grants Committee) of institutional funding for teaching and research; the stipulation that teaching funds would henceforth be allocated broadly in accordance with student numbers; that research funds would be allocated via the outcomes of sector-wide quality-related research funding exercises, i.e. the RAE; and, that funding allocations to individual universities would henceforth be accompanied by Financial Memoranda¹⁴ specifying what was expected in return for funding in terms of teaching, research and other activities. Government has used the incentivising yearly block grant¹⁵ provided by HEFCE to HEIs as a mechanism to steer university behaviour and implement pre-determined policy objectives which universities must adhere to in order to receive their funding. Universities

¹⁴ **Financial Memorandum** was (from 1988) the agreement between HEFCE and the institutions it funds, that set out the terms and conditions for payment of HEFCE grants. It was superseded in August 2014 by the **Memorandum of Assurance and Accountability** (HEFCE, undated, pg. 1).

¹⁵ **HEFCE Block Grant** is the total amount of funding provided by HEFCE to an institution for teaching and research annually (HEFCE, undated, pg. 1).

strive to reach particular performance levels with regard to their research, to attract high numbers of (high quality) students and to meet the conditions of their financial memoranda to maximise income (Dill, 1997; Williams, 1997; Kogan and Hanney, 2000; Middleton, 2000; Brown and Carasso, 2013).

As student tuition fees have been implemented and increased (from no fees in the early 1990s, to £1125 per year in 1997, to ca. £3000 per year in 2006, and up to £9000 per year in 2012) the direct teaching block grant to HEIs from HEFCE has been progressively reduced and students have increasingly brought more money into HEIs through fees. Changes to student funding in 2012 involved the most significant shift to date, with the amount of teaching block grant funding being reduced to the point where now only a small number of priority areas (such as very high-cost science, technology, engineering and mathematics subjects) receive direct subsidies from HEFCE. So in essence, there has now been a complete switch in the way in which universities receive their teaching income; away from direct government subsidies, to a situation whereby government directly subsidises students via enhanced student loans, which then subsidise HEIs via enhanced tuition fees (Brown and Carasso, 2013). As a result, competition for students between HEIs has intensified greatly. This shift in teaching funding since 2012, has arguably resulted in HEFCE losing some (or much) of its powers over HEIs, whilst the student body has gained increasingly more leverage through their new consumer guise. We can view all of these quasi-market reforms as part of one large overarching quasi-market in English HE, which is propped up and micro-managed by state subsidies and intervention (Ferudi, 2011) and with government determining both the extent and pace of marketisation (Brown, 2011).

2.3 The Impact of Marketisation on UK HEIs

The range of impacts upon UK HE institutions, university staff, as well as students, of the mutually reinforcing discourses of neoliberalism, new public management and marketisation, are well documented in the literature and have been summarised in Table 2.2 with a specific focus on the English university experience.

Table 2.2 – The impacts of marketisation on English higher education

General characteristics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universities are more business-like, corporate and managerialist. • Focus on financial control, efficiency, value for money, strategic planning and quantifiable outputs. • More interaction and knowledge transfer with businesses and the commercial/corporate sector. • Relationships and roles defined more in corporate terms, e.g. customers and service providers and more use of business-focused language. • Encouragement of private sector providers to enter the market. • Reduced levels of core public funding. • The rise of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for annual monitoring and reporting of key measures of success in teaching, research, enterprise, financial sustainability, etc. • Increased transparency of government funding via formula funding mechanisms based on student numbers, discipline type and assessed research excellence. • Proliferation of accountability, quality assurance and audit processes. • Proliferation of league tables. • Focus on student satisfaction and the information provided to students about courses and other aspects of university provision, e.g. the National Student Survey (NSS), Unistats website¹⁶, and the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES)¹⁷. • Proliferation of ‘student as consumer’ notions.
Research and research funding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competition between HEIs for government research funds in quality-related funding system (QR). • Competition between HEIs for research funding from the UK Research Councils, charities, the EU and business/industry partnerships. • Diversification of research funding to include more private, business and commercial funding. • Continued concentration of research funds from government in highest performing institutions. • Pressure to align research to fields which are recognised by the QR system. • Introduction of measures of research ‘impact’ outside of academia within the REF, e.g. impact on the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life.
Teaching and student funding

¹⁶ **Unistats** is a website for comparing data about undergraduate courses at UK universities/colleges, based on NSS satisfaction scores, jobs/salaries after study and other key information (Unistats, undated, pg. 1).

¹⁷ **Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES)** is a sector-wide survey administered by the HEA to taught postgraduate students about their learning and teaching experiences.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reductions in unit resource of student funding to HEIs from government. • Competition for students between HEIs. • Prior to student recruitment cap being lifted in 2015: drive to maintain student numbers/increase numbers in areas where possible. Post 2015: drive to increase student numbers across the board. • Drive to increase numbers of international students and associated revenues. • Increases in student fees, from no fees in the early 1990s to £1125 per year in 1997, ca. £3000 per year in 2006 and up to £9000 per year in 2012. • Quality assurance of university teaching, both internal mechanisms, six-yearly reviews from the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and the now the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF). • Increased diversity of student populations, e.g. more part-time, mature, postgraduate students, as well as students from broader range of ethnic minorities and disadvantaged backgrounds.
<p>Academic staff</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vice-Chancellors more akin to CEOs from the business world. • Development of stronger and more overt managerial roles by senior academics at Vice-Chancellor, Pro-Vice Chancellor, Dean and Head of Department levels. • Pressure on academic staff to compete for external research income from UK Research Councils, charities, the EU and business/industry partnerships. • Academics increasingly strategic about research collaborations and where work is published. • Pressure to work on research projects outside of chosen field, to 'follow the money'. • Pressure to generate additional revenue streams, for example, enterprise, CPD, new postgraduate courses, international partnerships. • More structured, monitored and managed regimes than in the past. • Many staff appointments based on research track record rather than teaching capability. • Less genuine collegiality. • Rise in administrative workloads.
<p>References</p> <p>Chandler, et al., 2002; Giroux, 2002; Mendivil, 2002; Fridell, 2004; Hill, 2004; Archer, 2008; Dowling, 2008; Kolsaker, 2008; Klenowski, 2009; Reid, 2009; Harland et al., 2010; McArthur, 2011; Waitere et al., 2011; Brown and Carasso, 2013; Brown, 2015.</p>

Overall the literature describes how UK governmental ministers, drawing upon neoliberal ideologies, NPM, agency theory strategies and the use of quasi-markets, have used a melange of marketising mechanisms in order to grow the size of UK higher education, fiercely enhance competition within the sector, as well as steer individual HEIs and academics towards desired policy directions and delivery against government targets. A two-pronged approach based on financial incentives and resource allocation decisions on one hand, and market monitoring, audit and accountability processes on the other, has been employed. Monitoring, audit and accountability processes have been justified as essential to maintain and improve academic standards; promote efficiency and innovation in teaching and research; make the activity of HEIs more transparent; and, to ensure accountability for the increased use of public funds in a mass HE

system (Williams, 1997; Deem, 2001; Hoecht, 2006; Henkel, 2007; Kolsaker, 2008). As Ferlie, et al., (2008, pg. 328) note, the HE system is now much *'...bigger, more expensive, politically more visible and economically more strategic'* and thus more accountable to society at large. The use of NPM mechanisms to control university professionals and to regulate the activities which go on behind university walls at arms-length, has also been called *'steering at a distance'* (Kickert, 1995; Middleton, 2000). As Reid (2009, pg. 575) describes, *'A key component of ensuring that universities, as public institutions acting in the marketplace, remain accountable yet independent has been to subject them to independent audit'*. Dill (1997, pg. 178) concurs, *'...orders are given, compliance is monitored, and non-compliance is punished'*. This regulation and *'steering'* of HEIs is the crux of the NPM doctrine, whereby the state assumes the central role in governing and shaping organisational and academic behaviours (Ferlie, et al., 2008). Two pivotal instruments of NPM audit culture within English higher education are educational quality assurance (QA) and quality-related research funding (QR), which will now be explored in more detail.

2.3.1 Educational quality assurance and enhancement

The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) was established in 1998 through merging the former Higher Education Quality Council (HEQC) and the quality assurance functions of HEFCE, to take overall charge of teaching quality assurance in UK higher education. The QAA is a quasi-independent national body, financed by mandatory subscriptions from HEIs and contracts with the UK HE funding councils (Henkel, 2007). The QAA carries out institutional reviews of teaching every six years and acts in conjunction with the internal quality assurance structures and mechanisms of individual HEIs. Along with monitoring the quality of educational provision in universities, the QAA also defines the range of different HE qualifications available across the UK and maintains a series of Subject Benchmark Statements (produced by national groups of discipline experts) which set out expectations about the standards of degree courses in a range of subject areas. Furthermore, since 2010/11 following from a HEFCE consultation entitled *Future*

arrangements for quality assurance in England and Northern Ireland, there has been an enhanced focus within the remit of the QAA to ensure that all HEIs are producing and publicly publishing a broad range of detailed information about their degree courses, both for students and for other stakeholders (Brown and Carasso, 2013). The consultation's rationale was that:

Improved public access to verified and useful information on standards and quality benefit students, employers and society more broadly, and provide a basis for continued confidence in programmes and awards offered by HEIs (HEFCE, 2010b, pg. 6).

One significant criticism of the QA system, revolves around the extent to which overly bureaucratic, 'box-ticking' QA policies, rules and procedures, actually lead to genuine enhancement and innovation in teaching and learning on the ground within universities, i.e. quality assurance does not necessarily equate to quality enhancement (Hoecht, 2006; Reid, 2009; Brown and Carasso, 2013).

Quality enhancement of higher education teaching in the UK is largely a non-regulated endeavour, which HEIs undertake in a variety of different ways. Many HEIs have senior members of university staff with teaching and learning enhancement oversight, along with specialised academic and educational development functions to provide staff development, training, resources and to guide on the implementation of university teaching and learning strategies. The main higher education body which supports universities in their quality enhancement activities, is the Higher Education Academy, which was formed in response to recommendations laid down in the *Dearing Report* of 1997, which stated that the following should be introduced: a nationally recognised system of professional qualifications for HE teachers; a professional institute to accredit such qualifications (initially the Institute for Learning and Teaching in HE, then the HEA from 2004 onwards); and a system of fellowships for differing levels of expertise/experience in HE teaching and learning (Dearing, 1997). The mission statement of the HEA is '*Improving learning outcomes by raising the status and quality of teaching in higher education*' (HEA, 2016, pg. 1).

Indeed, the HEA works in partnership with universities, colleges, national bodies, groups of staff and individuals, to enhance professional teaching practice across UK HEIs. The HEA historically received the majority of its funding from the UK's three university funding bodies – HEFCE, the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) and the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) – along with the Northern Ireland Department of Employment and Learning (DELNI) who fund Northern Irish universities. However, this funding has been gradually reduced since the recommendations of the 2009 Browne review came into force, from £26.7 million in 2010 to zero in 2015/16 (Grove, 2014). The HEA has been forced to move to a subscription funding model whereby it now receives the majority of its (substantially reduced) funding via subscriptions from UK HEIs. This can be analysed as a yet another marketising move by central government, which means that universities must now pay directly for the services they receive from the HEA, rather than receiving them as part of a state-funded model of teaching quality enhancement, and more pressure is placed upon universities themselves to absorb the quality enhancement functions and funding streams which the HEA had previously provided; functions which have been significantly reduced as the HEA has been forced to streamline its activities and thematic work areas.

2.3.2 Quality-related research funding

Financial support for research in UK universities has traditionally been distributed via a dual support system, which distinguishes between core funding from HEFCE for research facilities and infrastructure (which is provided with fewer restrictions and guidelines, although certain elements must be applied for specific purposes) and additional support for *specific* research projects from the UK's Research Councils¹⁸; these two streams together account for over 50% of funding for research in the UK's universities (Brown and Carasso, 2013). Other key sources of research income include UK-based charities, other government bodies, local authorities, health

¹⁸ **Research Councils UK (RCUK)** is a NDPB partnership body for the UK's seven **Research Councils**. The research councils collectively coordinate and fund research projects in UK universities across the whole spectrum of discipline areas to the tune of around £3 billion per year.

and hospital authorities, industry, and EU sources. The QR research funding system was first introduced in 1986 to apportion HEFCE core funding for research between UK HEIs, based upon the assessed quality and volume of institutions' research in different subject areas, known as Units of Assessment (UoAs). HEFCE carries out these research review processes, known formerly as the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) and since 2012 as the Research Excellence Framework (REF), at roughly 4-5 yearly intervals, and distributes research funds accordingly. Under the RAE/REF system, public funding for research is distributed in accordance with the quality of research across the sector, with the highest performing institutions receiving the most funding and thus having better resources to continue to produce the best research, i.e. the system perpetuates itself (Brown and Carasso, 2013). The introduction of QA and QR into UK higher education, can both be seen as classic NPM based instruments of steering (Ferlie, et. al., 2008), where previously government had virtually no direct interest in assuring quality in either teaching or research, it started to impose quality by law (Kogan and Hanney, 2000).

Many studies have investigated the impacts of QR research regimes on HEIs and HE staff, in the UK and further afield; the literature is largely disparaging. The overarching criticism, from the perspective of UK HE, is that the RAE and REF exercises have created and sustain a self-perpetuating, elite, discipline/subject-focused system, which incentivises university staff to follow certain research directions at the expense of others in order to optimise QR funding and boost research reputation, status and esteem. The impacts of QR in the UK does however vary depending on factors such as: the type of HE institution (i.e. research intensive or not); the discipline area; whether or not an academic department submits research to the RAE/REF unit of assessment for their discipline; and the type of contract an academic staff member is employed on (i.e. research/teaching balance). An overview of the impacts of QR research funding is listed in Table 2.3, with a specific focus on the English HE experience.

Table 2.3 – The impacts of quality-related research funding on English higher education

Overview of impacts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research funding has been concentrated (increasingly so) in the highest rated departments and HEIs, creating a hierarchical, elitist system, with differentiation between departments based on research rating esteem. It has thus become increasingly hard for lower performing departments (in terms of research) in HEIs lower down the national league tables, to compete for research income. • Research has been increasingly privileged over teaching in HEI departments, leading to research capability being valued over teaching capability in academic appointments and promotions, and to research and teaching becoming increasingly separated, at the expense of teaching quality. • Academics are more risk averse in their choice of research collaborations and publishing outputs to ensure maximum research ratings. • The RAE/REF creates specific incentives in publishing patterns with top rated disciplinary journal outputs being privileged over other types of publication. • There is enhanced pressure to compete for external research income and to bid for research funding, sometimes outside of academics’ chosen fields of research. • There is evidence that research has been marginalised and narrowed into fields which are recognised by RAE/REF panels and research funding bodies. • Pure, disciplinary and theoretical research, as well as established researchers, research fields and research methods, are favoured over applied, interdisciplinary, practice-based and novel research approaches. However, changes under the REF system which now recognise the broader ‘impact’ of HE research are beginning to counter this trend and allow a larger range of societal impacts of research to count toward QR ratings and funding. • Shorter-term research is often favoured over longer term research projects to fit with RAE/REF timescales and to meet the requirements of funders. • Internationally-applicable research is valued over nationally-relevant research. • The RAE/REF is a hugely expensive and time consuming exercise which exerts great pressure on staff, creates stress in departments and can be very divisive for teams of academic staff.
References
<p>Elton, 2000; McNay, 2003; Bence and Oppenheim, 2004; Lucas, 2006; Alldred and Miller, 2007; Barker, 2007; Henkel, 2007; Waitere, et al., 2011; Adams and Gurney, 2010; Harland, et al., 2010; Brown and Carasso, 2013; McNay, 2015.</p>

2.3.3 Higher education league tables

Another important marketised (and marketising) accountability mechanism which has been applied to higher education in England, is the increasing trend for the results of both research and teaching quality assessments, as well as other academic activities, to be made publicly available via benchmarking league tables which facilitate comparison, scrutinisation and competition between HEIs. Prominent league tables in the UK include those produced by The Guardian, the Times Higher Education (THE) and The Complete University Guide. Global league tables have also begun to proliferate, such as the QS World University Rankings, the Academic

Ranking of World Universities (ARWU) compiled by Shanghai Jiao Tong University and the Times Higher Education World University Rankings, which mean that universities in the UK are also increasingly being considered in the context of the international HE marketplace (Marginson and van der Wende, 2007). These league tables tend to focus on a relatively small number of similar metrics. Research and teaching performance are the mainstay, with other criteria including: staff: student ratios, income from business/industry, spend per student, students' entry qualifications and graduate employability rates (Hazelkorn, 2007). The increasing convergence regarding definitions of 'academic quality' and what constitutes a 'good university', as facilitated by such league tables, has had the effect that the university ranking agencies and the metrics used in such league tables, now exert significant direction over academic activities within universities, as universities seek competitive advantage in the HE marketplace (Dill and Soo, 2005; Marginson and van der Wende, 2007; Reid, 2009). As Hazelkorn (2007, pg. 21) describes '*...institutions are acting rationally and strategically, effectively becoming what is being measured*'. This proliferating trend for universities' performance in a variety of areas to be made publicly available and comparable – e.g. through leagues tables, comparison websites, student surveys and evaluations, as well as policies which oblige HEIs to publish/report on aspects of their performance – is a core aspect of marketisation, underpinned by the belief that such instruments will serve to promote and drive up academic quality and standards (Dill and Soo, 2005). Of course, another function of such mechanisms, is the provision of information for student consumers, who 'in theory' are able to use them to make transparent comparisons and informed choices (Dill and Soo, 2005; Jones-Devitt and Samiei, 2011; Scullion, Molesworth and Nixon, 2011). The most prominent student-focused university league table/evaluation mechanism, which has a significant impact on shaping academic activities in response to its results, is the National Student Survey (NSS), which was first carried out in 2005 and was justified by government as providing a new layer of public accountability for teaching quality in UK universities and to inform prospective students and their advisers in choosing what and where to study (HEFCE, 2004, pg. 2).

2.3.4 The impacts of marketisation on academic staff

Tables 2.2 and 2.3 have already listed some of the impacts of marketisation on academic workers under increasingly marketised regimes. Overall, the literature depicts a more structured, monitored and managed regime for academic staff than in the past, with intensified competition to produce high quality 'products' (whether teaching or research) within 'ever-tighter timescales' (Archer, 2008, pg. 272), in less supportive academic environments. Harland, et al., (2010, pg. 89) describe: *'...we now experience less genuine collegiality in our departments and have found that certain ideas are more difficult to discuss with colleagues who are increasingly situated in some form of opposition...'*. Archer's (2008) study, *The new neoliberal subjects? Young/er academics' constructions of professional identity*, is set against the backdrop of two other published works which conclude differing levels of optimism regarding the effects of neoliberalism/NPM on academic professionals, Davies and Peterson (2005) and Clegg (2008). As Archer notes, Davies and Peterson's study concludes that academics are largely *'...divided, disillusioned and distressed individuals'*, constrained in their academic pursuits by the infiltration of neoliberalism, whilst Clegg insists that *'Despite all the pressures of performativity, individuals have created spaces for the exercise of principled personal autonomy and agency'* (cited in Archer, 2008, pg. 268). Archer (2008, pg. 272, 276, 282) interviewed eight young/er academics herself and found that they:

- Had all taken up the language and mentality of neoliberalism and audit culture within their academic identity;
- Felt that neoliberal values and practices stifled creativity in teaching and research;
- Described the HE workplace as a threatening environment; and,
- Found it difficult to maintain collegiate relationships in an individualistic climate.

Dowling's (2008, pg. 817) paper looked specifically at Geographers to explore the logic of individualism and individual accountability inherent in neoliberal university culture. This study details the supremacy placed on research 'stardom' over teaching capabilities and the intense

underlying competition between academics. However, unlike Archer, she points to some more optimistic accounts of 'care, collaboration and trust' in the contemporary university setting. In Deem and Brehony's (2005) study, conducted through focus groups and interviews with academics, managers and administrators in HE institutions, they describe how the increased prominence of academics in management roles (e.g. teaching/learning and research directors, staff leading strategic work areas, staff with university-wide management remits) has introduced a stronger divide between manager-academics and 'regular' academics. They conclude that NPM as an ideology, has not only permeated higher education from the outside, but that manager-academics have actively embraced and willingly reproduced the principles of power and dominance over other non-manager members of staff. Chandler, Barry and Clark's (2002, pg. 1052) study, *Stressing academe: The wear and tear of new public management*, talks about a new breed of 'born-again-managers' who initiate management by stress; leading to resentment and resistance among groups of academics. Yet, for Kolsaker (2008, pg. 522), many current analyses of the impacts of NPM on academic professionals are overly pessimistic, espousing that academics on the whole '*...accept managerialism not only as an external technology of control, but as a facilitator of enhanced performance, professionalism and status*'. Indeed, her study failed to find academics who felt deprofessionalised or demoralised. Instead she says that 'power' in HEIs is cyclical and dynamic, rather than hierarchical and oriented towards 'principal-agent' lines of command, which allows a positive and productive manifestation of managerialism to emanate.

Though these studies present variable accounts of the impact of marketisation on academic staff, it is clear that neoliberal performativity measures *have* significantly increased the pressure upon university staff to 'perform', to reach certain targets and to compete with others (and with themselves).

2.3.5 Post-Browne marketisation and the 'student as consumer'

The most recent trend within the marketisation epoch of English HE, has been the heightened 'student as consumer' era since roughly 2009/10, driven by the significant increase to student tuition fees and the retraction of teaching funding distributed by HEFCE to HEIs. Governmental rationale for these funding changes and for the ideological creation of student 'consumers' (which links directly to the notion of individualised graduate 'goods' and 'collective private gain' for society in the economic model of higher education) is based upon three key presuppositions which are outlined by Brown (2015, pg. 5):

- First, it is believed that the best use of resources is obtained where universities interact directly with students as customers, rather than with the Government or a Government agency acting on students' behalf. The argument here is that 'students know best' and if they are empowered to act as consumers, institutions will either have to respond to their needs and preferences or lose custom.
- Second ...because of real or perceived limits on the ability and willingness of taxpayers to fund a greatly enlarged system, a private contribution is necessary if quality is to be maintained.
- Third, many of the benefits of higher education – such as higher wages, more satisfying jobs, better health and longevity – accrue to students/graduates as individuals. It is therefore only fair that they should contribute a reasonable share of the costs.

Indeed, the HE funding system which came into operation in September 2012 firmly established 'student choice' as the new focus of contemporary HE provision and signalled a huge acceleration in the marketisation trend; intentions which are made quite clear by these quotes from the linked White Paper (BIS 2011, pg. 5, 6):

The changes we are making to higher education funding will in turn drive a more responsive system. To be successful, institutions will have to appeal to prospective students and be respected by employers. Putting financial power into the hands of learners makes student choice meaningful.

We will radically improve and expand the information available to prospective students, making available much more information about individual courses at individual institutions and graduate employment prospects.

The new funding environment also provides an opportunity to introduce a simple, transparent regime for all types of provider with the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) taking on a new role as consumer champion for students and promoter of a competitive system.

The 'student as consumer' model utilizes a variety of typical market-based mechanisms and levers to enhance student choice and power in the HE system, as well as create genuine competition for students: it encourages students to 'navigate higher education as a market', making judgements about value for money and the quality of their academic provision as they go (i.e. through student evaluations, the NSS, league tables, social media, etc.) (Streeting and Wise, 2009, pg. 1); it emphasises the importance of (and holds universities account for) student satisfaction and calls for HEIs to respond to the needs and demands of students; it requires universities to publish detailed information about their academic programmes and to report on a range of annual performance indicators; and, it institutionalizes complaints and redress mechanisms for students (Dill, 1997; Middleton, 2000; Naidoo and Jamieson, 2005; Williams, 2011; Brown, 2015). All of these consumerist instruments are driven by a number of (not necessarily proven) assumptions linked to neoliberal ideology (which are explored more critically in Section 2.4), as Naidoo and Jamieson (2005, pg. 268) detail:

The assumption is that students will utilize such mechanisms to demand high quality provision and will apply pressures on universities to make courses more relevant to the skills they require for the workplace. The related assumption is that consumerist forces will have a positive impact on the professional practices of academic staff since the increased competition within and between universities will force providers to respond to student pressure or lose out on 'customers'.

A recent high profile development in this regard, has been a series of publications by the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA)¹⁹ aiming to boost students' legal rights as consumers and advise HEIs on their associated legal obligations. A guidance briefing published in 2015, *UK higher education providers – advice on consumer protection law*, provided detailed guidance about universities statutory duties with regard to aspects such as: the provision of clear, unambiguous and timely information for students about degrees courses offered, their structure and associated costs; students' rights as consumers within the HE environment; and how complaints by students should be addressed. Ultimately this guidance set the mandate for all UK HEIs to make necessary changes to their practices, policies, rules and regulations, to ensure that they are complying with consumer laws in relation to the student body (CMA, 2015).

¹⁹ The **Competition and Markets Authority (CMA)** is a non-ministerial UK government department, which aims to '*...work to promote competition for the benefit of consumers, both within and outside the UK*' in order to '*...make markets work well for consumers, businesses and the economy*' (CMA, 2015, pg. 9).

2.4 Objections to the Neoliberal Marketisation of Higher Education

Having now explored in depth, the history of marketisation in English HE and some of the major impacts on universities, academic staff and students, the final section of this chapter will explore a range of critiques of neoliberal marketisation, first more generally, and then within HE specifically. It is fair to say that the term 'neoliberalism' is rarely used favourably; rather it is a word which has been adopted to encapsulate grievances about the increasing appropriation of public societal assets, such as universities, by private interests and market mechanisms. In the forward to Noam Chomsky's famous book *Profit over People: Neoliberalism and the Global Order*, McChesney (1998, pg. 7) describes neoliberalism as the '*...policies and processes whereby a relative handful of private interests are permitted to control as much as possible of social life in order to maximize their personal profit*'. Eminent US cultural critic and critical pedagogy theorist Henry Giroux is also highly critical in his 2002 paper, *Neoliberalism, Corporate Culture, and the Promise of Higher Education*. He says that neoliberalism is the '*...the most dangerous ideology of the current historical moment*', which '*...assaults all things public, mystifies the basic contraction between democratic values and market fundamentalism, and weakens any viable notion of political agency by offering no language capable of connecting private considerations to public issues*' (Giroux, 2002, pg. 425, 428). Under the rule of neoliberalism, he says, national politics are driven by market forces and the notion of democratic citizenship is subordinated to economic values. For renowned sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1998, pg. 1), neoliberalism has resulted in a Darwinian survival of the fittest within the world's most economically advanced societies, with an increasing gap between the rich and the poor and the loss of collective public values needed to counteract the neoliberal hegemony. Peck and Tickell (2002, pg. 381) agree and say that: '*The new religion of neoliberalism combines a commitment to the extension of markets and logics of competitiveness with a profound antipathy to all kinds of Keynesian and/or collectivist strategies*'. Hursh and Henderson (2011, pg. 171) also posit that neoliberal economic and education policies

have had devastating consequences for equality. They note that as result of neoliberalism:

'...global inequality between the rich and the poor has increased, the impact of climate change on the environment will be with us for centuries, and educational reforms have focused on efficiency and accountability at a cost to improving learning'. Irwin's (2007) conference paper about ESD in neoliberal times draws a conclusion that aptly sums up these collective criticisms:

Instead of understanding humanity as clustered communities that live on the surface of the earth and have complex and various means of communicating and networking with one another, the economic paradigm reduces all interaction as some form of self-interested, rational, economic transaction (Irwin, 2007, pg. 13).

For many authors, a key factor which compounds the pernicious nature of the neoliberal ideology is the subtle and insidious way in which neoliberal values and ideals are said to have become internalised and normalised within all corners of society – a neoliberal subjectivity has emerged – so that neoliberalism is seen as the necessary, natural and inevitable way of societal operating. Because of this, they say, neoliberalism itself, is able to subsume resistance to the neoliberal doctrine, as well as marginalize alternative conceptions of how society could, should or might function, as well as different, more egalitarian, ways of viewing the world. Neoliberalism is thus said to be all-encompassing, self-fulfilling and self-evident (Peck and Tickell, 2002; Harvey, 2005; Irwin, 2007; Leitner, Sheppard, Sziarto and Maringanti, 2007; Maxey, 2009; Hursh and Henderson, 2011; McKenzie, 2012). Critics of neoliberalism decry the overwhelming lack of resistance and have asked: *'How does the calculated invisibility of neoliberalism work against our capacity to make a critique of it?'* (Davies and Bansel, 2007, pg. 254). Two linked theories associated with the supposed 'invisible hand' of neoliberalism are 'governmentality' and 'recuperation' which collectively denote the use of knowledge, power and social control by governments to internalise neoliberal norms in the behaviour of the masses, and to absorb, defuse and neutralise politically radical ideas so that they become part of the dominant political discourse and produce compliant citizens (Olssen and Peters, 2005; Wark, 2008; Maxey, 2009).

When it comes to published works which look at the impact of neoliberal marketisation on HE specifically – whether this be UK-based or further afield – the literature is no more forgiving and overall neoliberal forces have been portrayed as fundamentally antithetical to the core roles and purposes of higher education as a collectivised (rather than an individualised) societal public good (Readings, 1998; Giroux, 2002; Stromquist, 2002; Devaney and Weber 2003; Naidoo and Jamieson, 2005; Jones-Devitt and Samiei, 2011). The literature in this vein takes several different lines of attack. Three key arguments are identified and discussed below, these are: 1) tensions with the liberal/traditional HE model and academic freedom; 2) concerns surrounding the political framing of HE in the UK and the instrumentality of the ‘student as consumer’ model; and 3) tensions with the social, public, ethical and moral role of HE.

2.4.1 Tensions with the liberal/traditional HE model and academic freedom

The first area of tension identified is that between the new conception of the marketised university and traditional conceptions of the Humboldtian ideal. Many authors have written about the attacking of liberal arts and education in recent years, which, as Reed (2004, pg. 14) notes, has occurred ‘both at the level of theory and practice’. Ferlie, et al., (2008, pg. 328) describe how: *‘...traditional notions of academic freedom have been redefined and the image of the scientist protected from the world in an ivory tower condemned’*. For Olssen and Peters (2005, pg. 326) the ideal of the university *‘...as an institutionally autonomous and politically insulated realm’* is increasingly cast aside in the marketised HE sector, concurrently describing a general erosion of professional autonomy and trust in the roles of academic staff:

Under neoliberal governmentality, principal-agent line management chains replace delegated power with hierarchical forms of authoritatively structured relation, which erode, and seek to prohibit, an autonomous space from emerging. This shift in regulative modality constitutes a structural shift which is likely to transform the academic’s role (ibid, pg. 324).

Cowden and Singh (2013, pg. 48) suggest that we have moved far away from the Humboldtian notion of 'reading' and 'discoursing' within a community of scholars and agree that advancing consumerism has led to mistrust of academics and an undermining of the idea that 'professionals know best'. They describe how *'Contemporary neoliberal social policy thus gives us a strange kind of reverse panopticon where professionals are always under the microscope'*. Brown and Carasso (2013, pg. 117, 176) also explore the way in which marketised mechanisms, such as quality assurance, are *'...beginning to challenge the view that professional academic staff are the best judges of quality and standards'*, and as such believe that, *'We have moved a long way from the notion of universities as expert providers of specialist services'*. Hoecht (2006) discusses similar themes in his exploration of issues of trust, control and professional autonomy in the wake of QA mechanisms. In Henkel's (2007) eyes, this encroachment on academic freedom has externalised many traditional and fundamental rights of HEIs, including the freedom to determine curriculum content/degree standards and to self-evaluate the quality of research, which are now both the shared responsibility of universities and external agencies. She asks whether academic autonomy can survive in the knowledge society, which increasingly eats away at the edges of academia:

Recent social theories and analyses of social trends suggest that there have been profound epistemological, structural, political and cultural changes that have challenged the assumptions underpinning the working of academic systems. The ideal of academe as a sovereign, bounded territory, free by right from intervention in its governance of knowledge development and transmission, has been superseded by ideals of engagement with the societies in which academic institutions are 'axial structures', whose work is important to governments, businesses and civil society (Henkel, 2007, pg. 97).

The increasing interaction of academia with government and the corporate sector, as well as the positioning of academic knowledge and services to explicitly serve these groups, is said to have strained and split apart universities as organic, independent spaces for critical thinking, inquiry and reflection (Castree and Sparke, 2000; Saravanamuthu and Tinker, 2002; Harland, et al., 2010).

2.4.2 Concerns surrounding the political framing of HE in the UK and the instrumentality of the ‘student as consumer’ model

The second and interrelated area of tension arises from concerns surrounding changes to the ways in which the higher education sector, universities and students are politically framed and publicly valued in the UK within the marketised system. The evolution of government departments responsible for HE in recent years has been described as having politically reconfigured HE as a servant of the national economic engine (Kogan and Hanney, 2000; McCaig, 2011). In 2007 Brown’s Labour government moved responsibility for HEIs to the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS), which was then merged into the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) in 2009, thus losing the terms ‘education’ and then ‘universities’ from departmental terminology, which had always historically been present. Although responsibility for HE recently moved into a new ‘Department for Education’ (DfE) in 2016, previous government body representation of HE over the last decade, has raised fundamental questions for those actively concerned about the ways in which universities are publicly and politically represented. The wording of the mission statement of BIS, where university responsibilities resided until very recently, and quotes from the former Secretary of State for BIS when the department was being inaugurated, lays governments’ intentions and priorities bare:

The Department for Business, Innovation and skills (BIS) is the department for economic growth.

The department invests in skills and education to promote trade, boost innovation and help people to start and grow a business (BIS, 2009, pg. 1).

I believe the logical home for university policy is in a new department whose core remit is investing in economic growth, investing in our future. Over the last decade or so our expectations of the HE system in delivering economic impact have risen sharply – and rightly. After students themselves, you [business] are the key clients of the higher skills system (Mandelson, 2009a; 2009b, pg. 1).

McArthur's (2011, pg. 738) paper, *Reconsidering the social and economic purposes of higher education* explores these critical issues in depth. She notes, *'Such a change suggests that higher education is primarily seen as a tool that contributes to the achievement of other primary goals – namely business, innovation and skills – rather than a priority in its own right'*. Using the phrase 'higher skills system' as opposed to 'higher education system' thus represents a deep shift in how the UK's leaders value and publicly represent what was once a system of higher learning and discovery (McArthur, 2011). A report by the New Economics Foundations (NEF) from 2008 details a similar point of view and notes that the UK government department responsible for HE may essentially now be viewed as the department for the 'knowledge economy'. The report surmises that HE's economic role is increasingly elevated above, and to the detriment of other purposes of HE and asks *'...where the Government department is which is supporting the wider role of universities and optimising its contribution to the future society, not just the future economy'* (NEF, 2008, pg. 9). Harland, et al., (2010, pg. 87) also agree, and posit that *'The more the university becomes dependent on private income and focused on its economic project, the less likely it will be to provide a public role and the call to be 'critic and conscience of society'*. Such opinions are thus critiquing the economic model as opposing both liberal/traditional roles, as well as a range of socio-sustainability public good roles of universities. Exploration of the changing conceptualisation of students in the marketised system also takes this dual-critique.

There is much academic work which explores the perceived changing character of students in marketised higher education systems. A key concern expressed across the board, is that enhanced tuition fees, coupled with the growing emphasis on the development of students' 'employability skills', will encourage students to be rational consumers and to view their education primarily as a private economic investment focused on maximising future earnings and getting a better foothold in the job market (Middleton, 2000; Giroux, 2002; Harland et al., 2010). The fear is that within such consumerist environments, students' primary foci will be upon building the skills and competencies to be employable, rather than engaging deeply in the process

of learning (Jones-Devitt and Samiei, 2011; Nordensvärd, 2011); thus knowledge becomes a commodity with economic 'exchange value' that can be bought and traded for economic gain in students' future professional lives, rather than something with intrinsic knowledge-based 'use-value' (Naidoo and Jamieson, 2005, pg. 271; McArthur, 2011, pg. 742). A NEF quote (2008, pg. 5) sums up this perceived problem well:

By viewing learners simply as future workers, a premium is being placed on the development of specialist and technical knowledge to support growth of the economy and to enhance the competitiveness of individuals within it, to the detriment of the wider knowledge, skills and understanding which higher education could and should provide.

Whilst it's hard to argue that securing a job after university *should not* be an important and rightful concern for students, the growing employability agenda has been depicted as dangerous through its potential to preclude the development of other 'softer' skills and values in the student population. As McArthur (2011, pg. 743) has noted, '*...it risks being complicit in students' understanding their identity mainly in terms of their exchange value in the world of work*', rather than being based on other more humanistic, creative, and ethical values which can (and arguably should) be developed at university (McCulloch, 2009; McArthur, 2011). Castree and Sparke (2000, pg. 225) agree and say that in the marketised system, university education shifts from being '*...an experience of self-learning, emancipation, or radicalization, to becoming a vocationally-oriented, credentializing "consumer durable", or, worse still, a throwaway "lifestyle accessory"*'. Ferudi (2011, pg. 2) has also noted that marketisation transforms education from '*...an abstract, intangible, non-material and relational experience into a visible, quantifiable and instrumentally driven process*'.

A linked theme emerging from the literature relates to potential problems associated with an overemphasis on student satisfaction and customer sovereignty in the marketised system (Olssen and Peters, 2005). Several authors have noted that the trend for encouraging students to

express their consumer rights and opinions in relation to the educational experience they are paying for, is encouraging learners to become outcome-focused, to take less responsibility for their own learning and to have a growing sense of entitlement to success (Naidoo and Jamieson, 2005; Jones-Devitt and Samiei, 2011; Williams, 2011). As Scullion, et al. (2011, pg. 230) describe in the 2011 book, *The Marketisation of Higher Education and the Student as Consumer*:

What may seem a positive move to 'put the student at the centre' may have been appropriated within a market-oriented context to mean accepting and even pandering to consumerist attitudes and behaviour of students who increasingly see it as their right to get what they want from a HE sector as if it is like any other service industry.

It is also suggested by several other authors in this book, that the underlying neoliberal emphasis on quick, easily digested and accessible education, risks students being less committed and immersed in lengthy periods of deep, challenging and ambiguous learning, which is needed to genuinely engage in academic ways of thinking (Jones-Devitt and Samiei, 2011; Maringe, 2011; Scullion, et al., 2011; Williams, 2011). Although placing students at the centre of decision making is said to democratise higher education and enhance quality, Brown and Scott (2009, pg. 5 – 6) note that it is quite risky to unquestionably equate the quality of learning with customer satisfaction, as HE may actually be viewed as a 'post-experience good', whose effects are not always discoverable until well afterwards. Maringe (2011, pg. 149) says: '*...the satisfaction one derives from a HE experience is often delayed and comes from the pain of a sometimes tortuous journey which takes the student through a vast array of experiences, difficult reading and hard assignments*'. Thus, the effect of government desperately mobilising students to place universities under market pressure, is said to have caused academics to become '*obsessed with pleasing students*' and giving customers what they want, '*...rather than what they need to become truly educated*' (Ferudi, 2011, pg. 4). McCulloch (2009, pg. 177) (building on the work of McMillan and Cheney, 1996) has listed eight reasons why the consumer metaphor of students is inadequate, which sums up many of the above arguments fittingly. He says that the consumer metaphor:

1. overemphasises one aspect of the student's role and of the university's mission;
2. suggests undue distance between the student and the educational process, thereby de-emphasising the student's role in learning;
3. encourages passivity on the part of the student;
4. fails to encourage deep learning;
5. implies in the student a level of knowledge and information, and the possession of tools to use them, that are unlikely to be present;
6. serves to deprofessionalise the academic role and encourage the 'entertainment' model of teaching;
7. compartmentalises the educational experience as 'product' rather than 'process'; and
8. reinforces individualism and competition at the expense of community.

A final linked area of critique is associated with the impact of the enhanced provision of publicly available information on universities' performance. Such critique links to the assumptions laid down by Naidoo and Jamieson (2005) (explored earlier in Section 2.3.5) and point five in McCulloch's list above. The idea that students, before they start university, are suitably well-informed about the educational provision they are purchasing, and furthermore, that when they start their university studies, will utilize the range of available information to demand improvements to the quality of the provision they are receiving, has been extensively questioned. Brown and Carasso (2013, pg. 124) describe the impossibility of students being able to obtain such timely, suitable and accurate information about 'product quality', and note: *'...no one has or can have the information that would enable them to make the same judgements about quality and suitability that they might make about a physical product or a less complex service'*, not least because the trend in UK higher education has led to a perverse situation where indirect, symbolic and proxy indicators of 'quality' are used to benchmark and scrutinise university performance (Hazelkorn, 2007; Brown and Carasso, 2013). Hazelkorn (2007, pg. 3) describes such proxy 'indicators' used in university league tables:

...information on the student cohort is often used or interpreted as an indicator of institutional selectivity; the number of citations and publications in internationally-rated journals is used as an indicator of academic quality; the financial spend denotes the quality of infrastructure; employment record and patterns indicates the quality of graduates; while reputation is measured by an aggregate of its overall status and standing.

The recent development of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) is a prime example of the use of indirect quality indicators, in this case the use of graduate employability data, drop-out rates of students from their courses and a range of 'student satisfaction' questions from the NSS to directly determine the quality of teaching in the higher education classroom. Such proxy indicators are compiled into league tables and comparison websites and are presented to students, who are assumed to have the skills and the support to be able to make meaningful sense out of this vast collection of data. Brown and Carasso (2013, pg. 131) detail that, in reality, what has come to 'count' for many HEIs, students and employers is relative position in comparison to other HEIs, where price, status and scores are '*...a synonym for quality rather than a reflection of it*'. In the UK's marketised HE system, vertical differentiation between universities, based around the same sets of homogenised indicators, has thus become the direct barometer for quality, rather than measures of horizontal differentiation (e.g. institution type, social aim, policy aim, stated purpose, type of delivery, curriculum offer, etc.) which have been obscured and ironically are needed for a *true* market-place to function (Hazelkorn, 2007; Marginson and van der Wende, 2007; Brown and Carasso, 2013; McCaig, 2015). Brown and Carasso (2013, pg. 174, 175) provide an overarching critique to sum all of this up, saying that market competition and the enhanced provision of quality-related information, is no substitute for direct government investment in to teaching and student learning: '*There is simply no evidential base for supposing that the increased amounts of information that are being made available, and the proliferation in would-be interpreters of such information, together with the other ways in which the government is trying to give students greater leverage, will have more than a marginal impact on quality*'.

2.4.3 Tensions with the social, public, ethical and moral role of HE

The previous section highlights a palpable tension between the instrumentalist and individualised economic view of universities and students, and the broader role of universities and students in contributing positively towards collectivised societal benefits and goods. As Scullion, et al., (2011, pg. 231) describe, the ‘encroachment of market machinations’ and the focus on individualism and competition in universities is seen by many, to have contributed to a decline in the role universities play for the common interest, public good and civic character of society. Indeed, there are calls far and wide championing HE to re-focus on embedding collective wellbeing at its heart, and to stimulate individuals’ appreciation of, and connection to, the world around them (NEF, 2008). Klenowski’s (2009) article, *Public Education Matters: Reclaiming Public Education for the Common Good in a Global Era*, explores these issues in depth. In her view education needs to be reclaimed as a public good which serves a democratising, liberalising and humanising force in society and which addresses social and economic inequality, celebrates diversity, and strengthens respect for human rights. Giroux (2002) agrees, and says that the more that education is defined through the values of neoliberalism, the more that democratic values are subordinated and the less likely universities are to champion critical education, social responsibility, public morality and to produce responsible and thoughtful citizens.

The question of morality and ethics in relation to HE’s role comes up repeatedly. The argument commonly put forward is quite aptly summed up by the following quote: ‘*We implicitly expect tertiary institutions to take the high moral ground when it comes to the all-too-common trade-off between matters financial and social*’ (Saravanamuthu and Tinker, 2004, pg. 546). Fridell (2004) takes a similar viewpoint and says that, as public institutions, universities should be expected to adhere to high standards of ethical and moral responsibility and should prioritise these, and a whole host of internationally recognised public values, such as human rights, labour rights, and environmental sustainability, over corporate profitability (Fridell, 2004). The ethical

and moral contradiction in question here is the perceived lack of morality and ethical responsibility associated with market approaches. As Robertson (2005, pg. 117) points out in her chapter on *Public Education in a Corporate-Dominated Culture: 'Markets are not moral; they are necessarily preoccupied with self-interest and advantage, and, as such, are unfit arbiters of what constitutes our collective wellbeing'*. de la Fuente (2002, pg. 339) suggests that:

Whatever the mode or medium, one must remember that not everything is economic. Nor does it exist solely in—or for—the market. ...we [academics] also recognise as part of our social responsibilities, through our reflective and critical capacity, that the market also generates exclusion, intolerance, marginalisation and poverty.

Neoliberalisation in HE has also been accused of marginalising the spaces needed to enact resistance to such regimes (see earlier discussion of governmentality and recuperation). Indeed, the NEF report discussed earlier (2008, pg. 10) posits that the over-dominance of economic interests in HE are '*...crowding out the space for HEIs to fulfil other vital purposes for individuals and for the economy, the environment and society at large*'. Thus, by taking a subservient position within the consumerist university, spaces for emancipatory societal narratives are diminished (Scullion, et al., 2011). Scullion, et al., (2011, pg. 229) detail '*...the problem is that a market-orientation in the HE context has the potency to quash spaces for reflection about the market – to inhibit thinking that can be located outside of itself*'; spaces where academics and students alike, can dream of other visions of higher education. Nordensvärd's (2011) argument accords with this viewpoint. He says that neoliberalism strips education of its political, ideological and normative aspects and undermines the ability of academics and students to champion normative, ideological and political visions and values associated with the social good of society. All of these arguments paint an overwhelming tension with the sustainability model of higher education, which inherently drives, normative, ideological and political visions of HE's moral and ethical responsibility to advance socio-sustainability goods for all of society.

2.4.4 Overthrowing neoliberalism through education: the Critical Pedagogy perspective

One key theoretical area which deals explicitly with overcoming neoliberalism through education is the Critical Pedagogy movement. Critical pedagogy is an educational ideology located in the Critical Theory/Marxist theoretical realm (see Chapter 4 for more detailed explanation of Critical Theory and Marxism) which was developed by Brazilian educationalist Paulo Freire (1921 – 1997), who was and still is, one of the most celebrated educational theorists of all time. Critical pedagogy is based around the idea that education should be used as a tool for radical social and political change, to help students and by implication, societies at large, to challenge and resist dominant and oppressive ideologies and power structures in society (ideologies such as neoliberalism). Freire’s principal critique was of traditional pedagogical approaches, which he called the ‘banking’ concept of education, whereby students are viewed as receptacles to be filled up with the knowledge of experts in order to perpetuate the advancement of the socio-political status quo. Critical pedagogy argues for a collaborative educational model, based on dialogue, ‘problem posing’, critical engagement and co-production of knowledge between students and teachers (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 2006, Giroux, 2010). In the 30th anniversary edition of Freire’s seminal work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1970), Richard Shaull closes the book’s foreword with the following quote which exemplifies the rationale behind critical pedagogy:

There is no such thing as a neutral education process. Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate the integration of generations into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, or it becomes the 'practice of freedom', the means by which men and women deal critically with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world (Shaull, 2000, pg. 34).

As Giroux (2010, pg. 1) confirms, critical pedagogy is an educational movement, ‘...guided by passion and principle, to help students develop consciousness of freedom, recognize authoritarian

tendencies, and connect knowledge to power and the ability to take constructive action’; the aim thus, is to create a more socially just and equitable world through growing and empowering democratically functioning citizens.

It is not surprising that critical pedagogy has become a key theoretical tool which has guided alternative conceptions of how higher education might/could/should function and how collectively, academics and students might begin to undermine and attempt to overthrow the authoritarian marketisation doctrine. As Giroux (2006, pg. 28) points out, *‘Recognizing the inextricable link between education and politics...’* and understanding pedagogy as a *‘...moral and political practice’*, is vital for reclaiming higher education as a democratic public sphere. Hursh and Henderson (2011) have also argued for the vital role of pedagogy in contesting neoliberalism; they argue that we need social-democratic educational approaches that promote critical analysis and active participation to create alternatives to neoliberalism. Following from Freire’s work, a leading UK group of critical pedagogy theorists, the Critical Pedagogy and Popular Education Group based out of Coventry University, have strongly championed seeking alternatives to the neoliberalizing university. Their theorizing is summed up well through their five guiding principles²⁰. They describe critical pedagogy as *‘overtly political and critical of the status quo’*, *‘committed to progressive social and political change’* and have said that they *‘...seek to develop pedagogies of engagement that combine academic and activist knowledge, and classroom learning with social*

²⁰ **Critical Pedagogy and Popular Education Group** guiding principles:

1. Develop and advocate pedagogies of engagement, life and hope, aiming to break down the barriers between informal and formal education, old and new universities, research and teaching and between classes and ethnic groups.
2. Rethink the university as a radically democratic social and political institution and not a business.
3. Create learning and teaching environments in formal and informal educational spaces that facilitate dialogue, reflexivity and connection to real life needs and that enable the creation of methodologies encouraging and realising more democratic practices.
4. Link activism outside and inside the academy, utilising the insights stemming from both practical engagement with the world and engagement with theory that seeks to understand the world.
5. Challenge the individualised atomisation and instrumental and fatalist thinking and discourses that neo-liberalism encourages, through in part, its assumption that *‘There Is No Alternative’* to neo-liberalism (Amsler et al., (Eds.) 2010, pg. 6).

action' (Amsler, et al., (Eds.), 2010, pg. 6). A key facet of their theorizing revolves around contesting the Thatcherite notion that 'there is no alternative' to neoliberal capitalism. They argue emphatically against fatalistic approaches which accept neoliberalism as inevitable, and say there is a '*...profound lack of confidence or willpower amongst left leaning academics to challenge the hegemony of neoliberalism'*' (Cowden and Singh, 2013, pg. 10). They have challenged academics and students alike, to rethink universities as radically democratic social and political institutions, to confront the monolithic nature of neoliberalism, and to regain confidence in Marxist critiques of capitalism (Amsler et al., (Eds.) 2010; Cowden and Singh, 2013). Such processes of questioning oppressive socio-political forces and critical awareness raising was to referred to by Freire as 'conscientisation'; indeed, it is possible to view many of the ideals of the education for sustainable development movement, as engaging in 'conscientisation' endeavours.

2.4.5 Summary of objections to the neoliberal marketisation of HE: elucidating the tension with ESD

Principle arguments from the literature explored in this section are summarized below to highlight the overarching criticisms of neoliberal marketisation which are prevalent within the mainstream higher education research and literature (N.B. this a summary from the perspective of the literature explored, not a personal view):

- Academia is no longer a politically-insulated realm enjoying large amounts of academic freedom and professional autonomy. HE has moved away from the liberal education ideal of 'reading' and 'discoursing' within a community of scholars; it is no longer a system of higher learning and discovery. The increasing encroachment on academic freedom challenges the expertise of academic staff and the notion that 'professionals know best'. Many traditional academic functions have been undermined, there is less trust in academic staff and there is evidence that staff feel deprofessionalised.

- There has been a movement away from the notion that higher education is an important priority in its own right, towards the notion that HE's principle aim is to contribute towards national economic competitiveness, i.e. towards business, innovation and skills. Students are encouraged to be rational consumers, outcomes-focused, self-interested, and to view their higher education studies as a private economic investment to be exchanged for a successful professional career and good salary in their future life.
- The neoliberal marketisation ideology has become consolidated within higher education policy, practice and values to the extent that it has become internalised and normalised and seen as the natural and inevitable way of operating. This subjectivity subsumes resistance to neoliberalism and marginalizes alternative conceptions of a more egalitarian and emancipatory role for higher education. Neoliberal marketisation in HE is thus all-encompassing and self-fulfilling.
- There has been a general decline in the role higher education plays for the social, collective, public good aspects of society. Due to the neoliberal dominance, other values, roles and responsibilities of higher education are compromised, subordinated and marginalised. These include: social responsibility; democratic citizenship; environmental sustainability; human rights; labour rights; social and economic equality; humanism; creativity; public morality; ethical conduct; transformative learning; and critical thinking.
- Education and pedagogy should be used as a tool for radical and activist social and political change, to enable HE and society to move away from the neoliberal status quo and to create a more socially just and equitable world. This would help to foster and empower democratically functioning, responsible and thoughtful graduate citizens who have an appreciation of and connection to the world around them. Academics and students need to regain the confidence to champion normative, ideological and political visions and values associated with the social good of society.

Reading this summary of arguments and reflecting upon Doctoral Research Objective 3 of this thesis, to explore the ideological relationship between marketisation and ESD within English HE, a fundamental insight into this research is elucidated, that is, ideologically speaking, the neoliberal marketisation of higher education in England appears to diametrically contradict the education for sustainable development movement. Indeed, the list of values, roles and responsibilities of higher education which are purportedly compromised under the weight of the neoliberal regime, resonate almost identically with the aims and aspirations of the ESD movement. Yet, the number of researchers who have *explicitly, specifically and empirically*, explored the development of England's HESD movement within the context of increasing marketisation and neoliberalisation is relatively small. Critical environmental education research/literature, which does explicitly explore this relationship, though rarely empirically, is explored in the second half of Chapter 3. Before then, the first half of Chapter 3 will focus on the evolution of the higher education for sustainable development movement in English higher education, from both a policy and a theoretical perspective, to set the scene for bringing together the two key strands of this research and asking the critical question: is education for sustainable development in the marketised university a paradox or a possibility?

CHAPTER 3) HIGHER EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The aim of this chapter is to review and summarize the history and characteristics of the higher education for sustainable development movement, with a particular focus on English HE, both from a policy development and a conceptual/theoretical perspective. Section 3.1 explores the policy history of ESD and HESD at the international level, to demonstrate how ESD, and HESD specifically, has grown into an internationally recognised educational movement. The following section (3.2) then takes a UK-based policy lens, first briefly looking at ESD and HESD in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, before moving to focus specifically on HESD in England and in particular, the role of England's HE bodies and organisations. The roles of the five HE bodies laid out in Doctoral Research Objective 4 are considered – the Higher Education Funding Council for England; the Higher Education Academy; the Quality Assurance Agency; the National Union of Students; and the Environmental Association of Universities and Colleges – paving the way for further analysis of the impact of these bodies on England's HESD agenda in the marketised context in Chapter 5. Section 3.3 explores the theoretical and conceptual underpinnings of HESD, drawing on the publications of many notable HESD scholars. It considers the core conceptual characteristics and definitions of ESD; the 'transformative', 'paradigm shifting', 'holistic' and/or 'whole systems' HESD approach as proffered by Stephen Sterling and others; sustainability curricula and pedagogies; as well as notions of sustainability literacy and competencies. Sections 3.4 and 3.5 explore the eternal frustration felt through the HESD literature regarding the lack of systemic progress that has been made towards the transformative HESD ideal and a range of HESD 'barriers' which have been detailed in the literature over the years. The penultimate section of the chapter (3.6) picks up thematically from the end of Chapter 2 and asks whether ESD in the marketised university system is a paradox or a possibility. It considers a range of literature, but chiefly critical environmental education literature, which *explicitly* and *specifically* draws together

the two key themes of this thesis and focusses on the intrinsic ideological tension between neoliberal marketisation and the aims of the ESD movement. This all paves the way for the theoretical justification of the unique aim of the thesis which is provided in Section 3.7.

N.B. Discussions in this chapter focus on the concept of ESD, as well as ESD specifically within higher education (HESD), as well as broader theoretical discussions surrounding the ‘sustainability’ agenda of universities more generally (the sustainability model of higher education), which feed into and frame the HESD agenda.

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3.1 International Policy Evolution of (Higher) Education for Sustainable Development

The role of formal education processes in contributing towards a more sustainable planetary future, emerged as a global talking point over 40 years ago with the inception of the Environmental Education (EE) movement of the 1970s. Environmental education, which has roots that can be traced back as far as the interested researcher wishes (Sterling, 2004a), is often described as one of the key spin-offs of the post-war environmental movement and growing concerns at that time about the pollution of water, air and land, as well as the accumulation of toxins in food chains; most notably articulated in Rachel Carson's 1962 book *Silent Spring* (Wals, et al., 2016). The United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (UNCHE) held in Stockholm in 1972 is often cited as the first international conference to explicitly highlight and address the concept of EE. Principle 19 of the resulting *UNCHE Declaration* stated that:

Education in environmental matters, for the younger generation as well as adults, giving due consideration to the underprivileged, is essential in order to broaden the basis for an enlightened opinion and responsible conduct by individuals, enterprises and communities in protecting and improving the environment in its full human dimension (UNCHE Declaration, 1972, pg. 1).

Leading on from UNCHE, the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)²¹ organised the world's first intergovernmental environmental education-specific conference. This was held five years later in Tbilisi, Georgia, USSR, and the resulting *Tbilisi Declaration* was the first international charter for environmental education. As Michelson (2016, pg. 41) describes, the goals of environmental education were conceptualised through this charter as:

²¹ **UNESCO** is a specialised agency of the UN based in Paris whose mission is: '...to contribute to peace and security by promoting collaboration among the nations through education, science and culture' (UNESCO, 2000, pg. 1). **UNEP** in its own words is: '...the leading global environmental authority that sets the global environmental agenda, promotes the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the United Nations system and serves as an authoritative advocate for the global environment' (UNEP, undated, pg. 1).

...creating an awareness and knowledge of the importance of the environment, promoting attitudes, values and responsibility for the environment, developing practical skills to identify and solve environmental problems, and promoting the participation of groups and individuals in processes to overcome environmental problems.

Early environmental education was as such, very much focused on notions of environmental responsibility, desired pro-environmental attitudinal and behaviour changes, and environmental problem-solving linked to the emerging field of environmental science. As an educational concept and practice in its own right, EE remains active to this day, however, in the main it has been subsumed within the broader field of education for sustainable development, in parallel with the growth of the sustainable development movement (Wals, et al., 2016), which has sought to bring together and collectively address both issues of environmental protection and human development (Wade, 2008). A distinct sub-field of EE research which is of utmost relevance to this thesis (and is explored in depth in Section 3.6) is known as ‘critical’ or ‘socially-critical’ environmental education, which draws on critical theory and pedagogy in its theorising about the role of education in the transition towards a more sustainable future.

The notion of sustainable development was first internationally popularised through the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) (also known as the Brundtland Commission) in 1987 which offered the now infamous definition of sustainable development as: *‘...development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’* (WCED, 1987, pg. 54). The momentum created by the *Brundtland Report* fed into discussions held at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 and into the publication of the landmark global sustainable development blueprint – *Agenda 21* – which was the first tangible attempt to operationalize the concept of sustainable development on a worldwide scale (Filho, 2000). As Wade (2008, pg. 5) describes:

This process was an attempt to broker agreements on the environment and on development with all the member states of the UN and to pull together vastly different issues of concern from the minority wealthy, industrialised world and from the majority world which had been largely excluded from the benefits of economic globalisation.

In bringing to the fore the inextricable relationship between the human world and the natural world, between human development, progress and prosperity and the health of the natural environment and ecosystems, Agenda 21 boldly set about forging a new sustainable trajectory for humanity (Wade, 2008; Ryan and Tilbury, 2013). Although there were important antecedents to the ESD agenda prior to this point, ESD as an autonomous concept, international educational movement and normative educational quest, is often described as emerging from the 1992 Rio Earth Summit (Sterling, 2004a) and in particular Chapter 36 of *Agenda 21: Promoting Education, Public Awareness and Training*. The focus of this chapter was stated as ‘reorienting education towards sustainable development’ and it famously specified that (UNCED, 1993, pg. 1):

Education, including formal education, public awareness and training should be recognized as a process by which human beings and societies can reach their fullest potential. Education is critical for promoting sustainable development and improving the capacity of the people to address environment and development issues. ...environment and development education should deal with the dynamics of both the physical/biological and socio-economic environment and human (which may include spiritual) development, should be integrated in all disciplines, and should employ formal and non-formal methods and effective means of communication.

Tilbury’s (1995) paper, *Environmental Education for Sustainability: defining the new focus of environmental education in the 1990s*, was one of the first attempts to conceptualise the role of ‘environmental education for sustainability’ and what the differences were between this and earlier forms of environmental education.

A key take away message from Chapter 36 of Agenda 21, was that new synergies should be forged between EE and Development Education (DE), into an integrated and inclusive concept

of education oriented towards sustainable development. Development education emerged from the work of international aid agencies and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) from the 1970s onwards, who believed that education in the developed world must recognise and incorporate issues faced by poorer countries (Shiel, 2013a). With very distinct starting points and different priority foci, namely, conservation of the natural world on the one hand and poverty reduction, social justice and development on the other, this amalgamation of EE and DE has not always been straightforward (Wade, 2008). Parker, Wade and Atkinson (2004, pg. 63, 64) have described the key educational concerns of these two movements:

Environmental education concerns include:

- ecological interdependency (linking of life systems and materials cycles);
- relationships between social and ecological systems;
- site-specific issues of local ecology in relation to global-scale environment problems;
- local knowledge and specific knowledge of particular ecological systems; and
- implicit valuing of life and diversity.

Development education concerns include:

- economic interdependency and trade relations;
- social and political structures (political freedoms and human rights);
- inequalities in economic relations and debt;
- political power relations (local, national, regional and global);
- cultural rights (attitudes and values);
- value commitments (for example, justice and equality).

Despite these differences and some enduring fragmentation between the two sister movements, there has been a growing sense of commonality over time, as well as an increasing coalescence of environmental and development concerns through the conduit of sustainable development and *education for sustainable development* (Sterling, 2004a). Sterling (2004a), Wade (2008) and Shiel (2013a) have all described this historic separation of educational concerns relating to the human

and natural worlds, as a legacy of the western outlook of EE, DE and indeed ESD. Although nowadays ESD as a concept is embraced by actors in low, middle and high income countries of the world, it is nonetheless a construct and a research area which, sometimes explicitly, but more often implicitly, approaches the world and formal educational processes, through a westernised lens. Importantly Wade (2008, pg. 11) surmises, *'...those of us who have been brought up in a Western/academic setting may have more to unlearn than those who have not!'*. The complex relationship between these two key strands of ESD continues to develop and evolve to this day.

Turning to focus on higher education specifically, Chapter 36 of Agenda 21 somewhat cautiously stated that countries could *'...support university and other tertiary activities and networks for environmental and development education'* and that related cross-disciplinary courses could *'...be made available to all students'* (UNCED, 1993, pg. 1; Jones, Selby and Sterling, 2010a). At the ten year revisitation of UNCED at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg in 2002, a recommendation was made that the UN General Assembly should adopt a motion to establish a global decade of ESD for which UNESCO would take the leading international role (Ryan and Tilbury, 2013). The international implementation scheme for the resulting UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (UNDESD) stated that the overall goal of the DESD would be *'...to integrate the principles, values, and practices of sustainable development into all aspects of education and learning'* and that the DESD would encourage changes in behaviour to *'...create a more sustainable future in terms of environmental integrity, economic viability, and a just society for present and future generations'* (UNESCO, 2005, pg. 6). As Jones, et al., (2010a) describe, a far less tentative role for higher education was laid out during the formal planning of the decade and higher education was implicated as having *'a particular role to play'* (UNESCO, 2006, pg. 23). This *'particular role'* was laid out in the UNDESD international implementation scheme framework:

Universities must function as places of research and learning for sustainable development... Higher education should also provide leadership by practicing what they teach through sustainable

purchasing, investments and facilities that are integrated with teaching and learning. ...Curricula need to be developed, including content, materials and tools such as case studies and identification of best practices (UNDESD, 2006, pg. 23).

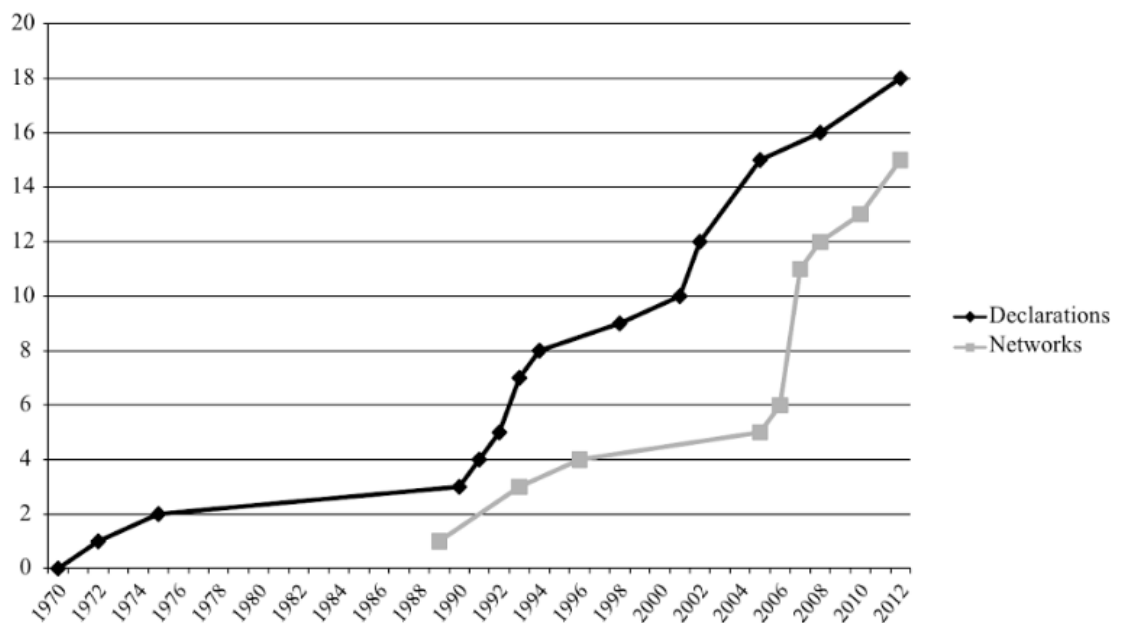
At the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) or 'Rio+20' held in 2012, shortly before the end of the UNDESD, an enduring global commitment to the ideals and goals of SD were once again at the top table and higher education's role was strongly reinforced via the summit outcomes document, *The Future We Want*, as well as the *People's Sustainability Treaty on Higher Education* which was published from the event (Ryan and Tilbury, 2013). Two years later at the final UNDESD conference in Nagoya, Japan, the Global Action Programme (GAP) on ESD was endorsed by UNESCO as a follow up to the decade post-2015, which aims to scale up ESD actions globally across all levels and areas of education and training (UNESCO, 2014; Michelsen, 2016).

Against this backdrop of growing commitment to HESD on the global stage, the international HE community has itself responded through a series of high-level declarations of commitment to ESD. The first official statement was the Talloires Declaration in 1990 which contained a global 10-point action plan for incorporating sustainability into university teaching, research and outreach. Since this initial declaration there has been a proliferation of further declarations, charters, networks and partnerships, at the international, as well as regional and national levels, dedicated to higher education's role in driving a more sustainable future. Table 3.1, *International and regional HESD declarations and charters 1990 – present* (Appendix A, pg. 359), (adapted from Tilbury, 2013, pg. 75 – 81 and Michelsen 2016, pg. 42 – 43) outlines fifteen key international and regional HESD declarations made since the early 1990s, including details of the year published, scope (global or regional), key initiators/partners and key messages and foci. In Michelsen's (2016, pg. 51 – 52) opinion the growth and expansion of such HESD commitments (declarations, charters, networks and partnerships) can be divided into three distinct phases:

- Firstly, the ‘**orientation and experimental phase**’ (1970 to 1990), which began when the idea of environmental education was first floated on the global stage at the 1972 UN Conference on Human Environment (UNCHE) in Stockholm.
- The UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 and the publication of Agenda 21 kicked off the ‘**transition and development phase**’ (1990 – 2000), during which time notions of EE largely transitioned into the new concept of ESD.
- The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg in 2002 which recommended the inception of the UNDESD signalled the beginning of the current ‘**expansive phase**’ (2000 onwards) through which HESD has been formally recognised on the global political stage.

