

## **Internationalisation:**

The opportunities and challenges associated  
with student outward mobility at  
undergraduate level in UK higher education.

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**EdD 2019**

# **Internationalisation:**

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with student outward mobility at  
undergraduate level in UK higher education.

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the  
Manchester Metropolitan University  
for the degree of  
Doctor of Education (EdD)

**Faculty of Education**  
**Manchester Metropolitan University**  
**2019**

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## Abstract

As the UK prepares to leave the EU, the UK government has indicated a need for the country to become even more global and internationalist in action and spirit.

“Outward mobility can form a key part of this agenda, in enhancing the domestic skills base and making students more globally engaged. The benefits of mobility are many and varied: international experience helps develop critical skills such as intercultural awareness and foreign language competency, and can increase students’ employability, helping them to be competitive in the global jobs market. Beyond these private benefits, the international mobility of students can create positive externalities by internationalising campuses, and fostering global networks that can in turn facilitate research, knowledge transfers and university–business engagement. These external benefits also help enhance the UK’s soft power and support the UK’s trading and diplomatic relationships longer term” (UUKi, 2017a).

There’s a significant body of research that demonstrates the benefits of student mobility and the positive impact outward mobility can have on students and their personal development and growth. However, despite the many positive benefits of an international mobility experience, the UUKi (2018:8) report identified only 7.2% of the 2015-16 graduating cohort were mobile during their degree programme. At Manchester Metropolitan University, only 1% of students undertake a mobility experience, which is lower than the national sector average of 7.2% of the student population. Students from the lowest HE participation neighbourhoods (LPNs) are underrepresented in the internationally mobile population each year, while students from the highest HE participation neighbourhoods have been overrepresented by a greater percentage. The university has an ambition to increase student outward mobility from 1% to 5% by 2021.

My interest in this area is as a practitioner researcher. In order to work on the ‘Routes into Languages’ thematic strand of promoting ‘student outward mobility’ for undergraduates in my faculty, I wanted to undertake a small scale research project to explore some of the factors influencing students’ choices/decisions regarding outbound mobility. In addition to the reports and policy documents, I wanted to hear the rich narratives and experiences of students who opted/did not opt for a study/work abroad opportunity during their undergraduate study, with the view to increase student outward mobility.

Building on a theoretical framework focusing on the globalisation/education/mobility relationship and based on semi-structured interviews with undergraduate students and policy document analysis, the thesis identifies some of the similarities and disconnects between the two with the view to assist formulating tailored remedial interventions to boost undergraduate students’ outward mobility in MMU’s Faculty of Arts and Humanities.

## **Acknowledgments**

My sincere appreciation to my supervisory team for their unwavering support and patience in enabling me to complete this thesis. No amounts of words can ever express my gratitude to Dr Benedicte Brahic and Dr Edda Sant, for the support and guidance they offered me while I was going through the toughest challenges of life.

I could not have done this without you!

A special thank you to my mentor and friend, Yasmin (Apa) Umarji. The incredible human who believed and supported me through the darkest days of my life.

I dedicate everything I have to my father, the best man that walked the earth.

I miss you every day.

In the words of Rumi “Goodbyes are only for those who love with their eyes; for those who love with the heart and soul there is no separation”.

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **Aims of this chapter**

Anchored in my professional practice as an educational manager in one of the UK post-1992 universities with a large population of 'first generation' students, this thesis explores competing narratives (students' and agencies/public bodies) concerned with the opportunities and challenges associated with outward mobility at undergraduate level in UK higher education. Building on a theoretical framework focusing on the globalisation/education/mobility relationship and based on semi-structured interviews with undergraduate students and policy document analysis, the thesis identifies some of the similarities and disconnects between the two with the view to assist formulating tailored remedial interventions to boost undergraduate students' outward mobility in MMU's Faculty of Arts and Humanities.

In this introductory chapter, the intentions are to make clear why I am undertaking this research project and why this area of research is of important to researchers and practitioners as well as of interest to me. In so doing I will clarify the aims and objectives of the thesis before the content of the thesis is outlined.

### **Research to support professional practice: situating myself as a 'practitioner researcher'**

Since the nineties, the Labour and subsequent governments have introduced a constant stream of initiatives and interventions in education policy, which led Ball and Olmedo (2013) to argue that the depth, breadth and pace of change and level of government activity in education has hitherto been unprecedented in the UK. One such policy change in 2004 was to remove the compulsory requirement for Key Stage 4 pupils in England to study a modern foreign language (MFL) at GCSE, making this optional. Subsequently, this led to a decline in secondary school pupils studying Modern Foreign Languages in England<sup>1</sup> (DfE, 2015), leaving a long-term deficit of linguists in the UK, which has significant implications, not least on the British economy (British Council, 2015a). Hence, in 2006, the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) introduced 'Routes into Languages', a national initiative to promote MFL and reverse the decline in language learning in England.

'Routes into Languages' operates as a consortium of universities working together with schools and colleges in England, to enthuse and encourage pupils to study languages. Between 2006 and 2016,

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<sup>1</sup> In 2000, four years after MFL were made compulsory in 1996, it was estimated that 90% of pupils were taking an MFL and 79% were entered for GCSE (Dobson, 2018). By 2012, the proportion of pupils sitting an MFL in their GCSE exams had fallen to 40% (DfE, 2015).

every region in England had a consortium or group of universities working in partnership with other stakeholders, local colleges and schools, in order to widen participation in language learning from Key Stage 3 onwards<sup>2</sup>.

'Routes into Languages' gained a second round of funding from HEFCE in 2013 for an additional three years, which ended in 2016, with new objectives and more partner universities<sup>3</sup>. One of the new key thematic objective was to promote 'student outward mobility' for UK undergraduates to take opportunities to study/work abroad as part of their degree programs.

Since 2012, I have been the Project Manager for the 'Routes into Languages' North West region, which is led by Manchester Metropolitan University<sup>4</sup>. Since 2016, my role has been embedded within a wider context as the Faculty of 'Arts and Humanities' Outreach Manager, with the view to use the Routes into Languages 'model' to enthuse and encourage school pupils to study Arts and Humanity subjects.

Therefore, my interest in this area is as a practitioner researcher. In order to work on the 'Routes into Languages' thematic strand of promoting 'student outward mobility' for undergraduates in my faculty (Arts and Humanities), I wanted to undertake a small scale research project to explore some of the factors influencing students' choices/decisions regarding outbound mobility. In addition to the reports and policy documents, I wanted to hear the narratives and experiences of students who opted/did not opt for a study/work abroad opportunity during their undergraduate study, with the potential of influencing how mobility experience during undergraduate studies can be promoted.

### **Internationalisation: shared ambitions, contested understandings.**

The internationalisation agenda is a government priority for UK higher education (Wihlborg and Robson, 2017). However, despite the fact that mobility is a central aspect of internationalisation, Sweeney (2012) points out that approaches to institutional internationalisation strategy have often focused on income generation and overseas recruitment, overlooking the role of outward student mobility in providing longer-term internationalisation benefits (both in terms of the institution and in the context of the global economy) and short- to medium-term benefits in respect of student experience and academic outcomes.

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<sup>2</sup> There were nine consortia in England until 2016 when the funding from HEFCE ended. Since then four consortia including the North West have managed to continue the project with support from their partner universities.

<sup>3</sup> By 2016, the 'Routes into Languages' network comprised 67 universities across England and was working with some 2,300 schools and 87,000 young people, with a focus on those from less advantaged backgrounds (Routes into Languages, 2019).

<sup>4</sup> Currently there are four partner institutions within the North-West consortium, The University of Manchester, The University of Central Lancashire, Liverpool University and Manchester Metropolitan University.

