

A degree for a job?
Understanding the 'value' of a UK Masters
degree for the international student

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Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Table of Contents..... | 2 |
| Abbreviations | 5 |
| Acknowledgements..... | 6 |
| Abstract | 7 |
| 1 Introduction..... | 8 |
| 1.1 First words..... | 8 |
| 1.2 Research context | 9 |
| 1.3 Why this research? | 10 |
| 1.4 Research questions and approach..... | 14 |
| 1.5 Thesis structure..... | 15 |
| 2 Literature Review..... | 18 |
| 2.1 Introduction | 18 |
| 2.2 International Education debates | 19 |
| 2.2.1 Some definitions..... | 19 |
| 2.2.2 The tensions of international education..... | 22 |
| 2.2.3 Summary | 30 |
| 2.3 Background to international education in the UK..... | 31 |
| 2.3.1 International student policy 1960s to 2008: from colonialism to trade | 31 |
| 2.3.2 <i>Education UK</i> brand: communicating the discourse of international education to students | 35 |
| 2.3.3 Summary: A degree for a job? | 38 |
| 2.4 International student research..... | 40 |
| 2.5 Conclusion | 45 |
| 3 Theoretical Framework | 47 |
| 3.1 Introduction | 47 |
| 3.2 Discourse and identity within a 'poststructuralist turn' | 48 |
| 3.3 An 'entrepreneurial identity' | 51 |
| 3.4 Interpreting complex identities..... | 53 |
| 3.4.1 Wenger's five dimensions of identity..... | 53 |
| 3.4.2 Rizvi's cosmopolitan identities..... | 56 |
| 3.4.3 Narrating educational trajectories | 57 |

| | | |
|----------|---|------------|
| 3.5 | Summary..... | 59 |
| 4 | Methodology and Methods..... | 61 |
| 4.1 | Introduction | 61 |
| 4.2 | Methodology..... | 61 |
| 4.2.1 | Competing research paradigms..... | 61 |
| 4.2.2 | A reflexive researcher..... | 64 |
| 4.2.3 | Research Ethics..... | 69 |
| 4.3 | Methods..... | 72 |
| 4.3.1 | Secondary data collection..... | 72 |
| 4.3.2 | Primary data collection: interviews..... | 72 |
| 4.4 | Conclusion | 82 |
| 5 | Value of a Masters degree pre-study | 83 |
| 5.1 | Introduction | 83 |
| 5.2 | An entrepreneurial approach pre-study | 84 |
| 5.2.1 | Value of career-focused education not available at home..... | 84 |
| 5.2.2 | Value of English-language programmes and British culture..... | 88 |
| 5.2.3 | Pragmatic values: university ranking versus time and money constraints | 90 |
| 5.2.4 | Personal values..... | 92 |
| 5.2.5 | Summary..... | 93 |
| 5.3 | Discussion..... | 93 |
| 5.4 | Conclusion | 96 |
| 6 | Value of a Masters degree in-study..... | 98 |
| 6.1 | Summary..... | 98 |
| 6.2 | Valuing of Masters degree in-study: from instrumental to tacit values..... | 99 |
| 6.2.1 | Introduction..... | 99 |
| 6.2.2 | Value of vocational education in UK..... | 99 |
| 6.2.3 | Value of becoming an independent learner..... | 103 |
| 6.2.4 | Value of life outside the academic programme: 'all the other reasons'..... | 108 |
| 6.3 | Discussion..... | 113 |
| 6.4 | Conclusion | 117 |
| 7 | Value of UK Masters Degree following return home..... | 119 |
| 7.1 | Introduction | 119 |

| | | |
|------------|--|------------|
| 7.2 | Narratives of Return | 120 |
| 7.2.1 | Instrumentalist narratives of return..... | 121 |
| 7.2.2 | Re-assessing the value of home and UK higher education | 125 |
| 7.2.3 | Pragmatic values: quality versus value for time and value for money..... | 129 |
| 7.2.4 | Personal life changing experience: 'in-between cultures' | 132 |
| 7.2.5 | Summary | 135 |
| 7.3 | Discussion..... | 136 |
| 7.4 | Conclusion | 142 |
| 8 | Concluding Reflections | 144 |
| 8.1 | Introduction | 144 |
| 8.2 | Revisiting Research Questions and Findings | 145 |
| 8.3 | Possible impact on policy and marketing of international education .. | 147 |
| 8.4 | Final thoughts | 152 |
| 8.4.1 | Reflecting on the research process..... | 152 |
| 8.4.2 | Areas of further research that are of interest..... | 154 |
| 8.5 | Last words..... | 156 |
| | References | 157 |
| | Appendix 1: Ethical Procedures Documents..... | 170 |
| | Participant Information Sheet..... | 171 |
| | Appendix 2: Interview Guide | 173 |
| | Appendix 3: Higher Education Systems in Russia and Palestine..... | 175 |
| | 1. Overview of Russian Higher Education | 175 |
| | 2. Overview of Palestinian higher education | 176 |
| | Appendix 4: Profile of research respondents..... | 178 |
| | Appendix 5: Extract from research diary 1 | 184 |
| | Appendix 6: Extract from research diary 2 | 186 |
| | Appendix 7: Examples of theme analysis..... | 187 |
| | Appendix 8: Websites consulted | 190 |

Abbreviations

| | |
|----------------|--|
| BA | Bachelor of Arts |
| BC | British Council |
| CGT | Constructivist Grounded Theory |
| DAAD | Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst / German Academic Exchange Service |
| DfES | Department for Education and Skills |
| DTI | Department for Trade and Innovation |
| ECS | Education Counselling Services |
| EdD | Doctor of Education degree |
| ERASMUS | European Region Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students |
| FCO | Foreign and Commonwealth Office |
| GATS | General Agreement on Trade in Services |
| HE | Higher Education |
| HEA | Higher Education Academy (UK) |
| HEAI | Higher Education Authority (Ireland) |
| HEI | Higher Education Institution |
| HCSEC | House of Commons Skills and Education Committee |
| HESA | Higher Education Statistics Agency |
| NGO | Non Governmental Organisation |
| OECD | Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development |
| MA | Master of Arts |
| MBA | Master of Business Administration |
| MORI | Marketing and Opinion Research International |
| MSc | Master of Science |
| oPT | occupied Palestinian Territory |
| PA | Palestinian Authority |
| PDI | Power Distance Index |
| PhD | Doctor of Philosophy |
| PMI1 | Prime Minister's Initiative for International Education (Phase 1) |
| PMI2 | Prime Minister's Initiative for International Education (Phase 2) |
| UKCOSA/ UKCISA | UK Council for International Student Affairs |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| UIS | UNESCO Institute for Statistics |
| UK | United Kingdom |
| US | United States |
| WTO | World Trade Agreement |

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My life has changed utterly since I started the University of Sheffield Doctor of Education (EdD) programme in ways I did not imagine when I began this adventure in 2004. I have had two children. I have lived in three different countries and moved house five times. I have packed up my research articles, notes and books twice to be sent by freight to my next destination, and I have posted material back and forth as I travelled between Dublin, Moscow and Jerusalem. I have breathed many sighs of relief when they turn up again, more or less intact. I have learned the importance of backing up my data, as one hard disk collapsed and another computer was stolen.

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Abstract

This thesis examines the educational experiences of international students from Russia and Palestine who studied for Masters degrees in the UK. I investigate how these students value their UK Masters degrees and how this valuing is reflected in their shifting identities.

I identify an entrepreneurial discourse of international education in the UK and in the national brand for UK education marketing overseas, *Education UK*, and I suggest that this discourse constructs students as entrepreneurial beings and frames students' value judgments and identities during their educational trajectories. My theoretical framework draws from theories of discourse and identity to establish this entrepreneurial identity and to analyse how students' value judgments and identities shift and become more multi-faceted during their educational trajectories.

The empirical work for this study consisted of interviews with 28 graduates of taught Masters degrees from UK higher education institutions several years after these individuals had returned home to Russia and Palestine. My analysis of students' value judgments and identities is based on their recollections of the three stages of their educational trajectories: their experiences pre-study, in-study and post-study. My research findings suggest that these students embark on their international education with highly entrepreneurial motives that reflect the discourse of international education. However, as their educational trajectories proceed, and students narrated their in-study and post-study experiences, there are subtle shifts in their value judgments and identities as they go beyond this discourse and as personal and transformative aspects of this international experience become more significant.

In conclusion, I argue that the emphasis on the economic benefits of international education on the part of policy makers and marketers of international education risks ignoring the more complex outcomes and value of international education and could potentially impact the UK's long-term success in the international education market.

1 Introduction

Choosing the UK means that you only have to pay tuition fees for one year and you'll be back in the workplace before you know it. While you're here, you'll be immersed in English, the world's most important business language...With such fantastic experience behind you, you'll be ready to hit the ground running by the time you finish your course...UK postgraduate qualifications let employers know at a glance that you've got the skills they're looking for, putting you on the right track for a great job and a great salary. (Education UK website).

The degree helped me personally to be able to build my career. It was really intensive and it adds to who you are as a human being. (Hayed, Jerusalem).

I remember my studies in the UK with nostalgia. I often want to go back. It was great to see how normal people work. Sure, it was difficult to live far from Russia but when I came back to Russia, I felt I had left a part of me had been left behind in London. (Andrei, Moscow).

Not only did I receive the education I wanted, I also got to understand a new culture. I now understand both Russian and UK culture better. I have an appreciation of UK culture. You have to have respect for cultures and this is important for life and in work. There are misunderstandings and they are because people don't understand the cultures. (Oleg, Moscow).

1.1 First words

The first excerpt above is taken from the *Education UK* website, an online resource aimed at prospective international students worldwide who seek information about studying in the United Kingdom (UK). It provides an apt introduction to this research study on international students who studied for taught Masters degrees in the UK. The text highlights the instrumental and employment benefits of studying in the UK. UK education is good value in terms of time and money. Students can quickly return to the workplace armed with market-relevant qualifications that will set them up in successful and lucrative careers. While studying in the UK they will be immersed in English, the most important global language of business. A UK postgraduate degree is positioned as 'a degree for a job' as in the title of this thesis. The other excerpts are from interviews with graduates of UK Masters degrees that I carried out for this research study. These individuals' comments illustrate how for international students, the international education experience is more multi-faceted and complex and cannot just be reduced to a simple economic transaction or 'a degree

for a job'. This complexity and tension is the subject of this thesis, which investigates how students value their UK Masters degree when they recall their educational experiences and how this valuing is reflected in their shifting identities.

In this chapter, I introduce the context of an economic-led and marketised international education that provides the background for my empirical research in this thesis. I note my rationale for carrying out this research study and outline the structure and approach that I took. I briefly refer to the theoretical and methodological resources used in the study. I then outline the structure of this thesis.

1.2 Research context

International education is a global industry with an estimated 2.7 million students enrolled at universities outside their home country (OECD 2007), over half of those in just four countries: the United States (US), the UK, France and Germany (OECD 2006a, p.6). International education is a 'dynamic, high-skill and sustainable export industry' in the UK, purportedly worth more than £10 billion (BC 2006a), with 12 per cent of all international students worldwide enrolled at UK universities (UNESCO-UIS 2006, p.35). International student fees are an important income stream for the UK's Higher Education Institutions (HEI), and represent around eight per cent of HEIs' total income, and a staggering one third of all income at two prominent UK HEIs (MacLeod 2006). Given these statistics, it is tempting to see international education, and indeed international students, purely in economic terms as education participates in and is shaped by forces of globalisation. Higher education can be seen as engaging in a service trade, where international students are 'consumers' who purchase educational services in another country obtaining a valuable credential or degree upon successful completion of their studies. This degree carries the promise of improved career and salary prospects for its holders who embark on their studies with an imaginary of the ways 'international education might play in better positioning them within the changing structures of the global economy' (Rizvi 2008, p.26). The exporting nation (or host country) benefits from this transaction economically thanks to international student fees, students' expenditure in-country and the taxes they pay should they stay after graduation. As expressed in a brief for the second phase of the Prime Minister's Initiative for International

Education (PMI2), the UK's strategy for internationalisation of education, the exporting nation also benefits from students' 'intellectual capital –making a vital contribution to [the UK's] capacity for research, technological growth and innovation', thus positioning international education 'at the centre of the UK's knowledge economy and its long-term wealth and prosperity' (BC 2006a). Such a trade-led or 'entrepreneurial' view dominates in much writing on international education and in UK policy and is reflected in the UK's brand for international education, *Education UK*. However, there is a growing body of literature that seeks to problematise this perspective as a globalised entrepreneurial discourse of international education. This study is placed within this body of literature.

1.3 Why this research?

This thesis seeks to go beyond the globalised entrepreneurial discourse of international education by exploring how the experiences of international students include and go beyond the entrepreneurial. These students are constructed by this discourse as entrepreneurial beings who improve their market attractiveness by obtaining a quality and business-relevant international degree, a UK taught Masters degree in the case of this research study, as illustrated in the opening excerpt of this chapter from the *Education UK* website.

This research study was prompted by my personal and professional experiences of international education, my moral and professional unease with short-term economic-led approaches to international education and my desire to learn more about international students' experiences. When I began the Doctor of Education (EdD) degree programme, I worked at a major Irish university where I was involved in a number of international student recruitment projects. I witnessed how management viewed these students primarily in terms of the short-term income they represented for the institution. I was uncomfortable with this approach as I felt that it diminished the many other non-economic benefits of international students such as providing more multi-cultural higher education learning environments, attracting high calibre researchers to HEIs, sustaining programmes that might not otherwise be viable, and ensuring that more quality internationally-focused programmes are available to all students (BC 2006c). I felt strongly that my institution and indeed Ireland Inc. should

take a more long-term strategic approach to internationalisation of education if it was to attain sustainable progress in this area. From a professional point of view, this research was also prompted by my desire to become more involved in international education activities at my institution and elsewhere. I watched with interest the development of the *Education UK* brand and the promotion of UK higher education abroad, initially on the sidelines when working in Ireland, and then more closely when I took up a position with the British Council in Russia. There I worked closely with the in-Russia *Education UK* team and I co-ordinated market research projects for this unit, including research at recruitment fairs to assess students' attitudes to UK higher education (HE) and research on Russian graduates to assess the outcomes of their international education experience. The focus of these studies was on measurable outputs to assess the effectiveness of the British Council and *Education UK*'s work in the region. I socialised with many Russian UK-educated alumni, and we often discussed their experiences of studying in the UK. Our conversations made me curious how their real-life experiences went beyond such measurable outputs and beyond the discourse of international education and of *Education UK* marketing of 'a degree for a job'. I wanted to learn more about how a UK degree is experienced by these students.

My personal experience of international education, a semester as a language student at a Russian university in the early 1990s, meant that I felt strongly that this international education experience could not just be understood in terms of a 'strategic cosmopolitan imaginary' (Rizvi 2005, p.10). During this semester, I achieved my instrumental objective of improving my Russian language skills, but seventeen years on, I view this brief period of my life as one of my most incredibly life-enriching and life-changing experiences. If pre-study, the 'job' I set out to do was to improve my Russian language skills, post-study, this was just one of the many ways I benefited from my international education experience.

This subject of this thesis is highly relevant to UK international education policy as it responds to one of four priorities of PMI2; 'Enhancing the quality of the student experience', which aims to improve all aspects of the student experience and to carry out relevant research on this topic (BC 2006b).

The thesis also responds to gaps in the research literature on international education as identified in two recent reviews, the first a review of unpublished research on international education commissioned by the UK Council for International Students Affairs (UKCOSA/UKCISA) (Leonard *et al.* 2004) and the second by the Higher Education Academy (HEA) (Caruana & Spurling 2007) on UK-based published and grey literature since 1995. Pelletier (in Leonard *et al.* 2004) remarks that there is little comparative research work, given that most international education research is carried out by international students who investigate students of their own nationality, or academics, whose research is concerned with students at their particular institution. I approached this research as an outsider, as I am neither an international student nor an academic at a UK HEI, an aspect that as I explore later in the Methodology and Methods chapter is both an advantage and a challenge to me as a researcher. My life trajectory has meant that I have lived in two geographical locations in the past three years, Moscow and Jerusalem and I have had access to graduates of UK HEIs in these two locations. Another criticism of research is that it often treats international students as a homogenous group. Where studies are on specific student cohorts, they tend to be Asian focused given the dominance of the Asian market (see for example: Habu 2000; Kingston and Forland 2008; Nichols 2003; Turner 2006; Turner & Robson 2009). Recent international education policy documents note the need to expand the number of sending markets for international students and to achieve 'a far greater understanding of the countries we operate in' (BC 2006a).

In this thesis, I explore the pre-study, in-study and post-study experiences¹ of international graduates of UK Masters degree programmes from Russia and Palestine.² During my literature trawl, I found no published research on Russian international students, who number about 2,620, half of whom are postgraduates,³ and none on Palestinian students, admittedly a much smaller cohort of about 100 (British Council Jerusalem, personal correspondence). This is a significant gap in research as

¹ My use of these categories reflects Pelletier's classification (in Leonard *et al.*, 2004).

² When citing Palestinian respondents in the data-reporting chapters, I refer to all as coming from Jerusalem. In fact, respondents came from Jerusalem, Ramallah and the Gaza Strip. All are referred to as Palestinians, although some are in fact Israeli Arabs, or ethnic Palestinians who hold Israeli passports. I refer to their geographical region of origin as 'Palestine' rather than the more cumbersome 'occupied Palestinian Territory (oPT) for ease-of-reading.

³ See: <http://hesa.britishcouncil.stats.org>

Russia is a priority market for PMI2,⁴ and is one of the top 20 countries of origin for international students globally (OECD 2007). Palestinian students are also representative of the Arab market, again an important but under-researched market, given that Gulf countries are also a priority for PMI2.⁵

Research on international students often fails to take 'a holistic approach' that contextualises students' experiences within their home and host cultures (Spurling 2007, p.126). In this research, I spoke to students about their UK educational experiences in the context of their home lives, as they recalled these experiences in interview. Much research on international students is market research focused, emphasising recruitment rather than the longer-term value of the 'product' or educational credential purchased (Leonard *et al.* 2004, p.9; see also Walker 1997; 1999). There is a dearth of longitudinal research on the post-study experiences of international students and little is known about international graduate employability on their return home (Leonard *et al.* 2004, p.23). This research project examines the 'longer-term value' of Masters degrees because I interviewed graduates several years after their return home from the UK.

It is also significant that this study looks at the experiences of postgraduate students, as it is likely that these will overtake undergraduate numbers as more students opt for undergraduate study at home and a shorter (and cheaper) period of postgraduate study abroad (Böhm *et al.* 2004, p.7). As Barker (1997, p.108) notes, postgraduate students tend to be 'more functionally concerned with future job implications of their studies', and thus they are a particularly interesting group to research in the context of an entrepreneurial discourse of international education. This is particularly the case for students on taught Masters degrees which tend to be vocationally based, thus the reason for my decision to interview this group of graduates for this research.

In this section, I have outlined my reasons for carrying out this research and I have described how my research responds to gaps in the literature on international

⁴ See <http://www.britishcouncil.org/eumd-pmi2-overview.htm>

⁵ I am aware of research studies on other Arab student populations (see for example: Al-Harathi 1997; Al-Mahri 1996; Al-Shawi 1990 cited Leonard *et al.* 2004).

education. In the next section, I state my research questions, informed both by my professional and personal interests as I have outlined and by my review of the literature on international education as I explore in the next chapter.

1.4 Research questions and approach

My review of the literature and my personal and professional interests led me to develop the following research questions.

My main research question is as follows:

- How do these international students value their UK Masters degrees when recalling their educational experiences and how is this valuing reflected in their shifting identities?

My secondary research questions are as follows:

- How is the entrepreneurial discourse of international education significant in these students' narrated value judgments and shifting identities?
- How do these students interpret and value their experiences of studying in the UK in their narrations?
- How do these students' value judgments and identities shift as they narrate the three stages of their educational trajectories: pre-study, in-study and post-study?

I approached this research as an interpretative researcher and I adopted a qualitative research approach in my empirical research. My research group consisted of 28 international graduates of UK Masters degrees, 18 from Russia and 10 from Palestine. My informants had all moved back home following their studies, and I held one semi-structured interview with each informant. I refer to the informants throughout this thesis as 'students' for ease of reading, yet at the time of interview they were all graduates. My research findings are based on students' narrations of their educational trajectories post-study and I considered that through the act of telling the story of their educational experiences, they were involved in an act of 'retrospective meaning making' (Chase 2005, p.656). I adopted a strategy that was loosely inspired from constructivist grounded theory (CGT) to analyse the interview data, where I coded interview data according to themes. As a reflexive researcher, I was at all times conscious of how the personal affected my research data, such as my

positionality and how this was perceived by informants, the research setting and objectives, issues of translation and how I chose to interpret and present students' narrations.

I availed of a number of theoretical resources to explore my research findings about students valuing of their Masters degrees and how this is reflected in their identities. I refer to poststructuralist thinkers to establish my understanding of 'discourse', an aspect that allows me to identify a 'discourse' of entrepreneurial international education and to interpret how this discourse frames students' valuing of their UK Masters degree. My understandings of identity as complex, multifaceted and fractured are informed by these readings. In exploring students' narration of an entrepreneurial identity during their educational trajectories, I refer to Masschelein and his collaborators (Masschelein 2001; Masschelein & Simons 2002; Masschelein & Quaghebeur 2005) and to Gee (2004). I borrow from Wenger's (1998) dimensions of identity and Rizvi's (2005, 2008, 2009) concepts of cosmopolitan learning and identities to analyse the way students' value judgments and identities shift and become more complex as their narrations proceed.

In this section, I have introduced the research questions at the centre of this thesis, and I have sketched my methodological research approach to this research study on international students and I have briefly introduced the theoretical resources I avail of to interpret my research data. I will explore these in much greater detail in the Methodology and Methods and in the Theoretical Framework chapters.

1.5 Thesis structure

In this final section, I outline the structure of this thesis and anticipate the broad content of the various chapters.

Chapter 2, the Literature Review, provides an overview of the literature that informs this research on international students' educational experiences. I survey the international and UK education policy environment and academic literature. I refer to theorists who problematise contemporary approaches to international education as a globalised economic-led 'discourse'. I review the *Education UK* brand, the official

marketing strategy for international education in the UK. I cite literature on international students relevant to this study.

In **Chapter 3**, the Theoretical Framework, I describe the theoretical tools that I apply in my analysis of students' narrations of their educational experience as outlined in the section above. I also describe my approach to narrative analysis, key to this research, which is based on students' interpretations and recollections of their educational trajectories.

In **Chapter 4**, the Methods and Methodology, I outline the ontological and epistemological beliefs that led me to adopt interpretative research methods of qualitative interviews. I detail the primary and secondary research methods used in the thesis and my approach to data analysis.

In **Chapter 5**, the first data-reporting chapter, I relate and analyse students' value judgments pre-study as narrated to me during interview. I note how at this point in students' trajectories, their value judgments, and thus their identities, can be interpreted as echoing the entrepreneurial discourse of international education.

In **Chapter 6**, the second data-reporting chapter, I describe and analyse students' value judgments in-study, as narrated to me during interview. I describe how students continue to exhibit an entrepreneurial identity, yet I relate how their value judgments and identities are more complex at this stage of their narration as they criticise aspects of their in-study experience and emphasise the more personal aspects of their experiences overseas.

Chapter 7, the final data-reporting chapter, I recount and analyse students' value judgments and post-study, as narrated during interview. I describe how students continue to be entrepreneurial as they seek to 'fit' the needs of their home employment market, yet their narrations are increasingly personal when they spoke of the disjuncture between how their UK degree was valued in the home market post-study compared with how they had imagined this return pre-study. At this stage, they gave increasing value to the more tacit and affective elements of their overseas experience.

In **Chapter 8**, my Concluding Reflections, I review my research findings and explain how they address my research questions. I outline why I consider my research findings may be pertinent for policy development and I argue for a widening of the discourse of international education. I then review the research process.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the literature that informs my research on international students' value judgments and their identities during their educational trajectories. According to Wellington *et al.* (2005, p.73), a Literature Review is an 'inquiry trail' to explore different types of literature and to look for themes, similarities and differences of a particular issue. Silverman (2000, p.231) states that a Literature Review should 'combine knowledge with critical thought'. I see this Literature Review as providing a starting point for my field research, insights into relevant debates, a set of themes to be explored during interviews and alerting me to gaps in the literature. It operates 'illustratively as a historical and theoretical background' (Turner 2006, pp.34-5) that enables me to structure the argument behind my research questions focusing on one of the stakeholders of international education, international students.

Walker (1999, p.7) has argued that one of the main failings of much international student research is its failure to locate international students in the environment that frames their experience. I view this chapter like a series of concentric circles, with each section getting closer to my research subjects, international students. The succeeding sections of this chapter provide first an overall view of the international student policy and literature environment, and then focus in on the international education policy in the UK, and then on the students themselves. In the outer circle of international students' environment, I establish the wider debates and policy environment of international education. This contextual discussion shows how a discourse of economic-led international education dominates in the UK and internationally. It is within this discourse that international students embark on and proceed through their educational trajectories and form their value judgments of their degree and their identities. I look at the definitions of international education, globalisation and international students, noting the dominance of the economic dimension in each case. I examine the debates around the marketisation of international education and I review the writings of theorists who problematise this as a 'discourse' of international education, a position I uphold in this thesis. I then

narrow my discussion to an examination of how a trade-view of international education has come to dominate in the UK. I examine the *Education UK* brand, which appears to embody this discourse. I explain how this literature led me to the research questions examined in this thesis. Finally, I briefly examine some relevant literature on international students.

2.2 International Education debates

2.2.1 Some definitions

It is useful to begin this thesis with a short review of three key terms relevant to this thesis, namely globalisation, international education and international students to show how all three are most often used and understood in economic ways and to establish my understandings of these terms. I address each of these terms in turn.

Although globalisation is one of the defining words of our times, as Schotle (2005, p.14) has argued, it is still a 'thoroughly contested concept'. Many prominent thinkers have attempted to define what is meant by globalisation (see for example Giddens 1990; Held *et al.* 1999; Robertson 1992), which they see variously as a 'process, a condition, a system, a force and/or an age' (Steger 2003, p.7). Although it can be viewed in economic, cultural and political terms (*Ibid.*), the economic dimension of globalisation tends to dominate both in the policy agenda and in the media as governments try to position themselves favourably in competitive global education markets (Porter & Vidovich 2000). The rhetoric of globalisation is often 'virtuous in character' emphasising how humanity's increased 'interconnectedness' has liberated us and created exciting new opportunities for individuals (Rizvi & Lignard 2000, p. 419). It is implied that education plays a key role in this process given how important universities and knowledge have become in the contemporary world (Altbach 2004, p.5). This is the position of supranational agencies such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank (Currie & Newson 1998, pp.6-7). This has a significance for international students, who as expressed by Rizvi (2005, p.5) are often 'already aligned to the emerging economic and cultural contours of corporate globalization' pre-study.

It is important to differentiate between globalisation and international education. When these terms are used interchangeably, there is a tendency not to 'unpack' the economic-led realities of globalisation and internationalisation in higher education (Altbach 2004, p.3; see also Knight 1997; Scott 1998; Teichler 2004, Turner & Robson 2009). Internationalisation of education then becomes a response to this economic led globalisation. For instance, as expressed by Marjik Van der Wende, president of the governing board of the OECD's Programme on Institutional Management in Higher Education (OECD-IMHE), internationalisation of education is then:

✓ ...any systematic effort aimed at making higher education (more) responsive to the requirements and challenges related to the globalisation of societies, economy and labour markets. (Van der Wende 1997, pp.18-19).

I follow Philip Altbach and Jane Knight in distinguishing between globalisation as 'the economic, political and societal involvement pushing twenty-first century higher education toward greater international involvement', and 'internationalisation', which as a response to globalisation, involves choices on the part of governments, HEIs and in this case, international students (Altbach & Knight 2007 pp.290-291). I seek to go beyond the markets-led version of international education within an economic-led globalisation.

For the purposes of this study, I adopt Schotle's (2005) definition of globalisation or what he labels 'respatialisation', where

...people become more able – physically, legally, linguistically, culturally and psychologically – to engage with each other wherever on planet earth they might be. (Schotle 2005, p.59).

This definition goes beyond the economic. Within it, we can perceive of international students as moving across borders to engage in education in the broader meaning of the term. They are not just engaging in a global economic transaction as 'consumers' of educational experience, rather they are 'physically, legally, linguistically, culturally and psychologically' involved in the UK education system, life and culture during and beyond their educational experience. This definition hints at experiences of education that go beyond mere trade and economic transactions, or beyond what Rizvi (2005, p.9) has called a 'consumerist cosmopolitanism'.

The OECD (2004) has stated that there are two dimensions to international education, namely 'internationalisation at home' where international and intercultural dimensions of the curriculum, teaching and research enable students to develop international and intercultural skills without leaving their country. And secondly, there is what it refers to as 'cross-border education', whereby 'the teacher, student, institution/provider or course materials cross national jurisdictional borders' (OECD 2004, p.19). It is this second dimension of international education that is the subject of this thesis, which focuses on international students. Knight (1997; 1999) has identified four groups of drivers for international education: economic, political, social and cultural, and academic forces that act on the diverse stakeholders involved in international education, including educational institutions, governments, cultural agencies and national and international students. Arguably, as is the case with globalisation, it is the economic drivers of international education that are particularly significant (see Currie & Newson 1998; DeVita & Case 2003), as comes across in the following OECD excerpt:

By and large, the expansion of cross-border education stems from the massification of higher education, from a favourable technological and economic climate marked by the spread of the new ICTs, the developing knowledge economy, the increased internationalization of labour markets and the demand for highly-skilled workers, and the falling costs of transport and communications. (OECD 2004, p.25).

The emphasis here is all economic. Note the terms in which international education is framed: 'technological and economic climate', 'developing knowledge economy', 'internationalization of labour markets' and 'demand for highly-skilled workers'.

Knight proposes a definition of international education that is cited frequently as '...the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education' (Knight 2003). Sidhu (2006, p.3) has criticised this definition as too general and ambiguous, noting that it is unclear what constitutes this international/ intercultural dimension and that it does not 'preclude a largely one-way transmission of knowledge West-North to East-South'. She cites Francis' definition as an alternative:

✓ Internationalisation is a process where education prepares the community for successful participation in an increasingly independent world...fosters global understanding and develops skills for effective living and working in a diverse world. (Francis 1993, p.5 cited Sidhu 2006, p.3).

This definition encourages a more comprehensive and more moral understanding of internationalisation of education in a globalised world. It is useful for my purposes as it goes beyond the purely economic, and describes how an international education can better prepare individuals for both their personal and their professional lives in globalised world, hinting at the critical cosmopolitanism Rizvi (2005, 2008, 2009) urges as I explore in the next chapter.

Finally, the term 'international students' can be 'unpacked' to show that it too similar to globalisation and international education carries strong economic connotations. Coate (2009, p.276) has noted that the rationale for designating students as 'home' or 'international' is based on an economic rather than an academic distinction. The term 'international student' is generally used to mean a student who pays full-cost fees rather than those who do not, regardless of their nationality. Thus the 'international student' category does not include either European students or non-Europeans enrolled on degree programmes who have satisfied residency requirements in the UK and both these groups pay domestic fees. It also does not include students on exchange programmes or one-year programmes as part of longer degrees (e.g. ERASMUS or year-abroad programmes). Yet the category includes UK passport holders who are not 'ordinarily resident' within the UK or the EU and are therefore subject to full-cost fees.⁶ I use the term 'international students' throughout this thesis to refer to the students who are the focus of this study, Russians and Palestinians, all of whom must pay full-cost fees to attend UK HEIs.

2.2.2 The tensions of international education

In the previous section I looked at the understandings of three terms: globalisation, international education and international students and I noted the strong economic undercurrents to each term as commonly used. In this section, I expand on these arguments as I engage with the literature on international education. This serves as an introduction to the next part of the chapter where I look specifically at how this trade view is significant in the UK and in the marketing of UK higher education abroad.

⁶ See http://www.ukcosa.org.uk/student/info_sheets/tuition_fees_ewni.php#home_overseas for a definition of 'ordinarily resident' in the UK.

2.2.2.1 *A trade view of international education*

In the dominant economic reading (see De Vita & Case 2003), international education can be seen in terms of its figures - a highly attractive global industry with an estimated 2.7 million students worldwide enrolled in HEIs outside their home countries (OECD 2007, p.299) contributing to an educational market that has been hailed a '\$2 trillion global industry' (Lynch 2006, p.4). For transnational organisations such as the OECD and the World Trade Organisation (WTO), whose membership is made up of high-income developed countries, arguments for deregulation and marketisation of education are prominent in discussions on education (Lingard & Rizvi 1998, p.262). A reformed education system is seen as key to increased labour productivity, technical advances and the creation of more flexible and more competitive behaviours among citizens (Marginson 1997, pp.60-61) and a 'major driver of economic competitiveness in an increasingly knowledge-driven global economy' (OECD 2008, p.13). As stated by Gürüz (2008, p.6), 'knowledge and people with knowledge are the key factors for development, the main drivers of growth, the major determinants of competition in the global economy'. These arguments extend to international education (see OECD 2006a, 2004; Gürüz 2008; Suavé 2002).

A 2004 OECD report identifies four public policy approaches to international education: 'a mutual-understanding approach' which aims to strengthen political and economic ties and to enhance mutual understanding and social cohesions such as that of the European Union's ERASMUS programme; 'a skilled migration approach', where international education is a way of attracting highly-skilled students who may remain in the country after their studies; 'a capacity-building approach' where sending-countries use international higher education to build or improve their capacity in higher education as in the case in some Asian countries; and 'a revenue-generating approach' where educational services are offered to international students at unsubsidised rates to cover the cost of their education (OECD 2004, pp.26-29; 2006b). The latter approach is the one taken in the UK, Australia, New Zealand and

Ireland (OECD 2004, p.26).⁷ And it is this approach that the OECD appears to support. While the report refers briefly to concerns about the trade liberalisation approach to higher education in the education community, it sees 'trade as the new viewpoint on cross-border education', where 'the enrolment of a foreign student represents an "invisible export" in the form of associated income flow' (OECD 2004, p.31). The inclusion of educational services in the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) for the OECD:

...reflects the belief that a progressive liberalisation of services trade will assist the growth of international trade in services and contribute to economic development worldwide (OECD 2004, p.34).

In a later report, the OECD proposes four future possible scenarios for higher education and states that the most credible scenario is 'Higher Education Inc.' driven by trade liberalisation of education, where HEIs compete globally on a commercial basis with high competition for students and academics (OECD 2006b). In a similar vein, the writer of one World Bank paper on the implications of international education on developing countries states that

Higher education has today become a tradable service, which although not yet on the same scale, is similar to the trade of telecommunications or financial services. (Bashir 2007, p.7).

For such supranational organisations, international education appears to be perceived as a business and a trade, where exporting nations (usually in the North or richer countries) receive students from importing countries (usually from the South or poorer countries), who pay full-cost fees to the exporting countries. As Devos (2003, p.5) has argued, there are perhaps parallels between today's international education and past colonialism, as international students are located within this discourse of economic globalisation as 'trade goods' (see also Sidhu 2006). International student fees help bolster the coffers to the exporting nations' often cash-strapped HEIs, providing non-state revenue to these institutions. Individuals educated abroad are likely to retain links and affection for the country where they studied, thus benefiting exporting countries in the long-term both economically and diplomatically (see BC 2006a; DfES 2003, p.65; UKCOSA 2004). Importing countries also benefit from this trade as it increases domestic access to post-secondary education, and this 'ultimately

⁷ The Report *The University Challenged: A Review of International Trends and Issues with Particular Reference to Ireland* prepared by the Higher Education Authority (HEA1) in Ireland provides a useful overview of these countries' policies (HEA, 2003).

contributes to growth and development' (OECD 2004, p.15). International education policy is placed within an economic globalisation rhetoric 'linked more to the interests of global capitalism than to the needs of particular societies and specific individuals' (Rizvi & Lingard 2000, p.421).

This trade view coincides with much academic and policy-led research that focuses on how countries and individual HEIs can maximise their revenue from trade in international education. When I reviewed the literature, I identified a number of themes to this research. Firstly, research looks what attracts international students to the UK and provides advice on recruiting international students. Baimbridge (1997) looks at the factors that attract international students or prospective 'consumers' to UK HEIs, noting that they constitute a 'lucrative market'. Hall *et al.* (1998) investigate why students choose to study in Scotland and recommend appropriate marketing strategies to recruit students and Naidoo (2007) looks at the factors influencing student mobility to the UK.

Secondly, there is marketing-based literature that aims to help institutions attract greater numbers of international students or develop 'competitive advantage' within the market. Binsardi and Ekwulugo (2003), for example, develop a marketing intelligence device to investigate opportunities and threats to Britain's market in international education, using classical marketing techniques borrowed from the world of business. Mazzoral and Soutar (1999) view education as a marketable commodity and develop a model for educational institutions to gain competitive advantage in international markets. Bourke (2000) examines how countries and universities can achieve competitive advantage within this market and she develops a theoretical explanation for trends in international trade in higher education. This research interest reflects the many press articles on the increasingly competitive market of international education (as a small selection see: Gill 2008a, 2008b; Macleod 2006; Maslen 2007; Robertson, 2008).

Thirdly, there is much policy-led research that seeks to quantify the current and future value of the international education market in the UK and other markets (see Böhm *et al.* 2004; Bullivant 1998; Cemmell & Behkradnia 2008; Greenaway & Tuck, 1995; Johnes, 2004; Lenton 2007; Sastry 2006; Vickers & Bekhradnia 2007).

Finally, there is research that aims to understand students' 'needs' as consumers so that universities as 'producers' can respond to these needs. Much of this research is done by individual universities or for their recruiting needs. In one example of a published research study, Hesketh and Knight (1999) investigate why postgraduates choose particular programmes and how HEIs can better market these programmes to the students.