Figure 3.1 after Michelsen (2016, pg. 52) clearly maps these three phases in terms of the volume of HESD declarations and networks.

Figure 3.1 – Global growth of HESD declarations and networks since 1970 (after Michelsen, 2016)



3.2 UK Policy Evolution of (Higher) Education for Sustainable Development

Moving away from the international policy history and evolution of ESD and HESD, there has been a concurrent growth in (H)ESD commitment within the UK over the last few decades. ESD *and* HESD policy evolution in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland will be briefly explored, before moving to focus on HESD in England and in particular the role of England's HE bodies.

3.2.1 UK policy for ESD and HESD: Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

There are significant differences between the four countries of the UK in terms of their political commitment to and progress with SD and ESD agendas, with Scotland and Wales showing significantly more policy emphasis on these issues at the level of government, compared to England and Northern Ireland. UK government has produced only one, now outdated, national sustainable development strategy, *Securing the Future*, which was released in March 2005 via the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)²² and the now disbanded Sustainable Development Commission (SDC)²³ (Defra, 2005a). An accompanying strategic framework entitled, *One Future – different paths*, (Defra, 2005b) was launched in conjunction and set out common goals and challenges for the devolved administrations of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (Sterling and Scott, 2008). In relation to ESD specifically, the recent policy history of ESD in the UK is mapped out in detail through a UNESCO publication from 2013, *Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in the UK – Current status, best practice and opportunities for the future*, with a linked article by Scott, et al., (2013) backing up this policy brief. According to Scott, et al., (2013), the fact that the UK government has been decentralising responsibility for education policy to the separate political jurisdictions of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales

²² The **Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)** is the UK government department responsible for safeguarding the natural environment, supporting the food and farming industry, and sustaining a thriving rural economy (Defra, undated, pg. 1).

²³ The **Sustainable Development Commission (SDC)** was a NDPB formed by the Blair Labour government in 2000 and disbanded in 2011, which acted as an independent adviser to UK government on sustainable development (SDC, undated, pg. 1).

since the 1990s, has allowed a 'divergent evolution' of ESD across the UK. The UNESCO report states that although good practice in ESD *does exist* across all learning contexts and levels in the UK, developments remain relatively small scale without an active overarching UK strategy for SD, nor a strategic framework which sets ESD within core educational policy.

Sustainable development is one of the Scottish Government's key national policy foci and performance indicators, which features in many aspects of policy; a 'greener' and 'fairer' nation are two of their overarching governmental objectives. Wales' unique commitment has also been shown through the writing of SD into its constitution via the 2006 *Government of Wales Act* (UNESCO, 2013). Such policy commitment to SD has meant that significant support for ESD has also ensued, for example, the General Teaching Council for Scotland's professional standards framework features 'Learning for Sustainability' as one of three underpinning themes which all school teachers must address. In addition, Scottish recognition of the UNDES was accompanied by an action plan for all levels of education called *Learning for our Future* (Ryan and Tilbury, 2013). According to Ryan and Tilbury (2013) the Welsh Assembly Government has a longstanding commitment to both SD and ESD, which is reflected in their SD scheme *One Wales, One Planet* published in 2009; its *Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship Action Plan* (2006 – 2009) which targeted all educational sectors; and the 2015 *Well-being for Future Generations (Wales) Act* which made SD a central organizing principle for all activities of government and public bodies, including schools, colleges and HE (Scott, et al., 2013; UNESCO, 2013). In Northern Ireland responsibility for SD resides within the Office of the First and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) which published an SD strategy and implementation plan in 2010. There are only two universities operating in Northern Ireland (as well as The Open University), the University of Ulster and Queens University, which both have ESD-focused initiatives, although there is much a stronger ESD policy remit at the school level (Scott, et al., 2013; UNESCO, 2013).

3.2.2 HESD policy in England: the role of the HE sector bodies

A series of developments can be mapped to show the policy trajectory of HESD in England (set within the broader UK national context) and the roles of the higher education bodies and organisations in this evolution. Starting around the same time as the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, one of the first impetuses for a national EE agenda in England was ‘The Toyne Report’ of 1993 entitled: *Environmental Responsibility: An Agenda for Further and Higher Education*. Produced by the Committee on Environmental Education in Further and Higher Education, it made six recommendations for England (and Wales), including that: *‘Enabling responsible citizenship [should] be recognised as core business of (all) learning institutions and a legitimate purpose of lifetime learning’* and that *‘Funds should be made available to establish a national programme to support the further and higher education sector’s response to the challenge of sustainable development’* (Toyne, 1993, cited in: Shiel and Bunney, 2002, pg. 2). Not long after the recommendations of The Toyne Report, a key development was the launch of the Environmental Association of Universities and Colleges (EAUC) in 1996, whose initial emphasis on environmental management and campus ‘greening’, has slowly broadened over the years to include a more significant focus on sustainability education. The EAUC’s mission statement states its intention to: *‘...lead, inspire and support Members and stakeholders with a shared vision, knowledge and the tools they need to embed sustainability and facilitate whole institution change through the involvement of everyone in the institution’* (EAUC, undated, pg. 1). Three of the association’s most impactful and enduring areas of work are its annual Green Gown Awards which recognise and reward sustainability initiatives being undertaken across UK universities and colleges; its annual conference which has been running for 20 years; and its Sustainability Exchange which is an online portal/resource bank which aims to connect environmental and sustainability professionals in HE (EAUC, undated). A further significant development towards the end of the ‘transition and

development phase', was the initiation of two projects by NGO Forum for the Future²⁴. These were the HE21 Project (funded by central government) and Higher Education Partnerships for Sustainability (HEPS) (funded by HEFCE), which worked with a number of UK HEIs focusing on, amongst other things, estates management, exploration of sustainability learning for different professions, and the development of a sustainability curriculum toolkit (Sterling and Scott, 2008).

In 2003 the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) under the then UK Labour government, published a *Sustainable Development Action Plan for Education and Skills*, which set out key actions required of schools, colleges and HEIs to secure a more sustainable future for the UK; it also pointed to the role to be played by national agencies such as HEFCE (Dawe, Jucker and Martin, 2005). Following from this, the next cluster of HESD activities took place in 2005 when the Labour government signed up for the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (UNDESD) and HEFCE published its first SD strategy, *Sustainable development in higher education*, after extensive consultation with the English HE sector via a draft document and a series of consultation seminars. The resulting publication placed an important emphasis on ESD through its vision statement which specified:

Within the next 10 years, the higher education sector in this country will be recognised as a major contributor to society's efforts to achieve sustainability – through the skills and knowledge that its graduates learn and put into practice, and through its own strategies and operations (HEFCE, 2005, pg. 5).

HEFCE also demonstrated their support for ESD in this document through their encouragement of the Higher Education Academy's ESD-focused work, stating a commitment '*...to continue to support the Higher Education Academy's work to identify, share and support the development of good practice in relation to sustainable development in the curriculum, in whatever form is*

²⁴ **Forum for the Future** is a UK-based but internationally operating non-profit charity, which works with businesses, government and civil society to solve complex sustainability challenges (Forum for the Future, undated, pg.1).

appropriate' (HEFCE, 2005, pg. 2). In 2005 HEFCE also funded two sustainability-focused Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETLs) – the Centre for Sustainable Futures (CSF) at the University of Plymouth and the Centre for Sustainable Communities Achieved through Professional Education (C-SCAYPE) at Kingston University – both of which had the remit to advance ESD within and beyond their institutions (Sterling and Scott, 2008).

With the support of HEFCE the HEA launched a key initiative of its own in 2005 called 'The ESD Project', which was established as a special theme in the overall programme of the HEA with a remit '*...to help institutions and subject communities develop curricula and pedagogy that will give students the skills and knowledge to live and work sustainably*' (Sterling and Witham, 2008, pg. 401). The first task of the project was to conduct a subject-based review of ESD activity across the UK HE sector, which was the first time that an integrated cross-disciplinary investigation into ESD and its implementation within UK HEIs had taken place (Jones, et al., 2010a). The resulting publication, *Sustainable Development in Higher Education: Current Practice and Future Developments* (Dawe, et al., 2005) or 'The Dawe Report' as it is often referred, found that there was substantial ESD work in progress and a range of good practice across UK HEIs, but that overall the picture was patchy, with several disciplines where ESD was marginal or non-existent (Dawe, et al., 2005). Other important ESD-focused developments at the HEA which flowed in the years following from this project included: the establishment an ESD Advisory Group to guide the HEA's and the sectors ESD-focused work; the employment of a part-time ESD Academic Lead staff member; and the setting up of the Green Academy organisational change programme (UNESCO, 2013). The Green Academy, launched in 2011, is often cited as one of the HEA's most impactful programmes, the aim of which was to assist universities in embedding ESD into the overall student experience; although the scheme had a much broader influence across the sustainability activities of many of the participating institutions (McCoshan and Martin, 2014). The Green Academy brought together small teams of staff and students from a range of HEIs to take part in a residential meeting. Here the teams worked together and with each other, to develop an ESD

action plan which would then be implemented within their institutions. A total of 18 UK HEIs took part in the programme over two rounds of the Green Academy between 2011 and 2014. The second evaluation report from the project highlights considerable impacts of the programme upon the participating institutions:

Green Academy has enabled institutions to put in place resilient platforms, giving sustainability greater legitimacy and longevity, upon which many activities have been – and continue to be – built. [It] has placed the teams leading sustainability implementation in a position to respond positively to events as they unfold (McCoshan and Martin, 2014, pg. 15).

The next period of significant policy movement for HESD in England occurred in 2007/2008/2009 when HEFCE produced, consulted on and released several significant policy documents and the first People and Planet (P&P)²⁵ 'Green League' table was published in the *Times Higher Education Supplement* newspaper. The first of these HEFCE documents was a strategic review of sustainable development across English HEIs which aimed to establish a baseline of sustainable development across the sector within the three broad areas of research, teaching and estates management/procurement (HEFCE, 2008a). This 130-page document was based upon responses from 93 HEIs and drew similar conclusions to The Dawe Report a few years earlier:

Probably the most important finding of the review is that SD activity is very disparate in the HEI sector: it is very widely dispersed within different HEIs; it varies widely across HEIs, with some engaging in multiple, coordinated institution-wide SD activities involving hundreds of staff, some having only a few active individuals, and some no identified activities at all (HEFCE, 2008a, pg. vi).

Alongside this review HEFCE released a consultation document for an update to their 2005 strategic statement and action plan, which again was taken out to consultation with the sector. The final version, *Sustainable development in higher education: 2008 update to strategic statement and action plan*, was published in February 2009 and restated the overarching vision

²⁵ **People and Planet** is the UK's largest student campaigning organisation, campaigning to end world poverty, defend human rights and protect the environment (People and Planet, undated, pg. 1).

initially set out in 2005; notably with no change in timescale to the ten-year aspiration. A key addition to the 2008 iteration of this document, was a new section on the importance of working with student organisations such as the National Union of Students (NUS) to ‘...*promote behavioural change among students and support initiatives that seek to harness the student resource for positive environmental initiatives at the campus level*’ (HEFCE, 2009a, pg. 4). The People and Planet ‘Green League’, which is now known as the People and Planet ‘University League’ (published in *The Guardian* newspaper since 2011), is the only comprehensive UK-based league table which ranks all universities based upon a range of sustainability indicators. Although the table has a broad SD focus, which ranks factors such as environmental policy, sustainability staffing, campus and estates management issues, ethical investment and sustainable food, the inclusion of an ESD-focused indicator in 2011 exemplifies the increasing prominence of ESD within the broader sustainability movement of UK higher education.

Around the 2013/14 period (when data collection for this thesis was in progress) several other HESD developments were taking place across the UK HE sector that were key topics of discussion in England’s HESD community of practice at that time. Firstly, HEFCE were in the process of finalising their latest SD policy statement and several consultation events were taking place across the sector. The National Union of Students (NUS) in conjunction with, and funded by the HEA, released their second annual research survey looking at student attitudes towards, and skills for, sustainable development. These annual surveys have consistently shown that around 80% of students believe that sustainable development should be actively incorporated and promoted by universities, and furthermore that around 60% believe that SD should be incorporated within all university courses and would like to learn more about sustainability issues (Drayson, Bone, Agombar and Kemp, 2013; Drayson, 2015). The NUS also led a HEFCE-funded initiative from 2013 – 2015, called the Students Green Fund, which supported 25 transformative sustainability projects across students’ unions in England and had a significant impact on informal ESD activity and student sustainability engagement across English HEIs (Students Green Fund,

undated). In 2014/15 the NUS also launched and implemented the Responsible Futures ESD-initiative, which is essentially an organisational change programme and accreditation mark for HEIs, focused on '*...whole-institution approach[es] to embedding social responsibility and sustainability across the formal and informal curriculum*' (NUS, 2016, pg. 1). Finally, the last key HESD development in 2013/14 was the publication of the QAA's ESD guidance document in collaboration with the HEA and a working group of ESD experts from across UK. Entitled *Education for sustainable development: Guidance for UK higher education providers* significant, this document had a stated aim to: '*...be of practical help to higher education providers working with students to foster their knowledge, understanding and skills in the area of sustainable development*' (QAA, 2014, pg. 2). This document was released to the sector in June 2014 after a series of consultation events. Some of the most recent HESD developments related to the HE bodies/organisations, are picked up in Chapter 5 which explores the role of the HE bodies from the perspective of interviewees who took part in this study and through the lens of marketisation.

It is clear that all of the HE bodies explored within this section have significantly shaped the activities of English universities, both in relation to their broad sustainability agendas, as well as their education-specific sustainability agendas. It is interesting to note however, the distinct lack of policy impetus from central government for ESD, unlike in Scotland and Wales where government has been *much* stronger in this regard. The policy evolution of HESD explored here is though, only one contributing factor to the growth of HESD as an (inter)nationally recognised educational movement. Another major factor, has been the conceptual and theoretical development of HESD into a distinct academic field, as developed through the research, writing and publication of ESD articles and volumes by scholars across the UK and internationally.

3.3 Theoretical Underpinnings of Higher Education for Sustainable

Development

The vision of ESD provided by UNESCO is a helpful model to begin with when framing theoretical/conceptual discussions about the nature of HESD. UNESCO's ESD vision provides a set of overarching, globally-focused statements and a common ESD language, that has been used by individuals across multiple continents and countries. UNESCO has stated that: *'Education for sustainable development is a vision of education that seeks to balance human and economic well-being with cultural traditions and respect for the earth's natural resources'* (UNESCO, 2002, pg. 1), which, they say, is based upon the following values:

- Respect for the dignity and human rights of all people throughout the world and a commitment to social and economic justice for all;
- Respect for the human rights of future generations and a commitment to intergenerational responsibility;
- Respect and care for the greater community of life in all its diversity which involves the protection and restoration of the Earth's ecosystems; and,
- Respect for cultural diversity and a commitment to build locally and globally a culture of tolerance, non-violence and peace (UNESCO, 2005, pg. 16).

UNESCO has also described a list of common features of ESD, which include that it is/should be: interdisciplinary, holistic and embedded across curricula; values-driven and linked to the values of SD; based upon critical-thinking and problem-solving to face the challenges of SD; based upon pedagogies of learning which involve participatory decision-making and interaction between teachers and learners; applicable to individuals personal and professional lives; and, addressing both local and global issues (UNESCO, 2005, pg. 17). A plethora of other ESD definitions have also been provided over the years. The 2012 HEA publication, the Future Fit Framework, describes ESD as *'...about the kinds of education, teaching and learning that appear to be required if we are*

concerned about ensuring social, economic and ecological well-being, now and into the future’, which will prepare people to ‘...cope with, manage and shape social, economic and ecological conditions characterised by change, uncertainty, risk and complexity’ (Sterling, 2012, pg. 8 – 9).

The QAA’s ESD guidance document has also become a common reference point for HESD in England, which emphasises the importance of working with students to explore concepts of global citizenship, environmental stewardship, social justice, ethics and wellbeing, in relation to their academic, personal and professional lives. This document defines ESD as: ‘...the process of equipping students with the knowledge and understanding, skills and attributes needed to work and live in a way that safeguards environmental, social and economic wellbeing, both in the present and for future generations’ (QAA, 2014, pg. 5). Based upon these definitions, as well as a range of other literature which has been reviewed, the core conceptual characteristics of HESD have been summarized into sixteen key points which are laid out in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 – Core conceptual characteristics of HESD

1. Learning how to make decisions and take actions based upon equitable and balanced considerations of the long-term future viability of the economy, society and the environment	2. To generate in students, an appreciation of the environmental, social, political and economic contexts of their disciplines
3. Promoting social responsibility and a commitment to intra-generational justice, equity and human rights for all, as well as responsibility for future generations	4. Promoting environmental responsibility through raising consciousness regarding the need for protection and restoration of the earths ecological systems
5. Future-oriented and based upon building the capacity for future-oriented action	6. Addressing local and global issues
7. Preparation for coping with and managing change, uncertainty, risk and complexity	8. Practical, problem-oriented and problem-solving
9. Applicable to individuals academic, personal and professional lives	10. Based upon the development of sustainability knowledge, skills, attitudes and values
11. Interdisciplinary, holistic, interconnected, collaborative and creative	12. Driven by and encouraging critical thinking and reflection
13. Building sustainability literacy, competencies and consciousness	14. Embedded across curricula, not a stand-alone subject area
15. Based upon participatory and interactive pedagogies of learning	16. Rethinking and redefining the purpose, methods and content of education
References	
UNESCO, 2002; 2005; 2014; Sterling, 2004a; 2012; 2013; Stibbe and Luna, 2009; Cotton and Winter, 2010; Wals and Blewitt, 2010; Ryan and Cotton; 2013; Ryan and Tilbury, 2013; QAA, 2014; Shephard, 2015b; Barth, et al., 2016; Wiek, et al., 2016 (amongst others)	

It is fair to say that characteristic number sixteen, ‘rethinking and redefining the purpose, methods and content of education’ has been theoretically and conceptually constructed as *the* fundamental underpinning ESD principle within mainstream HESD literature. As Ryan and Cotton (2013, pg. 152) describe, educators who embrace education for sustainable development may have varied approaches, areas of expertise and political viewpoints, but what they have in common is ‘...a concern to change educational systems, practices and methods’.

3.3.1 Rethinking and redefining the purpose, methods and content of education

Rethinking and redefining the purpose, methods and content of education, in the context of education for sustainable development, has often been described as necessitating a ‘transformative’, ‘paradigm shifting’, ‘holistic’ and/or ‘whole systems/institutional’ approach. This ‘transformative HESD’ vision (as it will be referred to herein) has been conceptually constructed, reconstructed and nuanced over many years by a range of UK-based and international HESD theorists. One of the most prominent theorists in this regard, who is renowned nationally as well as internationally for his theories surrounding ‘sustainable education’ and ‘the sustainable university’, is Professor Stephen Sterling. For Sterling, sustainable education requires a transformative, whole systems, cultural shift within HE, which places sustainability ‘at the heart of higher education’s *raison d’être*’; an epistemic and paradigmatic reorientation of universities towards sustainability (Sterling, 2004a; Sterling, 2013, pg. 18). In Sterling’s eyes, ‘*Sustainability is not just another issue to be added to an overcrowded curriculum, but a gateway to a different view of curriculum, of pedagogy, of organisational change, of policy and particularly of ethos*’ (Sterling, 2004b, pg. 50). His vision of ‘sustainable education’ thus represents a position whereby sustainability sets *the* overarching context for all policy priorities and agendas within HE; going far beyond ‘integrating’, ‘embedding’ or ‘mainstreaming’ sustainability as an ‘add-on’ area of practice (Sterling, 2001; Sterling, 2004a). Sterling (2013, pg. 33 – 36) has characterised the distinction

between such change approaches, (drawing upon the theories of Bateson, 1972, and Ison and Russell, 2000) as the difference between first, second and third-order learning and change:

- **First-order learning and change:** is **accommodative**, i.e. a 'bolt-on' of sustainability ideas to the existing system which occurs within sets of commonly accepted frameworks and assumptions, but does not fundamentally change the paradigm of the system itself. Branded as '*education about sustainability*' this type of learning often occurs in typical environmental-associated subjects and in isolated parts of HEIs (modules, programmes, disciplines).
- **Second-order learning and change:** examines and questions some norms and assumptions of HEIs in a process of **reformative** learning and change, i.e. changes to educational policies, programmes and institutional norms in line with sustainability ideas and principles, in a process of '*education for sustainability*'.
- **Third-order learning and change:** is **transformative** and fundamentally redesigns educational paradigms, purposes, policies and programmes in a process of deep learning involving whole educational communities, i.e. '*sustainable education*' or '*education as sustainability*'.

Positing that most change towards sustainability education in HE merely accommodates sustainability as an add-on to established practices, Sterling believes that the current response of England's HE system is inappropriate to the scale of the external challenge which sustainability presents and will not ultimately lead us to the ideal of the sustainable university:

The sustainable university is one that through its guiding ethos, outlook and aspirations, governance, research, curriculum, community links, campus management, monitoring and modus operandi seeks explicitly to explore, develop, contribute to, embody and manifest – critically and reflexively – the kinds of values, concepts and ideas, challenges and approaches that are emerging from the growing sustainability discourse (Sterling, 2013, pg. 23).

There are many other HESD scholars (too many to consider comprehensively here) who, along with Sterling, have championed this transformative HESD vision through their research and rhetoric. Ryan and Tilbury (2013, pg. 272) have described ESD as '*...a commitment to rethink the*

purposes of education and to reorient curriculum frameworks and pedagogical practice' ultimately seeking 'to shift education paradigms'. Tilbury notes that EfS seeks a transformative role for education '*...in which people are engaged in a new way of seeing, thinking, learning and working'* and whereby higher education itself must be subject to transformation (Tilbury and Wortman, 2004, pg. 9; Tilbury, 2013). For Barth, et al., (2016, pg. 1 – 2) successful HESD should facilitate systemic organisational change and provide universities with the spaces they need for '*...future-oriented and transformative thinking and learning'*. Tilbury has also recently written with others that (Scott, Tilbury, Sharp and Deane, 2012, pg. 6) '*...change leadership in this area requires a focus not only on curriculum change but also on the gradual transformation of the overall way in which our universities are structured and operate'*. This emphasis on holistic changes to all aspects of university life is a key characteristic of the transformative HESD ideal (Sylvestre and Wright, 2016). Such 'whole systems' and 'whole institutional' changes are often described as targeting universities systems, policies and practices across education, research, campus, community and business engagement. As Cebrian, Grace and Humphris (2015, pg. 79) describe, '*Change towards sustainability requires whole-university approaches that connect curriculum, campus, research and community strategies and action'*. All of the above views can be conceptually rationalised by the following quote: '*The nature of sustainability, and the prospect of unsustainability, require a fundamental change of epistemology, and therefore of education'* (Corcoran, 2010, foreword).

Under the transformative HESD literature banner, there are more and less critical and radical visions of the paradigm change needed in university systems towards sustainability. The area of critical environmental education is one research realm which has had a strong influence on the trajectory of transformative HESD writings over the past few decades (critical EE theorising is considered in depth in Section 3.6). Indeed, there are several scholars who bridge the divide between mainstream HESD research and critical EE research and have brought their critical EE perspectives to bear upon their writing about sustainability in HE. Rolf Jucker is a Swiss environmental educationalist with close ties to England's HESD community of practice who has

written collaboratively with several UK-based theorists and believes that paradigm change, and a fundamental redesign of educational values, are needed in order to forge '*...radical change for a transition to sustainability*' (Jucker, 2011, pg. 41; Jucker, 2014). Two other non-UK based EE theorists who have significantly shaped the English HESD vision towards transformation are Arjen Wals from the Netherlands and Canadian Bob Jickling who have theorised:

The integration of sustainability will never lead to anything fundamentally new if the institution is not prepared to re-think its academic mission. ... [this mission should] lead to the re-formulation of the aims and objectives of teaching and research programmes and it should result in a commonly accepted strategy at the macro-, meso- and micro-level (Wals and Jickling, 2002, pg. 226).

In a separate paper Wals' vision of 'third-wave' sustainability in HE '*...helps people transcend the 'given', the 'ordinary' and the often 'routine ways of doing' to create a new dynamic and alternative ways of seeing and doing*' (Wals and Blewitt, 2010, pg. 66). UK-based John Blewitt echoes the sentiments of the above writers through calling upon the more critical HESD theorists to work towards a new radical praxis in higher education which moves us away from current dominant educational paradigms (Blewitt, 2013). The critical EE vision of paradigm change for sustainability, in comparison to the mainstream transformative HESD vision, is more deeply entrenched within discussions of hegemonic and dominant political ideologies and practices; although of course, politics and political ideologies are intrinsically (though not always explicitly) bound up in most discussions of transformative HESD.

Taking a meta-perspective to approaching conceptualisations of HESD, Gough and Scott (2006, pg. 275) have described a range of contrasting ways of thinking about the relationships and interactions between sustainable development, education and politics, in an attempt to characterise common approaches to the intersection of these subject areas. They outline seven core perspectives of which the 'paradigm shift' perspective is one. They describe the paradigm shift approach as premised on the belief that sustainable development requires '*...nothing less*

than a revolution in the ways we think about, and live, our lives', with education serving as a facilitator of this 'inescapably political process' towards sustainability. This paradigm shift vision, which mirrors transformative HESD rhetoric, is however as they point out, a metaphorical, rather than a literal application of Kuhn's ideas about paradigms and paradigm change. Since 'society is not a science', the shift in university systems sought by many HESD theorists can thus be seen as a social paradigm shift, rather than a scientific paradigm shift (Gough and Scott, 2006, pg. 279). Scott (2015b) has also theorised more recently about the transformative orientation of HESD activities, via a notion of 'loose and tight framings'. For Scott, a transformative approach to advancing sustainability and ESD necessitates an institution taking a tightly framed approach, whereby the conceptual vision for the university has been deliberated at a cross-institutional level and the institution is shifted to embody this vision and certain sets of values-informed practices. A loose framing on the other hand, '*...is where an institution takes sustainability seriously in what it does, without having in place values, dispositions and orientations, and an appropriate conceptually-grounded vision'* (Scott, 2015b, pg. 952). For Scott, there is significantly more evidence of HEIs globally taking a loosely framed approach and very few convincing examples of HEIs who have established a transformative orientation in their activities akin the tightly framed method; though he makes these conclusions pragmatically, rather than disparagingly.

Visions of institutional transformation in higher education towards sustainability have also been conceptualised by some ESD theorists using established management theories of Organisational Change (OC), Organisational Learning (OL) and Transition Management (TM). Organisational change may be described as '*...the movement of an organisation from one state to another in response to some internal or external stimulus'* which exists along a continuum of change (Sylvestre and Wright, 2016, pg. 303). High-order systems change, which is radical, transformative and fundamental (i.e. paradigm changing), has been described as incredibly hard to plan for and implement within higher education due to the inherent complexity of HE's internal subsystems, the large scale of most university organisations, the diversity of values and cultures

present within HEIs, and the unpredictable external dynamics which impact upon HE organisational change programmes (Stephens and Graham, 2010; Sylvestre and Wright, 2016). Stephens and Graham (2010, pg. 611, 614) discuss the idea of transition management in relation to universities and the ways in which they are approaching and tackling the sustainability agenda. TM is described as: *'...a multi-scale, multi-actor, long term, process-oriented approach and analytical framework used to both understand and promote transformations of major social systems'* which has four distinct phases, namely: 'pre-development' – where no visible change to the status quo has taken place; 'take-off' – where initial change has begun and systems begin to shift; 'breakthrough' – where structural changes in social, economic, technological, ecological, cultural and institutional systems have occurred; and 'stabilisation' – where the desired organisational state and new dynamic equilibrium has been achieved and is maintained. In their opinion such frameworks could be used to encourage more comparative and generalizable analyses of the complex dynamics of change for HESD both within and across universities.

3.3.2 Sustainability curricula, pedagogies, literacies and competencies

Within the context of the transformative vision of HESD, there is a whole body of theorising which relates to models of higher education curricula and pedagogies suitable for and required to fulfil this transformative vision, as well as the types of competencies that 'sustainability literate' graduates should gain through such transformative learning processes. To start with, ESD has largely been conceptualised as necessitating a cross-disciplinary educational paradigm shift, that is, holistic and interdisciplinary change across all disciplines within universities, rather than being a standalone subject area in its own right. 'Add-on', 'bolt-on' or 'stand-alone' educational offerings with a sustainability focus, which are described as accommodative first-order learning and change, have long been denigrated within ESD literature as inadequately transformative. In describing sustainability as a 'cross-disciplinary concept for social transformations', Becker, Jahn, Sties and Wehling (1997, pg. 37) posit that due to the

complexity of issues raised by sustainability, we ‘...cannot simply aim at adding some new pieces to an already existing knowledge base’ and must attempt to overcome the limitations which are imposed by fragmented, disciplinary knowledge. Wals and Blewitt (2010, pg. 70) have said ‘...too often, ‘sustainable development’ is just another course or research project as expendable as anything else’. Tilbury (2007, pg. 119) echoes a similar sentiment: ‘...more and more we are seeing the word sustainability being added to the titles of programs, projects, activities, departments or units – however few have actually been redesigned to address new social learning approaches’. In his paper, *The catalyst that is sustainability: bringing permeability to disciplinary boundaries*, Selby (2006, pg. 57) posits that Efs ‘defies disciplinary compartmentalisation’, making the distinction between ambitious ‘interdisciplinary’ and ‘trans-disciplinary’ approaches, aligned to the transformative vision, and ‘infusionist’ approaches which do not involve any radical re-writing of curriculum and focus on working sustainability into existing disciplinary/structural boundaries.

A more pragmatic vision of ESD is portrayed in the QAA’s ESD guidance document which suggests that ESD should be pursued within, and contextualised to, existing disciplinary and professional contexts, modules and course structures (QAA, 2014). Furthermore, Holmberg and Samuelsson (2006, pg. 9) have proposed that ESD *should* be based upon a combination of integrated ESD approaches across disciplines, as well as separate courses and programs. They say that the merit of separate courses are that they ‘...give the basic understanding of the challenges associated with sustainable development; to deliver tools and conceptual models for dealing with dynamic and complex systems; and to attain a feeling of how things are interconnected’. Ryan and Cotton provide a comprehensive overview of issues pertaining to sustainability pedagogy and curricula in their 2013 chapter, *Times of Change: Shifting pedagogy and curricula for future sustainability*. They note that ESD is fundamentally ‘geared towards innovation in pedagogy’, which targets not only the ‘what’ of education, i.e. what is taught, but also the ‘how’ of education, i.e. how it is taught, in a process of reframing the purpose and aims of learning across programmes of study (Ryan and Cotton, 2013, pg. 152). They posit that for ESD to have a real

impact on student learning, change is required at the level of individual disciplines, enhancing existing programmes, but recognising that all disciplines have very different starting points both conceptually and pedagogically. As such, they say, some disciplines inherently have a much stronger connection with the ‘language of sustainability’ (e.g. geography, environmental sciences), whereas some have a much stronger connection with the ‘pedagogy of sustainability’ (e.g. humanities and social sciences). These propositions are backed up by Christie, Miller, Cooke and White (2015), who have described this matter of ESD alignment as one relating to disciplinary epistemological traditions and the differences between positivist and constructivist approaches to knowledge. Desirable and effective classroom pedagogies for ESD are largely conceptualised as needing to be active, participatory, experiential, interdisciplinary, based on critical thinking, and which give students the opportunity to explicitly reflect through discussion with others (Sterling, 2004a; Cotton and Winter, 2010; UNESCO, 2011; Ryan and Cotton, 2013; QAA, 2014; Cebrian, et al., 2015). Table 3.3 from Sterling (2004a, pg. 58, adapted from Van de Bor et al., 2000) exemplifies some commonly held assumptions about the desired shifts in higher education pedagogy required for ESD.

Table 3.3 – Pedagogical shifts required in HESD (after Sterling, 2004a)

Integration of sustainability in higher education requires shifts...	
From	To
1. Transmissive learning	1. Learning through discovery
2. Teacher-centred approach	2. Learner-centred approach
3. Individual learning	3. Collaborative learning
4. Learning dominated by theory	4. Praxis-oriented learning linking theory and experience
5. Focus on accumulating knowledge and a content orientation	5. Focus on self-regulative learning and a real issues orientation
6. Emphasis on cognitive objectives only	6. Cognitive, affective and skills-related objectives
7. Institutional, staff-based teaching /learning	7. Learning with staff but also with and from outsiders
8. Low-level cognitive learning	8. Higher-level cognitive learning

A list of commonly advocated teaching approaches for ESD which align with these desired pedagogical shifts include: role-plays and simulations; group discussions and dialogue; stimulus activities (e.g. use of photos, videos, newspapers); debates; critical incidents (posing critical events and asking what students would do); case studies; reflexive accounts; personal development planning; critical reading and writing; problem-based learning; fieldwork; modelling good practice; futures visioning; worldview and values research; and action research (Sterling, 2004a; Cotton and Winter, 2010; UNESCO, 2011; Sterling, 2012; Ryan and Cotton, 2013; QAA, 2014; Cebrian, et al., 2015). According to the literature, transformative learning for sustainability does not however only take place through formal curricula processes; the 'informal' and 'hidden' curriculum of HEIs have also been described as potentially transformative learning spaces (Winter and Cotton, 2010; Cotton, Winter and Bailey, 2012; Ryan and Cotton, 2013). Indeed, what the campus environment 'says about sustainability', what students learn through extra-curricular activities, learning that goes on in more informal environments within universities (e.g. libraries, cafes, outdoor spaces), and even the values and beliefs of lecturers and teaching teams, may leave a lasting impression on students. Winter and Cotton (2010) suggest that helping students to deconstruct the hidden campus curriculum through dialogue and reflection may enhance aspects of sustainability literacy in the graduate population.

Table 3.3 highlights a shift from promoting predominantly cognitive learning outcomes, to promoting a combination of cognitive, affective and skills-related outcomes, as another core aspect of transformative HESD learning. Kerry Shepard, Professor of Higher Education at the University of Otago, New Zealand, is the foremost thinker in this area within the HESD movement (Shephard, 2008; Shephard, 2015a; Shephard, 2015b). Theorising about the differences between cognitive (knowledge-based), affective (emotion-based) and psychomotor (skills-based) learning outcomes goes back many decades to the early work of Benjamin Bloom and David Krathwohl. For Shephard (2008, pg. 88) the affective domain is about values, attitudes and behaviours and includes, in a hierarchy: *'...an ability to listen, to respond in interactions with others, to*

demonstrate attitudes or values appropriate to particular situations, to demonstrate balance and consideration, and at the highest level [highest order], to display a commitment to principled practice on a day-to-day basis, alongside a willingness to revise judgement and change behaviour in the light of new evidence'. According to Shephard, the ESD movement too often focuses on championing cognitive and lower order affective learning outcomes, at the expense of the highest order affective outcomes (as exemplified by the above competencies), which are truly needed for developing students with the capacity to take future-oriented actions grounded in sustainability values; or 'doers' as he calls them (Shephard, 2015a). Shephard describes:

I suspect that most higher education teachers would conclude that ESD was not simply seeking affect outcomes; it was seeking higher-order affective outcomes, those at the very top of the affective hierarchy. The 'doer' is the very ideal of a citizen who has developed and organised a set of sustainability values and attributes to the extent that they are characterised by these values and live their life according to them (Shephard, 2015b, pg. 65).

Another way of thinking about affective learning outcomes for HESD, is through the notion of 'sustainability literacy' and 'sustainability competencies' which are two other central theoretical tenets of the HESD movement. *The Handbook of Sustainability Literacy* published in 2009 provides a detailed exploration of sustainability literacy through the eyes of a variety of ESD advocates working across a range of different disciplinary and research areas. For Stibbe and Luna (2009) the crux of sustainability literacy, as it relates to ESD, is moving forward from accrued sustainability knowledge, skills and attitudes, to *act upon* said knowledge, skills and attitudes, i.e. individuals being empowered to put knowledge, skills and attitudes into action, as they describe:

As people gain sustainability literacy skills, they become empowered to read society critically, discovering insights into the unsustainable trajectory that society is on and the social structures that underpin this trajectory. But more than this, they become empowered to engage with those social structures and contribute to re-writing of self and society along more sustainable lines (Stibbe and Luna, 2009, pg. 11).

Thus, according to Parkin, Johnston, Buckland, Brooks and White (2004, pg. 30), a sustainability literate person is able to:

...understand the need to change to a more sustainable way of doing things; have sufficient knowledge and skills to decide and act in a way that favours sustainable development; and recognise and reward other people's decisions and actions that favour sustainable development.

Individuals able to act upon accrued sustainability knowledge, skills, attitudes, and of course values, may also be described as competent or possessing a range of competencies for sustainability. Wiek, Withycombe and Redman (2011) and Wiek, et al., (2016) have authored the foremost thinking in this area through their broad literature review of sustainability competencies and their synthesis of these into a set of five competency types which characterise a sustainability literate student, or indeed staff member within HE. These are: systems thinking competence; futures thinking competence; values thinking competence; strategic thinking competence; and collaboration competence.

Through not exhaustive, this section has sought to outline some of the key ways in which ESD has been conceptualised and theorised through published literature and the discourse of England's national HESD community of practice. The ideal of the transformative, paradigm shifting, holistic, whole systems HESD vision and related curricula and pedagogical models, have had a strong influence on the goals, expectations and hopes of individuals driving ESD within England's universities and indeed frustrations that have often been expressed at the perceived lack of systemic progress being made towards such ideals.

3.4 The Eternal HESD Frustration

If rethinking and redefining the purpose, methods and content of education is the fundamental underpinning HESD principle, then the fundamental and underpinning HESD frustration, is the lack of systemic progress that has been made towards this ideal. It is rare to read any HESD-focused article or book chapter which does not start with some form of critique regarding the levels of progress and pace of change towards advancing sustainability and ESD within university life. As Corcoran (2010, foreword) describes *'...several years into the effort to reimagine higher education for sustainability, we see as much as ever the academy's stubborn resistance to change. It is clear that we have failed to transform either higher education or society. Yet we have begun to reform it'*. Indeed, progress made towards 'reformation' and the upsurge in HESD activities over the last few decades has been praised, however, such changes are rarely portrayed as satisfactory and the overall conception evoked through the literature, is that the ESD movement which has failed to deliver on the ideal of sustainable education and the sustainable university. As Sterling, Maxey and Luna (2013) describe in the preface to the edited volume, *The Sustainable University: '...despite encouraging signs of change, sustainability remains a minority sport. Both nationally and internationally, only a small proportion of institutions are taking serious steps to push the boundaries of discovering what a fully engaged 'sustainable university' might mean'*. Scott, et al., (2013, pg. 1536) also describe a similar predicament:

Whilst there is much to celebrate in terms of activity levels in developing initiatives and projects under the banner of ESD, much of this is through relatively small initiatives and shifts in policy, none of which are, in themselves, too demanding of government or individuals but which are unlikely, ultimately, to lead to a more sustainable society. Modest incrementalism may be too little too late, if we are to drive a more fundamental reform of our economy, and our society towards a sustainable and climate-resilient future.

Scott has written elsewhere, that there is no sense that sustainability has yet become a 'major strategic parameter of university life' that holistically links together the core functions of universities (Scott and Gough, 2006, pg. 300). Shiel (2013b) and Wahr and de la Harpe (2016) also agree that there are a lack of examples of universities that have taken a holistic and systemic approach to ESD, with very few (if any) tangible examples of systemic transformation of whole systems. For Shiel, ESD rhetoric is thus rarely matched by ESD reality. Cotton, Bailey, Warren and Bissell (2009, pg. 720) have also said: *'Recent research investigating the response of higher education institutions to the ESD agenda illustrates a clear mismatch between ideals and reality at the current time'*. Change towards advancing sustainability and ESD has been critiqued for being piecemeal, fragmented, slow and ultimately incremental and reformist, rather than radical and transformative. Stephens and Graham (2010, pg. 617) have pointed to a 'fundamental paradox' at the heart of universities, that *'...they are institutions designed to teach, but not to teach themselves'*, thus change towards ESD inevitably *'...comes slowly and incrementally'*. Thus, although many ESD successes across the global HE landscape *have* been actively celebrated, ultimately the HESD movement has been portrayed as unsuccessful in its attempts to systemically shift the values, attitudes and behaviours of the majority of students who come through the world's universities, or indeed the mainstream body of academic and non-academic HE staff.

ESD advocates and scholars often implicitly conjure Einstein's famous lesson, that *'no problem can be solved from the same level of consciousness that created it'*, when describing the struggle to move higher education towards sustainability. In the first edition and volume of the *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education*, van Weenan (2000, pg. 32) proffered: *'The key question is how any organisational response to the challenge of sustainable development is possible that starts from the same paradigms and assumptions that helped to create our prevailing unsustainable systems in the first place'*. The very foundations of higher education and its imbrication with the industrial and scientific revolutions, positivist scientific methods and reductionist disciplines and epistemologies, are said to oppose the interdisciplinary,

interconnected and relational vision of the sustainable university. Shriberg (2002, pg. 69) and Sterling (2004a, pg. 59) respectively describe:

...colleges and universities encourage mechanistic and reductionist thinking, which emphasizes scientific analysis of parts of the environmental problem as opposed to the systems-oriented perspective of sustainability.

...we must help to lead educational policy and practice away from a basis in fragmentation, mechanism, objectivism and reductionism, and towards an integrated and holistic ecologism and understanding of systems appropriate to the post-modern world.

Higher education has thus been described as an integral cogwheel of the larger unsustainable world economic, industrial and social system, for which it continues to provide expertise, and helps to continuously structure, restructure and perpetuate (Clugston and Calder, 1999; Jucker, 2014). Rammel, Velazquez and Mader (2016, pg. 331) have said that without whole institutional approaches to sustainability, *'...universities are caught in a crossfire of greenwashing, reductionist models and the increasing demand to produce knowledge and students simply for an economy based on unchallenged economic growth'*. Critique of this economic, industrial and 'technocratic' worldview embedded within the transformative, paradigm changing HESD vision, has been outlined by Gough and Scott (2006). Gough and Scott (2006, pg. 279) describe how advocates of the paradigm-shifting approach to sustainability and ESD, criticise technocrats as being *'...locked into the dominant social paradigm'* so that they *'...cannot see that, in relation to sustainable development, there are political and ideological issues that must be addressed'*. Or in other words:

By applying to environmental and social problems the mechanistic rationale that caused those problems in the first place, say the social paradigm-shifters, technocrats are trying to extinguish a fire by pouring fuel on it.

Rolf Jucker summarises this ultimate ESD challenge in his 2014 book, *Do we know what we are doing? Reflections on learning, knowledge, economics, community and sustainability*, where he

suggests that ESD needs to perform a radical paradigm shift in order to move away from what he sees as a whole host of good intentions, nicely written reports, wishes and un-reflected assumptions. He concludes that, *'We are faced with a contradiction – ESD is only possible with a radical paradigm change; yet according to all indicators such a radical change within society, economy and the education system seems impossible'*, i.e. *'There is no real progress in the sense of the necessary paradigm change'* (Jucker, 2014, pg. 38, 41).

3.5 Barriers to HESD

In line with the eternal HESD frustration just described, there has been much written over the years under the banner of 'barriers' to sustainability and ESD in higher education. A comprehensive report by the Global University Network for Innovation (GUNI) which polled 200 HE experts from across the globe, outlined the five most commonly cited barriers to the implementation of sustainability in HEIs, which were (Granados-Sánchez, et al., 2012, pg. 199):

- A lack of coordination and vision to change sustainability policies and education at government level;
- Lack of vision and prioritisation of sustainable development by university leadership;
- Sustainable development being perceived as an 'add-on' to education rather than a built-in aspect of universities;
- A lack of common understanding of ESD; and,
- Difficulties in attaining integrative inter- and trans-disciplinary learning and cooperation in universities.

Leadership for sustainability and ESD (or lack of), at both the level of government and within university leadership structures is a core factor outlined here, however, within the mainstream HESD literature, consideration of the importance of governmental support for sustainability and ESD tends to receive less attention. The importance of executive-level university support is however widely seen as essential for mainstreaming sustainability into university policy, practice and pedagogy (Holmeberg and Samuelsson, 2006; Bekessy, Samson and Clarkson, 2007; Shiel, 2013a; 2013b). As Bekessy, et al. (2007, pg. 302) detail, whilst small-scale 'ground-up' action by

interest groups is valuable it '*...may not achieve the cultural shifts that are a precondition for mainstream sustainability*' and thus '*Full, visible and tangible support from the university president, vice chancellor or rector and university executive is critical to the success of sustainability strategies*'. Shiel (2013a; 2013b, pg. 127) has also described the importance of sustainability champions in leading HESD agendas, whose enthusiasm is unfortunately, less often matched by sustainability leadership at 'the top'. Her chapter in the 2013 *The Sustainable University* book, considers a range of leadership theories for conceptualising HESD leadership, concluding that, although it is critically important for senior university managers to 'learn SD', it also vitally important that those championing ESD at any level in the university, also 'learn leadership', and in particular the qualities of transformational leadership, which are '*...inspirational motivation, developing appealing visions and uniting collective effort*'. In a later paper, Shiel and Jones (2016) offer an additional angle upon leadership challenges for ESD, highlighting the pervasiveness of neoliberal influence on high-level university leadership, which they say, overemphasizes short-term market growth and atomistic accountability at the expense of more transformative approaches to university leadership for sustainability.

A lack of common understanding of the terms sustainability and ESD is also widely described as a significant barrier to HESD implementation. Indeed, one of the most cited lists of barriers to sustainability in higher education, laid out by Filho in his 2000 paper, *Dealing with the misconceptions of the concept of sustainability*, identified a range of themes and factors related to how sustainability is conceptualised within HEIs, as a core difficulty faced by staff in enacting and operationalising 'sustainability'. Sustainability was described by staff interviewed as too abstract, too distant from reality, too broad, too theoretical and political, and not a subject per se (Filho, 2000, pg. 14). These conceptual difficulties faced by staff can also lead to sustainability being perceived as irrelevant to subject/disciplinary content, topics and skills, and ill-fitting to disciplinary structures and traditions (Dawe, et al., 2005; Moore, 2005; Cotton, et al., 2009). The Dawe Report of 2005, which undertook a comprehensive review of barriers to the

implementation of ESD in UK HE, described five key barriers, which along with the perceived irrelevance of sustainability to staff's subject areas already described, highlighted: insufficient institutional drive and commitment to ESD (i.e. highlighting the importance of sustainability leadership); lack of staff awareness, knowledge and expertise regarding ESD (pointing to the importance of staff development and training); and curriculum being too crowded already, with staff lacking sufficient time to update courses (Dawe, et al., 2005, pg. 28).

The significant emphasis placed on university staff as barriers to change for HESD is also described by Jones, et al., (2010a, pg. 9 – 10) who reflect upon barriers to wider and deeper curriculum change for sustainability. They break these inhibitors down into three factors:

- **Principal Inhibitor 1:** Academic staff, jealously guarding their academic freedom, see education for sustainable development as an imposition, something not commensurate with their discipline or student expectations of their discipline. Steeped in their specialism, they are uncomfortable about the interdisciplinary teaching for which the multi-dimensional concept of sustainability calls. They see no reward or career advancement in sustainability curriculum innovation.
- **Principal Inhibitor 2:** Academic staff, both converts and contrarians, consider themselves lacking the knowledge and skills, expertise and experience to implement sustainability-related teaching/learning.
- **Principal Inhibitor 3:** Academics and administrators, hold that the ethos of the institution is not favourable to successful integration of sustainability across the teaching and learning programmes of the institution.

Jones, et al., (2010a, pg. 9) suggest a number of approaches for overcoming the obstacles presented, which importantly include: tailored staff development opportunities; resources, advice and guidance; recognition and reward structures; as well as framing the process of engaging with ESD for academic staff as '*...invitational rather than imposition, dialogic rather than prescriptive [and] participative rather than directive*'. A recent chapter by Thomas (2016) which focuses exclusively on HESD implementation challenges and critical factors for successful curriculum transformation, also places significant emphasis on academic staff and the importance of

academic development for ESD, highlighting the importance of linking such training to broader organisational change strategies. He notes that the process of curriculum transformation relies both on top-down approaches to provide coordination, structures and resources, as well as bottom-up enthusiasm from academic and other staff to provide the knowledge and energy to put concepts into action. In summary Thomas (2016, pg. 66 – 67) posits that any academic member of staffs' decision to engage with ESD is influenced by six core factors, which are:

- **Personal values** – whether they are inclined to support sustainability activities, as well as their personal and cultural background;
- **Pedagogy** – whether their pedagogical approach is suitable to ESD or sufficiently adaptable;
- **Professional culture** – which can relate to the way in which their discipline, communities of practice, networks and peers engage with sustainability, as well as the provision/ encouragement of professional development opportunities;
- **Sense of self** – and whether they are confident to take risks with their teaching and research through focusing on sustainability;
- **Capacity for reflective self-learning** – and if they have the ability to continually analyse their own values, plans and actions and consider when change is needed; and,
- **Information sources** – that they have at their disposal related to sustainability.

So far this chapter has comprehensively considered, reviewed and summarized the history and characteristics of the HESD movement, with a particular focus on English HE, both from a policy development perspective looking at the role of several highly influential HE bodies for English universities, and from a conceptual and theoretical perspective, drawing on the writings of many of the HESD movement's most notable scholars. Yet all of this HESD activity within English higher education over the last few decades, has taken place *within* the context of marketisation, which as we have seen, presents an inherent ideological contradiction to the ESD cause. The next section of this chapter will further exploration of Doctoral Research Objective 3, i.e. it will explore the ideological relationship between marketisation and ESD within English HE.

3.6 Education for Sustainable Development in the Marketised University:

Paradox or Possibility?

In Chapter 2, objections to the marketisation of HE within mainstream HE research/literature were explored in detail and divided into three key themes of critique. Within the mainstream HESD research/literature such critique is also present, but varies considerably in how it is explicated. Although sometimes discussed in relation to ‘neoliberalism’ or ‘marketisation’, such critique is more often linked to other analogous themes such as: managerial cultures; corporatisation; mechanistic and technocratic ways of thinking; reductionist disciplines and epistemologies; positivist scientific methods; industrial, economic and capitalistic world systems; or alternatively, has been *implicitly* embedded within calls for a transformative educational shift, away from current, dominant educational ideologies and paradigms. HESD research also often takes a critical theory and/or critical pedagogy perspective in its approach to transforming HE towards sustainable development. Indeed, the principle facets of these philosophies, i.e. overcoming hegemonic and capitalistic societal structures through radical educational, social and political change, are echoed by many writers who seek to advance the sustainability model of higher education; though again such theoretical underpinnings are not always clearly outlined. Most authors who have *explicitly* and *specifically* connected and discussed ESD, in relation to, and within the context of neoliberalism, reside within the critical EE realm, as well as more critical and radical HESD realms; taking an overt critical theory approach to their broad-based theorising surrounding education, politics, policy, and the tensions between EE and ESD within the context of neoliberalism. As Kopnina (2016, pg. 140) describes ‘*Various critical environmental educators and more radical proponents of ESD identify the ‘enemy’ as a capitalist neoliberalism*’. This section will now explore a range of literature which draws together the two key themes of this thesis and focusses *explicitly* and *specifically* on the intrinsic ideological tension between neoliberalism and marketisation (both within and outside of higher education) and the aims of the ESD movement.

3.6.1 The critical environmental education perspective: ESD as a manifestation of neoliberalism

A key theme of ‘critical’ or ‘socially critical’ environmental education theorising, revolves around a strong castigation of the transition from earlier environmental education movements to the more recent education for sustainable development trend. As Bengtsson (2016, pg. 77) describes, *‘The concepts of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and Sustainable Development (SD) have historically had an antagonising effect on the field of environmental educational theory’*. In the 2012 paper, *Education for sustainable development (ESD): the turn away from ‘environment’ in environmental education*, Helen Kopnina (2012, pg. 669) has argued that with the more recent versions of ESD espoused in the literature, which are based on a broader plurality of understandings and different subjective and context-dependent definitions and interpretations of ESD, there is a *‘...danger that such pluralism may sustain dominant political ideologies and consolidated corporate power that obscure environmental concerns’*. She notes:

If we consider the power of political or corporate elites and the apparently global (although unequal) influence of industrial capitalism in shaping the discourse on development, with its clear emphasis on human welfare, how can we guarantee that pluralistic perspectives [of ESD] will lead students to develop ecocentric values? (Kopnina, 2012, pg. 707).

Her arguments largely echo broader debates and tensions regarding the role of economics and ‘development’ in sustainability. Kopnina (pg. 706) posits that ESD is dominated by and supports the *‘...the dominant post-industrial neo-liberal anthropocentric discourse’* and argues emphatically for a return to more instrumental ecocentric versions of environmental education, and away from what she says is the more anthropocentric view of ESD. Ruth Irwin makes very similar comments in her 2007 conference paper, *‘After Neoliberalism’: Environmental Education to Education for Sustainability*, through saying:

'Sustainability' has become one of those key Neoliberal terms, that has encroached upon an older, more authentically defined set of environmental factors that positions humanity as a species amongst many, and has inverted the meaning towards a metaphor for efficiency, economic development and the Ideal Market (Irwin, 2007, pg. 3).

In her opinion ESD has been promoted as a more optimistic approach to environmentalism, over older, more pessimistic 'greeny' approaches. The consequences of subsuming environmental concerns under the sustainability umbrella, she says, is the continuation of the neoliberal status quo and the '*...ability to keep ignoring the scientific evidence that modernity is resulting in radical climate change, pollution, deforestation, and extinctions*' (Irwin, 2007, pg. 12). She concludes that ESD simply helps to entrench the invisible hand of the market into environmental concerns.

Marcia McKenzie is another author in this vein. She discusses the 'twining' of neoliberalism and sustainability in education policy, and says that the neoliberalisation of sustainability in education policy shows an evident failure of educators to engage with the ecological limits to growth (McKenzie, 2012). In her paper, *Education for Y'all: global neoliberalism and the case for a politics of scale in sustainability education policy*, she says that:

...education for sustainable development can demark environmental sustainability for some, while very comfortably maintaining a neoliberal trajectory of individualism, free market economics, and continued western style development. At its worst, it can result in the greenwashing of business as usual (McKenzie, 2012, pg. 173).

Selby and Kagawa (2010, pg. 37) sum up this critique that ESD is fundamentally implicated as part of the neoliberal regime in their 2010 opinion essay:

Education for sustainable development (ESD) is the latest and thickest manifestation of the 'closing circle' of policy-driven environmental education. Characterised by definitional haziness, a tendency to blur rather than lay bare inconsistencies and incompatibilities, and a cozy but illconsidered association with the globalisation agenda, the field has allowed the neoliberal marketplace worldview into the circle so that mainstream education for sustainable development tacitly

embraces economic growth and an instrumentalist and managerial view of nature that goes hand in glove with an emphasis on the technical and the tangible rather than the axiological and intangible.

In 2015 a collection of papers were brought together for a journal special issue entitled *Environmental Education in a Neoliberal Climate*, published in the Journal of Environmental Education Research (EER). The editors introduced the aim of the special issue as seeking to explore how environmental education is shaped by the political, cultural, and economic logic of the 'dominant social imaginary' that is neoliberalism. They say:

...neoliberal ideals promoting economic growth and using markets to solve environmental and economic problems constrain how we conceptualize and implement environmental education. ...Together, the editorial and contributions to the special issue problematize and contest neoliberalism and neoliberalization, while also promoting alternative social imaginaries that privilege the environment and community over neoliberal conceptions of economic growth and hyper-individualism (Hursh, et al., 2015, pg. 299).

Contributions to the special issue include a paper by John Huckle and Arjen Wals entitled, *The UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development: business as usual in the end*, which criticizes the UNDESD for failing to challenge neoliberalism. The paper states that the UNDESD was essentially an unsuccessful 'reformist' agenda which '*...failed to acknowledge or challenge neoliberalism as a hegemonic force blocking transitions towards genuine sustainability*' and instead championed shifts in values, lifestyles and policies *within* prevailing societal forms, rather than transformatively changing the nature of our societal systems (Huckle and Wals, 2015, pg. 491 – 492). Like others before them, they conclude that environmental education rhetoric has been diluted from more radical visions 40 years ago and they call for a shift to a new 'Global Education for Sustainability Citizenship', which takes a critical pedagogy approach towards countering the neoliberal trend inherent in ESD. Other papers in the special issue focus on a variety of manifestations of the relationship between environmental and sustainability education

and neoliberalism across a range of contexts, including within urban gardens, prisons, schools and community groups. Fletcher's (2015) article, *Nature is a nice place to save but I wouldn't want to live there: environmental education and the ecotourist gaze*, illustrates how seemingly socio-democratic practices such as eco-tourism, urban youth agriculture, and horticulture in prisons, often perpetuate neoliberal agendas through the commodification and economisation of nature. And both Schindel Dimick (2015) and Ross (2015) focus on neoliberal tensions within school environments, respectively exploring how the emphasis on individualistic entrepreneurialism in US secondary schools undermines attempts to develop students as critical citizens and how the professional recognition of sustainable development educators in Scottish schools is negotiated through contradictory managerial technologies.

A second special issue focusing on EE/ESD and neoliberalism, has also recently been published in *The Journal of Environmental Education* entitled, *The Politics of Policy in Education for Sustainable Development*, which assembled ten critical environmental education theorists to reflect upon the political processes of policy making in education contributing towards sustainability (Payne, 2016). This special issue was constructed as a series of responses to an earlier paper by Stefan Bengtsson (2014) *Globalisation and education for sustainable development: exploring the global in motion*, who also wrote a sister paper for the special issue, *Hegemony and the politics of policy making for education for sustainable development: A case study of Vietnam* (Bengtsson, 2016). Taking a somewhat divergent (and bold) stance, away from the dogmatic traditions of environmental education, Bengtsson (2014, 2016) suggests that there is a difference between a *predominance* and a *dominance* of neoliberal discourse in the context of sustainable development. Indeed, he questions the ability of neoliberalism to install itself as the 'universal reference point' for SD and ESD, or to be able to fully determine what the meaning of SD and ESD are. Drawing upon the fact that there are varying meanings, interests and interpretations of SD and ESD, which are espoused by policy actors and different groups within varying national contexts, and through theorising about the role of socialism, nationalism and

globalism within this theoretical plurality, Bengtsson suggests that there are inherent spaces of contestation and ongoing dissensus about the nature of ESD, which enable opposition and resistance to the predominant neoliberal discourse. Or in layman's terms, sustainable development and ESD might not be the globalizing and hegemonic manifestations of neoliberalism that critical environmental educators insist they are.

In their critique of Bengtsson's paper Berryman and Sauve (2016, pg. 113) suggest that education in the fullest sense must be part of a critical and creative project, noting that '*... the 'black hole' of SD and ESD ... still generates erosion of critical thinking and praxis*'. They stress the need for EE centred on the close relationship between personal, social, and ecological realities and note that EE cannot and should not be amalgamated and subsumed in ESD, '*...where economy imposes its rules to the relation between society and environment*'. Jickling (2016) disputes Bengtsson's analysis of Vietnamese educational policy data and suggests that although dissensus may exist within this policy and thus provide spaces for resistance, SD and ESD have had little impact in generating counter-hegemonic discourse as Bengtsson suggests. Kopnina (2016, pg. 139) also writes a challenge to Bengtsson's ideas in this special issue, evoking the need for discourses which embrace 'deep ecological theory', 'philosophical ecocentrism' and 'practices of ecological justice between all species'. She notes that Bengtsson does not adequately demonstrate how the alternative discourses of socialism, nationalism, and globalism he discusses, might adequately overcome the dominant western and anthropocentric worldview. Lotz-Sisitka and Gonzalez-Gaudio both also contribute to this special issue and have both recently also contributed to the Routledge *Handbook of HESD* (imbuing their critical EE perspectives within the HESD realm). In this special issue, Lotz-Sisitka (2016b) draws upon theories of the 'transnational public sphere' and decolonisation literature to call for a more radical framework for EE and ESD policy research. Gonzalez-Gaudio (2016, pg. 118) discusses a 'tragic optimism' in the complex struggle for emancipation in the 'impossible discourse' of education for sustainable development. In relation to higher education specifically, Lotz-Sisitka (2016a) has written that it is increasingly

obvious and significant for HESD research to recognise that *'...the spread of liberalism and neo-liberalism do not allow for the forms of common good praxis to emerge that a more just and sustainable society seem to require'* (Lotz-Sisitka, 2016a, pg. 214). Whereas, Gonzalez-Gaudiano, Meira-Cardesa and Martinez-Fernandez (2016, pg. 80) describe a trivialisation and watering down of HESD in universities in Latin America due to the discourses of neoliberalism and social responsibility: *'Any other social or environmental purpose is considered secondary or, at most, subject to the neoliberal vision that pervades and determines everything'*. They say that the Latin American HE system is at cross-roads between choosing to serve the market or to serve society.

Jucker's (2014) piece briefly discussed earlier, *Do we know what we are doing? Reflections on learning, knowledge, economics, community and sustainability*, also explicitly connects the neoliberal marketisation of universities to the progress of the HESD movement. His principle dilemma being that he does not believe that ESD can be 'mainstreamed' into a system based upon the values of capitalism. He poses the question: *'...how do you want to mainstream something into a system whose ideology, construction principles, guiding values and understanding of education are diametrically opposed to sustainability?'* (Jucker, 2014, pg. 39). In 2009 John Huckle published a paper based upon consultations he had undertaken with the UK ESD community about an ESD indicator to recommend to government. Whilst this piece was schools-focused, rather than universities-focused, it is highly relevant as it takes place in the UK policy context. Huckle (2009, pg. 2) was surprised at what he saw as a marginalisation of socially critical approaches to ESD within the UK ESD community and noted that the ESD 'experts' consulted *'...seemed ambivalent at best, and negative at worst, about approaches that can best accommodate socially critical content and pedagogy'*. He described how contradictions between neoliberalism and social democracy in the governmental policy of the time, were resulting in contradictions in the spaces available for ESD. Drawing upon the work of critical EE theorist Robert Stevenson (2007), Huckle describes the marginalisation of socially critical ESD a result of a persistent theory/practice gap in EE that has widened over the last 20 years.

The most detailed theoretical exploration of the relationship between neoliberal marketisation and the progress of HESD in the UK/England context specifically, has been offered by John Blewitt in his 2012 Schumacher Institute Challenge Paper, *Radicalizing Education for Sustainability*, and his 2013 chapter, *Education for Sustainability: contesting the market model of higher education*, hypothesising that under neoliberal influence ESD is not radical enough:

...in colluding with the myth of efficiency, quantification, targets, performance indicators, strategies, action plans, work plans, outputs and so on has meant that EfS, drowning in a sea of managerialist obfuscation and delusion, lost sight of the ideal of a university as a community of learning and much of its radical edge (Blewitt, 2012, pg. 2).

Indeed, for Blewitt (2012, pg. 1), *'If EfS is to resist further neoliberal corporatization and make a real contribution to the emergence of a more socially just and environmentally sustainable society it must embrace an alternative and radical critical pedagogy...'*. This he says, is vital in order to counteract 'decades of accommodation, compromise and wishful thinking' which have played out in the ESD movement and have held it back from more radical and revolutionary visions. In his 2013 chapter, Blewitt echoes the same sentiment and describes how radical political-pedagogic drive towards sustainability, has declined over the last 40 years as HEIs have increasingly become constrained in their ability to offer alternatives to the market-model of HE. He concludes that ESD practitioners are 'insufficiently political' in their contestations of dominant neoliberal ideologies and practices within HE, and calls for the ESD community to forge forward with a new radical praxis (Blewitt, 2013, pg. 61).

The overwhelming message from all of the authors in this section, is that the global ESD movement is dominated by, implicated as part of, supports and sustains the hegemonic political ideology of neoliberalism. By subsuming environmental concerns under the sustainability umbrella these critical EE authors suggest that mainstream ESD embraces the economic growth paradigm, maintains individualised, rather than collectivist trajectories which are needed for ESD,

and allows a continuation of the anthropocentric neoliberal status quo. According to the critical environmental educationalists, by operating *within* the neoliberal educational paradigm, not only are we helping to sustain it, but we are fundamentally compromising the radical potential of other emancipatory forms of education. The principle call is for a return to ecocentric versions of environmental education and a radical paradigm change in education which has ecological limits at its heart. The views of these authors clearly resonate strongly with the more critical and radical spheres of HESD research and enduring HESD frustrations about the lack of systemic progress. In parallel with the exceptionality of Bengtsson's paper explored above, there are very few utterances from either the mainstream HE literature or the mainstream HESD literature, which dare to suggest that the neoliberal marketisation of higher education, and the provision of collectivised socio-sustainability public goods through such marketised systems, might not be ideologically (or otherwise, practically) incompatible; but there are a few. I will now explore two such instances, one from each of the aforementioned literature realms.

3.6.2 Dancing on a double-edged sword: sustainability within 'University corp'

A 2009 paper written by Larch Maxey of Plymouth University Centre for Sustainable Futures entitled, *Dancing on a Double Edged Sword: Sustainability within University Corp*, has a stated aim to explore '*...the two-way relationship between sustainability and the accelerating corporatisation of academia*'. Although Maxey concedes that the sustainability doctrine '*...is capable of being mobilised to serve neo-liberal interests...*' he stresses that we must move '*...beyond a binary framing of sustainability vs. corporatisation...*' and forge a '*...wider and more active engagement with the double edged sword of sustainability within the corporate university*' (Maxey, 2009, pg. 440). Like the writings explored above, Maxey (pg. 441) agrees that '*...there is an epistemological tension between neoliberalism's privileging of the market and sustainability's insight that the economy is but a subset of (and tool to be used by) society and that in turn society is but a subset of the environment*'. However, he urges the reader to not view the relationship

between ESD and neoliberal marketisation in higher education as a clear cut binary divide – neoliberalism vs. sustainability – but as a relationship which is ‘ongoing’, ‘not yet fixed’, ‘up for grabs’, and which you and I can shape and mould and determine (ibid, pg. 441, 448). He says that his academic endeavour over the last ten years has been to illustrate the double-edged sword of the ‘radical liberatory potential’ of ESD on the one hand, and the ‘neoliberal complicity and recuperation’ inherent within ESD, on the other (ibid, pg. 444). Maxey posits that our universities are not yet entirely sold to the market and do not exist purely to produce profit for their shareholders. He says that we have everything left to fight for and that we must seize: *‘...the opportunities presented by these various drivers before the corporatisation of academia is complete and doing so within a mutually supportive framework where we can explore tensions/contradictions and resist recuperation and oppression’* (Maxey, 2009, pg. 446). Maxey has written elsewhere about ‘reflexive activism’ within HE, a process which he calls ‘moving beyond from within’, where individuals work critically, progressively, but importantly reflexively, in their day-to-day lives within academia to bring about positive changes for a sustainable future. He says that reflexive activism is based upon attempting to do as much as we can from where we are at, celebrating our successes and what we are able to achieve, and not denigrating ourselves or others for what we have not been able to achieve. He concludes that adopting a reflexive activism approach can help us to *‘...leave as many spaces as possible open for questioning oppression and working towards equality within and beyond academia’* (Maxey, 2004, pg. 167).