More recently in 2015, the British Council, one of the British leading organisations focusing on international educational opportunities, published a report (2015a) echoing this sentiment and stating the idea that the internationalisation of higher education as simply comprised of student recruitment is not only outdated, but also ultimately is incorrect. Policymakers, institutional staff and students alike largely recognise that internationalisation must be engrained in the culture of the university, that it must be part of an institutional ethos catalysed by each individual's experiences, openness and purpose, to achieve its multitude of objectives. In order to achieve this, students must be given the opportunity to develop into global citizens, by providing and encouraging home students to study abroad. Whilst there is a general agreement that student outward mobility is a positive - particularly in terms of personal development, employability and enhanced degree outcome (Sweeney, 2012) – it remains relatively low (UUKI, 2018). Though, as Bridger (2015) affirms, since the publication of the 'Internationalising Higher Education Framework' HEA 2014) which stresses the benefits of internationalising higher education and of global learning experiences for both HE staff and their students, things have started to change with an increasing recognition of the role of mobility (both outward and inward).

### **Outward mobility: key trends, opportunities and challenges**

Across the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), governments and Higher Education institutions are striving towards a collective ambition of 20% of graduates in the EHEA to have undertaken a study or training period abroad by 2020 (UUKi, 2017a).

The term 'mobility' for the purpose of this thesis comprises both short and long-term mobility opportunities; it is about promoting and stimulating a range of international experiences, including summer schools, volunteering in vacation time, to overseas work placements. As suggested above, there is a significant body of research that demonstrates the benefits of student mobility and the positive impact outward mobility can have on students and their personal development and growth (UUKi, 2018). Furthermore, UUKi (2018) found a correlation between outward mobility and improved academic and employment outcomes for undergraduate students' year- on-year<sup>5</sup>. However, despite the many positive benefits of an international mobility experience, UUKI (2018) estimates that only 7.2% of the 2015-16 graduating cohort were mobile during their degree programme.

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<sup>5</sup> "Graduates who were mobile during their degree were less likely to be unemployed (3.7% compared to 4.9%), and more likely to have earned a first class or upper second class degree (80.1% compared to 73.6%) and be in further study (15% compared to 14%). Those in work were more likely to be in a graduate-level job (76.4% compared to 69.9%) and [on average earned] 5% more than their non-mobile peers" (UUKI, 2018: 6).



In terms of the demographics of the 7.2% of mobile students, about a third (5,260) were language students (UUKI, 2018). Female students were more likely than male students to be mobile<sup>6</sup> -however, this participation gap can be explained by the fact that a relatively higher proportion of language students are female (UUKI, 2018).

According to this source, students from disadvantaged backgrounds and minority ethnic groups were also less likely to go abroad than white students and those from more advantaged backgrounds. The lowest mobility rates were among students who described their backgrounds as 'never worked and long-term unemployed', with 1.2% students mobile. Students from a 'higher managerial and professional occupations' background were over eight times more likely to go abroad than students from a 'never worked and long term unemployed' background. Students from low-participation neighbourhoods (LPNs) participated at a lower rate of 4.3% compared to students from higher participation areas (7.6%).

At Manchester Metropolitan University, only 1% of students undertook a mobility experience, which was lower than the national sector average of 7.2% of students. Students from the lowest HE participation neighbourhoods (LPNs) were underrepresented in the internationally mobile population each year, while students from the highest HE participation neighbourhoods have been overrepresented by a greater percentage. In 2017/18, 30.0% of students who had an instance of international mobility were from the highest participation neighbourhoods compared to 25.1% of the comparable total student population. The university has an ambition to increase student outward mobility from 1% to 5% by 2021<sup>7</sup>.

### **Positioning the research context**

The findings of the UUKi (2017 & 2018) reports are interesting in the context of mobility relating to disadvantaged groups and outcomes for those groups. They highlight the difference in outcomes between mobile and non-mobile students, which are particularly pronounced for disadvantaged, and black and minority ethnic students (BAME), who are underrepresented in mobility. For example, on average, graduates from more disadvantaged backgrounds who were mobile during their degree earned 6.1% more, and those in work were more likely to be in a graduate level job (80.2% compared to 74.7%) than their non-mobile peers. This thereby indicates that students from disadvantaged and underrepresented groups appear to have more to gain from mobility periods, while being less likely to participate.

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<sup>6</sup> 6.7% (6,410) of all male respondents were mobile, compared with 7.5% (9,755) of female respondents.

<sup>7</sup> MMU, 2019: online <https://www2.mmu.ac.uk/internationalisation-strategy/>

As a practitioner researcher undertaking this research at a post 1992 university, these findings are of particular interest. Manchester Metropolitan University recruits and supports high numbers of students from disadvantaged backgrounds with a significantly higher proportion of students from Low Participating Neighbourhoods (LPNs) and students from low-income households<sup>8</sup>. Over 50% of full-time Home undergraduate students are first generation<sup>9</sup>. Furthermore, the data (see appendix 1) indicates students from disadvantaged groups obtained lower percentage of good degree outcomes and lower prospects of highly skilled employment after graduation.

### **The research project: research aims and objectives**

The data presented above (and in Appendix 1) highlights that as a university MMU recruits a high proportion of students from disadvantaged backgrounds. The findings of the reports by UUKi (2017a & 2018) indicate students from disadvantaged and underrepresented groups appear to have more to gain from mobility periods, while being less likely to participate.

The positive correlation between mobility and improved academic and employment outcomes, particularly for students from underrepresented groups report strengthens the case for mobility. International opportunities should be accessible to all students, not only those who make up the largest proportion of mobile students, namely language and/or socio-economically advantaged, white students. The UUKi and British Council 2015 report on UK students outward mobility stated students' backgrounds and prior experiences influence their decision to go abroad. There are indeed complex intersecting social, economic, geographical, institutional and cultural obstacles to mobility which researchers, practitioners ought to research, understand and challenge. Recognizing and championing the importance of the participation of under-represented groups as the UK's Strategy for outward Mobility does is an important step calling for additional research to develop successful interventions.

There is a growing body of research that explores the overall benefits and barriers of outward mobility to which this thesis seeks to contribute. In regards to the specifics of the student demographics in my institution – which did not seem appropriately explored/engaged with in the reports and policy documents informing my professional practice. I wanted to conduct a small-scale exploratory piece of

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<sup>8</sup> Compared to the sector average

<sup>9</sup> 'First generation' students are herein defined as per MMU's guidelines as students 'from a family where neither parent(s) nor guardian(s) have attended university and obtained an undergraduate degree or equivalent level qualification in the UK or abroad' (MMU, 2019: online). Despite its apparent simplicity, the definition of what constitutes a first generation student is critical in establishing the size of the population concerned (Toutkoushian, Stollberg, Slaton, 2018), it is also important to note here that the notion of 'first generation' student captures a set of intersecting variables which inform and affect trajectories and outcomes for so-called 'first generation' students.

research that was relevant within the context of my role and my faculty MMU. The aim of the study was to investigate students' narratives on their mobility (or non-mobility) experience and explore the relevance, similarities and mismatches between their narratives and reports and documents published by official UK bodies discussing outward mobility and arguably shaping agendas and discourses.

With specific references to so-called 'first generation' students (mobile and non-mobile), key objectives included exploring the factors influencing and/or hindering students' decision to study or work abroad. Furthermore, I wanted to find out if, in their own view, a mobility experience added value to them/ their studies and what were the perceived advantages/disadvantages of the mobility experience. Finally, by also giving a voice to non-mobile students as stakeholders of debates on mobility, this research project seeks to explore what measures/ steps could be taken to encourage non-mobile students to consider studying/working abroad during their degree programme. Beyond a contribution to the current understanding of outward mobility, findings from the research are expected to inform the design and implementation of a tailored strategy/tailored intervention for the thematic (yet insofar somewhat elusive) objective which is to promote 'student outward mobility' to undergraduates to study/work abroad as part of their degree programs.