It is remarkable how many of these writings echo the tone and approach of the classical Kotler and Fox (1985) text on marketing for educational institutions, which firmly situates universities within the marketplace. They advocate the creation of market-oriented institutions whose 'main task...is to determine needs, wants and interests of [their] consumers and to adapt the institution to deliver satisfactions that preserve or enhance the consumers' or society's well-being and long-term interests' (p. 11). They urge HEIs to adopt business techniques such as the BCG Matrix⁸, 'for appraising product lines on the basis of market growth and company's share of market relative to the largest competitor' (p.132), McCarthy's 4Ps⁹, environmental scans such as the SWOT analysis¹⁰, and market segmentation techniques to ensure competitive advantage within that marketplace.

In this section, I note the pervasive trade view in much of the literature and policy on international education. It is important to establish this trade view or discourse both in the literature and in policy as it serves to demonstrate the discursive power of economic-led international education that constructs students as entrepreneurial beings in their approach to education.

⁸ The BCG Matrix is a product life-cycle theory that is used to determine which products should be prioritised within a company's product portfolio. Products are labelled 'stars', 'cash cows', 'dogs' and 'question marks' depending on their market share and market growth potential. This theory assumes that every product has a natural life-cycle that can be extended through marketing activities.

⁹ The '4Ps theory' considers the marketing positioning and strategy of every product or service in terms of four dimensions: product, place, promotion and price.

¹⁰ The 'SWOT analysis' looks at the environment where a product exists to examine the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats of that market.

2.2.2.2 *Problematizing the 'discourse' of international education*

However, there are many voices who argue that this is discourse of international education should be questioned. The philosopher, John McMurty, writing about the dominance of a trade or market-view of education, warns about the danger of accepting this value-system without question stating:

If a value system is pre-supposed and obeyed as the given structure of the world that all are made to accept and serve, it can become systematically destructive without our knowing there is a moral choice involved.
(McMurty 1998, p.10).

McMurty (1998; 1991) argues that the goals, motivations, methods and standards of excellence of education and the market place are inherently contradictory and that the 'Market Model' should not be applied to education. McMurty (1991 pp. 211-213) states that the market places a profit motive at the centre of all actions, whereas in education the advancement and the dissemination of knowledge should be at the heart of all interests (p.211). The market aims to satisfy the wants of consumers, whereas education aims to develop sound understanding within individuals whether they want it or not (p.212). The method of the market consists of selling ready-made goods to consumers for the highest price, whereas the method of education is never to sell anything ready-made and to require learners to fulfil the demands of the subject matter (pp.212-3). The market's criteria of excellence is that a product be problem-free for its buyer, whereas education is about 'how deep and broad the problems it poses are to the who one has it' (p.212). In such terms, it would appear that an economic view of international education is reductionist and potentially dangerous as it is a discourse that silences other potential narratives of international education.

It is notable that a growing body of theorists caution against an unquestioning acceptance of the corporate rhetoric of international education that paints international education as a necessary response to forces of globalisation. Teichler (1999, p.21) states that international education can to be viewed in two ways, as 'unresistable, as those who resist fall behind' or as a 'challenge, which might or might not be taken up and which might be taken up differently', echoing the concept of 'choice' which Altbach and Knight (2007) see as the key distinguishing factor between the terms internationalisation and globalisation as I stated above. Teichler (2004, p.23) urges educationalists to ask the substantive questions that go beyond a markets-value

system of international education, addressing the wider impact of international education, or in the case of this thesis, international students.

Teichler's arguments are echoed in De Vita and Case's (2003) paper on a Foucauldian 'discourse'¹¹ of international education that prevails in UK policy and HE internationalisation. They argue that it is inappropriate to reduce curricula to international commodities to be traded. They regard references within international education policy to students as customers or purchasers and universities as providers as misplaced and dangerous. They see this marketisation discourse within higher education as mitigating against a genuinely international, open and multicultural educational experience at UK universities, and opening the door to a 'learning as eating' commodified educational experience that finds its apogee in Ritzer's McUniversity (Ritzer, 1996). They note that within a markets-led view of international education, students or 'consumers' will increasingly claim their rights as purchasers of educational products (De Vita & Case 2003). Sidhu's (2006, p.ix) study examines how Foucauldian 'power-knowledge relations shape our commonsense understandings of international education'. She investigates a number of export and import markets and describes in detail the 'arresting complexities and contradictions surrounding the discursive realm of international education' where the aims of international education are described in terms as diverse as 'export services', 'national income' and 'global peace' (p. 2). She links the 'reconceptualization of education as a tradable commodity' with the rise of neo-liberalism and the 'proliferation of trust in markets' (p. 13). Currie and Newson (1998, p.7) also warn that that by moving with the globalisation tide, universities are becoming the 'unknowing instruments of supranational bodies', where globalisation links universities to the marketplace and scholars must then act as entrepreneurs. They warn that the 'neoliberal agenda of globalisation has infiltrated minds of politicians and managers to the point that it has become internalized and alarmingly, normalized'.

Other theorists see the constant use of the word 'international' as a discourse that hides the real state of affairs or what Halliday (1999, p.20) has called the

¹¹ Foucault's concept of 'discourse' is discussed further in the Theoretical Framework chapter.

'chimera of the international university'. The word 'international' is bandied about constantly yet within the context of international education it is defined in a 'monocultural, ahistorical, form'. This is a point taken up by De Vita and Case (2003, p.389), who refer to the UK HE curriculum as 'flavoured' with international elements and providing an anglocentric monocultural education. Gibbs (2002) remarks how *Education UK* is marketing itself on the 'economic and cultural ticket'. Echoing McMurty's criticism, he questions how marketing ideas of consumption can transfer directly to higher education institutions. He argues that higher education cannot be just seen as a 'product' as it blends the education and development experiences of students with preparation for their role in society. The market-led rhetoric of consumer-producer cannot function within an educational context where the student is not simply a consumer, but is a consumer of educational experience, a resource for development and a producer of her own learning. Their educational experience goes way beyond just preparing them for the labour market, an aspect of importance in this research study. Marginson (2007), in the context of Australian education, argues that a markets-led or trade approach to international education is potentially damaging in the long-term. Such an approach assumes that students obtain 'positional goods' from their international education experience that confer relative advantage to them in their home markets. This reproduces educational inequalities, whereby education in less developed countries is perceived of lesser value, and economic revenues flow from developing to export countries.¹²

Asteris (2006) draws a comparison between the coal industry in the UK in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and the international education industry today to emphasise the fragility of this international student market. He warns that the international education industry could suffer the same fate as the coal industry in the past. He notes the optimism of the international education sector, where reviews such as that undertaken by the British Council, Universities UK and IDP Education Australia (Böhm *et al.* 2004) forecast spectacular market growth, echoing the optimistic forecasts of the UK coal industry before its demise (Asteris 2006, p.226). Similar to coal a hundred years ago, today the it is knowledge, the 'product' of higher education that drives the global economy (*Ibid.*, p.227) and like coal before,

¹² See also Marginson (1997) for a discussion on positional goods.

international education industry is important to the UK's balance of payments (*Ibid.*, p. 228). He cites several aspects that could pose an immediate danger to the UK's strength in the international student market, such as the increasing capacity of sending markets, greater competition from third markets and the impact of new technologies.

Many commentators who problematise the discourse of international education, have made the call for alternative discourses of international education (see: De Vita & Case 2003; Halliday 1999; Rizvi 2005, 2008, 2009; Sidhu 2006) in an effort to reclaim McMurty's 'knowledge...at the heart of all interests' (McMurty 1998, p.189). This means as Sidhu (2006) expresses it recognising that 'international education...is ultimately shaped by relations of power and knowledge'. Gibbs (2002, p.329) urges for an 'invisible handshake' of educational marketing, where there is a shift from a concept of consumption to a 'humanistic market' which requires all stakeholders to work in 'the interests of human experience and human capital based on mutual trust'. De Vita and Case (2003, p.385) call for the development of 'global citizenship and commensurate responsibility' in the internationalisation agenda of education which would prepare students to live and work in a multicultural society 'through greater understanding and respect for other cultures'. Halliday (1999, p.4) argues that universities have a distinct role in society 'to impart ideas and knowledge, to stimulate people to think as well as to train in the skills and knowledge relevant to the modern world'. Rizvi calls on higher education to develop in international students a moral cosmopolitanism, that is

...self aware, critical of its own positioning...of teaching students to live moral lives...producing critically and morally informed graduates able to recognise the importance of these issues...and possibility of cosmopolitan solidarity (Rizvi 2005).

These reflections recall Francis' (1993) definition of international education that I established earlier in this chapter as capable of 'foster[ing] global understanding and...skills for effective living and working in a diverse world'.

2.2.3 Summary

In this section I have described the tensions in international education research and policy, and highlighted the discourse of a marketised international education. It is very probable that this discourse affects the international student during their

educational trajectories as they are one of the principal subjects targeted by it. This is a point argued by Rizvi (2005, 2008, 2009), who warns that such market-based practices of international education develop international students who seek to locate themselves within narrow corporate narratives of globalisation and international education. These narratives encourage a 'consumerist cosmopolitanism' (Rizvi 2005, p.9) where international students aim to obtain positional goods that will give them strategic advantage within the global economic market. In the next part of this chapter, I look more closely at how such an economic view of international education holds sway in UK policy and in the marketing of UK education abroad.

2.3 Background to international education in the UK

2.3.1 International student policy 1960s to 2008: from colonialism to trade

Historically, there have always been international students at UK universities, however the status of international students has changed significantly in recent years and economic factors lie at the heart of this change. Up to the early 1960s, international students were charged the same fees as UK students and most were from the British Commonwealth. There was what has been described as a 'laissez-faire' regime of indiscriminate subsidy to overseas students (Elliot 1997) as a form of 'colonial or postcolonial aid' (Leonard & Morley 2003). Following the 1963 Robbins Report, the government introduced fee differentials for international students in 1967 although a weak pound meant that student numbers continued to grow. By 1979 there were 88,000 overseas students (Woodhall 1989, p.143) up from 28,000 in 1962-3 (DfES 2003, p.11) costing the Exchequer an estimated £100 million per annum (Woodhall 1989, p.143). In 1980, the UK government introduced full-cost fees for all overseas students.¹³ Faced with a withdrawal of public subsidies for international students, HEIs began to actively market their institutions abroad. Under the 1983 'Pym Package', the British Council was provided with a budget of £100,000 per year to market British higher education overseas (Woodhall 1989, p.145) and in 1984, the

¹³ This originally included students from the European Union. Following a legal challenge, these students were exempted from full-cost fees (Elliot, 1998).

Education Counselling Service (ECS) was set up within the British Council¹⁴ as the official body responsible for marketing UK education overseas.

√ 2.3.1.1 *PMI1 and PMI2*

By the late 1990s, the international student market had become increasingly competitive with aggressive new market entrants such as Australia commanding great success in South East Asia, more in-country provision, and the after-effects of the 1997-8 Asian crisis damaging the traditional student source-markets of Malaysia and Singapore (BC 2000). In 1999, the first Prime Minister's Initiative for International Education (PMI1) was launched to remedy this situation. This five-year initiative sought to redress the relative decline in the UK's global market share following the introduction of full-cost fees. It aimed to attract an additional 50,000 international students to UK higher education and 25,000 to UK further education by 2004 and to bring in over £5 billion to the UK economy (BC 2003). PMI1 consisted of a marketing campaign built around a new national brand, *Education UK*, a simplification of visa procedures and working rules for international students and it increased the number of Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) funded Chevening scholarships¹⁵ for international students to study for Masters degrees by 1,000. Education UK's aims were clear. Not only would international students bring immediate financial benefits to the UK economy, but in the long term UK-educated alumni would 'promote Britain in the world, helping our trade and democracy' (Tony Blair 1999 cited Böhm, 2004, p.2).

Over the period of PMI1, international student numbers grew by an average of eight per cent per annum (BC 2003, p.15). By 2001-2, there were about 225,000 overseas students in the UK (DfES 2003), representing 12 per cent of all students in the UK and 39 per cent of full-time postgraduate students (UUK 2003, p.36).¹⁶ Today the UK is the second largest recipient globally of overseas students after the US and

¹⁴ This was replaced by the Education UK Partnership on 1 April 2005 (BC 2006d).

¹⁵ The Chevening Scholarship Programme is funded by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and administered by the British Council. The programme offers scholarships of up to £20,000 for young people under 35 years of age to undertake Masters degrees or shorter programmes of study or research at UK HEIs.

¹⁶ However, the UK's global market share of international students fell during the period of the campaign from 16 per cent in 1998 to 11 per cent in 2004 (Vickers & Bekhradnia 2007).

in 2006/07 there were 239,210 overseas students attending UK HEIs (HESA 2008), double the number of ten years previously (Tysome 2007).

A consultative process was launched to assess PMI1's success in 2003/4 (see Böhm *et al.* 2004; BC 2003; MORI 2003). As noted by Sidhu (2006, p.138) the *Positioning for Success* document, which was key to this process and was widely circulated among educational stakeholders, was firmly located in an economic globalisation discourse as it stated: 'the future of international education will be inextricably linked to the future of globalisation' (BC 2003, p.6). In April 2006, the second Prime Minister's Initiative for International Education (PMI2) was launched. While again the focus of this initiative is on short-term economic outcomes, aiming to attract an additional 100,000 international students to the UK by 2010, and to double the number of countries with 10,000 or more students studying in the UK by 2011 (BC 2006c), PMI2 also emphasises more long-term outputs such as more international educational partnerships as essential to the UK's continuing success in the international education market. It also emphasises the importance of diversifying source markets for international students and a key objective is to ensure the 'quality of the student experience' (*Ibid.*). However, the discourse is still highly economic. Central to PMI2 is the ambition to grow the UK's market share of international students, aiming to attract an additional 100,000 students and to double the number of countries sending more than 10,000 students by 2011 (*Ibid.*). This focus is well illustrated by the opening statement of a strategy brief on PMI2 which states: 'International education provides the UK with a dynamic, high-skill and sustainable export industry that has been estimated to be worth more than £10 billion' (*Ibid.*, p.1). There would appear to be little room for 'progressive politics of globalisation' (Sidhu 2006, p.138) in this narrow perspective of international education.

2.3.1.2 Education policy papers

An analysis of some recent UK policy papers illustrates the significance of the discourse of international education to educational policy. Where reference to international education is made, it is usually in passing and confined to a discourse that is economic. For instance, the 1,700-page Dearing Report (Dearing 1997) viewed higher education's international role in terms of trading goods and services in

a global economy (Booth in Elliot 1998, p.42; Sidhu 2006, p.124). The Department of Education and Skills (DfES 2003, p.65) White Paper *The Future of Higher Education* makes just four references to international/overseas students, and it paints these students as important as they 'promote Britain around the world, helping our trade and diplomacy, and also providing an important economic benefit'. The 2004 DfES strategy paper *Putting the World into World Class Education* provides an example of lip service to the societal and cultural benefits of international students:

These overseas students bring a new and different perspective to university or college life, significantly **broadening the experience of UK students** and the communities within which they live. On their return home many students maintain **affection for and ties with the UK**. This is hugely **beneficial** in terms of **fostering mutual understanding and recognition between the UK and our international partners**. (DfES 2004, p.17, my emphasis).

This excerpt underscores how the UK benefits from international students rather than the other way round, an aspect also emphasised in an earlier sentence in the report: 'One in four UK jobs is related to international trade, and a much higher proportion faces direct or indirect global competitive pressures' (DfES 2004, p.6). Interestingly, this first extract with its talk of 'fostering mutual understanding and recognition' is placed within a strategic goal in the report entitled: 'Maximising the contribution of our education and training sector and university research to overseas trade and inward investment', again putting the economic to the top of the agenda.

The UK policy approach to international education is perhaps best expressed by the following excerpt from the British Council's *Vision 2020* report on international students:

International education is an **economic sector** that is extremely attractive to a country: it is knowledge intensive, **high value-added** and offers **long-term benefits**. When compared with other activities in the services sector of the economy, **growth** (both achieved and projected) is extremely impressive. **Few sectors of the world economy could match such predictions for sustained growth**. (Böhm *et al.* 2004, p.66, my emphasis)

International education is firmly positioned in the economic realm domain in this excerpt with benefits both short-term and long-term. It is a 'value-added' service sector trade with massive growth potential. Given this emphasis on the economic, it is worth mentioning how many attempts there have been to try to calculate just how 'valuable' the international education market is to the UK economy (see Böhm *et al.*

2004; Bullivant 1998; Cemmell & Behkradnia 2008; Greenaway & Tuck, 1995; Lenton 2007, Johnes, 2004; Sastry 2006; Vickers & Bekhradnia 2007). To quote just a couple of statistics, the international education market was valued at £3.74 billion in 2004-05 (Vickers & Bekhradnia 2007),¹⁷ and perhaps worth £8 billion to £12 billion by 2020 (Böhm *et al.* 2004, p.4; p. 73), although subsequent events have proved that this forecast was highly optimistic (Sastry 2006). Or the market is perhaps worth over £10 billion as the British Council states (BC 2006a). It appears that in public policy international education is above all about the economics and the value of the sector to the UK economy today and in the future. International education has become a 'directly saleable commodity' (Leonard *et al.* 2003). This is evident in the emphasis on student numbers in PMI1 and PMI2, the constant references to the 'value' of the international education market to the UK in policy papers, the automatic linkage between economic globalisation and international education and the fact that for many UK universities today international students represent the largest source of non-Exchequer related revenue, an estimated 8.1% of average income for English HEIs (Macleod 2006).

2.3.2 Education UK brand: communicating the discourse of international education to students

The previous section has described how the policy agenda of international education in the UK focuses on the economic benefits of international education to the UK economy. This discourse emphasises the market benefits of international education providing short and long-term economic and political advantages to the UK and HEIs and to students themselves as an investment in 'human capital' (Woodhall 1997, p.219).¹⁸ Research has shown that prospective students tend to decide what country they want to study in before they choose their university (BC 2006b) and for many, the *Education UK* brand is perhaps one of their first encounters with UK higher education. The *Education UK* brand provides a convenient platform to assess how

¹⁷ This figure that rises to £5.5 billion if the total impact of direct spending by international students is included making higher education a more significant export industry than alcoholic drinks (£2.8 billion in 2005), textiles (£2.8 billion), clothing (£2.5 billion), publishing (£2.3 billion) and cultural and media industries (£3.7 billion in 2006). (Vickers & Bekhradnia 2007).

¹⁸ I discuss Theodore Schultz's concept of 'human capital' in the next chapter. (See Masschelein & Simons 2002).

this marketised vision of international education is communicated to students, the 'consumers' of this educational experience.

The initial *Education UK* brand launched in 1999 emphasised the rich history of education and a tradition of academic excellence in the UK. At the heart of the brand was the concept of 'dynamic tradition', implying that UK educational institutions have a strong tradition of quality but also move with the times. UK education was 'new world class'. It was about being 'the best you can be', and achieving professional ambitions. *Education UK* aimed to 'sell' UK education as being affordable and value for money, accessible to all and welcoming to international students (BC 2003; MORI 2003; see Sidhu 2006, pp.129-136 for an analysis of the brand).

In 2006, the *Education UK* brand was re-launched with PMI2 and the 'unique proposition'¹⁹ of the brand became that of 'A tradition of innovation'. As stated by the British Council, this implies that 'UK education has both the asset of a traditional heritage but at the same time is [and has always been] modern and innovative and therefore linked to the marketplace' (Bridges & Jonathan 2003). The brand is both rooted in tradition and is modern and market-focused. The emphasis in the new brand is now even more on market-relevant education. The marketing campaign emphasises that a UK degree is an 'investment for the future' (BC 2005). The highlighting of the word 'innovation' in the brand echoes many recent UK educational policy texts, which are littered with the words 'excellence', 'knowledge' and 'innovation' (see for example: Dearing 1997; DfES 2003, 2004, 2006; DTI 1998, HCSEC 2007). The linkage between historical tradition and innovation also refers to OECD thinking, as stated by its Secretary-General: 'The history of human progress is also a history of innovation' (Gurría 2007). The marketing rhetoric stresses that English is the language of instruction, but this is seen in functional rather than cultural terms. As stated in a British Council document, the UK is the home of the English language, and English is the language of international business (Bateman 2006, p.2). The emphasis in the *Education UK* brand is on the individual career, economic and financial benefits of UK education to international students. This is perhaps best

¹⁹ Unique proposition in marketing terminology means what is unique to the brand or the essence of the brand and the essential benefit that it offers and promise that it makes its customers.

summarised in the brand's by-line: 'Innovative. Individual. Inspirational'. UK education educates the individual to succeed, rather than society. It is clearly positioned within individualistic and capitalist notions of society and economics. The learner in this discourse is imagined as an 'entrepreneur', independent, autonomous and empowered (Masschelein 2001).

An analysis of the material available to international students on the *Education UK* website²⁰ illustrates how the discourse of international education is communicated to prospective students. The website describes UK education as good value in terms of financial cost and time, a theme that I will return to in my data chapters. UK HE is positioned as 'highly regarded throughout the world' with graduates having a clear competitive edge in the job market as the following excerpt makes clear.

Choosing the UK means that you only have to **pay tuition fees for one year** and you'll be back in the **workplace** before you know it...UK postgraduate qualifications let **employers** know at a glance that you've got the **skills** they're looking for, putting you on the right track for a **great job** and a **great salary**. (Education UK website, my emphasis).

Note the words I have highlighted: one year's tuition fees, workplace, employers, skills, great job, great salary. It is still the case as Sidhu (2006, p.132) remarked of the 1999 brand, that *Education UK* 'offers access to the new gods of career success in top companies, higher potential earnings, efficiency, science and technology'.

The website is littered with the word 'innovative'. Not only is the UK innovative today and 'forward looking', it has a long history of such innovation:

The UK's tradition of inspiring brilliant minds is evident in the calibre of its scientists. From **Charles Darwin**, the father of evolution who changed the way we look at ourselves and our planet, to **Paul Nurse**, winner of the 2001 Nobel Prize in Physiology of Medicine. (Education UK website, my emphasis).

Throughout the site, there are lists of names of such 'stars' as Darwin and Nurse, both historical and contemporary, as evidence of this continuing cycle of UK innovation. The site is littered with figures and facts providing hard evidence of the UK's success in all economic realms.

²⁰ See <http://www.educationuk.org> accessed 10 March 2008.

The UK is painted in the website as a global centre for business and the arts and is one of the world's leading economies, where academic institutions and the business world work hand in hand in a spirit of entrepreneurship. There is little room to question this cosy relationship of business and education as the following excerpt shows:

The UK is the world's leading international financial services centre, employing more than one million people. The UK has more than 100 dedicated business schools...Many higher education institutions have enterprise centres to develop links between research and entrepreneurship. (Education UK website, my emphasis).

The discursive realm of the website is firmly entrepreneurial. The promise is clear: Come to the UK. Be immersed in a tradition of innovation and enterprise. Get a great well-paid job on graduation. There is little discursive space in this rhetoric for acknowledging the more diverse and more personal outcomes of international education. The emphasis is on developing specific 'skills to equip you for the future' so that individuals can become entrepreneurs of their lives. Where more tacit elements of the student experience are referred to, such as the rich multicultural experience of UK university life, these too are defined in economic terms.

You'll meet students from Asia, Africa, Europe, the Americas and Australasia, and will gain an insight into their customs and culture that will shape your view of the global economy in which you'll soon be looking to make your career (Education UK website, my emphasis).

As Sidhu (2006) puts it, 'the professional subjectivities created by this discourse are proudly entrepreneurial' (p.142) and the international student is imagined in the discourse as a 'self-developing individual who views education in instrumental terms' (p.133). This reflects Rizvi's (2005, 2008, 2009) findings about international students' strategic economic imaginaries.

2.3.3 Summary: A degree for a job?

In this section, I provided the background to international education in the UK. I described how international student policy in the UK emphasises export earnings, attracting and retaining skilled migration and labour and developing long-term trade and diplomatic relations (UCKOSA 2004, p.14). I noted the launch of the international education marketing campaigns, PMI1 in 1999 and PMI2 in 2006, and I

argued that these initiatives underline the UK's embrace of the market in higher education. My analysis of the *Education UK* brand shows how this discourse translates into communication to one set of stakeholders of international education, international students. These students are constructed by this discourse as entrepreneurial beings, who will improve their market attractiveness by obtaining a quality and business-relevant UK degree. Perhaps as stated by MacLure (2003, p.175), given the dominance of the economic-led discourse of international education, they are 'constituted within the discourse that establishes what is possible (and impossible) to "be"...as well as what will count as truth, knowledge, moral values and intelligible speech for those who are 'summoned' to speak by the discourse in question'. However, as Habu (2000, p.53) has argued while this discourse fits many students' ethos as 'their expectations of university are market oriented', for other students such as the women Japanese students Habu interviewed, this is only part of the story: 'the irony of globalization is that by seeking to reach their full human potential by studying abroad [students] may find that they have been recruited by institutions which view them only in financial terms' (Hubu 2000, p.62).

This Literature Review provides the springboard for my research and the title of my thesis: 'A degree for a job'. Through my reading, I became convinced of the over-riding economic dimension of international education and of the moral requirement to question this discourse. This intellectual conviction was reinforced by my professional experience working at an Irish university and then for the British Council in an overseas market. In my research I sought to explore how international students valued their international degrees and how this was reflected in their identities, and how or if their valuing reflected this marketised discourse of international education. This formed the basis of my central research question: How do these international students value their UK Masters degrees when recalling their educational experiences and how is this valuing reflected in their shifting identities?

My use of the word 'value' in these research questions is deliberate. In using the word 'value', I seek to echo and as Luke (1995-6, p.20) suggests to 'disrupt' the 'common-sense' economic-led discourse of international education as I am extending the concept of 'value' to the non-financial. I seek in this thesis, as Rizvi (2005, p.2)

has put, it to obtain an understanding of 'the broader values, perceptions and aspirations' of international students.

It is worth at this point returning to Knight's (2003) and Francis' (1993) definitions of international education I referred to at the beginning of this chapter. Knight spoke of internationalisation as a 'process of integrating an international, intercultural and global dimension' in higher education. Francis (1993) again used the word 'process', but saw this in terms of 'global understanding' and developing skills to work and live in a more diverse world. These definitions provide a useful background to this research study. During students' educational trajectories, they are involved in a 'process' of international education and in a 'process' of identity formation via this educational experience. This begins prior to their departure, continues during their studies in the UK and is ongoing upon their return home. Their educational experiences cannot just be seen in instrumental terms of careers and salaries, although these are of course important. Students change as individuals as a result of their international education experience. They become more 'globalised', and more 'cosmopolitan' (see Rizvi 2005, 2008), in ways that go beyond an individualistic economic discourse of international education.

This reflection, the literature problematising the marketised discourse of international education and the theoretical resources I explore in the next chapter led me to the secondary questions that frame this thesis, namely: How is the entrepreneurial discourse of international education significant in these students' narrated value judgments and shifting identities? How do these students interpret and value their experiences of studying in the UK in their narrations? And how do these students' value judgments and identities shift as they narrate the three stages of their educational trajectories: pre-study, in-study and post-study?

2.4 International student research

This final section focuses on research relevant to my findings on students' experiences during their educational trajectories and as reported in my three data chapters. These chapters look at students' pre-study, in-study and post-study experiences in turn.

2.4.1.1 Pre-study

Walker (1999, p.7) has argued that there were two main reasons for carrying out research on international students, the 'bleeding hearts welfare lobby – and...blatant commercialism', the former category peopled by researchers researching their compatriots or university staff who work with international students and the latter usually market research commissioned to improve universities' recruitment strategies. There is much research on students' motivations for undertaking international study as I remarked earlier in this chapter (see Baimbridge 1997; Bourke 2000; Coates, 2005; Hall *et al.* 1998; Hesketh & Knight 1999; Naidoo 2007).

Some of this research has relevance to my findings. For instance, the OECD (2007, pp.306-7) and Varghese (2008) identify factors in students' choice of country of international education as including: the language of education, whereby English dominates; the level of tuition fees; the cost of living; the academic experience; the flexibility of the programmes; limitations on higher educational systems in the home country and the perceiving academic superiority of host country institutions; ideological affinity; future job opportunities; cultural aspirations; and government policies for credit transfer and immigration policies and visa formalities. Nicola Spurling (2007, pp.103-108) identifies 'pull factors' in the literature for students' choice of academic programmes such as: quality or recognition of the host institution, a desire to understand Western culture, existing alliances between international institutions, location of the overseas institution, existing knowledge of the UK, the social cost of studying in the UK, employability and language, and the specific course or programme available in the UK. 'Push factors', less commonly cited in studies, include the perception that UK HE is a better education and is thus valued in the home job market and the influence of friends and family. It is notable that many of these factors are economically motivated. This highlights students' highly entrepreneurial approach and their 'strategic cosmopolitan imaginary' (Rizvi 2005, p.10) when embarking on overseas study (see also: Coates 2005; Gill 2008a; MORI 2003; Rizvi 2000; West 2000). My research study confirmed this approach on the part of students, an approach that echoes the discourse of international education that I established in the first part of this chapter.

2.4.1.2 *In-study*

Student experience is increasingly an area of interest to researchers, and there is a broad literature that can be drawn on for research purposes. I mention some of this literature here that is relevant to my research findings.

A recent UK Council for International Students (UKCOSA/UKCISA) report painted a broadly positive picture of international students' experiences at UK HEIs, but also cited some of the challenges they faced such as finance, language, difficulties in getting part-time jobs and their difficulties in making UK friends at their institutions (UKCOSA 2004; see also Bailey, 2005/6; BC 2006a; Coates 2005; Sovic 2008 for similar findings).

There is a significant literature written by academics and international student researchers on student adjustment to UK academic and social life which refers to aspects such as adapting to UK academic culture and to self-led learning approaches (see for example: Bailey 2005/6; Brown & Holloway, 2008; Caruana & Spurling, 2007; Cortazzi & Jin 1997; Gil & Rania 1999; Hellstén 20002; Kingston & Forland 2004; Leonard *et al.* 2003; Luzio-Lockett 1998; Mehdizadeh & Scott 2005; Peters 2005; Ryan & Carroll 2005; Sovic 2008; Turner 2006). Sovic (2008) notes that adapting to independent learning is one of the biggest challenges for international students, yet it is also highly appreciated by these students (see also Kingston & Forland 2004). Hellstén (2002) drawing from the narrations of nine international postgraduate students examines the 'ill-fit' between their expectations and their later experiences of Australian higher education. Pre-study, she found that students weigh up the risks of overseas studies with their 'dream' of the better life opportunities this education would provide. In-study, students encounter significant problems making the 'transition' into the 'academic knowledge and implicit disciplinary "know-how"' of their new institutions and often find themselves isolated both socially and academically (see also Sovic 2008). Luzio-Lockett (1998) calls this phenomenon the 'squeezing effect', a kind of compromising, trying to squeeze student identity into the constraints of the conventions of UK academic life. Turner's (2006) study of nine postgraduate Chinese students argues that the bulk of their learning in the first

semester was less about their subject but more about how to operate as a student in the UK, a finding also present in Sovic's (2008) study of first year international students. Turner (2006) also found that students feel their lecturers have little time for them and are unfriendly to international students, a finding also noted by Kingston & Forland (2004). Rizvi (2000, p.221) as part of a project interviewing twenty-six Malaysian students at Australian universities, cites the stories of four students to illustrate how international education is a force that 'helps reshape student identities, their cultural tastes, and professional aspirations, but in ways that are neither uniform nor predictable'. These are all findings of relevance to my research as I explore in my second data-reporting chapter.

2.4.1.3 *Post-study*

As Pelletier (Leonard *et al.* 2003, p.20) notes, there is a dearth of longitudinal studies on international students in the UK and other than a handful of tracer studies virtually no research on students' re-integration in home markets. During my literature trawl, I came across few published UK-based studies on international graduates.²¹ Reasons for the paucity of such studies is mainly due to the financial and geographical difficulties in carrying out such research with international graduates who tend to be scattered internationally and difficult to track down (Rizvi 2005; Cuthbert *et al.* 2008). I had access to one recently commissioned British Council market research study that investigated attitudes to British HE among Russian graduates of British HEIs and their employers (BC 2008a), which I reference in the third data-reporting chapter. I refer here to comparable studies on international students, which are Australian focused.

Rizvi (2005) interviewed Indian and Chinese students in their final year of Australian universities as well as graduates in their home markets to examine how students viewed their educational experiences, how their experiences of mobility affect their view on identity and cultural affiliations and the challenges and opportunities they faced (re)immersing themselves in their social and lives and professional careers at home. He argues that international students invest in international higher education with a 'strategic cosmopolitan imaginary' and that their

²¹ Two other studies include: Maxey & Preston (1994) and Schweisfurth (2008-9).

experience of studying abroad perpetuates this instrumentalist view. This finding corresponds to Ong's (1999, p.6) research on the Chinese diaspora, who she describes as transnational individuals who develop 'flexible citizenship' to 'respond fluidly and opportunistically to changing political economic conditions' in their 'quest to accumulate capital and social prestige in the global arena'.

Cuthbert *et al.* (2008) review some of the Australian literature on international education outcomes, including studies by Daroesman and Daroesman (1992) and Cannon's (2000) on Indonesian graduates. This research has shown that while international graduates report both career advancement and personal development thanks to their international degrees, some question the appropriateness of their overseas education for their home context, and others have both work and personal readjustment difficulties. Cannon (2000) thus argues for a 'third place' when assessing the outcomes of international education to account for the 'equivocal and complex outcomes from an overseas education', that takes into account the 'affective' and cultural benefits of this experience as well as career aspects. By 'affective', Cannon implies changes in individuals' attitudes, their increased confidence, and greater respect and recognition to them from others as a result of their overseas education (pp.9-10). He maintains that respondents place a greater emphasis on changes in intellectual abilities, attitudes and cultural perspectives than on narrower career advantages, which in some cases suffer due to their international education experiences. He writes of students on their return home as more complex members of their society who have to integrate their experiences abroad and the values and knowledge they have learned with their home lives. This echoes Hickson's (1994) vivid autobiographical account of 'coming "home" again' after a period abroad. Students have become in some ways hybrids, or as Grimshaw & Sears (2008) put it, theirs is a 'state of in-betweenness'. They are as Rizvi (2005) has described 'in-between cultures'. This literature is highly relevant to my own research, which found that while students' value judgments and identities are framed by the entrepreneurial discourse of international education, these values and identities are more complex and more multifaceted and go beyond this discourse.

2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have provided an overview of the literature that informs this thesis and provides the overall context for my empirical research on international students. I have noted how the definitions of globalisation, international education and international students are focused on the economic, and I have proposed definitions of globalisation and international education that go beyond this discourse. I have expressed some of the tensions in the debates on international education, ranging from marketised views which see international education as a tradable service that provides short-term income for individual HEIs and longer term economic and diplomatic advantages to exporting nations to views that problematise this approach as a neoliberal discourse of international education. This is a discourse that positions education as a

...commodity to be packaged and sold on open national and international markets by institutions acting as enterprises. These commodified courses are, in turn, purchased by students, who under the impetus of the discourse, now regularly claim consumer rights. (De Vita & Case 2003, p.384).

I have described how a trade discourse is significant in UK international education policy and the marketing of UK education abroad and I have analysed how the *Education UK* brand communicates this discourse and constructs international students as entrepreneurial beings. They are prompted by this discourse to undertake their studies with a 'strategic cosmopolitan imaginary' as Rizvi (2005, p.10) has put it. I explained how this Literature Review sparked my interest in carrying out research on international students, and in exploring how they value their degrees and how this valuing is reflected in their shifting identities.

In the final section of the chapter, I referred to a selection of relevant literature on international students which resonates with my research findings on students' experience pre-study, in-study and post-study. I noted in the opening chapter of this thesis that there are few studies on students' post-study experiences given the logistical difficulties and expense of carrying out this research. I referred to three papers with particular relevance for my research study, namely: Rizvi (2005); Cannon (2000) and Cuthbert *et al.* (2008), all concerned with the post-study experiences of international students in the Australian context. Rizvi's (2005) research involved interviews with final year students and graduates from two markets, India and China,

both in Australia and at home. Cannon's (2000) research consisted of questionnaires with open-ended questions supported by group discussions and interviews. Respondents were Indonesian graduates of postgraduate and undergraduate degrees who worked for four public and private sector organisations in Indonesia. Cuthbert *et al.*'s (2008) paper provides a particularly interesting discussion on alumni of international education. The paper describes forthcoming research papers on interviews with alumni, largely Colombo Plan graduates, many years after their return home from overseas study. These individuals 'are asked to describe or reconstruct their dominant values and attitudes at the point before embarking on study in Australia, and to give perceptions of the changes they experienced (or in some cases resisted)' (p.269). The authors speak of interview data that provides 'a picture of the multilayered and complex processes of transformation, which centrally involve integrating the Australian educational experience with the experience of returning home' (pp.269-270). The overall aim of Cuthbert *et al.*'s (2008) research is highly relevant to this thesis and expresses my objectives and my main research question. In my empirical research, I too asked students to recollect or reconstruct their values and attitudes pre-study and to recall the changes they experienced both in-study and post-study. Similarly, as I describe in the three data-reporting chapters of this thesis, these value judgments are multiple, multilayered and complex and are reflected in students' shifting identities.

The next chapter explores the theoretical tools that I draw on to explore the emerging complexity and multiplicity of students' identities and value judgments during their narrated educational trajectories.

3 Theoretical Framework

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I described the trade discourse in international education policy and I suggested that students are constructed by this discourse as entrepreneurial beings. This concept led me to my main research question and my wish to explore how students value their UK Masters degrees and how this valuing is reflected in their identities. I wanted to understand if this entrepreneurial discourse of international education is significant in students' value judgments and their identities during their educational trajectories as recalled during interview. In this section, I outline the theoretical tools that I use to analyse students' shifting and multi-layered value judgments and identities as they narrated their educational trajectories to me during interview. I see these theories rather like Foucault perceived his toolbox of theories for researchers:

I would like my books to be a kind of toolbox which others can rummage through to find a tool which they can use however they wish in their own area. (Foucault 1974, pp.523-4).