3.6.3 The marketised university: defending the indefensible

Ronald Barnett’s (2011) chapter, *The marketised university: defending the indefensible*, explores the polarisation of opinion in relation to the marketisation of HE within the UK, from the market adherents or ‘neoliberal apologists’ on one side, who champion HE’s place at the service of the national knowledge economy, to the other side, where we find individuals who are actively concerned about the deleterious impact that marketisation has on universities as social

institution's for the public good. This debate, he says, comprises for the most part a 'trading of fixed value-laden positions' in an 'ideological landscape' and he asks, is there any way through this debate which allows for a less value-driven view to be developed? Furthermore, could there be features of markets that might turn out to be beneficial for the development of the university? (Barnett, 2011, pg. 39 – 41). Discussing the pedagogical relationship between students and academics under marketised regimes and the negative conceptualisations of the student as consumer model, Barnett suggests that there is a lack of empirical evidence to suggest that there have been wholesale shifts in university teaching to focus predominantly upon students' demands, or that students nowadays have a diminished readiness to invest themselves in their academic experience. Barnett describes the presence of market dynamics as one of many factors which bear upon the pedagogical experience of students, alongside factors such as the nature and ethos of the institution and the discipline; staff: student ratios; teaching and learning strategies and priorities; and the nature of research-teaching linkages. Thus, '*...there is no reason to believe that the presence of a market dimension into the pedagogical relationship will have a significance that overrides all those other factors*' nor is there '*...reason (yet) to believe that the student becoming a customer will necessarily impair his or her experience as a student*' (ibid, pg. 42 – 43). For Barnett, HE markets and the educational activities which go within said markets, are multifarious, overlapping, fuzzy and reflective of many different interests and values all at once, both private and competitive, public and social (ibid, pg. 40). Barnett pragmatically acknowledges that the HE market is here to stay and that there can be no ratcheting back of the market in any significant way. In the conclusion of his chapter Barnett presents his underlying argument:

We cannot escape the presence of ideology in higher education and so have to find ways of living effectively with it. Marketisation is one such ideology. As with all ideologies, it has both its virtuous and its pernicious elements. ...It is possible not just that the pernicious aspects of marketisation can be ameliorated but also that its virtuous aspects can be heightened. That is perhaps the crucial pedagogical challenge of our times (ibid, pg. 50).

Such practical exploration of how the pernicious effects of marketisation might be mitigated and the virtuous effects enhanced, is he says, largely missing in the HE marketisation debate. It is here, following the more optimistic and pragmatic insights of Barnett and Maxey, that the aims, objectives, and theoretical perspective of this thesis emerge and find their niche.

3.7 Justifying the Doctoral Research Aims and Objectives

Much of the literature explored in this thesis thus far, paints the picture of a fundamental and enduring tension between the ideologies, values, policies and practices of marketisation and neoliberalisation as they relate to higher education, and the supply of public, social and sustainability 'goods' through such systems. Attempting to mainstream, embed or integrate such public, social and sustainability goods into our current educational systems founded upon the dominant neoliberal worldview, has been portrayed as an incontrovertible paradigmatic contradiction. Such viewpoints stem from the mainstream HE literature, mainstream HESD literature and critical environmental education literature; but particularly from the more critical and radical realms of each of these research areas.

Constructing such a dichotomistic view of higher education's role, purpose and contribution to society has essentially been an ideological endeavour. Neoliberal marketisation has been portrayed in a *morally universalistic* sense, insofar as marketisation is said to impact, infiltrate and impinge on every aspect and all corners of academic life for staff and students. It is also, at the same time, portrayed through a *morally absolutist* stance, which demonises all aspects of the economic model of HE and asserts that the neoliberal marketisation of universities is intrinsically and irrevocably wrong and bad. Such critical and radical rhetoric, more often than not, fails to provide practical (rather than ideological) examples of the real-life relationship between neoliberal marketisation and the socio-sustainability goods of education, i.e. demonstrating tangibly how neoliberalisation undermines sustainability efforts, nor does it provide practical and pragmatic solutions to suggest positive ways forward from the current

situation. This literature also allows little space or scope to fully recognise the meaningful progress and many successes made towards advancing a more socially and environmentally sustainable and equitable future for all, through the worlds current higher education systems. Furthermore, there remains a large disconnect between mainstream HE literature and HESD literature, with much HESD research operating in its own insular silo, away from this much larger field of research which has theorised extensively about the implications of neoliberal marketisation for universities; theorising which is highly relevant to, and would significant strengthen the theoretical underpinnings of the HESD field.

The remainder of this thesis seeks to address the research gaps outlined above and offers a different theoretical stance through which to view the relationship between neoliberal marketisation and education for sustainable development in English HE. This theoretical stance *is not* highly ideological and critical, but practical and pragmatic, and approaches these topic areas, and their intersection, through the eyes of the individuals who are actually involved with driving the ESD movement within the marketised university regime on a day-to-day basis, backed up by tangible evidence, examples and real experiences. Following from a paper I presented in the aforementioned special issue of EER in 2015 (Bessant, Robinson and Ormerod, 2015), this thesis focuses both on the contradictions and the challenges, as well as the synergies and the opportunities, presented to the HESD movement and community of practice in England within the prevailing marketised context. Exploring the impact of neoliberal ideology and new public management policies, practices and approaches (under the banner of marketisation), it attempts to reveal the ways in which marketising forces are working conversely to both drive and limit the sustainability education agenda. The overall aim of the thesis is thus: to explore the ideological *and* the practical relationship between marketisation and ESD in English higher education, in order to reveal how this relationship has influenced the pursuit, practice and development of ESD within England's HE sector. Some of the key research questions addressed in this thesis include:

- What is the nature of the practical relationship between marketisation and ESD in the English HE system? How does this relationship play out on a day-to-day and year-by-year basis in England's universities and throughout the HE sector? Are marketisation and ESD fundamentally contradictory and incompatible on a practical level? Is the ideological tension between them substantiated in practice? Or is the practical reality more complex?
- Leading on from the above point, are there any synergies between marketisation and ESD at the practical level within England's universities? Does neoliberal marketisation support the ESD movement in any ways and have ESD proponents used the marketised characteristics of English universities to the benefit of the ESD movement? Are there any positive aspects and benefits that the marketised system bestows for ESD?
- How do some of the core impacts of marketisation in English higher education relate to and interact with HESD, e.g. educational quality assurance, quality-related research funding, higher education league tables and 'student as consumer' ideology?
- What is the role of England's higher education bodies and organisations in this practical relationship between marketisation and ESD?
- Has the neoliberalisation of English higher education become so entrenched, consolidated and internalised, that the role HE plays for the social, public and sustainability good of society is entirely precluded and compromised? Has higher education's economic role been elevated above, and to the detriment of all other purposes of HE? Or do English universities still provide both public and private benefits to individuals and to society more broadly?
- Is neoliberal marketisation the dominant higher education ideology? Or are there other ideologies and practices which live, breathe and grow within England's HE system? Is marketisation wholly bad and sustainability wholly good? Are they inextricably linked?
- Do English universities have the choice to opt out of the marketised regime? Or have they responded in ways that are necessary to survive in the current climate?

CHAPTER 4) THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the theoretical framework, research methodology (research design), data gathering methods and data analysis techniques which underpin this thesis. The theoretical framework provides the philosophical as well as the practical context for the research design and is shaped by the epistemological and ontological²⁶ lens of the researcher (Crotty, 1998). The following key texts, amongst others – Burrell and Morgan's (1979) *Sociological Paradigms and Organisational Analysis*; Michael Crotty's (1998) *The Foundations of Social Research*; and Alan Bryman's (2008) *Social Research Methods* – are used in Sections 4.1 and 4.2 to explore a range of dominant social science research epistemologies and linked theoretical frameworks, in order to outline and justify the unique theoretical lens of this thesis. Figure 4.1 situates my theoretical stance (shown within red dotted lines) in relation to these other dominant approaches and has been designed as a reference point for the whole of this chapter. Figure 4.1 was developed based upon theorising laid out in Crotty's and Burrell and Morgan's texts. HESD research has been critiqued by some for its lack of conceptual/methodological underpinnings (Corcoran, et al., 2004; Dillon and Wals, 2006; Barth and Rieckman, 2016), thus the key rationale behind the detailed examination of social research theory presented, is to robustly map out and defend my own stance. Section 4.3 justifies the choice of case study research design, maps out the case study in detail and considers a range of issues associated with this methodological approach, which is followed by an explanation of the sampled case study subunits (i.e. a range of HE bodies/organisations and institutions) within Section 4.4. The use of semi-structured interviews as the principle data gathering method is justified in Section 4.5. Sections 4.6, 4.7 and 4.8 outline the approach taken to sampling research participants, devising interview questions

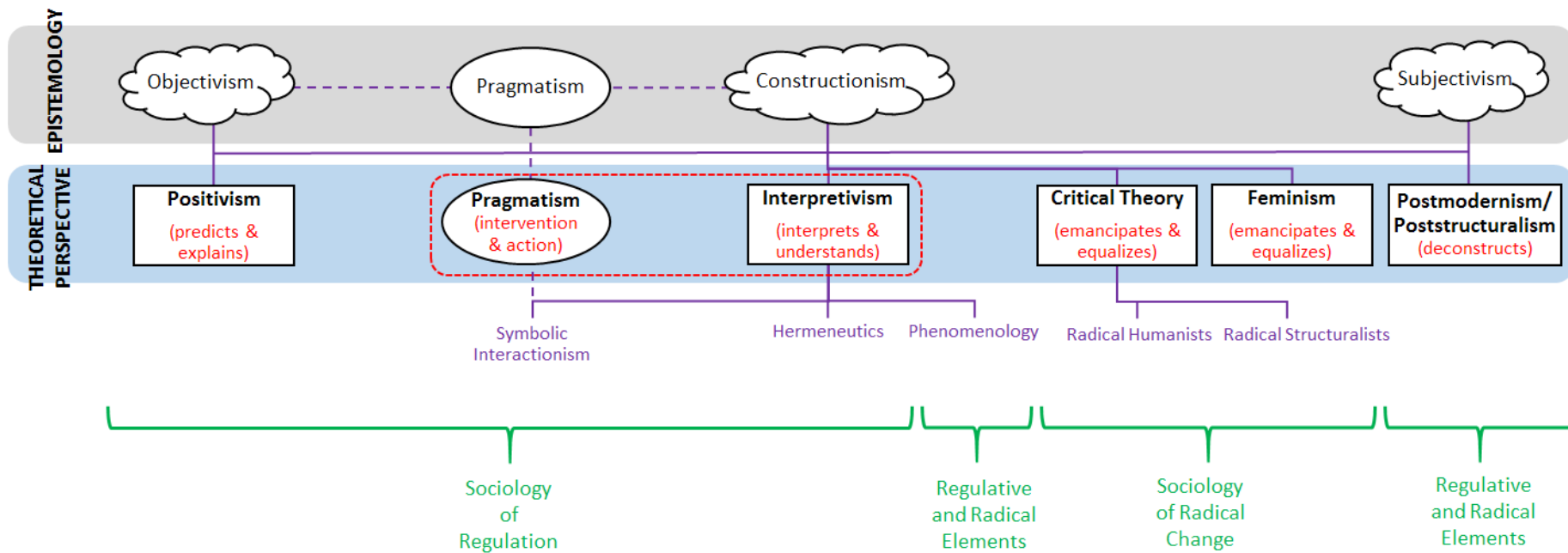
²⁶ **Ontology and Epistemology** respectively, are the philosophical study of the nature of being, existence, or reality, and the nature and theory of knowledge (Burrell and Morgan, 1979).

and schedules, undertaking interviews, as well as important ethical considerations surrounding informed consent of research participants, anonymity and data protection. Section 4.9 concludes the chapter through describing the approach to coding and analysing interview transcripts and how data is presented and explored within the two results and discussion chapters.

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Figure 4.1 – Key social science research epistemologies and theoretical perspectives
(based upon Burrell and Morgan, 1979 and Crotty, 1998)



4.1 Outlining Key Social Science Research Epistemologies and Theoretical Perspectives

All social scientists hold assumptions (whether explicit or implicit) about the nature of the social world and the way it should be observed, interpreted and reported upon (Burrell and Morgan, 1979), which, as Crotty (1998, pg. 17) outlines, ‘...*shape for us the meaning of research questions, the purposiveness of research methodologies, and the interpretability of research findings*’. Although there are a variety of ways in which to categorise such assumptions, positioning and unpacking one’s own ontological and epistemological stance, is the most significant endeavour for developing a transparent and coherent theoretical framework. Table 4.1 shows how discussions pertaining to ontology and epistemology are outlined in the three texts listed above.

Table 4.1 – Categorising ontological and epistemological considerations

Social Research Text	Ontology	Epistemology
Burrell and Morgan (1979)	Realism vs. Nominalism	Positivism vs. Anti-Positivism
Crotty (1998)		Objectivism vs. Constructionism vs. Subjectivism
Bryman (2008)	Objectivism vs. Constructionism	Positivism vs. Interpretivism

Crotty’s categorisation does not include ontological considerations as he insists that these tend to emerge together with those of an epistemological nature, are often conflated by researchers and as such, it is possible to deal with ontological issues as they arise from the epistemological stance and theoretical framework of the researcher. Following from Crotty, this chapter focuses on epistemology under the principle headings of Objectivism, Constructionism

and Subjectivism and my own ontological position, linked to my epistemological and theoretical stance, is dealt with later in the summary of the theoretical framework. Objectivism, Constructionism and Subjectivism may each be defined as follows (Burrell and Morgan, 1979, pg. 1 – 2; Crotty, 1998, pg. 8 – 9):

- **Objectivism** – holds that: meaning and meaningful reality exist separately from the operation of human consciousness; the social world has a reality of its own and imposes itself upon individuals who are born into it; knowledge is real, hard and can be acquired and transmitted in tangible form, i.e. it is waiting to be discovered.
- **Constructionism** – on the other hand posits that: there is no objective truth waiting to be discovered; there can be no meaning without a human mind; meaning is not discovered, but constructed by humans as they engage in the world they are interpreting; and knowledge is based upon unique and personal experiences and insights.
- **Subjectivism** – is the third epistemological stance, which states that: the act of meaning and knowledge making does not emerge from the interplay of subject and object, but instead, is essentially subjective and independently imposed on objects by subjects.

An additional and less mainstream epistemology, Pragmatism, has also been incorporated into Figure 4.1 and is of significant relevance to the approach of this thesis. Furthermore, following from Burrell and Morgan's (1979, pg. 17) categorisation of social researchers as falling within either the 'sociology of regulation' or the 'sociology of radical change' – which refers respectively, to theorists who emphasize the 'underlying unity and cohesiveness of society', and those who see 'deep-seated structural conflicts and modes of domination' – an additional layer of classification has also been added to Figure 4.1. The starting point for this exploration of research epistemologies and linked theoretical perspectives is the Positivist tradition of scientific research.

4.1.1 Positivist theoretical perspective

The principal theoretical perspective associated with objectivist epistemology is Positivism, which emerged from the Enlightenment era in English and French philosophy in the seventeenth century. As Crotty (1998, pg. 18) notes, *'Like the Enlightenment that gave it birth, positivism offers assurance of unambiguous and accurate knowledge of the world'*. For positivists, what is given and observed in direct experience, through scientific observation and method, may be regarded as 'the truth' (Crotty, 1998). A positivist approach to social research thus treats the social world as a concrete reality capable of rational scientific explanation; focuses on the analysis of relationships and regularities between various dependent and independent variables; and stresses the importance of systematic protocol and hypotheses testing (Burrell and Morgan, 1979; Crotty, 1998; Bryman, 2008). The positivist is thus always an 'observer' of the social world from the 'outside' and may be characterised as taking a sociology of regulation perspective on society (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). Although this thesis does also align with the sociology of regulation approach, it does this in an interpretivist, rather than a positivist fashion. Unlike the positivists, I do not believe that we can approach the study of HE institutions and bodies, their staff and distinct educational agendas, such as ESD, as if they are tangible, static, and pre-existing social entities capable of scientific explanation. I believe that they are social entities whose characteristics are constantly shifting due to the nature of the social actors which make up their existence. These beliefs pave the way for the constructionist aspects of my theoretical stance.

4.1.2 Constructionist epistemology

In contrast to objectivist epistemology, constructionism takes the view that: *'...all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context'* (Crotty, 1998, pg. 42). For constructionists, meaning is neither objective nor subjective – it is not waiting to be discovered nor created and

imposed upon the world – it is constructed and interpreted through humans’ engagement with the objects in their worlds (Crotty, 1998). The term Social Constructionism is often used alongside constructionism to emphasise the social and cultural character of ‘meaning making’ activities and the fact that we inevitably view the world through ‘interpretive lenses’ which are ‘bestowed upon us by our culture’ (ibid, 1998, pg. 9, 54). The different theoretical perspectives found within the constructionist tradition take varying views upon the role and effect of culture upon individuals and their interpretations of the world. There are ‘radical change’ constructionists, who view culture as dominating and oppressive, such as those who fall within the Critical Theory realm, for example the earlier works of Karl Marx (please see below) or Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer whose 1944 text, *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, critiqued the culture of instrumental rationality central to the enlightenment era for leading to the systemic oppression of humans and nature. There are also ‘regulation’ constructionists, who are more concerned with actuality and less critical exploration of the social world, e.g. the Interpretivists, for example Max Weber (please see below). Equally, there are many theorists who fall within the middle ground of these two extremes (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). Interpretivism is the theoretical position which is most commonly associated with constructionist epistemology.

4.1.3 Interpretivist theoretical perspective

Interpretivism grew out of disenchantment with the superficialities of positivist studies and explanations of society and the application of natural science techniques to human affairs. Equally, interpretivism may be seen as a reaction to the highly subjective and unscientific nature of Idealist²⁷ schools of thought (Crotty, 1998). Interpretivism is often linked to the work of German sociologist Max Weber (1864 – 1920) and the notion of *Verstehen*; translated literally this means ‘understanding’, however in sociological terms the ‘method of Verstehen’ is taken to be

²⁷ **Idealism** may be thought of as the most extremely subjective form of constructionist thought which asserts that ‘reality’ is entirely a mental, immaterial and structureless entity made up of nothing more than names, concepts and labels which individuals use to structure their world (Burrell and Morgan, 1979).

the empathic *understanding* of human behaviour, as opposed to positivist *explanation* of human behaviour (Crotty, 1998; Bryman, 2008). Interpretivists believe that one can only understand the social world from the point of view of the individuals who are directly involved in the activities being studied, stressing the importance of: occupying the 'frame of reference' of the participant in action; 'getting inside' situations; and 'involving oneself in the everyday flow of life' (Burrell and Morgan, pg. 5 – 6). For Weber, explanations of social affairs had to take account of the way in which individuals attached subjective meaning to situations and oriented their actions in accordance with their perceptions of those situations (Burrell and Morgan, 1979; Bryman, 2008). Interpretivism (like positivism) is chiefly oriented towards an uncritical (sociology of regulation) exploration of cultural meaning, however, unlike positivism, it looks for culturally and historically situated interpretations of social life, rather than rational scientific explanations. Interpretivist theorists see the social world and organisations and structures within the social world, as 'emergent' and ongoing social processes or 'networks', which are created by individuals' consciousness, their 'subjective experiences' and 'intersubjectively shared meanings' (Burrell and Morgan, 1979, pg. 28, 31; Crotty, 1998).

Though this thesis takes a broadly interpretivist approach to the analysis of the social world, there are, within interpretivism itself, many different schools of thought. Crotty describes the three key areas found within modern-day interpretivism as Phenomenology, Hermeneutics and Symbolic Interactionism. This thesis does not resonate with any one of these areas in particular, however, it draws most parallels with symbolic interactionism, which stems from the area of Interactionist thought; which itself has roots in positivist, interpretivist and pragmatist philosophy (see Figure 4.1). The foundations of interactionism were largely laid by German philosopher Georg Simmel (1858 – 1918) and American pragmatist, George Herbert Mead (1863 – 1931), who, like Max Weber, drove a mid-ground between subjectively and objectively constructed views of the social world and argued for analysis of human association and interaction (Burrell and Morgan, 1979; Crotty, 1998). In true interpretivist fashion, interactionism

views society as a complex web of overlapping relations and constant interactions between individuals, however, it also stresses the importance of underlying forms, patterns and structures within society, i.e. the state, the city, the clan, the family, the organisation; which provide an underlying and enduring 'grammar' of social life (Burrell and Morgan, 1979, pg. 69 – 70).

Interpretivism and interactionism taken together, appeal to the conceptualisation of HEIs, HE bodies and England's HESD movement as laid out in this thesis. These entities are seen as social constructions in a constant state of construction, reconstruction, interpretation and reinterpretation by the individuals, groups and stakeholders involved in their day-to-day functioning, evolution over time and the maintenance of their distinctive characteristics. Without the ongoing activities of different social groups and networks, e.g. academic staff, students, policy makers, etc., these entities would cease to exist or function. They do however have enduring forms and structures; procedures and practices; policies and guidelines; cultures and academic traditions, that persist over time. Therefore, if this thesis were to be conducted again in ten years' time, much in the HESD world would have evolved and changed, whilst much would also remain familiar. In true interpretivist fashion this study seeks to build its concepts and theories from the perspective of the individuals involved in the HESD movement, through their eyes and experiences and their world of work; attempting to understand the ways in which sustainability and ESD have been interpreted, constructed, promoted and constrained within the HE setting.

4.1.4 Critical theory theoretical perspective

As described in Chapter 3, there is much literature and rhetoric within the broad HESD field which takes (though not always explicitly) a critical theory (and critical pedagogy) perspective in its approach to 'transforming' higher education towards sustainable development. Whilst the theoretical perspective of this thesis does not reside within the critical realm, it does share some common overarching aims with the more radical visions of HESD, i.e. to progress sustainability and social justice within society via the role of higher education institutions, their teaching and

learning activities and student experiences. An exploration of critical theory is warranted here in order to exemplify the differences in approach taken by critical theorists and interpretivists to achieving desired social (and in the case of this thesis, educational) goals. The critical theorists, along with the feminists²⁸, postmodernists²⁹ and phenomenologists, invite us to take a more critical and suspicious (sociology of radical change) stance towards the effect of culture upon individuals (see Figure 4.1). Crotty (1998, pg. 59 – 60, 113) has described the key tenets of the critical tradition and has contrasted these with the interpretivist tradition:

[The critical tradition] emphasises that particular sets of meanings, because they have come into being in and out of the give-and-take of social existence, exist to serve hegemonic interests. Each set of meanings supports particular power structures, resists moves towards greater equity and harbours oppression, manipulation and other modes of injustice and unfreedom. ...It is a contrast between a research that seeks merely to understand and a research that challenges ... between research that reads the situation in terms of interaction and community and a research that reads it in terms of conflict and oppression ... between a research that accepts the *status quo* and a research that seeks to bring about change.

Modern-day critical theory has its roots very firmly within the work of German sociologist, economist and revolutionist, Karl Marx (1818 – 1883), who philosophised about a communist and classless world which would offer true freedom to all. Marx's ideas were rooted in the belief that

²⁸ **Feminism**, according to Crotty (1998), 'Speaks with one voice in characterising the world it experiences as a patriarchal world and the culture it inherits as a masculinist culture...' (pg. 161). 'When feminists come to research, they bring with them an abiding sense of oppression in a man-made world. Feminist research is always a struggle, then, at least to reduce, if not eliminate, the injustices and unfreedom that woman experience... ...feminist researchers may share methodologies and methods with researchers of other stripes; yet feminist vision, feminist values and feminist spirit transform these common methodologies and methods and set them apart' (pg. 182).

²⁹ **Postmodernism** is a term which is used interchangeably with poststructuralism; both being located within the subjectivist epistemology realm. Postmodernism, though roughly based upon scepticism, subjectivism, and a general suspicion of reason and ideology (Duignan, 2014, pg. 1), is a somewhat obscure, abstract and indefinable term. The literature surrounding this movement tends to talk around, rather than directly define the essence of postmodernist thought. 'Post' modernism evolved from earlier anti-bourgeois 'modernist' artistic movements around the turn of the 20th century, which attempted to move the arts away from the social realism of the ruling classes (Crotty, 1998). Crotty details the features of postmodernism which make it distinguishable from earlier modernist movements, including its focus on ambiguity, relativity and fragmentation and the deletion of the boundary between art and everyday life.

at any stage in history, society could be seen to possess inherent contradictions, antagonisms and warfare between the ruling classes – the ‘capital’ – and the proletariat – the ‘labour’ – which he coined ‘class struggles’ (Marx and Engels, 1932; Crotty, 1998). Marx built his thesis on a conceptualisation of the economic forces or ‘superstructures’ of society which control the way in which society thinks and functions: *‘The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force’* (Marx and Engels, 1932, pg. 64). He saw the imposition of the ‘ruling ideas’ on to the masses, as oppressive and resulting in an ‘inhuman’ alienation of workers, urging that workers must emancipate themselves through revolution and the total destruction of the current conditions of existence to form a new socialist society (Crotty, 1998).

It is widely accepted that Marx’s philosophical writings from before and after 1850 display quite different epistemological characteristics. This so called ‘epistemological break’ saw Marx move from a more interpretivist stance, to a more positivist stance (Burrell and Morgan, 1979, pg. 34). Burrell and Morgan have coined these two key paradigms within critical theory, as ‘Radical Humanism’ and ‘Radical Structuralism’ respectively (see Figure 4.1). They describe radical humanism as focusing on different aspects of modern capitalistic society, such as science, ideology and technology, and how they sustain systems of power and domination; with an underlying concern for setting individual human consciousness and spirit free. Theorists from the radical structuralist tradition on the other hand, they describe, place less emphasis on individual human beings and more emphasis upon the political economy, structure and organisation of capitalism, seeking in positivistic fashion, to discover patterns and regularities which characterise the social world. The economist Marxists of the structuralist tradition tend to be more revolutionary than the more *theoretical* humanists, and thus radical humanist theorizing (as opposed to bloody structuralist revolution), has served as the principle conduit for Marxist doctrine to move into the 20th and 21st centuries; most famously through the work of the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory at the University of Frankfurt (Burrell and Morgan, 1979;

Crotty, 1998). As Crotty (1998, pg. 157) notes, schools of critical inquiry today focus on calling capitalistic ideology into question in the cause of social justice through '*...interrogating commonly held values and assumptions, challenging conventional social structures and engaging in social action*'. Underpinning this modern-day manifestation of critical theory is the notion of 'immanent critique', which essentially means identifying the areas of contradiction within society which offer the most definite possibilities for emancipatory social change (Antonio, 1981).

The theoretical underpinnings of SD and ESD are clearly innately bound to critical theory, that is, to finding solutions to the problems caused by the capitalistic and commodified nature of 21st century life, in order that people, communities and societies may realise a more socially just and ecologically protective way of living. Lotz-Sisitka (2016a, pg. 207, 214) describes HESD as fundamentally necessitating critical forms of research that can '*...tease out, model and realise possible transformative acts of democracy, social justice and human emancipation*' and importantly, move us away from neoliberalism. She describes how: '*Critical theory presupposes a normative ideal of society that is incompatible with the individualistic premises of the liberal tradition and so-called neo-liberal democracies*'. The risk however, of adopting a critical theory stance to advancing ESD within higher education, is that one can quite easily slip, as Crotty (1998, pg. 141) says, into a mode of 'total critique', rather than immanent critique, 'leaving no way out' and no acceptable solution other than total transformation of systems, i.e. the total transformation of England's higher education system. Furthermore, the often pessimistic dialectic of critical theory social analyses can struggle to articulate positive programmes for change, or importantly to outline positive trajectories for getting from where we are, to where we want to be (Chambers, 2004; Lotz-Sisitka, 2016a). As Chambers (2004, pg. 219 – 220) describes:

Critical theory was born in the conviction that social theory should embrace normative, and purpose moral ends. Thus for every evaluation of an 'is', critical theory suggests an 'ought'. What critical theory has not always been good at is suggesting how we get from the 'is' to the 'ought'.

Whilst radical, critical theory approaches to HESD within the theoretical realm are common (especially at the interface with critical EE research), in practice they have consistently failed to materialize or prove themselves as realistic or tangible approaches to advancing sustainability education. Habermas is one critical theorist who has levelled analogous arguments at his fellow critical paradigm colleagues, particularly through his 1982 work, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, which critiqued the ‘global pessimism’ of several Frankfurt School scholars (namely Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer), whom he believes have rejected rational reason in favour of total critique. In this context Habermas can be seen to represent a mode of critical inquiry which is more practical and democratic, but not radically anti-capitalist or revolutionary (Crotty, 1998; Chambers, 2004; Lotz-Sisitka, 2016a). Through this amalgamation of critical and pragmatist traditions, Habermas (1982) is suggesting that it is possible to work towards positive, democratizing and egalitarian changes in society without total critique of the current situation; a theoretical tenet this thesis upholds.

4.1.5 Pragmatist epistemology and theoretical perspective

Pragmatism as a philosophical tradition originated in the United States around 1870 through the work of the ‘classical pragmatists’ Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914), William James (1842–1910) and John Dewey (1859–1952) (Hookway, 2013). The essence of classical pragmatism is known as the ‘pragmatist maxim’, which emphasizes that the usefulness, workability, and practicality of ideas, policies and research concepts, are the criteria of their merit and thus provide a standard for the determination of truth and rightness; we must thus strive to trace the practical consequences of ideas and reject unpractical philosophies (Crotty, 1998; Hookway, 2013; McDermid, 2015; Thayer and Rosenthal, 2015). As Goldkuhl (2012, pg. 139) neatly sums up, for pragmatists ‘...the meaning of an idea or a concept is the practical consequences of the idea/concept’ and thus pragmatists always prioritise ‘action over doctrine’ and ‘experience over fixed principles’ (Thayer and Rosenthal, 2015, pg. 1). Evolving from the classical pragmatist

tradition, modern-day pragmatist schools of thought are conceptualised as a way of disambiguating seemingly irresolvable philosophical disputes and demonstrating that longstanding metaphysical dichotomies are fallible (Hookway, 2013; McDermid, 2015), such as the war between objectivism and constructionism, or in the case of this research, the dichotomy which has been constructed within the literature, between the neoliberal marketisation of higher education and the provision of socio-sustainability goods for society. Dewey believed that philosophers should 'get over' these 'time-honoured distinctions', stop 'bickering' (McDermid, 2015, pg. 1) and return to the 'common sense facts of experience' (Hookway, 2013, pg. 1). Pragmatism can therefore be thought of as a new paradigm *and* a new theoretical perspective for understanding social research design, which '*...replaces arguments about the nature of reality [i.e. about ontology and epistemology] as the essential criterion for differentiating approaches to research*', and instead, centralizes attention on the value of human experience and the social context of different research communities (West, 1989; Morgan, 2014, pg. 1049). The new pragmatic paradigm thus falls directly between objectivism/positivism and constructionism/interpretivism (see Figure 4.1). As Goldkuhl (2012) notes, this broadens the possible research avenues for qualitative researchers, away from customary interpretivist conventions.

The appeal of pragmatists, for rational and pragmatic reasoning in the exploration of research concepts, drives straight to the heart of the aims and objectives of this inquiry and my attempt to move away from ideological notions and reified conceptions about what ESD 'should be', and instead focus on what ESD actually 'is' and 'could be' in its tangible, day-to-day form and function within the marketised university system. Similarly, the importance pragmatism places upon the practical utility of research ideas as more than simply understandings and interpretations of reality (though I believe that this aspect is hugely important too), but as tools for problem solving, action, change and forecasting the likely effects of given interventions in the world, twins with the implicit aims of this research to support practical and pragmatic trajectories

for continuing to develop sustainability-focused education within English HE (Goldkuhl, 2012; Thayer and Rosenthal, 2015). As West (1989, pg. 5) puts it, pragmatism's '*...common denominator consists of a future-oriented instrumentalism that tries to deploy thought as a weapon to enable more effective action*'. Theorising in the pragmatist realm has also been described as taking an 'unashamedly moral emphasis', which assigns a central role to democracy, social justice and ethics and is undeterred to exhibit values or suggest possibilities (West, 1989, pg. 4; Morgan, 2014). These characteristics are central to the theorising of this thesis. However, unlike the critical EE/HESD theorists who share this democratic political orientation, the pragmatist view (and my view) of culture and society is '*...essentially optimistic and progressivist ... a world to be explored and made the most of, not a world to be subjected to radical criticism*' (Crotty, 1998, pg. 74). Criticism often levelled at pragmatism from the more critical theoretical camps, centres on a perceived attitude of compromise, accommodation and acquiescence to the status quo, which is seen to exemplify a lack of values and vision to make real changes in an unjust world. The pragmatists' retort dismisses the critical inquirers as pessimistic, unrealistically utopian and unnecessarily revolutionary (Crotty, 1998).

Whilst I do not agree (like staunch pragmatists) that all prior epistemological debates should be abandoned, there seems to be much utility in bringing together aspects of interpretivism and pragmatism into the theoretical framework for this thesis. As Goldkuhl (2012, pg. 145) notes, there are obvious commonalities between these two research paradigms, whose confluence he describes as: '*Meaningful action based in evolutionary social interaction*'.

4.2 Summary of the Theoretical Framework: Pragmatist Interpretivism

Others who have written about common theoretical approaches for EE and ESD research have outlined positivism, interpretivism, critical theory and post-structuralism as the four core traditions of such research (Robottom and Hart, 1993; Fien, 2002; Sterling, Warwick and Wyness, 2016). Furthermore, Sterling, et al., (2016) have recently proposed a fifth paradigm to be added to

this list, the ‘participatory paradigm’, which is based upon theorising surrounding holistic, systemic and ecological change for sustainability; with participatory action research as its core methodology. I would also like to champion the pragmatist philosophy as a useful approach which could more readily be utilised within HESD research. The theoretical framework of this thesis thus combines tenets of constructionist epistemology and interpretivist theoretical perspective and pragmatist epistemology and pragmatist theoretical perspective, into a theoretical lens which I call: Pragmatist Interpretivism. Although theoretical and methodological blurring in research has been subject to critique (Burrell and Morgan, 1979), including within HESD specifically (Dillon and Wals, 2016), the pragmatist tradition, through its mission to bypass philosophical and ideological disputes and dichotomies, actually encourages pluralism (both ontologically, epistemologically and methodologically), and thus moves us away from the morally universalistic and morally absolutist conventions of the critical research realms. With this in mind, the overall theoretical framework of this thesis recognises ten core principles, which are outline in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 – Ten theoretical principles of pragmatist interpretivism for HESD research

Theoretical Principle	Description
1. Actor frame of reference	We must attempt to understand the social world through the eyes of the individuals who are directly involved in the activities being studied, i.e. through their experiences, points of view, frames of reference and worlds of work.
2. Social and cultural interpretive lenses	Individuals’ understandings and interpretations of social reality are shaped by their own social and cultural interpretive lenses. Thus, social researchers must be aware of the social and cultural interpretations of the individuals being studied, as well as <i>their own</i> social and cultural lenses upon said interpretations.
3. Culture-action symbiosis	We create culture through our thoughts and actions and our thoughts and actions are created by culture.
4. Dynamic social webs	Society and social entities are complex webs of overlapping relations and interactions between individuals, groups and stakeholders, in a constant state of construction, reconstruction, interpretation and reinterpretation. Such entities have underlying forms/structures; procedures/practices; policies/guidelines; and cultures/traditions.
5. Practical ideas for action and change	The efficacy of and need for useful, workable and practical ideas, policies and research concepts, as tools which may be used for problem solving, action and change.
6. Epistemological and	A need to disambiguate falsely dichotomous philosophical,

value pluralism	ideological and theoretical debates and tensions, to appreciate that reality consists of many different types of ‘things’, many different ways of knowing about these things, as well as many different viewpoints and values, which may be equally valid and important, yet in conflict. As such there can be no consistent set of truths, explanations, or correct ways to define the realities of the world or how we know about and research about such realities.
7. Action and experience over doctrine and ideology	The merits of pragmatic reasoning drawing upon practical and contextual human experience, in order to explore the differences between what is ideological and reified and what is real and tangible.
8. Positive reformation	A positive, optimistic and reformist sociology of regulation approach, rather than a critical, ideological and revolutionary sociology of radical change approach.
9. Morals and values-based	A democratic and moral approach which exhibits values and suggests possibilities.
10. The constructionist mid-ground	A constructionist mid-ground between subjectively and objectively constructed views of the social world.
References	
Burrell and Morgan, 1979; West, 1989; Crotty, 1998; Bryman, 2008; Goldkuhl, 2012; Hookway, 2013; Morgan, 2014; McDermid, 2015; Thayer and Rosenthal, 2015	

Although the Pragmatist approach to social research has been described as ‘anti-ontological’ through its insistence on leaving metaphysical disputes about the reality of the social world behind, to instead focus on empirical and hands-on social science research (Lohse, 2016), the constructionist/interpretivist aspects of my theoretical stance do warrant ontological clarification. As theoretical principle 4 above outlines and previous discussions in this chapter have detailed, my own theoretical view about the reality of the social world and indeed the reality of the HESD movement and community of practice in England, is that it is in a constant state of construction and reconstruction, it is actively created and recreated by human action and human practices within a social context. Thus, my ontological stance aligns with the constructionist aspects of my epistemological stance and falls within the Constructionist ontological realm. Collectively this constructionist lens views social reality, as well as knowledge about and meaning attributed to such social reality, as humanly shaped through ‘social genesis’ (Crotty, 1998, pg. 54). Collectively, my theoretical framework is also shaped by influences which are inherently personal, i.e. my own social and cultural interpretive lens. Three key influences upon this lens are described below:

- My **interdisciplinary background and research journey** which has involved morphing from a natural scientist into a social scientist over the years, perhaps explains why I am not strongly engrained within a particular disciplinary-based theoretical tradition and have thus taken a more experimental approach to outlining my theoretical framework.
- My involvement with the ESD movement in England and being a self-defined **ESD practitioner** has shaped my personal values and opinions about the role and purpose of higher education in England and the contribution of universities to society. Conversations and sharing of ideas within the HESD CoP have opened my eyes to the plural reality of the ESD movement and the many different interpretations and manifestations of ESD occurring across English HE.
- And finally, although I come from a family where all individuals hold HE qualifications, the focus of most of my social interactions and family conversations growing up were not particularly philosophical, academic and/or ideological. Furthermore, the family members who have had the strongest influence on my life have hands-on and practice-focused professions, e.g. teaching, nursing and engineering. As such I think my pragmatist focus on **'what works in practice'** stems from growing up in this environment, as does my frustration at overly critical treatment of issues which may detract from the job of **'getting stuff done'**. Although my approach is quite philosophical in places, what I have aimed to do through this research is map an approach to researching HESD which more readily supports, encourages and recognises the value of pragmatist philosophical approaches and pragmatic and practical actions which are forging positive changes for ESD within the marketised context.

4.3 Research Methodology: Case Study Research Design

Having outlined the unique theoretical perspective of this thesis, I will now outline and justify the choice of research methodology, which is framed both philosophically and practically by the theoretical framework, and serves to provide the logical structure that links the aims and objectives of the study to the data collected (Yin, 2003).

4.3.1 Justifying the choice of case study research design

The research methodology deemed most suitable for this research, based upon the context in question (the HESD movement and community of practice in England) and the theoretical framework just outlined, was case study research design, which has been defined as: *'...an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, program or system in a 'real life' context'* (Simons, 2009, pg. 21). Kyburz-Graber's (2016, pg. 129) statement reinforces the link between case study research and the constructionist interpretivist tradition: *'Case study research is most meaningful as research methodology for investigating social situations which are highly contextual, complex, subjectively and socially constructed and constantly interpreted and re-interpreted by people involved'*. The two other key types of research design considered but ruled out, were cross-sectional and longitudinal.

The key difference between case study research which is 'case-oriented' and cross-sectional research which is 'variable-oriented', is that case study research tends to look at a large range of variables within one or a small number of complex cases – like Weber's method of *Verstehen*, centring on in-depth and complex understanding of a particular and unique context – whereas cross-sectional studies tend to investigate a smaller number of defined variables and characteristics (and the causal relationships between them) within a much larger sample of data points (della Porta, 2008). Cross-sectional designs aim to generate statements which may apply

regardless of temporal or geographical context, rather than being interested in the unique features of a case (Bryman, 2008). The key limitation of cross-sectional approaches, which focus on certain variables and characteristics and how they are associated with other variables and characteristics, is that these factors can be taken out of context and stripped of their meanings. The question of context is however hugely important in case study designs, which recognise that meanings behind activities stem from their contextual situation, and, that the distinctive contextual conditions associated with a phenomenon are equally as important as the phenomenon itself (de Vaus, 2001; Yin, 2003). Yin (2003, pg. 13) has described case study research is an empirical approach that *'...investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident'*. As such, case studies focus on building full picture explanations of social phenomena via the interpretations of the actors directly involved in their occurrence (de Vaus, 2001).

Based on this description it is evident that this research endeavour innately takes a case study approach. It does not simply seek to explore the relationship between marketisation and education for sustainable development within higher education in general; it seeks to build an in-depth picture of this relationship within the unique setting of England's higher education system and within the unique ESD community of practice that has developed over the last decade or so. The HESD movement and community of practice as the 'unit of analysis' is intrinsically tied to the geographical location of England (Bryman, 2008). Furthermore, this analysis seeks to explore many different variables and characteristics, but is not interested in any statistical relationships between these variables, but rather, the way in which these variables have interacted to build the unique picture of HESD in England. In the sense that this research sampled a selection of individuals from across the case study for interview (as will be described later in this chapter), rather than every single individual within the case study, one could suggest that the research displays elements of both cross-sectional and case study design; which is not an uncommon research technique (Bryman, 2008). However, if we consider the aims and objectives of this

research and the distinctive unit of analysis in question which focuses on English HE in particular, it is clear that the study is principally a case study which seeks *ideographic* explanations, i.e. detailed explanation of a particular case and the many unique features which contribute to the case, rather than a cross-sectional analysis which seeks *nomothetic* explanations focused on particular causes and consequences within the case (de Vaus, 2001; Bryman, 2008).

With longitudinal research on the other hand, the express aim is to assess change at different intervals over time within a given social context (Bryman, 2008). Had the principle aim of this research been to systematically track, at set intervals over time, the views of particular individuals, developments within particular universities, and/or the impact of specific HE policies upon the HESD movement, this would have been an appropriate methodology to consider. This thesis has however, sought to analyse the HESD movement in England more holistically within the marketised context, not at the level of individual people, individual universities or specific policies, in order to gain a broad insight into the movement, to hear the ESD stories of a broad range of people and to contemplate how these collectively build the HESD picture as a whole. The benefits of a longitudinal approach for this thesis would have been a deeper level of insight into a smaller number of individuals and HEIs. This would not though, have allowed detailed exploration of the broader HESD CoP, nor characterisation of some of the key issues and debates across the sector, which can only be achieved through talking to a wide range of people. This thesis does nevertheless incorporate a temporal dimension into its analysis in three key ways:

- Firstly, this thesis sets general time scales of focus both in terms of marketisation and HESD. Broadly speaking it focusses on marketisation within English HE since the commencement of the Thatcherism era of the late 1970s. Though it has also briefly mapped out the policy history and evolution of HESD from around the same period, it predominately focuses on developments within the HESD movement in England since around 2005 when the first wave of *significant* HESD policy impetuses were felt at the national and the international level.

- Secondly, the research has been carried out part-time over roughly six years and within that timeframe there have been many reforms and developments to England's HE system. It has therefore been vital to track changes in relation to marketisation and in relation to ESD throughout that time, and to incorporate these developments into both the literature review and the more general theorising of the thesis.
- Finally, interview themes and questions inherently encouraged individuals to reflect upon ESD developments over time, both in the years preceding and during data collection, but also to a certain extent interviewees were looking forward and projecting anticipated changes.

4.3.2 Mapping the case study

There is an evident match between the theoretical framework of this thesis and the broad objectives of the case study methodological approach. Within case study methodology itself, there are several different typologies and multiple issues for consideration in its usage. Robert Yin's (2003) book, *Case Study Research – Design and Methods*, explores many of these issues in detail. He notes that the major distinction when designing case study research, is between single and multiple case study designs; with multiple designs being based on comparative reflections across several cases of a similar type. In the context of this study, a multiple case study approach would have entailed, for example, comparing ESD in English and Scottish HE, i.e. both are case studies of HESD movements at a national level, thus allowing robust analytic conclusions to be drawn through the added comparative element (Yin, 2003). However, as della Porta (2008, pg. 210) notes, cross-national case study researchers risk drawing conclusions and building theories based on 'insufficiently deep knowledge' of individual countries; which would certainly be a risk given the vastly different HE policy contexts across the UK.

The second principle distinction in case study research, as defined by Yin, is between embedded and holistic designs. An embedded case study is essentially where the overall case

contains multiple embedded subunits of analysis, whereas a holistic case study is a more comprehensive entity which is not carved up into subunits. Given that (at the time of data collection in 2013/14) there were 129 publicly-funded HE institutions in England displaying varying levels of sustainability and ESD activity, as well as numerous higher education bodies and organisations with a sustainability/ESD remit, this project is by definition an embedded case study. Insofar as the HESD movement is, at its most basic level, based upon educational activities occurring within universities, which are (to varying extents) influenced, supported and funded by the work of a number of HE bodies, these two types of organisation and their sustainability/ESD-active staff, were considered to be the two principle types of subunit making up the HESD movement in England. Other types of subunit were also considered for inclusion within the study.

Students are obviously intrinsically part of the HESD movement in England both from a conceptual perspective as the central foci of academic theorising and targeting in the area of ESD, and from a practical perspective, as they study within HEIs and are the chief partners in the formal and informal ESD activity which goes on across the sector. For the purposes of this study they were not however considered as part of the case study. There are two reasons for this, again one conceptual and one practical. Firstly, there is a distinction between students being the targets of, and active partners in, informal and formal ESD activity, and, students being direct members of the HESD community of practice itself, i.e. contributing theoretically to the development of the academic field of HESD. To fulfil the aims of this research, data collected needed to reflect the experiences of people directly involved with negotiating, shaping and working within the dual context of ESD and marketisation on a day-to-day basis. On the whole, other than a select number of postgraduate students researching within the field of ESD, students do not fit this description. The second rationale was that the choice of a select number of students to include within this study would be highly subjective, difficult to justify and unmanageable within one doctoral study. Other subunit types considered included: employers, parents of students, environmental/sustainability charities and NGOs, as well as central government; yet, the line was drawn around

the most significant institutions and their staff within the HESD community of practice, to allow for a focused exploration of the key issues and debates in question. As such, the two following subunit types were outlined for the thesis:

- **Subunit Type 1)** Higher education bodies and organisations with a sustainability/ESD remit and sustainability/ESD-active staff.
- **Subunit Type 2)** Higher education institutions with a sustainability/ESD remit and sustainability/ESD-active staff.

The sustainability/ESD-active staff within these subunit types are highly qualified to shed light upon HESD in England within the marketised context, as they are, in varying different ways: impacted by, and involved with, various aspects of marketisation within the HE sector; involved with day-to-day sustainability/ESD activity; and, they shape the wider policy development of ESD across the sector, as well as how this policy is interpreted. It is important to note however, that the lines between the two key subunit types are not clearly defined, due to the interconnected relationship between universities and HE bodies in relation to HESD. Furthermore, though most individual staff reside principally within either a HEI or a HE body through their formal job role, several have links, claims and/or roles (formal and/or informal) within the other type of subunit. For example, academic staff have always been members of the sector bodies' sustainability/ESD advisory groups, steering groups, governing boards, etc., and equally, staff from the HE bodies and organisations may have previously been employed within an HEI and/or may have links/roles within a university. In summary, the research design of this thesis is: **a single embedded case study of the HESD movement and community of practice in England within the context of marketisation**, or put another way, through a marketisation lens, which consists of two principle subunit types. As you can see from Figure 1.1 (which has been included again as a reminder), marketisation provides the background context within which the case study resides. The case study itself seeks to explore and characterize the HESD movement and community of practice as a

whole within this marketised context. The two principle subunit types overlap to represent the overlapping nature of the work of the HE bodies and universities in relation to sustainability and ESD. In addition, although we can surmise that the majority of HESD experts in England work within either a HEI or a HE organisation, it was also recognised that there are a small number of individuals who could also be considered HESD experts and part of the community of practice, but who do not currently work within either. As such a range of HESD ‘key informants’ who interact with/are involved with both of the two core subunit types (but do not necessarily work within either) are located in the overlapping region between the two subunits.

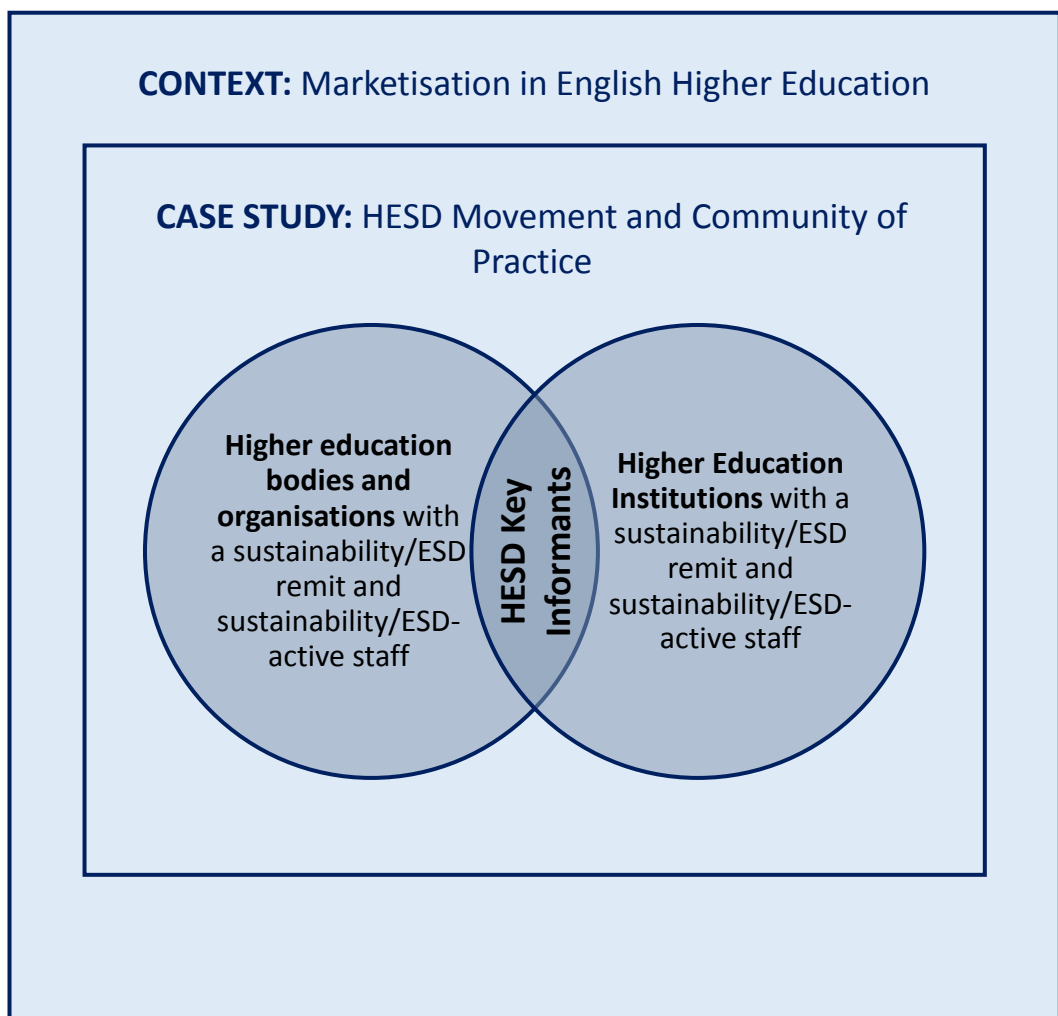


Figure 1.1 – Conceptualisation of the case study research design

4.3.3 Issues for consideration in case study research

An enduring issue of methodological concern within case study research is the external validity of such designs, i.e. the extent to which research results can be generalised to other similar situations and contexts. A key paper by Corcoran, et al., (2004, pg. 18) entitled, *Case studies, make-your-case studies, and case stories: a critique of case-study methodology in sustainability in higher education*, elucidates this dilemma: *'One of the tensions that emerged from the study is that between the more internal need for contextual relevance and richness and the more external demand for transferability and abstraction'*. On the whole, the type of generalisation of interest in case study research is theoretical generalisation, which involves generalising from a study to a theory – including comparison to previous theories, building on established theories and generating entirely new theoretical propositions – not practical generalisation to other similar contexts (de Vaus, 2001). As de Vaus (2001, pg. 223) describes, *'In the theory building model we begin with only a question and perhaps a basic proposition, look at real cases and end up with a more specific theory or set of propositions as a result of examining actual cases'*. The crucial outcome for case study research is thus how well the researcher generates theory out of the findings, rather than how generalisable the findings are (Bryman, 2008). Yin (2003, pg. 10) notes:

...case studies, like experiments, are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes. In this sense, the case study, like the experiment, does not represent a 'sample', and in doing a case study, your goal will be to expand and generalize theories (analytic generalization) and not to enumerate frequencies (statistical generalization).

Indeed, my principle concern throughout this study has always been to generate theory about the relationship between marketisation and ESD with a specific focus on the English HE context, in light of the current theoretical base of the HESD academic field. Having said that, although strictly speaking my findings will not be directly generalisable to other national HE settings, given that the

marketisation of HE and the ESD movement are global HE phenomena, the results of this analysis are likely to parallel many issues emerging in other national contexts. Moreover, the relationship and ideological tension between marketisation and the social/public good roles of universities, are key themes which run through many strands of HE research. Thus, I do hope that the findings of this research, and my unique pragmatist interpretivist lens on these issues, will feed into those broader international areas of debate and discourse.

The tradition of case study methodology in HESD research specifically, has also been critiqued for its overly descriptive emphasis, lack of explicit theoretical underpinnings and overall failure to transform practice in universities towards sustainability (Corcoran, et al., 2004). Indeed, the eclectic nature of case study methodologies and associated evidence gathering strategies, as well as the aforesaid deep contextualisation to individual settings, remains the double-edged sword of this method (Yin, 2003; Thomas, 2011). Corcoran, et al., thus proposed the ensuing guidelines for reviewing the methodological robustness of HESD case study designs:

1. The purpose of the case study was made clear;
2. Data-collection methods were included;
3. The role of the author/s in the conduct of the study was made explicit;
4. A critical analysis of the case was included;
5. All the people involved in the phenomenon were included in the case;
6. The case had the potential to contribute to an improvement in the field of sustainability in higher education (adapted from Corcoran, et al., 2004, pg. 12).

I believe that this research fulfils all but one of these guidelines – number five. I would however refute that the ability to include all individuals involved in a phenomenon is a necessity for case study research, or perhaps more pertinently, that it is universally possible to delimit the boundaries of a case study, including which individuals, groups and stakeholder fall inside and outside of the case. Following from Kyburz-Graber (2016) who have also more recently investigated the use of HESD case study methodology, I believe there is a distinction to be made

between a 'case' or a 'case study', and on the other hand, 'case study research', which recognises that case study research is not only about illustrative examination of a bounded and confined system or entity, but a methodological research design approach embedded within theoretical questioning and reflection; which surely renders the design of case study research flexible and contingent upon the researcher and research aims in question. The case study research which forms this enquiry is an unbounded and constantly evolving national-level educational movement and community, to which it would be impossible to confine boundaries or feasibly isolate all individuals involved in the phenomenon (let alone sample all of these individuals as part of one study). This research might well be described as macro-level case study, as opposed to much previous HESD case-oriented research which has occurred at the micro and meso levels of ESD innovations in individual classrooms, programmes or universities (Sterling, et al., 2016).

Reflecting upon their proposed set of guidelines, Corcoran, et al., (2004) draw upon Reid and Gough's critical evaluation of the use of guidelines in qualitative ESD research. Reid and Gough have suggested that in defining what 'research is', and more contentiously, what research 'should be', such guidelines risk narrowing the rich range of unique qualitative research types, genres and forms in the HESD field (Gough and Reid, 2000; Reid and Gough, 2000). In this regard the guidelines set out by Corcoran et al., or indeed any other prescriptive guidelines for conducting case study inquiry need to be taken with caution, since this is a methodological approach which is highly contingent on the unique context and features of the case in question. For me, the most important aspects of case study research design are: the need for robust theoretical underpinnings, i.e. which have been outlined in Section 4.1 and 4.2 of this chapter; clear outlining of the purpose of undertaking the case study, which has been justified through Chapter 2 and 3 of this thesis; detailed explanation of the structure of the case study, as per the case study mapping exercise carried out in Section 4.3.2 and further explanation of the selection of universities and HE bodies/organisations to follow in Section 4.4; and finally, explanation of appropriately matched evidence gathering methods which will be outlined and in Section 4.5.

4.4 Sampling of Higher Education Bodies/Organisations and Institutions

The overall case study conceptualised as part of this thesis includes all HE bodies/organisations, as well as all HE institutions in England, with a sustainability/ESD remit and sustainability/ESD active staff (as well as a range of HESD key informants who interact with/are involved with the two core subunit types). Given the macro-level focus of the case study, a selection of HE bodies/organisations and a selection of HE institutions were sampled, and within these a selection of individuals, to take part in the research. HE bodies/organisations and HEIs were selected for theoretical and targeted purposes based upon known characteristics related to their sustainability, ESD and marketisation activities; this is known as purposive or judgemental sampling (Arber, 2001). As della Porta (2008) notes, case-oriented researchers most often select 'positive' cases to research, where the phenomena under investigation are clearly evident. Indeed, where the aim is to generate theory and wider understanding of social processes, it is vital that such an approach is taken and that units and/or individuals sampled provide a valid and challenging test of the research objectives (Arber, 2001; de Vaus, 2001; Bryman, 2008).

4.4.1 Sampling of higher education bodies and organisations

In Chapter 3, Section 3.2, the policy history of HESD in England was mapped out through exploring the role of several HE bodies/organisations which have had a significant impact upon the trajectory of sustainability and ESD activities taking place across the sector since 2005 (or earlier). Based upon this exploration, as well as my own experiences working as an HESD practitioner within the national community of practice, the following list of HE bodies/organisations were chosen to be sampled for the thesis:

1. The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE);
2. The Higher Education Academy (HEA);
3. The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA);

4. The National Union of Students (NUS); and,
5. The Environmental Association of Universities and Colleges (EAUC).

All of these HE bodies were sampled due to their influence upon sustainability and ESD activity in English HE since 2005, with HEFCE and the QAA also being selected due to their significant marketising influence upon the sector (as explored in Chapter 2). In hindsight, I believe that the People and Planet student network should have also been sampled. As we will see in Chapter 5, multiple interviewees reflected upon the impact of the P&P Green League on their institution's sustainability and ESD activities although explicit questions about P&P were not asked in interviews. As a self-defined 'student campaigning organisation' the remit of this group is somewhat of an outlier compared to the other more formal HE organisations and bodies listed above and so was not included at the time. It is also worth noting that although the EAUC and the NUS were sampled as sub-units and an interviewee from each of these organisations was recruited, the roles of the EAUC and the NUS were not discussed in as much detail with research participants as the roles of HEFCE, the HEA and the QAA. This is largely due to the fact that there were a large number of academic staff within the interviewee cohort and thus HEFCE, the HEA and the QAA had more relevance to the day-to-days lives of the majority of interviewees. Discussions about the sector bodies thus tended to focus more on these three bodies who have more of a direct impact on academic practice. In addition, at the time of interviewing HEFCE and the QAA were both developing new sustainability/ESD policies and many structural changes were happening to the HEA's ESD thematic work which naturally led to these bodies being more central to discussions. In hindsight I should have more proactively asked questions about the EAUC and the NUS to ensure more even coverage of the bodies.

As also detailed in Chapter 2, the roles of some of these bodies are currently undergoing major reforms, in particular, HEFCE and the HEA will soon cease to exist in their current forms; with HEFCE's functions being merged with the Office for Fair Access into the new Office for Students and the HEA being merged with the Equality Challenge Unit and the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education into a new body which is yet to be named. It is important to briefly reflect upon these changes in relation to the focus of this research and to consider what implication these changes have for my research findings. Ultimately this thesis explores a relationship; a relationship between two models of higher education and a relationship between an educational movement/agenda and the marketising backdrop within which it resides. However the current roles and responsibilities of HEFCE and the HEA morph and change within their new sector body identities, we can be sure that they will both still be impacted by and ingrained within, neoliberal ideology, NPM philosophies and the overall marketisation trend in English HE. Indeed, they will both still have marketising impacts upon the HE sector (particularly OfS) and will both still operate within a highly marketised and competitive HE landscape. The fact that HEFCE and the HEA may no longer exist by the time the results of this thesis are published is not a problem for the research. The questions I have sought to answer through this thesis and the theorising I develop in the results and discussion chapters, relates to the practical (and the ideological) relationship between marketisation and ESD; a relationship which will continue to develop and evolve into the future, as the sector changes and as the sector bodies come and go. Theorising in Chapter 5 (which focuses on the role of the sector bodies) will therefore have significant relevance and applicability to the new relationships which are yet to exist in English HE – between ESD and the Office for Students and ESD and the 'new HEA' – and the potential impact that these bodies could or will have on the trajectory of ESD via their various marketising and marketised functions, or indeed, how these bodies could continue to practically support the progression of HESD as we enter further into the heightened marketisation era of English HE.

4.4.2 Sampling of higher education institutions

A more complex screening exercise, consisting of multiple levels of analysis, categorisation and elimination was employed in order to select how many and which universities to sample as part of the study. The simplest approach would have been to simply list a number of HEIs well-known for their sustainability and ESD work and to select a sample from this list. This would however, have risked missing sustainability and ESD active institutions unfamiliar to the researcher. Based upon the methodology that will now be outlined, a longlist was produced of 72 universities deemed to be broadly committed to the sustainability agenda, out of a possible list of 129 HEFCE-funded HEIs in the 2013/14 data collection period. This list was then reduced down to a shortlist of 26 universities deemed to be performing relatively well in terms of their sustainability and ESD activities and operations. The final list of eight universities were chosen from across the shortlist as a representative sample within the context of marketisation and also, including a selection of universities who had participated in the HEA's Green Academy programme. The rationale for all of these decisions are outlined below.

Longlist selection: broad sustainability commitment

As a starting point, the principle corporate document for each of England's 129 HEFCE-funded HEIs was sourced online and downloaded; these included strategic plans, corporate plans, university strategies and other similar documentation (N.B. eight of the HEIs had no publicly available documents and so were discounted). All 121 documents were read thoroughly to find explicit commitment to the principles of sustainable development and/or sustainability. Explicit commitment was taken to be broad statements pertaining to sustainability and/or sustainable development within core aspects of the HEIs mission statements, vision, values, objectives, actions and/or goals. Financial sustainability or sustainability used in the sense of the ongoing viability of the organisation was not taken as explicit commitment. A more targeted approach would have been to select institutions explicitly making a commitment to ESD within their corporate documentation. However, such commitment was only evident in a small number of documents at that time and thus many ESD-active universities may have been missed from selection if ESD, rather than sustainability and/or sustainable development, had been used as the initial search criterion. The principle limitation of this approach to create the initial longlist, is that commitment to sustainability at 'the top' of an organisation does not necessarily equate to ESD activity on the ground, and vice-versa universities may have many pockets of excellent ESD practice, without corporate support. The overall rationale however, was that a group of HEIs making strategic commitment to sustainability within their corporate documentation, were more likely to be focusing on ESD within their teaching activities than a group of HEIs making no commitment to sustainability at all. Overall there were 72 HEIs chosen for the longlist based upon their sustainability commitment. Table 4.3 in Appendix B (pg. 363) shows, for each of the 129 HEIs, the name of the corporate document sourced (and those which had no document) and an overview of the sustainability commitment found within their outlined mission, vision, values, objectives, actions, and/or goals; the 72 longlist HEIs are highlighted in this table in blue.

Shortlist selection: sustainability and ESD performance

The People and Planet Green League, as the only UK-based publicly available league table which rates and compares all HEIs based on the same selection of sustainability-related performance criteria, was chosen as the mechanism for reviewing the sustainability and ESD performance of the longlist HEIs. Despite ongoing debates surrounding the methodology of the league table, we can surmise that universities gaining a 2:1 or a 1st class award in the table will be performing relatively well in terms of their broad sustainability (including ESD) activities and operations, compared to those lower down the league table (People and Planet, 2013a). The 'Education and Learning' criteria of the league table in 2013 was based on the five criteria below:

1. Strategic or Corporate Plan commits to promoting ESD throughout the curriculum.
2. Teaching and Learning strategy explicitly mentions ESD in the curriculum.
3. Environmental policy explicitly mentions promoting ESD through the curriculum.
4. Institution makes available support or training to help all academic staff integrate ESD into the curriculum.
5. Institution has a mechanism for reviewing and reporting on progress on the integration of ESD into the curriculum (People and Planet, 2013b).

HEIs scoring either a 2:1 or 1st class award overall and that scored either two or three out of three, on the Education and Learning criteria (based on undertaking either four or five of the above ESD activities) were selected, bringing the number of potential HEIs down to a shortlist of 26. Using these two selection criteria from the Green League table, we can be confident that each of the 26 institutions making the final shortlist were not only broadly committed to sustainability through their corporate policy documentation, but also performing relatively well across a broad range of sustainability and ESD indicators. Table 4.4 (Appendix B, pg. 369) shows the details of the sustainability commitment in the short listed HEIs corporate documentation with key details highlighted.

Final selection of universities: representative sample in the context of marketisation

The key goal when choosing the final universities to take part in the study, was to produce a list which would be as representative as possible of the diverse nature of the HE sector in England within the context of marketisation. Although all HEIs in England are subject to marketising and managerial forces exerted by government, HEFCE and other agencies, the extent to which these different pressures and forces impact and shape the activities of institutions varies. Some differentiating factors for HEIs which link to marketisation, include: how research intensive or teaching focused a university is and how well it performs in associated QR research funding exercises, the National Student Survey and other league tables; its history, prestige, reputation and mission group; what its strategic priorities and foci are; the subject mix across its departments and courses; its financial health; the number and type of business and commercial partnerships it has; and the number and types of students it attracts. Before the final selection of HEIs were chosen, the 26 shortlisted institutions were categorised based upon the following three factors: HEI type/mission group; research performance; and NSS overall teaching score. These factors are explained in more detail below and the outcomes/details of this categorisation process (including universities' aforesaid Green League performance) are displayed in Table 4.5 (Appendix B, pg. 381). As an additional factor, HEA Green Academy participation is also included within this table.

Categorisation based upon marketisation factors

- **HEI types and mission groups** – are one of the key ways that universities in England have historically been categorised. The different HEI types and mission groups vary in terms of their educational and research histories, priorities and approaches. Although there are a variety of different mission groups and typologies for English HEIs, the four most commonly cited categories are outlined and described in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6 – Four principle HEI categories in English HE

Details about the HEI categories	
1. Russell Group Universities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 24 universities (20 in England) • The prestigious Russell Group of universities was formed in 1994 and represents 24 leading research intensive UK universities which are committed to maintaining the highest quality research, outstanding teaching and learning experience for students and unrivalled links with business and the public sector. • Generally, Russell Group universities are the oldest and most prestigious and expect the highest entry requirements from students. • The Russell Group universities have a total economic output of over £32 billion per annum – 44% of the total economic output for the whole UK university sector (of which Russell Group universities comprise just 15%). • The proportion of world leading research at Russell Group universities is almost double than that at other universities. • Russell group universities are also recognised as world-leaders. In the 2015 QS World University Rankings, the Russell Group had four of the top ten universities in the world, 17 in the Top 100 and all 24 in the Top 190.
2. Research Led and 1994 Group Universities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 1994 Group was a coalition of highly rated but smaller research intensive universities in the UK. The group disbanded in 2013. • Membership changed over the years but there were 22 universities in total part of the group (21 in England). • The group was founded in 1994 to defend their interests following the creation of the Russell Group by larger research intensive universities earlier that year. • Overall, the group can be seen as second to the Russell Group in terms of prestige and entry requirements for students. • Research Led HEIs are universities which were not formally part of the 1994 Group but who are research led in their approach (approximately 10 – 15 universities).
3. Former Polytechnic Universities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Polytechnics and colleges of higher education (often grouped together as the ‘former polytechnics’) were UK HEIs, which up until 1992 were funded by local authorities and had their degrees externally validated by the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA) or by neighbouring universities. • After the passage of the Further and Higher Education Act in 1992 the polytechnics became independent universities. • The former polytechnics had a history of teaching technical and vocational education, although this has significantly expanded into more traditional academic areas since 1992. • Many former polytechnics have also advanced their research focus since 1992. • Overall, the former polytechnic universities are not as research focused as the Russell Group, 1994 Group or Research Led HEIs. • There are 31 universities in England which are Former Polytechnics.
4. New Universities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After the former polytechnic universities were granted university status in 1992 there was a lull before a second wave of institutions were granted university status after the year 2000. • These 21st century institutions are often called ‘new’ or ‘modern’ universities. • The New Universities have a variety of histories but are overall more teaching focused than research focused.
References	
Williams, 1997; Tysome, 2007, pg. 1; Newman, 2009, pg. 1; Ross, 2012, pg. 1; Scott, 2013, pg. 1; QS World University Rankings, 2016, pg. 1; Russell Group, 2015, pg. 1	

- **Research performance** – was judged via the results of the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) in 2001 and 2008 (the 2014 REF results were not released until several months after the data collection period of this thesis). The Times Higher Education *Table of Excellence*, which ranks the research performance of all UK HEIs based upon the RAE, was consulted to find the ranked position for each HEI in the 2001 and 2008 RAEs (THE, 2008). The average ranking across the 2001 and 2008 exercises was then calculated for each HEI.
- **NSS overall teaching score (%)** – was obtained from the Guardian University Guide, which works out an overall percentage score for teaching for each HEI based upon the four core teaching questions³⁰ of the National Student Survey. The Guardian guide produced in 2013 for 2014 entry was used (The Guardian, 2013).