### **Outline of the thesis**

The thesis comprises of a further four chapters. Chapter 2 is the Literature Review, in this chapter I provide an in-depth overview and discussion around the differing perspectives on globalisation and global educational theories and how these discourses are influencing higher education policy and student (outward) mobility in the UK. In chapter 3, I discuss the methodology I have used to conduct this research project, followed by the research questions and the profile of the participants. In chapter 4, I discuss the research findings and provide some analysis of the semi-structured interviews. In chapter 5, I summarise the overall research project and the key findings, I conclude this chapter by identifying recommendations and tailored remedial interventions to boost undergraduate students' outward mobility within my faculty/institution.

### **The thesis contribution to the field of UK Higher Education and Knowledge**

The contribution of the thesis to the field of UK Higher Education was to examine the generic policy documentation in the area of student outward mobility and as a practitioner researcher, to understand the detailed nuances from a student perspective, their narratives and experiences of how they perceived student outward mobility. This would lead to developing and designing fluid strategies and interventions to increase student mobility within my own faculty and the wider institution. This model can be adopted to increase student outward mobility in the wider higher education context

within and across other higher education institutions. The policy documentation that I examined, such as the British Council reports and the UUKi reports, all highlighted the positive benefits of a mobility experience and how a mobility experience enriched the student experience and how mobile students developed invaluable skills during a mobility experience, obtained better degree outcomes and had better career prospects. Examining policy documentation is useful to understand the benefits of student mobility; however, they offer rather generic guidance on how to increase student mobility within specific contexts. For example, in terms of student demographics, the context of every institution varies, even within institutions, student demographics vary within faculties, departments and subject areas. It is rather difficult to applying generic guidance to a diverse group of students, in order to have substantial impact on increasing outward mobility.

The students in each Higher Education institutions have profound and unique experiences and views of outward mobility, beyond the narratives provided in very generic policy documentation, which is designed to increase mobility. In order to increase student outward mobility, the nuances of student experiences, views and perspectives need to be factored in and understood. The UK student population cannot be treated as one homogenous group. Furthermore, often the narratives and experiences of non-mobile students are not heard within this policy context. Hence, exploring the narratives of non-mobile students and providing a 'voice' for non-mobile students within this thesis was a key part of my research.

By applying this method, each Higher Education institution can develop bespoke and fluid strategies to increase outward mobility, which links to their context and student demographic. As stated previously, this project stems from my role and experience as a practitioner in Higher Education, and more specifically in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities at Manchester Metropolitan University. Despite the existence of relevant reports and policy documents focusing on outward mobility, the student voice and their experiences in relation to (im)mobility seemed to go unheard – though, as frequently observed in my professional practice - potentially having significant explanatory power. As a result, the purpose of undertaking the research was to obtain and explore the narratives of students who opted and those who did not opt for a mobility experience during their undergraduate study in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities at the Manchester Metropolitan University. From a professional and institutional perspective, this project was carried out with the long-term ambition to formulate strategies and policies to stimulate outward mobility among the student population in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities.

Although the project was initially rooted in a specific professional context, the thesis contributes to the field of UK Higher Education in a variety of ways.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **Aims of this chapter**

The key focus of this literature review chapter is to provide an in-depth overview and discussion around differing perspectives on globalisation and global educational theories and how these discourses are influencing higher education policy and student international (outward) mobility in the UK.

The literature review chapter comprises of four sections. In section 1, I explore and review the definition and origins of globalisation, followed by discussing the four main approaches to conceptualising globalisation. In section 2, I discuss global education discourses by highlighting the four major theoretical perspectives of globalisation and education. This is followed by exploring the current discourses around the knowledge economy and the production of knowledge that creates economic value. In section 3, I discuss how the current discourses around globalisation and education impact and relate to higher education and the purpose of higher education, in terms of producing knowledge that underpins economic growth. Followed by exploring how neoliberalism is influencing higher education policy, the rise of knowledge capitalism and the commodification of higher education. In section 4, I discuss higher education and the internationalisation agenda; I explore the definition and historical rationales for international mobility, followed by the approaches and motivations to internationalisation in higher education.

### **Section 1**

Section 1 sets the scene and reviews some of the key concepts concerned with processes of globalisation and used throughout the thesis. In this section, I will first review definitions of globalisation and, the differing theoretical and ideological positions regarding the origins and nature of globalisation. This is, followed by an exploration of George and Wilding (2002)'s categorisation of the four main approaches conceptualising globalisation. Then the section briefly considers the relation between globalisation, equality and inequity before concluding with an exploration of the dominant form of globalisation.

### **Towards a working definition of globalisation**

Globalisation is complex, highly contested and multi-faceted phenomenon/sets of processes (Torres, 2015). It has been used in both the popular press and academic literature to describe a process, a condition, a system, a force, and an age. "Scholars not only hold different views with regard to proper definitions of globalisation, they also disagree on its scale, causation, chronology, impact, trajectories, and policy outcomes" (Steger, 2017:13).

For some authors the term refers to the emergence of supranational institutions whose decisions shape and constrain the policy options for any particular nation-state. For others it means the overwhelming impact of global economic processes, including processes of production, consumption, trade, capital flow, and monetary interdependence. For some, it denotes the rise of neoliberalism as a hegemonic policy discourse. For others it primarily means the emergence of the new global cultural forms, media, and technologies of communication, all of which shape the relations of affiliation, identity, and interactions within and across local cultural settings. Others view, "globalisation" primarily a perceived set of changes, a construction used by state policymakers, to inspire support for and suppress opposition to changes. Because "greater forces" (such as global competition and external demands by the IMF or World Bank demands) leave the nation-state "no choice" but to play by a set of global rules not of its own making (Burbules and Torres, 2000:2)

For the purpose of this section, in an attempt to try to formulate a working definition of the concept of globalisation, I have selected George & Wilding's (2002) suggestion that globalisation is the increasing interconnectedness of the world through the compression of time and space brought about by advances in knowledge and technology as well as by political events and decisions. Whilst George and Wilding (2002) emphasize the role of knowledge and technology, Held (1991:9) highlights how global processes transform the 'local' and defines globalisation as "the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa". A further suggestion by Robertson (1992) that globalisation is "a feature of late capitalism, or the condition of postmodernity, and, more importantly, the emergence of a world system driven in large part by a global capitalist economy". This provides a sense of the range of positions academics and authors adopt in this highly contested area.

The reason globalisation is such a contested concept and subject matter is because of its economic, political and cultural importance and its implications at all levels. Again, in an attempt to explore what globalisation is, rather than what it is not, I have selected George & Wilding's (2002:2) suggestion that it involves at least some of the following processes.

- "Increasing and deepening interconnectedness of societies in different parts of the world
- Almost unimpeded flows of financial capital, news and cultural images across the world
- Rising activity and power of multinational companies
- Rising economic growth accompanied by rising inequalities in many countries
- A global consumer culture in the making
- More travel and migration by more people from more countries to more countries

- Greater awareness by the public of what is happening in the world and the possible implications for their own country”

### **Approaches to Globalisation**

As suggested in the previous section, globalisation is a complex concept to define. In an attempt to navigate the landscape of global studies, George and Wilding (2002) helpfully distinguish four main approaches to globalisation and its conceptualisation and study<sup>10</sup>. The first approach gathers authors George and Wilding (2002) identify as the Technological Enthusiasts. According to this approach, globalisation means the increasing transnationalization of the world economy that has come about during the second half of the twentieth century because of advances in technology and the adoption of an individualistic market ethic. Government restrictions on the movement of goods and capital have been removed and humans now live in a ‘borderless’ world. Global markets rather than nation-states are forces shaping the course of events. This group of writers see the origins of globalisation as a post-1945 process, the result of the new technologies in transport and telecommunications that made capital and markets far more mobile than before. The new technology and the new ideology went hand-in-hand in promoting the globalisation of markets and capital.