There are several elements to these theoretical tools. Firstly, I frame my overall discussion of students' identities in broadly poststructuralist approaches to discourse and identity that assume that discourses are 'practices for producing meaning, forming subjects and regulating conduct within particular societies and institutions, at particular historical times' (MacLure 2003, p.175). I assume that individuals' identities are socially constructed and are shaped by the multiple and conflicting discourses they encounter (Holland *et al.* 1998) during their lives. I then explore the writings of theorists that help to reveal international students' 'entrepreneurial identities' (Gee 2004; Masschelein 2001; Masschelein & Simons 2002; Masschelein & Quaghebeur 2005). I avail of Wenger's (1998) dimensions of identity as a way of analysing the multifaceted nature of students' identities as their narrations proceed. I then refer to Rizvi's (2005, 2008, 2009) writings on cosmopolitan identities and learning to reflect on how current practices of international education perpetuate students' instrumental approach to their education. As my study is based on students' narrations of their educational experiences several years after these experiences took

place, I have assumed as Giddens (1991, p.76) puts it, that 'an interpretative self-history produced by the individual...is...at the core of self-identity'. In the final section of the chapter, I explore my approach to narrative analysis in this research.

3.2 Discourse and identity within a 'poststructuralist turn'

This study is placed within what is variously called 'a "textual turn", a "postmodern turn", a "poststructuralist turn", a "narrative turn" or a "literary turn"' (MacLure 2003, p.195). Within this 'turn', there is 'a heightened awareness of the significance of language, discourse, and socio-cultural locatedness in the making of any knowledge-claim' (Usher & Edwards 1997, p.10). Such thinking rejects the 'grand narratives' of society typical of modernist societies such as inevitable human progress through the progress of scientific knowledge' (*Ibid*, p.9). It offers a way of identifying a 'discourse' of international education as described in the previous chapter, and of making visible the alternative narratives of international education experiences that students recall during interview. Individuals in the 'poststructuralist turn' are seen as living in 'text saturated environments' where they are constantly positioned and constructed by the language that surrounds them (Luke 1995). Such an approach makes it possible to perceive of international students as positioned by the discourse of international education, and as participants in a 'fragmented, rootless, rhizomic globalised world' (Appadurai 1990, p.6), where their value judgments (or meanings) of their education and their identities are constantly constructed and re-constructed.

Within poststructuralist writings, 'discourses' refer to what James Gee (1999) has referred to as the big 'D' of discourse or the 'broader sociological conceptualizations' of life (MacLure 2003, p.175) or 'imaginary' (Appadurai 1990) and the little 'd' of discourse or 'language in use'. The little 'd' discourse or 'language-in-use' is always political (Gee 1999, p.1). Language gets recruited 'to enact specific social activities and social identities' (*Ibid.*, p.1), and in doing so the big 'D' discourses are always involved, as we are all members of different Discourses or 'ways of being in the world' at the same time (*Ibid.*, p.7). The theorist most associated with discourse (specifically that of the capital big 'D') is Michel Foucault (MacLure 2003, p.176). Foucault (2002a, p.54) defined discourses as 'practices that

systematically form the objects of which they speak'. A Foucauldian approach assumes that discourses are linked both to institutions and to disciplines that regularise and normalise the conduct of individuals (MacLure 2003, p.176). Discourse refers to what can be said, known, and how knowledge is represented within the power relations of an *episteme*, or a particular historical moment organised around its specific world-views (Danaher *et al.* 2000, p.16; Foucault 1984). Foucault stated in a frequently quoted excerpt on the relations between knowledge and power:

Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true. (Foucault 1984, p.73).

Discourse provides a 'language for talking about – a way of representing the knowledge about – a particular topic at a particular historical period' (Hall 2001, p.72). It is about the interaction between language and practice (*Ibid*, p.72).

Discourse

...constructs the topic. It defines and produces the objects of our knowledge. It governs the way that a topic can be meaningfully talked about and reasoned about...it "rules out", limits and restricts other ways of talking, of conducting ourselves in relation to the topic or constructing knowledge about it. (Hall 2001, p.72).

Identity has been defined as a 'concept that figuratively combines the intimate or personal world with the collective space of cultural forms and social relations' (Holland *et al.* 1998 p.5). 'Identities are lived in and through activity and so must be conceptualised as they develop in social practice' (*Ibid.*, p.5), or in the case of this study, as students narrate the progress of their educational trajectories pre-study, in-study and post-study. The socially constructed concept of identity adopted for this study is thus one that directly contrasts with modernist essentialist understandings, which perceived of identity as stable and enduring (*Ibid.*, p.27). In our present 'turn' identity can never be totally defined or discoverable. We live in an age of messiness and uncertainty, of relativism and scepticism, where there is an emphasis on the pervasive power of language on human practices (Standish 2004, pp.489-490). Given this emphasis on discourse, there is no longer a place for durable, fully understandable notions of identity. Identity is recast as constantly changing, multiple, always in flux and socially constructed as individuals are 'exposed to competing and differentially

powerful and authoritative discourses and practices of the self' (Holland *et al.* 1998, p.29; see also Hall 1996, pp.3-4; Kondo 1990, p.24). The 'self must be considered precarious – always open to new ways to understand the world' (Bloom & Munro 1995, p.101). Foucault believed that there could be no pre-discursive subject and that all individuals occupy discursively constructed subject positions within the particular *episteme* or worldview of their world era that 'imposes on each one the same norms and postulates a general stage of reason, a certain structure of thought' (Foucault 2002b, p.211). 'Regimes of truth' or power-knowledge discourses objectify the human being and construct his subjectivity according to the norms of the *episteme*. Stuart Hall (1996, p.2), following Foucault, argues that today this means we need a theory of discursive practice for identity to understand the displaced and decentred position of the individual. Identity thus refers to

...the meeting point, the point of *suture*, between on the one hand the discourses and practices which attempt to 'interpellate', speak to us or hail us into place as the social subjects of particular discourses, on the other hand, the processes which produce subjectivities, which construct us as subjects which can be 'spoken'. Identities are thus points of temporary attachment to subject positions which discursive practise construct for us. (Hall 1996, pp.5-6).

Gee (1996, p.ix) argues that each of us is a member of many discourses at the same time and each discourse represents one of our ever-multiple identities given the conflicting nature of these discourses. It is impossible to ever fully determine or fix our identity, an aspect that Bauman (1997) has argued is at the crux of contemporary identity problems. The key issue is 'not making identity stand – but the avoidance of being fixed' (Bauman 1997, p.89) as individuals, or the international students of this research project, constantly build and rebuild their identities through their narrations depending on the discourses that surround them, and their changing social practices.

In the last chapter, I explored how a trade-led 'discourse' of international education dominates the policy agenda. As stated by Young (1981, p.48), for institutions or researchers 'to think outside this discourse is as if one was mad, beyond comprehension and reason'. The very purpose of discourse analysis is to disrupt such 'common sense' (Luke 1995, p.20) and to create a 'space for radically "other" ways of thinking and being' (McNay 1994, p.4). In this study, I try to question this discourse both in the Literature Review and in my analysis of my field research. This

allows me to show, as I recount in my data reporting chapters, how whilst students' value judgments and identities reflect the discourse of international education, they also go beyond this discourse as they are study in the UK and are then re-immersed in often conflicting discourses of their home lives. Approaching this research in the 'poststructural turn' provides a way of exploring students' 'increasingly fragmented and fractured' identities and value judgments and identities as they are 'hailed' by the economic-led discourse of international education and by their lives as a student in the UK and at home. Individuals, such as the international students of this study, are constantly involved in a process of constructing or positioning their 'selves' or their identities through and in the context of their social practice (Holland *et al.* 1998) and the discourses they encounter, each of which claim their particular authenticity and truth. This is an aspect of particular importance in this thesis, as this process of construction continues through students' narrations as I explore in the next chapter. As expressed by Zygmunt Bauman, students' identities are perhaps a 'series of "new beginnings" experimenting with instantly assembled yet easily dismantled shapes, painted over the other; *a palimpsest identity*' (Bauman 1997, pp.24-25) as they are subject to the 'intersecting and antagonistic discourses' (Hall 1996, p.4) of international education, life as a student in the UK, and life on their return home.

3.3 An 'entrepreneurial identity'

In the last chapter, I analysed the trade-led discourse of international education and have suggested that as a discourse it positions students to take an entrepreneurial view of their educational experience. Jan Masschelein *et al.*'s (Masschelein 2001; Masschelein & Simons 2002; Masschelein & Quaghebeur 2005) recent papers and Gee's (2004) writings provide a valuable analytical lens to explore how individuals perceive of themselves and act in entrepreneurial ways within the globalised discourse of education. They help me as a researcher to analyse international students' narration of 'entrepreneurial identities', identities that were present throughout their educational trajectories.

Masschelein and Simons' (2002) paper explores the narrative of the European Higher Education Area and the objectives of the Bologna process. They argue that

the 'discursive horizon' of these policies not only 'interpellates'²² individuals to see themselves as entrepreneurial and autonomous subjects, but 'immunises' them against other interpretations or valuing of their educational experiences. These policies emphasise 'the capitalisation of life', an approach that finds its starting point in the theory of human capital as developed by economists Theodore Schultz and Garry Becker in the 1960s (Masschelein & Simons 2002). Education is an investment in human capital and humans invest in themselves through education and training with this investment raising future income by increasing their lifetime earnings, implying an analogy between investment in physical capital and investment in human capital (Woodhall 1997, p.219). Masschelein and Simons (2002) link this 'capitalisation of life' with Miller and Rose's (1995, p.454) concept of the 'enterprising subject' and argue that within this globalised policy agenda of international education:

The entrepreneurial self is a new identity. Individuals appear in the light of the fact that each of them is trying to live his or her life as a kind of enterprise, striving...to increase the quality of their lives and that of their families through the learning they accomplish and the choices they make in the marketplace of life. (Masschelein & Simons 2002, p.595).

The entrepreneurial self is an 'active learner' who is independent, autonomous, self-responsible, emancipated, self-determining and responsible for the development of her own capital (Masschelein & Simons 2002).

In Masschelein's (2001, pp.3-4) paper, he writes of the 'active learner' in the context of the 'Learning Society', where learning is positioned as one of the central organising principles of society. The 'Learning Society' constructs the subjectivity of the learner as active and self-initiated. The learner is independent, autonomous and empowered. Students have to become 'active learners' to cope with the transformations and changes in society. As stated by Ong's (1999, p.3) in her study of Chinese diaspora, they must become flexible in 'navigating the disjunctures between political landscapes and the shifting opportunities of global trade'. This idea reflects Gee's (2004) notion of 'shape-shifting portfolio people' who see themselves

²² This notion of 'interpellation' is adopted from that of Althusser (1971) and implies: 'the discursive horizon and the related strategies and techniques are not obliging us or forcing us to act or think in a certain way. They are operative rather in the senses that they are appealing and prescribing (because they contain promises as well as threats). Acknowledging this appeal/ prescriptions and becoming a certain kind of subject can be perceived as one and the same process' (Bröckling 2001, p.3 cited Masschelein & Simons 2002, p.605).

in entrepreneurial terms as agents in charge of themselves as if they were projects or businesses. They believe that they must manage their own life trajectories through

...building up a variety of skills, experiences and achievements in terms of which they can define themselves as successful now and worthy of success later...they must also stand ready and able to rearrange these skills, experiences and achievements creatively (that is to shape-shift into different identities) in order to define themselves anew (as competent and worth) for changed circumstances. (Gee 2004, p.105).

However, the 'entrepreneurial identity' is only one aspect of students' narrations, and to use Masschelein's term, globalised international education is only one of the discourses that 'interpellates' students during their educational trajectories. When I set out to analyse my field research, I needed to develop theoretical tools to help understand participants' interpretations of their experience of postgraduate education in the UK and their shifting and complex identities as revealed through these interpretations. The final elements of my theoretical toolbox explored in the next section offer a way of exploring this complexity as students are interpellated by the multiple and conflicting discourses they encounter pre-study, in-study and post-study.

3.4 Interpreting complex identities

Etienne Wenger's (1998) concept of identity as outlined in his book *Communities of Practice* provides a valuable way of approaching the increased complexity in students' narrated identities as does Fazal Rivi's (2005, 2008, 2009) writings on cosmopolitanism. I then discuss my approach to narrated identities as this research is based on students' narrations of their educational trajectories at one point in time. I examine each of these approaches in turn.

3.4.1 Wenger's five dimensions of identity

Etienne Wenger's (1998, pp.149-162) dimensions of identity are useful in analysing the complex identities narrated by students as they relate their educational trajectories. Wenger (1998, p.48) perceives of 'identity' and 'practice' as mirroring each other, where 'practice' implies individuals' theories and ways of understanding the world as developed, negotiated and shared within their particular 'communities of

practice'. These five dimensions build on the notions of discourse and identity that I outlined above. First, identity is negotiated experience. It is socially produced in the lived experience of participation in specific communities; and the way we reify ourselves in social discourse.²³ Second, identity is community membership, in that we define ourselves by what is familiar and what is unfamiliar within our particular practice. This idea is a logical continual of Foucault's concept of 'regimes of truth', described above. Put another way, identity is a form of competence:

We know who we are by what is familiar, understandable, usable, negotiable; we know who we are not by what is foreign, opaque, unwieldy, unproductive. (Wenger 1998, p.153).

Third, identity is a learning trajectory, in that we define ourselves by where we are, where we have been and where we are going.

In using the term 'trajectory' I do not want to imply a fixed course or a fixed destination. To me, the term trajectory suggests not a path that can be foreseen or charted but a continuous motion – one that has momentum of its own in addition to a field of influences. It has a coherence through time that connects the past, the present, and the future. (Wenger 1998, p.154).

This concept of a 'trajectory' is particularly useful in this study, as I interpret students' identities during their educational experiences pre-study, in-study and post-study as narrated by them during interview. Students narrate their educational trajectories during the interview, and as a process of narration they reconstruct these trajectories through their reflections of their past, present and future value judgments. There can be no clear cut between the past and the present within their narrations as the two are indelibly fused in their narrations and thus in their identities. There is also an entrepreneurial aspect to these trajectories, for as Gee (2000, p.47) puts it, in the 'new capitalism', individuals 'must come to see themselves as an ever changing "portfolio" of re-arrangeable skills acquired through their trajectory through "project space"'. Thus, in the case of these students, their international education trajectories provides them with a 'portfolio composed of re-arrangeable skills and identities' (*Ibid.*, p.51). Student's ability to succeed post-study depends on 'the nature of one's portfolio, the sorts of experiences, skills, and achievements one has accrued...and

²³ Wenger's (1998, pp.58-9) concept of 'reification' implies when 'A certain understanding is given a form. This form then becomes a focus for the negotiation of meaning, as people use the law to argue a point, use the procedure to know what to do, or use the tool to perform an action.'

one's ability to manage these in a shape-shifting way' (Gee 2004, p.106) throughout their working lives.

Fourth, identity is a nexus of multi-membership: we engage in different sometimes conflicting communities of practice at the same time as we are also hailed by sometimes conflicting discourses at the same time. For instance, in the case of the students interviewed for this research, these discourses could include those of 'student-hood' at a UK HEI where as Kuo (2008) puts it they are constructed as both 'scholar' and 'customer' by international education, those of their home, work and family environments, and those of being members of an elite globalised community of mobile individuals or Bauman's (1998) 'tourists'.

And finally, identity is a relation of the local and global. It is an interplay of local ways of belonging within the wider discourses of life. Our membership of smaller groups cannot but be affected by our membership of broader groups or organisations, as that membership is invariably influenced by the identities of the smaller groups (Wenger 1998, p.162).²⁴ Students' 'local' experience of being a student at a UK university is affected by a globalised discourse of international education, the broader experience of being a 'transnational' individual engaged in processes of capital accumulation (Ong 1999, pp.4-5) as well as their more 'global' ethnicity of being a Russian or a Palestinian.

As will be explored in the final data-reporting chapter, Chapter 6, students' complex and shifting identities, particularly as expressed at the end of their educational trajectories can be interpreted in terms of Wenger's dimensions of identity. Students engage with various communities at the same time and are hailed by the different discourses of these communities. Their valuing of a UK Masters degree shifts as their narrated educational trajectories proceed. Their identities can be seen as constantly evolving as they struggle with the tensions and conflicting practices of the various worlds they inhabit and as they seek like Ong's (1999, p.6) Chinese diaspora subjects to both to be flexible in the ways they 'respond fluidly and

²⁴ Wenger (1998, p.162) explains this notion by noting how we may be affiliated to a particular political party as a public, and also part of a smaller group that discusses politics over lunch, but the lunch discussions may have more impact on our thinking than the party's policies.

opportunistically to changing political-economic conditions', yet also go beyond purely entrepreneurial valuing of their degrees.

3.4.2 Rizvi's cosmopolitan identities

Rizvi (2005) sees international education as a site where cosmopolitan identities are produced but he believes that:

...the meaning that the students attach to cosmopolitanism is highly contradictory and is linked more to their strategic interests within the emergent global economy and culture than any broader moral conception. (Rizvi 2005).

This interpretation echoes Masschelein *et al.*'s (Masschelein 2001; Masschelein & Simons 2002; Masschelein & Quaghebeur 2005) concept of an entrepreneurial identity and Gee's (2004) of 'shape-shifting portfolio people' as students see their education in terms of maximising their perceived usefulness in the global economy. Rizvi (2005) notes how students as members of an elite already aligned to the economic and cultural contours of corporate globalisation take an instrumentalist approach to their international education experience, similar to the approach of Ong's (1999) Chinese subjects. Their experiences of mobility and education abroad reinforce this instrumentalist approach. Since international students participate in an economic exchange, it is inevitable that they will be less concerned with moral and political dimensions of global interconnectivity and more concerned with their strategic positioning within global labour markets. International education provides students with an understanding of global inter-connectedness and develops transnational friendship networks, but this is so that they can 'become savvy players in a globally networked economy and society' (Rizvi 2005), reflecting Wenger's (1998) concept of the relation of the local and the global.

However, Rizvi (2005) perceives these corporative narratives of international education and 'consumerist cosmopolitanism' as contradictory. The experience of education abroad provides students with opportunities to meet people from different cultures and traditions, and to become more able to work within multi-cultural global societies. They become more 'cosmopolitan' in the broader meaning of the term of being a 'citizen of the world'. But this cosmopolitanism is formed within a 'logic of consumption' within globalised economic conditions. Rizvi (2005) sees higher

education as having a role to develop within students a 'cosmopolitan solidarity' that is not confined to the narrow economic model. He returns to this theme in later papers when he calls on international education to develop within students, 'a set of *epistemic virtues* with which to both understand current discourses and practices of global interactivity and to develop alternatives to them' (Rizvi 2008, p.30; see also Rizvi 2009). In making this call, he echoes Masschelein's (2001) call for a life of 'bios' or a life with meaning rather than 'zoé' or 'bare life', life that is just about the survival of the species as exemplified by the entrepreneurial approach to learning. My analysis of students' narrations showed that their value judgments and identities went beyond the merely entrepreneurial, perhaps hinting at the possibilities for Rizvi's 'epistemic virtues' or Masschelein's 'bios' as I discuss later in this thesis.

3.4.3 Narrating educational trajectories

This thesis is based on informants' recollections of their educational experiences in the UK and it relies on narrative dimensions of identity. I did not have access to students over a long period of time and met them for one interview at one point in their lives. In this section, I explain how I approached these narrations or the stories of their educational experiences which covered three stages of their educational trajectories, pre-study and in-study in the past, and post-study a period they are continuing to live in the present.

Luke (1995, p.14) has referred to as the 'text-saturated environment' in which we live today. It is through texts that we learn how 'to be' and our identities are woven by and into texts. There is an intimate connection between the project of language and that of selfhood and there can be no identity outside narrative (Bakhtin 1981 cited Munro 1998, p.6). Goodson and Sikes have stated that:

...it is through the construction, telling and retelling of our personal stories, to ourself and to others that we attempt to make sense of our lives and give them meaning. (Goodson & Sikes 2001, p.40).

As Chase (2005, p.656) has put it: 'Narrative is retrospective meaning making – the shaping of past experience...in addition to describing what happened, narratives also express emotions, thoughts and interpretations'. In the context of this thesis, students narrated their educational trajectories from their beginning pre-study to the present day post-study and they can be seen to begin to make some 'sense' of these

educational experiences through this process. Their narrative 'provides links, connections, coherence, meaning, [and] sense' to their lives (Sikes & Piper 2009). As I stated in the opening paragraphs of this chapter, this research relies on narrative dimensions of identity. This implies that the 'self is a reflexive project...we are not what we are, but what we make of ourselves...the individual appropriates his past by sifting through it in the light of what is anticipated for [the] future' (Giddens 1991, p.75). As expressed by Hall (1996) above, in these narrations the self, the international student in the case of this research, can constantly be seen as attaching herself to temporary subject positions constructed by the discourses that surround them.

It is noteworthy that several informants told me how they had enjoyed having the opportunity to speak about their educational experience. The interviews appeared to be in some way cathartic to these students, as they admitted that their family and friends could not relate to their UK educational experiences and had little understanding of how important these were to them. They appreciated having the opportunity to tell an interested interlocutor about an important period of their lives. After the formal interviews were over, I had long informal chats with many of the respondents about their lives and their plans for the future. I felt that these discussions were prompted by the preceding interviews, where informants had perhaps come to a new understanding of their educational experiences and how these had affected their lives today. Sikes and Piper's (2009) quotation from a Margaret Attwood novel sums up this process beautifully:

When you are in the middle of a story it isn't a story at all, but only a confusion...It's only afterwards that it becomes a story at all. When you are telling it to yourself or someone else. (Attwood 1996, p.298 cited Sikes & Piper 2009).

Janet Parr's (1998) and Stephanie Bruckner's (2005) accounts of their research provide another a further useful way of approaching students' narrations. Parr (1998, pp.87-102) describes how when researching adult learners, her interviewees emphasised economic reasons for returning to education at the beginning of interviews, whereas towards the end of the interviews they cited more personal reasons. She perceives this as a shift from 'public' to 'private' accounts' due to both

the trust built up during the conversation and to informants' reflexivity as they reflect on their experience with the interviewer. Similarly Bruckner (2005) describes Martha's initial account of her experience with an arts-based regeneration centre in a deprived inner city area as 'a public "PR" account' of the centre's success reflecting what she felt the interviewer wanted to hear. A second interview revealed her more personal account of this experience. While I only carried out one interview with students, it is perhaps possible also to perceive of them in their interviews as shifting from public to private voices. They initially provided accounts that echoed the discourse of international education, whereas later in interview they went beyond this discourse and told me of their personal and their 'lived' experiences of international education and other more tacit and non-entrepreneurial elements of their educational experiences emerged. Perhaps, through the process of telling me about this important period of their lives, they became more comfortable with me as the interviewer, and more willing to divert from the public accounts and to express their complex and shifting value judgments of their Masters degrees.

3.5 Summary

The elements of this theoretical framework build upon each other to provide a way for me as a researcher to interpret the emerging multiple identities and value judgments of international students. The notion of discourse implies that individuals are constantly surrounded by and positioned by discourses. In the case of this research, students reflected discourses in their value judgments as they narrated their educational trajectories during interview. However, given that these discourses are always multiple and conflicting, their value judgments are similarly multiple and conflicting and their identities may also be interpreted as complex and constantly in progress. The notion of an 'entrepreneurial identity' allows me to interpret students' identities as reflecting the discourse of a globalised international education. Wenger's (1998) dimensions of identity provide a framework to analyse these emerging complexities in students' identities and their value judgments as this educational trajectory proceeds. Rizvi's (2005) writings on cosmopolitan identities and learning allow further interpretation of this complexity and an opportunity to muse on education's role in producing 'morally cosmopolitan identities'. Such mobility and cultural exchange could 'open up instead genuine possibilities of cosmopolitan

solidarity' (Rizvi 2005, p.10), reflecting the definition of international education I established in the last chapter. This alternative discourse of international education offers a way of interpreting how students' value judgments and identities go beyond the entrepreneurial. Finally, I describe my approach to narrative dimensions of identity, as this research is based on students' narrations of their educational trajectories.

In this chapter, I provided an overview of the theoretical tools that frame my approach to this thesis and that I used to interpret students' value judgments and evolving identities during their educational journeys. The ideas of this theoretical framework underpin my choice of methodology and methods in this research as I describe in the next chapter.

4 Methodology and Methods

4.1 Introduction

This chapter is divided into two main sections, with the first addressing 'Methodology' and the second 'Methods'. It is important to distinguish between methodology, which has been described as the 'theory of acquiring knowledge and the activity of considering and reflecting on it and justifying the best methods' or the overall theoretical approach in research, and methods, which are 'the specific techniques used for obtaining data that will provide the evidence base for the construction of that knowledge' (Wellington *et al.* 2005, p.97). In the Methodology section, I outline the ontological and epistemological assumptions that led me to adopt interpretative research methods influenced by poststructuralist thinking. I seek to define my positionality as it emerged in my research, and as influenced by my personal biography, and I describe my efforts to be reflexive throughout the research process. I then refer to the ethics of the research process. In the second section of the chapter, I describe the primary and secondary research methods I used. Finally, I outline my approach to data analysis.

In the Literature Review, I established the marketised discourse of international education and I explained how this prompted my research interest. In the previous chapter, I explored the theoretical tools that frame this thesis and that help me interpret my research data. My objective in this chapter is to explain why my chosen research approach was appropriate to this research project and to describe how my biography influenced both my choice of research problem and the research methodology and methods.

4.2 Methodology

4.2.1 Competing research paradigms

From an ontological perspective, two competing paradigms may be identified within educational research: the scientific or positivistic paradigm and the naturalist or interpretative paradigm (Cohen *et al.* 2000, pp.5-27; Wellington 2000, pp.15-19).

The explanation below skims over the many nuances of the positivist/ interpretative debate, which are well documented in academic textbooks on educational research (see Cohen *et al.* 2000; Robson 2002; Walliman 2006; Wellington 2000). While it is important not to make too much of what Pring (2000) has called the 'false dualism' between these two paradigms, it is useful to distinguish between the two in order to explore my ontological and epistemological positionality.

A positivist approach to research reflects the traditions of the hard sciences, and it is one that has had significant influence on the social sciences both in the past and today.²⁵ In the positivist paradigm, social reality is perceived as external, independent and ultimately observable. In epistemological terms, this means that knowledge obtained through research is perceived as objective, value-free, generalisable, replicable and marked by researcher-detachment (Wellington 2000, p.15). Typically, researchers within this paradigm adopt 'scientific' research methods or quantitative techniques such as large-scale surveys, experiments and randomised trials (see Cohen *et al.* 2000). The emphasis is on obtaining statistics and numerical evidence from a large research sample. This is the approach of much policy-led market research on international students that studies students from an objective distance to quantify their experiences of international education (Grimshaw & Sears 2008, p.272; Walker 1999; as an example of such research, see: BC 2008a).

The emphasis within the interpretative paradigm is on obtaining deeper knowledge of a few research instances, rather than wider more generalisable knowledge as in the positivist paradigm (Blaxter *et al.* 1997, p.60). This paradigm questions whether a value-neutral approach to research is possible in the social sciences where the subject of enquiry is people. It maintains that social research can never be an objective activity carried out by detached scientists. As a social activity, research is powerfully affected by the researcher's motivations and values (Blaxter *et al.* 1997, p.15). The emphasis is on obtaining detailed accounts of individuals' experience from their perspective rather than searching for universal laws (Guba & Lincoln 1994, p.114; Hammersley & Atkinson 1995, p.10). Typically in this approach, qualitative research methods, such as interviews, participant observation,

²⁵ See for example the emphasis on policy-led research in the UK (Blunkett 2000) and the rise of post-positivism in the UK and the US (Hodkinson 2004).

and life histories, tend to be used. In this research, I seek to obtain what Hofstede (1980, p.41 cited Grimshaw & Sears 2008, pp.272-3) has termed 'understanding-from-within', by using an interpretative approach with qualitative methodology. The researched, international students, are at the centre of my research process and my findings are grounded in their narrations of their experiences.

It can be argued that all research is at heart qualitative and 'equally objective' as the inter-subjective element that underlies social research can never be eliminated (Vidich & Standform 2000, p.39). Researchers are observers of the world they also participate in, and they 'make their observations within a mediated framework...given to them by their life histories that they bring to the observational setting' (*Ibid.*). They cannot escape the world to study it (Hammersly & Atkinson 1995, p.17). As stated by Edward Saïd (1995, p.10), there can no such thing as 'nonpolitical' research since 'No one has ever devised a method for detaching the scholar from the circumstances of life'. Regardless of our ontological approach, as researchers, we decide what to study, who to study, what questions to ask during research, what to consider as data, how to analyse and interpret this data, and how to present the data in written form to readers who will then bring their own interpretations to the text.

In this chapter, I address my positionality in an attempt to be upfront about the politics I brought to this research process. I accept that as Van Maanen stated, there can never be 'immaculate perception', and no text or research may be closed to further interpretations (Van Maanen 1988 cited Hammersley 1995 p. 86). My research would surely provide for different interpretations if it involved different research actors and was carried out in a different place or at a different time. I have approached this research with the belief that there is no single 'truth' to be discovered and expressed through research writing; rather there are many truths, multiple realities and multiple interpretations of the same events (Cohen *et al.* 2000, pp.21-22; Pring 2000, p.253). In the postmodern world, there are no longer any secure foundations and the object of the researcher's gaze, both the researcher herself and the informants are constantly shifting and changing. Given such an understanding, reflexivity becomes central to the research process and a defining feature of qualitative research (Finlay 2002, p.211), a resource and a research opportunity (Finlay 2002, p.212;

Usher 1996), rendering the research process more rigorous. In the next section, I explain how I sought to be reflexive throughout this research.

4.2.2 A reflexive researcher

4.2.2.1 Understanding reflexivity

I borrow from Chisleri-Strater (1996) who distinguished between reflection and reflexivity: 'To be reflective does not demand an "other", while to be reflexive demands both an other and some self-conscious awareness of the process of self-scrutiny' (cited Pillow 2003, p.177). Reflexivity is not confined to the 'personal'; it is also about the 'identity' of the research (Usher, 1996) and about all the research actors, including the researcher and the researched. Wanda Pillow has defined reflexivity as:

...involving ongoing self-awareness during the research process which aids in making visible the practice and construction of knowledge within research in order to produce more accurate analyses of our research. (Pillow 2003 p. 178).

Pillow (2003, p.179) writes how researchers should be reflexive in constructing the research problem, the research setting, and research findings, and highlighting and thinking about the implications of these factors for the research. She urges 'reflexivities of discomfort' that 'seek[s] to know while at the same time situate[s] this knowing as tenuous' as a methodological tool to get better data while acknowledging the complexity of qualitative research (p. 188). As Bruner writes, when being reflexive, it is important to return the author to the text openly in a way that does not 'squeeze out the object of study' (Bruner 1983, p.6 cited Denzin 1997, p.218), in this case the voices of international students. In the following sections, I discuss my efforts to be reflexive researcher at all stages of the research process.

4.2.2.2 Constructing the research problem

My autobiography and positionality influenced my choice of research topic as I have described above. It also influenced my research approach. Professionally this research was prompted by my desire to work within international education. I perhaps approached this research like Gee's (2004, p.105) 'shape-shifting portfolio people' as I sought to build up 'a variety of skills, experiences and achievements [of

my]...portfolio' so that I could be deemed 'competent and worthy' by future employers in this area. My private and professional lives also provide for conflicting influences on my ontological and epistemological beliefs as my undergraduate degree was in languages and literature, I have a postgraduate qualification in business and marketing and now I am enrolled on an EdD programme, three quite different disciplines. I have worked in marketing and communications roles first in business, in the public sector and in non-profit organisations. In my professional life, I have been a purveyor of the very marketing discourses that I seek to interrupt in this research. I have authored brochures and university prospectuses that aimed to attract domestic and international students. However, my career has also been marked by a scepticism of these marketing discourses. It was perhaps this scepticism that led me as a 'reluctant marketer' to move from business to the public and non-profit sectors in the first place and to embark on doctoral studies in an effort to interrogate my own practice. I have also spent a significant portion of my student and working life abroad, immersed in other cultures and languages and surrounded by internationally minded cosmopolitan individuals. This life trajectory means that I am fascinated by the stories of the lives of these mobile and transnational individuals and of how their experiences of living abroad forms and changes them as individuals. Like the students of my research, I have also moved back home after periods of study and working abroad and I have struggled to adjust to life at home after these periods abroad. I was particularly interested in their stories of going overseas and moving home again, as these resonated with my own experiences in many ways.

When I began reading for my EdD, I worked at an Irish university where I was involved in projects to increase numbers of international students, whose main benefit was viewed by management as economic. Subsequently, I worked for the British Council in Russia and with the in-country *Education UK* team marketing UK education to young Russians. Professionally, I was surrounded by the entrepreneurial discourse of international education. However, my conversations with alumni of British universities, my personal life trajectory, my experience of international education and my natural scepticism of marketing discourses made me feel uncomfortable within this economic-led discourse. This personal journey was one of the defining reasons for my wish to learn more about international students' educational experiences.

4.2.2.3 Research setting

In considering the research setting, it is important to consider my positionality as an 'expat' researcher interviewing respondents in-country. I had to be careful not to rely on cultural 'myths' about Russian and Middle Eastern students (Robertson-Pant 2005, p.5).²⁶ For instance, Saïd (1995, pp.26-27) has written about the stereotypes by which the Orient and the Oriental is viewed and 'the total absence of any cultural position making it possible either to identify with or dispassionately to discuss the Arabs or Islam'. While I have been involved in Russia for twenty years, I do not have the same understanding of the Russian context as I would of my own and I may not always have had the cultural or educational background to fully comprehend informants' statements. This is even more significant for my interviews with Palestinian informants, as I have only recently moved to Jerusalem, I do not speak Arabic, and I have much to learn about the region's culture and social structure. Throughout the research process, I made an effort not to 'other' the respondents or to 'other' their culture or education systems and to impose my views formed within an Irish/UK worldview on the Russian or Palestinian context. However, as a researcher I cannot escape my autobiography, and inevitably my mindset has influenced what themes I identified in the data, and how I have interpreted and analysed this data and may have made me blind to many other equally valid themes.

I have approached this research as an outsider, not as an international student of the same nationality as my informants, nor an academic at a UK HEI, as is the case in most research on international students (Leonard *et al.* 2003). While I have worked for the British Council marketing UK education to Russians, I have never worked at a UK HEI nor have I ever lived in the UK. My personal experience of British education is limited to that of studying as a distance student on the EdD programme at the University of Sheffield for the past five years. I acknowledge that this lack of insider knowledge could be a disadvantage in a research project like this. However, I would hope that my positionality as an outsider has allowed me to interpret students' experiences without the 'baggage' that such local knowledge might also involve.

²⁶ For instance, there is an increasing body of research that criticises myths about the Asian (and particularly Chinese) learner (see: Biggs 2001; Kingston & Forland 2004; Turner 2006)

4.2.2.4 Research process and findings

The 'community of practice' (Wenger 1998) of my professional life as a marketing and communications specialist is one where a positivistic approach to research is the accepted norm. In my professional life, I have managed many marketing research projects. Marketing research is described by Philip Kotler (2000, pp.103-116) as 'the systematic design, collection analysis, and reporting of data and findings relevant to a specific marketing situation facing the company'. As Kotler relates, in market research qualitative research methods are 'useful exploratory steps' before the principal quantitative research methods and are perceived as unreliable and biased sources of information in their own right. In the context of international education, Walker (1999, p.7) has noted that 'the only international student research universities are interested in is market research, on which we have surfeited'. Likewise, the international student research projects I have managed have largely consisted of surveys or highly structured interviews with large cohorts of students. Both my professional experience of speaking with and researching international students and my personal experience as an international student made me believe that a purely positivistic approach to research gave little scope for international students to tell their personal stories of their educational experiences, stories that I felt must go beyond the outcomes-based economic-led discourse of international education. This was confirmed when I carried out initial focus groups with returned graduates in Russia for a research paper (Bruce 2006). I became interested in learning more about students' experiences of international education, of how they valued their degrees during their educational trajectories, and of their emerging identities during this process. I wanted the emphasis of my research to be on students' voices and on their interpretations of their educational experiences.

While I have felt it important to give a voice to international students' personal stories of their educational experience, their voices are inevitably expressed via my voice and my interpretation. Norman Denzin (1997) famously referred to the 'crisis of representation' in the 'poststructuralist turn'. This implies that all research, both quantitative and qualitative should be perceived as a narrative production and that there can no longer be a 'real world' to be discovered by a 'knowing author'. The

subject or the researched described by the researcher is always a textual construction that speaks through the author's translations and interpretations. The process of writing about the research both creates and transforms their experiences (Denzin 1997, pp.4-5). Research is 'not simply a matter of representing, reflecting or reporting the world but of "creating" it through a representation' (Usher 1996, p.35).

This 'crisis of representation' in my research is further complicated by issues of culture and translation. I interviewed across cultures and languages as I interviewed Russian respondents in Moscow and Palestinian respondents in Jerusalem. All interviews were conducted in a second language to informants (English) or in a second language to me (Russian). When interviewing Russian students, I followed their lead linguistically and held the interviews in English or Russian or often in a mixture of the two languages. In Palestine, all interviews were conducted through English. Both the informants and I were aware of the linguistic issues during interview. In English, I had to be careful to word my questions so that they were easily understood by informants. When speaking in English, informants often questioned if they had used the right words to express their experiences. As one informant put it:

I must choose my words very carefully here to make sure I say the right thing. (Wassim, Jerusalem).

Russian informants would often tell me something in English and then repeat the same statement in Russian to ensure that they had got across their message correctly. When informants made major grammatical errors in English, I corrected these for the excerpts quoted in this thesis. In doing so, I wanted the reader to concentrate on the content of the quotations rather than on any grammatical errors, that might serve to 'other' the students as foreigners or that might devalue the statements they made. Also as my field data consisted of both interviews in a native language (Russian) and a second language (English), I wanted all quotations to read the same way. I acknowledge that in taking this decision I divert from the practice of many researchers. For instance, Hellstén (2002, p.15) in her study on international students took the decision not to edit excerpts of students' narrations to maintain what she refers to as the 'truth value' of interviewees' opinions.