It can be seen in Table 4.5 that over half of the institutions on the shortlist fall into the former polytechnic category (which shows the strong tradition of ESD within these types of universities in England). In choosing the final universities to take part in the study, a representative sample would thus have included predominantly this type of university. It was decided however, that the universities selected should be as representative of the full range of **HEI types and mission groups** as possible, to broaden research findings and draw upon different experiences of marketisation. As such, two HEIs from each of the four principle categories were selected to ensure that the sample would be likely to represent a range of different teaching and research priorities/foci and related marketising and managerial pressures and impacts. Within each of the four categories, one institution was picked that had taken part in the HEA Green Academy programme, and one that hadn't taken part was picked. This was in order to explore the influence of the Higher Education Academy (as one of the five HE organisations) and the HEA Green Academy programme on ESD developments within England's HEIs. **Research performance**

³⁰ **2013 NSS core teaching questions:** 1) Staff are good at explaining things; 2) Staff have made the subject interesting; 3) Staff are enthusiastic about what they are teaching; and 4) The course is intellectually stimulating. These questions are rated on a scale from 1 to 5, with 5 being the most positive score (Guardian, 2013).

rankings and **NSS overall teaching scores** were used (more loosely) to ensure that the final selection of eight HEIs included as large a range as possible across research and teaching performance, i.e. I endeavoured to pick two universities from each of the four principle categories which had differing teaching and research rankings. And finally, an element of **convenience sampling** was employed and universities where the researcher already had ESD contacts were prioritised in some of the decisions made. For example, when choosing between the three former polytechnic universities that had taken part in the Green Academy programme, the university chosen was the one which I had previously met members of their ESD team at a national ESD event. Table 4.7 displays details about the final list of universities selected. A decision was made to keep the names of the institutions anonymous throughout this study (reasons for this are discussed later in this chapter) and so the universities are coded University A to H.

Table 4.7 – Final list of sampled HEIs

Institution	University Status Granted	Institution Category
University A	Pre 1960	Russell Group
University B	Pre 1960	Russell Group
University C	1960s	Research Led
University D	1960s	Research Led
University E	1992	Former Polytechnic
University F	1992	Former Polytechnic
University G	Post 2000	New University
University H	Post 2000	New University

4.5 Data Gathering Methods: Semi-Structured Interviews

With the list of eight HEIs and five HE bodies formulated, before selecting research participants (as well as which HESD key informants to sample), the next task was to decide upon the most appropriate data gathering methods for exploring the research aims, objectives and questions of the thesis. Evidence gathering strategies considered but ruled out were questionnaires and ethnography³¹, as well as structured and unstructured interviews. Structured interviews which utilise the same series of pre-established questions from one interviewee to the next, cannot really be tailored closely to individuals' circumstances and have limited power as an interpretivist research tool due to their inability to tap into deeper, more subjective emotional dimensions (Fontana and Frey, 2003). Given that I was aiming to understand the ESD stories of different individuals through their own eyes and experiences, this ability to tap into deeper emotional realms was vital for the research. At the other end of the qualitative interviewing spectrum are unstructured interviews which utilize loose lists of themes as the spur to interview dialogue (Fielding and Thomas, 2001). I decided to trial this method for use in the thesis by conducting two pilot interviews with academics from Keele University. The individuals, both with expertise spanning sustainability and political theory, were chosen to provide some theoretical insight into the core themes of the thesis, as well as to test the use of unstructured interviews as a research tool. Although these interviews were theoretically helpful to test preliminary research ideas (Leech, 2002), in using just a loose list of themes, both took more of a conversational format and veered off the thesis topics substantially. Unstructured interviews were thus deemed an unsuitable method and I decided that more targeted and individually tailored semi-structured interviews would be the most appropriate method for exploring the aims of the research.

³¹ **Questionnaires** would not elicit the depth of insight needed for this interpretivist study as they are too rigid to fully accommodate myriad individual perspectives and (even with open-ended questions) it is difficult to fully explore the meanings behind people's responses. In contrast, **Ethnography** would be unsuitable for the opposite reason, due to its exhaustive and intensive nature which would only allow exploration of the lives and realities of only a small number of individuals (Bryman, 2008).

Semi-structured interviews use tailored interview schedules for different individuals and/or groups based upon a broad set of research topics, themes and questions, thus allowing the researcher to obtain desired information from a range of interviewees, whilst also making appropriate modifications from one interview to the next dependent on interviewees' job roles, experiences and expertise. The key benefit of semi-structured interviews in interpretivist research, is the way in which they allow the researcher to examine interviewees opinions, feelings and experiences in their own words and from their own frame of reference. The interviewee has flexibility in their responses, is able to expand on issues important to them and can tap into subjective, emotional and complex personal experiences. Yet at the same time, through maintaining continuity in the range of themes and topics explored from one person to the next, the researcher is able to elicit a broad and deep contextual insight into the social phenomena in question (Kitchin and Tate, 2000; Fielding and Thomas, 2001; Longhurst, 2003; Valentine, 2005; Bryman, 2008). When situated in relation to the aims and objectives of the research it was quite evident that semi-structured interviews were the most appropriate technique. Given that the professional backgrounds and sustainability/ESD experiences of interviewees were likely to vary greatly, having structure around the key themes in question, yet also the flexibility in questions asked from one individual to the next, would enable me to get to grips with the personal sustainability and ESD stories of each individual in an informal and conversational environment.

4.6 Sampling and Recruitment of Interviewees

As with sampling of the HE bodies and universities, participants for interviews were selected purposively in order to maximise theoretical investigation of the research aims and objectives. With several of the selected HE bodies and universities, suitable interviewees were already known to the researcher, with others they were not. An extensive desk study was carried out investigating the public webpages of all the HE bodies and universities to produce a list of relevant interviewees from within each. Added to this list were a small number of HESD key

informants, not employed within either subunit type, but who were considered to be key members of England's HESD community of practice. The list of key informants was devised based upon my own knowledge of the HESD CoP and in conversation with my PhD supervisors. All potential interviewees highlighted through this exercise, across the HE bodies, universities and key informant group, fulfilled one of the following two criteria:

- **Sustainability and/or education for sustainable development** is a component of their job role, their professional identify and/or their academic expertise/interest area; or,
- They are a member of **senior university staff** or an **academic director** (categories explained in Section 4.6.1) within a university, who is involved with the **sustainability and/or ESD agenda** of their institution.

For research participants at the universities, a gatekeeper individual at each institution was contacted to start the recruitment process, before moving on to individual email threads with each participant. Although I had already identified a list of individuals at each university who I thought would be suitable to take part in the study, the rationale for using a gatekeeper (usually the leading member of ESD staff), was so that I could make sure I had selected individuals with relevant expertise and so that the gatekeeper could suggest additional individuals to me that I might not have otherwise picked. For research participants at the HE bodies and the additional key informants, individual emails were sent to each person. Overall the list of potential research participants identified across the HE bodies, universities and the key informant group, was around 70 individuals; 59 of these were eventually contacted to take part in the study.

Recognizing that interviewing is a large commitment on the part of the interviewee the foremost challenge with any qualitative research project is getting access to the chosen subjects, as Goldstein (2002) puts it, 'getting in the door', and thus several tactics were employed to enhance email response rates, including:

- Subject titles of emails were written to directly appeal to the professional and academic backgrounds of the interviewees to hopefully create intrigue;
- Individuals were commended for their organisational/institutional sustainability/ESD performance to make the reader feel positive about the research;
- Description of the research project was short to stimulate interest but not bore;
- Emails were personalised to individuals to make them feel important to the research project;
- When contacting an individual that the researcher had met previously in a professional context this was highlighted in the email in order to initiate rapport; and,
- It was indicated in every email that the researcher would travel to the participants' place of work to conduct the interview and that they would be flexible with dates and times.

Each interviewee was sent a research information sheet and consent form (Figure 4.2, Appendix C, pg. 383) and was required to complete and sign the consent form in order to take part in an interview. Keele University's research consent form gives participants the opportunity to be either 'fully identifiable' or 'anonymous'. Guidance outlined in the Social Research Association's ethical guidelines (SRA, 2003, pg. 38 – 39) states however that: *'Social researchers should take appropriate measures to prevent their data from being published or otherwise released in a form that would allow any subject's identity to be disclosed or inferred'*. It also states: *'Researchers cannot however be held responsible for any subject that freely chooses to reveal their participation in a study'*. Based upon this guidance and upon the fact that 14 of the 54 participants in this study wished to remain anonymous, identities of individuals in the thesis henceforth are anonymised, as outlined in more detail below (and within Section 4.7). Although 40 interviewees were happy to be identifiable, the only way to fully eliminate cross-identification of individuals from the same institution or organisation is through full anonymisation. Such detail is though, largely unimportant for the study, which specifically explores the collective characteristics of the HESD movement and CoP as a whole, not the characteristics of specific HEIs or specific individuals.

4.6.1 Sampling of higher education institution interviewees

Across the eight universities a total of 47 people were identified and contacted, of which: 42 agreed to take part and subsequently took part in an interview; two agreed to take part initially but had to cancel due to other commitments; two did not agree to take part in the study and one person did not respond to the recruitment email or follow-up email sent. I aimed to interview around five or six individuals at each HEI to allow me to cover a range of different professional roles related to sustainability/ESD. In the end the number of interviewees ranged from three to seven at each HEI and fell into nine principal professional categories which are outlined and detailed in Table 4.8, with the number of interviewees from each category listed. In total, 33 of the 42 individuals interviewed within the HEIs were staff in academic roles and twelve of the total wished to remain anonymous. Individuals in the study are referred to as Interviewees Y1 to Y42 to ensure that all are fully anonymous. Due to there having been only two research led HEIs within the final shortlist of universities, the two research led HEIs sampled for this study are identifiable, however no individuals from these institutions (including the three that wished to be anonymous), can be identified from the coding system or in any other way through the thesis.

Table 4.8 – Professional categories and numbers of HEI interviewees

Professional Category	No.	Notes about category
1. ESD Managers and Directors	2	Dedicated full-time positions
2. ESD Officers and Coordinators	3	Part-time positions
3. University ESD Leads	5	Full-time academic staff from a variety of disciplines with part-time ESD roles. Some ESD roles had an official role title, some did not, and some roles were fractionally bought out of individuals contracted full-time hours, some were not.
4. Sustainability Managers	5	Sustainability managers were primarily estates-based roles, although the portfolios of the interviewees were much broader than traditional environmental management.
5. Senior University Staff	5	Pro-Vice Chancellors, Deputy-Vice Chancellors and one

with sustainability/ environmental responsibility or teaching/learning responsibility		Chancellor.
6. Academic Directors	4	Directors of: Learning and Teaching; Academic Services; Educational Quality; Undergraduate Studies; Educational Development; and one Faculty Dean. Directors had varying degrees of involvement with ESD agendas, from loosely involved to actively driving the agenda within an HEI. N.B. Three individuals from other categories, held an academic director role alongside their main job role, taking the number to academic directors to seven.
7. Academics from 'traditional' sustainability-related disciplines	5	Academics (teaching fellows, researchers, lecturers, readers and professors) from disciplines such as: Geography, Sustainability and Environmental Science.
8. Academics from disciplines with strong links to sustainability	7	Academics from disciplines such as: Engineering, Politics, Business Management and Biology.
9. Academics from disciplines not traditionally related to sustainability	6	Academics from disciplines such as: English Literature, Chemistry, Economics and Ancient History.

4.6.2 Sampling of higher education body/organisation and HESD key informant interviewees

In total nine people across the five HE bodies were identified and contacted individually via email. A further three HESD key informants were also contacted. The email response rate was 100% and all twelve individuals agreed to take part in an interview. Ten of the twelve agreed to be fully identifiable, two wanted to remain anonymous. As per interviewees from the HEIs a decision was taken to keep all interviewees anonymous. Individuals are referred to as Interviewees X1 to X12. In a few instances in the results and discussion chapters the contributions of an individual from one of the sector bodies might be identifiable to the person from the nature of a quote. However, such quotes have only been used if the individual agreed to be fully identifiable and for quotes to be used. Table 4.9 shows the number and distribution of interviewees across the sector bodies and key informant grouping.

Table 4.9 – Higher education body/organisation and HESD key informant interviewees

The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE)	3 x Interviewees	
The Higher Education Academy (HEA)	2 x Interviewees	1 x Interviewee
The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA)	1 x Interviewee	
The National Union of Students (NUS)	1 x Interviewee	
The Environmental Association of Universities and Colleges (EAUC)	1 x Interviewee	
HESD Key Informants	3 x Interviewees	

4.7 Conducting the Interviews

Table 4.10 provides a summary of the logistics associated with the data collection of the thesis and the interviews carried out.

Table 4.10 – PhD interviewing logistics

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview time frame: September 2013 – June 2014 • Format: 45 face-to-face and 9 telephone interviews • Locations of face-to-face interviews: 40 in interviewees place of work (32 in interviewees offices, 8 in other rooms), 5 in neutral locations • Length of interviews: average length 52 minutes (range 30 mins – 1 hour 48 mins) • Recording: all by dictaphone • Transcription of interviews: 23 transcribed professionally, 31 by researcher

4.7.1 Interview themes, questions and briefing documents

As well as the research information sheet and consent form (sent when making initial contact with interviewees via email), all interviewees were also sent an interview briefing document closer to the date of their interview. These briefing documents provided an overview of the aims and objectives of the research (including a short literature review/abstract), as well as a

list of general interview themes/questions, in order to prepare interviewees and give guidance regarding the types of questions that would be asked. The key interview themes/questions asked across all interviews fell into eight key areas, which are detailed in Table 4.11. The briefing documents were tailored for each of the eight HEIs depending on the sustainability and ESD activities and histories of the institutions, as well as for *each individual interviewee* from the HE bodies and the key informants, depending on their job roles and expertise.

My principal aim during the interviewing process was to investigate the practical relationship between marketisation and ESD within English HE, both in a general sense through exploring some of the key issues and debates within England's HESD movement (Doctoral Research Objective 5) and also specifically in relation to the previously outlined HE bodies and organisations and their influence on and involvement with the ESD agenda (Doctoral Research Objective 4). Doctoral Research Objectives 1 and 2, which are, to review and summarize the history and characteristics of marketisation (Objective 1) and the HESD movement (Objective 2), within English HE, are largely fulfilled through the literature review aspects of the thesis. Although the interviewing process did also feed into these objectives, the main focus of interviews was not to ask interviewees to describe in detail, the history of marketisation and/or HESD from their experiences or within their institutions. Rather, the main focus was to encourage interviewees to build their own sustainability and ESD stories, with marketisation as the background context to questions, rather than the explicit focus of questions. The idea being that interviewees' responses would be then be analysed through the lens of marketisation. Interviews undertaken also contributed significantly to Doctoral Research Objective 3 and the ongoing debate which underpins the thesis regarding the ideological relationship between marketisation and ESD.

There were some questions asked which focused specifically on some of the most significant aspects of marketisation within English HE and the relationship between these marketised mechanisms and ESD, these included questions about: the links between quality

assurance processes and ESD; the general impacts of the quality-related research funding system (RAE/REF) and the relationship between the RAE/REF and sustainability/ESD research; and, the perceived impact of the introduction of £9000 tuition fees on students' characteristics, expectations and demands. Given the large proportion of academic staff in the interviewee cohort and the significance of these particular aspects of marketisation to academics' day-to-day roles, responsibilities and interactions with students, I felt it was important to ask questions about these aspects directly. Explicit use of the terms 'marketisation', 'neoliberalism' and/or 'new public management' were used rarely during questioning. Drawing on the pragmatist underpinnings of my research, my rationale for this was to keep discussions focussed on the practical experiences of the individuals' day-to-day HESD experiences, rather than encouraging critical discussions surrounding various marketised HE instruments; although of course such critical discussions did arise. In addition, this theoretical language could have been exclusionary for many interviewees and I did not want to assume that all interviewees would be comfortable with such terms and concepts. Explicit and extended discussions surrounding the relationship between marketisation and ESD, when these did emerge, tended to do so in line with the academic interests of particular interviewees. A final point to note is that individual interviewees were not asked every question from Table 4.11, but rather, questions were tailored to individuals' job roles, experiences, expertise and interests. Some of the questions were specifically relevant to the type of subunit, i.e. HE body or university, some were relevant to specific professional roles, some were more general. Equally, there are many themes which were discussed in interviews which are not captured by this overview, but were instead raised by individual interviewees based upon their own unique insights. Overall I hoped to explore the lived perspectives of HESD practitioners working within the marketised context.

Table 4.11 – PhD interview themes/questions

<p>1. Introduction and Background</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job role, professional responsibilities and sustainability/ESD activities and involvement • What does sustainability/ESD in higher education mean to you?
<p>2. ESD within HEIs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barriers and drivers for ESD • The role of policy/strategy, key individuals and leadership for ESD • ESD main institutional developments and successes • Individual involvement in institutional agenda • Different approaches to ESD being taken, e.g. sustainability degrees/modules, holistic integration across curricula, specific disciplinary approaches, campus-based and student-led ESD • Which routes are strategically most important to the institution? • Opinion about ‘whole institutional’ ‘transformative’ ESD approaches
<p>3. Marketisation and ESD</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The relationship between neoliberalism, new public management and ESD in English higher education • The extent to which you believe that progress towards sustainability can be made from within the current higher education system?
<p>4. Central Government, HEFCE and the HEA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central government commitment to sustainability/ESD. How does this impact higher education sustainability/ESD agendas? • The roles of HEFCE and the HEA on HE sustainability/ESD agendas and the impact of these bodies on developments within HEIs • How have HEFCE/the HEA’s roles changed/evolved in recent years? • HEFCE’s 2014 SD framework • The HEA Green Academy programme • Perceptions about the relationship between central government, HEFCE, the HEA and HEIs in terms of sustainability/ESD agendas
<p>5. ESD and Quality Assurance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The relationship between quality assurance and ESD • The QAA’s ESD guidance document
<p>6. Sustainability/ESD Research and Quality-Related Research Funding</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Factors which govern personal research strategy • General impacts of the RAE/REF • Involvement in sustainability/ESD research projects • The relationship between the RAE/REF and sustainability/ESD research
<p>7. Students, the NUS and the EAUC</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opinion about the impact of the introduction of £9000 tuition fees on students’ characteristics, expectations and demands • Student demand for sustainability/ESD • The role of the NUS in HE sustainability/ESD agendas • The potential inclusion of sustainability/ESD in the NSS • Link between employability and sustainability • The role of the EAUC in HE sustainability/ESD agendas
<p>8. Closing Questions and the Future of ESD</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision for university in the future in relation to ESD/overall goal? • The future of the HE sustainability/ESD agenda in England over the next 5/10/15 years. What key changes can you foresee? • Opinion about the best way forward for advancing HESD in England • Opinion about the role and purpose of higher education in England

4.7.2 Interviewing factors for consideration

There were a number of factors to consider when planning and undertaking the interviews in order to attempt to maximise the usefulness of the data gathered in relation to the aims and objectives of the thesis. One consideration was ensuring that the data collection process was as 'naturalistic' as possible, i.e. that data was collected in naturally occurring situations to '*...capture the daily life, conditions, opinions, values, attitudes and knowledge base*' of the interviewees (Cicourel, 1982, cited in: Bryman, 2008, pg. 33). As such I ensured that as many interviews as possible were conducted at interviewees' places of work, either in their own offices, or another location of their choosing, where (hopefully) they would feel comfortable to explore their everyday experiences and opinions. I also considered guidelines set out by Yin (2003, pg. 59) regarding effective case study research, which outlined the following factors as important:

- Having a firm grasp of the issues being studied;
- Being able to ask good questions – and interpret the answers;
- Being unbiased by preconceived notions, including those derived from theory;
- Being a good listener and not being trapped by his or her own ideologies/preconceptions; and,
- Being adaptive and flexible, so that newly encountered situations can be seen as opportunities and not threats.

The **ability to ask good questions** and **interpret the answers**, relies on the researcher having read widely around the topics in questions, being up-to-date with all of the issues being studied, and thus, being theoretically prepared to capture the significance of what is said in interviews (de Vaus, 2001). The extensive (and ongoing) academic literature review conducted was vital for theoretical preparation before entering the research field. In addition, prior to undertaking the interviews I had worked for nearly three years as a Sustainability Project Officer at Keele University which meant I had a good understanding of the range of contemporary developments

and activities within England's HESD movement. During that time I attended many ESD seminars and conferences. I also organised several ESD events at my own institution.

Being **unbiased by preconceived notions** and not **trapped by one's own ideologies and preconceptions** is an important skill in qualitative researching. Given that I am myself a self-defined member of the HESD community of practice in England, I am part of the case study that I have investigated for this thesis. Therefore, it would be impossible for me to not have opinions about, and experiences of, contemporary developments, topics and debates within the HESD movement. Indeed, it was these experiences and my own ideas and interests (along with the range of literature explored) which helped to shape the unique theoretical framework of the thesis and the themes explored through interviews. Following from Holstein and Gubrium's theorising in their (1995) book, *The Active Interview*, and based upon the social constructionist and interpretivist underpinnings of my theoretical lens, I believe that semi-structured interviews *are not* neutral tools of qualitative inquiry in which the researcher simply attempts to 'collect knowledge' from interviewees. Rather, I believe that they are active and contextual interactions within which interview narratives emerge and are 'constructed in situ' by interviewees; both as a response to the specific questions that have been asked and shaped by the social dynamic between the participant and the researcher (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995, pg. 2). As a result of the coming together of the cultural interpretive lenses of the participant and the researcher, both parties in the interview can thus be said to be 'active' and involved in 'meaning making' work (ibid, pg. 3; Crotty, 1998). As Holstein and Gubrium (1995, pg. 4) describe:

Meaning is not merely elicited by apt questioning nor simply transported through respondent replies; it is actively and communicatively assembled in the interview encounter. Respondents are not so much repositories of knowledge – treasuries of information awaiting excavation – as they are constructors of knowledge in collaboration with interviewers.

There is however a difference, as a researcher, between being well versed in the current issues and debates and being part of an active meaning making process, and, having strong ideologies and preconceptions and exerting these (either implicitly or explicitly) upon interviewees. As such during interviews, all questions were posed neutrally and in a non-leading fashion. Importantly, I did not openly talk about my own opinions regarding the relationship between marketisation and ESD as I wanted to ensure that all data gleaned in this regard was truthful to the interviewees own experiences, opinions and feelings. The phenomenologist theoretical tradition places emphasis on the use of 'brackets' in qualitative research to try to *'...minimize the imposition of researchers' presuppositions and constructions on the data'* and to try to ensure that analytical themes *'...arise out of the data and are not imposed upon them'* (Crotty, 1998, pg. 83). The ability to conduct truly 'bracketed' research in any form is debatable, for me it was important though, to take an open-minded approach to what I might find out through interviews, to appreciate the different experiences, opinions and insights of all interviewees, which varied greatly, and to ensure continuity in question themes throughout the study in order to build a robust data set to address the research aims and objectives.

In order to gain rapport with interviewees and to encourage interviewees to open up about their own personal opinions and experiences, I took an informal, conversational and personable approach and tried to relate to interviewees through our shared identity as members of the HESD CoP. Being **adaptive and flexible** during interviews was also important. Indeed, although the interviews were semi-structured, many unexpected items of discussion were thrown up during the course of interviewing. As long as interviewees did not go off at a tangent for too long or in a direction too divergent from the main themes and questions, my approach was to allow new ideas to be explored as overall I deemed these to be adding to the richness of the data.

4.8 Ethical Issues: Informed Consent, Anonymity and Data Protection

Before any data collection commenced this research project was reviewed and approved by Keele University's Ethical Review Panel (ERP) (approval letter, Figure 4.3, Appendix C, pg. 389). No risks to research participants were foreseen and as such, the principal ethical considerations were: ensuring informed consent of all research participants; ensuring anonymity of those wishing to remain anonymous; and protecting data. According to the Social Research Association's ethical guidelines, gaining informed consent '*...is a procedure for ensuring that research subjects understand what is being done to them, the limits to their participation and awareness of any potential risks they incur*' (SRA, 2003, pg. 27 – 28). The provision of the detailed information sheet and consent form, which all interviewees were asked to read and sign two copies of (one for themselves and one for my purposes) ensured that individuals were fully aware of all aspects of their involvement in the research before taking part. The information sheet highlighted the following areas to ensure informed consent was gained from all participants:

- An explanation as to why they had been chosen to take part; that they were free to choose whether they wanted to take part or not; that they could withdraw from the study at any time without giving reason; and that they could withdraw their contributions to the study, or alter their level of anonymity, up to two months after data had been collected.
- An explanation of what taking part would entail, i.e. a face-to-face or telephone semi-structured interview.
- An explanation that their responses and quotes and those of other participants, would make up the project data set and that data would be used to inform the researcher's doctoral thesis and future research outputs such as journal articles.
- Information about how data about them would be collected, used and stored (see below).
- Directions about how to make a complaint if unhappy with any aspect of the process.

- That the raw data would be kept by the principal researcher for up to ten years, before being securely disposed of.

In terms of ensuring anonymity of those individuals wishing to remain anonymous and securely protecting/storing the study data, the following practices were employed:

- Through the consent form participants were given the opportunity to state whether they, a) wanted to be 'anonymous' or 'fully identifiable' throughout the study, b) if they wanted their quotes to be used or not within the PhD and future publications, and c) if they were happy to have the interview audio recorded or not.
- The information sheet also outlined that if they chose to remain anonymous their data (i.e. name, institution and interview transcript) would be fully anonymised and unidentifiable. Accordingly, the transcripts of the fourteen individuals wishing to remain anonymous had all information, names and data removed that could link the transcript to the individual.
- As outlined in Section 4.6, a coding system was devised for all 42 of the HEI interviewees, as well as a separate system for the twelve HE body and key informant interviewees, to ensure anonymity of the fourteen individuals wishing to remain anonymous across the two groups. This coding system is used on data analysis documents and the main body of the thesis.
- All interview transcripts are stored on a password protected computer in a locked office.
- No data files are kept on transportable devices.
- A few individuals said that they were happy to have their quotes used if they were checked/ approved first. Accordingly, I followed up with these individuals once I had identified which of their quotes would be used in the main body of the thesis to gain their approval for usage.

4.9 Thematic Coding and Analysis of Interview Transcripts

Of the 54 interview audio files, which ranged in length from 30 minutes to 1 hour 48 minutes (average length 52 minutes), 23 were transcribed by a professional transcription service paid for with PhD research funding, the other 31 were transcribed by the researcher. The approach taken to coding and analysing transcripts was based upon the approach I used whilst undertaking my MSc dissertation, using the guidance given in the following three book chapters: Crang (2005) *Analysing Qualitative Materials*; Cope (2003) *Coding Transcripts and Diaries*; and Bryman (2008) *Qualitative Data Analysis*. Interview transcripts were all coded and analysed manually using a process of thematic descriptive and analytical coding. The coding and data analysis process was undertaken within the context of the pragmatist interpretivist theoretical framework and the doctoral research aims and objectives, via the following eight steps:

- **Step 1:** All transcripts were read systematically from start to finish to 'open up the data' and to get a sense of the range of themes that were emerging.
- **Step 2:** Each transcript was read thoroughly again. During the second reading of each transcript, important words, phrases and paragraphs were located and highlighted within the text using the Microsoft Word highlighter tool. These highlighted segments of text are referred to as '**Descriptive**' or '**Emic**' codes and are essentially verbatim snippets of interviewees' wording.
- **Step 3:** Time was then spent reading and reflecting upon the descriptive codes that had been highlighted across all of the transcripts. In particular, I was looking for important insights and recurrent themes.
- **Step 4:** In turn the descriptive codes from each transcript were cut and pasted into a separate data analysis document. The descriptive codes from each individual interviewees' transcript were assigned the relevant coded name.

- **Step 5:** Descriptive codes were grouped together with other descriptive codes expressing similar insights or themes. Each group of analogous descriptive codes were assigned a series of '**Analytical**' or '**Etic**' codes. The analytical codes were written using my own interpretive wording based on the specific group of emic codes.
- **Step 6:** Analytical codes were evaluated, re-evaluated and shuffled about and were built into a series of **43 'Key Themes'**. The key themes are essentially all of the main themes which emerged from the interviewing process in relation to the aims and objectives of the study.
- **Step 7:** Key themes were then evaluated, re-evaluated and shuffled about and were built into a series of **12 'Core Themes'**. The Core Themes are summary themes which capture the essence of groups of similar key themes.
- **Step 8:** The final key and core themes were evaluated and re-evaluated on several occasions, and certain transcripts were revisited, before confirming the final key and core themes ahead of the writing-up phase of the thesis.

Table 4.12 (Appendix D, pg. 390) shows the full data analysis table for Core Theme 12 to exemplify the process of data coding and analysis (all descriptive codes have had interviewee coded names removed). Table 4.13 (Appendix D, pg. 395) provides an overview of all of the core and key themes from the data analysis process. In the two results and discussion chapters which follow, the twelve core themes and associated key themes are explored in turn. Key findings and results of the data analysis process are presented and then discussed and analysed in detail, bringing in a range of relevant literature and theorising and using anonymous interviewee quotes to illustrate specific points. By exploring these core themes, I am thus seeking to address the overall aims and objectives of the doctoral research and to consider in depth, the practical relationship between marketisation and education for sustainable development in English HE, through the eyes and experiences of the range of HESD practitioners interviewed.

CHAPTER 5) THE ROLE OF ENGLAND'S HIGHER EDUCATION

BODIES AND ORGANISATIONS IN THE HESD AGENDA

The principle aim of this chapter is to explore how England's HE sector bodies and organisations, namely HEFCE, the HEA, the QAA, the NUS and the EAUC, have influenced and impacted the pursuit, practice and development of HESD in England since roughly 2005; looking at both the challenges/contradictions and the synergies/opportunities presented to HESD by the influence of these bodies in the prevailing marketised context and through their varied marketising roles. Or in other words, the HESD roles of these bodies will be explored through the lens of marketisation. The formal roles of these organisations, as well as their key sustainability and ESD initiatives, have already been outlined in Chapters 2 and 3. The focus of this chapter is thus to reflect the dominant themes which emerged from the interviewing process (as shaped by interview questions, as well as recurrent issues and ideas raised by interviewees), rather than trying to characterise the entirety of each of these bodies' work in the sustainability/ESD realm. As with the rest of the thesis, ESD is considered within the context of the broader HE sustainability agenda, to reflect the overlapping foci of the sector bodies' work and influences in these areas. The People and Planet student network is also discussed as it emerged as a highly influential organisation through interviewee responses. The chapter also feeds into ongoing discussion surrounding the ideological relationship between marketisation and HESD.

The chapter explores Data Analysis Core Themes 1 to 8 of the thesis, as summarized in Table 5.1 and is split into four major sections. Overall this chapter comprises the presentation and description of core theme results, as well as analytical/theoretical discussion of core themes in relation to marketisation and HESD theory, research and literature. Theories are generated and conclusions are drawn throughout each of the main sections of the chapter, regarding the practical and ideological relationship between marketisation and ESD, as is the case in Chapter 6.

In chapter 7 which concludes the thesis, the range of theories generated and conclusions drawn throughout Chapters 5 and 6, as well as broad theoretical insights from across the whole thesis are collated to demonstrate the key areas of original knowledge contribution from this study.

Table 5.1 – Summary of Data Analysis Core Themes 1 to 8

Core Theme 1 – The growth of England’s HESD agenda and the role of the sector bodies and organisations: introduction and overview
Core Theme 2 – The relationship between central government and HEFCE for driving sustainability in the HE sector
Core Theme 3 – The history and approach of HEFCE’s sustainability agenda
Core Theme 4 – The history and approach of the HEA’s ESD agenda
Core Theme 5 – Sustainability and ESD leadership and support from ‘the top’
Core Theme 6 – Educational quality assurance and ESD
Core Theme 7 – Quality-related research funding and ESD
Core Theme 8 – Competitive advantage and the HE sustainability agenda

Section 5.1 sets the scene for the chapter by providing an introduction and overview to the growth of England’s HESD agenda and the role of the sector bodies and organisations from the perspective of interviewees, by presenting/describing the results of Core Theme 1. Section 5.2 incorporates Core Themes 2 to 5 and focuses on the roles of and complex relationships between central government, HEFCE, the HEA and HEIs, in terms of how sustainability and ESD have been driven, shaped and led within England’s HE sector over the last decade or so. The notion of ‘leadership’ and support from ‘the top’ is considered through the lens of new public management ‘steering’, a core aspect of HE marketisation, as well as the impact of changing governmental regimes and heightened neoliberal ideology resulting from these changes. Section 5.3 focuses on the relationship between two archetypal marketised audit mechanisms in UK higher education – educational quality assurance (QA) (Core Theme 6) and quality-related research funding (QR) (Core Theme 7) – and the HESD agenda, with a specific focus on the impact of QA/QR processes, and the role of the QAA, on ESD teaching and research activities in English HE. Section 5.4 concludes the chapter through an investigation of the notion of competitive advantage in relation

to HE sustainability and ESD agendas in England, considering the roles of the People and Planet Green League, the EAUC Green Gown Awards, as well as the NUS and the National Student Survey. This section finishes by drawing together key themes developed across the chapter regarding the role of ‘steered legitimisation’ and ‘steered incentivisation’ as key mechanisms which have, and could further drive ESD in the marketised university context.

CHAPTER 5 SECTIONS OVERVIEW

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5.4.3 Changing ESD tides within the EAUC and the NUS	
5.4.4 Competitive advantage, reputation and reward structures for driving HESD: the role of steered incentivisation	

5.1 The Growth of England’s HESD Agenda and the Role of the Sector

Bodies and Organisations: Introduction and Overview

Reflecting upon the history of the sustainability agenda in English HE, interviewees described an evolution from earlier environmental and estates/campus dominated activities, towards a more holistic sustainability agenda today, incorporating: a much larger range of social, political, economic and ethical issues; more links between sustainability research, teaching and campus activities; and more collaboration between academic, estates and professional services staff on university-wide sustainability initiatives. The ESD agenda specifically, was described as having emerged and evolved as part of this broadening discourse, taking shape as a tangible cross-sector national movement in the early-2000s. The importance of inter-university ESD collaboration was seen as key in how the HESD agenda had grown over the last decade or so, which reflects the description in this thesis of English HESD practitioners comprising a national community of practice – with a shared domain of interest and engaging in joint activities and information sharing (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner, 2015). Interviewees described myriad drivers for HESD (explored in more detail throughout this and the following chapter) which are displayed in Table 5.2 which presents the results of data analysis Core Theme 1.

Table 5.2 – Analytical Codes and Key Themes within Data Analysis Core Theme 1

Core Theme 1 – The growth of England’s HESD agenda and the role of the sector bodies and organisations: introduction and overview	
Key Themes	Analytical Codes
Drivers for HESD in English HE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International policy: United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (UNDESD) • Identity: Specific sustainability/ESD building, brand, centre within HEI; part of HEI history, ethos, identity, research strength; cross-cutting university education/research theme • Expectation: SD more prominent societal issue and mainstream public concern; employer expectation for sustainability literature graduates • Momentum: ESD movement snowball effect creates impetus for further

	<p>change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active sector bodies: HEFCE, HEA, QAA, NUS, EAUC, People and Planet • HEI policy and funding: Policy documentation and ring fenced funding; sustainability/ESD strategies & policies; sustainability/ESD embedded in university aims, mission statements, strategic plans, KPIs; sustainability/ESD embedded in other HEI policy, e.g. teaching and learning, QA, graduate attributes • Professional policy: Sustainability embedded in professional and discipline body requirements and accreditation • Significant individuals: Notable ESD academics/experts driving national agenda; passionate and committed sustainability/ESD champions in HEIs • HEI leadership: Support for sustainability/ESD from the top levels of HEIs, e.g. Vice Chancellors, Pro-Vice Chancellors, Deans, Heads of Schools, etc. • HEI people infrastructure: ESD leads, directors, interns, project officers, coordinators, teams; cross-HEI sustainability/ESD committees, working groups, teams; departmental sustainability/ESD reps, fellows, leads • ESD scholarship and recognition: External (sector body) and internal funding linked to ESD; ESD in league tables and awards; ESD community of practice networks across HEIs and sector; ESD dedicated roles and funding for ESD 'buy-out' time for staff; ESD linked to promotions and careers • Staff development: ESD in induction, PG CertHE, training days; online ESD resources, groups, fora, teaching guides, videos
<p>Brief history of England's HESD agenda and tipping points</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National HESD tipping points in 2005/2006 and 2013/2014 • Evolution from environmental to sustainability (and ESD) agendas in HEIs • Broadening of agenda within institutions • Growing national community of practice

One key message emerging across the board throughout interviews, was the pivotal role that the various HE sector bodies in England have played since the early-2000s in driving, facilitating and legitimising sustainability and ESD within the sector. Though many interviewees believed that the sector bodies *could* and *should* be doing more to support sustainability and ESD, it was clear that their support had been critical for enabling HESD practitioners to broaden the scope and influence of their ESD work on the ground within HEIs. Two major HESD 'tipping points' related to the activity of the sector bodies since the early-2000s can be established from interview responses. As one interviewee described, these points were where several different sustainability and ESD policy drivers from within the HE sector bodies reached a peak and forged a new level of coherence and momentum for the agendas on the ground within HEIs. The first of these tipping points was in 2005 when HEFCE released its first *Sustainable development in higher education* (HEFCE, 2005) statement of policy, which was described by interviewees to have converged with several other developments, culminating in the tipping point, these were: the initiation of the UN

Decade of Education for Sustainable Development; the release of the highly influential 'Dawe Report' by the HEA; and, the commencement of official (and funded) ESD-focused work at the HEA via The ESD Project. The second tipping point was felt to be in progress during the time data was collected for this thesis in 2013/2014, as Interviewee X7 noted:

We are at a place that is unprecedented in the way sustainable development, and particularly education for sustainable development, is positioned, you've got HEFCE, you've got the HEA, you've got the QAA and the NUS, put that package of activity together, it is unprecedented in the sector on this topic. ...those are the initiatives that drive policy makers, so you put all of that together and institutions have to up their game.

Once again the tipping point was largely based upon policy activity within the sector bodies, leading to knock-on developments on the ground within HEIs. These 'tipping point' activities in 2013/14 were said to be: the release of HEFCE's third SD policy publication, *Sustainable development in higher education: HEFCE's role to date and a framework for its future actions* (HEFCE, 2014a); the launch of the Quality Assurance Agency's ESD guidance document (QAA, 2014); and, the launch of the £5 million NUS Students' Green Fund. It was clear from the range of interview responses that the development of sustainability and ESD strategy, policy, guidance documents and reports, as well as specific thematic work areas and funding streams from the sector bodies, had helped to forge significant advances in England's HESD movement over the preceding decade. Of particular significance from the responses of interviewees, were the roles of HEFCE and the HEA, whose activities, in turn, were described as having been significantly shaped by changes to central government in recent years.

5.2 Leadership for Sustainability: The Roles of and Relationships Between Central Government, HEFCE, the HEA and HEIs

Sections 5.2.1, 5.2.2 and 5.2.3 present and describe data analysis Core Themes 2 to 4, focusing on the relationship between central government and HEFCE for driving sustainability in the English HE sector, as well as the history and approach of HEFCE's and the HEA's sustainability/ESD agendas. Although some analytical/theoretical discussion is provided in these first three sections, it is in Sections 5.2.4, 5.2.5 and 5.2.6 that detailed analytical/theoretical discussion of these core themes, as well as Core Theme 5 (sustainability and ESD leadership and support from 'the top') is developed. Section 5.2.4 looks at the impact of heightened neoliberal ideology as a result of changing governmental regimes on the progression of HESD, before Sections 5.2.5 and 5.2.6 explore the roles of government, HEFCE and the HEA through the lens of new public management 'steering' theory. Reflecting on the use of grant letters from central government to HEFCE and subsequent grant letters from HEFCE to the HEA and HEIs, as well as a range of other financial and policy steering mechanisms which are utilised in the relationships between government, the HE bodies and HEIs, overall this section seeks to weigh up the practical and the moral efficacy of 'steering' (a core aspect of HE marketisation) as an approach which has driven substantial amounts of HESD activity within English HE. The tension between intrinsic, altruistic and values-based motivating factors, and extrinsic, financially and reputationally-driven motivating factors, for encouraging HESD engagement by HEIs and academic staff, is considered as one critique of the use of marketised steering mechanisms in the drive towards sustainability.

5.2.1 The relationship between central government and HEFCE for driving sustainability in the HE sector

As outlined in Table 5.3 which presents the results of data analysis Core Theme 2, several interviewees noted that national sustainable development priorities and activity had significantly

dropped back from the agenda of central government with the switch from Gordon Brown’s Labour government to David Cameron’s Coalition (Conservative-Liberal Democrat) government in 2010, comments included: *‘This government really hasn’t done a lot on sustainability other than trim it back’* (X5); *‘...but with the new government that has certainly been put on the back burner even though Cameron claimed to be delivering the greenest government ever’* (X4); *‘There was a lot of impetus, but when we got the change of government I think a lot of that was lost’* (Y31).

Table 5.3 – Analytical Codes and Key Themes within Data Analysis Core Theme 2

Core Theme 2 – The relationship between central government and HEFCE for driving sustainability in the HE sector	
Key Themes	Analytical Codes
Central government commitment to sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SD dropped back on government agenda since Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition government change in 2010 • Hole in the centre of national level mandate on sustainability • Sustainable Development Commission successfully pushed SD into range of government departments – quango bonfire – SDC disbanded
The relationship between central government and HEFCE on sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HEFCE priority work areas directly steered by central government grant letter to HEFCE • Importance of grant letter references for driving SD work of HEFCE • Potential implications of change to grant letter SD references discussed and speculated upon

The Sustainable Development Commission (SDC) was described as having been key to the higher level of sustainability momentum under the previous Labour government, with the commission playing an instrumental role in pushing sustainability into a range of different government departments: *‘They set a general tone, a direction of travel and a rate of travel’* (X7); *‘I think up until 2009 it was much more strategic, the role of the SD commission had made it more strategic’* (X2). The disbanding of the SDC in 2011 along with a host of other quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations (quangos), was described as a *‘quango bonfire’* and an *‘ideological red tape removal exercise’* by Interviewee X7, who said that Cameron’s government perceived quangos as cluttering the system and contributing to an interfering ‘nanny state’. According to

Interviewee Y16, the decision to purge quangos was indicative of the Conservative government's underpinning neoliberal ideology focused on '*...reducing the overall size of the state as a given percentage of totally economic turnover in the country*'. This accords with the description given by Scott, et al., (2013, pg. 1525) who describe a diminished emphasis on SD/ESD policy in UK central government since 2010, due to a '*...guiding philosophy for smaller and less directive government*', which they say, chooses instead to defer responsibility for a range of policy issues, such as SD, to institutions at a local level. This decentralisation of support and reduced governmental intervention is indeed a central tenant of neoliberal ideology (Peck and Tickell, 2002; Brenner, et al., 2010; Dobson, 2011; Hursh, et al., 2015) and overall the transition to the more 'hands-off' coalition regime, was felt by many interviewees to have left a large hole in the centre of national-level mandate for sustainability; including a reduction in the extent to which HEFCE itself was being driven by government to maintain a sustainability mandate for the HE sector.

A range of interviewees detailed the way in which HEFCE's priority work areas are directly steered by government via the annual grant letter which government sends to HEFCE. These grant letters subsequently shape the financial memoranda which individual HEIs receive setting out the terms and conditions for payment of their HEFCE grants. Recalling literature explored in Chapter 2, the marketisation of English HE has, at its most basic level, utilised a two-pronged approach based upon financial incentives and resource allocation decisions on one hand, and market monitoring and audit processes on the other, in order that government (and government under the auspices of HEFCE) can control, manipulate and 'steer' institutional and academic behaviours at arm's-length (Hood, 1991; Williams, 1997; Gruening, 2001; Deem and Brehony, 2005; Ferlie, et al., 2008; Henkel, 2007; Kolsaker, 2008); such grant letters are a classic instrument of new public management 'steering' within this marketised landscape. Interviewees from HEFCE described the importance of the grant letter that HEFCE receives from government for setting its priorities and supporting and maintaining its sustainability remit. A few other interviewees also specifically pointed to the significance of the grant letter for maintaining HEFCE's sustainability remit (and

hence the sustainability remit of the HE sector), as Interviewee X3 said: *'HEFCE does what the funding letters that come down from BIS tell them to and those funding letters have increasingly increased the demand for sustainability'*. The important championing role that had been played by Steve Egan, the then Deputy Chief Executive of HEFCE, for driving HEFCE's sustainability agenda was also described. It was however feared that losing Steve Egan from HEFCE and/or the loss of reference to SD within HEFCE's grant letter from government (both eventualities have now been realised), would equate to a decrease in HEFCE's ability to prioritise sustainability activities for the HE sector. Interviewee X4 described: *'...it comes down I think to a champion in Steve Egan. ...Well we will lose Steve someday, but I fear an awful lot is down to Steve'*. Table 5.4 lists all references to sustainable development within HEFCE's grant letters from government since they first appeared in 2008, including the government ministers responsible for each letter. The second column assigns thematic tags to the different SD references to show the changing focus of the sustainability references within the letters over the years. The significance of the changing emphasis of grant letter references is discussed after Table 5.4.

Table 5.4 – References to sustainable development within HEFCE’s grant letters from government since 2008

Grant Letter References to Sustainable Development	Themes
<p>Jan 2008 (2008/09), John Denham (Labour)</p> <p>Paragraph 18. When I announced your capital budgets, I noted that among other things this would allow you to commit resources to your proposed Green Development Fund*. I warmly welcome this initiative, and your plans to work in partnership with Salix** to deliver it. I know that institutions will help develop responses to the problems we face, and I am pleased the Council is providing leadership in this area. More generally, while higher education institutions have made some progress in reducing their carbon emissions, more needs to be done if the 2050 commitment to reduce emissions by 60% is to be achieved. I expect HEFCE to work with the sector to ensure these targets are met. Over the spending review, all institutions in receipt of capital funding should have plans to reduce carbon emissions, and performance against these plans should be a factor in future capital allocations. I would be grateful for a report on your plans for taking this forward by September 2008.</p> <p>* The Green Development Fund, which was renamed the Revolving Green Fund, was a HEFCE initiative which ran from 2008 to 2014 and provided recoverable grants to help HEIs reduce energy use/carbon emissions and save money, providing a total of £90 million of repayable grants. ** Salix Finance Ltd. delivers 100% interest-free capital to the public sector to improve energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting leadership for SD from HEFCE • Strong commitment to government energy/carbon emissions reduction targets • Linking HEIs carbon performance to capital allocations • Funding for energy/carbon emissions reduction scheme • Sustainability values (‘problems we face’) • Seeking individual reports from HEIs on carbon plans
<p>Jan 2009 (2009/10), John Denham (Labour)</p> <p>Paragraph 19. Last year, I set out our ambition that capital funding for institutions should be linked to performance in reducing emissions. Following your advice to me, I am now confirming that such links should be in place for 2011-12. In May 2008 I asked you to finalise during 2008-09 a strategy for sustainable development in HE, with a realistic target for carbon reductions that would reduce carbon emissions by 60 per cent against 1990 levels by 2050 and at least 26 per cent by 2020. This former target should now be upgraded to 80 per cent, in line with Parliament’s decisions in passing the Climate Change Act 2008. I hope that some of the capital expenditure I have asked you to bring forward into 2009-10 will support strategic, long-term action to tackle climate change, but institution-wide strategies to reduce carbon emissions are also needed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting leadership for SD from HEFCE • Strong commitment to government energy/carbon emissions reduction targets • Linking HEIs carbon performance to capital allocations • Setting carbon targets for sector • Encouraging strategic, long term action for climate change in sector
<p>Dec 2009 (2010/11), Peter Mandelson (Labour)</p> <p>Paragraph 9. I welcome the work the Council and the sector have done over the past year to ensure the development of carbon management strategies for all higher education</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting leadership for SD from HEIs • Encouraging sustainability to be linked to teaching and research

institutions. I hope universities and colleges will show leadership in this area, both in reducing their own emissions, and in seeking to include sustainability in their teaching and research.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting development of carbon management strategies for all HEIs
<p>Dec 2010 (2011/12), Vince Cable & David Willetts (Lib Dem/Conservative)</p> <p>Paragraph 25. We welcome the positive engagement of the sector over recent years in environmental sustainability. Even in fiscally challenging times, we remain committed to achieving the targets for carbon reduction and making progress on the wider sustainable development agenda. We hope you will continue to support the sector in its efforts here.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commending sustainability engagement of HE sector Encouraging HEFCE to support HEIs sustainability agenda Commitment to government energy/carbon emissions reduction targets Commitment to broad SD agenda
<p>Jan 2012 (2012/13), Vince Cable & David Willetts (Lib Dem/Conservative)</p> <p>Paragraph 22. The HE sector has made good progress in recent years on environmental issues. You should continue to support institutions in their efforts to improve their sustainability.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commending sustainability engagement of HE sector Encouraging HEFCE to support HEIs sustainability agenda
<p>Jan 2013 (2013/14), Vince Cable & David Willetts (Lib Dem/Conservative)</p> <p>Paragraph 28. We thank the Council for its activity which has contributed to the HE sector's good progress on sustainable development. In particular, by developing strategies and using the Revolving Green Fund to provide recoverable grants to help HEIs in England reduce emissions the Council has supported the sector to reduce carbon emissions. We look forward to the development of a new sustainable development framework that should seek to build on the achievements of universities and colleges and the enthusiasm of students and continue to support institutions in their efforts to improve their sustainability.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commending sustainability engagement of HE sector Encouraging HEFCE to support HEIs sustainability agenda Focus on HE sector driving SD agenda Welcoming new SD framework from HEFCE Focus on building upon enthusiasm of universities and students
<p>Feb 2014 (2014/15) Vince Cable & David Willetts (Lib Dem/Conservative) No reference</p>	
<p>Jan 2015 (2015/16) Vince Cable and Greg Clark (Conservative)</p> <p>Paragraph 13. We welcome the publication of the HEFCE sustainable development framework and HEFCE's continuing role in facilitating the sharing of good practice on sustainable development. We note the HE sector's performance and look to the sector to continue improvements in this area.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commending sustainability engagement of HE sector Focus on HE sector driving SD agenda Welcoming new SD framework from HEFCE
<p>March 2016 (2016/17) Sajid Javid and Jo Johnson (Conservative) No reference</p>	
<p>Feb 2017 (2017/18), Jo Johnson (Conservative) No reference</p>	
<p>References</p> <p>HEFCE (2008b; 2009b; 2009c; 2010c; 2012a; 2013; 2014b; 2015a; 2016; 2017)</p>	

Looking at the thematic tags assigned in this table, the shift in emphasis of the government grant letters is plain. We start in a position in 2008/09, 2009/10 and 2010/11 where government was actively promoting leadership for SD from HEFCE: '*...I am pleased the Council is providing leadership in this area*' (HEFCE, 2008b, pg. 1), procedures were brought in to ensure that all HEIs had carbon reduction plans, and explicit links were made to ESD when Peter Mandelson asked HEIs to consider sustainability within their teaching. The stance taken by government from 2011/12 onwards, conversely, has focused around 'commending' the level of sustainability engagement of the HE sector and 'encouraging' HEFCE to support HEIs in their work; with SD references becoming much vaguer and not as tangibly linked to university practices. Furthermore, three grant letters since the change of government in 2010 have had no reference to SD whatsoever, including the two most recent letters in 2016 and 2017. Essentially there has been a shift from government promoting HEFCE to take *leadership* for the sustainability agenda on behalf of the sector and HEIs, to asking HEFCE to *support* an agenda which is owned and led by the HEIs themselves and for which the onus is clearly placed upon HEIs to maintain momentum. In the 2013/14 grant letter government expressed that they were 'looking forward' to the development of the new SD framework, a document they hoped would '*...build on the achievements of universities and colleges and the enthusiasm of students...*' (HEFCE, 2013, pg. 1), but they did not prescribe any concrete actions or tangible policy changes to be associated with the publication. For example, they could have said that they hoped to see the framework forge further links between capital funding allocations and environmental performance, or that they hoped to see a five-year action plan for how HEFCE would support ESD across the sector. The 2015/16 grant letter did not even ask HEFCE to support the sector but simply to facilitate the sharing of good practice. To assess the impact of these changes in more detail, both for HEFCE's sustainability remit and indeed the trajectory of HESD within the HE sector, I will now look back at the history of HEFCE's sustainability agenda from the perspective of interviewees.

5.2.2 The history and approach of HEFCE’s sustainability agenda

HEFCE’s SD work was said to have commenced around 2003 when, as Interviewee X11 noted, *‘The Order Committee of the House of Commons reached the conclusion that higher education was what they called, ‘the dirty man’ of government, that wasn’t really doing a job, in terms of promoting sustainable development’* and thus HEFCE were asked to develop an SD strategy for the sector. In the consultation paper for their inaugural SD strategy, HEFCE were bold in their ESD ambitions and laid out their intention to support and encourage the sector to: *‘...develop curricula, pedagogy and extra-curricular activities that enable students to develop the values, skills and knowledge to contribute to sustainable development (HEFCE, 2005, pg. 8).*

Table 5.5 – Analytical Codes and Key Themes within Data Analysis Core Theme 3

Core Theme 3 – The history and approach of HEFCE’s sustainability agenda	
Key Themes	Analytical Codes
Early history	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SD work commenced ca. 2003 • Guardian newspaper article response to 2005 consultation document – weakened tone of HEFCE approach and ESD emphasis • Nevertheless, resulting publication raised profile of SD in sector, brought SD into mainstream and was a significant driver of SD activity
HEFCE SD Steering Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taken as a sign that HEFCE took SD seriously • Disappointment by some when group disbanded in 2011 • Responsibility moved up to higher level committee
Loss of momentum since 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of HEFCE influence, leverage and ability to push SD agenda • Importance of HEFCE funding as way of influencing HEIs to follow certain policy agendas – less funding equals less influence • HEFCE 2014 SD framework – less actions and targets more ‘enabling’ than ‘doing’ – HEFCE weakened stance on SD – going back on commitments
HEFCE as champion of the students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HEFCE engineering/pushing champion of the students role – seen as alternative approach to drive SD with reduced government mandate • Importance of what students want/demand (collective student interest) seen as way to promote SD
HEFCE’s approach/perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four principal SD roles – funding, policy, regulation, sharing good practice • Approach is non-prescriptive, facilitating, enabling, promoting • View that centralised SD enforcement can be resisted by HEIs – threat to institutional autonomy • Supporting a self-motivated agenda owned by HEIs
HEFCE and ESD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not directly involved in curriculum reform or development – careful to not interfere with curriculum • Give remit to HEA to lead on ESD through grant letter to HEA

The response to this consultation of one university Vice Chancellor via a Guardian newspaper article was picked up by several interviewees. The article in question, written by the then VC of the University of Central England, Peter Knight, fiercely attacked HEFCE for suggesting that it might seek to influence university curricula, through saying:

It is one of the most pernicious and dangerous circulars ever to be issued. ...Among other things it says that HEFCE will 'explore with the Quality Assurance Agency ... how a contribution to sustainable development could be used as an indicator of high-quality taught provision'. This is the most disgraceful, shameful and outrageous statement ever to appear in a publication from a funding council. It is saying that unless your university conforms to this particular political orthodoxy, your course may be regarded as of poor quality (Knight, 2005, pg. 1).

Interviewees felt that this article unfortunately led to HEFCE significantly weakening the overall tone of the document and its stance on SD, particularly in relation to teaching and learning.

Interviewee quotes included: *'...right away HEFCE backed away because one person's opinion scared them'* (X8); *'It got its fingers badly burnt in the middle in 2005, when it got some phrasing wrong around what it was saying around curriculum and it's been a bit reticent ever since'* (X3); *'I think in fact HEFCE are running scared of putting anything very strong in after people like Peter Knight's response to the last one'* (Y34). Nevertheless, the publication of the (somewhat watered down) 2005 document was still seen as a hugely positive driver for raising the profile of SD within the HE sector and propelling HESD activity on the ground within HEIs.

Another important driver for sustainability described by interviewees was HEFCE's Sustainable Development Steering Group, which as Interviewee X3 noted, was taken as a sign by the sector that HEFCE was serious about sustainability. This group was disbanded in 2011 with the change of government to the disappointment of many HESD advocates. HEFCE's rationale was that the group had largely fulfilled its purpose and that responsibility for SD had been streamlined and moved up to their more senior Leadership, Governance and Management Strategic Advisory Committee, to help mainstream SD within the organisation. Several interviewees on the other

hand, pointed to a significant loss in HEFCE's leverage and ability to drive SD within the HE sector since 2010. With HEFCE now allocating considerably less money to individual universities on a yearly basis (due to the changed university funding mechanism for teaching via the provision of enhanced £9000 tuition fees), coupled with the diminishing SD mandate coming from government to HEFCE, interviewees described how HEFCE's ability to drive SD within the sector had thus significantly weakened. HEFCE's latest SD framework (published in 2014) was also described as weak and going back on previous commitments. Interviewees commented:

HEFCE's a different animal nowadays, so there's certain things which it used to be able to do and now isn't appropriate, it doesn't give out the same funding so it doesn't have that power (X4).

I think with the student fees, the teaching grant decreasing, universities perhaps feel less under the sway of HEFCE (Y4).

...it seemed a diluted paper really, it seemed to be going backwards on its commitment, that's clearly a retrograde step (Y31).

I think if you look at their consultation document that came out recently, you don't find a particularly strong message there (Y34).

Another palpable theme was that HEFCE had taken on board the 'students at the heart of system' mantra since 2010/11 and were (at the time of data collection in 2013/14) actively pushing for students to become the new champions and drivers of SD within the sector. This attempt to mobilise student demand, for example through financing the £5 million NUS Students' Green Fund, was seen by interviewees as a way of keeping SD issues at the 'top table' as we entered an era where student choice and satisfaction were expected to have a much higher currency within the HE system. This change in approach directly mirrors the tone of the grant letter which HEFCE received from government in Jan 2013 which talked about 'building on the enthusiasm of students' for sustainability (HEFCE, 2013, pg.1).

When asking HEFCE representatives themselves about their overall approach to the SD agenda, HEFCE described their approach as facilitating, enabling and promoting good practice, rather than mandating policy changes. They took the stance that centralised enforcement of sustainability was a threat to HEIs' autonomy and instead pointed towards the value of a more self-motivated agenda which was driven by universities themselves. As one HEFCE representative said:

I don't think the answer is central control... ..If you present yourself as command and control, there are antibodies that really do start to develop. They'll oppose it because there's higher principle at stake, which is institutional autonomy. ...When you approach the sector, you have to do it in a sophisticated way, you have to bring people along with you, you have to get their consents to doing things, they have to co-create the solutions, and if you do it that way, then you can release enormous energy.

HEFCE also said that they do not directly get involved with curriculum reform or development and are careful to not interfere with the curriculum of HEIs. The only influence they have (or had) on curriculum in relation to education for sustainable development, they said, was through giving remit and support to the HEA to take the lead on ESD. The ESD role of the HEA up until 2013/14 (which has changed considerably since this time) will now be briefly explored from the perspective of interviewees, before moving on to analyse Core Themes 2 to 4 in more detail.

5.2.3 The history and approach of the HEA’s ESD agenda

Whereas HEFCE have supported the sustainability agenda in English HE in a more broad-based fashion since 2005 (although considerably less strongly in the last few years), the HEA has been England’s principle HE body responsible for driving ESD specifically, through focusing on curriculum enhancement, development and reform. Interviewees noted that the HEA’s ESD work was initiated around the time of the first HESD tipping point in 2005 via ‘The ESD Project’ which was funded by HEFCE for engaging different disciplines in ESD projects. Analysis of The ESD Project has suggested that it made a ‘...significant difference to the quality and quantity of curriculum change in relation to sustainability’ in English HEIs, as well as enhancing the level of networking, dissemination and policy growth in the area (Sterling and Witham, 2008, pg. 408). Significantly, HEFCE’s support of the HEA’s ESD work via specific reference to ESD in the annual grant letter given by HEFCE to the HEA (setting out the terms for its funding from HEFCE), was seen as crucial for maintaining the HEA’s ESD remit.

Table 5.6 – Analytical Codes and Key Themes within Data Analysis Core Theme 4

Core Theme 4 – The history and approach of the HEA’s ESD agenda	
Key Themes	Analytical Codes
Beginnings and growth of ESD thematic work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HEA ESD thematic work spurred by range of drivers in 2005 • The ESD Project – pots of money from HEFCE for curriculum projects – engaging different disciplines • First funded academic lead role in 2011 • HEFCE to HEA grant letter – stated that HEA must lead on ESD
Lack of priority around ESD within core ethos of HEA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HEA ESD work dropped back with lack of support/push from HEFCE – question mark over future work • ESD not embedded into core ethos and business of HEA – not a key priority – not sufficiently resourced • ESD in educational development & UK Professional Standards Framework for Teaching and Supporting Learning in HE (UKPSF) – untapped avenue
Role of the Green Academy programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance of Green Academy for driving institutional ESD developments • Competition/comparison element between institutions driving changes • Gives HEIs external recognition and profile around ESD • Gets ESD teams spending time together – importance of senior management input

General responses about the role of the HEA in England's HESD movement were mixed. Many interviewees noted that HEA activities had been extremely important for facilitating ESD within the HE sector; several wished that the HEA would take a more prominent lead on ESD; a few felt the HEA was quite ineffective in its ESD remit; and several noted a lack of commitment to ESD within the core ethos and business of the HEA. A few interviewees also noted the fact that sustainability is not part of the UK Professional Standards Framework for Teaching and Supporting Learning in HE (UKPSF)³², as a missed opportunity in terms of being able to embed sustainability more broadly within the educational development activities of HEIs and in particular, Postgraduate Certificates in Teaching and Learning in HE (PGCertHE) which most new university teaching staff undertake. A particular component of the HEA's work which was said to have had a significant and positive impact on participating institutions was the Green Academy programme. Indeed, it was palpable that taking part had been hugely important for HEIs in terms of consolidating and driving forward their institutional ESD initiatives. Interviewees described how the Green Academy had actively forced them to form an official ESD team and to spend time together as a team. Having a senior member of staff on each team had also helped to raise the profile of ESD within the participating HEIs and legitimise ESD as a priority educational development area. Interviewees also noted the external recognition and kudos provided by taking part in the programme and tied to this, a competitive spirit between the participating HEIs which helped to drive changes on the ground. The programme was also said to provide a supportive peer network to engage with other universities to exchange knowledge, ideas, success stories and tips around capacity building for ESD. Interviewee quotes included:

³² The **UK Professional Standards Framework for Teaching and Supporting Learning in HE (UKPSF)** (managed by the HEA) is a nationally-recognised framework for benchmarking experience/expertise in HE teaching and learning support via a range of dimensions of 'core knowledge', 'areas of activity' and 'professional values' and via four categories of fellowship: Associate Fellow, Fellow, Senior Fellow and Principal Fellow. The UKPSF supports initial and continuing professional development of staff engaged in teaching and supporting learning. Most PGCertHEs in the UK are accredited and underpinned by the UKPSF and lead to Associate Fellowship or Fellowship of the HEA (HEA, undated, pg. 1).

The Green Academy was really important to us in that process, and that was important to us because of external recognition, the ability to say look we've been 'picked' and we are therefore an 'exemplar', and hey look Keele is doing this or Southampton is doing that, we ought to be, and we were playing off each other (Y8).

...a lot of the work has come from Green Academy. ...the reason it was effective is the competition that it presented between the different institutions, I could make a case or we could make a case saying other universities have put about £100,000 into this agenda (Y14).

Things have gained momentum with getting the Green Academy, you have to have a senior manager on your Green Academy team, that has been a really important driver because people have seen that X is on our team and it gives it that credibility (Y26).

The notion of friendly competition and Green Academy participation being used as a way of differentiating institutions, shows clear marketised mentality, insofar as taking part was one way in which HEIs were building competitive advantage for themselves within the HE sector. This relationship between HESD and competitive advantage is explored in more detail in Section 5.4.

At the time of interviewing in late 2013/early 2014 the HEA was in the process of losing a significant proportion of its funding from HEFCE and moving to a subscription funding model (as detailed in Chapter 2). Interviewees noted that the HEA's ESD work was beginning to drop back and felt there was a question mark over the HEA's future ESD involvement. It turns out that since this time, the removal of HEFCE's funding to the HEA and the loss of the HEA's policy mandate to support ESD for the sector (via their grant letter), has subsequently led to the loss of the HEA's funded ESD Academic Lead position; the tapering out of the ESD Advisory Group; the disbanding of the Green Academy scheme; and overall, the almost total retraction of the HEA's ESD remit, apart from a few guidance documents available on their current webpage. The changing sustainability and ESD roles of the HEA and HEFCE in recent years will now be theoretically analysed through a marketisation lens, first through an exploration of heightened neoliberal governmental ideology and then in more detail through the notion of NPM steering.

5.2.4 The impact of heightened neoliberal ideology on HESD

Returning to reflect upon Doctoral Research Objective 5 and thinking about the practical relationship between marketisation and ESD in relation to the roles of HEFCE and the HEA; data analysis Core Themes 2 to 4 explored above demonstrate clearly that the heightened neoliberal values and policies of the Conservative-Liberal Democrat party regime (and since 2015 the Conservative majority regime), have had a significant and detrimental impact upon the extent to which HEFCE and the HEA are supporting the sustainability and ESD agendas of English HEIs. Interviewee Y16 expressed their concern about the impact of hands-off neoliberal governmental ideologies under Conservative leadership for failing to support and drive SD initiatives:

Governments need to intervene a lot to turn around inherently unsustainable business and societal behaviours; I think it's extremely difficult to look for a sufficiently accelerated change process in society without very substantial levels of government intervention at every level. ...the more we move away from governments with a capability and an enthusiasm for intervention at those different levels in society and move towards more neoliberal ways of delivering improvements in people's lives, the less likely it is that we'll have that quality of leadership [for sustainability].

Though not a key focus of the thesis, policy differences and similarities between the two major UK political parties regarding HE *and* sustainable development are worthy of brief investigation here.