The second approach identified by George and Wilding (2002) is the Marxisant Pessimists perspective. According to this approach, globalisation is driven by the logic for constantly increasing profitability. During the first half of the twentieth century, most Marxists embraced Marx’s view that, in the long term, capitalism would prove a liberating, modernising force. It would spread to the whole world and would create strong working classes that would overthrow both colonialism and capitalism in order to create socialist societies. This optimism gave way to pessimism when it was realised that the collapse of colonialism in the 1950s and 1960s led to neither economic affluence nor socialism. Most writers in this group agree that globalisation has its origins in the beginnings of capitalism in Western Europe, in “the dawn of the European colonial expansion and the modern world system 500 years ago: the gradual spread of capitalist production around the world and its displacement of all pre-capitalist relations” (Robertson, 1992:15).

The third approach identified by George and Wilding (2002) is the Pluralist Pragmatists. According to this approach, globalisation is a long, multifaceted process, with diverse, at times conflicting, effects, with an assured future but whose future form is not possible to predict. The driving forces of globalisation include technology, capitalist production, and political forces such as the formation of

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<sup>10</sup> It is important to note that there are alternative categorisations of the different approaches to globalisation such as Martell (2010)’s approach, however George and Wilding’s (2002) categorisation is particularly helpful as some of the categories identified are also used in global education studies.

nation states and their activities, and ideology. There is no attempt to stratify these forces into basic and derivative – they are considered of equal power. In terms of its origins, there is a general agreement that globalisation has a long history though it gained momentum during the past twenty years or so primarily because of the information technology, that has compressed space and time to an unprecedented extend.

The forth approach is that of the Sceptic Internationalists. This perspective is essentially a rejection against the Technological Enthusiasts' approach and the view of a borderless world where markets operate on a transnational basis and where nation-states become obsolete. This approach does not reject globalisation in its milder forms for it accepts that "foreign markets have increased in importance relative to domestic ones, hence producing a greater openness and interdependence of the international system' with the result that 'the world economy is much more interconnected today than it was in the 1960s or 1970s" (Weiss, 1998:170). This approach accepts the increasing internationalisation of the economy but they reject the claim that it has been transnationalised already.

### **Globalisation – Creating Equality and Inequality**

There is much debate around whether the processes of globalisation have created equality or inequality across the globe. Legitimising hegemonic discourses on globalisation 'as it is currently known' affirms that it encompasses all regions of the world and all aspects of human planetary life and is the solution to poverty, inequity and all other social ill. Friedman (1999) implied that the quicker the world became flatter, the better. It is interesting to note here that neo-liberal governments and higher education institutions argue that globalisation is a powerful tool to reduce inequalities within and across nations.

Whilst Wallerstein (2015) sees the potential for globalisation processes to alleviate poverty. "The freer flow of information, goods, and capital from richer to poorer nations should raise productivity and increase the demands for labour in the labour-abundant and technologically lagging nations, inducing tendencies toward convergence of wage rates for equivalent labour throughout the world", he warns the power of the elites worldwide has enhanced rather than reduced equality. "Driven by the exploitative logic of capital accumulation, the capitalist world system has created global inequalities based on the domination of modernizing Western 'core' countries over non-Western 'peripheral' areas (Steger, 2002:22). A key element for the sceptics in condemning globalisation is that it has unleashed an unprecedented wave of inequity. For sceptics, globalisation has also been deleterious because technological change has generally favoured skilled workers (Torres, 2015).



Adopting a pragmatist stance, George & Wilding (2002) suggest, globalisation has both desirable and undesirable effects. There is no argument to accept that globalisation can only benefit the strong. Political forces can shape the nature of globalisation to make it a more beneficial process for all humanity. Globalisation is here to stay and the challenge facing us all (as a human group) is how to harness its economic and social potential for the benefit of the whole humankind.

### **Globalisation as ‘we’ know it or the neoliberal globalisation as the dominant form of Globalisation/market globalism**

In this piece of work, and having considered the evidence reviewed above, I take the view that, although it is undergoing a growing amount of challenges, the hegemonic and dominant form of globalisation ‘we’ experience is ‘globalisation from above’. This is framed by an ideology of neo-liberalism (Steger, 2013) and calls for an opening of borders (to money and goods and for some, workers/people), the creation of multiple regional markets, the proliferation of fast paced economic and financial exchanges, and governing systems other than nation-states – particularly international trade agreements enforced by the World Trade Organisations. (Torres, 2009).

Market globalism reflects the concepts of globalization with neoliberal values and meanings and is without question the dominant ideology of our time. “Given that the exchange of commodities constitutes one of the core activities of all societies, the market-oriented discourse of globalisation itself has turned into an extremely important commodity destined for public consumption” (Steger, 2017:112). “Globalism is the dominant political ideology of our time – that is, the dominant system of ideas that make claims about social processes. Globalists put before the public an agenda of things to discuss, that supports their neoliberal political agenda” (Steger, 2013:6).

Therefore, market globalism has become what some social theorists call a ‘strong discourse’ – one that is notoriously difficult to resist and repel because it has on its side powerful social forces that have already pre-selected what counts as ‘real’ and, therefore, shape the world accordingly. The constant repetition and public recitation of market globalism’s core claims and slogans have the capacity to produce what they name. As more neoliberal policies are enacted, the claims of market globalism become even more firmly planted in the public minds (Steger, 2002).

Steger (2002) has identified five major ideological claims that occur with great regularity in the utterances, speeches, and writings of influential market globalists.

The five claims of market globalism are as follows:

1. Globalisation is about the liberalization and global integration of markets
2. Globalisation is inevitable and irreversible
3. Nobody is in charge of globalisation
4. Globalisation benefits everyone
5. Globalisation furthers the spread of democracy in the world

It is important to note that globalists themselves construct these ideological claims in order to sell their political and economic agenda. Perhaps no single market-globalist speech or piece of writing contains all of the five assertions, but all of them contain at least some of these claims.

Like all ideologies, market globalism starts with the attempt to establish an authoritative definition of its core concept. For neoliberals, such an account is anchored in the idea of self-regulating market that serves as the framework for a future global order. But the problem with claim 1 is that its core message of liberalizing and integrating markets is only realizable through the *political* project of engineering free markets. Thus, market globalists must be prepared to utilize the *powers of government* to weaken and eliminate those social policies and institutions that curtail the market. Since only strong governments are up to this ambitious task of transforming existing social arrangements, the successful liberalisation of markets depends upon *intervention* and *interference* by centralised state power. Such actions, however, stand in stark contrast to the neoliberal idealisation of the limited role of government (Steger, 2013).

Claim 2 portrays globalisation as some sort of natural force, like the weather or gravity, makes it easier for market globalists to convince people that they must adapt to the discipline of the market if they are to survive and prosper. Neoliberal policies are portrayed to be above politics; they simply carry out what is ordained by nature. This implies that, instead of acting according to a set of choices, people merely fulfil world-market laws that demand the elimination of government controls.

Claim 3 states that people are not in charge of globalisation, markets and technology are. To some extent this is correct, while there is no conscious conspiracy orchestrated by a single, evil force, this does not mean that nobody is in charge of globalisation. The liberalisation and integration of global markets does not proceed outside the realm of human choice.

Claim 4 globalisation benefits everyone – lies at the very core of market globalism because it provides an affirmative answer to the crucial normative question of whether globalisation should be considered a ‘good’ or a ‘bad’ thing. Market globalists frequently connect their arguments to the alleged benefits resulting from trade liberalisation: rising global living standards, economic efficiency, individual freedom, and unprecedented technological progress. But when the market dynamics dominate social and political outcomes, the opportunities and rewards of globalisation are spread often unequally, concentrating power and wealth amongst a select group of people, regions, and corporations at the expense of the multitude.