Plummer (2001, p.151) has written of the challenges of translation or the 'attempt to 'transplant the language from one culture so that it can make sense in another without losing its original meanings'. Where I translated Russian informants' interviews into English, as Robinson-Pant (2005, pp.133-135) points out, I risked losing some of the meaning of their original statements (see Sovic 2008 for similar reflections). As a reflexive researcher, I was aware of these challenges throughout the interview and data-analysis process. During interviews I repeated students' statements back to them to confirm that I had understood them correctly, and when transliterating and translating interviews I consulted with native speakers where I was unsure about exact meanings. There are moral consequences in my choice of writing and representation, for as Atkinson (1992, p.6) remarks, the more readable the account, the more it corresponds to literary conventions and the more 'comprehensible' it becomes to the reader, and perhaps the less it corresponds to informants' original comments. While I have tended to adopt such a 'readable' account, in doing so I believe as stated by Atkinson:

There is no textual format that pictures the social world as a perfect simulacrum. The contemporary ethnographer must make choices in the full knowledge of his or her textual practices, and the likely receptions on the part of readers. (Atkinson 1992, p.7).

I can never provide a 'perfect simulacrum' of students' educational experiences, and all I can ever do is make choices in my writing and interpretation of their narratives, whilst remaining reflexive about these choices.

In this section, I have described my efforts to be reflexive researcher throughout the research process. In the next section, I continue this theme as I discuss my approach to the ethics of this research project.

4.2.3 Research Ethics

As a reflexive researcher, I gave much thought to the professional ethics of my research and how these affected my research design and approach. I reflect on these here and then I refer briefly to the ethics of doing research in Palestine. I then outline how this research satisfies the University of Sheffield ethics procedures.

4.2.3.1 Professional ethics

I obtained access to my research informants via my contacts with the British Council. This professional positionality entailed a number of ethical issues for me as a researcher. The British Council supported my research by providing me with access to graduates of UK HEIs, however it did not support my research financially. I provided the British Council with summary reports of my research findings in both Russia and Palestine in return for this access. The British Council's stated objective is to build 'cultural relationships and trust between people of different cultures through the exchange of knowledge and ideas' (British Council website)²⁷ with the unstated aim of furthering UK's long-term economic and political interests.

Education UK fits into this overall aim as PMI2 aims both to attract short-term finance to UK HEIs and to educate a cohort of British-educated individuals who will 'promote Britain in the world, helping our trade and democracy' (Blair 1999 cited Böhm *et al.*, 2004, p.2). However, my research project criticises the economic discourse of international education and thus the un-stated principles of the British Council's work and that of *Education UK*, an aspect that could be uncomfortable from a professional point of view.

My professional positionality also posed ethical issues when I carried out research. In Moscow, most informants already knew me in my capacity as Head of Marketing for the British Council in Russia. In Jerusalem, I have no formal role with the British Council but I was recommended to informants by their office as an academic researcher. While I assured all informants that their identities would not be revealed at any time during the research process, I told them that the British Council would receive a copy of the interim research findings. Some informants, particularly Russians, were suspicious of my research motivations. Several asked if the British Council was funding my research and how it would use my research findings. When they criticised any aspect of their educational experience, some informants specifically asked me not to report their comments back to the British Council. In writing up and reporting my fieldwork, I have made every effort to anonymise respondents to ensure their confidentiality.

²⁷ www.britishcouncil.org

4.2.3.2 *Researching Palestinians*

I took a conscious decision to interview Palestinians about their educational experiences in the UK and not to focus on Israeli/Palestine political background of their lives. Several told me that my approach was refreshing as it gave them a chance to talk about 'normal' things and not to be pigeonholed by the 'situation', as they referred to it. However, the events of the Gazan war at the end of 2008 and beginning of 2009 made me reflect on the ethics of my approach. I was reminded of Patti Lather's (1986) notion of 'rape research' where 'the researcher 'goes into the research setting, gets what they want and then leaves, never to return and giving nothing in return' (Sikes 2004, p.29). I was worried that I was in some way exploiting my informants by concentrating on a positive period of their lives and ignoring the horror that they were living through. I felt that having interviewed respondents from Gaza, I was obliged to have some sort of longer term relationship with them. I emailed them during the war and have kept up occasional contact with them since then. One of my research respondents responded to one of my emails as follows: 'Sometimes when I receive email such as yours, my spirit gets better as I feel that we, people of Gaza have not been left alone... at least some people are still remembering us...'

4.2.3.3 *Ethical procedures*

In this research, I followed the University of Sheffield's School of Education ethical procedures. I obtained ethical clearance to carry out my research from the Ethics Committee. British Council staff sent a preliminary email to potential respondents, outlining the purpose of my research, and letting them know that I would be in touch with them. I briefed informants by email and in telephone calls prior to interviews about the objectives of the research, about their proposed participation in the research, about likely publications, and about sharing research findings with the British Council. A copy of this initial email is included in **Appendix 1**. I assured all interviewees that their statements were confidential and that their identities would be anonymised in my writing. At the beginning of each interview, I gave interviewees a copy of a 'Participant Information Sheet' to sign that set out the objectives of the research. The 'Participant Informant Sheet' and 'Participant Consent Form' are included in **Appendix 1**. In the case of the two telephone interviews with informants from Gaza, it was not possible to obtain their signature and I obtained their written

consent by email. Following interviews, I emailed all respondents to thank them for participating in the research project. Informants were not provided with interview transcripts, as bar a couple of cases in Palestine, they expressed no interest in seeing these transcripts when asked.

4.3 Methods

This research project is based on secondary research of the literature on international education and on primary research consisting of interviews with graduates of UK Masters degrees in two locations, Moscow and Jerusalem. In this section, I provide details of the research methods adopted in this thesis.

4.3.1 Secondary data collection

Before, during and after the active research-phase of my thesis, I carried out secondary research to improve my understanding of the topic of international education, to better understand what has already been researched and to identify the key issues in my area of interest as I outlined in my Literature Review. I reviewed academic books and papers on international education, read relevant media articles on the area, particularly those in the specialised education press and I reviewed reports by supranational organisations on trade in international education, as well as UK government policy papers. I referred to British Council documents, both internal memos and publically accessible publications, and the British Council managed website for *Education UK* (<http://www.educationuk.org>). My research questions were informed by this review.

4.3.2 Primary data collection: interviews

4.3.2.1 Approaching the research method and research questions

Pelletier (in Leonard *et al.* 2003, p.11) has noted that many studies on international students use strikingly similar methodologies, usually a mix of quantitative and qualitative approaches, with structured questionnaires used to gather quantitative data and semi-structured or individual and/or group interviews to provide further and richer data of student experiences. Spurling (2007, p.97) noted how the

majority of research consists of empirical research, with equivalent numbers of studies using quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods, whereas there are very few studies that use intervention or action research methods. In my Literature Review, I referred to a number of studies on international students with direct relevance to this study. Rizvi's (2005) research involved interviews with students from two countries, India and China, both in-study and post-study. Their post-study interviews were conducted in various locations such as offices, home and cafes and lasted around 50 minutes, although informal conversations with students lasted much longer, reflecting my own approach as I describe below. Cuthbert *et al.* (2008) describe interviews with Malaysian graduates several years after their return home to ascertain the wider more long-term outcomes of their educational experiences. Sovic's (2008) research involved co-nationals interviewing in-study students from six geographical locations in their native language, an aspect she sees as providing rich insights as language barriers were eliminated, an aspect also of relevance to my Russian interviews.

In this thesis, I carried out one-to-one interviews for this thesis with 18 Russians and 10 Palestinians. I interviewed Russians over a six-week period in the summer of 2007 in Moscow, and Palestinians over a six-week period in the spring of 2008 in Jerusalem. My choice of research method also suited my research topic, the profile of my respondents and my personal time constraints. Interviews are generally recognised as providing greater depth of data than other research methods (Atkinson 1990, p.269). As Wellington (2000, p.71) states, they offer a way of probing 'an interviewee's thoughts, values, prejudices, perceptions, views, feelings and perspectives', and can 'elicit their versions...of situations which they may have...lived through'. For the purposes of this research project, I was specifically interested in interviewees' 'thoughts, values, prejudices, perceptions, views, feelings and perspectives' about their international education experience. Interviews were the best method for recruiting my informants, all busy professionals with limited time to participate in a research exercise. I had previously carried out focus groups with graduates about their UK educational experiences (Bruce 2006), and had experienced significant problems recruiting respondents who were unable or unwilling to come to an assigned location at a specific time. This meant that as the interviewer, I travelled to meet the informants at a place and time convenient to them.

An interview has been defined as

A two-person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research relevant information and focused by him (*sic*) on content specified by research objects of systematic description, prediction or explanation. (Cannell & Kahn 1968, p.527 cited Cohen *et al.* 2000, p.269).

Atkinson and Silverman (1997, p.313) have stated that today 'the interview and its narrative products...come to occupy [a] central...place in contemporary sociological discourses'. The neophyte researcher may thus perceive interviews as an 'easy' research method given the ubiquitousness of the method, and the fact that interviews on one level can be perceived as just a conversation with another person, a technique that we all practice every day. However, as noted by Denscombe (1998, p.110), interviewing is no easy option, and it is fraught with dangers and can fail miserably if there is not sufficient planning. In researching this thesis, I tried at all times as a reflexive researcher to avoid the pitfalls of the 'interview society' as described by Atkinson and Silverman (1997). I tried to recognise as argued by Holstein and Gubrium (1995, pp.17-18) that the interview is a 'drama of sorts' with a scripted narrative of topics, clear roles for interviewer and interviewee and a format for conversation. All interview situations rely on the interaction between interview participations, and the collaborative social construction of meaning between these participants. As I have stated above, no interview can be perceived as providing a particular 'truth', rather it provides one version (or multiple versions) of the truth as constructed by the social actors during a particular interview occasion. Should the interview have occurred at a different time or place, with different social actors, it would have provided for different research findings. Informants' stories are always partial, the teller is always in 'flux' and the tales of their experiences are maybe no more than descriptions (Munro 1998, p.6). By making this acknowledgement, I do not want to deny the 'verisimilitude' of my research findings, rather as a reflexive researcher, I recognise that there are possibly 'multiple verisimilitudes' (Todorov 1977, p.83 cited Goodson & Sikes 2001, p.50).

It is generally accepted that there are three different basic approaches to interviews: structured, semi-structured, and non-structured (see Denscombe 1998, p.112-113; Robson 2002, p.270; Walliman 2006, pp.91-92; Wellington 2000, p.74). I adopted the approach of semi-structured interviews, described by Robson (2002,

p.270) as consisting of pre-determined questions or an interview guide, where the order and content questions can be changed according to the context. Semi-structured interviews give the interviewer the flexibility to let the interviewee expand on issues that are of interest to her (Denscombe 1998, p.113). I adopted what May (2001, pp.132-3): has called a 'sequential approach' to interviewing where my interview guide addressed the three stages of respondents' educational trajectories in chronological order: pre-study, in-study and post-study.

I began interviews by outlining my research objectives. I then asked a couple of opening questions about informants' family backgrounds, their higher level educational experience prior to their UK Masters and their current occupations. There were then three main topics in the interview guide, as follows:

- Topic 1: Tell me why you decided to pursue a Masters degree abroad/ in the UK;
- Topic 2: Describe your experience of studying and living in the UK;
- Topic 3: Tell me about your life after completing your Masters degree.

Within each topic, there were a series of sub-questions that served as prompts for me as the interviewer to expand on each of the topics. The three topics addressed my research questions, which as I stated in the Introduction chapter are:

Main Research Question:

- How do these international students value their UK Masters degrees when recalling their educational experiences and how is this valuing reflected in their shifting identities?

Secondary Questions:

- How is the entrepreneurial discourse of international education significant in these students' narrated value judgments and shifting identities?
- How do these students interpret and value their experiences of studying in the UK in their narrations?
- How do these students' value judgments and identities shift as they narrate the three stages of their educational trajectories: pre-study, in-study and post-study?

A copy of the full interview guide is included in **Appendix 2**.

4.3.2.2 *Profile of informants*

Informants were recruited from two geographical areas: Russia and Palestine.²⁸ My life trajectory has meant that I have lived and worked in both Russia and Israel/Palestine during the past three years meaning that I have had in-country access to these informants. These two groups of students offered a convenient and interesting research opportunity to me. I had professional linkages with the British Council in both locations, which meant that I could recruit respondents with relative ease. I was also aware that both Russians and Arabs (admittedly Gulf Arabs) are priority markets for PMI2. As I have already stated, there is significant research on international students from Asian markets, but I came across no published research on Russian students and little on Arab students. Despite the political, cultural and geographical differences between the two groups, their narrations of their experiences of education in the UK were remarkably similar. I have thus taken the decision in this thesis to present both sets of research findings together in my data reporting chapters. My purpose was never to carry out a formal comparative study of the experiences of these two groups of students. Where there are areas of convergence or divergence, I describe these in the data reporting chapters, however, this was not my main objective.

The British Council provided me with lists of potential informants, most of whom were Chevening Scholars, as these individuals tend to keep closer ties with the British Council and British embassies and consulates abroad. I identified a number of additional respondents through recommendations from this primary group. In Russia, all informants lived in Moscow. In Palestine, I interviewed individuals residing in Jerusalem, in Ramallah and in the Gaza Strip. Informants attended a wide range of universities throughout the UK, and studied a many different disciplines. When recruiting informants, I sought individuals who had graduated with Masters degrees from the UK within the past five to six years, although a couple of informants were outside these criteria as they were specifically recommended to me. It was important that they could still recall the details of their educational experience and that they had already worked for several years at home post-study. I recruited slightly more male than female respondents in each market. I had identified more respondents in both

²⁸ I provide an overview of Russian and Palestinian HE systems in **Appendix 3** that provides some background to students' narrations.

markets than were interviewed, but in both instances, I took the decision to stop interviewing when I felt that I had reached the 'point of theoretical saturation' (Strauss 1987, p.21), and where I considered that further interviews had little of value to add to my existing interpretations and analysis. I tried to include both scholarship and self-funded students in my sample so that I could hear both points of view, however self-funded students were more difficult to recruit and there is a dominance of scholarship students. In Russia, six of my respondents were self-funded and in Palestine, two were self-funded and the remainder were mainly Chevening scholarship recipients.

Most informants were professionals in their 30s. Russian informants mostly held middle or top management roles in Russian or international companies in Moscow. Palestinian informants worked at management level for local and international Non Governmental Organisations (NGO) and the public sector. I carried out one interview with each respondent. A full profile of research respondents is provided in **Appendix 4**, but the following provides a flavour of both research groups.

Eleven of my Russian respondents held Masters degrees in business related areas. The remainder held degrees in areas such as international relations, human rights, technology and film studies. Elena is typical of many Russian respondents. In her early 30s, she works as Marketing Manager for a major international company. She is originally from Siberia, and she saw her international education as helping her move to Moscow to work with international companies. She was a Chevening Scholar and holds a Masters degree in a business area. Vlad, also in his early 30s, is an enthusiastic and charming man with perfect English who now works for a major international corporation. A former medic, he decided to embark on Masters studies as he had moved into business and wanted a better understanding of his new profession. He also obtained a Chevening Scholarship. In contrast Tania, a self-funded student, was younger than most respondents and she graduated only two years prior to the interviews. She has found it hard to obtain a job relevant to her Masters degree in international relations and is currently working as a translator in a bank. At the other end of the spectrum, Andrei was in his late 40s and he studied in the UK on a now defunct scholarship programme. He runs his own company, and while he

benefited from international education himself, he had mixed opinions on recruiting graduates with international Masters degrees.

Four of my Palestinian respondents held Masters degrees in international relations and human rights, reflecting the employment prospects for these students at home. Others held Masters degrees in disciplines such as film studies, architecture, business and international relations. Maha, a West-Banker, is in her late 30s. Like several other respondents, she already held both undergraduate and postgraduate degrees from Palestinian universities before she was awarded a Chevening Scholarship to study for a taught Masters in International Relations. She heads up the research department of a large Palestinian NGO. Tariq is a Gazan, who left Gaza for the first time when he obtained a Chevening Scholarship to study for a financial degree in the UK. He faced considerable difficulties leaving Gaza and the British Consulate in Jerusalem had to negotiate his release from Israeli detention before he could travel to the UK. He took a leave of absence from his position with a large humanitarian organisation to study in the UK, and now holds a position of considerable responsibility with this organisation. Moustafa was older than the other respondents, and had studied for his Masters degree over ten years previously as a self-funded student. He is director of a support department in a leading Palestinian university. As an educational professional who has many contacts with international colleagues, he was able to talk at length about changing pedagogic approaches in the Palestinian higher education system, and about the academic culture shock that many Arab students face in the UK. Following his UK Masters degree, Moustafa studied for a PhD at an Israeli university.

Finally, it is important to briefly reflect on the make-up of my research respondents, most of whom were scholarship recipients. I accept that this bias has inevitably influenced my research findings. While both scholarship and self-funded students invested in their UK educational experience in terms of time and money, the financial cost was considerably greater for self-funded students and they could be expected to take a more 'consumerist' view of their education. In presenting my research data however, I have taken the decision not to separate scholarship and self-funded students, as I found that these two groups of students had remarkably similar attitudes and value judgments of their UK degrees.

4.3.2.3 Interview location, timing and organisation: some challenges faced

The majority of interviews took place in cafés or at the respondents' place of work. In two instances in Palestine, I carried out telephone interviews, where respondents were based in Gaza and for security and access reasons I was unable to meet them in person. Interviews lasted between 60 to 90 minutes. Robson (2002, p.273) warns that interviews can be time consuming, and that anything under half an hour is unlikely to render anything of value, whereas going much above an hour may make unreasonable demands on the interviewee, and could reduce the numbers of people willing to partake in the research exercise. Where interviews lasted more than one hour, this was informant-led. Where possible, all interviews (including the telephone interviews) were recorded on a digital recorder, however in a few instances in Russia, informants did not agree to the interview being recorded.

Wellington (2000, pp.84-85) has described field notes as a 'valuable aid to transcribing from tape', providing information about the time and place of interview, the setting and about the interviewee's disposition to the interview. In my research, I used notes and recordings together to 'improve accuracy and quality of data evidence' (*Ibid.*, p.85). As Denscombe notes, recordings alone only capture speech and miss non-verbal communication (Denscombe 1998, p.128). I also kept a research diary where I analysed my research data as I was collecting it. It was through writing this diary that I first began developing the idea key to this thesis, of students' 'entrepreneurial' approach at the onset of their studies, and the dilution of this approach as the narration of their studies proceeded. An example of such a memo from my research diary is included in **Appendix 5**. I decided not to transcribe interviews *verbatim*, but rather to use the digital recordings of interviews to supplement my detailed field notes. I considered that as all interviews were given/obtained in a second language, my emphasis should be on the 'meaning' of the words rather than on the actual words used, a 'meaning' that I realise, as a reflexive researcher working in a second language, was often dependent on my interpretation. In the final section of this chapter, I describe my approach to data analysis. Also, while I acknowledge that it was useful to record interviews as I had a permanent

record of the interview, I was not always comfortable with recording during interviews. As I wrote in my research diary:

Recording is always not a good idea. It makes the interview conversation more artificial, and it is clear that many interviewees are uncomfortable about being recorded, despite agreeing to the recording in the first place. It seems to stop natural discussion and move the conversation to a more formal level. (Excerpt from author's research diary, August 2007).

In many instances, I got the most interesting information from respondents once the digital recorder was switched off, and they felt that the 'formal' interview was over. They were then more willing to share their personal stories with me about their experiences of studying in the UK. I wrote up these conversations immediately afterwards.

Wellington (2000, p.3) has noted how research can be 'messy, frustrating and unpredictable'. I faced a number of challenges carrying out my interviews in terms of the location of the interview, respondents' attitude to the interview and power-relations. Russian women respondents were usually only able to meet me during the working day due to long commutes and family commitments, which made for shorter interviews. On one occasion, an informant brought along a work colleague for a lunch-time interview, despite having been pre-briefed about the purpose of the interview, which inevitably made for a difficult interview situation. Sometimes cafés were very busy and noisy and the recording quality of the interview was poor. In Russia, given a pervasive mobile phone culture, the interviews were constantly interrupted by mobile phone calls.

These difficulties in interviewing are also evidence of the complexities of power-relations during the research exercise. Bourdieu (1999, p.609) has written of the asymmetric power relations in research, where the interviewer wields more power than the interviewee. The interviewer sets up the interview and sets the research objectives and her research can sometimes have significant impact on interviewees and on policy. Hammersley (1995, p.109) on the other hand, argues that researcher power is often slight, and that informants have more power as they can decide if they give access or participate in the research process. In this research, I felt that respondents often had more power in the interview process than me, as they were busy professionals who did me a favour by meeting me. For instance, a number of

Russian male respondents made a point of establishing the upper hand from the beginning of the interview, as an excerpt from my research diary explores in **Appendix 6**. This reflects Sheila Riddell's (1989) experiences of interviewing male teachers and parents.

4.3.2.4 *Analysis of interview data*

In my Theoretical Framework chapter, I related how being aware of 'discourse(s)' allows the researcher to interrupt the 'common sense' (Luke 1995, p.20) of dominant narratives, such as that of international education to create a 'space for radically "other" ways of thinking and being' (McNay 1994, p.4). In this study, I seek to challenge this discourse of international education both through my analysis of the official narrative of international education in policy and in *Education UK* as related in the Literature Review, and in my interpretation of students' narration of their international education experience. 'Discourse' (with a big 'D') was an important element of my 'toolbox' (Foucault 1974, pp.523-4) in analysing my interview data. It alerted me to how students' narrations of their educational experience echoed the big 'D' discourse of entrepreneurial international education, and it made me more aware to how students' language-in-use (or small 'd' discourse' (Gee 1999) reflected this during interview.

When analysing the students' 'language-in-use' in the interview data, I adopted a process of theme analysis that was loosely inspired by Charmaz's writings on Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT) (Charmaz 2000, 2006). CGT proposes line-by-line coding of the research data, a process I undertook as my first stage of analysis of students' recorded interviews, their off-record comments and my own field notes of interviews to identify themes and sub-themes in the research data. Examples of such theme-analysis from two interview in my research are included in **Appendix 7**. My units of analysis for this work are phrases and sentences, rather than specific words given the translation and language issues I referred to above. In second and further phases of coding or what Charmaz (2006, p.57) labels 'focused coding', I used the most prominent initial codes or themes as categories to gather and develop large batches of data from all the interviews in the two markets studied. I then used these themes to organise my thoughts and my writing. As a reflexive researcher, I am

aware that these themes represent only one of many possible 'truths' of their experience, and that my emphasis on the entrepreneurial discourse of international education perhaps blinded me to equally valid themes within their narrations.

Charmaz (2006, p.72) sees the writing of 'memos' as a 'pivotal' intermediate step between coding and completed analysis, and about making time to analyse nascent ideas about codes as they occur to the researcher 'during the moment'. As related earlier in this chapter, in my research diary I first realised how students' language-in-use or the 'd' of discourse (Gee 1999, p.7) reflected the discourse of international education particularly in the initial stages of interview as they recalled their reasons for embarking on postgraduate study abroad. Yet as their interviews progressed, this 'entrepreneurial identity' became more complex as they were confronted with the reality of their return home. This thesis is centred around this idea of a narrated discourse of international education that becomes more complex as narrations and interviews progress.

4.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have described how my ontological and epistemological assumptions influenced the methodology I adopted for this thesis. I explained my efforts to be a reflexive researcher at all stages of the research process and I reflected on the ethics of this research. I outlined my methods of primary and secondary research. I introduced my research respondents and described how I carried out my field research, one-to-one semi-structured interviews with graduates of UK taught Masters degrees. Finally, I described my approach to analysing my interview data.

This chapter serves as an introduction to the next three data-reporting chapters, where I describe informants' value judgments and shifting identities during the three stages of their educational trajectories: pre-study, in-study and post-study. In this chapter, I have explained how I went about the research process. In the next three chapters, I describe the findings of that research process.

5 Value of a Masters degree pre-study

For me the MBA was a tool to use in my work. It was very important for me to have management skills and I wanted to know more about how organisations are run from A to Z, and to be able to understand the link between the different components in an organisation, like finance and marketing. (Ali, Jerusalem).

5.1 Introduction

In the last chapter, I outlined the research methodology and methods used in this thesis to address this research on how international students value their UK Masters degrees their educational experiences and how is this valuing reflected in their shifting identities. I explained that my analysis of students' educational trajectories is based on their recollections of this experience in interviews following their return home and I outlined my approach to interpreting this narration. These three data-reporting chapters examine the three stages of students recalled educational trajectories in turn: pre-study, in-study and post-study.

In this chapter, the first data-reporting chapter, I analyse students' valuing of their Masters degree pre-study as related during the initial stage of interviews, when they were asked to recall their expectations before embarking on a Masters degree in the UK. During my analysis of interviews, I identified four main themes that were prominent during students' narrations of the first stage of their educational trajectories. These are: the value of career-focused education not available at home; the value of English-language programmes and British culture; pragmatic values that weigh up a university or programme's ranking versus value of time and money; and more personal or tacit values. The first three themes can be interpreted as echoing the discourse of international education described in the Literature Review chapter, while the final value is evidence of more personal expectations. I argue that at this first recollected stage of their educational trajectories, students' identities can be interpreted as reflecting the entrepreneurial discourse of international education and I draw on the writings of Jan Masschelein and his collaborators (Masschelein 2001; Masschelein & Simons 2002; Masschelein & Quaghebeur 2005) in making this

analysis. This chapter responds to my main research question, and my wish to learn more about how international students value their UK Masters degrees; and to the first secondary question: How is the entrepreneurial discourse of international education significant in these students' narrated value judgments and shifting identities?

5.2 An entrepreneurial approach pre-study

Reasons cited for studying overseas in the literature include: the reputation of and perceived academic superiority of HEIs, international alliances, knowledge about the UK and ideological affinity, cost of studying, employability and language, specific programmes available, the valuing of UK education at home, limitations on higher education systems at home and future job aspirations and immigration policies (see Spurling 2007, pp.103-108; Coates 2005; Gill 2008a; MORI 2003; OECD 2007, pp.306-7; Rizvi 2000; Varghese 2008). It is notable that many of these motivations are economic. Similarly, when recalling the initial stages of their educational trajectory at the beginning of interviews, students emphasised the instrumental value of their degree for their future careers in their narrations, reflecting the motivations cited in much of the literature as above. At this stage of their narrations, when students referred to more tacit or personal values as influencing their educational decision, these values appeared of secondary importance in their decision-making.

5.2.1 Value of career-focused education not available at home

The most salient theme at this stage of the interviews was students' emphasis on the value of a career-focused quality market-relevant UK Masters degree unavailable in their home educational systems. Other themes, while explored separately in this chapter, can be viewed as sub-sections of this main theme as they reinforce this central idea. Informants embarked on a Masters degree abroad because they felt it would improve their career and salary expectations. They perceived British education as respected and high quality, market-oriented and vocational, providing them with the applicable skills that they needed to do their jobs better and to further their careers at home. At the same time they spoke of 'a strong tradition in UK universities' reflecting *Education UK's* brand proposition 'a tradition of innovation'. They considered that the employment market viewed UK degrees as 'prestigious'. I noted

in the last chapter that many of the Russian students interviewed studied for business related degrees, degrees that prepare them for careers in a globalised world, whereas a minority of Palestinians studied for such degrees. However, both sets of students expressed similar career motivations in interview as the following stories show.

Anton's experience is typical of many of the Russian students interviewed. He works in the fashion industry in Russia, an industry established in a Western guise following the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. He became involved in the fashion industry while still a teacher in a regional Russian city. Anton moved to Moscow to take up a position in fashion where he worked for several years before embarking on his Masters degree in the UK. He completed a one-year postgraduate qualification in fashion management at a prestigious Moscow university during this period, an experience he described as 'disappointing' academically and pedagogically. He felt his teachers had little practical experience of their subject and that the course was overly theoretical.

I felt I needed to update my knowledge and my skills and find out if I was doing things properly. Fashion is a new industry in Russia. There are no real experienced professionals. I knew I needed an international degree. I wanted to study in a school with great experience, where real designers taught. International experience was essential for my road in life, for my career. (Anton, Moscow).

Anton emphasised his desire to study with 'real experienced professionals' who could only be accessed by studying internationally. He saw this experience as essential for his 'career', his career and 'road in life' seen as one and the same, aspects that all echo the discourse of international education. Anton's comments on the importance of 'international experience' reflect *Education UK* rhetoric: '...you'll be part of a truly international community [in the UK]...With such fantastic experience behind you, you'll be ready to hit the ground running by the time you finish your course' (*Education UK website*).

Oleg, a marketing professional, spoke of similar motivations. He embarked on a Masters degree abroad specifically to improve his knowledge of marketing and his career prospects. Like Anton, he wanted to be taught by knowledgeable experienced professionals, and he believed that such professionals were present in the UK higher education system, but rarely in Russia.

Marketing is not very developed in Russia. In Russia it's just impossible to study marketing. I mean, we don't have the skills or the experience...I had to go abroad, either to the UK or the US, which in my view provide the best marketing education. (Oleg, Moscow).

Oleg's statement that the UK (or the US) provides the 'best marketing education' echoes the marketing promise of *Education UK* that the UK is a global centre for business and that by studying business studies in the UK, students have access to the 'centre of the country's exciting and vibrant business environment' (Education UK website). Anton and Oleg's comments can also be interpreted within the context of the difficulties faced by Russian HEIs today, where difficulties in pay and conditions mean that HEI courses are often misaligned with the needs of the labour market.²⁹

Palestinian respondents also referred to a lack of relevant market-focused Masters degrees in the Palestinian higher education system that would prepare them for their future careers, and their need to study abroad.³⁰ For instance, Hayed a Jerusalemite who works in film production, felt that she had no choice but to go abroad to study in her discipline:

There is no school here I could go to. Only an Israeli school in Jerusalem and I didn't want to go there. We have media institutions here, like in Birzeit, but there is no film school. (Hayed, Jerusalem).

Wassim, who obtained a Masters in international development in the UK, emphasised that his subject was not available at home. He spoke of wanting to study development abroad from an early age, and of choosing to study for an undergraduate degree in economics and political science, as it would provide a good basis for a future international Masters degree in development studies. He chose to study in the UK as he felt there was a real commitment to his area of study in the UK. From his narration, it would seem that Wassim had adopted an active and entrepreneurial approach to his education (Masschelein 2001) from an early age. Khadar also had no choice but to go abroad for his studies as his area of studies is not available in Palestine. But he did not just choose to go abroad just because of the lack of relevant studies at home. He told me:

I wanted to build myself...I wanted a higher degree for many reasons...I wanted to expand my knowledge, to have new methodologies and tools for conservation and so on. This degree will enhance my career and help me

²⁹ See Appendix 3 for a review of the Russian HE system.

³⁰ See Appendix 3 for a review of the Palestinian HE system.

achieve several goals...It was a must for me...I had to be expanded more to have an international perspective... (Khadar, Jerusalem).

Khadar's choice of wording here is interesting as he speaks of his UK degree as providing him with the 'tools' for his work, emphasising his instrumental approach to choosing a UK Masters degree. He perceived his experience of international mobility as resulting in a valued 'positional good' (Marginson 1997), a Masters degree that would enhance his value in the employment market.

Both groups of students spoke at length about UK education as being market-led, and as providing them with a more practical applicable knowledge than they could obtain at home. They constantly contrasted their home education systems with that of the UK, perhaps also evidence of what Sidhu (2006, p.132) has referred to as the post-colonialist attitude of international education marketing that positions UK education as perhaps better, or more attractive to employers than home education: 'The United Kingdom offers *the* authentic product, the genuine article'. In students' eyes, UK education would open doors to more career opportunities, make them part of a network of similarly international professionals and help them to progress professionally. Through their international education experience, they would become part of an 'emerging global elite, mostly urban-based and interconnected in many ways' (Crosette 1996 cited Ong 1999, p.11), like Bauman's (1998) consumerist, cosmopolitan and mobile 'tourists'. This is well illustrated by Maria's educational story. Maria had previous degrees in similar fields to her UK Masters degree, holding a Bachelor of Arts (BA) in arts management and a Master of Business Studies (MBA) from a new Russian university. Although she commended her Russian MBA as a 'good course', she acknowledged that it did not have international accreditation. She wanted to study on an 'international MA that was really good'. She wanted a 'practical and relevant education', and an 'internationally acclaimed education', whose quality would be recognised as valuable by future employers. Maria's statements echo the salient marketing promises of *Education UK* that prospective students will 'gain recognised and respected qualifications' (Education UK website).

Of all the respondents, Oleg expressed this sentiment perhaps most vehemently. He had a clear goal in mind and wanted to learn skills with direct relevance to his work.

For me, education is an instrument not an end to itself. I was not interested in education for the sake of education. (Oleg, Moscow).

He deliberately chose to study on a specialised marketing MA rather than a more general MBA as he wanted a qualification that had immediate value for him in his career.

I only had two or three years work experience and I think you need maybe five or seven years' relevant experience before you do an MBA or before you get any use out of an MBA. Who takes a 25 year old seriously who already has an MBA? Nobody knows what he can really do. That kind of education is a useless education. (Oleg, Moscow).

There are some interesting words used in Oleg's interview. He saw education as 'an instrument' for his career; he wanted a 'useful' as opposed to a 'useless' education. He and other respondents want a degree that to use the vocabulary of *Education UK* gives them 'an edge over the competition' (Education UK website). Oleg's narration and that of the students cited earlier can be read as framed within 'economistic modernizing imaginaries' of the discourse of education (Rizvi 2005). As Giddens (1991, p.75) has put it, through their narrations they can be seen as forming 'a trajectory of development from the past to the anticipated future. The individual appropriates his past by sifting through it in the light of what is anticipated for...[the] future'. As entrepreneurs of their lives, they take charge of themselves and their life trajectories as if they are a project or a business, echoing Gee's notion of 'shape-shifting portfolio people' (Gee 2004). I return to this theme in the analysis section of this chapter.

5.2.2 Value of English-language programmes and British culture

In the previous section, I examined respondents' desire for a career-focused education unavailable at home, and I noted how this echoes the discourse of international education, specifically as expressed by the *Education UK* brand. In this and the following sections, I look at sub-themes of this central desire.

A key theme that emerged from the data was the importance of degree programmes delivered through English for international students. The concept of 'language' echoes one of the central tenets of the Education brand, of UK education providing the opportunity 'to improve your English', with English 'the world's most important business language' (Education UK website). English language skills are

highly important in both the Russian and Palestinian job markets. In Palestine, most interviewees worked with international aid organisations or relied on international organisations for funding where English is a dominant language of work. For some Palestinian students, the opportunity to perfect their English while in the UK was sometimes perceived and experienced as even more important than obtaining the credential that is a UK Masters degree, as is discussed in Chapter 7. As Maha put it: 'If you have a UK degree it means you have fluent English and new skills so that gives a great advantage to graduates of UK universities'. In Russia, this emphasis on English must be understood within the context of the Russian business world, where English is the dominant second language of business.

Natalia's case is typical of many respondents. Prior to studying in the UK, Natalia had managed her own company in a regional city of Russia. She was keen to move to Moscow where most of the major companies are based and where she could really progress her career.³¹ Natalia wanted to differentiate herself from other candidates in the job market and she was convinced that her road to career advancement was fluent English language skills, which she saw as important as her Masters degree in management.

If you want a good job in Moscow and you come from the regions, you have to stand out. You have to be dynamic and have an international MBA but of course you have to speak fluent English. (Natalia, Moscow).

Both sets of students interviewed also emphasised how they were attracted by British culture, and in particular by London, a city they saw as a cultural and economic metropolis or a 'world full of exciting life with an endless menu of things to do' as one person put it. This sentiment reflects how the UK is marketed abroad particularly by the British Council and Visit Britain.³² Russians spoke of a perceived affinity with British culture, an affinity they claimed they did not feel with other countries. In an extract from Vlad's interview that would make warm the British Council's heart, Vlad stated:

In the Soviet Union, in English class we mostly learnt about England and about London. I remember there was an exercise called 'An excursion

³¹ It is difficult for a non-Muscovite to obtain a good well-paid job in Moscow as they need a legal 'permit' to live and work in Moscow and they need the personal and business connections that will help them obtain that permit and a job. In Russia, 'the regions' refers to anywhere outside Moscow.

³² See www.visitbritain.com

around London' in one Soviet textbook. The first time I came to London, I didn't need to use a guide. I remembered from the schoolbook and I recognised all the places and street names. (Vlad, Moscow).

For Palestinians, this perceived cultural affinity was often attributed to historical and colonial links between the UK and the Middle East. Many had parents and grandparents who had studied in the UK and they trusted the quality of UK education due to this history of family and cultural links, again hinting at post-colonial aspects, and to the ways UK education is valued in the home labour market. Perhaps again reflecting the rhetoric of *Education UK*, which speaks of the UK as 'one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the world' (Education UK website), they also spoke of imagining themselves as more 'comfortable' in a multi-ethnic Britain than say in post 9/11 United States.

5.2.3 Pragmatic values: university ranking versus time and money constraints

Students took a pragmatic approach to their choice of degree programme, weighing up its perceived marketability with time and money constraints. All respondents told me that they had consulted international university league tables when choosing their institution and programme, despite many criticisms of these tables. Lynch (2006) believes that global league tables of universities are 'the most powerful indicator that market values have been incorporated into the university sector'. Marginson and Van der Wende (2006, p.308), while acknowledging the inevitability of rankings from a public policy perspective, argue that the current global university rankings have 'cemented the notion of a world university competition or market capable of being arranged in a single "league table" for comparative purposes'

For instance, Tariq admitted that his choice was dictated by the programme's rankings:

I got several offers from several universities including L..., but when I checked the rankings, I saw that M... was the best. Especially the Institute where I wanted to study. It is very well ranked and the Masters is one of the top 3 or 4 in the world in this area. That was what made me make my decision. (Tariq, Jerusalem).

Katya described a research project she completed during her Masters degree in international marketing where she had investigated why students chosen their

particular Masters programme at her university. Most students surveyed stated that they had chosen the programme based on its rankings. Vlad, a former doctor, took a clinical approach to his choice of Masters programme and he admitted to spending much time consulting the published rankings and then classifying programmes 'based on these rankings and on my own criteria, such as overall cost'.