Both the Conservative and the Labour party have championed and driven the economic model of HE into England's universities over the last 30 years or so (Kogan and Hanney, 2000). Indeed, the marketisation era which started in the late 1980s has continued largely unabated through changes of political party to the present day (Huckle, 2008; Foskett, 2011). In 1997 the incoming Labour government essentially picked up where the previous Conservative government left off by endorsing the recommendations of the Dearing Report and bringing in the first round of student tuition fees. As Jary (2005, pg. 243) has described, with the change of government from Conservative to Labour at the end of 1990's, '*...Labour policies carried forward what were deemed*

progressive elements of new managerialism and the new accountability introduced by Conservative governments, especially an emphasis on stakeholder interests and resource competition'. Equally, the recommendations of the Browne Review of 2009 which was commissioned by Brown's Labour government, was conversely, picked up by the Conservative-led coalition who then finalised and implemented the £9000 tuition fee regime. On the other hand, if we look broadly at commitment to sustainable development, whether through general SD-related parliamentary groups and infrastructure, carbon reduction legislation or emphasis on driving sustainability education, clear underpinning ideological differences between the two political parties can be seen. The heightened priority that was afforded to SD under Labour is palpable and exemplified by activities such as the establishment of the SDC and the Environmental Audit Committee³³ in government, the implementation of the UK Climate Change Act and the growth of HEFCE's SD policy remit for the HE sector. The decline in priority since the change back to the Conservative-dominated regime is also plain; the dissolution of the SDC and the watering down of HEFCE's sustainability policy stance are just two of many examples which could be highlighted.

The 'Third Way' regime of New Labour (as witnessed under Blair and Brown) is often described as taking a left-leaning middle ground approach, which goes beyond the traditional dividing lines of left and right and attempts to meet the demands of the global economy, at the same time as advancing social democracy and justice in society; this has been described as the modernisation of social democracy, as well as the humanisation of capitalism (Giddens, 1998; Naidoo, 2000; Jary 2005). Several authors have explored the enactment of Third Way principles within higher education policy and the resulting amalgamation of (yet also tensions between) more 'right-wing' decentralising marketising principles and more 'left-wing' centralising socio-democratic ideals. As Naidoo (2000, pg. 25 – 26) describes:

³³ The role of the **Environmental Audit Committee** '...is to consider the extent to which the policies and programmes of government departments and non-departmental public bodies contribute to environmental protection and sustainable development, and to audit their performance against sustainable development and environmental protection targets' (Parliament UK, undated, pg. 1).

What is distinctive about this new form of politics is its 'dual' nature. On the one hand, policies of marketisation are adopted as a basis for a successful economy and concerted efforts are made to create market relations between and across various sites in society, including sectors such as higher education, which were previously insulated from direct contact with market forces. On the other hand, 'equity' and 'social justice' policies are developed to deflect the most corrosive effects of market forces through state regulation and state support for the most vulnerable groups in society. Reform strategies in higher education [under Third Way regimes] are thus likely to reflect both the 'marketisation' as well as the 'equity' strands of the 'third way' political frameworks.

The Third Way concept that state regulation and support should be directed to ensure that public societal and environmental goods are protected within prevailing marketised contexts, is clearly illustrated by the previous Labour government's much stronger focus on sustainable development and environmentalism generally, but also, by the enhanced emphasis placed on driving sustainability into the English HE sector via the mandate provided by government to HEFCE. Whilst for some, 'the primacy of neoliberalism' in the Third Way regime of New Labour, means that sustainability is still far from the heart of the Labour party (Barry and Peterson, 2004; Huckle, 2008, pg. 69; Jackson, 2010), greater advances for SD and HESD movements were clearly made under their watch; i.e. there are clearly different shades of neoliberalism. The shift in stance exemplified by government and HEFCE towards universities themselves taking the lead on and maintaining momentum for sustainability and ESD agendas, has as previously noted, left a large whole in the centre of national-level mandate for HESD. In relation to the overall marketisation trend in English higher education and the decentralising rolled-back neoliberal ideology which has underpinned marketisation processes, there is clearly a practical contradiction between neoliberalism and HESD. Yet on the other side of this marketisation coin, the centralising and interventionist tendencies of marketisation, as exemplified by the NPM steering manifestation of government grant letter references to sustainability, conversely, appear to have been very important for driving ESD activities on the ground within HEIs.

5.2.5 The importance of new public management for driving HESD: legitimisation through 'steering'

The importance of strong leadership and support for sustainability and ESD from central government and the sector bodies was highlighted through the responses of many interviewees. Sustainability and ESD support provided by HEFCE and the HEA have however dropped back in recent years, as exemplified through interviewee responses, the shifting emphasis of HEFCE's policy stance which points towards SD momentum coming from *within* HEIs themselves, and the near total loss of the HEA's thematic ESD work. HEFCE's 2014 SD policy framework confirms this shift, noting that '*...the drive for progress [regarding SD] is now firmly located within the sector*' (HEFCE, 2014a, pg. 5). Interviewees X1 and X4 expressed similar sentiments:

... [the sustainability agenda] absolutely needs leadership but it's where that leadership comes from, leadership with a stick, leadership with a wad of cash or leadership because you know it's the right thing to do, where does leadership come from? Is it government? Is it the funding council? Is it from each institution's own senior management team? Is it from students? Where is leadership going to come from? And I think we're very wedded to it coming from above and falling in line with it. ...I think now is the opportunity for the sector to grow up and account for itself and say if we think something is of value we'll do it. And I think the sector has been so used to just following or looking to what lead comes from government or HEFCE that now that there aren't those leads they struggle, and I actually think well hold on, this is the time for you to say these are the values of this university, this is what we think and we are going to take that direction. ...I don't think you should expect policy direction (X4).

When you're in an institution and you desperately want some help to unlock things internally and institutionally, you look for things and people and places that can help. In the absence of a big strategic push, some institutions have stepped up and said well we're doing this anyway because it's a good thing to do. I get frustrated with people who are looking at other people to tell them what to do, I just think crack on (X1).

Whilst there were a few responses (ca. three) from individuals working *within* a university who agreed that it was the responsibility of HEIs to take the lead on driving sustainability, overall it was palpable just how important the sector bodies were perceived to be for maintaining national-level momentum for HESD (as outlined in Table 5.7 which displays the results of data analysis Core Theme 5). Indeed, many individuals were actively calling out for stronger direction and support. Interviewee responses highlighted a range of reasons why strategy, policy, guidance documents, reports, as well as specific thematic work areas and funding streams from HEFCE, the HEA and other sector organisations, were vital to the success of HESD activities within their institution. These reasons are summarized in the bullet points on the next page and illustrated by interviewee quotes in Table 5.8 (N.B. there is a significant focus on the QAA due to interviews being conducted at the same time as consultations for the QAA ESD guidance document were taking place).

Table 5.7 – Analytical Codes and Key Themes within Data Analysis Core Theme 5

Core Theme 5 – Sustainability and ESD leadership and support from ‘The Top’	
Key Themes	Analytical Codes
The importance of sector body sustainability/ESD strategy, policy, guidance documents, reports, thematic work areas and funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance of sector body documentation – senior university staff buy-in – importance of ‘badges’ on documentation • Documents strengthen the role of ESD change agents in HEIs – legitimize agenda – tool in armoury – provides internal leverage for resources • Persuading sceptics and those ‘on the fence’ about ESD • Precursor for expectations in future • Financial incentives and ring fenced funding from sector bodies raises profile of sustainability/ESD, legitimizes agenda and drives change – creates opportunity structures for HEIs – can lead to ongoing investment • Calls for more direction/support from the sector bodies • HEIs and individuals looking upwards for direction and leadership on ESD
The importance of HEI leadership from ‘the top’	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vital importance of high level institutional leadership, VC and PVC buy-in for driving and progressing sustainability and ESD agendas • Institutionalising sustainability/ESD at top table – linking into senior management teams and executive committees – allocating funds – gives credibility to sustainability/ESD teams • Importance of high-level teaching and learning directors/managers for championing and driving ESD into teaching and learning activities
Issues with financial incentives and nudging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial incentives risk skewing outcomes – do people engage on a deeper values level, consider the bigger picture, take a critical approach and change their reasoning or just chase money and engage tokenistically? • Nudging as undemocratic and subversive

- Policy documentation, funding opportunities and thematic work areas were said to legitimise, give credibility to and raise the profile of sustainability/ESD on-the-ground within HEIs, as well as strengthen the influence of change agents within universities and create more internal leverage for ongoing financial investment into HESD agendas.
- Policy documentation was also described as important for gaining the buy-in of senior university staff, e.g. Vice-Chancellors, Pro-Vice Chancellors, Deans, etc. The significance of having the 'HEFCE' or the 'QAA' badge on such documentation was a key aspect of getting such staff on board. These 'badges' were actually described by some to be more important than the tangible content of the documents themselves. Interviewees were unanimous in detailing the vital importance of gaining internal high-level support for sustainability from within HEIs (i.e. which endorsement from the sector bodies helped to encourage), which was seen as imperative for helping to institutionalise sustainability at the senior levels and 'top table' structures of universities, e.g. senior management teams and executive committees. Engaging directors of teaching and learning as well as quality-assurance staff through such documentation was also seen as an avenue for driving ESD.
- Individuals also described documents from HEFCE, the HEA, the QAA, etc. as tools in their political armoury, due to the authoritative influence that such bodies have within English academia. These documents were used to 'sell' the ESD agenda to different subject departments and teaching teams and for persuading academics 'on the fence' about ESD. Guidance documentation, such as the QAA ESD guidance document, was also said to be taken by academics as a precursor for future quality assurance mandate areas.
- Sustainability/ESD policies and funding streams (whether from the HE bodies or from internal institutional structures) also 'allowed' and enabled staff enthusiastic about ESD in different subject areas to justify paying more time and attention to ESD within their teaching.

Table 5.8 – The significance of sustainability/ESD policy documentation, funding and thematic work areas from the HE sector bodies

Interviewee Quotes
Interviewee Y8: ‘...there’s a translational role in that our ability to move forward, as sort of intermediaries, is strengthened by being able to say look HEFCE has legitimated it, QAA have legitimated it. So they give strength to people who are change agents. So you stop being the token ‘greeny’ and start being just a person who’s going to implement something that they’re going to have to do anyway’ ‘It becomes more useful when you’re talking to the Vice Chancellor, to the Pro-Vice Chancellors because they’re the people who actually worry about what the QAA say...’
Interviewee Y7: ‘Things like the HEA, when they create their reports and they do these student surveys, that’s really powerful for us when we go into meetings. I can stand there in front of a room and say, off the top of my head, 67% of all students in the UK that have been interviewed say that they want to see sustainability in their curriculum. ...especially if people are a little bit on the fence about things, it really helps convince them...’ ‘If [the sector bodies] take the agenda seriously at a national level, and they are providing resources or funding for this, and funding obviously is very attractive for academics, and they see that there is a lot going on with this, [academics think] maybe I should take it more seriously. So it is, for me, really essential that those bodies make it obvious that they care about the subject, and they encourage it’
Interviewee Y4: ‘...once the QAA start producing things, even if it just says guidance, people are likely to pay some attention to it because of the audit role that they have. ...I think that the sector will probably see the publication of that guidance perhaps as an early indication that what now is guidance might become expectation later on’
Interviewee Y14: ‘I think the main impact, or one of the main impacts of the HEFCE and the QAA developments over the past 12 months is to be able to say to other academic staff or people in universities that the QAA and HEFCE are doing this, this is a real, you know, it’s a big thing, and the QAA I think starts to get other people interested’ ‘I do think [HEFCE] should have a much stronger role and my response to the HEFCE consultation was that they should be more demanding’
Interviewee Y13: ‘... [sector body documentation is] really important for giving weight to what we’re doing. Doing a presentation and having something from HEFCE at the beginning saying this is super important for HE in the UK, is so important, it gives so much weighting’
Interviewee Y31: ‘...I don’t know how it’s going to come out [QAA ESD guidance document], but even if it’s not the ideal document I think it’s more a matter of legitimation than direct guidance. ...its existence is important, that’s almost more important than anything really’ ‘...clearly having generous funding [from HEFCE] and real capacity with that number of staff we were able [University E] to do quite a lot in that time in terms of shifting thinking here and practice’ ‘...clearly senior management legitimation of [sector body] mandate is very key in terms of promoting it’
Interviewee X3: ‘HEFCE has since 2003 has done a fantastic job of nudging and steering and cajoling and pulling and pushing the sector as a whole into taking sustainability seriously, and it’s done that in large part through incentives, by putting sustainability focused demands into funding opportunities, so HEIs have had to do things if they wanted the cash, e.g. carbon and building cash’

So whilst direction, support and funding from the sector bodies has been paramount for moving HESD agendas forward within HEIs; HEFCE and the HEA have moved to a hands-off role in recent years. Equally there has been no further movement from the QAA since their 2014 guidance document. In the current hands-off neoliberal climate in relation to sustainability which

the sector is currently experiencing – which has ultimately placed responsibility for maintaining the momentum for sustainability and ESD on to universities themselves – the previous quotes from Interviewees X1 and X4 seem to exemplify a lack of understanding about the difficulties individuals and teams can face in gaining traction for sustainability, and particularly ESD, within institutions without support from above, as well as the practicalities of what drives (and equally what constrains) systematic change for sustainability within HEIs. HESD advocates do not look upwards to the sector bodies and their own senior management because they lack impetus or willpower, or because they want or need to be told what to do. They do so because they are often lone rangers, spread across a range of different departments, or small teams, who work incredibly hard to spread the sustainability message within their organisation, and for whom the support of the sector bodies and their own Vice-Chancellors, is vital for legitimising their cause and strengthening the role and influence they have. Indeed, Sterling and Scott (2008, pg. 387) have described this process of embedding HESD as a *'...complex, largely decentralised, and multi-stranded process undertaken by disparate groups of academics variously involved in raising the debate, developing policy and theoretical frameworks, networking, influencing peers, using existing funding streams, researching, disseminating, [and] working with professional bodies'*. HESD leadership from the sector bodies can be analysed most fittingly through NPM 'steering' philosophy. This 'steering' relationship, although significantly diminished in the last few years, was essentially a two-stage process, whereby government grant letters to HEFCE, and then HEFCE grant letters to the HEA, and their references to SD and ESD respectively, provided a first level of mandate for HEFCE and the HEA to deliver sustainability/ESD actions for the HE sector. Steering mechanisms (e.g. strategy, policy, guidance documents, reports; funding opportunities; thematic work streams) from HEFCE and the HEA then provided a second level of legitimisation for individual HEIs and ESD advocates/teams; which also links to a third level of gaining buy-in from senior HEI staff. Thus, in the context of the practical relationship between marketisation and ESD, the process of NPM steering has been quite critical for legitimising and facilitating HESD activities.

These complex relationships between central government, HEFCE, the HEA and HEIs in relation to sustainability and ESD have been analysed previously; notably around the time of HEFCE's second SD policy consultation and publication phase in 2008/09. Sterling and Scott (2008, pg. 388) described the relationship between government, HEFCE and individual universities as one of 'cooperative tension', whereby each entity has its own areas of responsibility and competence, yet must work within the context set by the others, as a result, they say: *'SD has provided (and continues to provide) a context in which this cooperative tension has played itself out in particular, varied and very interesting ways'*. Scott and Gough (2007, pg. 113) also described this tension between externally and internally driven HE agendas, which they say has been *'...found throughout all the sustainable development higher education initiatives put in place in England over the last fifteen years'*. In Scott and Gough's view, there is however *'...a fine line between offering support to the higher education sector, and steering it in a particular way'*, positing that more steering may actually result in a diminished response by HEIs (ibid, pg. 109). This is an interesting point and highlights the fact that there are different types of steering in relation to HESD; approaches which may be more or less palatable to HE institutions. Sterling and Scott (2008), Scott and Gough (2007) and Katayama and Gough (2008) all evoke an underpinning tension between the traditional/liberal model of higher education and centrally driven HE agendas (particularly those which focus on universities' curricula) and outline a desire for support from the 'the top', whether that be from central government, HEFCE, the HEA or from HEIs internal leadership levels, to be enabling, encouraging and indicative – promoting freedom, debate, challenge and multiple perspectives on SD – rather than directive, prescriptive and impositional. For Scott and Gough (2007) this is vital in order to maintain necessary barriers which protect and respect the traditional roles and liberal conception of academics and HEIs. Such tensions between top-down and bottom-up ESD approaches have also been highlighted by Cotton, et al., (2009), who found that some HE staff desire clear top-down support for ESD and do not feel comfortable making value judgements about the importance of ESD themselves, whilst

others evoke the impositional nature of strong leadership which doesn't align with individual academic priorities. Whilst Thomas (2016, pg. 59) has recently written that curriculum change for ESD needs '*...both the 'top' to provide coordination, structures and resources, as well as the 'bottom' to provide the knowledge and energy to interpret the concepts and put them into action*'.

A paper by Broadbent, Laughlin and Alwani-Starr (2010), *Steering for Sustainability: Higher Education in England*, provides important insights for thinking about the role of new public management steering in the context of marketisation and in relation to HESD. Although the paper focuses on the broader sustainability agenda of English HE, theorising can of course be extrapolated down to ESD-specific developments. Broadbent, et al., (2010, pg. 463) describe 'steering mechanisms' as regulations and systems that drive organisational actions in particular and desired ways and 'steering media' as the societal institutions that issue such mechanisms. At the heart of this steering relationship is the 'lifeworld', which is the taken-for-granted values and norms of a society or organisation. Through this steering lens, they depict HEIs as organisational systems undertaking societal functions and HEFCE as a steering medium which attempts to shape HEIs in accordance with values and norms defined by government. The paper goes on to detail a range of approaches taken by HEFCE to steer HEIs towards sustainability, including HEFCE's SD policy documents, SD references in HEFCE's annual grant letters to HEIs, the Revolving Green Fund initiative and the Higher Education Innovation Fund, amongst others. Furthermore, activities of the other sector bodies, such as the EAUC's Green Gown Awards and the People and Planet Green League, are also described as steering mechanisms. According to Broadbent, et al., the range of steering mechanisms employed to drive sustainability in English HE thus encompasses: direct intervention or regulation; financial rewards; the ability to demonstrate achievement; as well as naming and shaming and applying pressure. Drawing on previous work by one of the authors they posit that steering mechanisms intended to lead change in organisations can work in one of two ways (ibid, 2010, pg. 470):

They might be 'regulative and amenable to substantive justification' and, therefore, enable change as they are, in effect, enabling the demands of the existing societal and organizational lifeworlds, which are assumed to be in agreement. They could, however, be perceived to be 'constitutive and legitimized by procedure' and not in tune with existing organizational lifeworlds.

Thus, resistance to change will arise where a steering medium seeks to impose changes on an organisational system that is not compatible with the lifeworld of the organisation; the steering mechanism then becomes a 'colonizing threat' to the lifeworld (ibid, pg. 470). Leading from this, the authors describe the role of 'relational' and 'transactional' steering approaches for sustainability. The former allowing flexibility, aligning with organisational lifeworlds, usually being 'amenable to substantive justification', but not always generating desired actions in terms of substantive growth of new organisational discourses. The latter being applied in the form of mandate, thus *ensuring* that particular actions *will* result from steering mechanisms (ibid, pg. 471). Broadbent, et al., conclude that funding opportunities and resource flows remain the most significant mechanisms of steering for sustainability in HE, insofar as the providers of funds can influence the actions of those to whom the funds are provided (particularly as funding is a limiting factor for most HEIs), stressing that HEFCE and other HE bodies in England, should use funding, both relationally and transactionally as appropriate, to 'steer for sustainability'.

The results of the 'steering' analysis presented here portray an interesting tension between the economic/marketised model of HE and the liberal/traditional model; between steered leadership from 'the top' and the autonomy of institutions. Whilst in many ways academic staff and universities defend and attempt to safeguard their academic freedoms, it seems that they have also become reliant upon marketising dirigisme to legitimise specific policy causes; HESD is a case in point. The HESD movement and community of practice in England appears to have, in many ways, internalised the marketised norms of the HE sector as a vital legitimating driver of HESD activity. So whilst heightened neoliberal ideology and a de-prioritization of sustainability by government has proven a limiting factor for the progression of

ESD since 2010, ironically, it is actually more marketisation, in the form of NPM steering, that would lead to a reinvigoration of national-level momentum and policy activity around ESD and perhaps, would start a trajectory towards the next HESD ‘tipping point’. Paradoxically within this steering analysis, marketisation is both good and bad for HESD; it contradicts and challenges, as well as compliments and synergises. These conclusions chime with the literature in Chapter 2 which explored the tensions between market-led decentralisation (i.e. enhanced neoliberal ideology and hands-off government support for sustainability) and state-led centralisation (i.e. NPM steering mechanisms for sustainability) within the overall marketisation of English higher education. The positioning of state and market within the overall marketised landscape, is as Middleton (2000, pg. 540) described over fifteen years ago, a ‘complicated reality’ comprising a *‘...mélange of diverse and often contradictory elements’*. Such conclusions also fundamentally question the proposition that neoliberal marketisation is ‘the enemy’ of HESD activities and developments. There are clearly many nuances to this marketisation argument.

Overall we can conceive of the practical relationship between marketisation and ESD in relation to the role of HEFCE and the HEA, as one of ‘steered legitimisation’ – whereby various steering mechanisms emanating from these sector bodies over the years have led to substantial advances for higher education sustainability and ESD agendas. In the current absence of a strategic drive towards sustainability from central government and therefore from HEFCE, looking towards the future, the new Office for Students and the ‘new HEA’ are in the most prominent position to fulfil this HESD steering role going forward. Katayama and Gough have posited that (2008, pg. 421): *‘...the most effective ‘top-down’ policy may prove to be that which best facilitates ‘bottom-up’ activity’*. If the Office for Students and the ‘new HEA’ are to reinvigorate this top-down steering role to facilitate and legitimise bottom-up activity, their biggest challenge will be to develop an approach which is ‘amenable to substantive justification’ and compatible with broad-based institutional and individual lifeworld values and norms within the heightened marketised context.

5.2.6 NPM steering: practical processes of legitimisation or ‘crowding out’ values and morals?

An important issue raised during the interviewing process was the extent to which steering mechanisms, particularly financial incentives, might risk skewing the outcomes of resulting sustainability and ESD activities. Several interviewees evoked a tension between the need to encourage university staff to engage with sustainability on a deep, critical and values-based level, rather than on a superficial and tokenistic level, which they said, financial incentives might encourage. Interviewee Y8 said:

...my problem about financial incentives like that is on the whole they skew outcomes. I’m slightly worried about using incentives, a) because I’m not sure you get the outcome you’re expecting, and b), I think people then chase the incentives, and actually what we want them to do is to understand the message.

In the opinion of Interviewee Y13, ESD must connect with people’s deep emotions ‘...to trigger them to be interested in going on an ESD journey within their subject’, which they followed up by saying: ‘...I don’t think money or forcing people to do that through the nudge process would be useful, if you don’t change people’s reasoning behind things, it might not do anything...’. A linked viewpoint taken by Interviewee Y27 was that some people respond to financial incentives, whilst others respond to values-based incentives when it comes to sustainability activities:

...you can’t incentivise all people with money to do something environmental, you need to talk about values; they don’t want money for it. ...the environmental team this year are giving financial awards for people saving energy, which gets some people to push to do it, but it might put some other people off who are interested and might do it voluntarily anyway.

According to Interviewee Y18, if financial incentives are used to encourage people to engage with sustainability-related ‘public good’ activities, the altruistic instinct of the person is ‘crowded out’ (or pushed out) by the financial incentive, so that if the financial incentive is then taken away, the

person will be less likely to engage with the activity. Furthermore, if such incentives are combined with 'nudging' mechanisms, they said, the process then becomes undemocratic. In relation to the concept of 'nudging' Interviewee Y18 offered the following critique:

In the end, I think sustainability is going to be about people making choices about the way in which they live their lives. If nudging bypasses the rational process then what you're effectively doing is cutting out the very thing that you need people to develop; why bother to educate people at all if you can nudge them or steer them to do, as it were, the right thing?

Interviewee Y6 expressed a similar concern about nudge theory being 'underhand':

...you do need to be very open with people and say we're giving you this incentive because we want you to do this, and then people have an open choice. ...you always have to be careful that you don't then stifle the sort of bigger sustainability agenda, which is again getting people to think more critically about why we do what we do.

The above quotes link to three key theoretical areas from the academic literature, which are:

'Nudge' theory (Thaler and Sunstein, 2008); 'Motivation Crowding' theory (Frey and Jegen, 2001); and 'Environmental/Sustainability Citizenship' theory (Dobson 2007, 2010, 2011) – all of which have been collectively explored by Professor Andrew Dobson.

Nudge theory, as introduced by Thaler and Sunstein in their infamous (2008) book, *Nudge: Improving Decisions About Health, Wealth and Happiness*, is based upon the notion of a supposed 'choice architecture' which surrounds all of us in our day-to-day lives and guides the decisions and choices we make; from what items we decide to buy when food shopping to whether or not we choose to use recycling bins in public places. The basic premise is that people can be 'nudged' into making different life decisions, which might for example, be better for their health or better for the environment, by changing the choice architecture that they encounter on a regular basis (Thaler and Sunstein, 2008). The nudge approach essentially works through altering people's instinctual, rather than their rational behaviour, thus the key critique of this

approach is that it encourages people to make different life choices without enabling them to engage critically or reflectively with *why* these life choices are desirable; thus, bypassing individuals' values and not necessarily leading to lifelong behaviour changes. Moreover, through changing the choice architecture within people's lives in subtle yet influential ways, nudging has been critiqued for being subversive and undemocratic; 'depoliticising' and 'de-democratising' the inherently political and democratic agenda which is 'sustainability' (Dobson, 2010, 2011, pg. 11). On the other hand, the idea that financial incentives may 'crowd out' altruistic motivation towards public good activities stems from two branches of social science theorizing, the first links to the influential 1970 book by Richard Titmuss, *The Gift Relationship*, which hypothesised that financial incentives for public blood donations undermined peoples' sense of civic duty towards giving (Frey and Jegen, 2001). The resulting 'Motivation Crowding' theory, posits that financial incentives *do not necessarily* lead to increased engagement with public good activities and may in fact diminish such motivation through: altering the altruistic status of the action being undertaken making it less desirable; decreasing the reputational esteem attached to the action; or simply tainting the satisfaction people get from enacting good deeds (Frey and Oberholzer-Gee, 1997; Frey and Jegen, 2001; Bénabou and Tirole, 2005; Irlenbusch and Sliwka, 2005). The second area of research stems from Psychology and relates to the relationship between 'intrinsic motivation', i.e. *'...activities one simply undertakes because one likes to do them or because the individual derives some satisfaction from doing his or her duty'*, and 'extrinsic motivation' which is activated by external influences such as monetary incentives (Frey and Oberholzer-Gee, 1997, pg. 746; Frey and Jegen, 2001). In relation to sustainability specifically, the problem with fiscal incentives for Dobson is that they remove morals and values from the equation (Dobson, 2011, pg. 6):

In deliberately bypassing the normative 'why?' stage of the policy process, the fiscal incentive approach removes any possibility of social learning [and] sustainability becomes a non-normative policy objective that can be achieved by mobilising a reductive view of human motivation (self-interested utility maximisation) – and without making reference to sustainability at all.

The third key concept outlined above has been theorised extensively by Dobson, who has defined Sustainability Citizenship as: *'...pro-sustainability behaviour, in public and in private, driven by a belief in fairness of the distribution of environmental goods, in participation, and in the co-creation of sustainability policy'* (Dobson, 2011, pg. 10). Dobson's theories around environmental and sustainability citizenship have essentially been built around a contestation of the use of financial incentives (or sanctions), and more recently nudging processes, to lead to positive sustainability advances in society. For Dobson, sustainability citizenship requires deliberative, values-based, critical, normative and political engagement with sustainability issues, which he says financial incentives and nudging do not permit: *'Ethics, norms and values are not an optional extra in sustainability – they are constitutive of it'* (Dobson, 2011, pg. 8). Nudging processes he says, are even worse than financial incentives, as at least those subject to financial incentivisation *'...are aware that there is a policy, and that they are subject to it'*, whereas nudging *'hides itself from view'* and eschews any chance of critical engagement (ibid, pg. 7). Whilst Dobson's (and others) critique of nudging has much validity and indeed motivation crowding theory has been substantiated in various social settings, I believe there is a significant difference between the types of behaviour changing activities which have traditionally formed the centre of such debates (e.g. driving less, recycling more, reusing plastic bags) and the types of HESD activities which have been subject to NPM-style steering mechanisms in English HE, which makes some of the above rationale redundant in the context of the English HESD movement.

Firstly, the types of financial and policy incentives which have aided England's HESD agenda in recent years, such as HEFCE's SD policy statements, the Green Academy programme from the HEA, or teaching innovation grants provided for ESD projects within individual HEIs, cannot accurately be described as having taken a nudge approach. These types of activities require rational engagement and active decision making, i.e. it is not feasibly possible to engage unconsciously and automatically in responding to an ESD funding call or in implementing sustainability-based pedagogical innovations in the classroom. Such NPM-style incentives are, as

we have seen, more accurately described as ‘steering’ approaches. Therefore, the above critique of nudge ideology has little applicability to the types of ESD incentivisation activities which are the focus of this chapter. Furthermore, whilst the notion of ‘crowding out’ presents a significant challenge to the taken-for-granted proposition that financial incentives may simply be added to other motivations to enhance overall motivation towards an activity (without damaging underlying intrinsic motivation), research in this area is not entirely clear cut (Janssen and Mendys-Kamphorst, 2004; Bénabou and Tirole, 2005; Berglund and Matti, 2006). Bénabou and Tirole (2005, pg. 2, 34) have described how personal reputation is a significant determining factor in the motivation crowding phenomenon insofar as people’s behaviour is ‘...influenced by a strong need to maintain conformity between one’s actions, or even feelings, and certain values, long-term goals or identities they seek to uphold’ and therefore, individuals’ actions ‘...reflect a variable mix of altruistic motivation, material self-interest and social or self image concerns’. In this vein, Janssen and Mendys-Kamphorst (2004) have also explained that one way of differentiating between individuals’ motivations is through classifying people as either altruists or egoists. Both types of people, they say, are motivated by reputational benefits and rewards, and indeed both types value money, but crucially, to differing degrees. Therefore, they surmise, egoists are less likely to contribute altruistically unless the sum of reputational and financial rewards compensate for the time and effort it takes to engage in activities, whereas altruists will engage in altruistic behaviour even when the sum of reputational and financial rewards are much less than the personal cost. Thus, if thinking about motivation crowding in relation to HESD-based activities, there are likely to be multiple complicating factors and context-dependent variables, which mean that most individuals will be driven by a highly internalised and intangible mix of motivating factors which are at once intrinsic and values-based *and* also extrinsic and self-interested.

This research has also demonstrated that there is another significant factor at play in the provision of financial and policy incentives for academics engaging in HESD activities; that is the notion of steered legitimisation. Much motivation crowding theorising assumes that individuals

are unrestrained in their ability to engage with public good activities and are free to choose if, when and the extent to which they engage, however for many individuals interviewed as part of this research, this was not necessarily the case. There appears to be a difference between providing financial and policy incentives for actions which people have free will to engage or not engage with, compared to activities which are constrained to varying degrees by organisational settings and factors, in which case money may help to alleviate barriers through the process of legitimisation. Thus, are we to assume that the individuals who took part in this research are pursuing ESD solely based on financial and policy incentives, or should we assume that they are intrinsically and altruistically motivated and that extrinsic incentives simply help them to carry out their ESD roles through the process of legitimisation? Furthermore, if an individual is, in part, spurred to engage with ESD due to potential reputational benefits, does this detract from the efficacy of work that they are doing? Is there any valid reason why an individual shouldn't gain reputational esteem (and potentially personal gain through promotion) for engaging in ESD activities in a HE system where esteem is won through myriad different and competing avenues? If someone was initially spurred to engage with ESD due to financial and policy incentives, how can we say or know that this will not lead to more altruistic, deep and values-based engagement with sustainability? And vice versa, how do we know that someone who is intrinsically motivated will not also in time want to chase financial incentives for the work that they do?

These questions drive right to the heart of the pragmatist interpretivist framework of this thesis, particularly theoretical principles six – epistemological and value pluralism – and seven – action and experience over doctrine and ideology – which highlight a need to disambiguate falsely dichotomous philosophical and theoretical debates, to encourage epistemological and value pluralism, and to base decisions upon what experience and action shows us, rather than what doctrine and ideology tells us. In this regard, it is morally universalistic and absolutist to hypothesise that if sustainability/ESD activity is in any way linked to extrinsic marketised steering mechanisms and reputational or egotistic incentives, that it will lead to shallow, tokenistic, tick-

box engagement, rather than critical and reflective engagement. Revisiting the quote presented earlier by Interviewee Y8 (pg. 212) I believe this research has shown that it is possible for university staff to ‘chase financial incentives’ *and* to ‘get the sustainability message’. In fact, financial/policy incentives were one of the most important enabling factors cited by interviewees, which had allowed them to engage more deeply and progress further with their HESD work. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations towards HESD are clearly not mutually exclusive and in fact, are likely to be mutually reinforcing. Indeed, is it even possible that any member of staff could be driven solely by either intrinsic, altruistic and values-based factors or solely by extrinsic, egotistic and market-based factors? Can any sustainability or ESD action be purely values-driven or purely market-driven? There is no feasibly obtainable hard evidence which can answer these questions, but ultimately, the more academics’ are engaged with, exploring and ‘doing’ ESD in their classrooms, which is likely to be the result of a complex melange of motivators and incentivised steering mechanisms, the more likely it is that students will experience transformational sustainability-based educational experiences – which is surely the overall goal of HESD?

The practical relationship between marketisation and HESD, as related to the application of NPM steering mechanisms, appears to not only be practically effective, but morally legitimate too. In this regard the critical environmental educationalists are correct, ESD is deeply engrained in the ‘governmentality’ of the marketisation ethos. In a much-cited EE quote, Gonzalez-Gaudiano (2005, 2009, pg. 51) accused ESD of being an ‘empty signifier’ which, due to its neoliberal normalisation, ‘...operates like a huge myth with pretensions of being a salvation grand narrative’, but in reality lacks any inherent meaning. But what we might ask is an ‘empty signifier’, in this relationship between EE, ESD and marketisation? An educational movement making tangible progress, impacts and innovations, or a self-perpetuating, dichotomous, ideological debate with a *raison d’être* to critique anyone who attempts to forge positive change for sustainability at the interface with neoliberalism. Pragmatically speaking it is not possible for action to be ‘empty’; yet is certainly possible for ideology to be entirely devoid of practical meaning.

5.3 The Relationship between Educational Quality Assurance, Quality-Related Research Funding and ESD

This section explores the relationship between two archetypal marketised audit mechanisms in UK higher education – educational quality assurance (QA) (Core Theme 6) and quality-related research funding (QR) (Core Theme 7) – and the HESD agenda. Data analysis Core Themes 6 and 7 are based upon the responses of interviewees to the following question themes: the relationship between quality assurance and ESD; the QAA’s ESD guidance document; factors which govern personal research strategy; general impacts of the RAE/REF; involvement in sustainability/ESD research projects; and the relationship between the RAE/REF and sustainability/ESD research. As explored in Chapter 2, Sections 2.3.1 and 2.3.2, QA and QR are two major impacts of marketisation felt by academic staff, which have implications for both ESD and ESD research. Thus, any exploration of the ‘practical relationship’ between marketisation and ESD in English HE would be deficient if it did not consider these mechanisms. Focusing on educational QA allows us to explore the role of the QAA (as one of the outlined HE bodies in Doctoral Research Objective 4), and focusing on QR, implicitly allows further investigation of the role of HEFCE who implement the QR regime in England. Section 3.5.1 considers QA and Section 3.5.2 considers QR. Both sections combine presentation and description of results and analytical/theoretical discussion, with a specific focus on the influence and impact of QA/QR on the pursuit, practice and development of ESD activities and ESD research in English HE. Further analysis relating to Core Themes 6 and 7 is also picked up towards the end of this chapter in Section 5.4.4.

5.3.1 Educational quality assurance and ESD

The first emerging key theme from Table 5.9, which displays the results of Core Theme 6, relates to the relationship between the QAA’s subject benchmark statements and ESD. Two or three interviewees expressed a desire for benchmark statements to include cross-cutting

contemporary HE themes such as sustainability, alongside pure disciplinary knowledge, so that (in theory) all degree courses would have to start to consider sustainability in their teaching activities. Interviewees described:

...if the QAA can't generate a momentum that gets sustainability, and I would say enterprise, and I'd probably say internationalisation as well, into the subject benchmark statements, then I think they're copping out to be blunt about it. ...having subject benchmark statements that are completely narrowly disciplinary, rather than looking at the broader HE outcomes agenda, and then saying well how does this relate to my discipline? (Y8).

...to really have an impact [ESD] needs to start to move into the benchmark statements. ...when it becomes part of the benchmarking statements, then people will look at it (Y13).

Table 5.9 – Analytical Codes and Key Themes within Data Analysis Core Theme 6

Core Theme 6 – Educational quality assurance and ESD	
Key Themes	Analytical Codes
QAA Subject Benchmark Statements and ESD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calls for ESD to be embedded across Subject Benchmark Statements • Stand-alone Subject Benchmark Statement for ESD/sustainability would not be workable – too broad – not many stand-alone degree courses • Earth Sciences, Environmental Sciences and Environmental Studies Benchmark Statement increasing sustainability focus • (QAA rep view) Subject Benchmark Statements produced by disciplinary communities – HEIs curriculum autonomous
QAA ESD guidance document	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (QAA rep view) QAA facilitation role in ESD guidance document – not direct input • (QAA rep view) Step-change towards ESD – evolution not revolution • Hints towards ESD becoming more mandatory part of the quality code in the future? • HEFCE LGM project precursor to guidance • Working group made up of a variety of ESD experts – ESD people talking to each other – document for the ESD community • Document raising profile of ESD – policy driver towards mainstreaming • Document lacking 'teeth' to make impact
HEIs internal quality assurance and ESD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability increasingly being built into programme/module review and approval processes – leading to more ESD mainstreaming • Risk of tick box approach which can discourage critical engagement

The QAA representative interviewed for this research noted however that the QAA are an ‘outcomes oriented’ organisation that do not get involved with or intrude on, the autonomous curriculum of universities or the classroom practices of academic staff. Therefore, weaving a range of cross-cutting educational themes into the subject benchmark statements was not deemed to be part of the QAA’s remit; with such responsibility falling to the boards of academics responsible for each benchmark statement. When it came to the topic of a stand-alone benchmark statement for sustainability-related degree courses, several interviewees noted that this would not be appropriate or helpful due to the broad and nebulous range of ideas which would need to be included within it. Interviewee X7 noted that the Earth Sciences, Environmental Sciences and Environmental Studies benchmark statement had taken on an increasing sustainability focus in recent years and was the most appropriate home for sustainability-related degrees (although it could be argued this ties such degrees to an environmental-facing outlook).

Calls from the HESD community of practice for the QAA to produce an ESD quality enhancement document for the sector were heeded in 2012/13, and at the time of data collection the QAA and the HEA were collaboratively in the process of finalising the QAA’s first ESD guidance document. A previous project funded by HEFCE’s funding stream for leadership, governance and management projects within HEIs (the Leadership, Governance and Management (LGM) fund), entitled *Leading Curriculum Change for Sustainability: Strategic Approaches to Quality Enhancement* (HEFCE, 2012b), was seen by interviewees to have been the precursor to the guidance document, through helping to initiate conversations between the QAA and the national HESD community. This project was essentially the first tangible attempt to link ESD with national quality assurance and enhancement regimes. The QAA played a facilitation role in the development of the resulting ESD guidance document, which was written by a working group of ESD experts from across a range of UK HEIs. The QAA representative noted that the guidance document signalled a ‘step-change’ towards ESD in the sector and an evolution (not revolution) over time towards ESD. Other interviewees thought that this document signalled a movement

towards ESD being merged more formally into the auditing functions of the QAA and the six-yearly institutional reviews it carries out at each UK university; although no such movements have subsequently been seen.

Interviewee opinions about the development of the guidance document were mixed. As we saw earlier, many felt this would be another tool in their political armoury to help gain broader ESD buy-in at the institutional level. Some interviewees were sceptical about how impactful the document would be and felt that the working group had largely been a gathering of ESD experts working insularly together, producing a document for other members of the ESD community, rather than producing a document that would talk to the wider HE sector. Others felt that being only a quality enhancement/guidance document, rather than a mandated quality assurance document, it lacked the teeth to make real changes to classroom practice. However, only one interviewee expressed explicit concern and unease about ESD being linked to marketised QA procedures. Discussing the guidance document they said: *'...is this the appropriate response? Neoliberalism. I'm looking for human responses, let things be more localised, locally-led, why do you need people to assess and standardise things?'* (X8). As per discussions in Section 5.2, some interviewees also expressed concerns about the extent to which QA approaches encourage critical and values-based engagement with ESD or merely tokenistic, 'tick-box' responses. This concern is aptly summed by the following quote from Interviewee Y34:

I think my worry generally with the whole QA approach would be that if for example you try and put into all your [programme and module] revalidation documents, how you're addressing sustainability, the risk is that what you get is just a very tick box response. ...and as long as you've filled it in on the paperwork that's fine, [but] it doesn't actually change anything.

Indeed, over half of the institutions investigated also described other ways in which ESD was being linked to their own internal quality assurance regimes, including module and degree programme approval and review processes. Comments included:

...new teaching quality review framework. ...so every college, and therefore every discipline within the university will be asked to indicate how they are taking into consideration sustainability issues and how their discipline relates to the sustainability agenda (Y4).

...through our periodic review process we will expect courses to be able to say where they are at in terms of embedding sustainability into the curriculum (Y38).

We have an annual programme review process where every school reports every year on their programmes and we've got built into that a question about sustainable development (Y8).

Overall, the publication of the QAA's ESD guidance document, exemplifies an engineered and purposeful attempt to establish synergy between sustainability education and a core instrument of HE marketisation. The momentum for which, was driven almost exclusively by the national HESD community of practice. Furthermore, many ESD practitioners clearly recognised this QA-ESD link could be a fruitful way to further embed ESD within their own institutions, through a range of internal QA mechanisms. Overall, this burgeoning relationship, between ESD and QA, was portrayed as an important policy driver towards more ESD mainstreaming. These findings accord with a range of developments and research occurring at the international level and a recent growth in the number of universities that have started to make such links.

A recent volume edited by Fadeeva, Galkute, Mader and Scott (2015) entitled, *Sustainable Development and Quality Assurance in Higher Education*, explores the relationship between university QA processes and management systems and sustainability in depth, from the perspective of a range of international scholars. Overall this book describes quality assurance as an instrument of transformation within HE '*...that can help reshape the strategic, cultural and political dimensions of HE life*', can contribute towards 'whole systems' transformative HESD approaches, and can be more than simply a tool of compliance, ranking and marketing (Fadeeva, et al., 2015, pg. 3). Indeed, internal and external quality systems are presented through this book as levers that can harness engaged ESD activity and ensure that 'quality' in higher education is not

just about *fitness for purpose*, but ‘fitness of purpose’ and ‘fitness for transformation’ (ibid, pg. 21). As Tilbury (2015, foreword) describes in the books foreword ‘...without redefining the quality systems, ESD will continue to be left out of the mainstream as the cornerstone of education in achieving a sustainable future’. Built upon extensive previous research (Fullan and Scott, 2009; Scott, et al., 2012) Scott’s chapter describes a process of ‘steered engagement’ which emphasizes the importance of combined top-down/bottom-up approaches for leading change in HESD. In this model ‘the top’ sets the parameters for change, but then invites local groups, based upon unique contextual and disciplinary identities, to identify how best to implement them; with QA systems supporting and incentivising bottom-up activity (Scott, 2015). Indeed, Scott, et al., (2012, pg. 11) have previously championed the development of a comprehensive international ‘Quality Management and Tracking Framework’ for HESD. A separate article by Ryan and Tilbury (2013), addresses this QA-ESD link through reporting on the aforesaid HEFCE LGM project, which was led by the University of Gloucestershire in collaboration with four other universities and working closely with the QAA. The specific intention of the project was to connect sustainability education with quality systems in UK higher education and to produce a set of strategic guidance notes to help deliver this on the ground within HEIs. For Ryan and Tilbury (2013, pg. 273, 290), the connections between ESD and quality assurance offer huge potential for embedding ESD into the ‘...core practices, processes and priorities that underpin the higher education curriculum and guide its evolution’. They conclude that:

One of the most useful navigational tools is to approach ESD in higher education using quality as the compass. Finding the currents that connect both ESD and quality can provide momentum for long-lasting education change for this sector, so that ESD adds purpose and supports integration amidst the changing tides of higher education.

Thinking about the aim of this chapter, there is clearly a practical synergy between ESD and educational quality assurance/the QAA which has begun to develop across English HE. Only time will tell whether this synergy results in ‘box ticking’, ‘transformation’ or somewhere in-between.

5.3.2 Quality-related research funding and ESD

Exploring the general impacts as well as the ESD-specific impacts of the UK’s quality-related research funding system with interviewees painted a far less positive picture, both in terms of the detrimental influence of marketisation pressures on universities, departments and individual academic staff, as well as the relationship between QR processes and ESD research.

Table 5.10 presents the findings of data analysis Core Theme 7.

Table 5.10 – Analytical Codes and Key Themes within Data Analysis Core Theme 7

Core Theme 7 – Quality-related research funding and ESD	
Key Themes	Analytical Codes
General impacts of QR on universities/ departments/ individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Units of Assessment (UoAs) defined by elite disciplinary communities • Huge driver of research activity in research intensive HEIs/departments • Determines HEIs/departments’ status in league tables & research income • Linked to individual prestige, promotion, kudos and job security • Highly regarded 3* and 4* journals for each discipline – unwritten rules • Creates angst and stress – pressure to perform – divisive • Academics aligning research with UoA panels to maximise success • Time and resource intensive exercise • Diverts academics from other activities – notably teaching • Mitigates against taking risks – staff keeping to disciplinary confines • Research must fit with narrative being told by HEI/department • Strategic decisions in putting together submissions – game playing
Impacts of QR on interdisciplinary, sustainability, pedagogical and ESD research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interdisciplinary, sustainability, pedagogical and ESD research not well respected or accommodated by disciplinary UoA panels • Limited evolution in UoA panel thinking – silo discipline mentality/culture • ‘Core discipline’ research is REFable – academics encouraged to submit disciplinary papers • ESD and pedagogic research within discipline not readily REFable – academics discouraged from submitting pedagogic/ESD papers • Issues of theoretical/methodological quality and consistency of ESD research – not always evidence-based – individuals from variety of discipline backgrounds have variety of research approaches • ESD research not respected by high ranking disciplinary journals • ESD research doesn’t have many of its own high ranking journals
When QR isn’t a problem or barrier	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Departments with fewer RAE/REF targets/not submitting – more flexibility • Sustainability-based research which is more disciplinary with established journals – less problematic • Later-career staff less concerned about RAE/REF • Having an educational research institute, ‘Education’ UoA submission and when ESD is a key strength/theme of each – drives ESD research • QR less important in less research-intensive universities

The general impacts of QR research-funding, as explored in Chapter 2, Section 2.3.2, were more or less mirrored by the data collection process for this thesis and overall interviewees depict the RAE/REF system, as a self-perpetuating, elitist and disciplinary-focused system, which revolves around (as well as dictates), universities' national and international reputation and prestige, as well as individual academics' research status, links to promotion and job security. Table 5.11 includes a selection of interviewee quotes relating to the general impacts of QR, with some of the more negative implications outlined below. Interviewees described the RAE/REF exercise as:

- Divisive and causing departmental disharmony, as well as creating individual angst and stress for academics with the huge pressures to perform;
- Leading to research game playing by institutions, departments and individual academics, such as encouraging academics to strategically align their research with REF panel descriptors;
- Discouraging research risk-taking with pressure for staff to stay within disciplinary confines rather than exploring innovative and interdisciplinary research avenues; and,
- An expensive and time-wasting activity which diverts time away teaching, which was said to have been systematically downgraded in importance due to the REF.

Comparable critique of the REF has been detailed by Sayer (2014) who posits that the REF is not fit for purpose for several reasons, including that: it costs too much; it undermines collegiality; it discourages innovation; and, it is elitist in awarding almost 85% of all QR funding to the most prestigious research-intensive Russell Group and former 1994 group universities.

Table 5.11 – General impacts of QR on universities, departments and academic staff

<i>Interviewee quotes</i>
Interviewee Y25: 'The RAE and REF is a curse and it stops people thinking analytically and it encourages career researchers who don't care about anything else but their career'
Interviewee Y34: '...at quite an early stage [I] became quite strategic about what I did and where I published. The time I had for research I committed to writing journal articles because I could see quite quickly that that was the game'
Interviewee Y5: '...people know what is valued, and what is valued by the university is largely what's

valued by the REF because that determines our status and our income'
Interviewee Y6: '...I have to work very hard to make sure the papers that I publish are in the right journals, which are all Geography journals and it wouldn't necessarily be the journals I'd choose for my research but I have to publish in those if I want to keep my job, that's very transparent to me'
Interviewee Y11: '...it's a kudos-related activity. It really increases angst for those academics who are so bound up in their work and their research, and their publications sort of validate their identity. It's really divisive for departments, and lots of people get quite miserable about it'
Interviewee Y12: '... [the REF] is the key driver for virtually everything that goes on in the department and it impacts on not just the research, the teaching, the collegiality within the department, everything is driven by the REF. The university's status in the world and the nation is largely driven by the REF, it's the REF that holds them up in the league tables and it's what gives individual prestige to academics...'
Interviewee X7: '...to maximise your success in the REF you will align your research outcomes as explicitly as you can with the specified criteria of the particular panel you submit against'
Interviewee Y17: '... [REF] pushes us towards that kind of being very, very conscious all the time about your research, it makes you very sensitive, because you're always sitting there thinking, have I produced enough? Am I producing good quality? Am I doing this right?'
Interviewee Y28: '...all research is done with an eye on what can be submitted now to REF and to RAE previously. I'm not sure that that's been good for research in a pure sense because I think it's probably mitigated against people taking risks, and I think you have to be able to take risks in research because that's how you further knowledge'
Interviewee X9: 'The product of universities is not just research papers, the true product of university and the true meaning of university is the students, it's the graduates'

Interviewees were asked broadly about the relationship between the RAE/REF and interdisciplinary, sustainability, pedagogical and ESD research (recognising that many were doing research which crossed a number of these categorisations). Interviewees overwhelmingly agreed that these types of research are not well accommodated by the silo-discipline mentality REF panels. Interviewee Y5 who is a REF panel member described how interdisciplinary research is routinely disadvantaged, saying: *'...it's quite difficult for truly cross-disciplinary research, to be well received either by funders or by assessors because there aren't any experts. You're almost, by definition, on the boundaries of everyone's expertise...'* Although the former RAE and the REF have a system of cross-referrals for papers which cut across the boundaries of a Unit of Assessment (UoA), Interviewee Y5 posited that these papers never get appropriately considered by either the panel they are initially submitted to, nor the one they are referred to. For those interviewees actively publishing ESD-based research, the majority described a situation whereby they are encouraged by their departments to focus on and to submit to the REF their core background disciplinary research and are actively discouraged from submitting ESD papers which are not seen as 'REFable'. A compounding issue described, was the perceived calibre of journals in

which sustainability-based and ESD-focused articles are routinely published, which do not readily align with the elitist disciplinary expectations of the REF panels. As interviewee Y23 described: *'...if you can squeeze in an article on sustainability, that's great, but if you write for the International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education, you may as well be writing for the Beano in terms of your REFability'*. Interviewee quotes about the impact of QR on interdisciplinary, sustainability, pedagogic and ESD research are outlined in Table 5.12.

Table 5.12 – Impact of QR on interdisciplinary, sustainability, pedagogic & ESD research

Interviewee quotes
Interviewee Y12: '...the publications that you would do in the teaching area wouldn't go into the REF because the only things that go into the REF are Economics. If you do pedagogical research, or ESD, you will never have the respect from Economists'
Interviewee Y19: '...it's not something that's hugely encouraged [ESD and pedagogical research]; mainly because a lot of people think it's not REFable, because it couldn't go in a Chemistry submission'
Interviewee Y37: 'My REFable research is concerned with my discipline, that's quite separate; I've never tried to bring them together. In my discipline I can tick the REFable box and the sustainability work I do because I'm interested in it and I want to disseminate what we are doing'
Interviewee X7: 'I consider myself an interdisciplinary researcher and I have seen really limited evidence that REFs and RAEs have encouraged interdisciplinary research' '...if someone's got six papers, two of which are ESD and four are more mainstream to the panel, you would de-risk the situation by taking the four that are mainstream'
Interviewee Y8: 'The REF framework is appalling at recognising interdisciplinarity of any kind, or indeed pedagogic research, appalling, so it's a contra indicator'
Interviewee Y11: 'What wouldn't be valuable or valued, [is] if I wrote a paper on 'education' for SD, or if I reflected on the school practice or my teaching, that's the kind of thing that isn't REFable'
Interviewee Y6: 'I think what's interesting about the REF is that it's not very fit for purpose really if you were looking at sustainability because it is a discipline driven assessment. So I'm a Geographer and I'm assessed as a Geographer, not as somebody who works on sustainability'
Interviewee Y14: 'I don't see how I am going to be submitted in the next REF and that's seven years of paper writing ahead of me and a good number of maybe first author papers around sustainability education areas, they won't be submitted within the REF because they won't fit within any Geography or Environmental Science Unit of Assessment'
Interviewee Y40: 'The problem's been with the RAE in the past that we were limited in being able to submit within disciplines. So I had a struggle to make the case that when I did research on teaching and learning that that was actually within Geography'
Interviewee Y42: 'I did this great [ESD] project which brings lots of disciplines together but there is no way I could feature that in the REF because its different disciplines'
Interviewee Y20: '...sustainability is a new subject, so it doesn't have the journals and the reputations. ...has been strongly resisted by some of these dominant journals'
Interviewee Y29: 'I think the main problem for the REF/RAE is the calibre of the journals. The ones which take sustainability articles tend to be the lower ranking ones...'

There were a handful of individuals from across the range of universities who did not perceive the REF to be a barrier to their sustainability or ESD-focused research and/or it was not something that they were anxious or concerned about. These included staff working in departments that were not submitting to the REF in 2014 and so had more flexibility with their personal research; staff working in well-established fields of sustainability research with more highly rated 'house' journals to publish within, for example green politics or climatology; later-career staff who were no longer striving for promotions; and staff in the two new universities investigated which are more education-focused than research-focused establishments. However, of the eight HEIs investigated there was only one that had a genuinely positive story to tell regarding their experiences of ESD research and the REF. The university in question has a large educational research centre with a strong ESD theme, within which a range of academic staff work, research and publish collaboratively in ESD-related research areas, as well as supporting other staff across their institution who are exploring ESD in a range of disciplines. In the 2014 REF exercise this university had been able to build a sufficiently strong narrative around their ESD research which was then submitted, along with other higher education research, to the 'Education' Unit of Assessment (UoA). The overview report produced after the 2014 REF exercise by REF Main Panel C where the Education UoA resides, has shown however, that higher education research like this currently forms a very small proportion of submissions received by the panel and that HE pedagogical research is an even smaller portion still. Concerning HE pedagogical research, this report said: *'Although prepared for such work, the sub-panel assessed only a small number of submissions related to teaching and learning in various subjects within universities and colleges'*. The report did state though, that *'Higher education research remains an area with great potential'* (HEFCE, 2015b, pg. 110, 105). This lack of representation of higher education and pedagogic research in the REF, chimes with recently commissioned research by the HEA that explored the experiences of HE pedagogic researchers, as well as a range of individuals responsible for coordinating REF 2014 Education UoA submissions. Findings showed that such

research faces myriad barriers in terms of credibility, QR recognition and is widely deemed 'not REFable', and that HE pedagogic researchers (often spread across HEIs) are regularly overlooked, either purposively or through lack of awareness, by schools of education compiling REF submissions (Kneale, Cotton and Miller, 2016; Cotton, Miller and Kneale, 2017).

Overall it is fair to conclude that QR poses a significant obstacle to ESD research across the HE sector in England (although these pressures are likely to be less problematic for HESD researchers with an educational research background and/or working within education departments/research institutes); both in the sense that there are inherent pressures which discourage many staff from undertaking ESD research in favour of their core disciplinary research, and that even when ESD research is published, it cannot as readily be submitted and thus rated and rewarded within the QR system. Central to this issue is the fact that most disciplinary units of assessment do not readily consider educational research within the confines of the discipline and that, as suggested above, ESD researchers may struggle to have their ESD papers accepted by schools of education who are preparing submissions to the Education unit of assessment. Equally, as pointed out by a handful of interviewees, many HESD researchers do not come from an educational research background, but rather have transitioned from other areas of research, which means that these individuals are less likely to be equipped in the research traditions, methodologies and expectations of more mainstream educational, pedagogical and higher education research fields. As previously pointed to in Chapter 3, there remains a large disconnect between mainstream HE literature (which was explored throughout Chapter 2) and mainstream HESD literature, with HESD literature often operating in its own silo away from this much broader and theoretically established field of research; despite the fact that there are multiple commonalities between key research themes. A significant example of this insularity is the fact that HESD research/ers have no footprint whatsoever within the UK's largest and most prestigious

HE research organisation, the Society for Research into Higher Education (SRHE)³⁴. In largely failing to engage and integrate with the mainstream HE research community, the HESD community is adding fuel to those who have critiqued ESD's lack of sound methodological and theoretical underpinnings (Corcoran, et al., 2004; Dillon and Wals, 2006; Barth and Rieckman, 2016; Kyburz-Graber, 2016). Whilst these factors will not (and by no means should have to) be of concern for all HESD researchers, for the many interviewees that I spoke to who continue with their HESD publications but *do* desire for them to be REFable (despite the disincentives presented by the QR system), the tangible barrier they are faced with is the ability to translate their ESD research from a 'hobby' activity into an academic activity which is recognised and rewarded on par with their traditional disciplinary fields. How does HESD research gain recognition and respect in an elitist, disciplinary, quality-related research funding system? And should it want to?

There are different ways of approaching the above questions through the lens of marketisation. One could argue that it is ideologically contradictory to seek to tie the ESD agenda more closely to the QR regime; that ESD research should be driven by the intrinsic sustainability-based values of individual academics who want to educate for sustainability and disseminate the findings of their research. Sterling, et., al (2016, pg. 89) have recently commented that *'...for many ESD researchers, their primary purpose and motivation operates at a deeper level and relates to the grand challenges of securing a more sustainable societal and planetary future'*. They did however concede that, as with any other area of educational research, funding opportunities and issues of academic profile and advancement play an influential role in the HESD research field. One could also argue that more and more published ESD research does not necessarily equate to more and more ESD activity on the ground within HEIs, although there is an inherent link between certain types of ESD research and teaching activities, e.g. pedagogical action research. On the

³⁴ The **Society for Research into Higher Education (SRHE)** is: '...a UK-based international learned society concerned to advance understanding of higher education, especially through the insights, perspectives and knowledge offered by systematic research and scholarship. The Society aims to be the leading international society in the field, as to both the support and the dissemination of research' (SRHE, undated, pg. 1).

other hand, we can surmise that if ESD research was more readily received, represented and valued by the QR system, that such research would become more academically respected, and that this would ultimately lead to more engagement with ESD teaching and research across the board within universities. Thus, although the current situation regarding the relationship between ESD research and the REF exemplifies a huge practical tension between marketisation and ESD, a way to improve this situation may actually be to work with the market instrument, rather than against it. Given that the Education unit of assessment explicitly welcomes higher education research, one productive way forward for universities and researchers wishing to submit ESD research for QR review, could be to work towards building cross-university submissions to the Education UoA, incorporating ESD as a key thematic area. In light of recent changes associated with the introduction of the Teaching Excellence Framework, which is driving a focus on teaching quality across the sector, it is possible that we may also start to witness a growing emphasis on educational/pedagogical research, publications and scholarship *within* disciplinary traditions and confines, and maybe even (one day) within disciplinary REF panels. Indeed, there is a strong argument to be made that this is one way of bringing disciplinary research and teaching closer together. From the perspective of the liberal/traditional model of higher education, sound educational/pedagogical research *within* disciplines can also be seen as a key avenue for supporting the continued and effective transmission of disciplinary knowledge from one generation to the next, via robust traditions of scholarship in teaching and learning. Key challenges for those in the HESD community wanting their research to be 'REFable' via the Education unit of assessment route, will be: ensuring that research projects are of the methodological, theoretical and analytical quality required by leading HE journals; forging connections and exploring synergies with mainstream HE literature, contemporary research themes in these areas, and national HE research communities of practice, e.g. the SRHE; and, developing new research networks and support structures within and across HEIs, to support ESD and other higher education researchers, which can contribute to a growing sense of esteem in

these research areas. Given that most HESD researchers are likely to be influenced by a melange of intrinsic and extrinsic motivating factors in their ESD research pursuits, there appears to be no valid reason why those individuals and HEIs who want to, should not seek the esteem provided by QR for their HESD research endeavours, nor to think and act strategically about how to best position their research to these ends. The final section of this chapter continues on directly from these discussions surrounding the competitive ethos which surrounds the REF within universities.

5.4 Competitive Advantage and the HE Sustainability Agenda

A key feature of the ongoing marketisation of UK higher education has been increasing levels of competition between HE providers, academic departments and members of staff, driven by neoliberal ideology, NPM mechanisms and auditing regimes, as well as the enhanced provision of publicly available information about academic performance across a range of areas. Traditional areas of competition within universities include research, teaching and student recruitment, as linked to QR, QA, the National Student Survey, university league tables, Key Performance Indicators, and of course now, the TEF. Other areas of university activity have also increasingly become important factors within this competitive landscape. Indeed, sustainability and ESD emerged quite clearly through interviews, as two such areas where this competitive ethos is playing out. This section outlines Core Theme 8 (detailed in Table 5.13), which focuses on the notion of ‘competitive advantage and the HE sustainability agenda’, which arose from the responses of interviewees to *some* specific questions surrounding the role of the NUS, the NSS and the EAUC in the HE sustainability agenda, but overall, this theme emerged more organically across the interviewing process. This section also draws in findings from Core Themes 6 and 7 regarding educational quality assurance and quality-related research funding, as well as discussions relating to intrinsic and extrinsic motivating factors, in an overall exploration of the links between competitive advantage, reputation, rewards and incentives for driving sustainability and ESD within English universities. Sections 5.4.1, 5.4.2 and 5.4.3 present and describe the results of data analysis Core Themes 8, before a more detailed analytical/theoretical discussion of the key themes is presented in Section 5.4.4.

Table 5.13 – Analytical Codes and Key Themes within Data Analysis Core Theme 8

Core Theme 8 – Competitive advantage and the HE sustainability agenda	
Key Themes	Analytical Codes
HEI reputational benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability as part of HEI unique selling point, branding and identity • Sustainability contributing positively to HEI business case and bottom line • Sustainability competition and comparison between HEIs driving agenda • Reputational risk to not engage with sustainability • HEI senior staff pay attention to sustainability league tables/awards • Tension between business case for sustainability and values-based drivers • HEIs linking ESD to individual staff career development
The People and Planet Green League and the EAUC Green Gown Awards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green League huge driver of change – raising the profile/enhancing credibility of sustainability/ESD work across the sector • Institutions driven to maintain position in league table and criteria used as levers for internal sustainability/ESD developments • Issues with Green League methodology • Green Gown Awards important for driving sustainability/ESD activities in HEIs and for competitive advantage in relation to comparable HEIs
The sustainability role of the NUS and the NSS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance of NUS/HEA surveys for leveraging Students Green Fund money from HEFCE via ‘students at the heart of the system’ rhetoric • NUS campaigning for sustainability/ESD-focused question in NSS – overwhelming feeling this would be very powerful tool for driving HESD • NSS causes reactive responses

5.4.1 HEI reputational benefits, the People and Planet Green League and the EAUC

Green Gown Awards

A palpable theme which emerged during interviewing was the notion of formal sustainability competition and comparison between HEIs and the fact that sustainability had become a key marketing agenda for many of the universities, both in relation to how they were choosing to position themselves in the HE marketplace and how they were selling themselves to prospective students. As interviewee Y21 explained about their institution:

...we're not an ancient Russell Group Uni, we can't just rely on that reputation to get us students. I feel like the sustainability agenda is more important to us because I see it as gaining a competitive advantage on other universities, and ultimately it's part of the marketing and the selling that we

offer to prospective students. The message I feel that I get from the top is that it's part of that package together with employability and other things we use to sell the university.

Indeed, individuals from all apart from the two Russell Group HEIs, described the sustainability agenda as a unique selling point for their institution, something which was actively embedded as part of their university brand and identity and ultimately, something they thought would enhance their reputation and give them competitive advantage over other universities. Interviewees said:

...if you look on the website, and I make no bones about it, [sustainability] is there for a reason, it's there because we think that that's what students will be attracted by (Y28).

I think that the VC is quite savvy about if there are reputational benefits to be gained from supporting this agenda then that's a really useful thing to do (Y34).

The University puts a lot of its marketing weight behind our green credentials (Y40).

The reason it's been easy for that to gain traction in the modern environment is because [sustainability] could be a selling point. ...this is going to be a great marketing ploy for us (Y15).

The latest agenda is to try to push sustainability as a top table issue. ...so it's all about brand value, talent retention, business benefits (Y32).

We got the VC to agree that this is going to be an area of distinction for the university. ...ultimately sustainability is about innovation – innovation in process, innovation in thinking and innovation in solutions – and ultimately how we commercialize those ideas, it's just good business (Y37).

The importance of senior university staff valuing sustainability as a positive contributing factor towards universities' business cases and reputations, is highlighted through these quotes and was seen as especially important when linked to sustainability league tables and awards: *'[The] current VC is very supportive of the work they've done because clearly it's gained us Green Gown Awards' (Y40); 'People and Planet Green League is quite useful as a PR exercise to get the attentions of Vice-Chancellors because they always worry about league tables' (X5).*

Performance in the People and Planet Green League table, winning Green Gown Awards from the Environmental Association of Universities and Colleges (EAUC) and gaining other sustainability-related accreditations, were indeed cited as significant driving factors for sustainability and ESD agendas within the universities investigated. Reflecting upon the impact of the P&P Green League table interviewees portrayed a clear message that this mechanism had been a huge driver of sustainability change within universities since its inception in 2007. Some interviewees described methodological issues³⁵ which they felt had reduced the reliability of the league table's results, yet this seemed to have had little impact on the extent to which universities had taken on board the league table criteria and started working towards improving their performance across the range of audit areas, which includes a specific ESD-focused criterion (as detailed in Chapter 4, Section 4.4.2). As Interviewee X11 noted: *'It's not about the methodology, it's about the symbolism, it's about the prominence, it's about the communication of intent, and things start to happen, because people's attention starts to get focussed and that creates an impetus for change'*. Interviewees described how the Green League had substantially raised the profile and credibility of the SD agenda across the UK HE sector, had spurred universities to improve and maintain their league table position and ultimately, had provided leverage for ongoing institutional investment into sustainability and ESD. The Green Gown Awards were also widely cited by interviewees as an important aspect of friendly competition between HEIs that had served to maintain momentum, drive developments and gain vital support from senior university staff. Again, the Green Gowns have an ESD-specific award – the 'Learning and Skills' award – which recognises achievement in the development and provision of academic courses and skills relevant to sustainability. A selection of quotes about the impact of these two competitive mechanisms upon universities' sustainability/ESD agendas are listed in Table 5.14.

³⁵ **People and Planet Green League Boycott** – at the time of interviewing a boycott of the league table was underway due to a long-running dispute between P&P and the sector about methodological issues and its auditing calculations. This boycott went ahead in summer 2014 and has undoubtedly dented the credibility of the league table, although it continues to run and be published in the Guardian newspaper annually.