Claim 5 globalisation furthers the spread of democracy in the world – is rooted in the neoliberal assertion that free markets and democracy are synonymous terms. The assertion that globalisation furthers the spread of democracy in the world is largely based on a superficial definition of democracy.

Steger’s (2013) examinations of the five central claims of market globalism suggests that the neoliberal language about globalisation is ideological in the sense that it is politically motivated and contributes toward the construction of particular meanings of globalisation that preserve and stabilise existing power relations.

This form or the dominant form of neo-liberal globalisation has affected ‘competition-based reforms’, transforming educational policy in higher education. These reforms are characterised by efforts to create measurable performance standards through extensive standardised testing, the introduction of new teaching and learning methods leading to the expectations of better performance at low cost. Competition based reforms in higher education tend to adopt a vocational orientation and to reflect the point of view that colleges and universities exist largely to serve the economic well-being of a society. (Torres, 2015: 264). Neoliberalism is today’s dominant global ideology. This influences decisions about what should, and should not, be done, what are acceptable and unacceptable policies, what is to be encouraged and discouraged in human behaviour (George & Wilding, 2002).

In section 2, I will explore different educational discourses, how they link to the dominant neoliberal ideology and impact on education and educational policies and practices.

## Section 2

Section 2 discusses global educational discourses and the impact of these on education and educational policies. In this section, I will highlight the four major theoretical perspectives of globalisation and education. This is, followed by exploring the current discourses around the knowledge economy and the production of knowledge that creates economic value. I conclude this section by discussing the use of language that validates neoliberal ideas and policies in education.

Education helps to enrich human lives, to empower people and thereby to raise human wellbeing (Salmi, 2009). In terms of educational discourses, most of the world's governments discuss similar educational agendas that include investing in education to develop human capital or better workers and to promote economic growth. Consequently, educational discourses around the world often refer to human capital, lifelong learning for improving skills, and economic development (Dale & Robertson, 2003).

There are four major differing theoretical perspectives concerning globalisation and education. These are world culture, world systems, postcolonial and culturalist perspectives Spring (2008). The *world culture* perspective suggests the existence of a world culture that contains Western ideas of mass schooling, which serves as a model for national school systems. One premise of *world culture* scholars is that all cultures are slowly integrating into a single global culture. Often called "neo-institutionalist," this school of thoughts believes that nation-states draw on this world culture in planning their school systems (Ramirez, 2003).

The *world systems* approach sees the globe as integrated but with two major unequal zones. The core zone is the United States, the European Union, and Japan, which dominates periphery nations. The goal of the core is to legitimise its power by inculcating its values into periphery nations (Wallenstein, 2004).

The *postcolonial perspective* sees globalisation as an effort to impose particular economic and political agendas on the global society that benefit wealthy and rich nations at the expense of the world's poor (Olson, 2006).

The *world culturalist* perspective argues that schooling based on a western model is now a global cultural ideal that has resulted in the development of common educational structures and a common curriculum model (Ramirez, 2003). As an ideal, this model of schooling is based on a belief in educability of all people, the right to education, and the importance of education in maintaining economic and democratic rights. This perspective stresses the existence of different knowledge(s) and different ways of seeing and knowing the world.

These four major interpretive divisions in the field of globalization and education do reflect differing approaches to the future of globalization. The first two interpretive frameworks advocate a particular political agenda, linked to power and dominance. The *world culturalists* perspective wants to support and improve the current dominant human capital model of schooling. For *world culturalist* theorists the dominant model of schooling is not problematic and any educational change should be focused on its improvement. In contrast, postcolonial analysis posits that the dominant global school model is exploitative of the majority of humanity and destructive to the planet (Spring, 2008).

### **Global education discourses and the knowledge economy**

Global educational discourses play an important role in creating educational practices and policies. A central discussion is around the knowledge economy. Contained within the discourses about the knowledge economy are discussions of technology, human capital, lifelong learning, and the global migration of workers. The conceptual evolution of the knowledge economy from the original work on human capital economics by Becker (2006), he argued that industrial development in the 20<sup>th</sup> century relied on the knowledge and the skills of an elite few but that, now, economies depend on the skills and knowledge of all people. Coining the term post-industrial, Bell (1973) predicted that there would be a shift from blue-collar to white-collar labour, requiring a major increase in educated workers. In summary, changed in human capital and post industrialism, according to these theorists, created a knowledge economy where wealth was tied to knowledge workers and ultimately to educational systems.

Drucker (1993) used the term 'knowledge economy' to describe economic activity that centres primarily on the exchange of knowledge, ideas and information rather than raw materials and manufactured goods. The knowledge economy required a new labour force of 'knowledge workers', who were paid based on their ability to think, analyse and innovate rather than to perform a predefined set of tasks. Bell (1973) described the coming of a 'post-industrial' society, referring to the shift away from capitalist industrial economics towards a new paradigm in which science and knowledge would drive economic growth, hence it is the production of knowledge that creates economic value.

### **The knowledge economy and the emphasis on production of knowledge that creates economic value and developing students for the labour market/economic growth**

Discourses about the knowledge economy focus on the necessity of educating students with skills for the global workplace. "The conventional wisdom," Guile (2006:355) wrote, "is that knowledge now constitutes the most important factor of production in the economies of advanced industrial societies;

and as a corollary, the populations of these countries require greater access to knowledge as represented by qualifications". For developing countries, discourses on the knowledge economy hold out the promise that expanded educational opportunities will result in economic growth and modernisation. Grubb and Lazerson (2006:295) claimed, "it [the rhetoric of the knowledge economy] has been accepted by an extraordinary range of policy makers, reformers, many [but not all] educators, the business community, most students wanting to get ahead, and much of the public".

Furthermore, the 2000 European Council's Lisbon declaration (Directorate- General for Education and Culture, 2002:7) urged member nations "to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion". Under the Lisbon declaration, European Union schools are to educate their students to be high skilled workers who would ensure success in the global economic competition.

Countries are competing with one another in the knowledge economy, their economic success is increasingly perceived as a result of their national education systems and its ability to create globally competitive knowledge workers. There has created a discourse that a new emphasis on education as an agent of economic growth (Shields, 2013).

It stresses the importance of higher education, which it claims 'helps countries build globally competitive economies by developing a skilled, productive and flexible labour force and by creating, applying, and spreading new ideas and technologies (Salmi, 2009). Therefore, as the knowledge economy discourse links to economic growth to educational performance, improving national systems of education has become a key priority for governments throughout the world (World Bank, 2008).

From a critical perspective, the concept of the knowledge economy and the assumptions that underpin it are deeply problematic, and strongly embeds a neoliberal view of globalisation (Friedman, 1999). The belief that the spread of global capitalism is both inevitable and egalitarian, that competition creates better lives for everyone and that economic growth is always desirable. It also has the epistemological ramifications; global knowledge economy discourses privilege certain types of knowledge and ways of knowing (Shields, 2013:88).

The growth of the knowledge economy discourses recast universities as producers of commodified knowledge that drives economic growth in the knowledge economy; universities are seen as producing graduates with the skills that are valuable to employers (Shields, 2013:105). Higher education institutions have the responsibility of the training and education of the labour force to participate in globalised and competitive labour markets (Torres, 2015).

## **The impact of globalisation on education policy and reforms - modelling strategies on business models**

Section 1 highlighted that globalisation is one of the most complex and 'contested' concepts (Spring, 2008). As a dominant ideology, globalisation is associated with neoliberalism and technocratic solutions to economic reforms (Cox-Edwards & Ureta 2003). There is no doubt that economic, political and social forces of globalisation have a profound effect of education and society, both locally and globally (Zajda, 2014). Education policies promoting standardised testing, accountability, competition, school choice, and privatisation, reflect the rise and dominance of neoliberal discourses (Hursh, 2007).