However, it is not possible to separate students' aspirations from the reality of finite resources such as time and money. Students spoke of UK post-graduate programmes as offering good value in terms of both money and time. A UK Masters degree can be completed in one year rather than two as is the case in the US, or two or three years at home.³³ This is an aspect strongly emphasised in *Education UK* marketing, which when summarising the benefits of UK education, states that it provides 'fantastic value for money' and enables students to 'make the best use of your time' (Education UK website). Students had to take time out of their careers while studying in the UK, and thus faced an 'opportunity cost' in terms of a year's lost salary during their studies, an aspect that several mentioned. Moustafa, a self-funding student, saw his year's fees as opening the door to his future career:

My father supported my studies. It was a challenge because it was very expensive actually to study as an overseas student. But we knew that it would be one year and that it opens up the future. It would be a turning point. (Moustafa, Jerusalem).

As Khadar, a Chevening Scholar, put it:

I preferred to go to the UK rather than take a US scholarship. It is a one-year Masters in the UK instead of two or even three years in the US. I didn't want to waste time. One year is an investment for myself. I spend one year which will pass so quickly and I have a good degree from a good and well known university from a country well known for education. So I see this as revenue for myself. (Khadar, Jerusalem).

Both Moustafa and Khadar's extracts demonstrate a pragmatic business-like approach on the part of students. They emphasise that the degree only lasts one year, so while it is an expense at the time, as a 'positional good' (Marginson 1997), their degree will increase future earnings. Khadar, in particular, uses a language of business when referring to his motivations. His degree is an 'investment' and future 'revenue for himself', almost like a financial product that offers attractive revenue upon maturity.

³³ In Russia, Masters degrees or *Magistr* take two years after a four years Bachelor degree or *Bakalavr*. In Palestine, the majority of students on Masters degrees study part time and they take two to three years to complete their degree.

It is interesting that both Khadar and Moustafa studied for science-based Masters programmes in the UK in subject areas that would not immediately be associated with globalising industries.

As I analyse in the discussion section of this chapter, students' emphasis on quality, time and money is evidence of how they imagine their degree in entrepreneurial ways, and in ways that reflect the discourse of international education. They are involved in a 'capitalisation of their lives' (Masschelein & Simons 2002), as they view their education in strategic terms as an investment in themselves that will increase their future lifetime earnings. Although the following extract from the *Education UK* website only concerns MBAs, it sums up the approach of these students quite well:

An MBA...can have a huge impact on your earning ability...after graduation MBA graduates can command an average base salary increase of 20 per cent, which will continue to increase sharply. (Education UK website).

5.2.4 Personal values

As the discussion above has shown, instrumental values dominated in students' value judgments pre-study. However, students also referred to more personal or tacit motivations for this study. An analysis of students' interviews reveals a number of themes in this valuing including: broadening their horizons, growing as an individual, experiencing a new culture and taking time out personally and professionally from their lives, reflecting students' desire for what Coates (2005) has called the 'whole experience' of international education. These personal motivations became much stronger at later stages of interview when they narrated their in-study and post-study trajectories, as I describe in the next chapter, but at the pre-study stage of narrations, these tacit values appeared to be premised in students' capitalised visions of their educational degrees.

A few examples illustrate this. Elena told me it was her 'dream' to study in the UK. But when I asked her what she meant by 'dream', she told me that she needed a 'quality education' and needed to grow 'personally and professionally'. Natalia framed her more personal motivations for undertaking a Masters degree in the UK

within her desire for professional advancement. She wanted to go abroad ‘for my career, for experience, for my language skills, to widen my horizons...and to experience new things’, but most of all she wanted to get a ‘good job in Moscow’. Stas told me how he had wanted to take ‘time out’ of his busy professional life, and he saw a year spent in the UK far from the demands of business at home as just such a break from life. However, he then went on to tell me that his field was weak in Russia and that he needed to study abroad to advance his career. As Hayed put it: ‘It would be a good chance for me to learn more about my field of study and also to travel and develop personally’. Pre-study, the personal appears to be of secondary value to these students, as nice-to-have additions to their primary market-led motivations. This reflects *Education UK* marketing, which couches the tacit elements of the student experience, such as the rich multicultural experience of UK university life in economic terms, as I described in the Literature Review.

5.2.5 Summary

In this section, I have outlined the reasons cited by students for wanting to embark on postgraduate study in the UK. I have analysed this desire in terms of three instrumental themes or values that emerged from the research data and I have noted the existence of more personal or tacit values at this stage of narration, values that became stronger as students narrated the later stages of their educational trajectories. As Ong (1999, p.6) has described regarding Chinese diaspora, these students seem above all to perceive their Masters degrees ‘as strategies to accumulate capital and power’ in their ‘quest to accumulate capital and social prestige in the global arena’.

5.3 Discussion

In this section I draw on some of the theoretical resources I outlined in the Theoretical Framework to analyse students’ recollections of their motivations pre-study and how international students value their UK Masters degrees when recalling their educational experiences pre-study. The notion of ‘entrepreneurial identities’ as developed by Masschelein and his collaborators (Masschelein 2001; Masschelein & Simons 2002; Masschelein & Quaghebeur 2005) is a useful tool to interpret how

students' value judgments and identities pre-study and to interpret how these are framed by a globalised discourse of international education.

As I outlined in the Theoretical Framework, Masschelein *et al.* argue that the 'discursive horizon' of education 'interpellates' individuals to see themselves as entrepreneurial and autonomous subject and 'immunises' them against other interpretations of their education experience. Translated to the international student experience, this implies that students' value judgments and identities are interpellated by the globalised discourse of international education and thus they come to perceive of themselves and their degrees in narrow economic terms. As described by Masschelein and Simons (2002), theirs is an 'entrepreneurial self' that is

...an acting, counting and calculating self. It counts with itself, it keeps its own account and is accountable...In order to survive it is necessary to know one's resources and to use them, to put forward and constantly adapt to strategic goals, to look for improvement on the basis of permanent evaluation, to take initiative and not only to react, to be flexible and to be responsive to the changing environment. (Masschelein & Simons 2002, p.594).

As individuals, the discourse hails them to live their lives as 'enterprising subjects' 'striving to improve the "quality of life" for themselves and their families through the choices they took within the marketplace of life' (Miller & Rose 1995, p.455 cited Masschelein & Simons 2002, p.595). The 'entrepreneurial relationship to oneself' is seen as vital to their survival (Masschelein & Simons 2002, p.599-600). The concept of 'interpellation' offers a way to understand the process of subjectivation³⁴ by international students to the entrepreneurial discourse of international education at the onset of their educational trajectories. In Masschelein and Simons' (2002) view:

We are increasingly called 'stakeholders', and more specifically, 'entrepreneurial individuals'...as 'autonomous', 'responsive', and of course, entrepreneurial...this specific form of *subjectivation* (this production of subjects), which is related to the totalisation of this global space, involves what we would call a kind of *immunisation*, and...this also affects our thinking and our ideas about education. (Masschelein & Simons 2002, pp.590-591).

When recalling their motivations pre-study, students appear to adopt a future-oriented entrepreneurial identity of 'an active student, the active citizen' (Masschelein

³⁴ I use this term 'subjectivation' (or *assujettissement*) in the spirit of Judith Butler (1997, p. 83) who interpreted it from Foucault's writings as denoting both becoming a subject and the process of subjection: 'one inhabits the figure of autonomy only by becoming subject to a power'.

2001, p.13) in their approach to choosing their degree and to their studies. Students prioritise the instrumental in valuing their degree and they see their degree as providing them with what Khadar described as the 'tools' needed to progress their career within a globalised world. They want to study with 'experienced professionals' who teach at UK universities, and who will perhaps open the door to these careers. They want degrees that are 'market-focused' and practically based and that will provide them with the skill-set they need for their careers. They want degrees delivered through English, the 'language of international business'. They want a high quality degree that delivers the best value in time and money. They see their degrees as an 'investment in human capital' (Schultz 1971, p.24 cited Masschelein & Simons 2002, p.594) and they perceive this educational investment as providing for substantial future profits. In recalling these motivations, international students are perhaps subject to 'continual immunisation' within the discourse of international education. They see their Masters degree as a way of advancing their individual position in this marketplace of life. Their entrepreneurial relationship to themselves is vital for their 'survival' (Masschelein & Simons 2002) as career-motivated people responding 'fluidly and opportunistically to changing political-economic conditions' (Ong 1999, p, 6). So Natalia and Maria, among many others, see their internationally accredited degree as vital for their career progression at home. They are focused on their educational mobility as 'strategies to accumulate capital and power' (*Ibid.*).

I have noted throughout this chapter how students' comments reflect the marketing promises of *Education UK*. They appear to have internalised the values of the discourse of international education. To use Gee's (1997, p.7) analogy, their language-in-use (the small 'd' of discourse) reflects the Discourse (the big 'D' of discourse) of a globalised international education. This Discourse provides them with the terms, the categories and the truths they bring to their value judgments of a UK Masters degree pre-study, and the entrepreneurial identity they display. Students such as Oleg see the UK as a global centre for an 'exciting and vibrant business environment' (Education UK website), referring to 'Innovation', at the heart of the *Education UK* brand. Students speak of the 'quality' of UK degrees, a quality they felt was reflected in the UK's reputation for higher education and individual institutions' rankings in international league tables. Students such as Natalia were

attracted by degrees delivered through English 'the world's most important business language' (Education UK website). Students like Moustafa, Tania and Khadar viewed their UK degree as offering good value in terms of time and money or as stated on the *Education UK* website 'Choosing the UK means you only have to pay tuition fees for one year and you'll be back in the workplace before you know it'. Students' recollections of their pre-study motivations evoke *Education UK*'s by-line 'Innovative. Individual. Inspirational'. They sought a market-focused and innovative education that would progress them and inspire them as individuals in their future globalised careers. They are like Gee's (2004) 'shape-shifting portfolio people' who seek to manage themselves as entrepreneurial agents as if their lives and their careers were a project or a business. Their motivations pre-study are recalled 'in terms of which they can define themselves as successful now and worthy of more success later' (Gee 2004, p.105). They construct their identities in 'economistic modernizing imaginaries...within the logic of consumption, under the new global economic conditions' (Rizvi 2005, p.9).

In this section, I have analysed students' motivations for studying in the UK in terms of an 'entrepreneurial identity' that is embodied in the discourse of international education, and particularly as communicated to international students via the *Education UK* brand. Students can be viewed as interpellated by this discourse and immunised by it when they embarked on their international education studies, as recollected in interview.

5.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have described how students adopt an entrepreneurial approach to choosing their Masters degree, one that focuses on how the degree will improve their employment and career prospects in their home employment marketplaces. In recalling and reflecting on their pre-study attitudes in interview several years after they embarked on study in the UK, students can be perceived as involved in a 'reflexive project' and a 'trajectory of development from the past to the anticipated future' (Giddens 1991, p.75). Their narrations of their attitudes pre-study reflect the discourse of international education in UK policy and particularly that of *Education UK* marketing as they sought to 'build' themselves for their projected professional

futures. In theoretical terms, I borrowed from Masschelein *et al.*'s concepts of entrepreneurial identities to analyse students' narrations. I claimed that students can be seen as 'interpellated' by the discourse of international education to take an entrepreneurial, individualised view of their education as a 'kind of enterprise' to improve the quality of their lives 'through the learning they accomplish and the choices they make in the marketplace of life' (Masschelein & Simons 2002, p.595). In the next chapter, I relate students' reflections on the next phase of their educational trajectories, their in-study experiences, a period closer in time to their pre-study narrations. I describe how in their narrations they both reflect and go beyond the entrepreneurial identity that came out so strongly in this chapter.

6 Value of a Masters degree in-study

In England I discovered lots of new dishes. It's not that the basic ingredients were different, they are the same ones as we use here. But they just use them differently to make different dishes. And that's a bit like I see my education. (Tania, Moscow).

6.1 Summary

In this chapter, I analyse students' valuing of their Masters degree during their studies in the UK as narrated to me during interview. I examine the emerging complexity of students' educational identities as they both reflect the entrepreneurial identity described in the last chapter and convey more complex value judgments and identities. This chapter refers to data obtained at the middle part of interviews, when I asked informants to recall their experience of living and studying in the UK. It responds to the secondary research questions of this thesis: How do these students interpret and value their experiences of studying in the UK in their narrations? And how do these students' value judgments and identities shift as they narrate the three stages of their educational trajectories: pre-study, in-study and post-study? It also refers to the research question referred to in the last chapter: How is the entrepreneurial discourse of international education significant in these students' narrated value judgments and shifting identities?

Three themes emerged strongly in my analysis of interviews as informants recalled their experiences of living and studying in the UK: valuing of the vocational knowledge obtained during their UK degree; valuing of the self-directed learning approach of UK pedagogy; and the importance of non-academic aspects of their UK experience. Rather like Tania in the opening quotation of this chapter who spoke of discovering lots of new dishes that used familiar ingredients, they discovered a new approach to education in the UK. In the Discussion section of this chapter, I delve into my theoretical toolbox to analyse students' narrations. I argue that in students' valuing of skills and vocational knowledge, they continue to exhibit elements of an 'entrepreneurial identity' as described by Masschelein *et al.* (Masschelein 2001; Masschelein & Simons 2002; Masschelein & Quaghebeur 2005) and Gee (2004).

However, their valuing is more complex than pre-study. In analysing this complexity, I draw on concepts of narrative analysis I introduced earlier.

6.2 Valuing of Masters degree in-study: from instrumental to tacit values

6.2.1 Introduction

When recalling their in-study experience, students' 'language in use' (Gee 1999, p.7) continues to reflect the big 'D' discourse of globalised international education and that of entrepreneurial identities as I explore in this chapter. They display 'active, counting and calculating' selves (Masschelein & Simons 2002, p.595) in their continuing emphasis on instrumental aspects of their educational experiences as a way to develop their market potential post-study. Yet they can also be seen to go beyond this discourse when they recall their actual experiences of studying in the UK as opposed to how they imagined these experiences pre-study, and as more personal aspects of their experiences of their student life at a UK HEI move centre stage.

6.2.2 Value of vocational education in UK

As I explored in the previous chapter, one of the main motivations for students' embarking on Masters degrees in the UK was that they perceived UK higher education as offering a career-focused market-led education not available at home. When recalling their in-study experiences, students again spoke of obtaining 'vocational knowledge' in the UK, which contrasted with the 'theoretical knowledge' at home. However, they could also be seen to reassess the value of the educational approach in their home HE systems as I discuss below.

Students considered that in the UK the emphasis was not just on 'building lots of knowledge' as at home, but rather on learning how to apply this knowledge in real-life professional situations. They continued to reflect the rhetoric of *Education UK* that 'UK postgraduate qualifications let employers know at a glance that you've got the skills they're looking for' (Education UK website). For example, Elena, who studied international marketing, contrasted the highly academic and theoretical

knowledge she obtained in the Russian HE system with her experience of HE in the UK.

The Russian system is just too academic. You get lots of information but there is little concrete information. A Russian graduate can't do anything when they start a job. They need to be taught everything, and I see that in my work every day... In the UK your education better prepares you for your working life... the emphasis was not on the theoretical aspects of marketing but rather on real-life practice. (Elena, Moscow).

In this excerpt, Elena appears to value her UK degree because it means it 'prepared you for your working life'. It provides the finite knowledge employers want. Her emphasis is clearly on 'a degree for a job'. Vlad too saw his UK MBA degree as enabling him to apply his Russian education:

I already had a Masters degree from Russia but my knowledge was very fragmented. I really felt I needed to unite the fragmented knowledge in some way into a more holistic view. My Masters in L... allowed me to make out of this mess something so that I could have an understanding of how business works and how corporations develop business, so that I could apply this knowledge to real life. (Vlad, Moscow).

Time and again students expressed similar sentiments. Interestingly, this was often the case for students like Vlad who already held postgraduate degrees in similar disciplines, such as Anton, Katya, Maria, Alexander, Maha and Natalia. Vlad's description of his in-study experience recalls McMurty's (1991, p.213) critique of market-led education where the measure of excellence is 'how well a product line is made to sell' and how 'problem-free' it is for its buyer rather than about 'how deep and broad the problems it poses are to the who one has it' where 'the higher the standards are, the less it can be immediate in yield.' Vlad's view of UK education would appear to fall into McMurty's (1991) marketised category of education, where he gains non-problematic market-relevant knowledge with immediate use in business life.

It is perhaps inevitable that students should take such an instrumental approach to their education given that they were all studying on one-year professionally focused Masters degrees. However, other valuing and identities emerged in their narrations of their in-study experiences that went beyond the instrumental. Moustafa's interview is a case in point. A science graduate from a Middle Eastern university, he studied for a Masters degree in science in the UK. It is worth quoting from Moustafa's interview at length as he described his experience in-study.

In the UK I learnt a lot through experiments...Whereas in J..., I didn't have a chance to learn a lot in the labs. We studied more mathematics and concepts of physics. So it was more mathematical and more theoretical knowledge. At the University of M... [in the UK] there was a stronger practical part to our learning. There were very well equipped labs.

...I got to see things I had never seen before. I had never got to work with real equipment before. It is different reading about this kind of stuff and then actually doing it. Part of the problem is that there were not the same facilities in J... But also, it is a different teaching style.

...I could see that my Middle East education also made me a strong person in the British system. I was the best at Mathematics in my department whereas the UK kids had problems with that. But they had the practical side though that I didn't have.

...In the University of M..., I could see that the lecturer spends a lot of time doing research and not just teaching and that has an influence on the students, whereas at the University of J..., it is just a teaching job. (Moustafa, Jerusalem).

Like Elena and Vlad's narrations, Moustafa's narration also shows his instrumental valuing when he commends the more applicable, research-intensive, and 'innovative' education that he obtained in the UK as opposed to the more theoretical education at home. He values having active researchers as teachers, having access to modern well-equipped research laboratories and getting to grips with the practical side of his subject. His narration reflects the 'innovation' concept at the heart of the *Education UK* brand and statements such as 'UK universities are world-leaders in cutting edge research, with state-of-the-art facilities and extensive library resources' (Education UK website). Yet in this excerpt, Moustafa can also be seen to reassess the value of his home education. He spoke of how he had a better understanding of the fundamental principles of his subject, an understanding that his UK educated co-students lacked. This made him a 'strong' student on his UK Masters degree, perhaps also stronger in the job market at home. Some Russian students made similar claims to Moustafa. Tania spoke of the UK education system as

...more flexible, more oriented to market needs or to changes in research. An article is published in a journal one day and you read it in class the next day. That doesn't happen in Russia. (Tania, Moscow).

Again this reflects *Education UK's* 'innovation' theme. But like Moustafa, Tania went on to commend the 'good fundamental knowledge' obtained in Russia that she perceived as not part of the UK HE experience.

As Tania and Moustafa's narrations show, students' valuing of their in-study experiences are more multi-faceted than the narrowly entrepreneurial valuing narrated pre-study, as they both commend the applicable research-led vocational teaching in the UK, yet come to re-assess the value of their home education systems. They may be seen as involved in a process of 'rearrang[ing] their skills, experiences and skills creatively (that is to shape-shift their identities) in order to define themselves anew (as competent and worthy) for changed circumstances' (Gee 2004, p.105). In the next chapter, I discuss how for Russians in particular, employers appeared to value home education more than overseas education, and these narrations in-study can be seen as pre-empting this as they begin to reflect on the labour market 'value' of their home and overseas education.

In addition, many students spoke of their difficulties in obtaining relevant work experience in the UK during and after their studies, experience that would have added value to their degree in the employment market at home,³⁵ and to their overall experience of being in the UK, as I discuss in the next section. This finding reflects Coates (2005) research on Chinese students who found that these students wanted to work in the UK, as they saw this as part of the 'whole experience' of being in the UK. An excerpt from Hayed's interview highlights students' difficulties:

I wanted something related to my degree and in my area of interest and that's not easy to get. I wasn't prepared to work as a waitress or in translation...what's the point? It is not related to my field. I wanted a job that teaches me something that's related to my course. There was actually no facility in the college to help people like me get jobs. (Hayed, Jerusalem).

Hayed's interview refers to challenges that many of the informants faced. As mature postgraduates, students often had several years experience in their professional field often at management level and were unwilling to take on the low-skilled service jobs that they saw their British counterparts do. They wanted work experience relevant to their academic studies that would add value to their degrees when they returned home. They faced administrative difficulties obtaining jobs and were disappointed with the poor career advice for international students at their institutions. As Hayed

³⁵ Most students who took part in this research were entitled to work for twenty hours a week during their studies in the UK, and some were entitled to work in the UK after their Masters degree under special graduate schemes including: the Science and Engineering Graduates Scheme (replaced by the International Graduates Scheme in 2007) and the Fresh Talent: Working in Scotland Scheme (see www.ukcisa.org.uk).

put it they felt that 'people like me', in other words non-British students, were low in the priority list for such support services at their universities and were perhaps seen as a difficult 'other' by these services. These difficulties are cited in UKCOSA's (2004, p.57) survey that found UK employers are often unwilling to employ international students (also see BC 2006a). Bailey (2005/6) has referred to this as 'the thorny issue of employment' where international students see work experience as an integral part of their UK education (Bailey 2005/6), yet the National Insurance (NI) number Catch 22' means this is often impossible (see also Sovic 2008).

In these narrations, students go beyond the clear-cut narrations I described about their pre-study period, which firmly placed their Masters education as providing them with a 'degree for a job'. Their narrated valuing in-study are more ambiguous and complex, as they continue to commend the market-led vocational approach in the UK, yet they also regret the lack of work opportunities which would have added greater market value to their degrees. They also begin to reassess the value of their home education systems, a theme that I explore further in the next chapter.

6.2.3 Value of becoming an independent learner

In this section, I describe students' appreciation of and difficulties with the problem-solving self-directed pedagogic approach in the UK.

Students spoke of becoming autonomous learners in the UK where most encountered self-directed problem-based learning for the first time. The positive aspects of this experience are perhaps best illustrated by a number of excerpts from interviews:

In Palestine, they would say to you read these books, and the exam will be on them. But in the UK you read what you want. The reading list is so long that you could not possibly read everything... When you read more materials, you get more knowledge on different aspects of your area, not just on matters you are researching at a particular moment. You expand your knowledge. In the UK maybe you get deeper knowledge. (Khadar, Jerusalem).

You are expected to do it all yourself. You are supposed to be proactive. Lecturers are just there for guidance and to give an overview about the subject. It's up to you to read the literature and to then go back to the lecturer with questions. In Russia they chew everything for you. They give

you everything. You have more standardised knowledge maybe here. (Yulia, Moscow).

Here it is expected that the lecturers have better knowledge than the students. In the UK everyone brought their own experience to the classroom. (Rana, Jerusalem).

In Russia, the system is pushing you to study. But in the UK, it shows you the way. You have to be self-motivated and push yourself. You are responsible for your own results... This is very important for the development of a person in general. (Vlad, Moscow).

These excerpts can be analysed as revealing a number of themes that build on the central theme of becoming independent learners. First, students had to take ownership for their learning in the UK, unlike at home where their learning was more didactic. They had to learn to work independently, to become 'active students who take responsibility for their learning and who develop their learning capacity, their ability "to learn to learn"' (Masschelein 2001, p.5). Second, their learning was not 'directed ...[but] only...facilitated by appropriate learning environments and by mentors' (*ibid.*). They perceived that this approach to learning provided a 'deeper knowledge' as Khadar put it than at home as it encouraged them to push the boundaries of their knowledge, rather than focusing on passing exams. During their home educational experiences, the emphasis was on 'prescribed knowledge', where they were expected to attend lectures, read the list of textbooks, and then demonstrate their knowledge of the subject in an examination, rather than show any true understanding or analysis. Third, many saw their UK degree as their first 'adult' experience of learning, where their relationships with their lecturers and tutors were that of equals. Fourthly, felt that they had grown as individuals through their in-study experience as Vlad stated, and become individuals who are 'self-motivated' and 'responsible for your own results'. These positive experiences of independent learning are reflected in other research studies (see Kingston & Forland 2004; Sovic 2008).

Seale (1999, p.73) has written of the importance of presenting 'disconfirming evidence' in data to improve the quality of research. This is important when analysing my field data, as students' narrations are complex and conflicting as they both commended the self-directed learning ethos in the UK and were not always

comfortable with the business-like nature of this approach. Masschelein and Simons (2002, p.601) write about how such an approach to learning can be seen as evidence of an enterprising or entrepreneurial self where 'autonomy, self-responsibility and entrepreneurship' are 'learnable competencies' (Masschelein & Simon 2002, p.601) to prepare individuals for their labour environments and society. While, as I described in the last chapter, they took an entrepreneurial approach to their education pre-study as 'consumers' of this educational experience, in-study as 'scholars' they appear to have some difficulties with this economic approach to their education. For instance, students felt there was little value put on their home academic cultures and conventions. It was up to them as 'enterprising subjects' to fit into the UK way of doing things if they were going to 'survive' (Masschelein & Simons 2002); the system was not going to adapt to their needs. There is a substantial literature on international student 'adaptation' or 'transition' as I referred to in my Literature Review (Bailey 2005/6; Brown & Holloway, 2008; Spurling, 2007; Cortazzi & Jin 1997; Gil & Rania 1999; Hellstén 20002; Kingston & Forland 2004; Leonard *et al.* 2003; Luzio-Lockett 1998; Mehdizadeh & Scott 2005; Peters 2005; Ryan & Carroll 2005; Sovic 2008; Turner 2006). Luzio-Lockett (1998) writes of the 'squeezing effect', where international students are expected to 'squeeze' into the constraints of the conventions of UK academia. Different cultures have differing academic writing conventions and different languages have different discourse patterns (Bailey, 2005/6; Peters 2005), yet these do not 'fit' the UK academic norms. This leads authors such as Ryan and Carroll (2005) and Harris (1997) to urge HEIs to be more responsive to international students' needs and to recognise the diversity of their learning approaches.

Many students spoke of the challenges they faced adapting to the UK academic culture, which as understood by Cortazzi and Jin (1997, p.77) implies 'systems of beliefs, expectations and cultural practices about how to perform academically'. When writing essays or examinations, they had to learn how to build an argument and to express it in written form. This was a new experience for most students as few had any experience of British-style academic essays.³⁶ They felt there was little guidance

³⁶ In Russia, the standard essay is a *referat*, a long unstructured work where the objective is to show students have read lots of books and have gained knowledge, rather than be expected to make an argument. Examinations tend to be orally based. Students are given a published list of topics prior to the

from their tutors as to what was expected of them academically, rather they had to somehow 'try to understand what the professor wants from me in my essay or exam', as Tariq put it. Alexander, who already held a Russian doctorate qualification, spoke of his frustrations during his initial weeks on his business Masters degree. He prepared assignments at what he perceived as being at a 'high academic level' and tutors told him they were unstructured and meandering. He complained about the 'lack of flexibility' in tutors' marking and did not understand why he could not argue his case for better marks. It is interesting that later in Alexander's interview, he told me that he liked the 'logic of the UK methods of teaching and thinking' and that he had benefited greatly in his professional life from this approach, reflecting the shifting nature of his appreciation of UK academic life.

Lina spoke of similar difficulties. She struggled to 'find a way of communicating my ideas to the tutors'. A proficient English speaker, Lina's problems were not linguistic, rather as she put it:

It was really important to adapt to a new culture of speaking and this was a gradual process for me...I had to be straightforward and to the point, and that's totally different to the way I am used to doing things...[In Palestine] we don't conceptualise things like in England, we philosophise. (Lina, Jerusalem).

Tania and Alexander told me about their initial 'honeymoon' period in their first semester as they had so few contact hours, before they realised how much work they were supposed to do independently of the classroom and they struggled to catch up. Alexander felt the academic level was pitched low as he had few contact hours, and it was only months later that he realised he was experiencing a new approach to learning. Tania related how she obtained a reading list in the first weeks of term that referred to 'essential' and 'optional' literature. At first she just read literature on the 'essential' list believing that was all that was required of her, and she later regretted how much learning she had 'lost' in her first semester. Hellstén's (2002) research of international students found that 'the process of enculturation into the academic knowledge and implicit disciplinary 'know-how' is often perceived as unavailable to new students'. It is a process, she argues, that is acquired by these students through

examination, and on the day of the examination, they choose a card and make an oral presentation on the one these topics (British Council, personal communication).

trial and error, a finding that coincides with Turner's (2006) research on Chinese post-graduates at UK HEIs (see also Cortazzi & Jin 1997; Sovic 2008).

Commentators have noted the increasingly assertive attitudes among international students who pay full-cost fees and where 'studying abroad is less an end in its own right rather than a vehicle for securing economic advantage' (Harris 1997, p.36). As Colin Gilligan has put it 'The new student "consumer" will be far more demanding...more sceptical, more inclined to complain, more experimental and with better access to information' (Gill 2008a). My informants, both scholarship and self-funded, were highly aware of their status as international students as 'consumers', of how much their UK education cost and of their intrinsic 'value' to the UK HE system. They criticised the high cost of life in the UK, and particularly that of student services, contrasting with their pre-study impression of the UK as 'value for money'. Some spoke of the large numbers of students on their courses, numbers they felt were financially driven (see also UKCOSA 2004 for similar findings). While most students spoke highly of UK academics, some were unhappy with their tutors. Some felt their tutors favoured home students over international students, echoing Hayed's 'people like me' comment I referred to earlier. They resented this, and reminded me how much their academic studies had cost them as non-Europeans. As Stas put it: 'they use international students as a cow to milk'. Khadar went on to say: 'As international students, we felt that some of the teachers were helping the British students more than the international students'.

Sometimes their difficulties with tutors were due perhaps to a mismatch between their expectations and realities of tutors' roles in their institution (see also Sovic 2008, pp.23-24). On the one hand, students called tutors by their first names and they felt like their 'friends', a new experience for these students from high power distance index (PDI) cultures to use Hofstede's (1980) term.³⁷ Yet at the same time, communication with tutors was often more formalised than at home. Anton spoke of

³⁷ Hofstede (1980) claims that Arab states such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia have Power Distance Indexes (PDI) of 80, similar to what could be expected in Palestine. In the UK, the PDI is a much lower 35 (see www.geert-hofstede.com). In Russia, researchers using Hofstede's dimensions have estimated PDIs of 92 (Bollinger 1994) and 68 (Naumov & Puffer 2000) respectively.

feeling 'on his own' in the UK. His relationship with lecturers was professional, and business-like, and he missed the personal touch he was used to at home.³⁸

The first time I met my tutor he just said straight out. "I'm paid to spend 6 hours with you. So we can meet 6 times for one hour, or 12 times for half an hour. And every time you send an email and I reply that will be considered half an hour." In Russia it is totally different. Your academic tutor feels responsibility for you and helps you. In the UK you have to do everything yourself. (Anton, Moscow).

It is interesting to note Anton's difficulties with this business-like approach of his lecturers, yet as I related in the last chapter, he took a business-like or entrepreneurial approach when embarking on international study 'for my road in life, for my career'. Despite these reservations, Anton felt he had benefited enormously from the independence he was forced to develop during the programme. 'It was an amazing experience', he told me.

In this section, I have described the multifaceted and sometimes conflicting nature of students' valuing of the self-directed learning. They both commend the individualised self-directed learning ethos in the UK and are uncomfortable with the business-like nature this approach. They are both 'consumers' of their educational experience as they seek learning that can progress their position in life, yet also 'scholars' who feel alienated at times by such a business-like attitude to learning. Students appear to be constantly shifting between valuing that are consumerist and entrepreneurial focused on the instrumental outcomes of their learning and valuing more focused on their position as students of the academy engaged in a process of learning.

6.2.4 Value of life outside the academic programme: 'all the other reasons'

Whereas when recalling their initial motivations or valuing of a UK degree, students focused on the instrumental, at this stage of interview they put a new emphasis on non-academic aspects of their degree. As Rizvi (2000, p.221) has stated, students' experiences of international education 'help[s] reshape student identities, their cultural tastes and professional aspirations' in ways that go beyond those

³⁸ Teacher-student ratios are lower in Russia than in the UK at 13 to 1 in Russia rather than 18 to 1 in the UK (IES 2004). At the same time Russian institutions do not have the Student Services of UK HEIs (British Council, Personal Communication).

imagined pre-study. Viktor put this process succinctly: 'It's not just about the degree, it's about the atmosphere, all the other reasons for being there.'

There were many facets to this non-formal experience. Students spoke of their period in-study as a time to develop personally. It was a time of making a network of international friends and learning from these friends. It was about learning about life in a new culture. Khadar described this experience well:

It was a chance for me to study life, and to teach myself and to see how people live and think and interact and to see their perspectives on life. It is the only occasion in life really to interact with people of your own age in another country. This was very important for me, maybe more important than studying. For study, I can go out and get a book and read it, but I think for life I have to live it. (Khadar, Jerusalem).

Khadar's statement here marks a change from the initial part of his interview, when he focused on how the degree would help him to 'build myself' and 'enhance my career'. Here Khadar spoke of the actual experience of living in the UK and interacting with other students as the most valuable aspect of their Masters degree. He appears to conceive of his experience of mobility as a personal learning trajectory rather than as just as part of his 'quest to accumulate capital and social prestige in the global arena' (Ong 1999, p.6). His valuing seems to be shaped as Rizvi (2005, p.4) puts it 'by new cultural experiences' of education in the UK 'in ways that are neither uniform nor predictable'.

Only six the students interviewed worked during or after their postgraduate studies, given the difficulties I referred to earlier. Vlad worked in a medical call centre, Yousef in the Students Union, Wassim as a researcher, Anton with a fashion company, Rana in a magazine as part of the work-module component of her journalism degree and Yulia spent several years in the UK working after she graduated. Several others engaged in voluntary activities. Through these activities, they met 'real English people', as several put it, individuals who became their friends. In contrast, many students found it difficult to be-friend their British co-students, who they often found distant and closed to contacts with international students (see also Newman 2007; Sovic 2008; UKCOSA 2004). Through their work, they came to understand UK life, and they felt more integrated in their communities. As Wassim put it:

I really got to know the UK during my work as a researcher...I got to understand what they think about things and how they view events, government actions, what people do, their relationships with neighbours and I think this experience was the most important learning experience. It gave me a real view of how English people live. (Wassim, Jerusalem).

However, while this experience was incredibly enriching personally for these students, this personal experience cannot be entirely separated from the entrepreneurial as post-study many felt this work experience carried more value in their home markets than their degree as I explore in the next chapter.

Other students spoke of the value of going beyond their academic degrees and their institutions, in ways that were just about personal enrichment. Several availed of additional courses available at their HEIs to maximise the personal learning experience while in the UK. Students spoke of managing their study timetable so that they could find time to go outside their academic studies to travel or to engage in cultural activities. A few told me that they chose to live outside traditional student residences so that they could really experience British life. For instance, Lina shared an apartment with two English professional women. She felt that as an older student, she had more affinity with these professionals than with students, and that by living with other British people she would have a better understanding of UK culture.

For Palestinian students particularly, this non-academic experience was often experienced as more important than their academic studies. They spoke of the 'freedom' that they experienced in the UK, a freedom that most tasted for the first time. There were no political issues and no family constraints or pressures, and they felt this absence as a release. As Wassim put it: 'I think that the freedom you have over there is something wonderful, and something you get attached to'. Hayed went further in her narrative:

In the UK there are more options. You can do what you want and be who you want to be...I loved living in London. You have everything. You can just pick and choose. There is an endless menu of things. That was a real freedom for me. (Hayed, Jerusalem).

Like all the Palestinian women interviewed, Rana lived alone away from family for the first time when she was the UK. She admitted that the year was not always easy and that she had periods when she was lonely and homesick. But most important to her was that:

I did it...this was a year of personal growth. That was the most important that for me, learning to be independent. I learnt I had nothing to fear. (Rana, Jerusalem).

Lina put this sentiment particularly poignantly during her interview.

One of the important things about studying in the UK was to build my self-confidence and my esteem as an individual belonging to a country with a strong culture and traditions. (Lina, Jerusalem).

She felt she had come to a new understanding of and a new respect for 'home' through living away from this home for a period of time. She told me that she embarked on her degree during the Second Intifada.³⁹ In recounting her pre-study motivations, she had valued her Masters degree in instrumentalist terms telling me how she had chosen a programme that would provide her with the specific skills she needed for her career. But when I chatted with her after our formal interview, she admitted that she had viewed her UK Masters degree more as a survival mechanism to take a break from the emotional strain of home life:

Before I went to the UK, I said to my mother, "I need to get out of here for a while"...It was just all too much for me here at that time. (Lina, Jerusalem).

These narratives are rich in identity issues. Living in the UK, students had the freedom to grow as individuals and they could access identities unavailable to them in the Arab world, an 'endless menu' of identities to quote Hayed. As Hayed went on to say, no one worried that as a Muslim woman, she smoked, went bareheaded and lived alone. She could become the person she wanted to be. This is something that has stood her in good stead since her return home. Despite living in a male-dominated Arab world, she told me she is 'no longer hesitant to give my opinion' as a woman in professional or private spheres.

Students also referred to their studies in the UK as a chance to discover new cultures, to become more multi-cultural and to come to a better understanding of how they and their nationality is viewed in the UK. However, while the *Education UK* rhetoric couches this multi-cultural experience in economic terms as I explored in the Literature Review, noting how this means international graduates will be more able to work in an international environment, for many students this experience was more personal. Students relished having the opportunity to live in such a multi-cultural

³⁹ The Second Intifada or 'uprising' began in 2000 and carried on until around 2006 in Israel and Palestine.

cosmopolitan environment. This was an experience many saw in terms of personal growth and understandings. Khadar embarked on his studies in 2005 during a period of anti-Western sentiment in the Muslim world.⁴⁰ Studying in the UK meant that he had a chance to 'talk with people who don't think like their governments'. He came to understand Western society behind the headlines, a society where 'most people are supporting us and with us, and are supporting peace and democracy and prosperity'. He saw this understanding as one of the most valuable aspects international study. Many Palestinians were initially nervous about going to live in the UK as Arabs, as they expected to encounter racism. Despite some official red tape,⁴¹ they spoke of experiencing the UK as a multi-ethnic society that was welcoming to them as Arabs and open to their traditions.

I came across no discrimination in the UK. No one attacked me. I am really happy to say this. Even with the people in the street, I had no difficulties... I had no problems at all. (Tariq, Jerusalem).