Table 5.14 – The impact of the P&P Green League and the EAUC Green Gown Awards on the sustainability and ESD agendas of English universities

Interviewee quotes
Interviewee Y31: ‘The external recognition here has made a big difference, the fact that we were getting Green Gown Awards and doing very well in the People and Planet Green League. As you know external plaudits count an awful lot for senior management, and the fact this was around sustainability rang bells with senior management, so they thought, this is something we should be encouraging, this is something clearly we’re good at’
Interviewee X7: ‘...but it has a league table at the end of it and universities, like it or not, respond to league tables. I think the People and Planet League Table has been really quite important. You can use that as a relative pecking order argument and certainly I’ve found that helpful in internal discussions’
Interviewee Y2: ‘I think [the Green League] has been one of the biggest drivers for change in the sector. ...we actively try to improve our position in the table’
Interviewee Y13: ‘The Green League has been absolutely amazing at sharing best practice across HEIs’
Interviewee Y21: ‘The Green League has made a massive difference. ...from my point of view it’s done a lot to improve the credibility of our work and other people to engage’
Interviewee Y27: ‘One of the main drivers was that we were really good in the estate and we got really high ranking on the People and Planet Green League, but we realised that we weren't really integrating it into our teaching, so then the focus started to be more on the curriculum’
Interviewee Y21: ‘There's an expectation that we should be winning things like Green Gown awards and that we should performing at sector leading performance levels against our comparable universities’
Interviewee Y28: ‘What I would also say is that underpinning all of this, is the fact that we have been very successful in the Green League, we’ve got the Green Gown Awards, we’ve done well in all of those league tables. ...that’s kind of spurred us on because we want to maintain that. ...again some of that comes back to the business model for the university; a lot of that has been driven by the need to do better in league tables, and to ensure that we safeguard the income of the university’
Interviewee Y34: ‘The fact that we have been able to win awards. ...University E is not going to come top of that many tables, People and Planet is one that we’re doing exceptionally well on, so it’s got to be something that senior management are going to find hard to ignore from that point of view, because that is the kind of thing that persuades’

Whilst overall the Green League and Green Gown Awards were described by interviewees to have led to positive sustainability developments, some did express concern at the muddying between the business case and the morals/values case for pursuing sustainability initiatives. As Interviewee Y4 noted: ‘...reputation, while its incredibly important to the institution, should not be the primary driver for doing this, if an institution is serious about sustainability, then any benefits to reputation should be a side benefit and not the main driver I think’. Interviewee X4 also noted: ‘It worries me that I don’t think you can reduce sustainability down to just a business case because there is another layer to this, there’s a moral layer, but I can see that in the current climate you do

need to sell the business value of sustainability'. Equally, Interviewee Y23 expressed concern that the flagship sustainability-based Masters degree at their institution was largely driven by the marketing and business opportunity it provided, rather than sustainability being embedded as a value within the department '*...if there isn't a business case for it under conventional terms, it would go. The senior management of the school would close it down just like that, the course's existence is because it's seen as a market opportunity*'. Further to the discussion surrounding NPM-steering mechanisms earlier in this chapter, again we see here the recurring tension between critical, values-driven and marketisation-driven sustainability agendas. The sustainability role, and the potential sustainability role, of the National Union of Students and the National Student Survey respectively, provide further examples which demonstrate this tension.

5.4.2 The NUS and the NSS: putting students at the heart of the sustainability system

Through my interview with the NUS representative in this research it became clear that the NUS is another higher education body that has utilised the marketisation ethos of English HE to drive some of its sustainability work. At the time of interviewing, the NUS in collaboration with the HEA, had just secured £5 million in funding from HEFCE for the Students' Green Fund, having achieved this *in part* by capitalising on the 2011 higher education White Paper and using the successive results of HEA/NUS *Student attitudes towards and skills for sustainable development* surveys. As this respondent explained, the basic argument and case put to HEFCE was that these surveys demonstrate that students are demanding more sustainability exposure during their time at University, thus if students are 'at the heart of the system' and their demands are important, then this agenda for students should be financially supported:

...if students are going to be at the heart of the system in what is a consumer marketplace, then the students should get what they want. So it's helpful that we've got three years' worth of evidence that shows that students do want more sustainable futures, they want more sustainable institutions, they want more sustainable curriculums. ...HEFCE's role has been redefined, as being

there for the collective student interest. ...if students want something then it's HEFCE's duty in some respects to try and ensure, especially if it's in the student interest, the collective student interest, that, that happens. The Students Green Fund is a convenient and good way of doing that.

This interviewee took the view that the 'students at the heart of the system' mantra was the silver lining of a bad document and concluded: *'We probably wouldn't have got the £5 million from HEFCE if the White Paper hadn't been pushed through. ...we probably wouldn't be funding some of these transformational projects, keeping it on the top table'*. Thus, we see here how the NUS were able to successfully latch on to the heightened 'student as consumer' era to ensure that student-led sustainability and informal ESD projects were being funded nationally.

At the time of interviewing the NUS were also actively championing for the highly influential NSS survey (which was about to be reviewed) to include a question on sustainability. The NUS respondent explained that it was something that the Ethical and Environmental team within the NUS had been *'...trying to make happen for a couple of years'*, taking the view that embedding sustainability within such an influential league table would help to further mainstream sustainability across the curriculum of English HEIs. I asked several interviewees what their opinion was about the possibility of a NSS sustainability/ESD question and several others also brought this topic into discussions themselves. The overwhelming feeling was that a sustainability question would be a hugely powerful tool for driving ESD developments. Interviewees said:

If it goes in that will be perhaps one of the most powerful things... And it doesn't matter whether students look at that answer or not, what matters is whether institutions think they will and how much they want to take a risk that they get a bad score there (X11).

...to me that is the real pinch point, never mind the QAA guidance, when there's an NSS question it'll focus minds. You can benchmark results against other institutions question by question (Y8).

...my God, that would make institutions really stand up and think about what they're doing (Y14).

I think that would be a real driver actually, because some institutions pretend not to pay much attention to the NSS but they do really. University B is much more open about it, and every year we will be looking at the response profiles to every question for every discipline, and if that was one that was pulling the institution down or was making the difference between a discipline being in the top ten or not in the country, then absolutely you'd be looking at beefing that up (Y4).

That would be very effective because the NSS is a real driver for universities, even those universities who are cynical about student surveys, they still don't like being lower than institutions that they feel superior too. As soon as it's flagged up in that it becomes important (Y29).

Although interviewees raised important concerns, such as what terminology would be used to frame the question, why should sustainability have a question as opposed to other important HE agendas (such as internationalisation), as well as the fact that the NSS encourages reactive responses to the specific wording/focus of particular questions (that wouldn't necessarily lead to academics engaging meaningfully with sustainability in their teaching), ultimately what we are seeing here is recognition from a range of academic staff that bringing sustainability into this key tool of HE marketisation *could* ultimately have a positive impact on HESD agendas.

5.4.3 Changing ESD tides within the EAUC and the NUS

The wide-ranging sustainability roles of the EAUC and the NUS were not discussed in as much detail with research participants due to the large number of academic staff interviewed, who on the whole, appeared to be engaging much more with, and showed more interest in, the academic/teaching-related bodies of HEFCE, the HEA and the QAA. It is however interesting to highlight significant developments in the roles of these two bodies over the last few years as sustainability and ESD support provided from HEFCE and the HEA has dropped back. Both the EAUC and NUS have developed enhanced ESD and academic-related functions in recent years and appear to be trying to step up to fill the void left by these other organisations. Examples of activity include: the EAUC's new 2017 strategy which strategically repositions the EAUC as having a broad-

based sustainability role in supporting HEIs in the UK, operating at the level of the 'whole institution' (i.e. incorporating business functions, organisational development, sustainability leadership and a strong focus on education) rather than a predominant focus on environmental management, campus and carbon, which has been its legacy; the broadening of the EAUC Green Gown Award categories and discussions surrounding a renaming of the EAUC to reflect its expanded remit; an enhanced focus on working at the international level and drawing together a coalition of international sustainability organisations; as well as emphasis on undertaking an advocacy role for the HE sector, including through dialogue with government bodies. Equally, the Ethical and Environmental team at the NUS has continued to grow in size and expand its ESD work with universities, including: the Responsible Futures ESD-initiative which has now seen over twenty universities, colleges and their students unions (similar in number to those that undertook in the HEA's Green Academy programme) take part and work towards the ESD accreditation mark; the introduction of the Dissertations for Good scheme which partners students with organisations to collaborate on dissertation projects taking an economic, social and/or environmental sustainability stance; and, the setting up of a new ESD advisory group. The trend for advocacy organisations to fulfil social, public and democratic welfare roles (once performed by the state) which are lessened within retracted and hands-off neoliberal governmental regimes, has been a strong trend within the 21st century. Thus, in some ways it is not surprising that the EAUC and the NUS have stepped up to be the new champions of ESD as the government-funded HE bodies have lessened their support for HESD agendas. It does though suggest interesting trajectories ahead for HESD movement and community of practice as the core sector bodies now taking a lead on ESD are the national confederation of students' unions and an environmental charity, which are on-the-whole, organisations led by non-academic members of staff who do not come from a university employment background, rather than government funded and academically underpinned state organisations with a more intrinsic understanding of the academic operations of universities and their curricula; this may be a worrying trend for some.

5.4.4 Competitive advantage, reputation and reward structures for driving HESD: the role of steered incentivisation

Reflecting upon the practical relationship between marketisation and sustainability/ESD in relation to the roles of the EAUC and the People and Planet student network, the key analysis themes presented in this section have demonstrated clear synergies between competition-based marketised mechanisms (chiefly league tables and awards) and sustainability/ESD agendas. Additionally, regarding the role of the NUS, a clear synergy was shown with the ‘students as consumer’ ideology in the awarding of the Students’ Green Fund money. The impact that the P&P Green League has had is particularly significant. Irrespective of the fact that the league table is less influential now, ten years after its inception and since the 2014 boycott, here we see a classic instrument of HE marketisation and competition having caused a huge positive shift in the momentum of sustainability activity across the board in English universities. Comments provided by many interviewees demonstrated that performance, profile and prominence in the HE sustainability agenda is clearly seen as something that will contribute positively to universities’ business case, reputation and identity in the competitive HE marketplace. The NSS is another important part of this reputational environment, hence interviewees’ overwhelming response that a sustainability-related question would cause a huge swing towards HESD activity; although it looks increasingly unlikely that such a question will appear. A paper by Dobson, Quilley and Young (2010, pg. 38, 42), *Sustainability as competitive advantage in higher education in the UK*, mirrors these key findings and has described how there is plenty of evidence that ‘...sustainability can and has been mobilised as a vehicle for competitive advantage, with benefits accruing in relation to staff and student recruitment, research funding, infrastructure and reputation’. Rationalising that the overarching imperative facing all senior university staff is to ‘...divert flows of capital through the institution’, capital such as government grants, research funding, private sector investment, as well as human capital in the form of world class students and staff, Dobson, et al., conclude that investment and performance in the sustainability agenda, can provide both short-term marketing

opportunities, as well as longer-term benefits associated with anticipating a wider societal trajectory towards the prominence of sustainability concerns in the future.

There are certainly risks associated with the confluence of sustainability and competitive advantage, which Gonzalez-Gaudiano, et al., (2016, pg. 80) have recently reflected upon in relation to the use of sustainability-based indicators and league tables. They describe how such mechanisms, vested in neoliberal discourse, are susceptible of turning processes that should in their opinion be cooperative, supportive and embedded in a culture of deep sustainability, into superficial processes which do not lead to truly alternative cultures within university communities and environments. Indeed, thinking about some of the concerns raised by interviewees in this study, it is highly likely that superficial, tick-box, non-values-based and extrinsically motivated sustainability/ESD developments will have increased since the introduction of sustainability-based league tables, awards and other competitive mechanisms. But crucially, the question we need to ask is, what is the overall net impact of such mechanisms? Does the impact that the P&P Green League and the EAUC Green Gown Awards have had, in legitimising and incentivising meaningful sustainability and ESD projects across England's HE sector, and indeed rewarding the hard work of HESD advocates and teams, outweigh the fact that areas of superficiality will have also ensued? Of course, the pragmatist and optimist in me believes that yes these instruments will have had a net-positive impact upon sustainability and ESD. The legitimising and incentivising functions provided by recognition, reward and reputational HE drivers in the marketised context are also highly significant for academic staff in their ESD endeavours. Several interviewees reflected on ways in which their institutions had linked ESD to the career development of individual staff, such as: providing educational development roles within schools/departments with an ESD focus; creating a sustainability category within university-wide awards systems; supporting staff to run ESD events within their departments; promoting staff based primarily on their successful ESD teaching and research activities; and, making ESD a specific category of funded educational enhancement and innovation schemes.

Research by Cebrian, et al., (2015) recently investigated factors influencing academic staffs' engagement in ESD through interviews and follow-up action research interventions with fourteen individuals across a range of discipline areas at the University of Southampton, UK. Based upon their findings that benchmarking processes are clear catalysts for staff engagement in ESD, they propose seven key recommendations for driving ESD, the final three of which show clear synergies with the reputational/competitive functions of England's marketised HE sector:

- Creating rewarding systems that recognise and reward good practice in ESD;
- Embedding sustainability into academic processes and research structures, such as creating research grants and recognition of research conducted in ESD, and including sustainability criteria as part of university ranking systems and research evaluation frameworks; and,
- Making sustainability a requirement of the internal and external quality assurance processes and benchmarking of HE institutions (Cebrian, et al., 2015, pg. 88).

These recommendations link directly to the implications discussed in Section 5.3 regarding the alignment of ESD with educational QA and research QR procedures. Several other HESD scholars have also written about the need for ESD to be incentivised through linking to institutional and individual recognition, reward and audit structures. Mochizuki and Yarime (2016, pg. 22) have written that *'...reward systems, and evaluation criteria play a crucial role in providing incentives and legitimacy to new and cross-cutting efforts like ESD and sustainability science, the structure and processes of their institutionalisation in the academia also need to be addressed seriously'*. Stephens and Graham, (2010, pg. 612) (drawing on Freeland, 1992) have also noted that *'...efforts to promote change in universities are successful when the change is incentivized and internalized into the distinctive culture and reward system of higher education institutions'*. Whilst Sterling and Scott (2008, pg. 390) have posited that if ESD it is to be systematically embedded in HE, it needs to be *'...associated much more visibly and markedly with institutional status, access to funds including research funds, academic performance and career paths'*. A much-cited paper by Ferrer-Balas, et al., (2008) is also highly relevant here. This research project studied seven universities

from across the globe in relation to their transitions towards sustainability and barriers and drivers in this process. Results showed that there was no common pathway towards sustainability for the HEIs, but that in general, the main barrier to institutional change was the lack of incentive structures for promoting progress at the individual level. Research by Scott, et al., (2012) also backs up these findings around the importance of incentives for academic staff. The project, which investigated 'Turnaround Leadership' for ESD in higher education through extensive research involving several hundred participants over two years across Australasia, North America and Europe, highlighted the importance of 'putting in place the right incentives' as one of ten recommendations for HEIs wishing to pursue ESD in a more systemic and systematic way. Linked to discussions earlier regarding the differences between extrinsic and intrinsic motivations, the authors note that: *'Overall, the study has found that external and internal influences, challenges, satisfactions and incentives all interact to shape what Efs leaders give focus to in their role and how they judge they are doing a good job'* (ibid, pg. 12). A selection of nineteen extrinsic and intrinsic incentives for ESD were revealed through their study, which included:

Extrinsic incentives

- Introduction of relevant awards like a VC/President's sustainability award and systematic acknowledgement by senior leaders of successful implementation of agreed Efs initiatives;
- A focus on Efs capabilities in staff selection and promotion processes;
- Rewards for trans-disciplinary research in national research reward schemes ... where the focus at present is primarily on single disciplines; and,
- The allocation of targeted human and resource support for Efs initiatives.

Intrinsic incentives

- Knowing that one is playing an active part in helping one's students, profession and nation build a socially, culturally, economically and environmentally sustainable future;
- Feeling that what one is doing is both meaningful and useful; and,

- Satisfaction in seeing one's students develop their capabilities and hearing back from them about the relevance of what they have learnt and how they have applied it in their work (Scott, et al., 2012, pg. 12).

Overall the results and analysis presented in this section demonstrate the huge significance of competitive advantage, reputation, recognition and reward-based incentives/ motivations for driving both institutional and individual academic staffs' engagement with sustainability and ESD agendas. Some key marketisation mechanisms which could be used, aligned and manipulated to further support, drive and steer HESD engagement in English HE, include (N.B. this may be at the sector, institution or departmental level): general research funding and research support structures/processes; quality-related research funding and the REF; educational quality-assurance; awards and accreditations; league tables; promotions and career paths; recruitment processes and professional/performance reviews; continuing professional development; and teaching and learning qualifications such as PGCertHEs, the UKPSF and HEA Fellowships. All of the HE sector bodies explored in this chapter have the potential to play a significant steering role in this regard; as will the new Office for Students and the 'new HEA'. Embedding sustainability and ESD within the range of mechanisms just outlined, may be conceived of as a process of 'steered incentivisation', which works alongside the 'steered legitimisation' provided by the provision of sector body sustainability and ESD strategy, policy, guidance documents and reports, thematic work areas and funding streams described earlier in this chapter. Whilst it's certainly possible to reflect upon the potential negative implications and ideological contradictions associated with the marrying of sustainability and marketisation through such academic incentivisation processes, it is also important to recognise that such structures can also be conceived of through the lens of positive recognition and the rewarding of ESD scholarship. Indeed, in recent years there has been a growing trend in English HE of academic staff pursuing individual career development and promotions via the teaching and learning route, such that many more staff are now being promoted all the way through to professorial positions

based on capability, success and expertise in teaching and learning, which of course can and does already include those working in the area of education for sustainable development. Working together steered legitimisation and steered incentivisation in English higher education have clearly supported many staff and HE institutions to further their ESD agendas, and have the potential to forge further advances in sustainability education, not only through supporting members of the national HESD community of practice, but also more broadly through supporting other academic staff who have personal, professional and/or academic interests in sustainability-related areas, i.e. areas which align with the social, public, collectivised, democratic, moral, ethical and socio-sustainability roles, purposes and values of higher education. There is however, clearly an important and fine line between legitimising and incentivising, and mandating and auditing – the later being unlikely to be welcomed by many academic staff and being likely to lead to further stresses on academic life in the marketised environment. Legitimising and incentivising mechanisms, taking a flexible, enabling and relational approach compatible with broad-based institutional and individual lifeworld values and norms, and recognising the plural reality of academic lives, motivations and influences (which are at once tied to the complimentary yet conflicting economic, liberal/traditional and sustainability models of higher education), may prove a productive way forward for HESD within the marketised reality.

CHAPTER 6) KEY ISSUES AND DEBATES WITHIN ENGLAND’S HESD

MOVEMENT

This chapter aims to investigate the practical relationship between marketisation and ESD within English HE, through exploring some of the key issues and debates within England’s HESD movement which arose through the interviews conducted for this research. In comparison to the previous chapter which focussed on the role of England’s higher education bodies and organisations, particularly in relation to the steering, legitimising and incentivising impact they have had on individual universities and HESD advocates, this chapter extends the analysis of the relationship between marketisation and ESD, to consider more general populations of university staff and students and the challenges of broadening engagement with ESD across the board within the marketised university system. As with Chapter 5, this chapter also contributes to debates surrounding the ideological relationship between marketisation and ESD within English HE. The chapter explores Data Analysis Core Themes 9 to 12 of the thesis, as summarized in Table 6.1 and is split into three major sections. An overview of Core Themes 9 to 12 and the Key Themes associated with each Core Theme are found in Appendix D, Table 4.13, pg. 395. The data analysis process used to gather these themes is outlined in Chapter 4, Section 4.9. Overall this chapter comprises the presentation and description of core theme results, as well as analytical/theoretical discussion of core themes in relation to marketisation and HESD theory, research and literature.

Table 6.1 – Summary of Data Analysis Core Themes 9 to 12

Core Theme 9 – Academic staff engagement with sustainability and ESD
Core Theme 10 – ESD and the student as consumer
Core Theme 11 – Ideology vs. reality in education for sustainable development
Core Theme 12 – The role and purpose of higher education in England

Section 6.1 commences the chapter through exploring a range of issues related to academic staff engagement with sustainability and ESD agendas, including an exploration of such challenges in light on the competing ideologies of marketisation and sustainability and competing pressures of academic staffs' time in the marketised university context. Section 6.2 then moves on to consider the reality of the 'students as consumer' ideology from the experiences of interviewees and considers the extent to which students are embodying the consumerism and/or sustainability roles which have been carved for them respectively by central government and HESD advocates. The final section of the chapter brings together themes which have been building throughout the thesis and considers the tensions between transformative HESD ideology and the reality of HESD developments which are occurring in England's marketised university context. The role and purpose of HE in England is considered as the final thought of the chapter.

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6.1 Academic Staff Engagement with Sustainability and ESD

The challenges associated with engaging broad populations of academic staff with sustainability and ESD is clearly a central issue for ESD practitioners. Equally, one essential success measure for the HESD movement is the extent to which those who support and champion the sustainability model of higher education, are able to support and encourage other staff outside of the HESD community of practice, to consider and explore sustainability issues within their own professional and disciplinary contexts. Discussions in the first section of this chapter investigate this theme in more detail, focusing on the results of data analysis Core Theme 9 (academic staff engagement with sustainability and ESD) which are outlined in Table 6.2 and specifically analysing these challenges through the lens of marketisation. Discussions in this section are not based upon the responses of interviewees to any specific or targeted lines of questioning, but evolved organically as part of the semi-structured interviewing process. Section 6.1.1 presents and describes the results of Core Theme 9, before sections 6.1.2, 6.1.3 and 6.1.4 engage in detailed analytical/theoretical discussion around the key issues that arose from interviewees responses, including: challenges associated with the use of sustainability and ESD terminology and how these are interpreted by general populations of university staff in relation to their disciplinary teaching endeavours; the tendency within the HESD movement to position disinterested or apathetic colleagues as ‘barriers’ to HESD and other potential ways of thinking about why staff might not be interested or engaged in higher education sustainability agendas; the thorny issue of teaching values-based and politically-underpinned subject matter within the HE environment and how this links with the traditional/liberal model of higher education and academic freedom; and finally, an exploration of competing priorities and pressures in the marketised university context as barriers for academic staff engagement in sustainability and ESD.

Table 6.2 – Analytical Codes and Key Themes within Data Analysis Core Theme 9

Core Theme 9 – Academic staff engagement with sustainability and ESD	
Key Themes	Analytical Codes
Lack of interest, understanding and resistance to sustainability and ESD terms and concepts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many people have limited understanding of what sustainability/ESD mean and/or lack of interest in agendas • Terms contested and nebulous • Financial sustainability and profitability presented as part of sustainability • Sustainability, ESD and ‘green’ terminology can have negative connotations and stereotypes – preaching and moralising • Resistance to terminology creates barriers to engagement • ESD is a term for the HESD community
Politics and values in ESD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tensions in HE related to political and values-based educational agendas targeted at students – resistance within university • Assumptions of neutrality and openness in HE teaching – HE is not neutral, unbiased or value-free • If other values can be promoted, why can’t sustainability?
Evolution in terminology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are ‘social responsibility’ and ‘futures’ more palatable? • Trend in sustainability/ESD moving away from reactionary responses and reducing the negative, to pro-active responses and promoting the positive
Competing agendas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many different agendas that academics must respond to • Individuals resentful of/resist new or enforced agendas • Less time for ‘enhancement’ activities compared to mandated activities • Why is sustainability more important than other agendas?

6.1.1 The challenges of academic staff engagement with sustainability and ESD

During the interviewing process no questions were asked directly about the language and terminology of sustainability and ESD, however over half of all interviewees brought up some discussion related to how the word ‘sustainability’ is received, understood and accepted across broad populations of university staff. The overarching gist of these conversations was that there are significant barriers for many ‘normal staff’, i.e. non-ESD enthusiasts, in seeing the relevance of sustainability to their disciplinary-based teaching, understanding the terminology of sustainability and ‘education for sustainable development’ (which were said to be nebulous and contested), or indeed wanting to, or being interested in, engaging with ESD-related agendas. As Interviewee X9 surmised: *‘The problem with ESD is people either don’t think about it, don’t understand it, or just*

look at it and think well that's got nothing to do with me, and if it was I wouldn't know where to start anyway!' Interviewees described some of these issues:

I think the word sustainable remains totally problematic, both in the way that everybody uses it, but there is no sort of common currency; it means everything to anybody (Y41).

I think this is well articulated in the ESD literature, what ESD actually means, but I don't think that most academics actually understand what this ESD agenda is about, other than just making people aware that there is an environmental issue here, of climate change (Y12).

...can be difficult to get academic staff to engage in sustainability, as they want to teach their own academic subject. ... [they] don't feel comfortable with sustainability, it doesn't give staff a comfort blanket, a lot to learn, it's difficult (Y38).

...still a general lack of recognition, I think, amongst the vast majority of academic staff that this agenda is actually that important (Y23).

The way in which sustainability is often used to refer to the future financial viability of institutions, particularly by senior university staff, was said to have contributed to misunderstandings surrounding sustainability terminology. Interviewee Y42 explained: *'...there is a massive confusion about whether sustainable development is about finance and money or whether it's about protecting the conditions of the planet that we live on; so lots of people think that sustainability is about the financial viability of the university'*.

A recurring topic within these discussions, related to the ways in which for many university staff, the term 'sustainability', and associated words, such as 'environmental' and 'green', can hold negative connotations and stereotypes as being proselytizing and moralising. Interviewees also pointed to an associated level of cynicism regarding environmental and sustainability agendas. Interviewees described these tensions created by sustainability terminology:

... [people are] cynical about the use of the words environment and sustainability. The words become more of a blockage or an obstacle rather than something to push you on (Y3).

There is a moralizing discourse around these disciplines and ideas. My experience tells me that in the future there will be another different moralizing discourse which will be challenging those concepts. ...achieving certainty about these moralizing discourses is very difficult (Y24).

Does preaching at people who aren't interested turn them off even more? There's good evidence in psychology to suggest the more you preach at people the more they dislike it (Y17).

...I deal with academics, I see it on a day-to-day basis, the sort of cynicism and resistance that you can get if you try and talk to them in this language that they really just don't engage with (Y36).

Barriers to engagement created by the moralizing undertones of the sustainability discourse also links to another issue raised by interviewees, regarding the difficulties that many academic staff face in accepting and promoting educational agendas that are perceived to be political and values-based, and the tensions that such agendas cause within the (supposedly politically impartial) university setting: '*...most universities would not dream of teaching values*' (X3); '*...talking about students developing positive attitudes towards the environment. ...if you see it as a political agenda and getting people to think in a certain way, then that is a really big conflict*' (Y36). Interviewee Y18 described their own experience with dealing with this dilemma:

...this wasn't education about sustainable development, this was education for sustainable development, if you take the distinction. Because on the one hand you want to educate people about something and on the other hand we were committed to the sustainability project politically, so there was always that sort of tension between an open-ended approach to the teaching on the one hand and also thinking actually, this is really politically important.

Several interviewees did however point out that such tensions are based upon an assumption by academic staff, that they are entirely neutral and value-free in their teaching. Questioning whether such neutrality is feasibly possible within academia, a few interviewees posed the

argument that HE is in fact a values-rich environment and thus if other (non-sustainability-based values) can be accepted, promoted and normalized, why can't sustainability?

It's how you transform the minds, but not just the minds and the skills, the values and that's an area that a lot of people feel, "Oh no we can't get into that", but that's ridiculous because there are values all around us and we're pedalling one value, pedalling another one and I think we need to be actively sort of espousing the values of sustainability as well (X4).

I believe the politics of education is really important and if you're talking about education you're talking about politics, and if you want to change things you act politically. And we're told here quite categorically [we] mustn't be political or ideological. No, we must support business, as if that isn't ideological or political (Y23).

People have a very, very uncritical understanding of what education involves and believe that they're entirely neutral, unbiased, fair, value free in everything that they do. ...but I think we can still have institutional values even if not absolutely everyone shares them (Y36).

Several interviewees also described an evolution in the language and framing of higher education sustainability and ESD activities over recent years, involving a movement from reactionary 'environmental' and 'sustainability' responses focused on reducing 'the negative', to pro-active 'responsibility' and 'futures' responses focused on promoting 'the positive':

I would simply put the word, responsible and awareness of a broader community and in a funny sort of way, I would actually feel one actually has to shy away from saying 'sustainability' (Y15).

Instead of us just trying to do less negative, trying to do more positive, that debate has shifted quite considerably, the whole thing about HE is it's around aspirations, it's about doing things better (X5).

I tend to go for responsibility or accountability. ...I think it's moving into another sort of paradigm shift where it's starting to be clearly adding some value to wider university agendas (X4).

Social responsibility is more language of business and universities are trying to catch up. Social responsibility is much more palatable to universities, and that's important for academics. The real thrust of what we're trying to do is move away from that really negative reductionist language of cut, reduce, don't, finger wagging environmentalism, towards a much more embracing and positive language, because it opens a lot of doors (X1).

This shift can be seen in the ESD-focused work of the National Union of Students over the last couple of years, via their 'Responsible Futures' programme, as well in the work of several leading ESD universities that have opted to use the language of 'responsibility' or 'the future'. Examples include: Canterbury Christ Church University which has named its university-wide ESD programme 'The Futures Initiative'; the University of Manchester whose latest strategic plan has three overarching goals, one of which is social responsibility, within which sustainability education has been embedded; as well as the University of Edinburgh and Aberdeen in Scotland, who have changed their sustainability-focused terminology to 'Social Responsibility and Sustainability'.

A final key theme emerging from interviewee responses revolved around the pressures felt by academic staff in responding to the plethora of centrally propagated educational agendas within HEIs, of which, sustainability is just one of many which academics may choose, be asked, or be required to engage in and respond to. Interviewees detailed the pressures of the marketised audit-driven system on academic staff:

There are so many initiatives going on at the university and national level. We get so many directives coming down from above. ...There is always some initiative that we're trying to integrate and respond to and have an action plan. ...there was no way I was going to ask my overworked, very stressed and very tired colleagues to do anything radically new with this [with ESD] (Y11).

Who does these things? When the university starts saying, oh yes, we'll have something on sustainability, there are about four people are going to get fingered to do the job and you start getting resentful. ...Why not multiculturalism? Why not gender equality? Basically is this you just pushing your agenda and saying it's more important than the work I do? (Y17).

Do they want to have to engage with this? Probably wouldn't choose to, unless there's been some push from the centre. ...The fact that we have been putting down the line a lot of changes, so we've made a lot of changes to curriculum development, to assessment methods, all kinds of things, the average academic has had a lot to contend with (Y28).

...staff find it difficult to add-in supplementary and enhancing things rather than something we are required to do (Y30).

People have a lot of competing priorities and this can be seen as a bit of an add-on (Y26).

6.1.2 Resistance to sustainability and ESD: colleagues as human barriers?

Thematic interviewee responses surrounding lack of interest, understanding and resistance to sustainability, ESD and environmental terminology and agendas, have been widely cited in the HESD literature over the years as problematic for the progression of sustainability education endeavours. Previous studies have revealed many of the factors highlighted here, and have consistently made reference to: sustainability concepts being too abstract, broad and theoretical; sustainability being perceived as irrelevant, ill-fitting and insufficiently contextualised to disciplinary content, structures and traditions; as well as staff lacking the knowledge and expertise to address sustainability themes within curricula (Filho, 2000; Dawe, et al., 2005; Moore, 2005; Ferrer-Balas, et al., 2008; HEFCE, 2008a; Cotton, et al., 2009; Jones et al., 2010a; Djordjevic and Cotton, 2011; Granados-Sánchez, et al., 2012; Cebrian, et al., 2015). Several interviewees argued that sustainability and ESD terminology is less important than tangible action and educational impact: *'...I actually just try to avoid getting really hung up on definitions and terminology because you can never get beyond that otherwise' (Y36); '...it doesn't matter what you call ESD, it's got to be called something' (Y25); '...no-one can agree on this language and definition area, I am sick to death of everyone fighting over it. ...let's get over that and actually do something' (X4)*. Whilst this seems easy enough to say from *within* the HESD community of practice, it was over twenty years ago that the concept of 'Environmental Education for

Sustainable Development' was first used (Tilbury, 1995), and yet, within higher education, ESD largely remains a term for advocates and enthusiasts, unlike for example, employability, internationalisation, equality and diversity, inclusive practice, technology enhanced learning, flexible learning, which arguably could all be considered significantly more mainstream. Perhaps this is because some of these areas are more readily tied to the marketised apparatus, auditing requirements and QA regimes of English universities? Perhaps this is because some of these agendas align more comfortably with the lifeworld values and norms of broad populations of university staff (Broadbent, et al., 2010)? Some of these agendas also clearly have legal implications linked to the Equality Act 2010 which outlines a range of 'protected characteristics', such as race, religion or belief, disability, age and gender, which must be guarded from discrimination by law and which academic staff are increasingly being encouraged to consider through the notion of inclusive teaching practices. Interviewee X3 described this issue regarding the somewhat insular nature of ESD language:

ESD is just a piece of jargon. If you really want to engage the vast majority of university teachers who don't teach anything about sustainability, you don't bang on about ESD. ...talk to them in their terms. ...the more you talk about ESD, the less likely that is to happen, because you draw in to yourselves, all those people who are interested in ESD and you talk to yourselves.

If sustainability and ESD concepts are *still* problematic for large populations of the academic community after several decades of usage, is it time for some more considered, inward-looking reflection upon the barriers to ESD progress which might stem from the language and framing of our own movement, rather than focusing on others lack of interest or understanding?

Our academic colleagues who exhibit lack of interest, understanding or resistance, have often been constructed as such 'barriers' to change. This is acutely exemplified by the list of three 'principle inhibitors' to ESD provided by Jones, et al., (2010a, pg. 9 – 10) which were explored in Chapter 3, Section 3.5, all of which start with the phrase 'academic staff', e.g. Principle Inhibitor 1

says: *'...academic staff, jealously guarding their academic freedom, see education for sustainable development as an imposition, something not commensurate with their discipline or student expectations of their discipline'*. Yet it is much less common to see HESD research which is approached from the voice and perspective of these 'non-engaged' staff; attempting to really reflect upon why they might not be interested (or more importantly what *they are* interested in), might not understand, might be resistant, or simply might have no idea what you are talking about when you say the words 'sustainability' and 'education' to them in the same sentence. Interviewees within this study appeared to sympathise with the constraints felt by their academic colleagues with regards to engaging with sustainability and ESD. Yet there is still an assumption within HESD, that broad populations of academic staff *should, will or want to*, share our concerns about 'sustainability' issues and accordingly, about the value and importance of sustainability education endeavours. Consequently, apathetic colleagues, rightly or wrongly, sympathetically or frustratedly, are cast as human barriers to progress (Shephard, 2015b). Gough, et al., (2016, pg. 114, 188) have recently written that *'...much sustainable development education in higher education takes place in a partial or absolute ignorance of the existence of something called "Education for Sustainable Development"'* – and they ask whether this matters and if so why? For Gough, et al., it is not problematic that many of our academic colleagues do not share our concerns or desires to discuss and debate the role and purpose of higher education within the sustainability context, as they are instead *'...simply getting on with developing and delivering to students programmes that are, by any defensible standard, practical examples of education for sustainable development'*. Kerry Shephard's recent (2015b) volume, *Higher Education for Sustainable Development*, which is based upon semi-structured interviews and group discussions with over 100 university staff, across five different countries, offers similar insights. He describes how extensive ESD engagement across broad populations of academic staff, seems highly unlikely in the short to medium term; with most staff being largely engaged in disciplinary pursuits, which are of greater academic importance to them. Central to Shephard's grounded theory argument is

that ESD has the potential to be redesigned and refocused to harness the many strengths of higher education, but in doing so *must* set aside ‘...*passionate expositions of barriers to ES/ESD and on what others should do to achieve sustainability education, focusing instead on what everyone involved can do and wants to do*’ (ibid, pg. 4). He argues that we will collectively make more productive progress towards sustainable futures if we attempt to find some common ground between those who advocate for HESD and those who do not. For Shephard, agendas of critical thinking, critical reflection and ethical reasoning for all disciplines, staff and students, are appropriate approaches for forging such connections, through boosting students’ ability to question and challenge unsustainable norms and power structures in society.

Recalling the work of Thomas (2016, pg. 66 – 67) explored in Chapter 3, Section 3.5, the importance of individuals’ personal and cultural background, pedagogical approaches, professional culture, and importantly, personal values, were described as key determinants of academic staff members’ decision to engage (or not) with ESD. Could it in fact be that there is a fundamental misalignment between the ways in which ESD is commonly presented, received and understood and the personal, professional and academic values of many university staff? This is not to suggest that broad populations of (highly educated) academic staff, have low regard for issues such as environmental protection, social justice and equality, human rights, climate change, poverty and hunger, health and wellbeing, etc., indeed many will be addressing such issues within their teaching and research. But rather, that they do not necessarily consider such matters under the banner of ‘sustainability’, nor wish to engage with ESD as an educational development movement, nor perhaps consider that their teaching activities are the most appropriate place to be addressing their concerns in these areas. Work by Christie, et al., (2015) which surveyed over 1800 academic staff in Australian universities about their opinions on education for sustainability, confirms my inclinations about the mismatch between the ways in which sustainability education is regularly presented and the ways in which it is often received. Although overall they found broad support for the goals of EfS amongst academic staff, they found that the language of

sustainability and ESD is simply not part of the core vocabulary of most academic staff groups, describing how for many the word sustainability is still taken literally, to mean 'durability' or 'keeping something going' (ibid, pg. 675). Do we HESD proponents too readily attach social and environmental meanings to sustainability, wrongly assuming that because 'sustainability' has a long history in *our eyes*, that there must be a universal and general understanding of the social and environmental implications of these terms? Should we be focusing more on sustainability's constituent parts than its nebulous whole as a route in to different curricula areas? Indeed, Christie, et al., describe how the HESD movement needs to do more to attempt to connect with the different disciplinary 'worldviews' and traditions of academic staff, which accords with the theorising of Broadbent, et al., (2010) about the significance of HE sustainability agendas needing to be 'amenable to substantive justification' to gain broad staff buy-in to individual and collective 'lifeworlds'. Results presented here suggest that the word 'sustainability' is in itself, a significant culprit within the 'barriers to sustainability' debate; more so than our allegedly apathetic colleagues, many of whom *are* likely to be concerned about the state of the planet and the welfare of its most impoverished peoples. Finding approaches to harness and frame the context and content of sustainability in ways which align with the personal, professional and disciplinary values of the broad academic psyche, has always been, and evidently remains, a significant challenge for the HESD movement. But is this a challenge which can be overcome within and under the banner of 'sustainability'? Or is it time, after twenty years, for HESD practitioners to think about trying to develop new, progressive, inclusive and empowering language for encapsulating what it is we are trying to achieve within this agenda? Or, do we continue to forge forward under the 'sustainability' umbrella and if so how do we ensure that sustainability more readily aligns with the current plural and ever-changing reality of England's higher education sector? A more nuanced consideration of the role of politics, values and ideology in HE teaching, as well as the different conceptualisations of higher education's roles and purpose, may be one key starting point for making advances in this regard.

6.1.3 Values, politics, academic freedom and ESD

The thorny issue of values and politics in higher education teaching has always plagued the ESD movement. Peter Knight's infamous response to the 2005 HEFCE sustainable development consultation document, which publicly lambasted the council for promoting a 'particular political orthodoxy' (Chapter 5, Section 5.2.2), is an apt case in point. Interviewee X11 summed up this dilemma inherent to ESD through saying:

...there is a sort of value-driven element of sustainable development which we've got to think about very seriously, and we've got to allow academics and others to challenge, because it's not, you know, this isn't something that you can say is right or wrong. It's something that needs debate and discussion, development, progression through research, through doing, through learning, through looking at what other people are doing.

A key element of this 'values and politics' quandary, relates to the traditional/liberal ideal of universities as self-governing, academically free communities of scholars; tasked with providing to students, a liberal education, *free from* ideological, economic and political influence (Anderson, 2004, 2010; Reed, 2004; Henkel, 2007; Deboick, 2010; Williams, 2016). Within this model of HE – whose values are still seen to hold a firm place within the contemporary higher education environment – it is not the role of universities to imbue contemporary political, values-based and ideologically-underpinned agendas within the education of students, i.e. agendas such as education for sustainable development. This interrelationship between values, politics, academic freedom and ESD, has been extensively considered by Professor William Scott and Professor Stephen Gough (Gough and Scott, 2006; Scott and Gough, 2006; Scott and Gough, 2007). Their central question in this regard is quite simply: '*...whether it is any part of the proper business of a university in a liberal democracy to advance what is, after all, a recent and very much contested policy initiative*' (Scott and Gough, 2007, pg. 112). For Scott and Gough (2007, pg. 113), looking through this traditional/liberal lens, although they believe that universities *should* be at the

vanguard of responses to unfolding societal issues and problems, they believe that *'...this clearly is not achieved by making them the uncritical repositories of present conventional wisdom'*. Or as Scullion (2011, pg. 227) has more recently described (in relation to marketisation, rather than sustainable development, but the same arguments stand true), *'...participation in a university sector that is receptive to contemporary culture is acknowledged as having merit. However, there is a difference between being receptive and an unreflective acceptance of the hegemony of the dominant cultural discourse regardless of context'*. In this liberal/traditional sense, it is therefore both the responsibility and the right of academically free educators, to ensure that contemporary political, ideological, or other values-laden agendas in the higher education context, are received, scrutinised and adopted critically and cautiously, rather than unquestionably internalised and promoted to staff and students. Shephard (2015b, pg. 40) has also described these internal ESD contradictions as they relate to students: *'Universities, as institutions, are traditionally charged with helping young people to critique the norms and values of society, not to simply accept them or reject them with the guidance of their university teachers'*. Indeed, fears surrounding the subversive indoctrination and brainwashing of students via 'hidden curricula' has always been a theme within ESD critique, as have twinned calls to promote open, explicit and critical exploration of sustainability-related issues in curricula (Qablan, Khasawneh and Al-Omari, 2009; Winter and Cotton, 2010; Cebrian, et al., 2015). For Scott and Gough (2007) the traditional/liberal principles of academia, provide important barriers which defend staff and students against the inculcation of indiscriminate values and ideals. Scott (2015b, pg. 949) has recently restated the importance of such academic scepticism in relation to ESD:

...it is surely reassuring that there are academics who to want to retain influence over what is, after all, their teaching. This is a salutary reminder that not all barriers (to change) are wholly negative, and that intellectual counter currents are vital if societies are to know what knowledge to revere, and what to abandon.

An intriguing aspect of this whole debate, is one which was insightfully presented by several interviewees during this study, and relates to the credulity of assuming that any higher education policy, reform, or agenda, could feasibly be politically impartial or values-free. Moreover, the ideal of the liberal/traditional higher education model seems increasingly antiquated when considering the reality of English higher education today and the various economic, political and ideological influences which shape all corners of academic life. As the buffers between higher education, society and political-economic domains have become increasingly eroded over the last thirty or so, and higher education has increasingly adapted and responded to the needs of the national economy, the idea that universities could purport to be pursuing disciplinary endeavours in a static vacuum, or be disinterestedly inducting students into this current body of disciplinary knowledge, seems somewhat idealistic. We simply do not live in a neutral world and higher education is not a neutral or value-free public sphere. Thus, if it is vital that we uphold and promote criticality and challenge in relation to sustainability, surely it must also be vital that we uphold and promote criticality and challenge with regard to all other ideological influences in the academy; which would of course include the most palpably influential ideology of all – neoliberal marketisation.

Ferudi (2011, pg. 2) has stressed the importance of remembering that *'...marketisation is as much a political/ideological process as an economic phenomenon'*, through which government promotes clearly defined political policies. Middleton (2000, pg. 549) also stressed this point when describing the provision of incentives and performance indicators from government and HEFCE which promote employability and graduate skills agendas: *'...they are not acting as neutral referees allowing institutions to respond to market demands as and how they find them. They are promoting substantive changes to the academic curriculum whose specifics, in broad outline, are known in advance'*. These are, Middleton says, the *'...politically determined rules of the game'*. The marketisation of English higher education is and has always been a conscious political decision, based upon policies and reforms derived quite transparently from political-ideological

belief systems (Middleton, 2000; Bührs, 2003; Irwin, 2007; Ferudi, 2011; Nordensvärd, 2011). Therefore, if the central issue at stake is the embedding of values, politics and ideologies within disinterested academic institutions and curricula, surely we need to learn to be more discerning before we decry the audacity of sustainability advocates and their brainwashing intentions? To contest and resist sustainability and ESD on the basis of ideology, politics and values, is a misnomer unless one similarly resists all ideological influences of the marketisation regime also. Given that ideologies are clearly all around us, some positive, some less positive, why shouldn't we promote sustainability ideologies? If government can drive the economic model of higher education, students as consumers and employability agendas into the lifeblood of academia, why shouldn't we also fight for a place for sustainability? If we view marketisation and sustainability as political, values-based and ideological in equal measure, how can we argue that it is important for HE to respond to the economic ideologies of the time, but not the socio-environmental ones?

Considering this 'politics, values, ideology' critique of sustainability education as one potential cause of staff disengagement and resistance to ESD initiatives, yet having also countered that critical thinking in relation to the political-ideological underpinnings of both sustainability and marketisation, is one way of laying this somewhat incongruent conceptual debate bare – where do we go from here? Bührs (2003, pg. 87) has written that *'Depoliticising or de-ideologising policies, practices and techniques is perhaps one of the most insidious and effective ways of promoting and advancing particular interests and ideologies'*. Thus, do we do as Kerry Shephard (2015) has suggested and shift our focus away from sustainability, and more towards advancing agendas of critical thinking, critical reflection and ethical reasoning as a way of uncovering hidden and hegemonic societal ideologies and forces? According to Shephard (2015b, pg. 85) if higher education focuses more on teaching such skills to students, graduates should emerge from higher education with the skills and aptitudes to 'decide for themselves' about the extent to which they wish to embrace a more sustainable and socially equitable way of life. Thus, in effect is Shephard saying that the 'content' of sustainability can be removed from the HESD equation? Whilst

criticality is clearly imperative to the sustainability education endeavour, and importantly to the way in which academia receives, digests and deals with this agenda, I imagine many sustainability educators would find taking such an impartial position difficult to accept, and are probably not ready or willing to give up on their sustainability-based teaching materials and content. The gamble we would then be leaving to the gifts of criticality is between, on the one hand, an educational agenda which desires to contribute towards the advancement of equity, peace and protection for all of humanity and the natural world, and on the other, an educational agenda with a *raison d'être* to promote competition and economic growth. Barnett (2011, pg. 49) has eloquently surmised the following in relation to ideologies of higher education:

Ideologies have both pernicious and virtuous aspects. They can be overbearing, brook no dissent, have only a partial reading of situations and claim to know persons' interests better than those persons themselves. At the same time, they can be energising, engendering greater collective spirit, and offer putatively rational bases for action.

Perhaps a key challenge for sustainability educators is thus to think about how we can best engender the virtuous aspects of our own ideology: how we can be that energising force; stimulate that collective citizenship spirit; see the challenges faced by our colleagues and our students holistically and rationally through their individual frames of reference, personal, professional and academic values; support, encourage, relate and emphasize; and hopefully inspire them to take part in this sustainability journey. Finding a place for the politics, values and ideologies of sustainability, whether under the sustainability banner and nomenclature or not, within the complex higher education landscape, which both practically and ideologically speaking, comprises a plural mix of marketising, socio-sustainability and liberal/traditional academic forces, and through which academic staff continue to navigate the conflicting and competing pressures which weigh on their own time and indeed, their own values and morals, must surely remain a core mission for HESD advocates.

6.1.4 Competing priorities and pressures in the marketised university context

Shephard (2015b, pg. 22) has recently described the ‘grappling’ environment which academic staff habitually find themselves in, dealing with the ‘...*contradictory demands of massification, efficiency, research excellence, being the conscience of society, accountability, ‘student as consumer’, and calls to address sustainability and a range of other competing or interacting agendas...*’. Interviewees in this study described this plethora of academic mandates, coupled with the high levels of pressure felt by academic staff, as barriers to engagement with ESD; which accords with findings elsewhere in the HESD literature (Dawe, et al., 2005; Thompson and Green, 2005; HEFCE, 2008a; Djordjevic and Cotton, 2011; Cebrian, et al., 2015). This also chimes with the literature explored in Chapter 2 around the impacts of more monitored and managed regimes on academic staff who are under pressure to produce high quality ‘products’ (whether teaching or research) within ‘ever-tighter timescales’ (Archer, 2008, pg. 272). Thinking about the practical relationship between marketisation and ESD, through the lens of competing agendas, we can quite clearly see a contradiction/challenge to the progression of sustainability education caused by the pressures of the competitive marketised regime. Interviewee quotes in this vein (outlined in Section 6.1.1) portrayed the fact that academic staff, overall, are less likely to engage with optional educational enhancement agendas, due to the already large range of mandated agendas which are actively driven from the centre of universities. Although, as we have seen, in many universities ESD is becoming increasingly tied to quality assurance mechanisms, on the whole, sustainability education initiatives still tend fall outside of the new public management audit regime, and are thus less likely, than some other agendas, to be driven systematically into all academic departments. Of course, there are many benefits and very good rationales for deliberately keeping ESD separate from mainstream marketised apparatus. Yet practically and pragmatically speaking, this is likely to make it more difficult, even for those actively committed to sustainability education, to find sufficient space and time amongst already tightly packed work regimes, to advance sustainability education initiatives. As Cotton, et al., (2009, pg. 731) have

described, *'...it is important to acknowledge that the constraints on institutions and individuals in modern higher education are very real, and in many cases irresolvable in the short and medium term'*. Scott and Gough (2006) have agreed, that universities and their academic staff, working within varied institutional, professional and disciplinary contexts, with various ongoing commitments and demands on their time, may have little choice but to respond to the delegated ordering of priorities.

In relation to some of the other HE agendas mentioned in this chapter, that have in recent years become widely accepted and promoted within academia, it is not difficult to appreciate why employability and internationalisation have become so readily normalised. The employability agenda is a core component of the marketised 'students as consumer' drive, and internationalisation, with its strong links to international recruitment, international research collaborations and the globalising missions of many HEIs, is clearly strategically aligned with marketisation. The movement in ESD framing towards the 'social responsibility' banner highlighted by several interviewees, may be seen as one way in which universities have tried to brand ESD as a more market-aligned initiative. Several interviewees also highlighted links that had been actively been made at their institutions, between sustainability and employability agendas, often via a graduate attributes/skills narrative, which was said to have helped to present sustainability to broader populations of staff and students, as more mainstream, more palatable, and importantly, as a consolidation of workload and resources. Interviewees did highlight the 'greenwashing' risks associated with bringing such agendas together, and of course, the more critical and radical HESD and environmental education proponents, may point to any such movement as the co-opting of environmental concerns by the neoliberal hegemony. This brings us neatly back to the central dilemma that this thesis embodies. How do we continue to advance and develop sustainability education agendas within a marketised system without tying such agendas more closely to the marketised regime which ideologically contradicts their very cause?

6.2 ESD and the Student as Consumer

Moving on from discussions about academic staff engagement in ESD, the second section of this chapter will focus on the reality of the ‘student as consumer’ phenomenon in English HE and the links that can be made between this core component of marketisation ideology and ESD. Data Analysis Core Theme 10, ESD and the student as consumer, comprises three key themes which are outlined in Table 6.3 and are based upon the responses of interviewees in relation to two key question areas. Firstly, interviewees were asked to reflect generally (not in relation to sustainability or ESD) upon the transition to the £9000 student tuition fee regime, the notion of ‘students as consumers’, and any changes they had witnessed in the characteristics, expectations and demands of their own students in recent years. Secondly interviewees were asked about the level of student demand for sustainability and ESD (both formal and informal) within their institutions. Section 6.2.1 presents and describes the results of the first two key themes, including analytical/theoretical discussion. Section 6.2.2 presents and describes the results of the third key theme, including analytical/theoretical discussion. Section 6.2.3 attempts to bring these key themes together to explore how we might really begin to appreciate students as partners within the marketised context and how actively working in collaboration with students might support and drive ESD-related agendas, values and practices within English universities.

Table 6.3 – Analytical Codes and Key Themes within Data Analysis Core Theme 10

Core Theme 10 – ESD and the student as consumer	
Key Themes	Analytical Codes
Observed student behaviour changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult to ascertain trends overall • Increased emphasis on: employability and choosing a degree with job prospects in mind; getting value for money; professionally-oriented, STEM and traditional subjects • Students wanting more face-to-face contact & good campus facilities • Harder to enforce lecture attendance • Students are: more likely to submit extenuating circumstances forms and

	<p>appeal against marks; showing less independence, needing more reassurance and expecting things on a plate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased instrumentalism and focus on good grades
More hype than evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academics responding much more to consumer ideology, ‘the student experience’, and their own fears and anticipation, than students are exemplifying such behaviours – media hype driving pressures for staff • Limited evidence of changes in student expectations and demands • Interviewee resistance and challenge to student consumerism ideology
Is ESD demand or supply driven?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there evidence of increasing student demand for sustainability in formal and informal curriculum? Some think yes, some think no – still a minority of students – still a lot of apathy – scepticism of HEA/NUS survey results • Little evidence that students choose a university based on sustainability • Latent student interest in sustainability – doesn’t necessarily translate into student academic choices – feeling that interest grows during university • Evidence of informal ESD and student union activity growing • Anticipation that students will expect more sustainability in future

6.2.1 The impact of tuition fee increases and ‘student as consumer’ ideology

The ‘student as consumer’ aspect of higher education marketisation (explored in detail in Chapter 2, Section 2.3.5) utilizes a variety of market-based mechanisms and levers to attempt to enhance student choice and power in the HE system, create competition for students between HEIs and encourage students to navigate university as a market-place (Streeting and Wise, 2009; Williams, 2011; Brown, 2015). Interviewees described a range of trends they had witnessed within the student body resulting from the heightened student as consumer era and recent increases to student tuition fees. Trends included students: being more instrumental about assessments, exams and getting good grades; expecting good campus facilities and accommodation; showing less independence, needing more reassurance and expecting things on a plate; being more likely to submit extenuating circumstance forms, as well as appeal against marks; being less likely to attend lectures, yet also wanting more face-to-face contact time; showing an increased focus on employability, choosing a degree with job prospects in mind and getting value for money; as well as an increased demand for professionally-oriented and traditional subjects. For example, interviewees said:

...students seem to be less independent, even good students seem to be less independent (Y17).

I think we get more appeals against marks, various excuses about students' performance (Y39).

Expectation of more contact hours, more events, more stuff to do, accommodation, that kind of thing (Y13).

...students have an expectation that they will have good facilities (Y28).

Attendance seems to have dropped and other colleagues have said the same thing (Y30).

...looking at traditional STEM subjects again, demand went up in things that were professionally oriented (X7).

They do appear to be altering what subjects people are choosing, so that we're finding growth in applications in disciplines that you and I might think highly profitable (Y8).

...certainly the employability issue is understandably becoming far more important to them in terms of at least being concerned that they're employable (Y17).

Students now being more focused with the fees and everything; it's much more about their job at the end (Y21).

Our students are very instrumental and they are very driven by results (Y6).

It was however difficult to ascertain strong and definite trends in relation to student behaviour changes from these results, with several of these factors only being mentioned by small numbers of respondents (one, two or three), as well as some interviewees presenting their observations quite speculatively. Of these themes, the ones which were mentioned by larger numbers of respondents (four, five or more) were: demand for high quality campus facilities/accommodation; instrumentality in relation to assessments and grades; and the link between university education, employability and value for money. Interestingly, in relation to employability, careers and value for money, more often than not, interviewees appeared to be speaking on behalf of students, rather than reflecting upon tangible student behaviours (emphasis added):

...an intelligent future student will be thinking, where is my best rate of return for my investment?

It's a terrible thing to say, rather than thinking about, I really love Geography, I want to study Geography; *they're thinking*, can I get a job when I've got a degree in geography (X7).

...if you're going to get yourselves into 30 or 40 or 50 grand's worth of debt *you're going to think* quite long and hard about whether you want to do that before you commit to it (X5).

I think the fact that students are paying these really high fees now, *means they will be* much more concerned with instrumental things, like getting their degree, a good job, the right skills (Y12).

I hear a lot of students are pragmatic about things, is it necessary for the assessment to do this, is it useful for my career to do this, *I think they see themselves* more as customers now (Y27).

...if it had been me, I'd be thinking, at roughly £8,000 a year, that's £1,000 per module, if you divide that by 12, that's £40-odd per hour I'm paying, I'd be there, because I'm paying (Y40).

The strongest theme by far which came through from this line of questioning, was the fact that universities and academic staff have in fact responded much more markedly and en masse to the 'student as consumer' ideology and 'the student experience' mantra, than the student body have themselves. Indeed, many interviewees believed that there had been quite limited evidence in practice of changed student behaviours, expectations or demands and that the 'student as consumer agenda' was more based on hype, anticipation, fear, media stirring and of course ideology, than it was based upon tangible consumer-focused student behaviours. A range of interviewee responses reflecting this theme are found in Table 6.4.

Table 6.4 – The reality of the 'student as consumer' ideology

<i>Interviewee Quotes</i>
Interviewee Y8: 'I think it's having that marginal impact on what they're expecting. I think academic management is more anxious about it'
Interviewee Y11: 'On the ground, the make-up of the student population hasn't changed, it doesn't seem to have made the difference that a lot of us were afraid it would do' 'We had so many management/planning meetings about how we were going to respond to changed student expectations, we worked really hard on that horrible phrase 'the student experience', but actually we

were responding to our own fears and the university's'
Interviewee Y14: 'I've been lecturing now for ten years, there probably hasn't been much change. I think we're the ones who are going oh my God, students are paying £9,000 fees'
Interviewee Y19: 'I've never heard a student say, "well I'm paying nine grand a year for this", but I've heard plenty of staff saying, "well when they're paying this much we need to do much better"'
Interviewee Y17: 'Universities are so obsessed; especially post £9,000 a year to a certain degree, with the student experience, the money aspects of this' '...there hasn't been as much as I feared there might be. ...that's quite reassuring in the sense that they're not suddenly consumers'
Interviewee Y40: 'There have been some changes but the changes have been a lot more subtle than I think everybody expected. I think there was a lot of concern that creating a market in higher education was going to make students take the attitude that they're paying for something therefore they should get something in return, and I don't think it's been quite like that'
Interviewee Y38: '...a bit more of a consumer orientation, a few more complaints, I wouldn't want to overstate that'. ...every period when fees have been introduced you expect it to radically affect student behaviour but it doesn't'.
Interviewee Y39: 'We all thought fees were going to have a much greater effect on student numbers than they actually did have'
Interviewee Y24: 'I have been in the UK for a long time and I still have not found a body of students who see themselves as consumers, I may have seen one or two but that is not a representative view of the people who actually study'

It is of course possible that if these same questions were asked to interviewees now, further into the enhanced 'consumerism' regime, that there could be increases in the behavioural trends noted above. Nevertheless, the takeaway message from interviewees during the 2013/14 data collection period, was that the implementation of higher tuition fees and governmental reforms to drive consumerist characteristics in students, had not, as yet, had a pervasive impact upon the general student psyche. Or as one interviewee described, students are still students as they have always been, '*...they still choose modules because their friends are doing it and they still leave their assessments until the last minute and then rush around like mad people*' (Y37). Paradoxically, the impact of recent governmental reforms appears to have had a much more manifest impact on academic expectations *about* students' expectations and upon academic behaviours *in response* to real or imaginary student behaviours. Students on the other hand, do not appear to have automatically become 'consumers' of their own education, which is not entirely surprising when we consider that most students have not been positioned as, or encouraged to be consumers in the educational lives before HE; thus why would they automatically become neoliberal pawns ready to be manipulated and shaped by government when they arrive at university?

A final theme which came through from these discussions, was one of resistance and challenge to the validity of the 'student as consumer' notion. Interviewee Y24 detailed their frustration: *'I'm very cynical about this debate; the idea that if you put a price tag on something then anyone who will buy will become a consumer. We are consuming knowledge whether we buy it or not, for long period of time, the process hasn't changed'*. Similarly, Interviewee Y8 described how their university was simply refusing to get on board with the notion of student consumerism: *'We're just simply saying we're not going to buy it. So all of our phrasing to students is very much about becoming part of a community of scholars; you're not here to consume, we're not selling you a 2:1'*. And Interviewee X3 described: *'I don't think I accept this idea of students as consumers, I don't want to. I think students should be learners and participants and partners with academics and others in the experience they have in a university'*. Interviewee Y24 also provided an insightful analysis using their expertise in the field of Business and Management, to explain why they thought it simply not possible for knowledge and education to be a commodity:

Every product has to have two important elements, one is instant gratification, and knowledge can't provide that. The second important thing for the consumer is that you constantly change the material; you reform the material in response to needs and interests. But we are not here directly dealing with interests and needs, we are dealing with cognition, something that students may or may not need in the future. ...So in a sense we are not addressing their needs or interests, we have a future orientation in knowledge.

This analysis accords with discussions in Chapter 2, Section 2.4.2, regarding the 'post-experience' nature of many higher education benefits and the fact that there are unequivocally, many advantages of higher education learning, that are not realisable in the short term.

Overall interviewee responses within this theme, provided some enlightening insights into the practical reality of the student as consumer ideology. There were certainly themes highlighted which accord with concerns that have been expressed elsewhere in the literature, i.e. regarding

increasingly instrumental mentalities in relation to degree outcomes and securing a good job after university. Although linked concerns regarding students' disengagement with the learning process, the preclusion of 'softer', humanistic and relational skills development and HE being widely received as a private, economic, and credentializing investment, were less evident from interviewee responses. In fact, these results do call into question some commonly held critiques and concerns regarding the pernicious and pervasive impacts of the student as consumer ideology *for students* (but perhaps not for staff). They certainly refute key assumptions of the neoliberal ideology which has underpinned many recent student-based reforms, including that: increases in tuition fees will automatically lead to students becoming empowered to behave as consumers; that students know what they want to learn, how they want to learn it and are suitably well informed and equipped to express such demands; and that students will readily and actively apply pressure on universities to both provide high quality provision and make courses more workplace-relevant. Government may have been correct that *'Putting financial power into the hands of learners makes student choice meaningful'* (BIS, 2011, pg. 5) – but it seems that this power has been more meaningful, or rather more consequential, for academic than student behaviours. Has the Conservative government's ideological experiment with enhanced tuition fees, really had the impact that they planned and hoped for? Or has it fundamentally failed to recognise that students, without substantial support and guidance, are not necessarily equipped to navigate, nor make informed and meaningful judgements about, the deluge of information about higher education quality that flows their way (Jones-Devitt and Samiei, 2011). The assumption that students will automatically internalise the (artificial and unproven) link between tuition fees and the quality of educational experiences and environments, also seems to have been a sweeping hypothesis, as Williams (2011, pg. 174) has expressed: *'...paying fees does not automatically lead to a consumer mentality. ...It may be the case that today's students accept accruing quite high levels of debt as a normal part of life and the quality of education received bears only a tangential relationship to debt occurred'*. But what sense can we make of all this in relation to ESD?

6.2.2 Is ESD demand or supply driven?

Linking this discussion back to education for sustainable development and thinking about student consumer demands and the supply of 'goods' within the marketised HE system, interviewees expressed their experiences of student demand for sustainability and ESD (within both formal and informal learning settings) within their institutions. Some interviewees were incredibly positive about the level of demand from students, particularly associated with students' union-based and other student-led initiatives:

I just see an amazing set of students across all different levels, first/second/third year, undergraduate, postgraduate and research students like yourself, this is what they do, it's their passion, and I think wow, this is just fantastic (Y18).

...you can see lots of students want a career where they are doing something valuable linked to the challenges facing society (Y10).

I've spent the last five years really strongly engaging with students and we've had a lot of activity with students (Y9).

...we've had lots of applications for different projects, we have lots of students coming to get involved... ...I would say there is demand for it and it is growing (Y3).

We know that the students that we recruit, many of them are engaged by the green agenda, want to come to a university where sustainability is taken seriously (Y28).

Such levels of enthusiasm were however depicted as occurring within relatively small pockets of the student body, rather than being at the forefront of the majority of students' priorities:

Some of the students do see the necessity for having this element in their programmes; it certainly isn't an overwhelming majority (Y11).

We have so few students here actually interested... I thought when I came here this was going to be a university that was going to be full of environmentally enthused students... (Y17).

I would be reluctant to say with confidence that there is a demand. It's still universities, and academics and politicians who decide what the curricula should be. I have not seen any student who has come to me and say is there any module around sustainability (Y24).

But one thing I can say, we have student groups here who are clearly involved and engaged, but that doesn't mean to say they all are (Y31).

...students have a certain apathy and it's really hard to engage people today. There are a few people who are really passionate and want to learn more (Y27).

...there's a lot of hype around the younger generation really pushing this forward, in terms of really strong evidence of it, I don't know. ...not seeing any strong evidence that that is really affecting people's decisions, it's a nice to have, I think, but I'm not sure that it's a make or break (Y34).

A few interviewees also expressed scepticism about the results of the HEA NUS student sustainability surveys which have consistently found that around 60% of students surveyed would like to learn more about sustainable development (Drayson, et al., 2013; Drayson, 2015).

Interviewee X11 said: *'...I approach those things with a certain amount scepticism, because if you ask people do you think a good thing is good, they say, yes. The question is to what extent is that expressed opinion translated into the way that they behave, either in terms of how they select the course or the options that they choose when on the course'*.

Overall, interviewees portrayed sustainability as something for which there is a latent, rather than an active interest within the mainstay of the student body. So although sustainability is unlikely to be an decisive factor for the majority of students when choosing which university to go to, which degree course to undertake or even which modules to study, interviewee quotes suggest that when students do become exposed to sustainability during their time at university, for many their interest begins to grow and they become more engaged and receptive. A few interviewees explicitly described this phenomenon: *'I don't think there are many students who choose a university because it's got sustainability written all over it, but I think what happens is*

when people arrive they can be quite pleased that it's here and then they get involved in it' (Y33);
'...interestingly, not as strongly as you'd think amongst applicants, but it's a very important part of
the view of people going out... ...that they've been at a university which has considered itself green
... I suppose, creating the demand by opening them up to the fact that there is an issue that's
important' (Y40). Interviewees also described evidence of growing student-driven informal and campus-based sustainability activity, often linked to the work of students' union's.

6.2.3 Students as partners for ESD in the marketised context

Drawing together all the findings of Core Theme 10 (ESD and the student as consumer) leaves us with the following question: what is the practical relationship between marketisation and ESD in relation to the notion of student as consumer? Results of this thesis suggest that in many ways, students are not the consumers that government has ideologically manoeuvred them to be. Perhaps they will become more so as marketisation trends continue to grow and unfold; that remains to be seen. Furthermore, the many anticipated pernicious impacts of student consumerism *for students*, do not appear to be substantially borne out in practice. Results also suggest that ESD, particularly in relation to the formal curriculum, is certainly more of a supply driven, than a demand driven agenda. On the whole it is not students, across a range of disparate disciplines, demanding sustainability be embedded within teaching, but academic staff deciding that it is important for students to engage with, reflect upon and learn about sustainability-related issues (or similarly, graduate attributes which we decide our students *should be* developing). Academics are thus using the future-orientation and post-experience good nature of higher education learning, to attempt to prepare students to deal with complex global issues that are likely to become increasingly significant within their future lives. Like government, we are, as sustainability educators, advancing our ideologically-driven agenda upon the student body. The connecting question which emanates from both of these key themes, is how often do we really engage with students and truly listen to what it is *they want to learn*, what it is *they value* now

and for their future lives and how *they would like* to be involved in the process of their own education. Yes we undertake many student surveys, evaluations and satisfaction-checking exercises and we provide insurmountable levels of quality-based information, but how often do we consult students before and during the process of learning in a relational, personal and contextual manner? In many ways it is possible to argue that the student as consumer mentality has led to an infantilization, rather than empowerment of students (Nordensvärd, 2011; Williams, 2011). The concept of students as partners or co-producers offers some ideas to counteract this trend and to help us to really connect with students in the marketised context.