Current education hegemonies are shaping dominant discourses as to how education policy and curriculum need to be reformed, in response to the ubiquitous global monitoring of educational quality and standards, are some of the outcomes of the globalisation process.

One of the effects of forces of globalisation is that educational organisations, having modelled its goals and strategies on the entrepreneurial business model, are compelled to embrace the corporate ethos of the efficiency, accountability and profit-driven managerialism. Hence, the politics of education reforms in the 21<sup>st</sup> century reflect this new emerging paradigm of standards-driven and outcomes-defined policy change (Zadja, 2014).

One of the effects of globalisation on education in all spheres, is that it is compelled to embrace the corporate ethos of the efficiency and profit-driven managerialism. This is particularly evident in higher education. The new entrepreneurial university in the global culture succumbs to the economic gains offered by the neoliberal ideology (Zajda, 2015).

### **Why neoliberal policies and ideas are seen as necessary, inevitable, and unquestionable**

In education, neoliberal policies and ideas are seen as necessary, inevitable, and unquestionable. Carnoy & Rhoten (2002) concluded what gives the dominant discourse (neoliberalism) its strength is because we constantly hear the narrative that there is nothing to put forward in opposition to the neoliberal view, that it has presented itself as self-evident and there is no alternative to this. Educational efficiency can only be achieved through standards and standardised mechanisms.

Furthermore, Olssen (2004) argues, "language itself is a sphere of social process," shaping and being shaped by material conditions, which are intimately related to power. To understand the deeper purpose and meaning of any policy text, it is not simply enough to rely on the particular policy's stated purpose. "policy texts are political, cultural, economic as much as they are educational treatises, the

meanings of the discourses embedded in these texts await decoding so as to reveal the real relations that this specifically cultural form of official discourse helps to construct, reconstruct, and conceal.”

Linking this to the approach developed by Davies and Bansel (2006), they describe the way new modes of government work at the level of the individual subjectivity draws on Foucault’s theorising of governmentality. By governmentality, Foucault means the art of government, and signals the historical emergence of distinctive types of rule (Foucault’s, 1978, Peters, 1999). He says that government, in the sense he wants to use it, does not ‘refer only to political structures or to the management of states’ but also designates ‘the way in which the conduct of individuals or of groups might be directed’ (Foucault, 1994:341). It includes ‘modes of action, more or less considered and calculated, that [are] destined to act upon the possibilities of action of other people. To govern, in this sense, is to structure the possible field of action of others’ (Foucault, 1994:341). And it does so, in part, through the introduction/imposition of new discourses – new mentalities- through which subjects will take themselves up as the newly appropriate and appropriated subjects of the new social order.

In Foucault’s (1994) theory of government, the ‘modes of action’ of government and of others in position of power, he says, are ‘more or less considered and calculated’ and they ‘structure the possible field of action of others’, in ways that may well be anticipated, in order to maximise the benefit for those who initiate them, though the initiators may not fully comprehend how that will play itself out in detail. The new mode of action is, in this sense, an experiment in discourse and power, which, like any other experiment, may or may not pay off in the ways intended.

The emergence of neoliberal states has been characterised by the transformation of the administrative state, one previously responsible for human well-being, as well as for the economy, into a state that gives power to global corporations and installs apparatuses and knowledge/s through which people are configured as productive economic entrepreneurs of their own lives. Davies and Bansel (2006) suggest it is primarily this reconfiguration of subjects as economic entrepreneurs, and of institutions capable of producing them, which is central to understanding the structuring of possible fields of action that has been taking place with the installation of neoliberal modes of governance.

Davies and Bansel (2006) suggest individuals have been seduced by their own perceived powers of freedom and have, at the same time, let go of significant collective powers. Individual subjects have thus welcomed the increasing individualism as a sign of freedom and, at the same time, institutions have increased competition, responsibilisation and the transfer of risk from the state to individuals at a heavy cost to many individuals, and indeed many nations (Saul,2005).



Within this new set of relations all aspects of social behaviour are rethought along economic lines 'as calculative actions undertaken through the universal human faculty of choice' Rose (1999:141). All human actors to be governed are conceived of as individuals active in making choices in order to further their own interests and those of their family. The powers of the state are thus directed at empowering entrepreneurial subjects in their quest for self-expression, freedom and prosperity. Freedom, then, is an economics shaped by what the state desires, demands and enables.

### **The historical context**

Davies and Bansel (2006) state neoliberalism as a form of governmentality first emerged in the 1970s in response to some of the more radical and progressive positions being taken in education. It was in schools and in the public service that the new forms of governmentality were first installed (Davies,1996).

Through discourses of inevitability and globalisation, and through the technology of choice, responsibilized individuals have been persuaded to willingly take over responsibility for areas of care that were previously the responsibility of government. "A particular feature of neoliberal subjects is that their desires, hopes, ideals and fears have been shaped in such a way that they desire to be morally worthy, responsibilized individuals, who, as successful entrepreneurs, can produce the best for themselves and their families. The technologies of government that have shaped these desires include a heavy investment in mechanisms of surveillance, which are tightly linked to mechanisms through which economic survival or demise are secured, and to a strong mobilisation of nationalist rhetoric, again tightly linked to economic (and national) survival or demise" (Davies and Bansel, 2006:251).

The market, as a model of entrepreneurship, is firmly installed in the desire of each subject to 'be' and to 'become'. The belief that the market should direct the fate of humans beings has come to seem, through the installation and operationization of neoliberal discourses and practices, a natural, normal and desirable condition of humankind. "No matter how many disasters neoliberal governments have created, neoliberalism is still accepted as the only possible economic and social order that is available to us. It is taken without question as true that future security and prosperity are linked to market solutions which solidify cooperation between economically interdependent nations" (Saul, 2005:253).

Furthermore, Fairclough (2003) also suggests that the project of articulating a global market as the new global order is partly a language project – that is, it is achieved through the discursive practices

of government – and that challenging the new order is partly a matter of critiquing the discursive practices through which it gains dominance.

Neoliberal discourse constitutes a set of relations among government, society and the individual. “This impacts not only on the terms in which subjects are governed, but also on the terms in which they understand and articulate themselves, their lives, their opportunities and desires. At the same time, discourses of common sense, inevitability and naturalness obscure the ambitions, policies and practices of government through which they both emerge and circulate. Examples of familiar terms that circulate in neoliberal rhetoric include ‘the information economy’, the knowledge economy’, ‘globalisation’, ‘flexibility’, ‘mutual obligation’ and ‘enterprise’” (Davies and Bansel, 2006:254).

The broader economic effects of globalisation tend to force national educational policies into a neoliberal framework and (Burbules and Torres, 2000).

### **Section 3**

Having discussed the key concepts concerning globalisation and positioning the discourses of education in the previous sections, in section 3, I will explore how these discourses impact and relate to higher education and the purpose of higher education, in terms of producing knowledge that underpins economic growth. I will explore how neoliberalism is influencing higher education policy, the rise of knowledge capitalism and the commodification of higher education.

#### **The role of higher education in society**

Torres (2011) states, universities have a dual function; they should preserve knowledge and create new knowledge. Innovation is the central element of the university. That is, the possibility to create new knowledge through interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary or transdisciplinary efforts. Universities are also warehouses of knowledge, preserving and making available historically produced knowledge. “The specific mission of the university is to produce new knowledge in the cultural, economic and social spheres, but also to preserve the knowledge historically accumulated by civilisations, societies, communities and individuals. Institutions of higher education differ from elementary and secondary education as well as adult education and lifelong training in several ways, among them not only the different age groups they serve but also in their ability to produce original knowledge and to preserve a civilisation’s knowledge”.