It is interesting that Tariq specifically told me 'no one attacked me', implying perhaps that he expected this to be the case despite the *Education UK* rhetoric. Maha, a practising Muslim, related how a university manager was sensitive to her religion and her traditions, and helped her find a room in a single-sex apartment. She described her friendships with other international students as 'one of the most interesting things about living in the UK'. Yurat, a member of a Russian ethnic minority spoke of how interested most British people he met were in his culture and his origins, although this curiosity was not shared by the British students on his degree programme. Students also referred to the professional benefits of this multicultural experience. As Anton stated:

For me 85% of what I got out of my Masters was from the environment, the people I met and studied with. I studied with students from countries all over the world, and that international outlook was very important. I learnt how they work. If I were honest, I think I probably learnt more from the other students than from the teachers. (Anton, Moscow).

The mix of entrepreneurial and non-entrepreneurial values in Anton's excerpt is notable. He relished the opportunity to develop transnational friendship networks as it meant he 'learnt how they work' so that he could, as Rizvi's (2005) puts it, become

⁴⁰ Violent anti-Western demonstrations were held in many Muslim countries following the publication of twelve editorial cartoons mostly depicting the Islamic prophet Mohammed in the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* on 30 September 2005.

⁴¹ One Palestinian student spoke of problems when registering at the local police station when he arrived in the UK. Police refused to write his nationality as 'Palestinian' and he was described as 'no nationality'.

a 'savvier player[s] in a globally networked economy and society'. This different tone in Anton's narrations and those of Khadar, Tariq, Maha and Yurat can partly be explained by their choice of professions; the Palestinians all studied for non-business degrees and work in the non profit sector and Yurat is very involved in international humanitarian law, whereas Anton is a high-flying manager in a globalised industry. They are also perhaps indicative of different cosmopolitan identities; Anton's a more 'consumerist cosmopolitanism' and the others perhaps closer to a 'cosmopolitan solidarity' not confined to economic imaginaries (Rizvi 2005, p.9).

Of all the students interviewed, Yousef was probably at the extreme in his embrace of the non-academic side of his UK life and he relished his momentary taste of freedom. Yousef had never left the Gaza Strip before his UK Masters degree and he spent most of our ninety-minute interview relating his activities outside his studies. He worked for the Students Union, was elected Student Representative for international students and met students of all religions, ethnicities, nationalities and political views through this work. He rented a room with an English woman and through her came to feel part of the community where he lived. His detailed recounting of his experience in the UK was told at break-neck speed, a reflection of the pace he appears to have lived life. For most of the interview, Yousef barely spoke about his academic activities, and as if as an aside, he told me near the end of interview that he was awarded a distinction in his Masters degree.

In this section, I have highlighted how non-academic aspects became more important as students narrated their experience in-study. This was a time of personal growth and discovery as lived in the UK with a network of other internationals. Yet aspects of this personal growth journey are also entrepreneurial. While students' value judgments continue to be framed by the discourse of international education, their overall valuing are richer and more complex than those imagined in this discourse. The next section analyses how this is so.

6.3 Discussion

In this discussion, I draw on a number of theoretical resources to analyse students' narrations of life as a student at a UK university and to explore students'

shifting value judgments and identities. I refer again to Masschelein's *et al.*'s writings about the 'entrepreneurial self' (Masschelein 2001; Masschelein & Simons 2002; Masschelein & Quaghebeur 2005) and to Gee's (2004) concept of 'shape-shifting portfolio people' to interpret students' continuing emphasis on the economic 'usefulness' of their international education within the global economy. I then refer briefly to writings on identity (Bloom & Munro 1995) and narrative analysis to try to understand the shifts in students' value judgments in-study as narrated in interview (Chase 2005; Goodson and Sikes 2001). Together these theoretical resources help me to interrupt the 'common sense' (Luke 1995, p.20) of the economic-led discourse of international education and to 'hear' the 'messy, uncertain, multi-voiced' (Denzin & Lincoln 2005, p.26) stories within students' narratives.

When narrating the second stage of their educational trajectories, students adhered to an entrepreneurial identity as I have described in this chapter. Their narrated identities continue to be framed by the discourse of international education, which 'interpellates' them 'to behave as active, competent self-determining human beings' (Masschelein & Quaghebeur 2005, p.61) as was the case pre-study. They restated many of the value judgments they related pre-study, such as the usefulness of 'concrete' and 'practical' knowledge they obtained in the UK, as Elena and Moustafa related, rather than the more theoretically based learning of their home education systems. They commended an education described by Tania as 'oriented to market needs.' They appreciated the self-directed learning ethos in the UK and students such as Khadar, Yulia, Rana and Vlad spoke of their lecturers as providing the 'tools' for learning, and the skills and attitudes they needed to advance their professional lives in a globalised world.

In their narratives, students can be perceived as independent, autonomous, self-responsible, emancipated and self-determining and 'living life as a kind of enterprise' as they seek to develop their 'human capital' (Masschelein & Simons 2002). They have a productive and entrepreneurial attitude to their learning and to their future. Like Gee's (2004, p.105) 'shape-shifting portfolio people', they appear to be engaged in a process of developing themselves like a 'business' or a 'project' where they 'must manage their own risky trajectories through building a variety of skills, experiences and achievements' and always be ready to 'rearrange' their 'portfolios' of

skills or 'to shape-shift into different identities' according to the needs of the marketplace. They experienced their degrees as linked to 'real-life practice' as Elena put it, and as helping them, as Vlad stated, to understand 'how business works'. They were disappointed at the paucity of relevant work experience opportunities when in the UK since such work experience would have added to their 'portfolios'. They spoke of themselves in terms similar to Masschelein's (2001, p.13) 'active learners' in the learning society, where the emphasis is on 'flexibility and adjustment to permanently changing demands'. They wanted to obtain a practical market-relevant education and relevant learning skills so that they can become 'energetic, working, autonomous individuals who are ready to change and learn' (Masschelein 2001, p.14) during and beyond their educational trajectories. They appreciated the UK pedagogic approach, as it enabled them to 'learn to learn', a skill that they will constantly need in their lives, where as 'flexible' workers they must constantly 'move[s] and retrain[s] to meet [the] altered market demands' (Schotle 2000, p.301) of today's knowledge-based economies.

Masschelein (2001) describes this approach in terms of Ardent's (1958) 'zoé' or 'bare life', where life is sustained through labour and consumption and where the individual's function is to fill needs and to survive, as opposed to the intrinsically relational 'bios' or 'life of someone'. As 'animal laborans' within this 'zoé', students' learning is reduced to 'acquiring skills of cognitive self-regulation' and it is dictated by constantly changing needs of the market (Masschelein 2001, pp.12-13). In the context of the learning society, the survival of individuals and society depends on people constantly learning and advancing to succeed professionally and in changing economic conditions (Masschelein 2001, p.12). This is an aspect significant in the discourse of international education as I described in the Literature Review chapter, and it comes across in the following quotation from a document about the PMI2 strategy: 'international education is at the centre of the UK's knowledge economy and its long-term wealth and prosperity' (BC, 2006a). Students' economic valuing of their in-study experiences as narrated during interview would appear to reflect this 'zoé' of the international education discourse, as was the case in their pre-study narrations.

However, students' value judgments in-study were not simply entrepreneurial. They began to value their home educational systems more, as Moustafa and Tania's narrations showed, a valuing that appeared to be absent when they recalled their pre-study motivations, when they seemed to assume that British education was better. They spoke of their difficulties adapting to the UK academic culture. They appeared to have difficulty as 'scholars' in-study with the 'business-like' consumerist approach of their institutions and their tutors, despite the 'business-like' approach they appear to have taken when embarking on international study. They placed more value on their non-academic experiences in-study such as their personal development, the freedom they experienced, their improved multi-cultural understanding, the networks of friends they made and all the other aspects of daily life in the UK. There is a complexity and messiness in students' narratives of their experience in-study that includes and goes beyond that of their predominantly entrepreneurial identities revealed in their pre-study narrations.

There is a tension in students' narrations as they appear to try to make sense of the way their value judgments and identities have been reshaped by this educational experience in the UK. At this stage of interview, they perhaps come to a better understanding of the 'reality' of these educational experiences through the process of narration. They are no longer just echoing the discourse of international education as was the case pre-study. Theirs is a now a:

...nonunitary subjectivity, a process and way of being in the world [that] remind us the self must be considered precarious – always open to new ways to understand the world and the self, to act in and upon the world and to think about experiences. (Bloom & Munro 1995, p.101).

Their identities are 'precarious' as they reflect on their experiences, and both value and question the entrepreneurial approach to learning in-study. They come to adopt 'new ways to understand' and think about their educational experiences and how these have affected their lives through this process of narration. They are constantly 'revising' their value judgments as they try to make sense of their experiences in-study and the impact these experiences have had on their lives post-study. Thus the messiness in their narrations, as they both commend the entrepreneurial approach to learning and admit to difficulties with this approach. They give their lives meaning by telling their stories (Goodson & Sikes 2001, p.40) and this is a meaning that is more personal, and thus more complex, and one that goes beyond the entrepreneurial

globalised imaginings narrated at the beginning of interview. Their revealed identities are more multi-faceted and complex, an aspect that becomes increasingly clear in the next chapter as they relate their post-study experiences.

In this section, I have analysed students' experiences of studying in the UK as related to me during interview. I have argued that students continue to display strongly entrepreneurial identities, similar to those when they narrated their pre-study motivations. However, I have noted the shifting nature of their value judgments that go beyond the purely entrepreneurial. Personal and tacit values, peripheral pre-study, are of central importance in-study. I have analysed this 'messiness' in students' narrations in terms of their coming to a better understanding of the 'reality' of their educational experiences through the process of telling their stories. These real stories of their experience are more multifaceted and complex in contrast to the entrepreneurial identities they described when they spoke of their pre-study attitudes and motivations.

6.4 Conclusion

In the first part of this chapter, I described students' valuing of their Masters degree in-study, valuing that moved between the instrumental and the tacit. I have described how students interpret and value their experiences of studies in the UK and I have described how their value judgments and identities appear to shift as they narrate the progressive stages of their educational trajectories, a process that continues post-study. In the discussion section of this chapter, I analysed this in terms of an entrepreneurial identity as revealed pre-study and in terms of students analysing and coming to an understanding of their educational experiences through the process of narration.

I continue this discussion in the next chapter, the third data-reporting chapter, where I address the final stage of students' trajectories; their experiences post-study on their return home from the UK. Their narrations at this final stage of their educational trajectories expand upon many of their sentiments expressed at the second stage of interview. Given that this part of the interview was focused on a time in their lives that is nearer the present, students were more focused on their 'real-life'

experiences of moving back to their home-employment markets, and how their UK educational degree is perceived within these home markets.

7 Value of UK Masters Degree following return home

It's different in Russian companies. For some it's [UK Masters] a good thing. For others they are sceptical. Maybe they think that you have too high an opinion of yourself. Sometimes that's a negative...But if companies have international management techniques or links, then they will take your qualification seriously. But many people just think that business is different here. (Tamara, Moscow).

It was a great year of experience. I think it builds up your confidence hugely. You learn how to cope with new things...I developed a new way of communication, a different way of communicating with different people...You discover things about yourself I think more than actually change as a person. You can build on this experience. (Lina, Jerusalem).

7.1 Introduction

At the beginning of students' narrated educational trajectories, as was described in Chapter 5, they emphasised the perceived usefulness of a UK degree for their future careers. I interpreted students' identities at this stage in their narration as 'interpellated' by an economic-led discourse of international education that encouraged them to adopt an entrepreneurial approach to their studies and their lives. However, as described in Chapter 6, as their narrations of their educational trajectories progressed and they spoke of their studies in the UK, their value judgments became increasingly complex as they both valued the market-led approach to education and questioned aspects of this approach.

This chapter is concerned with students' stories of their experiences post-study when they moved home to live and work, or the third stage of their educational trajectories. Students' 'narratives of return'⁴² of this post-graduation period are multiple, complex and at times conflicting. Similar to their narrations of studying and living in the UK, they both value and go beyond an entrepreneurial approach to their educational experience. They narrate how their UK degree was perceived in the home market as Tamara's excerpt above reveals and how they have adapted to home life post-graduation. They speak more about the personal aspects of their degrees, as

⁴² The term 'narratives of return' is borrowed from Rizvi (2005).

in Lina's excerpt. In recalling this experience, they are speaking of a period that is much closer in time to the present day compared with the first two stages of their educational trajectories. Their narrations are more about their current lives rather than about the past and are more complex as they struggle to 'make sense' of these experiences. In the Discussion section of this chapter, I avail of two final tools from the Theoretical Framework to analyse this complexity, namely Wenger's (1998) dimensions of identity and Rizvi's (2005, 2008, 2009) concept of 'consumerist cosmopolitanism' to analyse this complexity in students' narrated value judgments and their identities.

This final data-reporting chapter responds to my main research question: How do these international students value their UK Masters degree when recalling their educational experiences and how is this valuing reflected in their shifting identities? It also refers directly to my secondary research questions as I review how students' value judgments and identities shift as they narrate the three stages of their educational trajectories: pre-study, in-study and post-study and as I discuss how the entrepreneurial discourse of international education continues to be significant in students' value judgments and shifting identities.

7.2 Narratives of Return

In this section, I explore students' narratives of return as they are re-immersed in their professional and personal home lives post-study. These narratives of return reflect many of students' motivations pre-study, yet as this chapter reveals, tell very different stories. First, I explore instrumentalist narratives of return as students re-assess how their degree was valued by employers in the job market when they returned home. Second, I explore how students re-evaluate their home educational systems post-study. Third, I look at concepts of quality and value for money. These first three themes recall students' value judgments pre-study. Finally, I explore a narrative of return, which I have called 'in-between cultures' to explore how students are changed by their experience of international education. This final narrative return encapsulates students' efforts to define themselves anew on their return home and to understand how they have been changed by their UK educational experience.

7.2.1 Instrumentalist narratives of return

Students' narratives of return reflect their experiences of returning to their home employment markets, where despite the official discourse, a UK degree is not always seen by employers as providing 'all the ingredients to help you develop your thinking, your skills and to equip you for the future' (Education UK). There appears to be a 'disjuncture' (Appadurai 1990) between students' imagined worlds' of UK higher education pre-study and the reality to which they return post-study an aspect also present in other research on returned graduates. This finding reflects Cannon's (2000) research on Indonesian graduates who had returned home, where in some cases their careers and promotional prospects actually suffered as a result of their international education experience, an aspect also referred to in the recent Cuthbert *et al.* (2008) paper.

Most of the Russian students interviewed worked for global corporations or for Russian companies with international links, reflecting the experience of most other overseas-educated Russians (see BC 2008a). They spoke of their UK degree as a valuable credential for such employers. To take Alexander's example:

You become a more knowable person because you have an international degree. They know who you are, I suppose. It means you speak the same language as your employer. Like, my MBA is like being part of a club. It means you speak the same business language and that of course, you speak English. That's important. (Alexander, Moscow).

Thanks to his international education experience, Alexander is a 'known' quantity, who through his adaptation to UK academic culture now 'speak[s] the same business language' as international corporations, a 'language' that is about much more than just good English. It is a language about cultural competencies within a globalised world.⁴³ Elena too told me how an international Masters degree is essential to get a good job with a Western employer in Russia, as such graduates: '...see things differently. You think differently. You think like them'. Through such international education experience, students such as Alexander and Elena become part of a 'club' of Bauman's (1998) consumerist, cosmopolitan and mobile tourists and are perhaps better able to 'position' himself in globalised businesses, which 'prize[s] the skills of inter-culturality and a cosmopolitan outlook' (Rizvi 2005, p.9). In-study, students

⁴³ See Harris *et al.* (2004, p. 358) for a description of cultural competencies in global business leaders.

learn the ways of thinking and of behaving of international business. Post-study they have a 'positional good' (Marginson 1997) or an internationally accredited and quality degree that is valued by international employers, providing an 'open door' to recruitment and promotion. Not only are such graduates more 'knowable' by international employers, they have perhaps become more globalised, more entrepreneurial in the way that they act and think.

Many Palestinian students reported similar experiences. Students such as Tariq and Ali spoke of how their UK Masters degree had positively affected how they were perceived in the job market. Since returning home, Tariq has taken part in a high-level management committee of the agency where he works, the only local to be entrusted to this role. He believed that this privilege is thanks to his Masters degree as it 'gave me the tools to do my job better...I understand the underlying principles of why we are doing things. I can analyse things better'. This means that his boss now 'relies on me'. He has an internationally acclaimed degree that is valued and understood by his organisation and his manager. Ali had a similar experience to Tariq. An MBA graduate, he now works as a regional manager with an international organisation. He referred to his MBA as a 'driving licence', a trusted certificate that tells employers of his capabilities. He was recently promoted in his organisation, a promotion he attributes to the credential that is his international degree.

Respondents spoke of acquiring new attitudes and new ways of behaving as a result of their overseas education. Elena spoke of her attitude to time management, calling it 'the most valuable part of my experience in the UK' and a result of adapting to the independent learning approach during her Masters degree. Yousef experienced similar changes and told me how he in the UK 'You just had to be organised, not like here...This is the British way of life, a very organised way of life. The British way of life has organised my life.' However, Elena's narrative also hints at the more complex nature of her identity. She went on to tell me how her Russian colleagues had difficulty with her new time management skills: 'My time management skills are so good that no one can keep up with me'. She is now 'in-between different cultures' (Rizvi 2005, p.4) an aspect I address later in this chapter.

However, in Russia, students who took up or returned to jobs in more traditional companies had very different narratives to those just described. Their employers often had little understanding of educational systems outside Russia and were sceptical about the value of a UK degree comparing this degree unfavourably with traditional specialist Russian *Diplom* and *Aspirantura*. They often knew nothing about Masters degrees other than MBAs, perhaps the only Masters degree generally well known and respected in Russia.⁴⁴ Some students who had obtained Master of Arts (MA) or Master of Science (MSc) degrees, such as Katya, experienced their degree appellations as a disadvantage in the employment market. Some Russian employers seem to think that UK qualifications are not appropriate for the realities of Russian business. According to students' testimony, they prefer people who understand the complexities of life and business in Russia rather than individuals who are more Western in their attitudes and behaviour, an observation confirmed by recent British Council research (2008b). Such employers perceive international graduates as difficult and expensive employees and they are nervous about recruiting individuals who potentially have more knowledge, and who might be difficult to control in the top-down management high power distance index (PDI) (see Hofstede 1980) structures of Russian corporate life. Vlad described his experience of returning to work in a small Russian company:

A Russian employer may say they are happy that you have a foreign degree but they don't know how to use it. I came back to my [Russian] employer after studying in the UK. I got a promotion but I was really just doing the same job as before I left even if I was earning more money. The management just told me, "It doesn't matter if you have an MBA". I was just to do my job and not talk too much. (Vlad, Moscow).

Vlad felt very unhappy and frustrated in this atmosphere although he had enjoyed working with the company pre-study, and he soon moved to a job in a large global corporation where he now works. In his new job, he is happy and feels comfortable both professionally and culturally. His post-study identity fits with this company as he is both 'understood' by this company and 'understands' them. His narration is evidence of his shifting identity as a result of his international education experience. During my interviews, a couple of informants told me about friends who had omitted their UK degree from their curriculum vitae when applying for jobs with Russian

⁴⁴ A recent marketing survey found that 96% of employers 'desire or require' MBA qualifications, in comparison to 28% 'desire or require' other Masters degrees (BC 2008a, p. 14).

companies, as they did not want to disadvantage themselves in the job market,⁴⁵ although none of my respondents would admit to having done so themselves.

While Palestinian students did not have such negative experiences about how their Masters degrees were perceived at home, many also could be seen to question the value of their actual Masters degree as a credential in the home job market. Some felt that their English language skills were more important assets for a job seeker in the Palestinian employment market. Yousef told me:

Studying in the UK, you get really good language skills and a good education....Don't forget, all my reports need to be written in English. I need people who can do that, and they are very hard to find. (Yousef, Jerusalem).

The wording in Yousef's narrative is significant. First he referred to 'good language skills' and then to 'good education', implying that 'good language skills' are the most important aspect of this overseas study experience. Rana also felt that her career progression following her return home was more due to her English language skills than her degree: 'When I got my current job, they were not interested in my Masters. For them my English was the most important thing'. Rana has since left her position to pursue further studies abroad, and other members of her organisation confided in me that they are finding it very difficult to recruit a replacement with equivalent English language skills. These comments would imply that for students, the valuable 'positional good' (Marginson 1997) is not so much their specific international degree, but their competency in English.

These experiences as narrated by students' sometimes conflict with the market-led discourse of international education where the assumption was that international education as a 'positional good' necessarily confers relative advantage to individuals in the job market (Marginson 1997). The promise that 'UK postgraduate qualifications let employers know at a glance that you've got the skills they're looking for, putting you on the right track for a great job and a great salary' (Education UK website) seems rather simplistic when viewing these students' actual experiences of returning to their home markets. It would appear wiser not to overstate

⁴⁵ This was also mentioned by a British Council education specialist interviewed in Moscow during the research process (British Council, personal correspondence).

the positional advantages of a UK education when expressing the benefits of international education to prospective students.

In this section, I have discussed how students' instrumentalist narratives of return are mixed and go beyond the narrowly defined benefits of the discourse of international education. In the next section, I show how in their post-study narrations, students come to a place more value on their home education systems as they reflect on their employability on their return home.

7.2.2 Re-assessing the value of home and UK higher education

In their pre-study narrations, students were very critical of their home education systems in contrast to what they described as the market-led education system in the UK. This theme continued into their in-study narrations as I explored in the last chapter, however with nuances not present pre-study. Post-study, these value shifts became more pronounced as students reflected on their experiences of returning to their personal and their working lives at home.

In their in-study narrations, students such as Moustafa and Tania reported having reassessed the value of their home higher education system when they spoke of the strong fundamental and theoretical education they obtained at home, an education they did not think was as strong in UK HE. Towards the end of interviews, I asked respondents if they would encourage their friends or their children to study abroad or in the UK, and in their answers they reaffirmed this valuing of their home education systems in ways that are in marked contrast to their pre-study narrations. Russians told me that a school-leaver should study for a first degree in economics, science or mathematics at a top Russian HEI, where they would benefit from the more structured and closely supervised pedagogic style and from Russian strengths in these 'hard' disciplines. Then they could go abroad to study for a postgraduate degree in a more vocational area, like business. That way they could benefit from both educational approaches and be more attractive in the home employment market. As Oleg put it,

Our educational system is closer to us...I think in the UK undergraduate students are too free, they have too much free time too early and they don't

get enough knowledge. I think it's important to have a good all-round knowledge, and we get that in Russia (Oleg, Russia).

In this excerpt, Oleg appears to have reappraised Russian education as being 'closer' to him as '*nash*' or 'ours',⁴⁶ providing learning perhaps more relevant to the Russian situation than international education, perhaps indicative of his experience of returning to the home employment market. He criticises the 'freedom' at UK HEIs, a freedom that many respondents admired when recounting their in-study experience. He speaks of the strong 'all-round knowledge' students obtain at Russian HEIs rather than the more focused knowledge of UK degrees, a knowledge that he and others rejected as overly theoretical when recalling the beginning of their educational trajectories. Yet Oleg's value judgment was more complex than this. While he admired Russian education, he went on to say that students needed an international postgraduate degree to 'get a good job'. Russian education was not enough. He cited his own positive experience of international education: 'I have achieved my objectives. I have even surpassed them'. He started on his educational journey with a dream of moving to Moscow to work in a marketing-related role, and has achieved both of these ambitions.

Respondents' reappraisal of home education systems were particularly marked when they reflected on how their degrees were valued by employers in the home market, an aspect I referred to in the previous section. They emphasised that it was important for graduates to 'understand' the home situation if they wanted to obtain good jobs at home, and that they were unlikely to obtain such an understanding if they did not study at home at least for their undergraduate degree. Vlad was particularly vehement in expressing this:

There is no purpose in doing a Bachelors and a Masters degree in the UK for you to return back to Russia. You're mostly a foreigner. You don't understand how business works here. You are more expat than local. You will have Western values. If you want a career in Russia, you need a Russian degree and then you can get an international degree. (Vlad, Moscow).

Paradoxically, Vlad had encountered many difficulties when he returned to work with a Russian company post-study as I described above, and he admitted that he only now

⁴⁶ The use of this word '*Nash*' or 'Ours' is worth briefly noting as it reflects increased nationalistic fervour in Russia. For instance, a right-wing youth organisation supported by the Kremlin is called '*Nashi*' or 'Ours', and this organisation has done much to fan the fires of British-Russian diplomatic squabbles in recent years.

feels comfortable that he is working for an international global corporation. His is perhaps an identity that is 'more expat than local'. Palestinians expressed similar sentiments as in Maha's excerpt below:

If a person say has done all their education abroad, then they do not understand the Palestinian situation and the conflict or the local situation. They speak great English and they have their degrees but that's it. They don't have this understanding. It is better to study for your Bachelors degree here and then for your Masters in the UK. You then follow the news and the internal policy and how things develop in the various ministries. Otherwise you are a stranger and you don't really know anything. (Maha, Jerusalem).

Both Vlad and Maha refer to 'understanding' the local context as key attributes for job seekers in the home market. It would appear that students' reflections are prompted by the demands of the home employment market, where home and international education have different functional advantages for employers as I have described. They come to a better understanding of these advantages through their experience of studying in the UK and through their experiences of moving home post-study.

Ivan and Yulia, two Russian respondents, narrated diametrically opposed narratives of return. Both had lived for longer periods in the UK than most other respondents before returning to work in Russia. Ivan studied for both his undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in Russia before returning to Russia where he is now managing director of a large family-owned company. He experienced no difficulties re-integrating into Russian life as he had help from his family. He told me that there is a huge need for 'internationally qualified professionals' in Russia, and he claimed that companies will overlook individuals' lack of local work experience and understanding of Russian business. In contrast, Yulia, who returned to Russia after several years living in Scotland following her Masters degree, experienced significant difficulties readjusting to life in Russia. She felt a real hybrid, neither Russian nor British, but both.

'I feel un-Russian. I speak Russian and I look Russian so people think I should understand everything. But I don't. I have an accent when I speak English, so I'm not British either. (Yulia, Moscow).

She is another example of someone who is 'in-between different cultures' (Rizvi 2005, p.4).

In Chapter 6, I referred to students' difficulties in obtaining relevant work experience in the UK. This was an important theme when students narrated their post-study experiences. Many spoke about work experience as more important than academic qualifications in their job markets. As Viktor put it:

Russian companies are more interested in your work experience and how far you've got in your career... Maybe you have the best international qualifications but if you have no experience, a Russian company is not interested, unless of course you are very well connected. (Viktor, Moscow).

Lisa told me of her difficulties finding a relevant job in Russia following her return from the UK. She felt that her 'UK Masters was no help getting work without work experience', whereas pre-study Lisa had related how she had to study abroad if she was to advance her career in Russia. They appeared to have assumed pre-study that their UK degree carried a 'promise' of a good job upon their return. Palestinians also related how work experience abroad and at home was often more valuable than their Masters degree. Lina obtained her current job as manager in a Palestinian cultural agency thanks to work she did prior to her Masters degree. In the highly networked society of Palestine, she felt that her reputation was more important than her UK degree. Hayed, a freelance filmmaker told me that qualifications count for very little in her line of work and prospective funders and employers are more interested in her previous work. She thinks that her Masters degree has had little impact on her life professionally, rather 'the degree helped me personally to be able to build my own career', an aspect I explore in the next narrative or return. Khadar questioned how much his UK masters degree helped his career as a freelance consultant. Yet when recalling his pre-study motivations, he had stated that study abroad was vital for his career.

While these students' stories are not in any way extraordinary, as employers worldwide demand some level of work experience from graduates, I cite them here as they contrast absolutely with students' value judgments in their pre-study narrations. When recounting their pre-study expectations, they emphasised how they had perceived British education as high quality and market-oriented and providing them with the applicable skills they needed in the job market, in their post-study narrations their value judgments were far more complex as I continue to explore below.

7.2.3 Pragmatic values: quality versus value for time and value for money

When recalling their initial reasons for going to the UK pre-study, students cited pragmatic reasons mentioning both the quality of the education they could obtain and the perceived 'value for money' of UK education, aspects that I identified as echoing the rhetoric of *Education UK*. These perceptions had shifted when they recalled their experiences post-study.

In their pre-study narrations, students had told me that one of the major advantages of studying in the UK, rather than say the US, was that they could obtain a Masters degree in one year. They viewed this as a good use of their time, echoing the discourse of *Education UK*. There was a shift in students' value judgments post-study when many questioned, as Lisa put it, if it was possible to 'really get to grips with a subject' during one year of studies. Yurat, for example, is now studying for a 'second higher education' in law in Russia following his UK Masters also in a legal discipline, the equivalent to the last three years of a *Diplom*. He said:

In terms of the Russian reality, an international degree is not enough. For an employer it is important to have a Russian degree. And a one-year course in law is not enough. You have to have a degree in the specialisation. (Yurat, Moscow).

Influenced by how this more specialist approach is viewed in the home employment market, they told me that 'true specialists' needed to study for several years. Other students were disappointed at what they perceived as the low level of the research element of their degrees given the shortness of their degrees. Moustafa contrasted the longer Masters programmes in Palestine and the US to those in the UK. At home, he told me there is a greater emphasis on the research component of Masters degrees, usually the final degree for future academics as there is currently only one doctoral programme in Palestine (BC 2008b).

In the UK, a Masters degree is just a passport to a PhD. They don't consider it very important. It is just a small piece of research and you do your real work in the PhD. And the idea is you focus during one year and you do five courses and a little piece of research in five months. And one year is too short. It's not enough to do any real research...I don't think it's better here but if you graduate with a US Masters degree, you spend one year doing courses and one year doing research. (Moustafa, Jerusalem).

It is interesting to compare Moustafa's criticism of his degree to his narration at the beginning of interview cited in Chapter 5, when he spoke of his degree in more

instrumental terms as a one-year investment that would open up the future for him. His narration possibly reflects his life trajectory, as following his Masters degree he embarked on a PhD in educational studies and he is now an academic at a Palestinian HEI. Pre-study he had assumed he would have a career in science, and was perhaps more focused on the functional benefit of a Masters degree for his career progression. Today, as an academic, he is perhaps more focused on a Masters degree as the first step in an individual's academic career and thus emphasises the research component of this degree. While students' perceptions of the quality of their degree shifted during their narrations and no longer just reflect the discourse of international education, they are still in many ways entrepreneurial as these shifts reflect how their degrees' value within the employment market. In these value judgments, students are still 'shape-shifting' (Gee 2004, p.105) as they seek to define themselves in terms of being 'successful now and worthy of success later' (*Ibid.*).

Pre-study, students appeared to see their Masters degree as value for money. It was a good investment for their future life, as Khadar had put it, reflecting *Education UK's* rhetoric. In their post-study narrations, students were critical of the high costs of studying in the UK and the quality-value for money equation. For many, as Viktor put it, 'UK life is not affordable in terms of money'. Students referred to the high costs of fees, services and accommodation at their institutions. Many felt that as international students they had been forced to take rooms in over-priced and shoddy university-run accommodation. Echoing Stas' statement that international students were milked like cows, Moustafa spoke of UK education as 'over-marketed' and as money-led. He felt that his institution was just interested in obtaining his fees, and had little interest in him as an individual or his academic potential post-Masters. Scholarship students spoke of having to borrow large amounts of money from family and friends to cover their UK living costs. Similar to their in-study narrations, these students appear to have difficulty with a consumerist approach to their education, although they had related that they took just such a consumerist approach when they embarked on overseas study. Recent official UK reports have recognised the importance of fighting the impression that HEIs are just 'stripping out students and giving nothing back' and of making what Professor Drummond Bone of Universities UK has spoken of as 'shift from a "selling model" to a partnership model of higher education' (Gill 2008c; Gill 2008d; see also UKCOSA 2004). However, as I argued

in the Literature Review, it would appear that this sentiment is rooted in the marketised discourse of international education and that efforts to improve the student experience are still seen in terms of protecting Britain's market share (see Böhm *et al.* 2004).

While students were happy to tell me about the high expense of living in the UK, few were willing to directly criticise the quality of their Masters degree perhaps because of my positionality as a British Council aligned researcher, as I discussed in the Methods and Methodology chapter. For example, Katya had suggested I interview Lisa, and she had told me that Lisa, a self-funded student, was very unhappy with the quality her Masters degree. During interview Lisa refused to admit to any personal dissatisfaction limiting her criticism to more general comments about the advantages of Russian education over international education in the Russian employment market. Other interviewees recounted that 'friends of theirs' (and never the informants themselves) were unhappy with the standard of their degree or how the large numbers of Asian student on their degrees lowered the standard of teaching. It is interesting to note that they often made these criticisms at the end of formal interviews when I had turned off the tape-recorder. For instance, Maria told me as we were winding down post-interview: 'Some people on my course were very unhappy with the course. They didn't feel they got value for money'. Like Moustafa, she went on to say, 'There is a feeling among many international students that UK universities are over-marketed, for instance there are far too many Asians'.

Students' narrations point to their dissatisfaction with aspects of their UK Masters degree and they contrast with their pre-study narrations where they perceived their degree as a good use of time and money. None of the students interviewed regretted studying in the UK, however, but they appear in their post-study narrations to now view this degree in a more nuanced way. Whereas they had initially spoken of this degree in simple terms as a one-year investment that would further their professional lives, towards the end of interview as they reflect on their post-study experiences, they perhaps come to a better understanding of the degree's benefit on their lives as these have progressed since they had returned home.

7.2.4 Personal life changing experience: 'in-between cultures'

In contrast with their value judgments pre-study, at the final stage of interview, personal aspects of students' experience emerged as one of the most important facets of their UK sojourn. They spoke of how much they had developed and changed as a result of their overseas study, but these changes were not without complexity as they had often adopted attitudes and ways of life that were perhaps more 'British' than Russian or Arab. Theirs are hybrid identities as they are as Rizvi (2005, p.4) describes 'in-between different cultures', or as Grimshaw and Sears (2008) have put it, they are in a state of 'in-betweenness'.

Students spoke of their time in the UK as a 'golden period' of their lives, a time of great 'personal development', and one that is an important part of the person that they have become post-UK studies. It was as Hickson (1994) has described 'one of those "mountaintop" experiences' for them. They had to make a life for themselves in a new country, make new friends and succeed in their studies and their lives. Katya spoke of studying in the UK as 'one of the best times of my life'. Following graduation, she moved from a regional Russian city where she had lived all her life to work in Moscow with an international organisation, an impossible dream before her Masters degree. She travels outside Russia frequently for work and pleasure, and is surrounded by like-minded colleagues and friends. Vlad told me:

Being in the UK can change your life. I don't know what would happen to me without this experience. It changed my attitude to life. (Vlad, Moscow).

Since his return to Russia, he has moved to Moscow, and he now works for a large international corporation, and is integrated within a cosmopolitan community of young professional Russians and internationals. Elena too spoke about her year abroad as 'not just about studying, it was about leaving Russia, living a new life, getting new experience'. Her comments would imply that she saw this year as a new start to her life. Yousef too felt that his life was changed in many ways by his year in the UK. He was 'empowered' by the people he met and studied with in the UK and this was not an outcome he had expected pre-study. Khadar told me: 'My perspective, my knowledge, everything has changed...how I look at life and deal with life events'. He spoke of his year abroad as being more about this personal growth

than academic learning, contrasting with his narrative at the beginning of interview when he told me that he 'wanted to build himself' professionally

It would seem that in these post-study narrations, the personal outcomes of students' international education experience were sometimes more important than instrumental professional outcomes. Students spoke of their year spent living and studying in the UK as a life-changing and life-enhancing opportunity. Students' experiences may also be interpreted in terms of what Cannon (2000, p.3) notes as the 'equivocal and complex outcomes' of international education, a complex mix of professional, affective, cultural and career outcomes and the challenges graduates experience when re-integrating into their professional environments at home. As the previous three narratives show, they do not abandon entrepreneurial value judgments or identities, but these cannot be seen in isolation to the wider personal aspects of their experiences.

Students' life-changing experiences of international education posed important identity issues for them. Students spoke of how they had adopted aspects of a 'British way of life', as well as remaining Russian or Palestinian, and this change in their attitudes was both empowering and challenging as they re-adjusted to life in their home culture. I have already described how Elena had adopted cultural and work attitudes such as her time management skills that were at odds with home cultural norms, attitudes that appeared to be 'in-between cultures'. Like Elena, Yousef also spoke of his new 'British' attitude to time, an attitude he sees as changing his life for the better but again different to the home norm. I described in this chapter how Russians such as Vlad only felt comfortable working with international corporations. Lina told me that she had 'developed a new way of communications' due to her international education, and that this meant she approached work projects and supervisors in ways not usual for women in a traditional society like Palestine. Yulia admitted that she only understood how much she had changed when she returned home, and she was confronted with her 'unRussianness'. She feels distant from Russian culture and feels different to her Russian colleagues and sometimes feels closer to her British ones, yet she knows she has a Russian accent when she speaks English. But she believes that thanks to her experience in the UK, she has a better understanding of cultural differences, and this is an advantage at work. 'I understand

what UK and US people are saying and how they think. I can talk like them.' She spoke of her embarrassment when her boss makes obvious cultural mistakes with international clients, 'he speaks English, and has good English but he thinks in a Russian way'. Post-study individuals have become more complex members of their society and they needed to integrate the experiences, values and knowledge gained overseas with the experience of being and living at home (Canon, 2001; see also Cuthbert *et al.* 2008). They are 'in-between different cultures', as their new identities produced through their international education experience are 'always unsettling the assumptions of one culture from the perspective of the other' (Rizvi 2005, p.4).