Students as partners has been defined as *'...a process of student engagement, understood as staff and students learning and working together to foster engaged student learning and engaging learning and teaching enhancement'*. Partnerships in learning are thus *'...a relationship in which all participants are actively engaged in and stand to gain from the process of learning and working together'* (Healey, Flint and Harrington, 2014, pg. 7). A central tenet of students as partners, is that students should be actively engaged in decision making processes, regarding the design of curriculum content, pedagogy and learning environments, as well as being co-producers in the production of knowledge and skills to meet the intended learning outcomes (ILOs) of their courses (Streeter and Wise, 2009, pg. 4). Healey, et al., (2014, pg. 20), summarising the work of Cook-Sather, Bovill and Felten (2014, pg. 100) have suggested that the benefits of such partnerships for students include: enhanced confidence, motivation, and enthusiasm; enhanced engagement in the process not just the outcomes of learning; enhanced responsibility for, and ownership of, their own learning; and deepened understanding of, and contributions to, the academic community. Likewise for staff, they may gain transformed thinking about and practice of teaching; changed understandings of learning and teaching through experiencing different viewpoints; and reconceptualization of learning and teaching as collaborative processes. Such descriptions accord with those of the active, participatory, experiential and interdisciplinary learning approaches and environments advocated within HESD literature. As Tilbury (2016, pg.

273) has recently detailed: *'The student engagement narrative resonates deeply with proponents of sustainable development who seek to engage students in real world issues, reframe the teacher-learner relationships, promote participatory and active learning and embed responsibility into professional education outcomes'*.

Whilst the reality of achieving a partnership approach in practice is clearly more challenging than writing lists about the many potential benefits that such an approach offers, there are undoubtedly lessons to be taken from this theory, that all academics, ESD advocates or otherwise, could seek to apply to at least some aspects of their teaching and learning practice. Evidence in this thesis pointed to the fact that the current student body is neither strongly swayed by marketisation or sustainability, thus the idea of students as partners or co-producers, offers the potential to create spaces within higher education where the *reality*, rather than the *theory* of students' experiences, desires and expectations within the marketised context, can be explored through a process of active listening *to students*. Such an approach offers tangible opportunities for students to explore in an open way with academic staff, the real-life relationship between their student identities as consumers, scholars and contributors to the socio-sustainability good of society. The practical relationship between marketisation and ESD in relation to the notion of students as consumers, can therefore only be truly uncovered through giving students an active voice in the values-driven and ideologically-underpinned 'marketisation vs. sustainability' debate.

6.3 Ideology vs. Reality in Education for Sustainable Development

The last section of this chapter focuses predominately on Core Theme 11 – ideology vs. reality in education for sustainable development – which comprises five key themes outlined in Table 6.5 and arose from responses of interviewees which highlighted a tension between transformative HESD ideology (underpinned by critical environmental education (EE) theorising) (as explored in Chapter 3, Section 3.3.2) and the practical reality of ESD developments and changes that are occurring on-the-ground within England’s marketised universities. Core Theme 11 is based upon the responses of interviewees to some broad question themes, as well as responses which arose more generally throughout the interviewing cycle. Broad question themes included: the relationship between neoliberalism, new public management, marketised mechanisms and ESD in English higher education; the extent to which interviewees believed progress towards ESD could be made *within* the current higher education system; different approaches to ESD being taken at their institutions and the value/priority afforded to different approaches (e.g. sustainability degrees/modules, holistic integration across curricula/disciplines, campus-based/student-led ESD); the notion of whole systems transformative approaches to driving ESD; and their future hopes for the progression of the ESD agenda. Section 6.3.1 presents the results of Core Theme 11, before the remaining sections delve in to a variety of theoretical/analytical issues related to the key themes, in an exploration of the tensions between transformative HESD ideology and pragmatist HESD reality in the marketised HE context. Data analysis Core Theme 12 which focuses on the role and purpose of higher education in England through the eyes of HESD community of practice, is brought in towards the end of this section to draw together some of the key themes emerging across Section 6.3 and to conclude the chapter.

Table 6.5 – Analytical Codes and Key Themes within Data Analysis Core Theme 11

Core Theme 11 – Ideology vs. reality in education for sustainable development	
Key Themes	Analytical Codes
Championing of transformative HESD approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Radical overhaul of the nature of education – asking critical questions about purpose of education • Changing the system not working within it – systemic institutional change and organisational learning towards sustainability • Radical critique of neoliberal capitalism in HE – HE should lead not follow dominant political ideology • Sustainability and social responsibility not challenging neoliberal conventions but reinforcing them
Working with(in) the system HESD approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Radical whole system paradigm change of HE towards sustainability is not likely to happen in reality • Neoliberalism is hard to break – marketised system and sustainability must fit together – making transition to more sustainable society within the context of neoliberalism – working to modify and ameliorate the paradigm • Using skills of sector and making the best of what we have – starting from where we are – pushing as much as possible – good enough outcomes
Theory-practice gap in HESD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of disconnect between theory and practice in HESD – too much ESD writing not empirically-based – very normative • HESD literature self-serving and self-celebration – not enough impact
Strong individual HESD ideologies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • England’s HESD community of practice tensions, factions and strong personalities – different and strong opinions about the nature of ESD – what ‘it is’ and ‘should be’ – disagreements about language & approaches • Ideology and ego of individuals – individuals trying to monopolize agenda
Encouraging plurality in ESD approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A need to encourage debate, discussion and challenge in relation to sustainability and ESD approaches • Encouraging innovation, plurality and creativity – no right/wrong approach – letting people make up own minds – importance of individual ownership

6.3.1 Transformative HESD ideology vs. pragmatist HESD reality

Throughout the interviewing process, the majority of interviewees expressed some form of commitment to systematically advancing sustainability and ESD within English HE. There were however, only a handful of individuals who exhibited values and ideals clearly aligned to the transformative HESD vision, whereby working towards ESD from *within* our current marketised HE sector was deemed inadequate and inappropriate. These interviewees sought radical transformation of the very nature of HE: *‘For me it’s a paradigm shift, the university has to*

completely change how everything is taught' (Y27); '...it needs to be a completely radical overhaul of what education is about' (X8); 'We absolutely need to transform the whole question about what education is for' (Y42). Further interviewee quotes championing the transformative HESD vision, included:

... [ESD is] fundamentally not a challenge to neoliberalism and the current state of transnational capitalism, it's not challenging it, and so therefore it's allowed to prosper. ...People who really care about the world and want to do something good for the world, go into ESD because it's the only publicly available recognized channel. ...We have the space to do something a bit different within universities and the danger is that if we don't challenge the structures that are there then we are reinforcing them (Y42).

Education follows the political agenda, it certainly follows the funding agenda, it follows the dominant ideology, rather than attempting to change it. ...basically neoliberalism has set the scene. It has changed the nature of the University. ...the economic model has failed in terms of being able to deliver on sustainability and social responsibility. ...there needs to be far more than a willingness to accept market mechanisms as a way of changing things. ... [we are] slightly tinkering with the economic system but really doing so to ensure the market model is actually more robust in the future (Y23).

So reforming capitalism, in that sense, is an oxymoron, and reforming it for sustainability is an oxymoron. So in other words we are sitting around fiddling while Rome burns, and thinking we are doing a great job. ...sustainability itself as a complex concept also has a side to it which supports the neoliberal and new public management ethos. ...And if that's the case it could get co-opted as a method for better running organisations more effectively, efficiently and economically without ever driving to the fundamental heart of what drives capitalist practice (Y35).

...higher education should say how can we contribute to that [sustainability], not the other way round. ...it should be education at the service of society, and this is the biggest thing happening in the world, nothing else will matter if we've fried the planet (X8).

Key tenets of critical pedagogy and critical EE theorising resonate from these quotes, which portray the notion that ESD is insufficiently political and radical in its contestation of dominant neoliberal paradigms. Or in other words, in ‘tinkering’ at the edges of marketisation, ESD does not systemically challenge the hegemonic structures and ideologies which underpin higher education, thus is reinforcing and even exacerbating the problems of ‘unsustainability’.

On the whole the majority of interviewees expressed a more pragmatic ‘working with(in) the system’ approach to advancing ESD, with several describing transformative ESD approaches as unrealistic and unlikely to materialize in reality. These more pragmatic interviewees varied in the extent to which they seemed to notionally support the transformative ideal, with some expressing more radical and critical values alongside their pragmatist approaches, whereas some were more measured in their ESD aspirations. There was however a palpable undercurrent message, from many of the more pragmatic respondents – sometimes implicit, sometimes more explicit – that greater progress could have been made, or could still be made, towards advancing ESD, if the English HE system were less marketised and academics were under less pressure from the competing priorities and pressures of the marketised system. A selection of quotes demonstrating this ‘working with(in) the system’ ethos are outlined in Table 6.6.

Table 6.6 – The pragmatist reality of HESD in the marketised context

<i>Interviewee Quotes</i>
Interviewee Y34: ‘That’s another problem that I think we have in sustainability education as a whole... [they] would like everything to change and the whole system to be transformed... ...and I’m very much, I would much rather take a lot of people a small way down that path, I just think it’s a more practical proposition, and that’s just the pragmatist in me really’
Interviewee X9: ‘And there are some who are so hard lined they believe universities should be dismantled and rebuilt purely along ESD lines, and that is what a university is for. And I’m more pragmatic... ...we’re in this sector, we need to find some ways that we can utilise the skills of the sector to try to lead transforming the change, universities are never going to be about ESD, it’s just not going to happen, not within this generation certainly’
Interviewee X2: ‘...the neoliberal thing is going to be difficult to break, I mean I agree with what Rolf Jucker says and everybody who talks about this as being the big barrier, but that’s the way we’re going. ...So my reality says if that is the way we’re going how do we actually latch on to that and still create more sustainable institutions and infrastructure, and that’s what I think we’ve got to try and find a way forward on. Here’s the neoliberal debate and here’s the ESD debate, how do we actually make that

transition given that the ideology is very much about a market?’
Interviewee Y16: “Sweep away the entire system”, that never really makes much sense to me, although I am still a member of the Green Party, so I’m surrounded by lots of people who tell me we’ve got to sweep away the entire system, that’s practically the preamble to any conversation. I don’t honestly know what that means; by and large systems don’t get swept away’
Interviewee Y25: ‘...you can't work like thinking well if only the revolution had happened we'd all be fine, that's complete rubbish, to talk in that way is actually very unhelpful’ ‘You can’t write off the ESD agenda. I think you've got to start from where you are and work from that, I'm too old to wait for the revolution to start teaching things that I want to teach’
Interviewee Y13: ‘...I think universities are slow moving and I think there is a paradigm shift happening’ ‘If it’s based on personal interest of academics, changing the whole system is never going to happen’
Interviewee Y31: ‘...he might say, well you’re just being manipulated by the whole capitalist thing, but in a way you have to play within where you are really and work for change within that, both at institutional level and individual level. So that’s what we do. I sometimes think of it like a force field exercise, you know, where the centre ground is being pushed both ways, if you like, there’s forces going both ways, but there certainly is still lots of opportunities’
Interviewee Y17: ‘...as somebody who doesn't particularly care for neoliberalism at all, the whole keeping the spirit of autonomy and independence and radical pedagogy, fine, but get real, in one sense that, you know, you want to keep a job. If I was a university Vice-Chancellor I wouldn’t stake my university’s future on what a radical pedagogue is saying I should be doing, in the sense that bucking the trend of neoliberalism is fine, but being the first to do it...’

These quotes illustrate important insights into the practical relationship between marketisation and ESD and the reality which faces most HESD practitioners working within English universities. There are clearly many individuals who feel that they *can* make positive advances towards sustainability education from within our current HE sector; taking the view that ‘we are where we are’ in terms of marketisation, that our HE system is not going to get radically overhauled, nor marketisation ‘swept away’. Rather, that we must keep striving for change, trying our best, making the most of the current system, utilising the range of skills of individuals within the HESD movement, and ‘latching on’ or manipulating marketisation for the benefit of ESD. These interviewees portrayed themselves as actively working both *with* and *within* the marketised HE system to drive ESD, or as one interviewee put it, trying to ‘modify’ or ‘ameliorate’ the influence of the dominant paradigm. Interviewee Y17’s quote in particular, highlights the tension between radical/critical pedagogical approaches to ESD and the marketised norms of the sector by reflecting upon the extent to which individual staff, if they want to retain their jobs, and individual HEIs, if they want to remain financially viable institutions, have the choice to opt out of the marketised regime or ‘buck the trend of neoliberalism’.

Associated with this transformative ideology vs. pragmatist reality tension, a few interviewees explicitly highlighted the notion of a theory-practice gap within the HESD movement. Indeed, the desire to contribute some empirical research to England's HESD movement had spurred Interviewee Y34 to become involved with ESD in the first place, they described:

...there are a lot of people who write stuff about ESD but not a lot of research. ...that's one of the reasons that I got into it in the first place, or one of the things that really drove me in the beginning was that I felt that there were a lot of people with views on ESD and that very little of it was empirically based. ...there were a lot of people out there who were saying what they thought should happen but very few who were going out and saying, well what is actually happening?

Jucker (2014, pg. 26) has recently made a similar point, saying that: *'Most of ESD literature relies on opinions or claims, rather than building on established facts and knowledge, or providing sound empirical evidence'*. Interviewee X2 described a similar stance to Interviewee Y34 and expressed a certain level of exasperation with the volume of ESD research being produced, which they felt, did not have enough of a connection to the reality of changes occurring within universities, saying:

'There is a disconnect with practice, this is the problem with ESD. There is a lot of theory but often that doesn't relate very much to the practice. The 'ESDers' will keep going on, they'll keep writing their books, there are hundreds of them, you can go on and on, there is wonderful stuff written but in the end, what's the impact? If you can't change things, writing about it, what's it actually doing except being self-serving for the academic community?' Interviewee Y17 also raised a question about whether the very radical and critical ESD theorists live up to their own doctrines in the reality of their day-to-day work, or if they are too, ingrained within marketised realities of chasing career goals, security and pay rises: *'I wonder if their CVs match up with their radical aspirations?'*

A final linked theme emerging from the responses of a handful of interviewees, related to the presence of some very strong individualised ESD ideologies within England's HESD community. These 'expert' voices weren't necessarily explicitly badged as falling within transformative/radical HESD camps, but were described as similarly idealistic and unwavering in their beliefs about what

ESD is, isn't, should and shouldn't be. Such normative visions were said to have led to clashes between strong personalities, tensions within the HESD community, as well as the creation of factions with differing opinions about the nature, goals, language and approaches of ESD.

6.3.2 Action and experience over doctrine and ideology

The question of ideology vs. reality is clearly a central debate which underpins the HESD movement and community of practice in England and links directly to the heart of this thesis. In line with theoretical principles number one and seven of the pragmatist interpretivist theoretical framework³⁶ – ‘Actor frame of reference’ and ‘Action and experience over doctrine and ideology’ – the results outlined above reinforce the importance of seeking to understand the realities of ESD through the day-to-day contextual human experiences of active HESD practitioners. In so doing, I have been able to shed light on some of the realities of the practical relationship between marketisation and ESD in English HE and how HESD practitioners feel about this relationship.

Interviewee responses overwhelmingly point to the fact that most ESD developments occurring across the English HE sector are first and second order ‘accommodative’ and ‘reformative’ change within the marketised system, rather than third order transformative change (Sterling, 2013), which remains largely doctrine and ideology. Overall interviewees seemed empowered and positive about their ESD achievements and though they pointed to a range of challenges and constraints presented within the prevailing marketised context, neoliberal ideology and marketisation were not presented as all-encompassing or irresolvable barriers to progress. Interviewees demonstrated in many tangible ways how they had been able to embed and mainstream socio-sustainability issues and agendas into strategic university policies and

³⁶ **Pragmatist-Interpretivist Theoretical Principle 1, Actor frame of reference:** we must attempt to understand the social world through the eyes of the individuals who are directly involved in the activities being studied, i.e. through their experiences, points of view, frames of reference and worlds of work. **Pragmatist-Interpretivist Theoretical Principle 7, Action and experience over doctrine and ideology:** the merits of pragmatic reasoning drawing upon practical and contextual human experience, in order to explore the differences between what is ideological and reified and what is real and tangible.

strategies, the education of students across a range of disciplinary areas, the professional development of staff and the ethos of their institutions. None of the eight universities however, demonstrated a situation anywhere close to the transformative HESD vision, i.e. paradigmatic redesign of educational purposes, policies and programmes involving the whole university community (Sterling, 2013). Although clearly there is a wealth of practical and empirical HESD research also going on within the HESD movement, alongside the more transformation-focused literature, recent examples include: the NUS's (2017) ESD guide, *From Art to Zoo Management: embedding sustainability in UK higher and further education*, which aims to showcase best practice in embedding sustainability within a range of disciplines and inspire colleagues in all corners of universities, as well as UNESCO's (2017), *Good practice in Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in the UK: Case Studies*, which reports on a series of UK-based case studies within formal education, community and business sectors. So far, such research has failed to dislodge the entrenched transformative ideal from its ideological pedestal. Thus, the ways in which the transformative HESD vision continues to be presented as *the* ideal and correct vision of how higher education *should* be contributing towards a more sustainable future, remains problematic for a number of reasons which will now be outlined.

Firstly, it idealises what ESD *should be*, rather than reflecting what ESD *has ever been* in practice. When couched in terms of the limiting effect of neoliberal ideology, such visions also fail to acknowledge that we cannot feasibly know the extent to which sustainability education *might be* more advanced and developed, nor the ways in which sustainability education *might have* played out differently, if the English HE system *had been* different – ESD in England has only ever functioned within a marketised HE sector. Having said that, as Interviewee Y16 described, we also cannot be certain that the pro-sustainability developments which have occurred within HE '*...are over and above what would have been happening in a less neoliberal regime*'. Or in other words, that we have had a net-positive sustainability outcome within the marketised regime. Highly normative HESD visions also suppose certain and correct ways of 'doing' ESD, which leave other

modes, that do not radically transform HE systems, to be deemed less valuable. For the more pragmatic HESD advocates, those new to ESD and those from more tangential disciplinary areas, this risks conveying the message that smaller-scale changes to curriculum and teaching practice are negligible in terms of their educational impact, rather than encouraging individuals to see such changes as stepping stones to broader innovations in the future. Moreover, it suggests that positive impacts on small groups or individual students are not worthwhile. Arguably small changes to teaching practice in any discipline, in any university, will have more educational benefit than another journal paper or book which lambasts the failure of the HESD movement to radically transform and revolutionise higher education. Ironically, Sterling himself recognized this entrenched paradox within sustainability education research over a decade ago. He described:

...the more conceptually far-reaching that the movement has become, and the more strategically ambitious, the more difficult it is for education as a whole to respond adequately. ...the reconstructivist [transformative] approach often suggests a revisioning of education and society too radical or apparently ideological for most educational systems to accept or for which to find starting points (Sterling, 2004a, pg. 47, 54).

Several chapters in the 2016 *Routledge Handbook of Higher Education for Sustainable Development* have recently reinforced the importance of pragmatic approaches to HESD within the context of working towards longer-term transformation of systems. Wahr and de la Harpe's chapter *Changing from within*, describes how universities working towards HESD reformation or transformation, must make a concerted effort to unite and do so from *within* the HE system, in ways that are sympathetic to the diversity of university sub-cultures. Further, Sylvestre and Wright (2016, pg. 301) have urged that HESD transformation '*...necessitates more than asserting claims to a moral high ground*' or '*...merely using HESD rhetoric*'. Rather they say it involves a '*...serious commitment to understanding how universities as organisations learn and change*' through using grounded organisational change theory, recognising the importance of incremental changes within longer-term organisational development, and again ensuring that change

resonates with the diversity of HE traditions. Mochizuki and Yarime (2016, pg. 18) have described how first, second and third order ESD learning and change (accommodative, reformative and transformative) are equally as important as one another, saying: *'It is important to note that these three stages are neither mutually exclusive nor meant to indicate the relative usefulness of particular approaches and associated scholarship'*.

Research by Cotton, et al., (2009) entitled *Revolutions and second-best solutions*, is one of the most detailed previous explorations of this ideology-reality paradox in HESD literature, which is based upon interviews with several academic staff working to embed ESD within curricula at the University of Plymouth, UK. Cotton, et al., (2009, pg. 730) described:

...current practice in integrating sustainable development into higher education is far removed from the 'ideal state' envisaged by many ESD experts. The radical changes to educational programmes and institutions, creating holistic learning opportunities that transcend disciplinary boundaries and provide 'transformative' learning experiences, appear somewhat disconnected from the everyday experiences of our respondents.

Through this research Cotton, et al., advocate the importance of recognising 'second best' solutions in the context of ESD; suggesting that it may be more productive to adopt such approaches, as a tangible way of making progress and stimulating discussion, reflection and cultural transition, rather than continuing to strive for 'first best' optimal ESD ideals, i.e. with *'...less focus on rhetoric and more on practical changes within the boundaries of the current higher education system'* (ibid, pg. 732). For Cotton, et al., the risk of strict adherence to the transformative HESD vision, which they describe as utopian, normative and abstracted, is that many other forms of change towards ESD can become overlooked, thus leading to the disengagement and disempowerment of HE staff trying to work in this area, they describe:

Whatever standpoint one takes on the rectitude of transformative visions of higher education, much of the current pedagogical literature on ESD (at least implicitly) overlooks, or discounts, a

significant portion of current practice as deficient in relation to this 'ideal' state. ...focusing excessive attention on normative prescriptions while dismissing the value of second-best scenarios risks at best a missed opportunity, and at worst a general disengagement by the higher education community (ibid, pg. 730, 731).

Such conclusions align closely with those drawn through this research and are also reinforced by several newly published doctoral studies. Bieler and McKenzie (2017) have recently found a correspondingly strong trend towards 'accommodation' and 'reformation' in the strategic sustainability approaches of Canadian universities, rather than more progressive or transformative approaches. And Cebrian, et al., (2015, pg. 87), researching ESD at the University of Southampton, UK, described a disparity between ESD ideals and academic views on teaching sustainability, concluding that '*...the ideal of embedding ESD within all courses, having sustainability discussions embedded throughout programmes and developing an understanding from the subject area context... ...is far from becoming a reality*'.

6.3.3 Encouraging plurality in ESD approaches

Linked to these ideas about the importance of valuing individual experience, the achievements of HESD practitioners however small or large, and tangible pragmatic actions for driving sustainability (as per theoretical principle number five of the pragmatist interpretivist theoretical framework³⁷ – 'practical ideas for action and change'), other theorists have aired their grievances with the elitist and prescriptive language which plagues certain realms of the ESD movement (notably the more transformative, abstracted and normative realms). Wals and Jickling (2002, pg. 222) have said that ESD '*...breathes a kind of intellectual exclusivity and determinism*' and that we must continue to seek more diversity of thought and less exclusive language. One way for HESD to do this is through engaging more deeply with mainstream HE research and

³⁷ **Pragmatist-Interpretivist Theoretical Principle 5, Practical ideas for action and change:** The efficacy of and need for useful, workable and practical ideas, policies and research concepts as tools which may be used for problem solving, action and change.

literature. In their opinion, owing to the varied cultural, academic and curricular traditions of individual HEIs, there is no panacea for curricular reform when addressing sustainability issues: *'Some institutions will choose to add on to existing programmes, others will opt for a more revolutionary approach'*. Blewitt and Vare (2007, pg. 2) have also said, *'The thought that some body of experts 'out there' should define what we all need to know/do/think in relation to sustainability, irrespective of our diverse settings, is quite frankly chilling'*. Which links directly to the idea of 'Mode 1' and 'Mode 2' ESD proffered by Vare and Scott (2007), whereby ESD 1 is 'expert-led', but ESD 2 encourages individuals to think critically about, and to test the ideas of, supposed ESD experts. Indeed, several interviewees within this study also highlighted a need to encourage debate, discussion and challenge in relation to sustainability and ESD approaches; recognising that there are many different ways of 'doing' ESD and that we should therefore welcome and encourage innovation, creativity and plurality in approach. Interviewees described:

...nobody really knows what sustainability is going to look like, so how can anybody know what education for sustainability needs to look like? So why not experiment and see what works in particular contexts? So if you just say there's only this or that type of ESD, you would lose, there is value in that diversity. Plus people learn differently, there are different subjects, it's appropriate to be taught in different ways, you have to recognize and value in particular contexts, the different types of ESD (X1).

So it constantly needs to be challenged... ...we all dispute it anyway, we all have our own different understandings. But, for me at least, it's not about telling people what they should be teaching, it's not about saying, you've got to include this, it's not about telling students, you've got to think this. There's not a right and there's not a wrong way of doing it (Y34).

Everybody will have a different trajectory and way of getting there. There are platforms that you can get to and some of them may be short-term, if it's the right direction towards that end goal of a sustainable society... What universities ought to be doing and can-do is find those different stages in that journey (X2).

These quotes point to the importance of encouraging individual staff within HEIs to *make up their own minds* about how they wish, or do not wish to approach ESD within their own contexts.

Strong normative ESD visions on the other hand, which often present a pretence of openness and of encouraging criticality, may actually work against critical thinking and debate, through a habitual tendency to tell the HESD community what it *should* be doing and what it is not doing well enough. Scott and Gough (2006, pg. 301) have summarized this tension as follows:

Sustainable development, if it ever happens, will be a process in which everyone learns all the time. Its cause is unlikely to be advanced by any group that simply asserts its right and authority to teach others without learning itself. Aiding collaborators to do what they want to do more effectively will be more helpful than telling them they should really be doing something else. ...Encouraging, facilitating and supporting sequences of small steps may well be more productive ways of exploring issues and gaining confidence than being faced with the imperative of taking giant leaps on the grounds that, for example, such sustainable development is urgent.

6.3.4 Reification and sedimentation of ESD ideology in the marketised university

Another way of analysing the reality of the transformative HESD vision within the marketised reality of English HE is through the lens of 'reification', i.e. treating an abstraction as if it were a real thing. This links to my thesis theoretical principle 'action and experience over doctrine and ideology' and the quest to uncover differences between what is ideological and reified and what is real and tangible within the context of HESD. Crotty (1998) has described in detail problems associated with the process of 'sedimentation', which for me, resonate strongly with the ways in which highly normative HESD ideals and highly critical EE analyses, have evolved over the years. Crotty (1998, pg. 59) describes sedimentation as the process whereby increasing layers of interpretation get placed on top of one another like '*...levels of mineral deposit in the formation of rock*'. The problem with this, he says is:

No longer is it a question of existential engagement with realities in the world but of building upon theoretical deposits already in place. We become further and further removed from those realities and our sedimented cultural meanings serve as a barrier between us and them – living on top of a culture that has already become false.

Thus, we might envisage some of the most critical, transformative and normative HESD visions, which have sought to stimulate and drive the most radical change within HE, as comprising layers of sedimented interpretation and theorising that have become increasingly far removed from the tangible reality of HESD change processes occurring within the marketised context. Ironically these abstracted visions may turn out to be the most disempowering of all³⁸. Tilbury (2013, pg. 81) has recently described how *'Senior leaders and key agencies responsible for higher education have struggled to prioritise the reorientation of higher education towards sustainability'*. To counter this claim I would suggest that senior leaders have not 'struggled', because they have not tried or *wanted* to 'reorient' higher education towards sustainability. What many *have done*, is successfully integrated, embedded and mainstreamed sustainability within institutions – and many are indeed pleased with the progress that they have made. Sterling (2013, pg. 39) has also recently said that *'...there remains confusion in the higher education sector about the qualitative difference between, on the one hand, 'embedding sustainable development in education' – most often an accommodatory add-on response that does not necessarily impinge on or challenge exiting norms – and, on the other hand, a reformative or transformative change as a more holistic response involving cultural change and whole institutional shifts'*. I do not believe there is any confusion on the part of the higher education sector, this is merely the difference between ideology and reality.

³⁸ This analysis does not seek to diminish or vilify transformative HESD theorising, which I do believe to be a vitally important foundation of the conceptual and theoretical richness that makes up our academic field, it merely aims to examine some of the problems presented by the theory-practice gap it represents.

6.3.5 Typologising HESD approaches

The practical relationship between marketisation and ESD in English HE, in relation to the transformative HESD vision and critical EE theorising, is highly complex. Interviewees pointed to pressures and constraints within the marketised system as challenges to the progression of ESD. They also evoked the sense that more progress *might* have been made in a less marketised system, i.e. does this mean there is a practical contradiction between marketisation and ESD? Conversely interviewees portrayed messages of empowerment and commitment to driving sustainability education *within* the marketised sector and using marketisation to the advantage of ESD, i.e. does this denote a synergy between marketisation and ESD? The reality is that ESD – as an educational reform movement and social movement within academia – incontestably resides and always has done, within a marketised sector. Thus, if ESD ever does make significant inroads into the commonly agreed conceptualisations of higher education’s role and purpose, and moreover the reality of day-to-day activities within English HE, it will emerge within, from and beyond neoliberalism. In this sense, the critical environmental educators are correct again: ESD is implicated within and as part of the neoliberal regime. But does this mean that every sustainability education activity is tainted by neoliberalism, that tangible progress has not been made, or more importantly that neoliberalism is the only lens through which to view the progression of this agenda? We must also remember that the liberal/traditional conception of autonomous HE institutions and the rights of academically free scholars, as well as the political and values-driven underpinnings of sustainability, present further challenges to the development of ESD and add further layers of complexity to this relationship; which may not easily be distinguishable or divisible from the forces of marketisation.

Table 6.7 attempts to crudely typologise the key characteristics of transformative HESD ideology vs. pragmatist HESD reality within the marketised HE context, drawing on simple definitions of key terms from the Oxford Dictionary. On the left-hand side of the table we have

the transformative approach which aligns with rhetoric within the mainstream HESD and critical EE literature, concerned with the theory and ideals of sustainability education; radical, revolutionary and far-reaching change to HE conditions, attitudes and operation; and underpinned by morally universalistic and absolutist values which portray the all-encompassing and pernicious impacts of neoliberalism. On the right-hand side of the table we have the pragmatist approach, which was portrayed by many HESD advocates throughout the data collection of the thesis, concerned with the practical application and tangible action of sustainability education; reformist and incrementalist change to HE conditions, attitudes and operation (i.e. pragmatist interpretivist principle 8: positive reformation³⁹); and underpinned by epistemological and value pluralism. Again, drawing on fairly simple encyclopaedia definitions, epistemological and value pluralism is the idea that reality consists of many different types of ‘things’ and many different ways of knowing about these things; as such there is no consistent set of truths, explanations, or correct ways to define the realities of the world. Within this reality there are many different viewpoints and values, which may be equally valid and important, yet in conflict (New World Encyclopaedia, undated, pg. 1; Mason, 2011, pg. 1). This also ties in to the idea that we all possess different ‘social and cultural interpretive lenses’⁴⁰ which shape our understandings and interpretations of social reality. In line with the theoretical underpinnings of this thesis, this typology *has not* been constructed to dichotomise approaches to HESD. The purpose of creating this typology is to proffer, ‘epistemological and value pluralism’⁴¹, as a philosophical approach which reconciles education for sustainable development within the

³⁹ **Pragmatist-Interpretivist Theoretical Principle 8, Positive reformation:** A positive, optimistic and reformist sociology of regulation approach, rather than a critical, ideological and revolutionary sociology of radical change approach.

⁴⁰ **Pragmatist-Interpretivist Theoretical Principle 2, Social and cultural interpretive lenses:** individuals’ understandings and interpretations of social reality are shaped by their own social and cultural interpretive lenses. Thus social researchers must be aware of the social and cultural interpretations of the individuals being studied, as well as their own social and cultural lenses upon said interpretations.

⁴¹ **Pragmatist-Interpretivist Theoretical Principle 6, Epistemological and value pluralism:** a need to disambiguate falsely dichotomous philosophical, ideological and theoretical debates and tensions, to appreciate that reality consists of many different types of ‘things’, many different ways of knowing about these things, as well as many different viewpoints and values, which may be equally valid and important, yet in conflict. As such there can be no consistent set of truths, explanations, or correct ways to define the realities of the world or how we know about and research about such realities.

marketised context. It may also help us more broadly to conceptualise the economic/marketised, liberal/traditional and sustainability-based roles, purposes, ideologies and realities of English HE, as incontrovertibly conflicting yet symbiotic, opposing yet inseparable in equal measure. Myriad scholars would add further roles and complexity to this list; their viewpoints would be equally valid in this plural reality.

Table 6.7 – Transformative HESD ideology vs. pragmatist HESD reality in the marketised

HE context

Transformative HESD Ideology	Pragmatist HESD Reality
<p style="text-align: center;">Theoretical/Ideological</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerned with or involving the theory of a subject or area of study rather than its practical application. • Based on or relating to a system of ideas and ideals, especially concerning economic or political theory and policy. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Practical/Pragmatic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerned with the actual doing or use of something rather than with theory and ideas. • Dealing with things realistically in a way that is based on practical rather than theoretical considerations.
<p style="text-align: center;">Radical/Revolutionary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relating to or affecting the fundamental nature of something; far-reaching and thorough change and action. • A dramatic and wide-reaching change in conditions, attitudes, or operation. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Reformist/Incrementalist</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting or advancing gradual reform rather than abolition or revolution. • Belief in or advocacy of change by degrees; gradualism.
Moral Universalism and Absolutism	Epistemological and Value Pluralism

Overall the results explored in this chapter demonstrate the need for HESD advocates and researchers to be aware that the emphasis and significance we place on sustainability education is unique in the HE context. As Gough, et al., (2016) have recently noted, many of our colleagues simply do not share our concerns, and indeed, will have myriad social and cultural interpretive lenses and ways of thinking about the role and purpose of HE, which may or may not incorporate values and ideals aligned with the sustainability model. This leads on neatly to the final key theme of this chapter which explores the opinions of the fifty-four interviewees who took part in this study about the role and purpose of higher education in England.

6.3.6 The role and purpose of higher education in England

All interviewees were asked to reflect upon and give their opinion about, the role and purpose of higher education in England. Core theme 12 (outlined in Table 6.8) is split into six different key themes which emerged from interviewee responses to this question.

Table 6.8 – Analytical Codes and Key Themes within Data Analysis Core Theme 12

Core Theme 12: The role and purpose of higher education in England	
Key Themes	Analytical Codes
Sustainability role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students finding and understanding their place/role in society, contributing positively to wider society now & in the future – public good • Encouraging and fostering (locally and globally-facing) citizens/citizenship • Inter-generational justice, preparing for resource constrained and environmentally insecure future, preparing for sustainability challenges of tomorrow • Challenging paradigms and encouraging visionary change • Lifelong learning • Challenging and solving complex societal problems • Environmental awareness
Critique of economic model of higher education	Critique of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employability/professional training role of HE –transactional and qualification-based – skilling up the workforce • Producing students who don't challenge conventions but perpetuate capitalistic, consumerist and neoliberal status quo • HE at the service of the national economy • Individualistic purposes and outcomes of HE
Critical thinking role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping students become independent thinkers, critical analysers, self-reflective, questioning, able to use evidence, independent learners, able to ask difficult questions and challenge norms
Liberal/traditional role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning for learnings sake, intellect, reading, higher learning, disciplinary pursuits
Social capital role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increases students' social and cultural capital
Research role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researching, creating and disseminating new knowledge, blue skies thinking, knowledge to help society

Given that participants for this study were chosen as a representative sample of the HESD movement and community of practice in England (incorporating a range of university types, HE bodies and professional roles), we can surmise that the six themes presented in Table 6.8, broadly represent the perceived role and purpose of higher education in England according to those who

support the sustainability model of higher education. It is perhaps unsurprising then that the 'sustainability role' of universities came through as the strongest theme, with 25 interviewee comments in total in this vein. Interviewees discussed the importance of universities for helping students find and understand their place and role in society and for encouraging and fostering locally and globally-facing citizens, who will contribute positively to wider society now and in the future. Interviewees also placed emphasis on 'the future' in relation to the role of universities in helping society prepare for the known and the unknown environmental and sustainability challenges and insecurities 'of tomorrow'. Significant emphasis was also placed on tackling current complex societal issues and problems, as well as the notion of challenging paradigms and encouraging visionary change towards sustainability. The next two key themes came through equally as strongly as each other (with 14/15 comments). The first of these was an emphasis on the role of HE in helping students become independent, critical and self-reflective thinkers, analysers and learners, which was linked to the ability to be able to use evidence to weigh up environmental and sustainability problems and to be able to ask difficult societal questions and challenge unsustainable norms. These findings highlight the central place of critical thinking in the sustainability role of higher education. Once again, unsurprisingly, there was a strong critique of the economic and marketised model of higher education from within the HESD community, including critique of HE serving employability and professional training roles for the national economy. Interviewees talked about the individualistic, qualification-based and transactional nature of higher education, which may be viewed as simply 'skilling up the workforce', rather than producing citizens who can and will challenge capitalistic, consumerist and neoliberal conventions. The final three themes had around six comments each from interviewees, these were: the liberal/traditional role of HE and the importance of knowledge, learning, intellect and disciplinary pursuits for their own sake, rather than tied to any instrumental or other purpose; the role of universities in increasing the social and cultural capital of students through providing opportunities which will underpin their future successes in life (which may not be as readily

realised without a university education); and finally, interviewees talked about the research role of higher education for creating and disseminating new knowledge for society.

The strong castigation of the economic model of HE suggests that although interviewees did express pragmatic responses to driving ESD within the marketised context, for most, marketisation pressures, forces and ideologies are not welcomed and interviewees did not see the 'students as consumer' ethos as aligning with their role as educators or their students as learners. The HESD community of practice in England quite firmly portrayed the role of higher education in England to be fulfilling the sustainability and critical thinking role of helping society move towards a more sustainable future. Within this there was much emphasis placed on students, including increasing students social and cultural capital, and surprisingly little emphasis on the liberal/traditional role or research role of higher education. Such results suggest that the HESD movement is highly student centred and really does place students as the heart of the higher education system. The significant emphasis placed on higher education in helping students and society prepare for the longer-term 'future' was detailed through a variety of descriptions and rationale, and portrays the value placed on the future orientation of higher education knowledge and experiences, rather than instrumental, shorter-term economic and employability purposes. It is interesting to think about how this range of responses would be different if posed to a different academic community of practice, for example, a group of academics with a keen interest in internationalisation, or employability, or enterprise, or equality and diversity. Academic staff with different values, cultures, foci and worldviews would inevitably produce different key themes (and likely several of the same) and place priority on different roles for universities. Higher education in England is clearly a plural reality and melange of contradicting and complimentary values, ideals, roles and purposes; the sustainability model is just one of these roles and purposes, but certainly one which is worth fighting for within the marketised context.

CHAPTER 7) CONCLUSION

Overall this thesis has sought to explore the ideological and the practical relationship between marketisation and education for sustainable development in English higher education – focusing in particular on the political-economic ideology of neoliberalism and associated public sector management philosophy of new public management – in order to reveal how this relationship has influenced the pursuit, practice and development of ESD within England’s HE sector. This relationship has been explored both in terms of the contradictions and challenges, and the synergies and opportunities presented to the ESD agenda, as well as some of the key issues and debates within England’s HESD movement within the prevailing marketised context. The justification for this unique focus was a lack of studies which have *explicitly, specifically and empirically* explored ESD in English HE in the context of increasing neoliberal marketisation, through a marketisation lens and from a practical and pragmatic theoretical stance. Underpinning this thesis is a question which was posed in the first paragraph of Chapter 1 – what is the role and purpose of higher education in England? – which was set against the backdrop of three principle models of HE: the liberal/traditional; the economic; and the sustainability model.

This final chapter summarizes the key theoretical insights made throughout the thesis, including developments of existing theory, contributions to resolving issues identified through the literature review, ideas generated and conclusions drawn throughout the results and discussion chapters. These theoretical insights are explored in turn and avenues for further potential research are outlined. This chapter starts by focusing on the research design and theoretical framework of the thesis (Section 7.1), before working through each of the doctoral research objectives in turn (Section 7.2). Section 7.3 provides my overarching insights into the ideological and practical interface between marketisation and ESD. Section 7.4 provides a summary of the knowledge contribution of this study and Section 7.5 concludes the thesis by highlighting some limitations of the doctoral research.

7.1 Research Design and Theoretical Framework: New Approaches for Qualitative Higher Education Research

The research design of this study is unique and, to my knowledge, is the first empirical study to have considered the national-level ESD movement and community of practice (CoP) within English higher education. Though many HESD studies have utilised a case study approach, these have tended to be at the micro and meso levels of individual classrooms, programmes or universities, rather than the macro level. Furthermore, studies which have considered the HESD movement in England have tended to be theoretical/conceptual or policy analyses, rather than empirical studies. Robert Yin's (2003) book, *Case Study Research – Design and Methods*, was pivotal in enabling me to characterise and formulate the single embedded case study design which makes up this research. The methodological approach taken to sampling higher education institutions, higher education bodies/organisations and sustainability/ESD professionals, enabled me to produce a representative unit of analysis of the HESD CoP within the context of marketisation. My in-depth survey of the principle corporate documentation of each of England's HEFCE-funded HEIs, to find commitment to the principles of sustainable development and/or sustainability, could be repeated to assess changes over time. Overall this single embedded case study research design would be highly applicable to other studies wishing to explore national-level higher education agendas and movements, including further HESD-related studies.

Pragmatism, as a theoretical lens, has not readily been utilised within mainstream HESD research. One particular piece of work which does draw upon pragmatism in relation to environmental and sustainability education is Gough and Stables (2012) article, *Interpretation as Adaptation: Education for Survival in Uncertain Times*. Like this thesis the paper challenges dominant approaches to ESD through adopting a theoretical framework which draws upon tenets of classical pragmatist theory and in particular the work of Richard Rorty and John Dewey. Indeed these are two philosophers which I plan to explore in more detail to extend my own theorisation

of pragmatism in relation to HESD. Although I always knew that my personal theoretical lens had interpretivist underpinnings, it wasn't until I had undertaken extensive reading of the literature that I realised my stance diverged from much of the critique found within the mainstream HE and mainstream HESD research. Whilst it is not that I do not see or feel the impacts of neoliberal marketisation on academic life, unlike the critical theorists, pedagogues and environmental educationalists, as well as the more critical HESD writers, I do not believe that radical critique is the only lens through which to view the contemporary higher education environment.

Importantly, I believe that positive and reformatory progress for sustainability education and other social, collectivised, democratic, moral and ethical agendas in higher education, are more likely to be forged through action and activities working *with* and *within* the system, rather than through self-perpetuating dichotomistic critique. I believe that the ten theoretical principles of Pragmatist Interpretivism laid out in Chapter 4, Section 4.2, could serve as a useful theoretical tool for other qualitative researchers investigating contemporary higher education trends. Figure 4.1 (pg. 127), which builds on theorising laid out in Burrell and Morgan's (1979) book, *Sociological Paradigms and Organisational Analysis: Elements of the Sociology of Corporate Life*, and Crotty's (1998) book, *The Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process*, schematically maps key social science research epistemologies and theoretical perspectives and could also be a helpful research tool for qualitative social scientists.

7.2 Summarizing Findings from the Doctoral Research Objectives

7.2.1 Doctoral Research Objective 1

Chapter 2 sought to review and summarize the history and characteristics of marketisation within English HE (Doctoral Research Objective 1), drawing on a range of mainstream higher education research/literature. The terms capitalism, neoliberalism, marketisation, managerialism, new public management, corporatisation, and other similar phrases, in relation to higher education, are often used interchangeably and/or are conflated.

Whilst this trend in itself is not problematic, especially considering that the economic model of higher education is in practical terms a melange of all of these ideologies, approaches and practices, a key contribution I provided through Chapter 2 is an up-to-date (albeit within an exceedingly fast changing educational policy environment) and nuanced explanation, through a deep reading of the literature in this area, of the relationship between non-interventionist, decentralising, market-led tendencies, and interventionist, centralising, state-led tendencies, within the overall marketisation process of English higher education. Appreciating that the marketisation of higher education is a complicated and contradictory process, driven by rolled-back neoliberal ideology, and rolled-forward NPM steering and manipulation of universities, their staff and students, helps us to comprehend how HEIs are both more strongly controlled and regulated by the apparatus of the state, yet also more active participants in a range of markets and subject to market forces (Gamble, 1988; Middleton, 2000; Graefe, 2005; Henkel, 2007; Naidoo, 2008; Hursh, et al., 2015). This nuanced understanding, drawing on up-to-date higher education reforms in England, could help contribute towards other contemporary analyses of different policy developments in the marketised HE context.

7.2.2 Doctoral Research Objective 2

Chapter 3 reviewed and summarized the history and characteristics of the HESD movement, with a particular focus on English HE (Doctoral Research Objective 2) both from a policy development and a theoretical perspective. An important contribution within this chapter was outlining the core conceptual characteristics of HESD and positioning characteristic number sixteen from Table 3.2 (pg. 92) – ‘rethinking and redefining the purpose, methods and content of education’ – as the fundamental ESD principle within mainstream HESD literature. Description of the ‘transformative’, ‘paradigm shifting’, ‘holistic’ and/or ‘whole systems/institutional’ vision of HESD, via the theorising of Stephen Sterling (2001; 2004a; 2004b; 2012; 2013) and others, was pitched against the ‘eternal HESD frustration’ regarding lack of systemic progress that has been

made towards this ideal. Tensions between the transformative HESD ideal and the reality of HESD progress in England's HE sector is a recurrent theme within the rhetoric of the HESD movement. In this chapter I framed and typologised this debate as 'transformative HESD ideology vs. pragmatist HESD reality' (Table 6.7, pg. 297). This typology could be used as a reference point for further pragmatist ESD research within English higher education.

7.2.3 Doctoral Research Objective 3

Doctoral Research Objective 3 underpins the entirety of this thesis and has sought to explore the ideological relationship between marketisation and ESD within English HE. My exploration of this objective started in Chapter 2, Section 2.4, through outlining objections to neoliberal marketisation within the mainstream HE literature, which were divided into three key themes: 1) tensions with the liberal/traditional HE model and academic freedom; 2) concerns surrounding the political framing of HE in the UK and the instrumentality of the 'student as consumer' model; and 3) tensions with the social, public, ethical and moral role of HE. Overall this critique described the marginalisation of a whole range of values, roles and responsibilities of HE, including: social responsibility, social and economic equality, environmental sustainability, democratic citizenship, public morality, ethical conduct and critical thinking; a list which resonates identically with some of the core values of the ESD movement. This ideological contradiction was picked up again in Chapter 3, Section 3.6, which looked at a range of critical EE and critical/radical HESD literature and drew together the two key themes of this thesis for the first time, focusing *explicitly* and *specifically* on the intrinsic ideological tension between neoliberal marketisation and the aims of the ESD movement and asking whether education for sustainable development in the marketised university is a paradox or a possibility. The literature explored in this section is underpinned by critical theory and paints a resolute picture that the global ESD movement is dominated by, implicated as part of, supports and sustains the hegemonic political ideology of neoliberalism. Thus, attempting to mainstream, embed or integrate socio-sustainability public

goods into our current educational systems founded upon such a worldview, is portrayed as an incontrovertible paradigmatic contradiction (Irwin, 2007; Huckle, 2008; Jucker, 2011; 2014; Blewitt, 2012; 2013; Kopnina, 2012; 2016; McKenzie, et al., 2012; Gonzalez-Gaudio, 2016; Jickling, 2016; Lotz-Sisitka, 2016a; 2016b). It is interesting how much overlap there is between on the one hand, objections to neoliberal marketisation presented through the mainstream HE literature, and on the other, mainstream (and more critical/radical) HESD literature which critiques marketisation (both implicitly and explicitly) through its vision of an alternate sustainable university. Yet HESD research has, as previously mentioned, on the whole, failed to engage with this much broader and theoretically established field of research. The way in which I have interweaved and drawn commonalities between these two literature realms could potentially open up new lines of research enquiry for HESD researchers, through drawing on the range of theories and theorists within the mainstream HE literature and applying these to ESD research.

Within all three of the core literature realms of this thesis (mainstream HE, mainstream HESD and critical EE) it is rare to find authors who deviate from the dominant critique of neoliberal marketisation, to suggest that the provision of collectivised socio-sustainability public goods through marketised universities, might be possible. Three such authors, one from each of the three literature areas, were explored at the end of Chapter 3, these were respectively: Stefan Bengtsson (2014; 2016), Larch Maxey (2004; 2009) and Ronald Barnett (2011). Collectively these three authors take a divergent stance away from the dogmatic traditions of marketisation critique, to suggest that: there are inherent spaces for dissensus and resistance within the neoliberal hegemony which means that neoliberalism *cannot* be the universal reference point for all ESD activity (Bengtsson, 2014; 2016); we need to move beyond a binary framing of 'ESD vs. marketisation' to see this relationship as a double-edged malleable and adaptable sword (Maxey, 2009); HESD advocates have everything to fight for and must attempt to 'move beyond from within', i.e. move towards sustainability from within neoliberalism (Maxey, 2004); and, that we cannot escape the presence of ideology in higher education and must appreciate that

marketisation is just one of many factors which bears on the experiences of students and academic staff (Barnett, 2011). Indeed, it was here following these more optimistic and pragmatic insights that the aims, objectives, and theoretical perspective of this thesis found their niche. This doctoral research then set about establishing whether marketisation and ESD are fundamentally contradictory on a practical level, through championing this pragmatist voice and posing a range of pragmatist research questions which included:

- What is the nature of the practical relationship between marketisation and ESD in the English HE system? How does this relationship play out on a day-to-day and year-by-year basis in England's universities and throughout the HE sector? Is this ideological tension substantiated in practice? Or is the practical reality more complex?
- Are there any synergies between marketisation and ESD at the practical level within England's universities? Does neoliberal marketisation support the ESD movement in any ways and have ESD proponents used the marketised characteristics of English universities to the benefit of the ESD movement? Are there any positive aspects and benefits that the marketised system bestows for ESD?
- How do some of the core impacts of marketisation in English higher education relate to and interact with HESD, e.g. educational quality assurance, quality-related research funding, higher education league tables and 'student as consumer' ideology?
- What is the role of England's higher education bodies and organisations in this practical relationship between marketisation and ESD?

Further research could be undertaken using such pragmatist research questions to assess changes that have occurred within the English HESD movement in the last few years and/or to map changes that occur over the next few years in a longitudinal approach, through analysing a range of policy developments, changes to the sector bodies and assessing key marketised trends/mechanisms and how these are impacting the development of HESD activities on-the-ground.

7.2.4 Doctoral Research Objective 4

Chapters five and six of this thesis provided the results of the fifty-four interviews undertaken as part of this research through presenting, describing and theorising in turn, the twelve Core Themes of the data analysis process (summary of core themes is found in Table 4.13, Appendix D, pg. 395). Chapter five investigated how England's HE sector bodies and organisations, namely HEFCE, the HEA, the QAA, the NUS and the EAUC, have influenced and impacted the pursuit, practice and development of HESD in England since roughly 2005; looking at both the challenges/contradictions and the synergies/opportunities presented to HESD by the influence of these bodies in the prevailing marketised context. Through investigating the roles of and relationships between central government, HEFCE, the HEA and HEIs, I offered the notion of 'steered legitimisation' for HESD in the marketised context. Drawing on the complex dual-role of neoliberal ideology and new public management within the overall marketisation trend, results of the data analysis in this section showed that rolled-back, hands-off governmental support for sustainability since 2010, has left a large hole in the centre of national-level mandate for sustainability and HESD, particularly through retracted mandate given to HEFCE and thus HEFCE's lessened support for the HEA and the sector, i.e. we see here a clear practical contradiction between neoliberalism and HESD. Yet on the other hand, the centralising and interventionist tendencies of marketisation, as exemplified by the steering manifestation of government to HEFCE grant letter references to sustainability, and the development of sustainability and ESD strategy, policy, guidance documents and reports, as well as specific thematic work areas and funding streams from the sector bodies, has helped to forge significant advances in England's HESD movement over the preceding decade. Thus, paradoxically within this analysis, marketisation is both good and bad for HESD at the practical level; it contradicts and challenges, as well as compliments and synergises. The notion of steered legitimisation also presents an interesting tension between the economic/marketised model of HE and the liberal/traditional model. Indeed, data analysis demonstrated that although academic staff and HEIs attempt to

defend their academic freedoms, they have also become reliant upon marketising dirigisme to legitimise specific policy causes, such as HESD.

Whilst the NUS and the EAUC have, in recent years, made moves to step up to fill the void left by the work of HEFCE and the HEA, they do not have the same steering potential through being detached from the auspices of government sector body apparatus. This led me to suggest that the new Office for Students and the 'new HEA' are now in the most prominent position to fulfil this HESD steering role going forward and to start a trajectory towards the next national HESD tipping point; although of course, such emphasis will be highly dependent on governmental HE priorities over the coming years, or what government perceives to be the priorities of the student body. The notion of HESD 'tipping points', resulting from the convergence of varied marketised and marketising 'steering' drivers, could also be applied to the growth over time of other contemporary HE agendas and movements. A particularly interesting research avenue building on my ideas around steered legitimisation and the theories of Broadbent, et al., (2010) (i.e. regarding 'relational steering' which is 'amenable to substantive justification'), would be an empirical study which assesses and compares the development and progression of several different thematic HE educational agendas over time, e.g. internationalisation, employability and sustainability. Such a study could investigate, from the perspective of a range of different university staff and HEIs, how, why and the extent to which such agendas have grown and have been normalized (or not) and how marketised 'steering' and compatibility with institutional and individual lifeworlds demands, values and norms relates to such growth and development.

Another important conclusion drawn through Chapter 5 was that most HESD advocates are likely to be motivated and driven in their HESD endeavours by a complex, context-dependent and highly internalised mix of motivating factors which are at once intrinsic, altruistic and values-based, yet also extrinsic, self-interested and market-led. These conclusions were drawn through an exploration of Nudge theory (Thaler and Sunstein, 2008), Motivation Crowding theory (Frey

and Jegen, 2001) and Environmental/Sustainability Citizenship theory (Dobson 2007, 2010, 2011). Although there is much critique in the critical EE and HESD literature, at the linking of sustainability activities with marketised drivers, the provision of steered financial and policy incentives for HESD emerged as hugely important for enabling the interviewees in this study to undertake their HESD roles. Indeed, overall evidence was presented that intrinsic and extrinsic motivations towards HESD are mutually reinforcing. Further investigation into the role of intrinsic and extrinsic drivers for HESD activities, using the pragmatist interpretivist lens, could provide further empirical material to develop this theory.

The second half of Chapter 5 explored the relationship between a range of marketised mechanisms within English HE and sustainability and ESD activities. A clear practical synergy was established between ESD and educational quality assurance, whereas a clear contradiction was established between quality-related research funding and ESD research – demonstrating that this practical relationship is not black and white, but complex, contradictory and context-dependent. In relation to the roles of the People and Planet Green League and the EAUC Green Gown Awards a practical synergy was shown between the linking of sustainability and ESD activities to marketised league tables and awards mechanisms. Overall the incentivising functions provided by competition-based, recognition, reward and reputational HE drivers within the marketised context, were shown to be highly significant for both academic staff and universities more broadly in leading to net-positive impacts upon sustainability and ESD activities; a notion I called ‘steered incentivisation’. Research by Ferrer-Balas, et al., (2008), Dobson, et al., (2010), Scott, et al., (2012) and Cebrian, et al., (2015) have all also highlighted the importance of ‘incentivisation’ for sustainability/ESD engagement. At the end of Chapter 5 I made the suggestion that a range of marketisation mechanisms which could be used to further drive HESD in English HE, included: general research funding and research support structures/processes; quality-related research funding and the REF; educational quality-assurance; awards and accreditations; league tables; promotions and career paths; recruitment processes and professional/performance reviews;

continuing professional development; and teaching and learning qualifications such as PGCertHEs, the UKPSF and HEA Fellowships. Importantly these are also ways in which to positively recognise and reward ESD scholarship. Working together I believe that steered legitimisation and steered incentivisation have supported many staff and HE institutions in English HE to further their ESD agendas and provide evidence of a clear practical synergy between marketisation and HESD. Building upon the notions of steered legitimisation and steered incentivisation, an action research project which could be undertaken at the university level (although this would require reasonable funding and human resource) would be the development and deployment of a strategically planned steering agenda to encourage HESD engagement, coupled with monitoring of the impacts of a range of steering mechanisms and the extent to which these legitimise and incentivise HESD engagement and increase uptake of HESD activities across the institution.

7.2.5 Doctoral Research Objective 5

Chapter 6 investigated the practical relationship between marketisation and ESD through exploring some of the key issues and debates within England's HESD movement and focusing on the challenges involved with engaging wider populations of university staff and students with HESD. One key finding was that there are (still) significant barriers and a fundamental misalignment between the ways in which ESD is commonly presented, received and understood and the personal, professional and academic values of general populations of university staff. As such the tendency within the HESD movement to position disinterested or apathetic colleagues as 'barriers' to HESD, may better be positioned as a failure of the HESD movement to frame the context and content of ESD in ways which align with the lifeworld values and norms of the broad academic psyche. Linked exploration of competing priorities and pressures in the marketised university context suggested that there is a practical contradiction between the lived experiences of academic staff in the marketised context and individuals' ability, desire and/or willingness to engage with HESD agendas. However, interviewee responses did suggest that a key reason why

sustainability education is less readily prioritised amongst the array of educational priorities which academic staff are required to respond to, is because it often falls outside of the marketised regime, thus if it were more readily tied to marketised apparatus, it would be more widely embedded. Another significant research avenue in this section related to tensions between the liberal/traditional model of higher education and the HESD movement in relation to the political, values and ideologically underpinned nature of ESD. Conclusions drawn in this section drew upon the fact that the modern English university is rich with myriad conflicting and complementary values and ideologies, such that it is impossible to describe English HE as a neutral, impartial and values-free public sphere. Thus, one way in which to counter resistance to sustainability agendas on the grounds of ideology, is through more frank discussion and debate about the ideologically driven nature of the marketisation trend in English universities; such debates could also serve as a key avenue for developing the critical thinking skills of students. A planned university-level forum for debating such issues could provide interesting research outputs to assess the opinions of both staff and students regarding ideology, politics and values in the HE environment and curricula. This could also provide data regarding staff and students' opinions about the interrelationships and tensions between the different roles and purposes of higher education outlined in this thesis, i.e. the economic, the liberal/traditional and the sustainability model.

The practical reality of the 'students as consumers' notion was also explored in Chapter 6 and was linked to student demand for sustainability and ESD. Some themes were highlighted through interviewee responses which accord with concerns expressed elsewhere in the literature, i.e. regarding increasingly instrumental mentalities in relation to degree outcomes and securing a good job after university. However, the strongest theme which emerged from interviews, was the fact that universities and academic staff have responded much more markedly to the 'student as consumer' ideology and the 'student experience' mantra, than students have themselves. Thus, the impacts of student consumerism are likely to have been far more consequential for academic staff behaviours, than student behaviours. Indeed, results from this thesis refute several key

assumptions of governmental ideology which have underpinned recent reforms, including that: increases to tuition fees will automatically lead to students becoming empowered to behave as consumers; that students know what they want to learn, how they want to learn it and are suitably well equipped to express such demands; and, that students will actively apply pressure on universities to provide high quality, workplace-relevant provision. Drawing these findings together with the fact that ESD was largely described by interviewees to be a supply-led, rather than a demand-led agenda, it seems that HESD advocates, much like central government are just as guilty of attempting to advance an ideologically-driven agenda upon the student body. Whilst of course I would argue that ESD intrinsically has good intentions for students, universities and society more broadly, a key question arising from these findings is how often do we really engage with students and truly listen to what it is they value now and for their future personal, academic and professional lives.

The final two core themes explored in Chapter 6, 'ideology vs. reality in education for sustainable development' and 'the role and purpose of higher education in England', will now be rolled into my overarching insights into the ideological and practical interface between marketisation and ESD. Drawing together theorising from across the thesis and the core theme results of the empirical research, as well as building on the ten pragmatist interpretivist principles, Section 7.3 will conclude the theoretical portion of the thesis by summarizing the relationship between transformative HESD ideology and pragmatist HESD reality in the marketised context through the lens of epistemological and value pluralism.

7.3 The Interface of Marketisation and ESD in English Higher Education:

Reality Instead of Ideology in Education for Sustainable Development

Drawing together the literature review findings and the empirical findings of this thesis, we can conclude that there is an intrinsic ideological contradiction between education for sustainable development and marketisation in the contemporary higher education environment in England, yet the practical relationship between these two agendas is much more complex. Core theme results which emerged from the responses of interviewees demonstrated that on a day-to-day and year-by-year basis, neoliberal marketisation presents contradictions and challenges to the progression of HESD, yet also synergies and opportunities. Key challenges include: the impact of heightened neoliberal ideology and lessened government support for SD since 2010, which has had a knock-on impact on the roles of HEFCE and the HEA and the extent to which these bodies are legitimising developments within the sector; the inflexibility of the research excellence framework for encouraging and valuing the work of ESD researchers, thus presenting inherent barriers to ESD research; and, the highly pressured environment which academic staff work within and the many competing pressures on their time, which means that ESD is routinely de-prioritised amongst other agendas. Key synergies include: new public management steering serving as a key driver and legitimiser of university HESD activities; the linking of quality assurance and ESD as mechanisms to institutionalise ESD within HEIs; and the tying of sustainability and ESD to a range of competition-based, recognition and reward measures for universities and individual academic staff (including the People and Planet Green League and the EAUC Green Gown Awards), which are likely to have incentivised and led to a net-positive impact upon sustainability and ESD. Other theorising in this thesis has suggested that most HESD advocates are likely to be driven and motivated by (mutually reinforcing) intrinsic, values-based factors, as well as extrinsic, marketised factors; suggesting that the lifeworld values and norms of the HESD community of practice in England amalgamates and internalises both marketisation and sustainability. Indeed, many HESD

advocates have used the marketised aspects of HEIs to the benefit of sustainability education agendas and have actively called for further synergies between marketised mechanisms and ESD. Equally, the lack of wholesale response by students to either government-driven marketisation ideology, or HESD advocate-driven sustainability ideology, also suggests a plural lifeworld reality for the student body, which is neither strongly swayed by marketisation or sustainability.

Overall the majority of interviewees in this study presented a pragmatic ‘working with(in) the system’ approach to advancing ESD. Although interviewees did point to challenges presented within the prevailing marketised context, neoliberal ideology and marketisation were not portrayed as all-encompassing or irresolvable barriers to progress. Interviewees seemed empowered in their HESD work and evoked the sense that they were making positive progress towards sustainability *within* the current marketised system. Furthermore, transformative, whole systems HESD approaches were largely described as unrealistic and unlikely to materialize. The reality of the relationship between marketisation and HESD in English HE presents an entrenched theory-practice gap; the transformative HESD literature calls for revolution, yet the reality is second-best solutions (Cotton, et al., 2009). Findings of this research reinforce the importance of theoretical principle number one of the pragmatist interpretivist theoretical framework – actor frame of reference – which stresses the need for social researchers to attempt to understand the social world through the eyes, experiences, points of view, frames of reference and worlds of work of the individuals who are directly involved in the activities being studied. Theoretical principle number seven is also key here – action and experience over doctrine and ideology – which urges us to draw upon practical and contextual human experience, in order to explore the differences between what is ideological and reified and what is real and tangible. Calls from transformative HESD and critical EE camps for radical and revolutionary educational change may essentially be seen as layers of sedimented theoretical and ideological interpretation, that have become increasingly far removed from the tangible reality of HESD change processes occurring within the marketised context. Such change processes are on the whole, practical, pragmatic,

reformist and incrementalist, and I believe, worthy of praise, not denigration. Ironically, these abstracted and utopian 'transformative' visions may turn out to be the most disempowering of all.

Stefan Collini's (2012) book has attempted to answer the question of 'what universities are for', although he surmises that asking such a question will more often than not turn out to be trouble, through the danger of supposing that it is possible to reduce a complex institution down to a 'single' or 'narrow' purpose (ibid, pg. ix). Indeed, Collini has written that universities serve both instrumental and non-instrumental purposes and always have done; positing that our most difficult challenge might therefore be '*...finding a language in which to talk about this ineliminable tension*' (ibid, pg. 94). Collini's approach is intrinsically pragmatic as he details the 'elevated' and 'high-toned rhetoric' which surrounds discussions of higher education's purpose; which appears to be one of the most fundamental and enduring problems for HESD ideology also:

One of the recurring difficulties with nearly all writing about universities, this book included, is the apparent discrepancy or lack of proportion between, on the one hand, the elevated, high-toned rhetoric of the general characterisation of their purposes, and, on the other, the necessarily limited and pragmatic accommodation to contemporary circumstances that makes up daily experience in any actual university (ibid, pg. 102).

The empirical results of this research reinforce this pragmatic reality that universities in England serve a variety of roles and purposes and embody a complex mix of different ideologies, values and realities, which include, but are not limited to, the economic/marketised, the liberal/traditional and the sustainability models of HE. Such realities are incontrovertibly conflicting yet symbiotic, opposing yet inseparable in equal measure. Furthermore, academic staff working within this environment must navigate all of these competing pressures that weigh on their own time and indeed, their own values and morals. Epistemological and value pluralism, as a theoretical research lens, can help us to understand this reality which underpins the relationship between marketisation and HESD in English HE. It can also help us to comprehend that higher education comprises many different sets of truths and explanations about the realities of the

university environment, which are based upon the social and cultural interpretive lens of different individuals' and which vary from one person to the next. The emphasis that HESD advocates place upon sustainability education, is just one interpretation of the social reality of higher education.

This theorising about the pragmatist and plural reality of English higher education, accords with the writings of Bengtsson, Maxey and Barnett explored in Chapter 3, Section 3.6, but particularly Barnett who described discussions about the marketisation of HE as the 'trading of fixed value-laden positions' in an 'ideological landscape' (Barnett, 2011, pg. 39 – 41). Like me, Barnett believes that marketisation is just one core aspect of the contemporary HE environment, which *does not* override all other purposes of the university. Gough and Scott (2006, pg. 287) have also taken a similarly pragmatic approach in their analysis of the interrelationships between education, sustainable development and politics, urging that engagement with the divergent ideological perspectives of others, rather than engaging in pointless political debate, is a more fruitful way of attempting to understand the realities of such relationships and can ultimately help us to circumnavigate the 'western bipolar' way of thinking about such issues. They note:

There is, in Western thought at least, a deeply rooted assumption that notions of 'good and evil', 'right and wrong' are essentially dichotomous. A thing cannot, it is supposed, be both good and evil at the same time, though good in one thing can sometimes be traded-off against bad in another.