UNESCO (2005) further this by stating, there are other key contributions of institutions of higher education such as the training and education of the labour force for participation in globalised and competitive labour markets and, in the traditional Napoleonic university model, the training of state civil servants. Pure, applied and technological research – much of which is done in universities – makes up one of the pillars that sustain the dynamism of what is now known as the ‘the knowledge economy’ (UNESCO, 2005).

I will discuss how neoliberalism and knowledge capitalism is influencing the above definitions of the role and purpose of higher education in society.

### **How Neoliberalism is influencing Higher Education Policy**

Within higher education, neoliberalism has introduced a new mode of regulation or form of governmentality. In order to understand this, it is necessary to understand and highlight that the welfare liberal mode it replaced maintained fundamentally different premises at the level of political and economic theory, as well as the level of philosophical assumption.

The central defining characteristic of this new brand of neoliberalism can be understood at one level as revival of many of the central tenets of classical liberalism, particularly classical economic liberalism.

The central presuppositions shared include:

1. *“The self-interested individual:* a view of individuals as economically self-interested subjects. In this perspective, the individual was represented as a rational optimizer and the best judge of his/her own interests and needs.
2. *Free market economics:* The best way to allocate resources and opportunities is through the market. The market is both a more efficient mechanism and a morally superior mechanism.
3. *A commitment to laissez-faire:* because the free market is a self-regulating order, it regulates itself better than the government or any other outside force. In this, neoliberals show a distinct distrust of government power and seek to limit state power within a negative conception, limiting its role to the protection of individual rights.
4. *A commitment to free trade:* involving the abolition of tariffs or subsidies, or any form of state-imposed protection or support, as well as the maintenance of floating exchange rates and ‘open’ economies” (Olssen and Peters, 2005:314).

Although, there are some clear similarities between neo and classical liberal discourses, the two are not identical, and an understanding of the differences between them provides an important key to understanding the distinctive nature of the neoliberal revolution as it has affected OECD countries over the last 30 years.

Burchell (1996) states classical liberalism represents a negative conception of the state power in that the individual was taken as an object to be freed from the interventions of the state, neoliberalism has come to represent a positive conception of the state's role in creating the appropriate market by providing the conditions, laws and institutions necessary for its operation. In classical liberalism, the individual is characterised as having an autonomous human nature and can practice freedom. In neoliberalism, the state seeks to create an individual that is an enterprising and competitive entrepreneur.

This means that for neoliberal perspectives, "the end goals of freedom, choice, consumer sovereignty, competition and individual initiatives, as well as those of compliance and obedience, must be constructions of the state acting now in its positive role through the development of the techniques of auditing, accounting and management" (Barry, 1996).

For Foucault (1991), neoliberalism represents an art of government or form of political reason. A political rationality is not simply an ideology but a worked-out discourse containing theories and ideas that emerge in response to concrete problems within a determinate historical period. For Foucault, like Weber, political reason constituted a form of disciplinary power containing forms and systems of expertise and technology utilizable for the purposes of political control. Liberalism, rather than being the discovery of freedom as a natural condition, is thus a prescription for rule, which becomes both the *ethos* and *techne* of the government (Olssen and Peters, 2005).

### **Competitive neutrality as the reason of neoliberalism in higher education**

Marginson (1997) states one of the major objectives of the reforms in higher education has been to install relations of competition as a way of increasing productivity, accountability and control. Increased competition represents improved quality within neoliberalism.

Olssen and Peters, (2005:326) state what such a competitive ordering results in is a new type of approach to academia which, with the addition of a particular funding model, conflicts with and interferes with traditional notions of professional academic autonomy and freedom. In this process, "the values of disinterested inquiry and respect for the integrity of the subject matter compete with a new set of pressures to 'dumb' courses down, as well as to demonstrate their relevance to labour market conditions and prospects". In that competitive neutrality is a state-engineered 'market-driven'

programme, it must be considered as a series of supply-side levers introduced to increase responsiveness of the universities to the market order and to the market interests of their customers. Under this model and framework, universities have become concerned with their market reputation. Neoliberalism has thus advocated a shift in the forms of accountability to an emphasis on market processes and quantifiable output measures. Olssen and Peters (2005:327) state there are two main types of accountability:

- *“Bureaucratic:* professional accountability, is ex-ante, where rules and regulations are specified in advance and the accountability is measured in terms of process, formulated in terms of standards, based on expertise of those who work in a particular area.
- *Consumer:* Managerial accountability, associated with market systems, based on price; which works in terms of contracts in which the performance is rewarded or punished according to the achievement of pre-set targets and externally imposed objectives”.

Under the neoliberal period, there has been a shift from ‘bureaucratic-professional’ forms of accountability to ‘consumer-managerial’ accountability models. Under the consumer-managerial forms of accountability, there have been developments to make university courses and programmes more relevant to the world of work, as well as changes in the nature of knowledge. There is an increasing emphasis on transferable skills, and a general shift towards vocationalism, linked directly to the functional imperatives of the world of work (Olssen and Peters 2005).

This leads me to discuss the notion of knowledge as capital or knowledge capitalism.

### **Knowledge as capital - knowledge capitalism and the new orthodoxy**

The most significant material change that underpins neoliberalism in the twenty-first century is the rise in the importance of knowledge as capital. The term ‘knowledge capitalism’ emerged only recently to describe the transition to the so-called ‘knowledge economy’, which is characterised in terms of the economics of abundance, the annihilation of distance, the de-territorialisation of the state, and, investment in human capital. (Olssen and Peters 2005).

Burton-Jones (1999) states ‘knowledge is fast becoming the most important form of global capital – hence the term “knowledge capitalism”’. For Burton-Jones (1999), the shift to a knowledge economy involves a fundamental rethinking of the traditional relationships between education, learning and work, focusing on the need for a new coalition between education and industry. ‘Knowledge capitalism’ and ‘knowledge economy’ are twin terms that emerged in the late 1990s by the (OECD, 1996).

Here, I summarise, some of the key differences of how the knowledge economy differs from the traditional economy:

1. "The economics is not of scarcity, but rather of abundance, unlike most resources that deplete when used, information can be shared, and actually grow through application.
2. The effect of location is diminished. Using appropriate technology and methods, virtual marketplaces and virtual organisations can be created that offer benefits of speed and agility, of round the clock operation and of global reach.
3. Laws, barriers and taxes are difficult to apply on solely a national basis. Knowledge and information 'leak' to where demand is highest and the barriers and lowest.
4. Knowledge enhanced products or services can command price premiums over comparable products with low embedded knowledge or knowledge intensity.
5. Pricing and value depends heavily on context. Thus the same information or knowledge can have vastly different value to different people at different times.
6. Knowledge when locked into systems or processes has higher inherent value than when it can 'walk out of the door' in people's heads.
7. Human capital-competencies- are a key component of value in a knowledge-based company" (Olssen and Peters 2005:332).

The OECD report (1996) discusses knowledge distribution through formal and informal networks as being essential to economic performance and hypothesizes the increasingly codification of knowledge in the emerging '*information system*'. In the knowledge-based economy, 'innovation is driven by the interaction of producers and users in the exchange of both codified and tacit knowledge'. The report points to an interactive model of innovation (replacing the old linear model), which consists of knowledge flows and relationships among industry, government and academia in the development of science and technology. With increasing demand for more highly skilled knowledge workers, the OECD (1996) indicates:

*"Governments will need more stress on upgrading human capital through promoting access to a range of skills, and especially the capacity to learn, enhancing the knowledge distribution power of the economy through collaborative networks and the diffusion of technology, and providing the enabling conditions for organisational change at the firm level to maximise the benefits of technology for productivity"*

## **The role of the higher education from the perspective of knowledge capitalism**

Olssen and Peters (2005) state the dominance of neoliberalism and the associated discourses of 'new public management', during the 1980s and 1990s has produced a fundamental shift in the way universities and other institutions of higher education have defined and justified their institutional existence. The traditional professional culture of open intellectual enquiry and debate has been replaced with institutional stress on performativity, as evidenced by the emergence of an emphasis on measured outputs: on strategic planning, performance indicators, quality assurance measures and academic audits.