Many students spoke about their nostalgia for the UK now that they have returned home. While they were studying abroad, they missed home, but now it is as if they are split between their lives in the UK and their lives at home. They are home, and they are glad to be back with their friends and their family, but they miss their former lives in the UK. As Viktor put it, 'I felt I had left part of me behind in London'. As Cannon (2000, p.273) described in his research on Indonesian graduates, they are 'of a different culture...and different from the culture they were part of overseas'. Students told me that they had been warned about 'culture shock' (Oberg, 1954) when moving to the UK, but had no idea that moving home might as Hickson (1994, p.256) described, entail 'more upheaval than the demand of the initial cross-cultural adjustment'. They felt different when they returned home, but they were not always perceived as such by their employers and friends. They felt that these people did not understand and were not interested in their experience of studying in the UK. They experienced 're-entry shock' as Hickson (1994, p.256) has put it, as their UK sojourn left them 'changed person[s]'. Their identities have become more complex due to their experiences of mobility and international education.

Given these difficulties, students spoke of the importance of knowing people 'like me' (Hayed, Jerusalem) upon their return home, fellow cosmopolitans who had also lived abroad. Many told me how they continued to keep in contact with their international network of friends they made during their Masters studies. In Russia, most of the informants interviewed were members of an active alumni group, the British Alumni Club. They see this club as a good networking and friend-making

tool. It helps them get to know individuals who have lived through the same experience in the UK and are at a similar 'friction point between two cultures' (Hoggart 1992, p.225 cited Reed-Danahay 2005, p.30). In the Palestinian context, there is no such network due to the difficulties of travelling around the territories, and several informants noted this as lacking in their lives. Similarly Cannon (2000, p.373) describes how Indonesian graduates of international education become more complex as a result of two broad processes: 'differentiation and integration'. Through their overseas experience, they can distinguish themselves from others. But they have also experienced a 'new and powerful form of integration...with their professions and with new cultures' and many want to retain this through networking at home and with contacts overseas (*Ibid.*). He refers to the concept of 'third place' to describe this complex phenomenon. Through their mobility, the students of my study have become members of a distinct inter-cultural group in professional society – a 'third place', which is a source of professional advantage for them in this rapidly globalising world and a potential source of advantage for their employers (*Ibid.*).

In this section, I have described how personal experiences of international education are prominent in their post-study narrations. Their international education was a life-changing and life-enhancing moment in their lives. Yet, they are changed in ways they had not imagined pre-study and many felt different from their colleagues and friends and thus sought out similarly cosmopolitan individuals in their post-study lives.

7.2.5 Summary

In this section, I have described the rich and diverse narratives of return of international students and their value judgments of their UK degrees post-graduation. These value judgments build upon the values expressed at the second stage of their educational trajectories as described in Chapter 6. They are both entrepreneurial and go far beyond the entrepreneurial as students reflected on their personal experiences of moving back home. In telling their stories, students revealed identities that were more complex and equivocal than the neatly packaged entrepreneurial identities narrated at the beginning of interview. This is the subject of the next Discussion section of this chapter.

7.3 Discussion

As is evident from the richness of the narratives of return described in this chapter, students' recollections of their UK educational experiences reflect more complexity and messiness than at the beginning of their narrations. Their value judgments are multifaceted and go beyond those imagined in the entrepreneurial discourse of *Education UK* marketing. In their narrations, students' identities are still entrepreneurial as they try to mould their 'portfolios' of skills and competences so that they can be the best 'fit' for the home marketplace. The reality of these marketplaces is often at odds with the rhetoric of international education and they seek to adapt themselves to this reality. Yet, they also go beyond the entrepreneurial in their valuing of their Masters degree as a personal life-changing experience and they reveal hybrid identities evidence of their 'in-betweenness' (Grimshaw & Sears 2008) in the 'third spaces' (Cannon 2000) that they inhabit post-graduation. In analysing these complexities in students' identities, I draw on the final two aspects of my theoretical framework, Wenger's (1998) dimensions of identity and Rizvi's (2005, 2008, 2009) writings on cosmopolitan identities within contemporary global interconnectivity. This discussion builds on those of the two previous data-reporting chapters, and I also reference various writings on identity, Masschelein *et al.*'s papers and Gee's (2004) notions of entrepreneurial identities.

As I explored in my Theoretical Framework, Wenger (1998) proposes five dimensions of identity. Sachs (2001) has argued that these are useful when thinking about teachers' complex professional identities and I find them helpful to interpret the complexities of students' narrated identities. As I described in the Theoretical Review, identities today can be viewed as constantly 'negotiated, open, shifting, ambiguous, a result of culturally available meanings and the open-ended power laden enactments of those meanings in everyday situations' (Kondo 1990, p.24 cited Sachs 2001, p.154). To recap, Wenger's dimensions are: first, identity as *negotiated experience* or the ways we define who we are and we experience ourselves through participation and the ways we and others reify our selves; second, identity as *community membership* or how we define ourselves by the familiar and the unfamiliar; third, identity as a *learning trajectory*, or how we define ourselves from

where we have been and where we are going; fourth, identity as a *nexus of multimembership*, or the ways we reconcile our various forms of membership into one identity; and fifth, identity as *a relation between the local and global* or the way we define who are by negotiating local ways of belonging to broader constellations and manifesting broader styles and discourses (Wenger 1998, p.149, original italics). For my purposes, the most important aspect of these dimensions is that they address the social, cultural and political aspects of identity formation for international students as identity and practice mirror each other (Sachs 2001, p.154) allowing for an understanding of the multiple identities students inhabit during their narrated educational trajectories and particularly when recalling their experiences post-study.

Rizvi (2005, 2008, 2009) has argued that given the market-based practices of international education, students' experiences of mobility through international education produce cosmopolitan identities that are framed by the 'strategic economic possibilities' of their education. There is a 'consumerist cosmopolitanism' (Rizvi 2005, p.9) that is concerned with how international education can better position them within the structures of a global economy. Rizvi (2008, p.31) contrasts this 'consumerist cosmopolitanism' with a cosmopolitanism that is reflexive, self-aware and critical of how 'global processes are creating conditions of economic and cultural exchange that are transforming our identities and communities'. This is a cosmopolitanism fostered by learning that could develop 'an alternative imaginary of global interconnectivity...which views diverse people and communities as part of the same moral universe' (Rizvi 2008, pp.31-2). Rizvi's writings are useful in helping me to interpret students' continued entrepreneurial approach to their learning and their lives post-study and the ways in which they go beyond the narrowly framed economic-led discourse of international education.

Using Wenger's (1998, p.151) dimensions, students' identities can be interpreted as socially produced and in a 'constant work of negotiating the self' through their experiences of participating in various communities at home and in the UK. As 'consumers' of their educational experiences, students continue post-study to be entrepreneurial and flexibilised as they seek to 'arrange and rearrange' their personal 'portfolios...[of] skills, achievements and previous experiences' (Gee 2004, p.97) to be more attractive in their home marketplace of local and global transnational

employers. They are concerned with how, as Ong (1999, p.90) has put it, 'the cultural capital of a foreign university degree can be converted into economic capital (wealth) and social capital' and how the competencies they have acquired through their international mobility are valued in the social, cultural and political lives of home. As Rizvi (2005, p.9) argues, since international students participate in an economic exchange, it is inevitable that they will be less concerned with moral and political dimensions of global interconnectivity or a 'genuine interaction among people from different cultural tradition'. Thus informants such as Alexander, Ali, Elena and Tariq told me that their degree is a valued credential that their internationally minded employers understand and that in turn makes them more 'understandable' to these employers who as Rizvi (2008, p.26) puts it 'increasingly prize[s] the skills of interculturality and a cosmopolitan outlook'. Students' experiences of mobility 'generate[s] a new set of transnational practices and imaginings' that realign[s] their political and personal identities to better 'navigat[e] the disjunctures between political landscapes and the shifting opportunities of global trade' (Ong 1999, p.3 cited Rizvi 2005, p.9). For instance, Vlad spoke of the more equivocal valuing of international degrees by Russian employers, who did not value these same cultural competencies or the 'positional good' of a UK degree, and preferred home-educated individuals, individuals who are perhaps less internationalised or cosmopolitan. He thus preferred to work for an internationalised employer. Students also told me of friends who had not declared their overseas qualifications to such employers as they sought to fit into the politics of Russian business. In a similar fashion, Palestinian students 'shape-shifted' as they perceived their newly acquired English language skills as perhaps more attractive in the market than their Masters degree. Students appear to take a flexible approach post-study as they 're-imagine' their portfolio of skills and competencies and the benefits accrued from UK and home education so that they can best 'navigate' these 'disjunctures' (Rizvi 2005, p.9).

Given the social, cultural and political realities of their home lives and markets, students almost come full circle in their reassessment of their home degrees. There are important 'disjunctures' between the constructed 'imagined world' (Appadurai 1990) of the outcomes of a UK degree that reflected the discourse of the *Education UK* brand and how their homecoming is actually experienced by students. Upon their return, students struggled to readapt to the 'regimes of truth' of their 'community

membership' (Wenger 1998) of home and their home employment markets to (re)define what is 'familiar and unfamiliar'. To give the example of Russian students, pre-study these students appeared to have imagined their UK Masters degrees as market-led and career focused and providing an education not available at home. When recalling their in-study valuing, they contrasted the more vocational approach of UK education to the more theoretical approach of home. Post-study, they came to a new valuing of their home education, as providing an education that was 'familiar' and perhaps more valued by many Russian employers as opposed to the 'unfamiliar' UK education. Thus Oleg described this home education as 'closer to us' and Vlad warned against studying too long abroad as 'you're mostly a foreigner'. Similarly, their perceptions of quality and value for time and money shifted as a result of these 'disjunctures'. Moustafa is a case in point, as he shifted from speaking of his degree pre-study as a one-year investment to bemoaning the lack of research depth in such a short degree, reflecting the employment needs of academics in his home market. As these examples show, in seeking to readapt to their 'community membership' of home, students are no less entrepreneurial post-study than pre-study. Theirs is still an 'active, counting and calculating self' (Masschelein & Simons 2002, p.595). As they try to meet the needs of their home community, they have shifted from the entrepreneurial identities reflected in the *Education UK* discourse, and are inhabiting identities that while still entrepreneurial, are constantly being revisited and 'revised' (Josselson 1996).

Thus Wenger (1998, p.154) speaks of identity as a 'learning trajectory', or a constant becoming that is always going on and 'not...something we acquire at some point in the same way that, at a certain age, we grow a set of permanent teeth'. In this thesis, I have used the word trajectory deliberately for this reason to describe the ongoing nature of students' educational experiences as they revise and revisit their identities through their narrations. In these terms, identity is always temporary and it is defined 'with respect to the interaction of multiple convergent and divergent trajectories' (Wenger 1998, p.154). While students narrated their educational trajectories in interview, their identities are constantly in a state of 'becoming' as they describe their experience of moving from and then back to their home cultures and labour markets. During the process of storying or narrating these experiences, students reconstruct these trajectories through their reflections of their past, present

and future value judgments. As Rizvi (2009, p.26) has put it their 'past is thus linked to the present, and plays an important role in imagining the future'. They make 'sense' of their lives through their narration and give meanings to their lives (Goodson & Sikes 2001). There can be no clear cut between the past and the present in these narrations. The two are indelibly fused in both their narrations and their identities and constantly in a state of 'becoming' involved in the 'shaping or ordering of past experience' (Chase 2005, p.654).

Through their experiences of mobility, students are also involved in what Wenger (1998, pp.158-9) has referred to as a 'nexus of multi-membership' of different communities. They have allegiances to and are 'hailed' by various communities some past and some present, including that of home, the UK and that of an elite globalised community of mobile internationally educated individuals or Bauman's (1998) 'tourists'. They carry the values and cultural baggage of these diverse communities or multiple identities. They are 'in-between different cultures', both 'insiders and outsiders' (Rizvi 2005, p.4) in the UK and Russia. Theirs is a story of 'hybridity and cultural melange, rather than cultural adaptation' as Rizvi (2000, p.209) has put it. Thus Yulia spoke of herself as 'un-Russian'; she both embraces British life and feels that she understands it, yet she can never be British. She is happy to be home, yet is constantly confronted by how different she is to her Russian colleagues and friends. Moving back home is a 'shock' as Hickson (1994) terms it. Respondents have changed as a result of their educational experiences in ways they did not imagine pre-study, when in their recollections of their motivations, they emphasised the instrumental outcomes of their degrees and gave mere passing reference to personal or more tacit values. It is significant that these respondents actively seek out 'people like me' both in her personal and professional lives. These 'transnational friendship networks' with individuals who are also 'in-between different cultures' (Rizvi 2005, p.4) and occupy Cannon's (2000) 'third place' are important for them as they help them 'imagine, create and sustain productive professional and cultural lives' (Rizvi 2005 p.4).

While Rizvi (2005, p.4) perceives such transnational friendship networks as 'assisting [students] to become savvier players in a globally networked economy and society', my respondents cannot just be interpreted as 'shape-shifting' and

entrepreneurial. In their post-study narratives of return, students put increased value on affective and personal aspects of their international education experience. Students such as Yousef, Vlad, Elena, Rana and Lina described how their attitudes have changed and how they have grown as individuals and gained more confidence thanks to their year spent in the UK. They did not just acquire useful knowledge to further their careers, they acquired life knowledge and they now have an attitude to life that is one of 'critical exploration and imagination' (Rizvi 2008, p.30). They see themselves as having taken part in a valuable multi-cultural experience that has changed them as individuals and that continues to change them following their move home. Their identities are not just those of an economically motivated 'consumerist production of mobile identities' (Rizvi 2005, p.2). In their narratives, they have shifted from the narrow 'official' story of their degrees pre-study to more personal narratives post-study that while still entrepreneurial go beyond the merely entrepreneurial in their richness and depth. More than at any stage of their educational trajectories, students' narrated identities are multiple, reflecting the messy, uncertain world where they live, where their identities are 'socially constructed, as a "production" that is never complete and always in process... a matter of becoming' and 'becoming somebody' (Hattam & Smyth 2003, p.383). 'Becoming somebody' for Yousef meant being 'empowered' by his experience of mobility both personally and professionally. For Rana it was a chance to learn to be independent and to grow away from the constraints of family and of the political situation at home. Vlad wondered what kind of person he would be without his experience of international mobility. Students' narratives hint at the kind of cosmopolitanism that Rizvi espouses, a cosmopolitanism that is not just 'corporate' (Rizvi 2009) or 'consumerist' (Rizvi 2005) and that is a 'an instrument of critical understanding and moral improvement' where students have 'both an empirical understanding of global transformations, but an ethical orientation towards them' (Rizvi 2008, p.28).

In summary, in their narrations post-study students struggle to make sense of their experiences abroad and the 'ways in which they are positioned by and actively seek to locate themselves within the dominant corporate narratives of globalisation and international education' (Rizvi 2005, p.2). They still reflect 'entrepreneurial identities' as they continue to seek to best position themselves in the 'marketplace of life' (Masschelein & Simons 2002, p.594) of their home labour markets. However,

they have moved on from merely reflecting the discourse of international education in their narrations as they did at the beginning of interview and are more concerned with their real experiences of moving back to work and live at home, and adapting to the requirements of their home labour markets rather like Gee's (2004) 'shape-shifting portfolio people'. Significantly they voice more personal and affective benefits of their experiences of international mobility in ways that go beyond that of 'consumerist cosmopolitanism' (Rizvi 2005, p.9).

7.4 Conclusion

In the first part of this chapter, I described students' valuing of their Masters degree in-study in terms of four narratives of return. In their instrumentalist narratives of return, students reflected on the market-value of their international education at home and noted 'disjunctures' between their home-coming experiences and how they had imagined this home-coming pre-study. I described how in their post-study narrations, students re-assess and re-value their home education systems as they reflected on the realities of their home labour markets. These realities influenced students' opinions of the quality of their Masters degree and factors such as the value for time and money. I described how students spoke of their experiences of mobility as personally enriching and life-changing, and how they had changed and become more complex members of their societies as their identities are hybrid and 'in-between different cultures' (Rizvi 2005, p.4).

In the discussion section of this chapter, I analysed these narratives of return in terms of increasingly messy and complex identities on the part of students, identities that reflect the globalised world in which they live. In my analysis, I availed of a number of tools from my theoretical toolbox including Wenger's (1998) dimensions of identity and Rizvi's (2005, 2008, 2009) writings on cosmopolitanism within contemporary worlds characterised by global interactivity. Using these resources, I interpreted students' narrations as continuing to be entrepreneurial as they 'shape-shifted' to meet the needs of their home labour markets post-study, however in ways that went beyond and contrasted with the discourse of international education. This contrasts with their pre-study narrations, which appeared to closely echo this discourse. I described how personal and affective aspects of their experiences of

living abroad were emphasised by respondents post-study in ways that went beyond the merely entrepreneurial, again in contrast to their pre-study narrations where these appeared to be framed by the market-led discourse of international education. I have suggested that their narratives post-study perhaps diverge from the 'consumer' or 'corporate' cosmopolitanism (Rizvi 2005, 2009) has written of as engendered by students' experience of international education, and hint at a cosmopolitanism that as described by Rizvi (2005) is more that of 'genuine possibilities for cosmopolitan solidarity'.

Perhaps also through the process of telling their stories to themselves and to me, students came to a better understanding of their educational experiences. Their stories maybe became more personal as their narratives progressed and less about echoing the 'public' discourse of international education (Parr 1998), as was the case pre-study. These personal stories do not fit neatly within the dominant economic-led discourse of international education. Their experiences of international education have 'reshape[d] student identities, their cultural tastes, and professional aspirations, but in ways that are neither uniform or predictable' (Rizvi 2000, p.22). They are more messy, less linear, more human than those imagined in the marketised rhetoric of international education or in the *Education UK* brand that can be summed up in the words that entitle this thesis: 'A degree for a job'. In the next chapter, Concluding Reflections, I reflect on the findings of these three data chapters and I suggest that based on my research, there is a case for widening the discourse of international education.

8 Concluding Reflections

The Russian educational system is very conservative but it gives a good fundamental knowledge. Whereas the UK system is more flexible, more oriented to market needs or to changes in research. An article is published in a journal and you read it in class the next day. That doesn't happen in Russia. (Tania, Moscow).

I look more critically at things. In the past you get a task and you just do it, but now I sort of try to think on it more and reflect on it. I give a judgment. I'm more analytical and I got that from studying in the UK. (Wassim, Jerusalem).

Not only did I receive the education I wanted, I also got to understand a new culture. I now understand both Russian and UK culture better. I have an appreciation of UK culture. You have to have respect for cultures and this is important for life and in work. (Oleg, Moscow).

8.1 Introduction

In this, the final chapter of this thesis, I review the findings of my research on international students' experiences of studying for a UK Masters and question if this experience can ever just be reduced to 'A degree for a job', as in the title of this doctoral thesis. I revisit my research questions and I reflect on how I have addressed these. I then discuss the possible impact of my research findings on policy and marketing of international education. I review the research process and note how my focus changed during this process, and how as a reflexive researcher my final thesis is quite different to the thesis I set out to write three years ago. I discuss aspects that I would do differently if I were to begin this research study again. Finally, I suggest further areas for investigation prompted by my findings in this research.

The excerpts from Tania, Wassim and Oleg's interviews that open this chapter highlight many of the themes of this thesis. Tania speaks of the market-relevance of UK education, an aspect important to students throughout their narrations, who I interpreted as displaying an entrepreneurial relationship to their lives. She compares the more 'flexible' system in the UK with the more conservative less market-led home education, a valuing that shifted as students' narrations proceeded during interviews. Wassim reflects on how his experience of studying in the UK has changed him in both his professional and private lives, reflecting the complex mix of

professional and affective benefits of the international education experience. Oleg speaks of how he has become more 'cosmopolitan' thanks to his UK educational experience, with a better understanding of UK and other international cultures. While he sees this cultural understanding as useful in his professional life and in advancing his 'strategic interests' within the global economy (Rizvi 2005, 2008), he also sees it as personally enriching. In these short excerpts, the three students display much of the complexity of value judgments and identities that have been the subject of this thesis. For them, their studies in the UK are not just about 'a degree for a job'.

8.2 Revisiting Research Questions and Findings

This thesis set out to examine how international students value their UK Masters degree when recalling their educational experiences and how this valuing is reflected in their shifting identities. I sought to explore how the entrepreneurial discourse of international education is significant in students' narrated value judgments and shifting identities. I wanted to understand how students interpret and value their experiences of studying in the UK through their narrations. Finally, I wanted to explore how students' value judgments and identities shift as they narrate the three stages of their educational trajectories: pre-study, in-study and post-study.

In the Literature Review, I established the globalised entrepreneurial discourse of international education and I described how this discourse dominates official publications on international education, UK policy and marketing and is evident in much academic literature. I explained how the notion of 'discourse' is of particular relevance in today's text-saturated environments that 'position and construct individuals, making available various meanings, ideas and versions of the world' (Luke 1995, p.13). In terms of international students, I argued that they are constructed by this discourse as entrepreneurial beings who seek to improve their market attractiveness by obtaining a quality and business-relevant Masters degree in the UK. I referred to literature that problematises this discourse of international education as reductionist and as silencing other potential narratives, and I noted how as a researcher I also felt morally obliged to question this discourse.

These debates on international education, my analysis of UK policy on international education and of the *Education UK* brand provide the background to this study of international students' narrated value judgments and identities during their educational trajectories. I explore students' value judgments and identities at three stages of their educational trajectory: pre-study, in-study and post-study. I describe how when narrating the beginning of their educational trajectories, students emphasised the economic benefits of a UK degree echoing an economic-led discourse of international education. In their imaginaries pre-study, a UK degree provided them with a market-appropriate and career-focused education that was not available at home. Where students referred to more tacit aspects of the educational experience, these were seen as peripheral to their primary objective of obtaining a useful vocational education to further their professional lives, findings that are backed up by Rizvi (2005, 2008, 2009). I interpreted this narration by students as displaying their 'entrepreneurial identity' that echoed the discourse of international education, a finding reflected in Masschelein and Simon's (2002) writings about the discourse of education as 'interprellating' individuals to see themselves as autonomous and entrepreneurial.

When students narrated the second stage of their educational trajectories, there were subtle shifts in their narrated value judgments and identities. In-study, while they continued to value the vocational nature of their UK educational experiences, and in particular the self-led approach to learning, they could be seen both to re-evaluate the merits of a purely market-led approach to education and to place more value on more tacit and affective elements of their educational experience. I interpreted their valuing at this point as continuing to be framed by the discourse of international education as they sought to maximise the instrumental benefits of their international mobility. I referred to the 'messiness' of their narrations that were both entrepreneurial and non-entrepreneurial. Their valuing and identities are constantly changing and multiple as they move through their educational trajectories, and importantly as they come to give meaning to these experiences through the process of narration.

These shifts were even more in evidence in students' 'narratives of return' post-study. Students continued to 'shape-shift' (Gee 2004) as they described their

experiences of returning to the labour market at home and as they sought to maximise their strategic interests in this market. Their experiences of international mobility produced shifting imaginaries in the students. They went beyond value judgments that reflected the international education discourse as they imagined pre-study and more personal aspects of their educational experiences moved centre stage. I interpreted their narrations post-study as revealing the multiple identities they inhabit in their post-study narratives, identities that include and go beyond the entrepreneurial. They voiced more personal aspects of their experiences of international mobility that were not just those of 'consumerist cosmopolitanism' (Rizvi 2005, p.9). I interpreted my findings using Wenger's (1998) dimensions of identities and Rizvi's (2005, 2008, 2009) cosmopolitan identities and learning. Their narratives reflect the messy, uncertain world where they live where their identities are constantly being produced and revised. Following their transnational experiences, students are 'in-between cultures' and feel caught between their lives in Russia and the UK.

When theorising these shifts in students' narrations, I argued that these can be understood as a process of understanding achieved through narration during the interview. They achieve a new appreciation of the value of their educational experience through the process of telling me the interviewer the story of this experience. Their narrative can be viewed as 'verbal action' (Chase 2005, p.657) as they shape and order their past experiences through the act of telling (*Ibid.*, p.656). I interpreted students' narratives as shifting from 'public' accounts of their international experience pre-study that echoed the market-speak of *Education UK* to more 'private' accounts of this experience as interviews progressed (see Parr 1998; Bruckner 2005).

8.3 Possible impact on policy and marketing of international education

Given the shifts in students' value judgments, the question could be asked: Which are the 'truer' stories of their educational experiences, those given when recalling their experiences pre-study, in-study or post-study? Are they those of pre-study when as phrased in the title of this thesis, their narratives were entrepreneurial

and about 'A degree for a job'? Or are they those of their in-study and post-study narratives that are messier as students both value the entrepreneurial and go beyond it? I think if there is any conclusion to be made from this research study, it is that students' experiences of international education and the outcomes of this experience are multifaceted and complex. They cannot just be reduced to the 'new gods of career success in top companies, higher potential earnings, efficiency' (Sidhu 2006, p.132) as in the discourse of international education. Such a view cannot account for the personal transformative potential of international education experiences on the mobile individual. Nor can it account for the 'disjunctures' between how the discourse imagines the outcomes of international education and students themselves actually experience it in-study while living abroad and post-study when they return home.

I opened this thesis in my Literature Review with a critique of the economic-based discourse of international education that dominates in supranational agencies' reports, UK policy documents and in the marketing of UK higher education abroad. I noted how such a trade view linked international education policy 'more to the interests of global capitalism than to the needs of particular societies and specific individuals' (Rizvi & Lingard 2000, p.421). Given the importance of international student economic contributions to the UK exchequer and to individual university coffers and the evident positional advantages of international education to international students, it would be naïve to imagine that international education can ever fully escape the entrepreneurial. However, based on the evidence of this thesis, I would argue for a widening of this discourse. It is clear that students, as ambitious, mobile and career-focused individuals, are concerned with the strategic economic possibilities of their degree throughout their educational trajectory. However, this represents only part of the story for them. It would appear important that the official narrative of international educational can provide a space to go beyond the narrowly entrepreneurial and to recognise the multi-faceted nature of international education experience.

Given the UK's success in attracting international students in recent years and the value of these students' fees to the UK's balance of payments, the question could be asked: what is the point of going beyond a trade view as ultimately the economic value of international education is the aspect of greatest value to the UK economy and

society and to international students? As the idiom goes: If it ain't broke, don't fix it. I would argue that such a view is myopic as it fails to take account of the complexities of international student experience and the varied outcomes of international education for students, or of the fragility of the international student market particularly in times of global economic crisis. For instance, an immediate danger to the UK's international student market is the impact of the new visa rules for international students (Shepherd 2009). This is a point argued forcibly by Asteris (2006) when he makes the comparison between the coal industry of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and the international education industry today and he argues that the UK's international education industry could suffer the same fate as the coal industry before given the similarities between the two industries. It would appear that if the UK is to protect and extend international education initiatives and to continue to grow numbers of international students, it is important to be cognisant of this market fragility and to see beyond the economic in policy making and marketing activities. Asteris' observations are portent in the rapidly evolving international education market where Böhm *et al.*'s (2004) forecasts of spectacular growth in numbers of international students already seem implausible (see UUK 2005; Sastry 2006). They are echoed in a recent report by the House of Commons Education and Skills Committee (HCSEC 2007, p.6) that warns that: 'the Higher Education sector needs...to guard against the risk that the recruitment of international students will be seen as driven by short term gains in fee income'. This is a point also taken up by Professor Colin Gilligan, one of the instigators of the original *Education UK* marketing strategy, when he warned HEIs that they need to develop a better understanding of the international student who are increasingly demanding and discerning, and 'will demand in advance evidence of a return in their investment, both of time and money, in education' (Gill 2008a).

However, while these warnings are pertinent as they refer to the future fragility of the international education market, they are still firmly situated in the economic realm. As argued by Rizvi (2005), this is a view that encourages the idea that students invest in international education with 'a strategic cosmopolitan imaginary' in mind and that their experience of higher education perpetuates this instrumentalist view of the world. Rizvi has declared that the corporative narratives of international education are contradictory, as they

...open up the possibilities of genuine interaction among people from different cultural traditions, giving those students who can afford it the opportunity to travel and learn the knowledge and skills required to work more effectively in an increasingly global society, to become more cosmopolitan. On the other hand, they fail to problematize their bases in economistic modernizing imaginaries, within which subject positions are formed. (Rizvi 2005, p.9).

The crux of the problem for Rizvi is that while international education encourages students to engage in international networks and exchanges, it does so 'within the logic of consumption' or a 'consumerist cosmopolitanism'. He makes a case for international education as a site for 'producing critically and morally informed graduates...and the possibilities for cosmopolitan solidarity' (Rizvi 2005).

International education should seek 'to develop an alternative imaginary of global interconnectivity...Such an imaginary requires the development of a sense of moral responsibility among students...towards humanity as a whole' (Rizvi 2008, pp.31-2).

Rizvi's arguments recall Masschelein's (2001) call for a life of 'bios' or a life with meaning rather than one that is simply entrepreneurial and concentrated on survival within the market and De Vita and Case's (2003) arguments for culturally inclusive, fair and genuinely educational forms of multicultural higher education teaching and assessment. These arguments recall Francis' (1993) definition of international education that I established in the Literature Review.

I have described in the data reporting chapters how students' narratives when recalling their in-study and post-study experiences go beyond the entrepreneurial as they noted the personal ways they benefited and were transformed by their educational experiences. Their value judgments and identities include yet also go beyond 'economistic modernising imaginaries' in ways that perhaps occur outside 'the logic of consumption under the new global economic conditions' (Rizvi 2008, p.26). I would not go so far as to argue that students have developed what Rizvi (*Ibid.*, p.30) refers to as a cosmopolitanism that implies a 'set of *epistemic virtues* with which to both understand current discourses and practices of global interconnectivity and to develop alternatives to them'. It would appear however, that students' narrations perhaps hint at the richer, more reflexive cosmopolitan learning that Rizvi urges.

If this is the case, it would seem vital that international education policy and indeed international education marketing rhetoric should not be confined to the economic and the entrepreneurial if the UK is to ensure its long-term success in international education initiatives. This implies an emphasis not just on the short-term economic benefits of international education to the UK and to the international student, and implies that a more holistic view of international students' experiences and outcomes should be taken. Pre-study, international education marketing could give students a more rounded view of studying in the UK with as much emphasis on the personal as the professional benefits students are likely to experience through living and studying abroad. It should also note the 'disjunctures' students are likely to face when they move back home and set up mechanisms to make this passage easier. In-study, HEIs have a responsibility to provide internationalised, quality and relevant curricula and learning experiences for international students. Perhaps also, as Rizvi argues, they have a role to provide 'cosmopolitan learning' so that international students can become reflexive individuals with a 'critical global imagination' who have engaged in the 'cognitive and ethical dimensions of intercultural learning' (Rizvi 2008, pp.31-32) through their experiences of studying in the UK. There is also an obligation to provide services to students to assist them in their re-entry to their home markets. Post-study, HEI alumni relations' offices and organisations such as the British Council and overseas embassies and consulates should maintain relations with graduates and track their career progress and the long-term outcomes of their UK education. If as Dame Alexandra Burslem stated, these international students are 'future partners in diplomacy, trade and cultural exchange...and...people likely to become influencers and decision makers' (UKCOSA 2004, p.6), it would seem that such an approach is not only advisable but necessary. If everyone, including policy makers and international students, confine themselves to entrepreneurial individualist imaginaries of the international education experience where everyone pursues their own interests, there is surely little hope for genuinely global and rewarding partnerships in diplomacy, trade or culture?

8.4 Final thoughts

8.4.1 Reflecting on the research process

At the end of a major study such as this and one that has taken nearly three years of my life, it is natural to wish I that I had done some things differently. On an academic level, my readings have meant that I have become a more confident educational researcher and my research questions and theoretical focus evolved during the research process. Similar to my respondents, who I identified as engaged in learning trajectories that were always in continual motion 'with a coherence through time that connects the past, the present and the future', my personal learning trajectory as a researcher of their experiences can be described as one of a 'constant becoming' (Wenger 1998, p.154). My research trajectory and indeed the research question have been moulded and changed by my readings and by my conversations with the actors of international education who were the focus of this thesis. While, this conclusion marks the end of this thesis, this research trajectory goes beyond the limits of this thesis and I realise that if I was to revisit my research findings a year from now, I would analyse them differently, and I would bring different theoretical tools to this analysis.

As I described at the beginning of this thesis, I was prompted to undertake this research study both by my review of the literature, my past life trajectory, my professional ambitions and by my experience of marketing higher education to international students. However, as a researcher, my emphasis shifted during the process of reading for and researching this thesis. Given my marketing background, I was initially focused on a more narrow definition of my research questions and I wanted to examine how students' experiences reflected the discourse of international education as expressed in the *Education UK* brand. As a reflexive researcher, I spent much time re-thinking the focus of my research and my research question. I became aware that my initial approach reflected a market-research view of the research, one that as a reluctant marketer I wanted to go beyond. It also smacked of positivist epistemologies in that I was assuming that students' responses would provide me with a particular 'truth' that I could then compare with the rhetoric of *Education UK*. As I continued my research journey, I realised that students' experiences and value judgments were far richer and more complex than could be expressed by simply

comparing the rhetoric of *Education UK* with the reality of students' experiences. My research focus and questions evolved during the research process as I sought an approach that could do justice to their experiences and to my positionality as an interpretive researcher of these experiences. I shifted my research focus from one concentrated on the marketing of UK education to one that focused on students' value judgments and shifting identities during their educational experience, with the discourse of education and the rhetoric of *Education UK* as a rich background to this experience.

When deciding on the research methods at the initial phases of researching this thesis, I decided to adopt the approach of semi-structured interviews for pragmatic reasons as outlined in the Methodology and Methods chapter of this thesis. This research method also offered me a certain degree of comfort as a marketer engaged in my first major piece of educational research. Three years on, my readings and reflections have whetted my interest in other research methods and methodologies that I would not have considered at the beginning of this research process, such as a life history approach. As described by Goodson and Sikes (2001, p.21) such an approach would have perhaps have given me the scope to investigate the 'many influences, experiences and relationships' within individuals' lives and how that led them to develop and take on 'a specific professional identity which informs their work'. During this research, I interviewed 28 respondents in two geographical locations. My personal timescale, my choice of respondents, as well as my chosen research methods meant that in most cases I was only able to meet these individuals on one occasion, for one hour-long interview. A life history approach would have meant that I studied a smaller number of informants and had more opportunity to gain a better understanding of their educational experiences within the context of their wider lives. This method might have enabled me to better reveal not just how individuals are continually constituted within discourses but how they are 'active agents in negotiating them' (Munro 1998, p.4). It might have helped me better understand how their private and public lives intersect (*Ibid.*, p.5) and perhaps it might have allowed individuals' voices to be more prominent in the final text, an aspect that I had struggled with in my research, as I described in the Methodology and Methods chapter.

However, given my professional positionality as a marketer when I began this research study and my desire to work within international education, I felt that I needed to choose a research approach that would have value within the 'regime of truth' of my profession, and that the ensuing research project could be 'useful' for my future professional career. In doing so, I was perhaps just as guilty as my informants of 'shape-shifting' (Gee 2004) as I moulded myself for my imagined professional future. However, my professional and personal lives have changed absolutely since I set out on this research. When I embarked on the EdD programme, I worked at a major Irish university and I saw my future professional career in the realm of this or similar institutions. A year into the programme, I moved from Dublin, first to Moscow, where I worked for the British Council and now to Jerusalem, where I work on a free-lance consultancy basis. I have had two daughters in the past three years and I am now witnessing my eldest daughter's initiation to international education. I have moved from a position where I saw the EdD as progressing me on a clear career path, to one where I have a myriad of professional and personal options, and therefore my approach to research is perhaps less constricted by the discourse of my professional life.

8.4.2 Areas of further research that are of interest

Like any research project, this research could have taken many different equally valuable directions. Some of these are worth mentioning here as they would all contribute to an improved understanding of the international education experience. It was beyond the scope of this thesis to give more than passing reference to many of these valuable areas of research.

In this thesis, I referred to some of the challenges students experienced, as they were re-immersed in their personal and professional lives at home following their studies. However, students' narratives of return are only one side of the story. A highly useful study would be to research this question from the point of view of students' 'community of practice', to use Wenger's (1998) term and to investigate how students' employers and co-workers view them and their international education credentials upon their return home. Such research would have immense value for

policy on international education, and indeed for the marketing of *Education UK*, as it would enable a more thorough understanding of the outcomes of international education.

A second aspect that merits more detailed research is how personal factors influenced students' educational experiences. Several of the Russian women respondents were single parents with young children who they left at home with grandparents during their year's study in the UK. The Palestinian women interviewed spoke of their experience of living and studying in the UK as their first opportunity to live alone, apart from their families and from the social pressures of Arab society. Palestinians referred to the 'freedom' of living in UK society in contrast to the psychological and political pressures of life at home in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. A deeper analysis of their lives obtained perhaps over a series of interviews with the same individuals would allow me to probe how these personal factors influenced their experiences in-study and post-study.

A third aspect, and one mentioned in the final data-reporting chapter, is the role that networks of other international graduates play in individuals' lives. UK universities increasingly see their relationship with students as beginning prior to registration and continuing when they graduate, thus the emphasis on alumni programmes at most institutions. It would seem that research on the value of international graduate networks within international markets would be of great value to universities in keeping alive their overseas alumni networks and attracting prospective students, and to the British Council when devising international education marketing strategies, as research consistently shows that family and friends, who are often graduates of UK institutions, are important promoters of UK education in overseas markets (Mazzarol & Soutar 2002).

Finally, I think that this thesis shows the importance of doing more research outside the traditional geographical areas of international education and of doing more longitudinal research on international students. As I mentioned in my Literature Review, most current research is on the traditional sending markets, particularly Asian markets such as China, Malaysia and India. However, there is an increased awareness at policy level that the UK must diversify its source markets for

international students and not rely so heavily on so few markets (see BC 2006a; Gill 2008c). It is also important to follow international students many years after graduation to have a better view of the long-term outcomes of the international education experience.

8.5 Last words

In this thesis, I have argued for a widening of the discourse of international education. My data chapters have shown students' complex and shifting value judgments and identities during their educational trajectories. I think the best way of reinforcing this point is to refer again to the words of international students themselves, the informants of this research, and the basis on which I have built my arguments.

At UK universities it is not just about what you get on paper. It's an all rounded experience. (Ivan, Moscow).

I would be prepared to spend my money again on the same course. My MBA was a foundation stone for my career and for my life. (Natalia, Moscow).