The plural reality of English higher education explored through this study helps us to reason and justify that, this western bipolar lens is essentially theoretical and ideological, rather than based upon the practical and pragmatic realities of higher education life. Such theorising also helps to quite straightforwardly answer the following research questions which were laid out in Chapter 3:

- Has the neoliberalisation of English higher education become so entrenched, consolidated and internalised, that the role HE plays for the social, public and sustainability good of society is entirely precluded and compromised? *No it has not.*

- Has higher education's economic role been elevated above, and to the detriment of all other purposes of HE? *No it has not.* Or do English universities still provide both public and private benefits to individuals and to society more broadly? *Yes they do.*
- Is marketisation wholly bad and sustainability wholly good? *No.* Are they inextricably linked? *Yes.*

Drawing upon the pragmatist underpinnings of my theoretical framework I believe this doctoral research has provided empirical evidence that the reality of English higher education in relation to the sustainability model of HE, is far more complex than a simple question of 'sustainability vs. marketisation'. What I have attempted to do through this research is provide a new lens through which to view this relationship, which moves us away from the pessimistic 'total critique' adopted by many critical theory analyses of HESD progress – and which have consistently failed to outline positive trajectories for getting from where we are, to where we want to be (Chambers, 2004; Lotz-Sisitka, 2016a) – to focus on the nature of reality and upon rational and pragmatic reasoning. This research therefore helps to disambiguate seemingly irresolvable philosophical disputes between marketisation and HESD and moves us away from ideological notions and reified conceptions about what ESD 'should be', to instead focus on what ESD actually 'is' and 'could be' in its tangible, day-to-day form and function within the marketised university system (West, 1989; Hookway, 2013; Morgan, 2014; McDermid, 2015). Working towards positive changes in education and society without total critique of the current situation clearly *is possible*; this does not represent compromise, accommodation, acquiescence to the status quo, or a lack of vision or values – it is simply the pragmatic reality. As outlined in the previously discussed report from the New Economics Foundation, higher education can provide both public and private benefits for individuals and society (NEF, 2008, pg. 12, 5):

Aspiring to higher education playing a dual role by bringing benefits to the individual alongside enhancing a sense of collective well-being need not be incongruous. In fact, they offer complementary pathways and an opportunity to demonstrate the full power and potential of

higher education for the individual, for the economy, for the environment and for society.

... [HE can serve] a dual purpose of enhancing both personal and collective well-being, recognising the learner's role as a member of a family, community and society, as well as a future worker.

There is currently no evidence that the marketisation trend in English HE is going to lessen, diminish or ratchet back in any significant way, any time soon. In fact we appear to be entering a newly invigorated period of heightened marketisation with the recent advances of the Teaching Excellence Framework and the Higher Education and Research Bill. Yet amongst this marketised reality, the global sustainability imperative remains urgent and unprecedented. I believe that it is our social responsibility to society, as environmentally-conscious individuals working in the marketised university environment, to keep making the best of the system we currently have; attempting to ameliorate the negative impacts of marketisation; heighten the virtuous aspects which can and do support the progression of HESD; and ultimately, to keep striving for educational processes, practices and policies, which have the potential to foster sustainability literate and competent graduates and to contribute to sustainability-based values-shifts within society. There are evidently many different ways of working towards sustainability from within our current marketised system. HESD practitioners are now faced with the task of strategically considering how best to manage and progress their ESD work given the increasingly marketised contexts with which we are faced, to ensure that our current HE system really does help us, to the best of its ability, to move towards a more sustainable future. Pragmatic higher education for sustainable development at the interface of marketisation, working with and within the marketised reality, can never be an 'empty signifier' if HESD advocates recognise that marketisation and sustainability are separated by ideology but not by practice.

7.4 Summary of Study Contribution to Knowledge

Several ways in which this study is original have been outlined throughout this conclusion, including that: it is the first macro-level case study of education for sustainable development conducted at the national level within the English higher education context; it has utilised a novel methodological approach via a single embedded case study of England's HESD movement and community of practice; it is one of few studies to explore ESD within the context of neoliberal marketization using an empirical approach; and, it is one of few studies to explicitly draw upon Pragmatist philosophy as a theoretical lens for HESD research. A summary of the core theoretical insights generated through this research are as follows:

1. The opposing ideological relationship between marketisation and HESD

Building upon in-depth reading and analysis of key themes within the mainstream HE, mainstream HESD and critical environmental education literature, there is an evident ideological contradiction between marketisation and ESD within English higher education. That is, ESD ideas and ideals about how HE needs to be reformed and changed in order to progress a more socially and environmentally sustainable future, and marketisation ideas and ideals about how HE needs to be reformed and changed in order to progress a more economically competitive future, fundamentally contradict and challenge one another at the level of ideology.

2. The paradoxical practical relationship between marketisation and HESD

Results from data analysis Core Themes 2 – 5 demonstrated that the practical relationship between marketisation and HESD is more complex. Indeed, different processes of marketisation appear to simultaneously synergise and provide opportunities for ESD, yet also contradict and challenge the progression of ESD in a number of ways. In particular, the non-interventionist, decentralising and rolled-back neoliberal tendencies of the marketisation doctrine have led to a retraction in support for sustainability and ESD activities at the national level since around 2010.

However, the interventionist, centralising and rolled forward tendencies of marketisation, aligned to New Public Management modes of operating, have helped to forge significant advances to England's HESD movement since 2005, through various processes of 'steered legitimisation'.

3. The incentivising impact of competitive marketised mechanisms upon HESD activity

Results from data analysis Core Themes 6 – 8 demonstrated that the incentivising impact of competition-based, recognition, reward and reputational mechanisms within the marketised context, are likely to have served as significant drivers for net-positive university HESD activities over the last decade or so, via various processes of 'steered incentivisation'. In relation to this I hypothesized that most HESD advocates are likely to be driven in their work by a complex mix of motivating factors which are at once intrinsic, altruistic and tied to the values of sustainability, yet also extrinsic, self-interested and steered by financial, competition-based and reputational incentives. Rather than 'crowding out' intrinsic motivation towards HESD, I suggested that extrinsic and intrinsic HESD motivations are mutually reinforcing. Overall I believe this thesis has demonstrated that processes of steered legitimisation and incentivisation have supported many English HEIs and their sustainability/ESD active staff, to positively progress HESD agendas.

4. Misalignment between ESD and the academic lifeworld

Drawing upon the results of data analysis Core Theme 9 I suggested that there is still, after several decades of HESD activity in England, a fundamental misalignment between the ways in which ESD is commonly presented, received and understood and the personal, professional and academic values of general populations of university staff. Without suggesting that broad populations of academic staff have low regard for sustainability-linked issues (e.g. climate change, human rights, social justice, ecological conservation), I believe rather, that the results of this thesis demonstrate that the HESD movement has largely failed to frame the context and content of ESD in ways which align with the lifeworld values and norms of the broad academic psyche, unlike other university agendas which have become readily normalised over similar timeframes.

5. Transformative ideology vs. pragmatist reality: an entrenched HESD theory-practice gap

Exploring HESD through the eyes, experiences, points of view, frames of reference and worlds of work of individuals who are practically progressing ESD within England's universities, the results of data analysis Core Theme 11 demonstrated that the transformative HESD vision has become increasingly far removed from the tangible reality of HESD change processes occurring within the marketised context, which are on the whole, practical, pragmatic, reformist and incrementalist. Layers of sedimented and reified theoretical interpretation, particularly prevalent within the more critical and radical HESD and environmental education literature, have created a huge gulf between ideological notions of what ESD/EE 'should be' and the practical reality of what ESD/EE actually 'is' within the marketised reality. My overall pragmatist hypothesis in relation to this is that '*ESD is*' practical activities taking place within English universities which are making tangible impacts and innovations and forging positive change for sustainability at the interface with marketisation. And conversely, that empty, self-perpetuating, dichotomous ideological debate with little practical meaning '*is not ESD*', i.e. '*ESD is*' the practical manifestation of ESD.

6. The plural role, purpose and reality of higher education in England

Drawing together Core Themes 11 and 12 I theorised that HEIs in England serve a variety of roles and purposes and embody a complex mix of different ideologies, values and realities. Although, both ideologically and practically speaking the HESD vision may be in tension with other truths and explanations about higher education (e.g. marketised and traditional HE models), within this plural reality all HE roles and purposes are symbiotic and inseparable. As such, I concluded that: neoliberal marketisation does not override all other purposes of HE; that HEIs serve both instrumental, private, individual and economic purposes, as well as non-instrumental, public/societal and socio-environmental purposes; that epistemological and value pluralism, as a theoretical lens, can help us to comprehend this plural reality; and, that there are many different ways of working towards sustainability from within the marketised HE context.

7.5 Limitations of the Doctoral Research

Several limitations of this study have been pointed to and discussed already throughout the thesis. The five most significant limitations of this study, in my opinion, are outlined below:

1. Long study time period

I believe the principle limitation of this study is the long period of time during which it has been undertaken and the many higher education policy changes that have occurred whilst the study has been in progress. Given the rapidly changing environment of English HE, this would have been a challenge even for a full-time doctoral student. Nevertheless, although the data collected for this thesis is reflective of a particular point in time (academic year 2013/14), and thus some of the core theme results are indicative of issues and debates associated with that particular time frame (particularly those relating to the sector bodies), I believe I have successfully used these results to build robust theories about the relationship between marketisation and HESD, which is an enduring, ongoing and continually evolving relationship. Thus, theories generated through this study are directly applicable to the English HE sector in its current form and function and will continue to remain relevant to its changing functions into the future.

2. No anomalous interviewees

Having surmised that HESD research habitually fails to empirically engage in discussions with individuals who fall outside of the HESD community of practice, I believe this research is also guilty of such a charge. Although technically all interviewees were chosen to serve a dual purpose of being embedded within both marketisation and education for sustainable development – I believe that interesting insights would have been given by individuals who do not advocate for sustainability. I would therefore be interested to collect the reflections and responses of a range of such individuals to the key findings of this research.

3. No student interviewees

Given the insights drawn about students' resistance to manipulation by either neoliberal or sustainability ideologies, insights from students themselves would have added additional layers to this analysis and supplemented theoretical findings in this regard. I would like to conduct follow up research to explore some of these research findings with students.

4. My role within the case study

In line with theoretical principle number two of the theoretical framework, I outlined the importance of social researchers being aware of their own social and cultural interpretations upon the social and cultural interpretations of interviewees. My own embeddedness within the HESD community of practice could have made it harder for me to step-back and appreciate my own lens. Although my intrinsically pragmatic approach does help in this regard, I am aware that I am part of the case study that I have sought myself to analyse, which undoubtedly impacts upon my interpretations. Although it could also be argued that this gives me a theoretical advantage, through having a deep contextual understanding of the movement I am investigating.

5. Marketisation as the research lens, rather than the research focus

For a number of reasons which were mapped out in Chapter 4, Section 4.7, a decision was made to approach the interviewing process with marketisation as the research lens and focus of some, but not all questions. Had I framed all questions more explicitly through the relationship between marketisation and ESD, I would have gathered a range of different (as well as likely similar) results. Although I do believe this would have been exclusionary for many interviewees and I uphold the approach taken, I do believe an important follow-up piece of research will be to use my findings, about the interface of marketisation and ESD, to conduct a more explicit investigation about these findings with HESD active individuals, to gauge their insights on my findings and how they think such relationships have evolved and changed in recent years.

6. Lack of practical action for change realised

Pragmatist interpretivist principle five (practical ideas for action and change) emphasised: *'The efficacy of and need for useful, workable and practical ideas, policies and research concepts, as tools which may be used for problem solving, action and change'*. Throughout the results and discussion chapters of the thesis many of my analyses point to practical actions and highlight where, when and how ESD is most readily achieved in practice within the marketised HE context and in conjunction with marketised mechanisms. These practical ideas could however have been further expanded/theorised and consolidated as part of the thesis write up. Furthermore, no tangible HESD interventions were implemented as part of the methodology of this thesis. Although the implementation of practical interventions was not laid out as part of the doctoral research aims and objectives and furthermore the emphasis within principle 5 above is upon *practical ideas*, rather than *practical action*, given the pragmatist philosophical underpinnings of this research, it could nevertheless be considered a weakness of the method of the thesis that there was not scope within the study to realise any practical actions for HESD change.

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APPENDIX A

**Table 3.1 – International and regional HESD declarations and charters 1990 – present
(adapted from Tilbury, 2013, pg. 75 – 81 and Michelsen 2016, pg. 42 – 43)**

Year	Declaration/ Charter + Initiator/Partner	Scope	Key Messages
1990	<p>Talloires Declaration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University Leaders for a Sustainable Future (ULSF) 	Global	<p>First official statement made by university leaders of a commitment to environmental sustainability in HE</p> <p>Key Messages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global 10 point action plan for incorporating sustainability into teaching, research and outreach • Major roles: education, research, policy, information exchange • Higher education leadership for sustainability • Mobilisation of resources <p>Challenge Environment, Sustainability</p>
1991	<p>Halifax Declaration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consortium of Canadian Institutions, • International Association of Universities (IAU) • United Nations University (UNU) 	Global	<p>The ethical and moral obligation of universities in addressing sustainability recognised</p> <p>Key Messages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 point action plan for Canadian universities to commit to sustainable development • Ethical obligation • Shape present and future • Leadership • Participation • Development of policies and practices <p>Challenge Environment, Sustainability</p>
1993	<p>Kyoto Declaration on Sustainable Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IAU 	Global	<p>Closely tied to Agenda 21 and UNCED, called for specific sustainability action plans</p> <p>Key Messages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability action plans • Ethical obligation • Sustainability imperative • Environmental education • Sustainable physical operations <p>Challenge Environment, Sustainability</p>
1993	<p>Swansea Declaration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Association of Commonwealth Universities 	Global	<p>Declaration stressed commitments outlined in previous documents</p> <p>Key Messages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of physical operations • Environmental literacy and curriculum • Ethical obligations for current and future populations • Environmentally literate faculty and students • Research and public service • Major attitudinal and policy changes <p>Challenge Environment, Sustainability</p>
1993	<p>COPERNICUS</p>	Regional	<p>Called for a paradigm shift in European universities</p>

	<p>University Charter for Sustainable Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Association of European Universities (Copernicus Alliance) 	(Europe)	<p>Key Messages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European inter-university co-operation programme on the environment • Embedding environment and sustainability across HE • Core social mission • New frame of mind • Whole-institutional commitment • Environmental ethics and attitudes • Education of HE employees • Programmes in environmental education • Interdisciplinarity • Dissemination of knowledge • Cooperation and networking <p>Challenge Environment, Sustainability</p>
2001	<p>Luneburg Declaration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global Higher Education for Sustainability Partnership (GHESP) 	Global	<p>In preparation for 2002 WSSD</p> <p>Key Messages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key role of universities • Catalyst for social change • Globalisation, poverty alleviation, social justice, democracy, human rights, peace • Environmental protection • Generation of new knowledge • Training of future trainers • Curriculum reorientation • Lifelong learning <p>Challenge Sustainability</p>
2002	<p>Ubuntu Declaration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNU • UNESCO • COPERNICUS • GHESP • ULSF 	Global	<p>Called for the development of a global learning environment for learning for sustainability, suggested the creation of networks and Regional Centres of Expertise (RCE)</p> <p>Key Messages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of programmes and curricula • Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) • Knowledge transfer • Development of an action-oriented toolkit for universities • Development of an inventory of best practice and case studies • Learning for sustainability <p>Challenge Sustainability</p>
2005	<p>Graz Declaration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IAU 	Global	<p>Closely tied to Agenda 21 and UNCED, called for specific sustainability action plans</p> <p>Key Messages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability action plans • Ethical obligation • Sustainability imperative • Environmental education • Sustainable physical operations <p>Challenge Environment, Sustainability</p>
2005	<p>Bergen Communique</p>	Regional (Europe)	<p>EU universities should build upon sustainability principles, linked to Bologna Process</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EU, Ministers of Education in Europe 		<p>Key Messages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> University reform supporting education for sustainability Interdisciplinarity Innovation to address social challenges Sustainability skills Employability <p>Challenge Sustainability</p>
2008	<p>Declaration of the Regional Conference on Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (CRES)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> UNESCO 	Regional (Caribbean and Latin America)	<p>CRES was intended to be a contribution to identifying the major issues of Latin America and the Caribbean, looking toward the UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education in 2009</p> <p>Key Messages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainability for social progress Cultural identities, social cohesion, poverty, culture of peace Climate change Democratic relations and tolerance, solidarity and cooperation <p>Challenge Sustainability</p>
2008	<p>G8 University Summit Sapporo Sustainability Declaration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> G8 University Network 	Global	<p>Aim was to develop common recognition of the need for global sustainability, to discuss responsibility of universities and provide messages to G8 leaders and societies</p> <p>Key Messages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Universities working closely with policy makers Re-orientation of education and curriculum, including teacher education Training leaders Interdisciplinarity <p>Challenge Sustainability</p>
2009	<p>Bonn Declaration, UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> UNESCO 	Global	<p>As part of DESD</p> <p>Key Messages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raising awareness, resources and funding for ESD Reorienting education and training systems Develop and strengthen existing international, regional and national enabling mechanisms <p>Challenge Sustainability</p>
2012	<p>The Future We Want, Rio +20 Declaration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> UNESCO, UNEP, PRIME, UNU 	Global	<p>Declaration supported in the lead-up to Rio +20</p> <p>Key Messages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ESD Quality education International frameworks Global footprint <p>Challenge Sustainability</p>
2012	<p>The People's Treaty on Sustainability for Higher Education, Rio +20</p>	Global	<p>Treaty developed to influence international negotiations and dialogues. It is a formal voluntary commitment of Rio +20.</p> <p>Key Messages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transformation of systems and structures

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copernicus Alliance + 35 HE agencies, associations and organisations 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four-stage action-plan • Education for sustainable development • Partnerships
2014	<p>Aichi-Nagoya Declaration on ESD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNESCO 	Global	<p>Final meeting of UNDESD</p> <p>Key Messages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scaling up ESD • Set specific goals • Platforms for sharing experiences • Strengthen monitoring and evaluation approaches • Allocate and mobilise substantial resource • Global leadership <p>Challenge Sustainability</p>

APPENDIX B

Table 4.3 – Overview of sustainability commitment in the corporate documentation of all English HEIs (longlisted HEIs highlighted)

	Name of Institution	Corporate Document	Sustainability Commitment in Mission, Vision, Values, Objectives, Actions, Goals
1	Anglia Ruskin University	Corporate Plan 2012 - 2014	Values (1 of 6), Goals (2 of 15)
2	Aston University	2020 Forward	Strategic Aims (1 of 8)
3	Bath Spa University	Strategic Plan 2009/10 - 2011/12	
4	Birkbeck College	No document available	
5	Birmingham City University	Corporate Plan 2011 - 2016	Goals and Objectives (1 of 6)
6	Bishop Grosseteste University College	Corporate Plan 2010 - 2015	Value
7	Bournemouth University	Strategic Plan 2012 - 2018	Strategic Enabler (1 of 3)
8	Brunel University	Strategic Plan 2008 - 2012	Value
9	Buckinghamshire New University	Strategic Plan 2010 - 2015	Key theme (1 of 6)
10	Canterbury Christ Church University	Strategic Plan 2011 - 2015	Values (1 of 5), Goals (1 of 5)
11	Central School of Speech and Drama	Corporate Plan 2009 - 2013	Enabling Goals (1 of 5)
12	City University London	Strategic Plan 2012 - 2016	Key Theme
13	Conservatoire for Dance and Drama	Strategic Plan 08/09 - 11/12	Principle Strand (1 of 4)
14	Courtauld Institute of Art	Draft Strategic Plan 11/12 - 15/16	
15	Coventry University	Corporate Plan 2010 - 2015	Key Values (1 of 9), Key Areas (1 of 4)
16	Cranfield University	Strategic Plan 2011 - 2015	Mission, Key Enablers (1 of 3)
17	De Montfort University	Strategic Plan 2011 - 2015	Guiding Principles (1 of 6)
18	Edge Hill University	Strategic Plan 2008 - 2013	
19	Goldsmiths' College	Strategic Aims 2011 - 2016	Values (1 of 6)
20	Guildhall School of Music and Drama	No document available	

	Name of Institution	Corporate Document	Sustainability Commitment in Mission, Vision, Values, Objectives, Actions, Goals
21	Harper Adams University College	Strategic Plan 2008 - 2013	Mission, Vision, Values, Key Theme
22	Heythrop College	Strategic Plan 2010 - 2014	
23	Imperial College London	Strategy 2010 - 2014	
24	Institute of Cancer Research	Strategic Plan 2011 - 16	Strategic Goals (1 of 3)
25	Institute of Education	Corporate Strategy 2007 - 2012	Value
26	Keele University	Strategic Plan 2010 - 2015	Mission, Strategic Aims (1 of 6)
27	King's College London	Strategic Plan 2006 - 2016	
28	Kingston University	Strategic Plan 2011/12 - 2015/16	Key Objectives (1 of 3)
29	Lancaster University	Strategic Plan 2009 - 2015	Vision, Catalysts and Drivers (4 of 22)
30	Leeds College of Art	No document available	
31	Leeds Metropolitan University	Strategic Plan 2010 – 2015	Strategic Themes (1 of 5)
32	Leeds Trinity University College	Strategic Plan 2007 - 2012	
33	Liverpool Hope University	Corporate Plan 2012 - 2016	
34	Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts	No document available	
35	Liverpool John Moores University	Strategic Plan 2012 - 2017	Core Aims (1 of 4)
36	London Business School	No document available	
37	London Metropolitan University	Strategic Plan 2010 - 2013	Mission, Values, Key Aims (1 of 5)
38	London School of Economics and Political Science	Strategic Plan 2011 - 2016	Values (1 of 10)
39	London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine	Strategy 2012 -2017	Values (1 of 6)
40	London South Bank University	Corporate Plan 2011 – 2014	
41	Loughborough University	Strategic Plan 2006/07 - 2016	Goals (1 of 7)
42	Manchester Metropolitan University	Corporate Strategy 2012 - 2017	Values (2 of 9), Key Areas (1 of 5)
43	Middlesex University	Strategic Plan 2012 - 2017	
44	Newman University College	Strategic Plan 2010 – 2013	

	Name of Institution	Corporate Document	Sustainability Commitment in Mission, Vision, Values, Objectives, Actions, Goals
45	Norwich University College of the Arts	Strategic Plan 2009 - 2014	Core Values (1 of 5)
46	Nottingham Trent University	Strategic Plan 2010 - 2015	Strategic Platform (1 of 7)
47	Open University	Strategic Plan 2012 - 2015	
48	Oxford Brookes University	University Strategy 2010 - 2020	Values, Strategic Themes (1 of 7)
49	Queen Mary	Strategic Plan 2010 - 2015	
50	Ravensbourne	Strategic Plan 2010 - 2016	
51	Roehampton University	Vision Statement	Vision, Values
52	Rose Bruford College	No document available	
53	Royal Academy of Music	Strategic Plan 2009/10 - 2013/14	
54	Royal Agricultural University	Corporate Plan 2010 - 14	Mission, Strategic Aims (1 of 10)
55	Royal College of Art	Strategic Plan 2011 - 2016	
56	Royal College of Music	Strategic Plan 2007 - 17	
57	Royal Holloway	Corporate Strategic Plan 200 -13	
58	Royal Northern College of Music	No document available	
59	Royal Veterinary College	Vision and Mission	
60	School of Oriental and African Studies	2020 Vision and Strategy	Values
61	Sheffield Hallam University	Corporate Plan 2008 - 13	
62	Southampton Solent University	Strategic Plan 2008 - 2013	
63	St George's Hospital Medical School	Mission and Vision	
64	St Mary's University College	Corporate Plan 2011 - 2016	Strategic Aims and Objectives (1 of 4)
65	Staffordshire University	University Plan 2012 - 2017	Whole Section
66	Teesside University	Institutional Plan 2012 - 2015	Values, Institutional Aims (1 of 6)
67	The Arts University College at Bournemouth	Strategic Plan 2010 - 16	Whole Section
68	The University of West London	Strategic Plan 2008 - 2013	
69	Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance	Strategic Plan 2010 - 2015	Organisational Enabler (1 of 7)

	Name of Institution	Corporate Document	Sustainability Commitment in Mission, Vision, Values, Objectives, Actions, Goals
70	University Campus Suffolk	Strategic Plan 2010 - 2015	
71	University College Birmingham	Corporate Strategy 2012 - 2017	
72	University College Falmouth	Strategic Plan 2012 - 2017	
73	University College London	Corporate Plan 2006 - 12	Vision, Values, Guiding Principles
74	University College Plymouth Marjon	Strategic Plan 2010 - 2015	Key Aims (1 of 7)
75	University for the Creative Arts	Strategic Plan 2011/12 - 2015/16	
76	University of Bath	Corporate Plan 09/10 - 13/14	
77	University of Bedfordshire	Strategic Plan 2012 - 2017	Values, Enabling Strategy
78	University of Birmingham	Shaping Our Future - Birmingham 2015	
79	University of Bolton	Strategic Plan 2010 - 2016	Key Targets
80	University of Bradford	Making Knowledge Work 2016	Mission, Values (2 of 6), Strategic Aims and Corporate Objectives
81	University of Brighton	Strategic Plan 2012 - 2015	Mission, Objectives (1 of 10 Points), Key Strategy (1 of 4)
82	University of Bristol	Vision and Strategy 2009 - 2016	Vision (2 of 9 points), Values (2 of 10 points)
83	University of Cambridge	Mission and Values	
84	University of Central Lancashire	UClan 2007 - 2017	Values (1 of 4), Strategic Objectives (1 of 10)
85	University of Chester	Corporate Plan 2012	
86	University of Chichester	University Strategy 2010 - 2013	Strategic Priority (1 of 5)
87	University of Cumbria	Corporate Strategy 2012 - 2017	Mission, Values, Corporate Themes (1 of 4)
88	University of Derby	Corporate Plan 2009 - 2014	
89	University of Durham	Strategy 2010 - 2020	Values, Strategy (1 of 5)
90	University of East Anglia	Corporate Plan 2012 - 2016	
91	University of East London	University Strategy 2010 - 2020	Values (1 of 6), Strategic Objectives (1 of 8)
92	University of Essex	Strategic Plan 2009/10 - 2013/14	
93	University of Exeter	2015 Our Vision, Our Strategy	Values, Underpinning Theme

	Name of Institution	Corporate Document	Sustainability Commitment in Mission, Vision, Values, Objectives, Actions, Goals
94	University of Gloucestershire	2012 - 2017 Strategic Plan	Values (1 of 6), Underpinning Strategy (1 of 10)
95	University of Greenwich	Strategic Plan 2012 - 2017	Mission, Strategic Objective (1 of 4)
96	University of Hertfordshire	Strategic/Operational Plan 2010-15	Enabler (1 of 4)
97	University of Huddersfield	Strategy Map	
98	University of Hull	Strategic Plan 2011 - 2015	Key Theme (1 of 11)
99	University of Kent	Strategy Plan 2012 - 2015	
100	University of Leeds	Strategic Plan 2009	
101	University of Leicester	Strategic Vision to 2015	
102	University of Lincoln	Strategic Plan 2011 - 2016	
103	University of Liverpool	No document available	
104	University of London	Strategic Plan 2009 - 2014	
105	University of Manchester	Strategic Plan 2020	Enabling Strategy (1 of 8)
106	University of Newcastle upon Tyne	Vision 2021	Institutional Objectives (2 of 5)
107	University of Northampton	Strategic Plan 2010 - 15	
108	University of Northumbria	Corporate Strategy 2009 - 2014	Core Value (1 of 5)
109	University of Nottingham	Strategic Plan 2010 - 15	Guiding Principles (1 of 11), Key Areas (2 of 7)
110	University of Oxford	Strategic Plan 08/09 - 12/13	
111	University of Plymouth	Creating our Future 2009 - 12	Values (1 of 11), Ambitions (1 of 5)
112	University of Portsmouth	University Strategy 2012 - 2017	Underpinning Values
113	University of Reading	Corporate Plan 2008 - 13	
114	University of Salford	Strategic Plan 2009/10 - 2017/18	
115	University of Sheffield	Strategic Plan 2010 - 15	
116	University of Southampton	University Strategy	
117	University of Sunderland	Corporate Plan 09/10 - 12/13	Values (1 of 8), Strategic Themes
118	University of Surrey	University Strategy 2012 - 2017	Vision, Key Points (1 of 7)

	Name of Institution	Corporate Document	Sustainability Commitment in Mission, Vision, Values, Objectives, Actions, Goals
119	University of Sussex	Strategic Plan 2009 - 2017	
120	University of the Arts London	Strategic Plan 2010 - 15	Principle Values, Key Priorities (1 of 9)
121	University of the West of England	Strategic Plan 2007 - 2012	Strategic Enabler (1 of 4)
122	University of Warwick	Vision 2015	
123	University of Westminster	Corporate Strategy August 2009	Values and Mission (1 of 5)
124	University of Winchester	Strategic Plan 2010 - 2015	Catalysts and Drivers, Strategic Priority
125	University of Wolverhampton	Strategic Plan 2012 - 2017	
126	University of Worcester	Strategic Plan 2013 - 18	Values (1 of 7), Areas of Distinction (1 of 4)
127	University of York	University Plan 2009 - 19	Objectives (1 of 4)
128	Writtle College	Strategic Plan 2010/11 - 2013/14	Mission and Core Values
129	York St John University	Our Strategy 2012 - 2015	Values, Enabling Strategy (2 of 7)

Table 4.4 – Details of sustainability commitment in shortlisted HEIs corporate documentation

	Name of Institution	2013 Green League Overall Class	2013 Green League Education and Learning Score	Overview of Sustainability Commitment in Corporate Documentation	Details of Sustainability Commitment in Corporate Documentation
1	University College London	2:1	3/3	Corporate Plan 2006 – 12 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vision, Values, Guiding Principles 	<p>Vision:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Committed to achieving maximum positive social, environmental and economic benefit through its achievements in education, scholarship, research, discovery and collaboration Operating ethically and at the highest standards of efficiency, and investing sufficiently today to sustain the vision for future generations. <p>Values:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ethically acceptable standards of conduct Environmental sustainability <p>Guiding Principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> UCL will conduct itself ethically and fairly, and in an environmentally sustainable manner, locally, nationally and globally
2	University of Bristol	1st	3/3	Vision and Strategy 2009 – 2016 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vision (2 of 9 points) Values (2 of 10 points) 	<p>Vision:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Committed to operating in a sustainable manner A major contributor culturally, environmentally and economically to Bristol and the South West <p>Values:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responsibility - we aim to make a positive difference to the wider world and the future Equity - we believe in the equitable treatment of all

	Name of Institution	2013 Green League Overall Class	2013 Green League Education and Learning Score	Overview of Sustainability Commitment in Corporate Documentation	Details of Sustainability Commitment in Corporate Documentation
3	University of Newcastle upon Tyne	1st	2/3	Vision 2021 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional Objectives (2 of 5) 	Institutional Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To achieve and maintain: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Three Societal Challenge Themes: Ageing; Social Renewal; Sustainability ○ Environmental sustainability
4	University of Nottingham	2:1	3/3	Strategic Plan 2010 – 15 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guiding Principles (1 of 11) • Key Areas (2 of 7) 	Guiding Principles: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership in environmental sustainability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Aims and Objectives: 1) Improve the environmental performance of our buildings and the University's physical infrastructure; 2) Ensure all operations and procurements are sustainable; 3) Harness the University's research and teaching strength to improve its environmental performance and advance the environmental agenda; 4) Contribute broadly to efforts to protect the environment and ensure those efforts get the recognition they deserve. Key Areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environment • Social responsibility
5	University of Exeter	1st	3/3	2015 Our Vision, Our Strategy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Values (1 of 10) 	Value: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability - Through education and research we are aware of the ecological limits of the planet and promote the careful use of resources.

	Name of Institution	2013 Green League Overall Class	2013 Green League Education and Learning Score	Overview of Sustainability Commitment in Corporate Documentation	Details of Sustainability Commitment in Corporate Documentation
6	Aston University	1st	2/3	2020 Forward <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic Aims (1 of 8) 	Strategic Aim: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainability and Social Responsibility - Sustainability and social responsibility are issues our staff, students and stakeholders feel passionately about, and are central to how we work at Aston, and how we relate to the world around us. Sustainability and social responsibility are based on ethical values and underpinned by the idea of economic, social and environmental obligations to our range of stakeholders. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commitment to the United Nations Principles of Responsible Management Education (PRME) Sustainable campus and infrastructure Social responsibility and sustainability literacy Community engagement and involvement

	Name of Institution	2013 Green League Overall Class	2013 Green League Education and Learning Score	Overview of Sustainability Commitment in Corporate Documentation	Details of Sustainability Commitment in Corporate Documentation
7	Keele University	2:1	3/3	Strategic Plan 2010 – 2015 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mission • Strategic Aims (1 of 6) 	<p>Mission:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keele will provide a high quality educational experience for students shaped by outstanding research, contributing positively to social, environmental, and economic agendas locally, nationally and internationally. <p>Strategic Aim:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To develop an environmentally aware and sustainable outward-facing campus community. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ To provide models of innovation and good practice in environmental sustainability through all our activities. ○ To unlock the potential of the University Estate so that it underpins the attainment of our vision. ○ To share and provide the University's expertise in environment and sustainability to local, regional, national and international communities and partners.

	Name of Institution	2013 Green League Overall Class	2013 Green League Education and Learning Score	Overview of Sustainability Commitment in Corporate Documentation	Details of Sustainability Commitment in Corporate Documentation
8	De Montfort University	1st	3/3	<p>Strategic Plan 2011 – 2015</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guiding Principles (1 of 6) 	<p>Guiding Principle:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make a significant contribution to global efforts to achieve environmental sustainability: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teaching about sustainability and helping staff and students become responsible 'global' citizens in the face of the environmental challenges ahead of them Developing groundbreaking and interdisciplinary research that advances knowledge on sustainability, and establishes the university as a leader in the higher education sector Embracing sustainability in all our activities by reducing the environmental impact of the university's operations and activities Demonstrating leadership in sustainability by communicating and promoting engagement with our sustainability message within the university, and locally, regionally, nationally and internationally Embedding responsibility for sustainability throughout our management and governance practices Ensuring the university is a healthy, creative and inspiring 'space' to study and work

	Name of Institution	2013 Green League Overall Class	2013 Green League Education and Learning Score	Overview of Sustainability Commitment in Corporate Documentation	Details of Sustainability Commitment in Corporate Documentation
9	University of Brighton	1st	3/3	<p>Strategic Plan 2012 – 2015</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mission • Objectives (1 of 10 Points) • Key Strategy (1 of 4) 	<p>Mission:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The University of Brighton is committed to conserving, generating, transmitting and sharing knowledge locally, globally and professionally, with focus on its application for social purpose. We offer a higher education that contributes critically to citizenship and to the public good. Our model of higher education is based on a spirit of enquiry and the active co-production of knowledge amongst staff and students, in learning, teaching and research. We want Brighton staff and students to be known for their commitment to impact, community and sustainability in their chosen field. <p>Objective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable campuses <p>Key Strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable practices
10	University of Plymouth	1st	3/3	<p>Creating our Future 2009 – 12</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Values (1 of 11) • Ambitions (1 of 5) 	<p>Value:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouraging sustainability through shared practice. <p>Ambition:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability - To be a customer focused, socially responsible organisation, demonstrating sustainability in our activities and ensuring our graduates are aware of economic, environmental, social and ethical issues including the importance of social enterprise, community engagement and volunteering.

	Name of Institution	2013 Green League Overall Class	2013 Green League Education and Learning Score	Overview of Sustainability Commitment in Corporate Documentation	Details of Sustainability Commitment in Corporate Documentation
11	Manchester Metropolitan University	1st	3/3	Corporate Strategy 2012-17 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Values (2 of 9) • Key Areas (1 of 5) 	Values: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To promote responsible, ethical and professional behaviour • To promote global citizenship in our staff and students Key Area: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional Sustainability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Minimise our environmental impact and greenhouse gas emissions from the University's estate and business activities by reducing energy consumption and our total carbon impact. ○ Increase environmental awareness amongst staff, students and external stakeholders, and make them effective agents for sustainability.
12	University of the West of England	1st	2/3	Strategic Plan 2007 – 2012 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Enabler (1 of 4) 	Strategic Enabler: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide a creative, sustainable, safe and healthy learning, working and living environment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ By using designs that are innovative in terms of the flexibility of the learning spaces, sustainability, and their impact on health and well-being ○ By maintaining high ethical standards ○ By promoting and putting into practice environmental sustainability and healthy University initiatives

	Name of Institution	2013 Green League Overall Class	2013 Green League Education and Learning Score	Overview of Sustainability Commitment in Corporate Documentation	Details of Sustainability Commitment in Corporate Documentation
13	Birmingham City University	1st	2/3	Corporate Plan 2011 – 2016 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Goals and Objectives (1 of 6) 	Goal and Objective: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure academic and financial sustainability, while providing maximum value to students and stakeholders and behaving responsibly towards the environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote environmental sustainability in our policies, operations and actions and reduce the University's carbon footprint
14	Nottingham Trent University	1st	3/3	Strategic Plan 2010 – 2015 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic Platform (1 of 7) 	Strategic Platform: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Resource Structure to Drive the Business: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmental sustainability
15	Oxford Brookes University	1st	2/3	University Strategy 2010-20 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Values Strategic Themes (1 of 7) 	Values: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social responsibility demands that all aspects of our activity should be sustainable. Strategic Themes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainability and infrastructure
16	Kingston University	2:1	3/3	Strategic Plan 2011/12-2015/16 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key Objectives (1 of 3) 	Key Objective: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respect for Individuals, Communities and our Environment - We will act ethically to minimise our impact on the environment; we will include issues relating to sustainability and ethics in the curriculum.
17	Bournemouth University	1st	3/3	Strategic Plan 2012 – 2018 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic Enabler (1 of 3) 	Strategic Enabler: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environment – E1. Embed a culture of excellent service; E2. Provide world-class facilities; E3. Reduce our impact on the environment

	Name of Institution	2013 Green League Overall Class	2013 Green League Education and Learning Score	Overview of Sustainability Commitment in Corporate Documentation	Details of Sustainability Commitment in Corporate Documentation
18	University of Central Lancashire	1st	2/3	UClan 2007 – 2017 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Values (1 of 4) • Strategic Objectives (1 of 10) 	Value: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A commitment to health, well-being, sustainability and sustainable development Strategic Objective: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will be a model international university for sustainability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ We are also fully committed to sustainable development, that is development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the needs of future generations.
19	University of Greenwich	1st	3/3	Strategic Plan 2012 – 2017 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mission • Strategic Objective (1 of 4) 	Mission: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To inspire society through the discovery, application and dissemination of knowledge. We aim to achieve this through high-quality education, research and enterprise activities. Success is demonstrated by significant cultural, economic, environmental and social contributions at local, national and international scales. Strategic Objective: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services and infrastructure. Building effective, efficient and sustainable services and an infrastructure that supports the university's activities (more detail of environmental sustainability in plan)

	Name of Institution	2013 Green League Overall Class	2013 Green League Education and Learning Score	Overview of Sustainability Commitment in Corporate Documentation	Details of Sustainability Commitment in Corporate Documentation
20	Anglia Ruskin University	2:1	3/3	Corporate Plan 2012 – 2014 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Values (1 of 6) Goals (2 of 15) 	<p>Values:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concern for the environment. We want our concern for a sustainable environment to inform every aspect of what we do. <p>Goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students will use the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) on a daily basis, sustainability will be a feature of their experience, and most full-time on-campus students will be involved in activity outside the academic curriculum. To enable our academic programme to be administered and delivered affordably at home and abroad, face-to-face and online, we will maximise its efficiency through the use of student and staff friendly online systems. We shall strive to exceed national and sector benchmarks for the sustainability of our buildings and processes.
21	University of Gloucestershire	1st	3/3	2012 - 2017 Strategic Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Values (1 of 6) Underpinning Strategy (1 of 10) 	<p>Value:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainability - We are dedicated to creating sustainable futures across the communities we serve <p>Underpinning Strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainability (lots of detail in document)
22	University of Bedfordshire	1st	2/3	Strategic Plan 2012 – 2017 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Values (1 of 6) Enabling Strategy 	<p>Value:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Innovation – Our contribution to the sustainable development of communities, organisations and society is built on our ability to innovate through research, enterprise and our own practice. <p>Enabling Strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainable development
23	University of Chichester	1st	2/3	University Strategy 2010-13 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic Priority (1 of 5) 	<p>Strategic Priority:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving its environmental performance

	Name of Institution	2013 Green League Overall Class	2013 Green League Education and Learning Score	Overview of Sustainability Commitment in Corporate Documentation	Details of Sustainability Commitment in Corporate Documentation
24	Canterbury Christ Church University	1st	3/3	Strategic Plan 2011 – 2015 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Values (1 of 5) • Goals (1 of 5) 	<p>Value:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The development of the whole person - by encouraging a spirit of reflection and enquiry and promoting opportunities for learning beyond the curriculum - in responsible stewardship of the natural environment <p>Goal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To promote a sustainable future - The University will strengthen its sustainability and, consistent with its Church of England foundation, be an exemplar of excellent environmental practice. We will also ensure we invest in the development of our staff and leadership opportunities, ensuring that individuals can realise their full potential and that Christ Church can respond quickly to new opportunities and risks.
25	University of Worcester	1st	3/3	Strategic Plan 2013 – 18 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Values (1 of 7) • Areas of Distinction (1 of 4) 	<p>Value:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental sustainability and social responsibility <p>Areas of Distinction:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic, social and environmental sustainability

	Name of Institution	2013 Green League Overall Class	2013 Green League Education and Learning Score	Overview of Sustainability Commitment in Corporate Documentation	Details of Sustainability Commitment in Corporate Documentation
26	Harper Adams University College	1st	2/3	Strategic Plan 2008 – 2013 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mission • Vision • Values 	<p>Mission:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher education for the delivery of a sustainable food chain and rural economies <p>Vision:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To maintain a high-quality university institution made distinctive by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Activities closely related to the needs of the rural economies and industries reliant upon those economies, with a specific commitment to farming for sustainable environments, reestablishing connections between food producers and consumers, knowledge transfer to support the rural economies and the international dimension of environmental and food chain sustainability <p>Values:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An ethical approach to all activities in which the University College and its staff are engaged, with special reference to the production of food and management of the environment

Table 4.5 – Shortlisted HEIs categorised by marketisation factors, Green League performance and HEA Green Academy participation

	Name of Institution	Institution Type or Mission Group	2013 Green League Overall Class	2013 Green League Education and Learning Score	Average Ranked Position in RAE 2001 and 2008 (Based upon all UK HEIs)	2013 NSS Overall Teaching Score	HEA Green Academy
1	University College London	Russell Group	2:1	3/3	7	84	Yes
2	University of Bristol	Russell Group	1st	3/3	15	86	Yes
3	University of Newcastle upon Tyne	Russell Group	1st	2/3	30	88	No
4	University of Nottingham	Russell Group	2:1	3/3	31	88	Yes
5	University of Exeter	Russell Group	1st	3/3	32	91	No
6	Aston University	Research Led	1st	2/3	43	82	No
7	Keele University	Research Led	2:1	3/3	56	90	Yes
8	De Montfort University	Former Polytechnic	1st	3/3	65	84	Yes
9	University of Brighton	Former Polytechnic	1st	3/3	70	80	No
10	University of Plymouth	Former Polytechnic	1st	3/3	72	88	No
11	Manchester Metropolitan University	Former Polytechnic	1st	3/3	75	80	No
12	University of the West of England	Former Polytechnic	1st	2/3	76	83	No
13	Birmingham City University	Former Polytechnic	1st	2/3	78	81	No
14	Nottingham Trent University	Former Polytechnic	1st	3/3	78	81	Yes
15	Oxford Brookes University	Former Polytechnic	1st	2/3	79	85	No
16	Kingston University	Former Polytechnic	2:1	3/3	86	78	No
17	Bournemouth University	Former Polytechnic	1st	3/3	91	78	No

	Name of Institution	Institution Type or Mission Group	2013 Green League Overall Class	2013 Green League Education and Learning Score	Average Ranked Position in RAE 2001 and 2008 (Based upon all UK HEIs)	2013 NSS Overall Teaching Score	HEA Green Academy
18	University of Central Lancashire	Former Polytechnic	1st	2/3	95	84	No
19	University of Greenwich	Former Polytechnic	1st	3/3	95	83	No
20	Anglia Ruskin University	Former Polytechnic	2:1	3/3	104	81	Yes
21	University of Gloucestershire	New University	1st	3/3	97	83	No
22	University of Bedfordshire	New University	1st	2/3	98	78	No
23	University of Chichester	New University	1st	2/3	112	87	Yes
24	Canterbury Christ Church University	New University	1st	3/3	115	84	Yes
25	University of Worcester	New University	1st	3/3	126	80	Yes
26	Harper Adams University College	New University	1st	2/3	N/A – Single Subject	N/A – Single Subject	No

APPENDIX C

Figure 4.2 – Research information sheet and consent form



Sophie Bessant
School of Physical and Geographical Sciences
William Smith Building
Keele University
Staffordshire
ST5 5BG
UK

Doctoral Research Study: Neoliberalism, new public management and the sustainable development agenda of higher education: history, contradictions and synergies

Invitation to Participate in Research

Dear Sir/Madam,

You are being invited to consider taking part in the doctoral research study: 'Neoliberalism, new public management and the sustainable development agenda of higher education: history, contradictions and synergies'. This research is being undertaken by Sophie Bessant, Sustainability Project Officer and PhD student at Keele University within the Research Institute for the Environment, Physical Sciences and Applied Mathematics (EPSAM).

This research project aims to explore the ideological and the practical relationship between Neoliberalism and New Public Management (NPM), and the Sustainable Development agenda of western Higher Education (HE), using the UK and specifically English universities as a case study. As you will know, sustainable development or 'sustainability' is a major issue of importance for government, the university funding councils and for universities in the UK. Many Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) now acknowledge a responsibility to institutionally embed both the principles and practice of sustainability. This study will explore the ways in which neoliberal and NPM ideologies and practices within the university sector may be both complimentary and contradictory to the progression of the sustainability and education for sustainable development movement. The higher education institution or body for which you work is being explored because:

- It has been identified as one of the leaders of the sustainability and education for sustainable development agenda within English HE; and/or,
- It has been identified as being involved with the governance, management, quality assurance or funding of education, research and/or sustainable development within English HE.

You have been contacted due to your personal expertise in one or more of the following areas:

- Sustainable development research, education and outreach;

- Research assessment/quality assurance, benchmarking and funding;
- Education assessment/quality assurance, benchmarking and funding.

Your participation in this research would be highly valued and greatly appreciated. Participating in this research will involve a semi-structured face-to-face interview with the researcher lasting approximately 30mins to 1 hour. Please see the below information sheet and consent form for details of research ethics and procedures and how to proceed with participation in this research.

Yours sincerely,
Sophie Bessant

Project Information Sheet

Aims of the Research

This research project aims to explore the ideological and the practical relationship between Neoliberalism and New Public Management (NPM), and the Sustainable Development agenda of western Higher Education (HE), using the UK and specifically English universities as a case study. As you will know, sustainable development or 'sustainability' is a major issue of importance for government, the university funding councils and for universities in the UK. Many Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) now acknowledge a moral responsibility to institutionally embed both the principles and practice of sustainability. This study will explore the ways in which neoliberal and NPM ideologies and practices within the university sector may be both complimentary and contradictory to the progression of the sustainability and education for sustainable development movement.

Invitation

You are being invited to consider taking part in the doctoral research study: 'Neoliberalism, new public management and the sustainable development agenda of higher education: history, contradictions and synergies'. This research is being undertaken by Sophie Bessant, Sustainability Project Officer and PhD student at Keele University within the Research Institute for the Environment, Physical Sciences and Applied Mathematics (EPSAM). Before you decide whether or not you wish to take part, it is important for you to understand why this research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read this information carefully and discuss it with friends and relatives if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is unclear or if you would like more information.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been asked to participate in this study due to your expertise in one or more of the following areas of Higher Education: 1) Sustainable Development research, education and outreach, 2) research assessment/quality assurance, benchmarking and funding or 3) education assessment/quality assurance, benchmarking and funding. These criteria have been used to select all research participants.

Do I have to take part?

You are free to decide whether you wish to take part or not. If you do decide to take part you will be asked to sign two consent forms, one is for you to keep and the other is for our records. You are free to withdraw from this study without giving reasons at any time leading up to the data collection. After data has been collected from you via a face-to-face or telephone semi-structured interview with the researcher you may decide to withdraw your contribution to the research or alter your level of anonymity up to two months after the interview has taken place. You may inform the researcher of these changes via email, post or telephone.

What will happen if I take part and what do I have to do?

Taking part in this study will involve a face-to-face or telephone semi-structured interview with the researcher lasting approximately 30mins to 1hour. You will be sent a schedule of interview questions in advance of the interview but it is not mandatory that you do any preparation for the interview. The researcher will travel to your work place or to another place that is convenient for you to meet. Your responses and quotes, along with those of other interviewees will form the data set for this research project.

What are the benefits of taking part?

By participating in this research project you will be helping the researcher and the wider Higher Education sector gain insight into the sustainable development movement within HE and how this may be advanced and expanded in the future.

What are the risks of taking part?

There are no foreseen risks in taking part in this project.

How will information about me be used?

Data will be collected as described above, via one semi-structured interview with the researcher. Your responses and quotes will make up the project's data set. Data will be used to inform the researcher's doctoral thesis and may be used in future research outputs such as journal articles. You will be asked whether or not you wish data about you to be anonymised before it is used in the PhD thesis and any subsequent publications (via the consent form below). You will also be asked if you are happy to have your quotes used in the thesis and subsequent publications. Additionally you will be asked if you are happy to have the interview audio recorded or not. If you wish to take part in the study but remain anonymous your responses will be subject to a coding system and you will remain unidentifiable.

No personal details will be asked for or disclosed and all research records will be kept only by the principal researcher on a password protected computer in a locked office. Data collected may be used in future research projects and may need to be subject to further ethical approval procedures.

Who will have access to information about me?

All data from interviews will be stored on a password protected computer in a locked office. If you have chosen to remain anonymous your data will be coded and unidentifiable. If you have given permission to have your name, institution, etc. used in the study then your data will be fully identifiable on the computer. The data will be kept by the principal researcher for up to 10 years, after that the data will be securely disposed of.

I do however have to work within the confines of current legislation over such matters as privacy and confidentiality, data protection and human rights and so offers of confidentiality may sometimes be overridden by law. For example in circumstances whereby I am made aware of future criminal activity, abuse either to yourself or another (i.e. child or sexual abuse) or suicidal tendencies I must pass this information to the relevant authorities.

Who is funding and organising the research?

The project is funded by the Research Institute for the Environment, Physical Sciences and Mathematics (EPSAM) at Keele University.

What do I do now?

If you are interested in taking part in this study please send an email response indicating your interest to s.e.f.bessant@keele.ac.uk. Please attach to the email the completed and signed consent forms (below). You may alternatively send the signed consent forms in hard copy to: Sophie Bessant, William Smith Building, Keele University, Staffordshire, ST5 5BG. The researcher will then get back to you via email to arrange a date and time for the interview to take place.

What if there is a problem?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, you may wish to speak to the researcher who will do their best to answer your questions. You should contact Sophie Bessant on s.e.f.bessant@keele.ac.uk. Alternatively, if you do not wish to contact the researcher you may contact the PhD supervisor of this research, Dr Zoe Robinson on z.p.robinson@keele.ac.uk. If you remain unhappy about the research and/or wish to raise a complaint about any aspect of the way that you have been approached or treated during the course of the study please write to Nicola Leighton who is the University's contact for complaints regarding research at the following address:

Nicola Leighton
Research Governance Officer
Research & Enterprise Services
Dorothy Hodgkin Building
Keele University
ST5 5BG
E-mail: n.leighton@keele.ac.uk
Tel: 01782 733306

Contact for further information

For any further information about this research project please contact: Sophie Bessant: s.e.f.bessant@keele.ac.uk, 01782 – 7 - 34115.



Sophie Bessant
 School of Physical and Geographical Sciences
 William Smith Building
 Keele University
 Staffordshire
 ST5 5BG
 UK

Research Consent Form

Title of Project: Neoliberalism, new public management and the sustainable development agenda of higher education: history, contradictions and synergies

Name and Contact Details of Principal Investigator: Sophie Bessant, William Smith Building, Keele University, Staffordshire, ST5 5BG, s.e.f.bessant@keele.ac.uk, 01782-7-34115

Please tick box if you agree with the statement

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 my contribution to the study up to two months after data collection.	
3. I agree to take part in this study.	
4. I am happy for data collected about me during this study to be fully identifiable.	
5. I want data collected about me during this study to be anonymous.	
6. I agree to the interview being audio recorded.	
7. I agree to allow the dataset collected to be used for future research projects.	
8. I agree to be contacted about possible participation in future research projects.	

<u>Name of participant</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Signature</u>
<u>Researcher</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Signature</u>



Sophie Bessant
 School of Physical and Geographical Sciences
 William Smith Building
 Keele University
 Staffordshire
 ST5 5BG
 UK

Consent Form for Use of Quotes

Title of Project: Neoliberalism, new public management and the sustainable development agenda of higher education: history, contradictions and synergies

Name and Contact Details of Principal Investigator: Sophie Bessant, William Smith Building, Keele University, Staffordshire, ST5 5BG, s.e.f.bessant@keele.ac.uk, 01782-7-34115

Please tick box if you agree with the statement

1. I agree for any quotes to be used.	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I do not agree for any quotes to be used.	<input type="checkbox"/>

<u>Name of participant</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Signature</u>
<u>Researcher</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Signature</u>

Figure 4.3 – Keele University Ethical Review Panel approval letter



RESEARCH AND ENTERPRISE SERVICES

8th November 2012

Miss Sophie Bessant
William Smith Building
Keele University

Dear Sophie,

Re: 'Neoliberalism, New Public Management and Sustainable development in English Higher Education: Contradictions and Synergies'

Thank you for submitting your revised project for review.

I am pleased to inform you that your project has been approved by the Ethics Review Panel.

The following documents have been reviewed and approved by the panel as follows:

Document	Version	Date
Summary of Proposal	1	October 2012
Letter of Invitation	2	October 2012
Information Sheet	2	October 2012
Consent Form	2	October 2012
Consent Form for use of quotes	2	October 2012

If the fieldwork goes beyond the date stated in your application (30 September 2013), you must notify the Ethical Review Panel via Hannah Reidy.

If there are any other amendments to your study you must submit an 'application to amend study' form to Hannah Reidy. This form is available from Hannah (01782 733588) or via <http://www.keele.ac.uk/researchsupport/researchethics/>

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact Hannah Reidy in writing to h.reidy@keele.ac.uk

Yours sincerely

Dr Bernadette Bartlam
Chair – Ethical Review Panel
CC RI Manager, Supervisor

APPENDIX D

Table 4.12 – Data coding and analysis process as exemplified through Core Theme 12

Core Theme 12 – The Role and Purpose of Higher Education in England		
Descriptive/Emic Codes	Analytical/Etic Codes	Key Themes
<p>X: there is a natural other side to that if you're receiving something from the community you need to give something back to that community, also starts being in the public good aspect of education, as does democracy</p> <p>X: I think it is important that we have universities that are operate for the common good, and I think sustainability should be a very important part of our agenda</p> <p>X: certain obligation on universities, to also consider this wider dimension of the curriculum and its wider purpose</p> <p>X: understand their role in society</p> <p>X: the social aspects, the economic aspects, the environmental aspects, see that bigger picture, asking bigger questions, got to turn out graduates with another skill set to solve complex problems, skills to create low carbon products and services</p> <p>X: It should be a place where people come together to focus on particular problems and ideas in society</p> <p>X: much more scope for universities to liberalize that education and widen it, wider, liberal and social purpose of a university, about individuals finding their place in the world and at the right time</p> <p>X: it's trying to put students out there who can deal with things that are facing us as a society</p> <p>X: success to me when you leave is that you leave a better person and that you leave as somebody who is going to make a valuable contribution to society, who are engaged, who are socially aware and environmentally aware, that's what we should be producing</p> <p>X: make our graduates super super citizens, and this idea of 'citizenliness'</p> <p>X: I do think universities should be pushing sustainability, because somebody has to, can't leave it up to industry because they have too many other interests, we can't trust government to do it either, to turn out decent human beings, to make sure there are human beings in 500 years from now</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students finding and understanding their place/role in society, contributing positively to wider society now and in the future – public good • Encouraging and fostering (locally and globally-facing) citizens and citizenship • Inter-generational justice, preparing for resource constrained and environmentally insecure future, preparing for the sustainability challenges of tomorrow • Challenging paradigms and encouraging visionary change • Lifelong learning • Challenging and solving 	<p>Sustainability role</p>

<p>X: To provide the next generation with time and supportive mechanisms, to reflect on their role within future society, specializing in one area of interest that they have, giving them the time to reflect and equipping them with skills to put society on a better course than its on at the moment</p> <p>X: It's actually about how do we prepare, not just within British society, we are part of a global society and economy, future global citizens and leaders for tomorrow to face the real challenges, which is how do we improve life for all people on this planet within a resources and carbon constrained planet, to me it's how do we educate the students today who are going to be leading us tomorrow to recognize that's the greatest challenge, of having the resources and carbon constrained planet</p> <p>X: What it should be is to make people far more sensitive beings attuned to the whole glory of life and learning</p> <p>X: if we don't engage in critical self-inquiry and challenge social, political and economic paradigms, then education really disappears up its own bottom and is useless, or is it to somehow as well have maybe a different vision of the future, because the current practices, as we experience them, will not sustain, if we are not careful this society will collapse; we can see the seeds already being sown, so higher education needs to either encourage visionary change or get out of the flipping way, in a nutshell</p> <p>X: For me it twofold, one is to solve the problems we have for example climate change, how can we teach students to solve these problems, making the world a better place to live in</p> <p>X: I think we're trying to turn out well rounded adult citizens</p> <p>X: I think it's to alleviate suffering, why do we do anything, from an individual, society and global perspective, they have a drive to study something, what contribution does that make, is it good, or neutral or bad, at the end of the day we're here to educate people, but we have to recognize that the way we educate people has knock-on effects for everything and everyone</p> <p>X: To develop a knowledgeable, literate, engaged society, is what I would be aiming at - engaged in the issues of the day</p> <p>X: it's about creating the citizens, the volunteers, the community members of the future</p> <p>X: The role is to try to prepare students for the kind of world that they're going in to and to prepare them to become leaders in that world, it's the university's role to make sure that they use their high status in society to do something that is beneficial for that society, I strongly believe that you cannot benefit society unless you acknowledge that society is utterly dependant on larger ecological systems for its survival, preparing them to become leaders who consider social and ecological issues</p> <p>X: I like to think that the task of the university is to educate and quite obviously sustainability comes into that, morally we have an obligation to educate in that area as well</p> <p>X: to make a bigger contribution, a more purposeful and reflective contribution to wider society</p> <p>X: role of HE is to educate in the widest sense, bring out the best in people, not just knowledge imparting, but the ability to engage in lifelong learning, should involve topics like sustainability</p>	<p>complex societal problems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental awareness 	
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<p>X: making them more independent thinkers, critical analysers</p> <p>X: we need more sort of critical thinking</p> <p>X: I think it's about producing creative thinkers, but who are evidence based creative thinkers</p> <p>X: critical thinking is core to that</p> <p>X: one is to make people critical and self-reflective, independent learners, so they always think about what is and why they do things, what the impacts are on other people</p> <p>X: equip them with the critical thinking skills and other attributes that they can apply in all areas of their life, whether that's professionally or personal</p> <p>X: I would say it is to provide people with the openness in which to think critically and to question things which in every other part of society aren't questioned, to enable them to immerse themselves in thinking outside the box, probably the last time you will ever be able to think for yourself</p> <p>X: The whole point about HE is that you should be encouraging people to ask the difficult questions and to say things that might be unpopular at times</p> <p>X: to turn out students that are critical of the world, who just don't take anything at face value, they don't take for granted anything they're ever told about anything</p> <p>X: purpose is to open up students minds to the possibilities of alternatives, change and to help them to understand that whatever they see and observe can be challenged, critical outlook, teachers job is to help students to see that there are various ways of understanding how this world is formed and you make a choice about which perspective you think is most appropriate, knowledge as incomplete</p> <p>X: I mean higher education is about ultimately helping students learn to think critically, independently, weigh evidence, make decisions, making someone sustainable is helping them weigh evidence, now actually if you really understand the role of evidence, things like climate change you would never come down on the side of climate change deniers because there frankly just isn't any evidence, it's not a rational decision to make, it's about dealing with difficult issues and saying, actually let's just look at the evidence, let's think critically about this</p> <p>X: HE plays a role in providing, not just subject specific education, but to allow people to become independent learners and develop skills around enquiry, communication, encouraging students to speak out, to have a voice of their own, not just where you fill the vessel with knowledge and stuff</p> <p>X: broadest sense the responsibility is not to teach people things, it's to enable people to ask the right questions</p> <p>X: for me HE is about developing the whole person</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helping students become independent thinkers, critical analysers, self-reflective, questioning, able to use evidence, independent learners, able to ask difficult questions and challenge norms 	<p>Critical thinking role</p>
<p>X: the fear is that we reduce universities to a financial transaction with the fees and it becomes purely a place to get your very narrowly focused professional qualification to prepare you for a particular niche be it in business, industry or whatever</p> <p>X: higher education is a way of trying to skill up the workforce, education now is too driven on the</p>	<p>Critique of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employability/professional training role of HE – 	<p>Critique of economic model of higher</p>

<p>money element and is too focused on making sure that people have got certain skills that are pushed for by employers</p> <p>X: I think students go to university predominantly because they think they'll get a job at the end of it, they're not challenging conventions, they're not challenging the way business is done or politics is done, they're just turning out to get a job, the marketisation of HE, whereas it provides us some short-term opportunities, ultimately it's geared up to a competitive marketplace, it's geared up to turning out students that will get jobs because that's part of the league table</p> <p>X: It appears to be a way to keep the status quo, a way to keep the class system in place, with all the focus on employability, it's a way to churn out people who will perpetuate capitalism, somehow people manage because they put things in monetary terms, universities role isn't to create workers</p> <p>X: in an unfree society the universities do what the state tells them, British society is just about still free, hanging in, degrees of freedom</p> <p>X: there is some truth that we here to be a sausage factory providing skill and graduates for industry, that is one of the functions, that we are here to produce people that function well in the real economy, there is the instrumental function which is irreducible, but its becoming much more important than it ever was before, and that's partly to do with the funding situation now, skills and employability and so on, those significantly benefit the individual, so those aren't really in conflict with a neoliberal agenda, there is a split between the things that are there to help the individual do better and the things that are there to help society function properly, I think we're moving more towards the individual one</p> <p>X: I don't think it's just to churn out graduates you can work in business and finance, there is no use knowing the cost of everything but the value of nothing</p> <p>X: It is not a preparation for employment training institution</p> <p>X: I have to say I don't think it's to train people for jobs, I really quite resent the fact that I'm now seen as an employment counsellor, that's not my job, my job is not to get people jobs</p> <p>X: I think in pedagogic practice academics have accepted and bought into neoliberal practice</p> <p>X: What it is to support the economy, economic growth and business</p> <p>X: if the neoliberal paradigms on the ascendancy you get a diminution of the meaning of education, so it becomes limited to the first, it's just vocations and it's just about skills, with budgets being tight and so on, it makes it harder to hold onto a broader and more holistic view of education in that way</p> <p>X: the government is trying to do that very strongly indeed, by saying that education is to increase economic growth in our country, it's not to try to increase economic growth in a country which already has vast overconsumption</p> <p>X: One role is to mould round pegs to slot into round holes to contribute to a materialistic and capitalistic society, it's about consumption</p> <p>X: don't agree with the recent shift that education has to be related to skills, and a certain thing that</p>	<p>transactional and qualification-based – skilling up the workforce</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Producing students who don't challenge conventions but perpetuate capitalistic, consumerist and neoliberal status quo • HE at the service of the national economy • Individualistic purposes and outcomes of HE 	<p>education</p>
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<p>you are going to be doing, we're running the risk of deconstructing the famous British Education system, do we want to become an apprentice workshop, two perspectives at odds with each other</p>		
<p>X: something which challenges people, intellectually stimulating, personally rewarding, they're reading for this degree, it should be about reading, exploring, developing your intellect X: there is value in learning for learning's sake X: I was signed up to the enlightenment values, the liberal values of higher learning X: the other is to educate your mind and explore the world, an academic challenge X: my feeling would be it's to provide higher learning X: I like Music, I'll go and study music, that doesn't mean I have to go and get a job out of it, pure pursuing education for your own development, you need people who are studying a discipline in a very cerebral way, and a philosophical way, they contribute different kinds of things to society, we must defend the right to pursue education for education's sake</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning for learning's sake, intellect, reading, higher learning, disciplinary pursuits 	<p>Liberal/traditional role</p>
<p>X: opportunities that are available in society, it's a great tool for changing people's life situations X: value has to be to help people make the best of themselves X: creates an opportunity for that individual to co-create a future for themselves in some way or other X: build up your cultural capital X: it's about transforming lives, I believe HE can impact on people's futures in very significant ways, fundamentally about empowerment to enable students to have opportunities that wouldn't have been there before X: students who go to university, their social capital is increased, they will naturally after they leave have a higher status and position than before</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increases students' social and cultural capital 	<p>Social capital role</p>
<p>X: in a free society is to help society decide which knowledge is worth having, and which should be discarded, discovering new knowledge X: research challenges facing society and helping industry and society as a whole improve X: research, from blue sky thinking, right through to really applicable research, practical, impactful things, government is very focused on the practical end, but don't want to forget about this blue sky thinking, where you don't quite know where it might end up X: the key place where new innovative thinking is given a home and given time to grow X: I think the role of universities and higher education is to create and to disseminate new knowledge, if you're not creating new knowledge, then you cease to have the right to call yourself a university</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researching, creating and disseminating new knowledge, blue sky thinking, knowledge to help society 	<p>Research role</p>

Table 4.13 – Overview of data analysis core and key themes

Core Themes	Key Themes
Core Theme 1 – The growth of England’s HESD agenda and the role of the sector bodies and organisations: introduction and overview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drivers for HESD in English HE • Brief history of England’s HESD agenda and tipping points
Core Theme 2 – The relationship between central government and HEFCE for driving sustainability in the HE sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central government commitment to sustainability • The relationship between central government and HEFCE on sustainability
Core Theme 3 – The history and approach of HEFCE’s sustainability agenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early history • HEFCE SD Steering Group • Loss of momentum since 2010 • HEFCE as champion of the students • HEFCE’s approach/perspective • HEFCE and ESD
Core Theme 4 – The history and approach of the HEA’s ESD agenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beginnings and growth of ESD thematic work • Lack of priority around ESD within core ethos of HEA • Role of the Green Academy programme
Core Theme 5 – Sustainability and ESD leadership and support from ‘the top’	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The importance of sector body sustainability/ESD strategy, policy, guidance documents, reports, thematic work areas and funding • The importance of HEI leadership from ‘the top’ • Issues with financial incentives and nudging
Core Theme 6 – Educational quality assurance and ESD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • QAA Subject Benchmark Statements and ESD • QAA ESD guidance document • HEIs internal quality assurance and ESD
Core Theme 7 – Quality-related research funding and ESD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General impacts of QR on HEIs/departments/ individuals • Impacts of QR on interdisciplinary, sustainability, pedagogical and ESD research • When QR isn’t a problem or barrier
Core Theme 8 – Competitive advantage and the HE sustainability agenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HEI reputational benefits • The People and Planet Green League and the EAUC Green Gown Awards • The sustainability role of the NUS and the NSS
Core Theme 9 – Academic staff engagement with sustainability and ESD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of interest, understanding and resistance to sustainability and ESD terms and concepts • Politics and values in ESD • Evolution in terminology • Competing agendas

<p>Core Theme 10 – ESD and the student as consumer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observed student behaviour changes • More hype than evidence • Is ESD demand or supply driven?
<p>Core Theme 11 – Ideology vs. reality in education for sustainable development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Championing of transformative HESD approaches • Working with(in) the system HESD approaches • Theory-practice gap in HESD • Strong individual HESD ideologies • Encouraging plurality in ESD approaches
<p>Core Theme 12 – The role and purpose of higher education</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability role • Critique of economic model of higher education • Critical thinking role • Liberal/traditional role • Social capital role • Research role