Each person brought something special to the course, and brought their knowledge...It was really exceptional and we learnt so much from each other. (Hayed, Jerusalem).

The Masters opened the door for me to my PhD, mostly because of the language. For me, English was a very important factor in going to the UK. I learnt my English in the UK. (Moustafa, Jerusalem).

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Appendix 1: Ethical Procedures Documents

Copy of initial email to prospective informants in Russia

Dear XXX,

XX of the British Council and British Alumni Club gave me your contact details and suggested I contact you.

I currently work for the British Council in Moscow and I am also carrying out research on Russian students' experiences of studying in the UK on postgraduate programmes. This research forms part of my EdD (Doctor of Education) with the University of Sheffield, and the results of the research will be shared with the British Council and *Education UK* as well as the British Alumni Club.

I am keen to meet with a number of graduates who have returned to Russia following their study in the UK to carry out one-to-one interviews with them. My aim is to gain a better insight of graduates' experiences of studying in the UK, to understand the challenges they faced and whether the experience of living and studying in the UK lived up to their expectations.

I was wondering if you would be willing to be interviewed as part of this research project? The interview will take no longer than one hour, and I can meet you in your office or at another location convenient to you.

I can be contacted at this email or on my mobile at

I look forward to hearing from you.

Best regards

Victoria Bruce

Research Project Title:

The International Study Experience: An exploration of returned students' experiences of higher education in the UK

You are invited to take part in this research project. It is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take the time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Thank you for reading this.

Purpose of the project:

In this research project, I am focusing on returned postgraduate international students' study experiences of higher education in the UK. I hope to gain an understanding of graduates' experience of studying and living in the UK and to ascertain if these experiences lived up to graduates' expectations.

Why have you been chosen?

I am interviewing graduates who have obtained a Masters Degree at a UK university and lived in the UK for at least one year. This includes individuals who funded their own degree and individuals who obtained a scholarship for their studies.

Do you have to take part?

It is up to you to decide if you would like to take part in this research. If you decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part, you are free to withdraw at any time, without penalty and without giving a reason.

What will the research consist of?

The research consists of a one-to-one interview with the researcher.

Will this research be confidential?

All information that is collected about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. Any information about you which is disseminated will have your name and address removed so that you cannot be recognised.

What happens to the results of the research project?

A copy of the initial research findings will be given to the British Council. The results of this research project will form the basis for my thesis in partial fulfilment for a Doctor of Education (EdD) at the University of Sheffield.

Contact for further information

Victoria Bruce
v.bruce@sheffield.ac.uk

THANK YOU FOR TAKING PART IN THIS PROJECT

**SCHOOL OF EDUCATION UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD
PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM**

Title of Project: The International Study Experience: An exploration of returned students' experiences of higher education in the UK

Name of Researcher: Victoria Bruce

Participant Identification Number for this project:

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated:
[insert date] for the above project and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason.

3. I understand that my responses will be anonymised before analysis. I give permission for members of the research team to have access to my anonymised responses.

4. I agree to take part in the above project.

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Name of Person taking consent
(if different from researcher)

Date Signature

Researcher

Date

Signature

Copies:

One copy for the participant and one copy for the Principal Investigator / Supervisor.

Appendix 2: Interview Guide

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this interview. First of all, I wanted to remind you about the objectives of this interview and my overall research. Please feel free to ask me any questions about the research.

- Give copy of *Participant Informant Sheet*
- Get respondent to sign copy of *Participant Consent Form*

The interview will take about one hour in total. I will ask you some questions about your experience of studying for a Masters degree in the UK. Please be assured that any information you give me is confidential and you will remain completely anonymous in any reports or papers I write on this research.

Opening questions

1. Where are you originally from? What city/ region?
2. Can you tell me about your educational background?
 - a. Level of degree(s)
 - b. Institution(s) where studied
 - c. Year(s) of graduation
3. What is your current position?
 - a. What was your position prior to studying in the UK?

Topic 1

4. Tell me why you decided to pursue a Masters degree abroad/ in the UK?
 - a. How did you fund your studies?
 - b. Can you tell me how you found out about the Masters programme?
 - c. What attracted you to this particular programme?
 - d. Did anyone advise you to go to the UK/ to study on this particular programme?
 - e. Did you consider studying for a Masters degree at home? Why? Why not?

Topic 2

5. Describe your experience of studying and living in the UK
 - a. How did you experience the academic system in the UK?
 - b. Were there any specific events or moments in your academic journey that stand out for you?
 - c. Could you describe some of the more important lessons you learnt (both academic and non-academic)?
 - d. How did your experience of studying in the UK compare with your previous studies?
 - e. What kind of relationship did you have with your lecturers?
 - f. Tell me about living in the UK?
 - g. Can you tell me about your life outside of studies?

Topic 3

6. Tell me about your life after completing your Masters degree
 - a. What positive changes have occurred in your life? Or negative changes?
 - b. How is your UK Masters perceived in Russia/ Palestine?
 - c. What kind of job opportunities are they for you as a UK graduate?
 - d. How did you experience returning to work at home?
 - e. Would you encourage your friends or children to study abroad?
 - f. How is UK higher education perceived in Russia/ Palestine?

Closing question

7. Thank you very much for your time and help. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your experience of studying in the UK that I have not covered in this interview?

Appendix 3: Higher Education Systems in Russia and Palestine

1. Overview of Russian Higher Education

Expansion of higher education was one of the key achievements of the Soviet Union, and today there are an estimated six million students studying at over 1,000 HEIs across Russia (HSE 2006). Higher education continues to reflect the political and economic priorities of the Communist period where it was an integral part of the system of political socialisation (Deaver 2001). In communist times, there was a particular bias towards the scientific, since Marxism-Leninism was a scientific theory of socialism, and this affected the structure of the HE system and the structure and delivery of curricula. HEIs aimed to form experts, and in Russia the standard degree was the 5-year specialist diploma or *Diplom*. An authoritative pedagogic approach was the norm with students expected to 'passively consume and then repeat what is said in lectures' (Deaver 2001, p.1).

With the fall of Communism, the Russian modernisation programme was launched with the 1992 *Law on Education*, which first introduced a multilevel degree system in Russia in addition to the traditional 5-year specialist *Diplom*. The new system consists of an Intermediate Diploma (at least 2 years study), *Bakalavr* (not less than 4 years study), Specialist *Diplom Vyishiye Obrazovaniye* (5-6 years study) and *Magistr* or Masters Degree (6 years of study), and *Aspiratura*, or PhD equivalent. Throughout this thesis, the traditional five-year Russian degree or *Diplom Vyishiye Obrazovaniye* is referred to as *Diplom*. There are two levels to the *Aspiratura* qualification, and the first level *Doktor Nauk* is considered a PhD equivalent. Many of my male respondents held *Aspirantura* degrees, as it is a popular way to delay or avoid obligatory military service (British Council, personal correspondence).

The first two years of a Russian *Diplom* cover a wide range of subjects, many of which have little relevance for the final qualification. In the final three years of the degree, students specialise very narrowly in their profession. Within the *Diplom* structure, it is the number of hours that counts, and credits equate to the number of hours spent studying a subject rather than on learning outputs. This is an aspect that the OECD referred to in a review of the Russian higher education system view as one that needs to 'give way to the development of core competencies and transferable skills' (OECD 1999 p. 13).

Russia today faces significant challenges in higher education today. The principal issues include: access and equity; quality and responsiveness, as problems in pay and conditions affect the quality of courses delivered and misalignment with the needs of the labour market; efficiency, given low staff-student ratios; and government policies that fail to recognise the needs of the higher education system (OECD 1999, p.12). Russian state spending on higher education has fallen, with the Russian government spending 3 per cent on education as a share of GDP in 1997, one third of the amount spent in 1989 (Deaver 2001, p.2). Klachko (2003, p.60) claims that today Russia's current higher education system 'fails to supply the economy with the labour

resources meeting [*sic*] its qualification requirements'. With the fall of the Soviet Union, the abolition of a centrally planned economy, and the severing of the links between higher education and the centrally planned labour market, the current Russian system has become 'dysfunctional' and half of all graduates cannot find a job in the professional field for which they are trained.

Russian public HEIs have great difficulties attracting younger staff with experience of working in business as they offer very poor salaries. Official salaries for Russian academics at public HEIs are low ranging from the equivalent of US\$ 153 for lecturers to US\$ 615 for professors. Most academics supplement their salaries with teaching in private institutions, private tutoring and in many cases bribes (British Council, personal correspondence). Often business subjects are taught by older academics who previously taught communist inspired subjects and who have no practical knowledge of the subject (British Council, personal correspondence).

It was estimated that 39,382 Russian students studied abroad in 2005, representing an outward mobility rate of just 0.4 per cent UNESCO-UIS 2007, p.138). The five top destinations for these students were: Germany (12,158), the USA (2,599), UK (3,673), France (2,672) and Kazakhstan (2,516) (*Ibid.*, p.138). Around half of the students studying in the UK are studying at postgraduate level, and 73 per cent of these are studying on taught programmes.⁴⁷

2. Overview of Palestinian higher education

There are eleven universities (including one Open University), 5 university colleges and 26 community colleges operating in Palestine for a population of 3.5 million people. Nearly all the institutions were established after 1971 (Moughrabi 2004). A total of 127,214 students (UNESCO-UIS 2007, p.124) are registered on higher education programmes, 62 per cent of these at the ten traditional universities, and the remainder at the Al- Quds Open University (MoEHE 2005). Around 38 per cent of the school leaving population attends higher education institutions (UNESCO-UIS 2007 p.124). The sector is growing fast, and there were three times more students in 2002/3 as compared with 1995/6 mainly due to increasing numbers studying at the Open University (World Bank 2004, p.51).

The Palestinian higher education system faces severe challenges due to the economic and political crisis in the region, where 25.8 per cent of adults are unemployed (World Bank 2007) and more than 47 per cent live in poverty (World Bank 2004, p.30). The finances of Palestinian HEIs are precarious. In 2003-4, the Palestinian Authority (PA)⁴⁸ provided \$15.8 million in financial support to HEIs, fifty times more than in 1996, however the expansion in enrolments far exceeded this budgetary increase (World Bank 2004, p.52). Most HEIs have to rely on cost recovery from tuition fees, which currently account for 60 per cent of total expenditure, and there have been difficulties in payments of employees' salaries. For instance, following the Hamas election in the Gaza Strip in January 2006, the PA was

⁴⁷ See: <http://hesa.britishcouncil.stats.org>

⁴⁸ The Palestinian Authority is the administration that governs the West Bank. Since January 2006, Hamas has governed the Gaza Strip.

unable to pay the salaries of more than 165,000 Palestinian state employees, including professors, due to an economic blockade imposed by the United States and the European Union (Taweel 2007, p. 4).

Unit costs for Palestinian HEIs remain low averaging about US\$ 1,312 for traditional universities and USD \$318 at the Open University (World Bank 2006, pp.59-60). The World Bank has stated that there are acute quality problems with university programmes (World Bank 2004, p.52). The share of full-time academics has fallen from 82 per cent in 1996/97 to 64 per cent in 2000/1 despite the significant increase in the numbers of students (World Bank 2004, p.51). There is a marked lack of PhD qualified faculty, and there is only one PhD programme available in the territories. Of an estimated total of 3,731 faculty staff, only 1,533 hold PhD qualifications (BC 2008b). The pedagogic system, as noted by Khalil Mahshi, is one that tends to emphasise theoretical learning and rote education rather than what he calls 'relevant education' (Anon 2006a, p.76).

It is estimated that 7,729 Palestinians studied abroad in 2005, representing an outward mobility rate of 6.6 per cent (UNESCO-UIS 2007, p.138). The top five destinations for these students were Jordan (5,572), Qatar (440), Saudi Arabia (292), USA (280) and Turkey (214) (*Ibid.*, p.138). Around 100 individuals enrol on higher education programmes in the UK each year, 20 of them Chevening Scholar (British Council, personal correspondence).

Appendix 4: Profile of research respondents

1. Russian respondents

Alexander

Alexander is in his late-thirties and has both a specialist diploma and a *Kandidat Nauk* (PhD) in economics from a prestigious Russian university. We met in a small café after work. Several times during the interview he disappeared outside to smoke cigarettes, as the café unusually for Moscow was non-smoking. Each time he would reappear with new ideas after these short breaks. He obtained an MBA in the UK, funded by a Chevening Scholarship. He is now a senior manager in a major Russian telecommunications company. I conducted the interview in Russian.

Andrei

Andrei is older than my other respondents, and had studied in the UK under a now defunct scholarship programme. A balding man in glasses, he was professional and courteous and treated the interview as a business meeting. We met me at his office in a former factory at the beginning of the working day. He is partner of a project management training company, which he co-founded in the early 1990s. He studied for an MSc in information systems. His primary degree is in systems analysis from a prestigious Moscow institute. I conducted the interview in Russian.

Anton

Anton is in his early 30s and is originally from Siberia. We met in a quiet café in Moscow city centre on a Saturday afternoon. Anton made a point of turning off his mobile for the interview. He pondered each question for a few moments. He commented at the end of the interview on how he had answered my questions, saying that perhaps he had been overly negative in his responses. Anton qualified as a teacher of foreign languages and then obtained a fashion diploma in Russia. While working as a teacher, he became involved in fashion events and was invited to Moscow to work in the fashion industry. As a Chevening Scholar, he obtained a Masters degree in fashion and marketing. In his current work, he manages the franchise for a number of UK fashion chains in Russia. The interview was in English.

Elena

Elena is in her early 30s. She works as Marketing Manager with a luxury cosmetics company. The interview was in Russian and it took place in a popular Moscow restaurant over lunch in a noisy cafe. She brought along a colleague, who sat silently eating her lunch throughout the interview, which made communication difficult and stilted. Elena was friendly, but not personable. She did not elaborate on her answers and gave only impersonal generalised information. Originally from Siberia, she studied economics at undergraduate level. She then worked for a number of years there before obtaining a Chevening Scholarship and heading to the UK to do a Masters degree in international marketing.

Ivan

Ivan is unusual among my respondents in that he studied for both his undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in the UK, both in computing and management science. He

funded his own studies. We met at a trendy café after work. The interview was interrupted a couple of times by telephone calls, as Ivan arranged his social life for that evening. Ivan is Managing Director of his family-owned company. I conducted the interview in English.

Katya

Katya is in her mid-thirties and is from a large regional city, where she graduated as a teacher of English and German. At time of interview, she was Marketing Manager for an international cultural agency. Katya studied on a Masters degree of international marketing programme as a Chevening Scholar. I interviewed Katya at her workplace and we spoke English during the interview.

Lisa

Lisa is in her late twenties and is a graduate of economics and has a Masters degree in international marketing. She is now Marketing Director of a major Russian retail chain. We met in her apartment after work. Lisa's parents funded her study abroad. I had been informed by another respondent that Lisa was disappointed by her UK-educational experience, however she refused to be drawn on this during interview. I met Lisa in her home at the end of a working day. The interview was short and while Lisa was polite and professional, she provided few detailed answers. I conducted the interview in Russian.

Maria

Maria is in her late 20s, and was an elegantly dressed and charming, with perfect English. The interview took place in a busy café in Moscow city centre at the end of the working day. Maria has an arts management *Bakalavr* and an MBA from a new Moscow university. She worked for a major Russian Arts organisation in a marketing capacity for a number of years before her Masters degree and continued to work with this organisation while studying in the UK. She obtained a Chevening Scholarship and studied for a Masters in arts management. While in London, she was recruited for her current role as a management consultant with an international consultancy firm. The interview was in English.

Natalia

Natalia, originally from Siberia, is a qualified teacher and has a degree in management and economics from a Russian university. She studied for an MBA and funded her own studies. We met near her office in a quiet bar during lunch. Natalia approached the interview with great seriousness and her answers were thoughtful and detailed. She is a director of a large international company. The interview was in English.

Oleg

In his early thirties, Oleg was very polite, personable and charming. The interview was conducted in Russian. The interview was interrupted a couple of times by mobile phone calls from his girl friend as he made plans for his evening. He was very forthcoming with information and gave detailed answers to all my questions. Oleg has a *Diplom* in economics and business and a *Kandidat Nauk* (or PhD) from a regional Russian university. He was a Chevening Scholar graduating with a Masters degree in marketing. Oleg now heads up the marketing department of a large Russian company.

Pavel

Pavel is in his mid thirties. We met in an Irish pub in Moscow city centre over lunchtime and he insisted on ordering a 'business lunch', which made for a difficult and rushed interview. The interview was in Russian. Pavel is a computer science graduate and he studied communications management in the UK as a Chevening Scholar. He works as a senior manager with a major Russian company.

Stas

I met Stas in the café of a large Moscow shopping mall at the end of the working day. He was urbane and fashionably dressed. He holds both a *Diplom* and *Kandidat Nauk* (PhD) in journalism from a prestigious Moscow university. He obtained a Chevening Scholarship and studied for a Masters degree in film studies. He is now self-employed, involved in filmmaking and news television. Stas spoke on the phone a number of times as he arranged his Friday night social life with various girlfriends towards the end of the interview. I conducted the interview in English.

Tamara

Tamara met me in her office not far from Moscow city-centre on a stifling hot summer day. She is in her early 30s and spoke about her experience of studying in the UK in fast and detailed Russian. She was very friendly and full of smiles and despite meeting me at work, appeared to have as much time as I needed. Tamara has a *Diplom* in economics and she also participated in the prestigious 'Russian Presidential Programme' for young managers, obtaining a Masters equivalent qualification. She was a Chevening Scholar and she studied for an MBA in the UK. She now works as Financial Director for a large Russian company.

Tania

Tania is younger than most of my other respondents. It took many emails and telephone calls to set up the meeting and we met late on a work evening in a quiet café near the busy Moscow ring road. A Muscovite, Tania studied interpreting and translation and then obtained a Masters in international relations. Tania funded her own studies. Tania's answers were short and to the point, and she gave little detail. She now works as a translator in a bank, a job she fell into upon her return to Moscow. She is looking for a job in her area of speciality. I conducted the interview in Russian.

Viktor

Viktor was my first interviewee and I met him during lunchtime in a busy Moscow café. The interview was cut short as he was called back to the office soon after we arrived, so we only had forty minutes together. Viktor had responded immediately to my initial email requested an interview saying he would be very interested to meet me. He runs an educational consultancy that organises language-programmes for Russians in the UK and other countries, and I think he was hoping I could help him in his work. In his late 30s, Viktor was born in Siberia. He studied engineering before setting up his own company in educational consultancy. He studied for a Masters degree in management information systems in the UK. He paid his own fees. The interview was in English.

Vlad

Vlad is a charming and confident man in his early thirties with perfect English. We met in a Moscow café on a busy pedestrian street after work. A former medical doctor, he began working in the commercial sector a number of years after graduating and through this work, he came across the British Council and the Chevening Scholarship Programme. He graduated with an MBA. Vlad works with a large international company. I conducted the interview in English.

Yulia

Yulia lived in the UK for nearly 10 years, first as a student and then a further eight working in finance. She is originally from Siberia. She studied for a Masters degree in economics in the UK. She was sponsored by a Russian company who paid her tuition fees and living expenses. She recently returned to Russia where she now works as a Financial Manager in a Western banking company. At time of interview, she was pursuing a Masters degree with the Open University. The interview was in English.

Yurat

Yurat is a quiet and serious man in his early thirties. He is not an ethnic Russian, and is originally from the Caucasus. He was charming and open and interested in my research, asking many questions about my research aims. We met in a café during his lunch hour and he insisted on speaking English. He is a graduate of linguistics and is currently studying for a *Diplom* in law part-time. He worked as a para-legal consultant in a non-governmental organisation on human rights for ethnic minorities while studying for his primary degree. Based on this experience, he was accepted on to the Chevening Scholarship programme, and obtained a Masters degree in law and human rights. He is now working in a Russian commercial company in the legal department while continuing to volunteer for human rights organisations.

2. Palestinian respondents

All interviews were conducted in English.

Ali

I met Ali in the British Council offices in Jerusalem. Ali is in his late 20s and is a graduate of international politics from an Israeli university. He also studied for a Masters-equivalent degree in the same subject in France, funded by a French government scholarship. He studied for an MBA in the UK as a Chevening Scholar. Ali now holds a middle management position with regional responsibilities with a major international NGO.

Hayed

Hayed is a freelance filmmaker based in Palestine in her early 30s. She obtained her undergraduate degree in film directing in Egypt, and she graduated with a Masters degree in the same subject in the UK. She was a Chevening Scholar. Prior to doing her Masters degree, she worked for internationally based media organisations in Palestine covering the events of the Second Intifada. We met at the end of the working day in a café near the Old City of Jerusalem. Hayed informed me early in the interview that she was a non-practising Muslim.

Khadar

Khadar is a young energetic man, with tremendous enthusiasm both for his subject and about his experience of living and studying in the UK. He has a degree in biology from a Palestinian university. He studied conservation biology in the UK, as a Chevening Scholar. He works on worldwide environmental projects, and is employed by an international foundation where he heads up their Middle East section. We met in the British Council's offices in Jerusalem.

Lina

Lina is in her early-30s and has a Bachelors degree in architecture from a Palestinian university. Throughout her primary degree she worked in the production of films and festivals and became interested in her current profession as an arts manager. She now heads up a Palestinian arts organisation. She graduated with a Masters degree in film and television in the UK. We met in a warm sunny café during the working day.

Maha

Maha is in her late 30s. She holds both a Bachelors degree and Masters degree in political science from two Palestinian universities. She was awarded a Chevening Scholarship and she graduated with a Masters in International Politics. Maha heads up the research department of a large Palestinian NGO based in Ramallah in the West Bank. She also worked in as a researcher for a Palestinian NGO before studying in the UK. We met in Maha's office during the working day.

Moustafa

Moustafa is in his late 30s, and was a self-funded student on a Masters degree in physics in the UK. He studied for his undergraduate degree in physics at a prestigious university in Jordan. Following his Masters degree, Moustafa decided to pursue a PhD in education in Israel as he felt there were more opportunities for him as an educationalist in Palestine than as a physicist. He now heads up a support department in a leading Palestinian university. We met in Moustafa's office. He was very hospitable, and had set aside a couple of hours of his working day to meet me.

Rana

Rana is in her mid-30s. She is a graduate of English from a Palestinian university and obtained a Masters degree in journalism in the UK. She funded her own studies. We met in a café near her office during the working day. Rana obtained her Masters degree several years after her initial degree, as she wanted to obtain relevant experience before going to the UK. Rana speaks flawless English, as she lived with her family in the US for several years as a child. At the time of our meeting, Rana was communications manager for a large international NGO. Shortly after our interview, she began a second Masters degree in the UK.

Tariq

I interviewed Tariq by telephone as he is based in Gaza. We had difficulties with the line quality at times, and the line was cut off twice, making for a difficult interview. Tariq was understanding and patient about these technical issues. Tariq has an undergraduate degree in economics from a Gaza university. He studied for a Masters degree in development finance in the UK. He was a Chevening Scholar. Tariq faced considerable difficulties when leaving Gaza to go the UK, due to movement

restrictions on young Palestinians, and he spent 45 days in an internment centre at the checkpoint before he was given permission to leave. Due to these difficulties, he missed the first six weeks of term. Tariq now holds a middle management position with an international relief organisation in Gaza. His organisation gave him leave of absence to pursue his Masters degree.

Wassim

I met Wasim in the British Council's office in Ramallah. He works as a researcher in a university-based consultancy that provides support to development NGOs in the region. Wasim is in his early 30s. He graduated with a Bachelor's degree in economics and political Science from a Palestinian university before embarking on his Masters degree in international development in the UK. He was a Chevening Scholar. He apologised profusely that he took a couple of calls during the interview.

Yousef

I interviewed Yousef by telephone as he lives in Gaza City. Yousef has lived in the Gaza Strip all his life, and studied for his Bachelors degree in English at a local university. He was a Chevening Scholar and obtained a Masters degree in international relations in the UK. Yousef had never travelled outside Palestine prior to his studies in the UK. He was an enthusiastic talkative interviewee and he spoke in great detail about his time in the UK. The interview lasted over 90 minutes. Yousef now holds a middle management position with a major international humanitarian relief organisation.

Appendix 5: Extract from research diary 1

This extract was written about half way through the interviewing process in January 2008.

Based on my initial theme analysis of interviews, I think there are a few key themes that are emerging from interviews and are worth further analysis.

Vocationalism of UK education?

Is it such a bad thing that HE in the UK is vocationally oriented? Much of the academic literature on international education and on HE generally in the UK argues that this vocationalism is a sign of the increasing marketisation of HE, and its alignment with business and government objectives. It is also seen a sign of the 'dumbing down' of the HE system in the UK, with the emphasis on applicable skills rather than on wider knowledge. Yet when I read through my interviews with students, all of them link studying in the UK with getting a good job. Many speak about the strong business ties between UK HEIs and UK business. Certainly, many of these students studied on vocationally oriented Masters programmes, and made a conscious choice to study on these programmes. But at the same time they are comparing the UK educational system with their home educational systems and they see this business-orientation or vocationalism as one of the good points of the UK system.

They want value for money (a theme that crops up again and again in interview). They see a Masters degree in the UK as ensuring future career success and good salaries. They see their year in the UK as a good investment. Granted many of these are scholarship students and did not have to pay for their studies, but there was still a cost to them in terms of the time they took out of their lives and their careers. But in all cases they saw this as an investment as they were getting a vocational degree that would improve their career prospects and get them a well-paid job at home.

But at the same time as emphasising the vocational-aspect of a UK degree, they also emphasised the importance of personal growth to them as an important outcome of their degree. They emphasised the importance of the social experience, of their friendships and of the informal knowledge they obtained from their classmates and friends. This was particularly evident when they answered questions on the second and third stages of their educational trajectories.

Challenge of adapting to new academic system

UK education differs hugely from the Russian/ Palestinian systems. I should re-examine the interviews to look at the particular challenges students faced in adapting to new learning methods, the new academic system and methods of assessment etc.

Knowledge

What is seen as good knowledge by the students? Academic literature in the UK tends to criticise knowledge that is more skills-based, or more business oriented and to argue for the importance of wider knowledge and understanding. Yet what do students want? Judging by their narratives, they want a mix of applicable and

theoretical learning. Therefore many emphasise the importance of fundamental knowledge that they obtained during their undergraduate studies at home, which they can then build upon with the vocational knowledge they obtained in the UK.

Describing bad experiences

Students' perception of my positionality appears to affect what they tell me and how they tell it. At the initial stages of interview, they seem to tell me what I want to hear, and avoid giving me the negative side of their experiences, even when I have been informed by others that they were not totally happy with their degree. Why is this? Is it that I come from the British Council and therefore they do not want to give me the negative side of their experiences? Were their experiences of studying in the UK all positive? Or is this a veiled/ safe way of criticising their experience without damaging or threatening themselves? It's only towards the end of interview (often when I turn off the recorder) that they report bad experiences in the UK or begin to criticise aspects of this experience.

Appendix 6: Extract from research diary 2

This extract was written after a particularly difficult interview with Pavel, in Moscow.

We met in an Irish pub near Pavel's workplace over lunch, at his suggestion. This was a difficult interview. He insisted in ordering a three-course business lunch and ate this while we talked.

He spoke very loudly throughout the interview and gave me the shortest possible answers to all my questions, averting any questions he did not want to answer and talking off-topic frequently even when I tried to pull him back to answer the question in hand. He often just answered 'yes', even to open questions, and I had to draw more information out of him with question after question. Everyone in the pub could probably hear him talk. I wondered if he was talking so loud to ensure they all heard what he had to say, as if he wanted to share his experience with everyone else. When we had walked from his workplace to the pub, he had seemed very friendly and spoke in a normal voice and tone. His behaviour changed when we started the interview in the pub.

It was mid-summer and very very hot and I seemed to have rivers of sweat flowing down my legs and my back as I tried to conduct the interview. He seemed more interested in asking questions on why I was doing this research, what exactly was I researching and how did the research process work.

Control was definitely in his court. I got the minimum from the interview. He got a chance to talk loudly, find out about my research, and not say very much about his own experience

(Excerpt from author's research diary, July 2007).

Appendix 7: Examples of theme analysis

Extract from Khadar's interview

This is an extract from Khadar's interview when I asked him about **Topic 1** on the interview guide, and about his reasons for pursuing a Masters degree abroad. This is the first stage of theme analysis of interviews when I developed sub-themes in the data, which on additional analysis became the main themes of the research.

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| <p>Improve self/ personal growth Field of study not available at home Few professionals at home/ career</p> | <p>I wanted to <u>build myself</u>. You see my field of study is unique here. <u>No one else in Palestine works in this conservation biology</u> so it's not possible to study here. I work in X.... and I am <u>maybe the first of the second person</u> here who deals with this matter.</p> |
| <p>Expand knowledge Access to new approaches and new ways of learning Enhance career/ Entrepreneurial Vocational knowledge Value of degree as perceived in market International perspective</p> | <p>...I wanted a higher degree for many reasons. One of these reasons, I wanted to <u>expand my knowledge, to have new methodologies and tools for conservation</u> and so long. This degree will <u>enhance my career</u> in achieving several goals. For instance when I write a proposal, <u>they will consider a person who writes a proposal has a Master's degree</u>. It was a must for me on one side. On the other side, I had to be expanded more to have an <u>international perspective</u> on the area of conservation biology especially here in Palestine, we don't have this much expertise. So I <u>have to build myself by my own hand</u>.</p> |
| <p>Improve myself/ personal growth History of quality education in the UK Well known internationally UK qualification has value in market/ Entrepreneurial</p> | <p>...The UK has a <u>strong history of education</u>, no matter what field, architecture or architecture or any type of field. The UK is <u>well known for the standard of its education</u>. All people seek education from the UK. <u>They think the UK education is higher. A certificate from the UK is seen with pride</u>. It means I studied in the UK. <u>Because 50 years ago, people who studied in the UK, people will look at him and say "Wow!"</u> This is one of the aspects that I had in mind. I wanted to study in the UK because <u>the UK education is very well thought of</u> and it is more focused on specific things than say that of East European countries, where the education is not so good.</p> |
| <p>History of people studying in UK UK education perceived as of value by myself and society/ Positional good</p> | <p>...I preferred to go to the UK rather than the US scholarship. It is <u>a one-year Masters in the UK instead of two or even three years in the US. I didn't want to waste time. One year is an investment for myself</u>. I spend one year which will pass so quickly and I have a <u>good degree from a good and well known university from a country well known for education</u>. So this is <u>revenue for myself</u>. On the other hand the UK is a <u>European country</u>. And dealing with conservation in this area, Europe and Middle East, it is much easier as <u>we have much in common with Europe</u>. We have mainly the same birds and plants. In the US there is a different type of ecosystem, different types of birds and plants so the research methods would be totally different. <u>I would not make so much revenue. I wanted to study in Europe</u>.</p> |
| <p>Value for time: faster degree in UK Investment for self/ value for money Well-respected degree/ country of origin of degree / Revenue for self/ Entrepreneurial UK – part of Europe Similar field of study/ Geographically closer</p> | <p>I looked at <u>Germany as another option. So it was the UK first choice, Germany second choice and the US third choice</u>, but this was specific to my area of study. <u>The UK has achieved much in the area nature conservation</u>...So I looked at countries which were strong in my field, and I based my decision on that.</p> |
| <p>Financially better choice/ Entrepreneurial Other options for study UK strong in area of speciality/ pragmatic choice</p> | |

Extract from Stas's interview

This is an extract from Stas's interview when I asked him about **Topic 2**, about his experience of living and studying in the UK.

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| <p>Facing initial difficulties/ Adjustment /Used to stressful situations No difficulties with English writing but difficulties with academic English/ Adjustment New academic rules.</p> <p>Learning curve as he had to learn how to learn UK academic rules. Lectures facilitating knowledge/ Relationship with tutors Had little relevant academic knowledge at beginning/ former knowledge not relevant?</p> <p>Large volume of work Expanding knowledge not prescribed knowledge. Enjoyment</p> <p>International students vs. British students / Lack of cultural knowledge / Process of adjustment: takes time.</p> <p>Assessment Assessment more or less objective?</p> <p>Lack of anonymity in marking</p> <p>Small group –cohesive group?</p> <p>Good tutor support/ individual attention.</p> <p>Need to write what tutor wants. Successful student – got good grades</p> <p>Bureaucratic.</p> <p>Accommodation difficulties. Lack of choice International students trapped Lack of time to find alternative</p> <p>Lack of choice. Poor quality and expensive accommodation</p> | <p>The first essay was a very stressful experience, I remember that. <u>I'm used to deadlines. I'm a journalist and I write many articles always with deadlines. I write many articles in English, so it wasn't writing in English that was the problem.</u> But writing an article for a paper or a magazine or maybe a website is very different from writing an essay. It is on very severe lines. You have to have a <u>particular format and write it in a particular way.</u> <u>The format of an essay is different from what we know. You need to have references and you have to refer to things in a particular way.</u> The <u>tutors gave me a lot of help</u> with this, because I didn't have a clue. I had only had 5 lectures by the time I wrote my first essay. I hadn't read many of the books and I <u>had very little knowledge.</u></p> <p>...It was tough for the Masters, <u>You have to read lots of materials, books and articles and things.</u> And we had to watch hours and hours of film and TV. <u>That was enjoyable of course.</u> There were lots of references to cultural things that I did not <u>know.</u> Like particularly on my course which was about film studies. We would watch these BBC films, and all the other students on the course, well the English ones, would know them or know what <u>they were talking about, the historical context.</u> For a <u>foreigner it takes much more time to understand these things.</u></p> <p>...There were <u>no exams on the Masters degree, only essays.</u> This was great for me. But maybe the <u>marks were not always objective like they would be in an exam?</u> Probably essays should be <u>anonymous but that was impossible on this masters.</u> We were such a <u>small group and everyone knew everyone else,</u> and we all had our particular interests. So it would have been hard to be anonymous. Before I wrote an essay, <u>I had to discuss my topic with my tutor and often the tutor would help me choose a topic.</u> Like on my Hollywood course, my tutor was interested in certain subjects and <u>I knew that if you didn't take his advice, it was reflected in your grade. Not hugely, but a little reflected.</u> <u>But I always got good grades.</u></p> <p>...I was <u>very unhappy with the university's administrative system.</u> Like it was very <u>inflexible and bureaucratic.</u> You felt like they would do nothing to help you.</p> <p>...They <u>didn't give me any real choice about where I lived</u> and I was kind of forced to stay at the university residence. As an <u>international student you are trapped. You are told that you have 10 days to decide if you take the university accommodation.</u> But that's not true. You have 10 days induction period and it is hard to <u>escape the campus during that time.</u> So in fact you have <u>no choice.</u> The <u>accommodation there was poor and it was very expensive.</u> The heating didn't work, and the cooking facilities were terrible. And in my view, it was dirty. We were in new student accommodation but it was under-heated. We complained and nothing happened. <u>They only fixed it after I wrote to the</u></p> |
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| Lack of response from university administration. | <u>head of faculty and then suddenly there were three people who came and fixed it. I ended up with pneumonia because of this situation</u> |
| Illness due to poor facilities | ...I had a flat mate who was doing Social Policy at the university and you know <u>they are very active, those students.</u> So he wrote a letter to the Vice Chancellor complaining about the cost of accommodation, with a list of things like for instance. Why could a Masters student not borrow a DVD and why should we always have to watch the DVDs in the university? <u>We got a very bureaucratic reply.</u> "For problems with libraries, please contact the head librarian. For problems with accommodation, please contact this person." <u>So what we did was, about 100 international students cornered the Vice Chancellor one day and then asked to meet him and then they got a meeting.</u> And he claimed not to know anything. How can he not know anything? I mean that's terrible. <u>He's the Vice Chancellor of a big university. Like in Russia, we'd say he's like a Tsar and he's supposed to know what's going on in the university.</u> |
| 'Active' student with consumerist approach? | |
| Bureaucratic response. | ... We felt that in N.... <u>they use international students as a cow to milk, I think the expression is. All the economy seeks to be around the campus and the students.</u> There was a monopoly about the university businesses and I didn't like that. |
| Active students with business-like approach to solving problem | ...I have a few issues with the university administration. <u>Sport is one thing that really annoyed me.</u> As a student we could get £1 off a once-off entry to the sports facilities. But they had been built with lottery funds or something like that, and the public could pay something like £32 per month for unlimited membership. They could go as many times a month if they wanted. But if I wanted to go say <u>three times a week it would cost me £64 because I'm a student. That's stupid. I argued this with the university administration but I was told that as I was a student I wasn't eligible for the unlimited membership.</u> Because students were only around 8 months of the year, and the public is there all year, so they said it didn't make financial sense to let students in cheaper. But that's ridiculous. Then they said something about having to pay back money to the government or making it financially feasible. |
| VC viewed as Tsar: should know everything that's going on? | ...Like <u>compare the sports facilities with the bar. That's the strange thing. The bar was very cheap for students. A pint was £1 or something. Nothing, really. So why is drink cheap and sport expensive?</u> That doesn't make any sense to me. |
| International students as cash cows Expensive/ Value for money? | |
| Sport facilities overpriced for students | |
| Bureaucratic system: no flexibility. Financial led administration | |
| Difficulties with consumerist approach of HEI | |
| Paradox: cheap drink; expensive sport? | |
| Cultural differences. | |

Appendix 8: Websites consulted

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| British Council | http://www.britishcouncil.org |
| Department for Education and Skills | http://www.dfes.gov.uk/ |
| Department for Innovation Universities and Skills/ Department for Business Education and Skills | http://www.dius.gov.uk/ |
| Education UK | http://educationuk.org |
| HESA statistics (via Education UK Partnership) | http://hesa.britishcouncil.stats.org |
| Higher Education Funding Council for England | http://www.hefce.ac.uk/ |
| International Association of Universities, Internationalisation pages | http://www.unesco.org/iau/internationalization/i_bibliography.html |
| OECD | http://www.oecd.org |
| The observatory on borderless higher education | http://www.obhe.ac.uk |
| The Higher Education Policy Institute | http://www.hepi.ac.uk |
| Times Higher Education | http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk |
| UKCOSA/UKCISA | http://www.ukcisa.org.uk |
| Universities UK | http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk |
| Visit Britain | http://www.visitbritain.org |