In terms of higher education in the United Kingdom, universities are now regarded in neoliberal policy as producers of knowledge that can enhance individual and collective human capital and so positively affect economic growth and development. Universities have an important role with respect to the development and dissemination of knowledge is not a new idea (Torres, 2011).

However, emphasis tends to be placed on the production of knowledge that be commercially exploited rather than on considering the ways in which engagement with knowledge can enhance individual development within sets of broadly conceived educational aims.

Arguably, "the acceptance of marketization and associated forms of neoliberal governance has led to the undermining of universities as "independent source (s) of knowledge and inquiry" (Torres, 2011:192). One of their primary functions is now to

*"Raise their own productivity in order to survive. They must package knowledge, deliver flexible education through ICT, provide adequate training for "knowledge workers", and produce more of them at lower unit cost. While this scenario portrays universities as guiding social change, there is evidence of a reverse tendency: that they are becoming subordinate to corporate-style managerialism and income maximization" (Levidow, 2002:3)*

A result of this emphasis is that universities are no longer considered primarily as "cultural spaces" that can enable individual students and teachers to engage in critique and discussion. "Education tends not to be considered as a public or individual good in any meaningful sense" (Davies and Bansel, 2007:494). It is simply a commodity, much like any other, and higher education (both as a sector and as individual institutions) seems to have lost any will to debate openly the values and goals that students might develop (Clegg, 2011). There is little sense of an alternative to the neoliberal vision of the purposes of education as creating the "economically self-interested" individual (Olssen and Peters, 2005).

Cribb and Gewirtz (2012) claim that universities have now become “hollowed out”, lacking any “distinctive social role and no ethical *raison d’être*”. Neoliberalism seems to have “taken away the joy of learning, the creativity of teaching and the formation of strong public intellectuals” (Baltodano, 2012:489). Educational institutions have become part of a social reality that is “identified with an economic value system that shapes all reality in its own image” (Brancaleone and O’Brien, 2011:502). Within this value system, knowledge becomes “objectified, measurable and transferable”. One effect of this is that credentialism becomes inherent in the system: the more credentials possessed in the shape of certificates and degrees, the more marketable the individual.

The self as learner becomes tied to “an economic empirical base”. However, as higher education sectors have expanded, the value of credentials has lowered rather than increased. Patrick (2013) states, of concern here is the way in which neoliberalism and the knowledge economy are presented in global and national policy as inevitable aspects of modern capitalist economies.

### **Knowledge as a commodity and learners as commodified subjects**

Staddon and Standish (2012) state the changes in higher education in the United Kingdom have constituted a profound shift towards a competitive system within which students are placed within a paradigm of “customer orientation”. A utilitarian conception of knowledge dominates a system in which quality of learning is judged by the cost-effectiveness of the delivery and by student perceptions of the quality of their learning experiences.

However, taken as part of the knowledge economy rhetoric and practice, it is not just knowledge within higher education that is reduced to utilitarian value, but the student as embodiment of that knowledge. The student as a person is commodified within the system. Overall, neoliberal concepts of (human) capital require “selves which are endlessly adaptable to the levels of change and insecurity, to the personal and social instability generated by a globalised economy” (Goddard, 2010).

Of course, educational practices have never been neutral and have always acted upon students as selves with the aim of shaping intellect, emotions, habits, and so forth. However, neoliberal discourse tends to deride notions of the individual good as an aim of education: students are consumers and disciplinary knowledge is what is consumed. (Patrick, 2013).

Patrick (2013) states in theory, individuals still have agency to accept, reject, mediate, or ignore neoliberal policies and practices. In practice, the extent to which individuals can exert choice over whether to accept or reject or resist such policies may be limited by a range of factors (social, economic, and cultural). Where individuals learn or work within a system that has embraced neoliberal



educational ideals, a sense of isolation and helplessness may occur in the face of policy and management practices that predicate economic rationalism over the needs and talents of individuals.

Taking a Foucauldian perspective, the subject of neoliberal project can be seen as the entrepreneurial self (Goddard, 2010). Foucauldian constructs of the subjectivity of the self have been the focus of much academic writing in the past ten years, almost to saturation point. However, Brancalone and O'Brien (2011) state it is important not to overlook Foucault's work on the ways in which power is enacted, and how it acts upon, individuals, for his concepts in this respect still have much to offer. In particular, Foucault's work supports understanding of how individual subjectivity is constituted by discourses of power (Bonnett, 2009).

Bonnett (2009:358) argues that neoliberal educational practice is concerned with shaping the "selves of learners in accordance with what are perceived to be the current economic imperatives, rather than, say with what arises from their sense of their own existence". Foucault suggests that our problem as individuals is to "discover that the self is nothing else than the historical correction of the technology built into our history" (Foucault, 1993:222). The issue then becomes how to change these technologies, in which case, "one of the main political problems would be... the politics of ourselves" (Foucault, 1993:223). It is tempting to concur with the Foucauldian perspective that power is inescapable, and that the best that remains to us is to develop the will not to be "governed like that, in this way" (Foucault, 1997:75). Ball and Olmedo (2013) point out that concurring with this view does not mean accepting that the individual cannot offer resistance to subjectification.

Indeed, power is not always a negative force according to Foucault (Brancalone and O'Brien; 2011). Reading the subtleties of his conception of power enables us to see that there is room in the Foucauldian perspective for individual empowerment: as Ball and Olmedo (2013:92) state, "to define ourselves according to our own judgements .... to develop a particular *technology of the self* according to our own principles, an aesthetics of the self". It is this thought that opens possibilities for individuals to reclaim themselves.

In this market model, learning and learners have been commodified (Patrick, 2013). Education has been incorporated into the agenda of wealth production at nation state level via discourses relating to the knowledge economy (Powell and Snellman, 2004). The assumption is that education will be a driver for economic growth, development, or improved competitiveness for nations under globalised market conditions is found in many explanations of the knowledge economy (Peters, 2003).

Peter and Reveley (2012) argue that the intellect of each knowledge worker has become the most productive resource. Individuals carry the mode of production within them, and shaping the individual

intellect must therefore take place through education towards the end of developing human capital and economic growth. The value of knowledge within this paradigm inheres in its utility to develop human capital (Olssen, 2006). Thus the role of schools and universities in relation to educating the individual has changed markedly: the end of education can be considered as the creation of the knowledge worker. (Patrick, 2013).

### **Challenging the current status quo**

Patrick (2013) argues the doxa of neoliberalism remains largely intact in education policy and practice in the United Kingdom, despite challenge at a theoretical and social level and despite a lack of empirical evidence of the economic or educational efficacy of neoliberal doctrine. Wolf (2004) notes the “marked absence” of clear education effects on the economic performance of any nation. A link between education and individual or system wide productivity cannot therefore be assumed.

However, if evidence from empirical research has not challenged the doxa, what can? Perhaps the beginning of an answer lies in a rethinking of the aims of education and the individual’s place within any education system. Down (2009:59) argues, “it is important to consider the possibilities of the restoration of “human sensibilities” in educational conversations, rather than economic rationalism, so that the process and purposes of education can be reimagined”. Nussbaum’s thesis might also be considered that a worthwhile conception on which to base education is that it should enable individuals to lead “meaningful lives” (Nussbaum,1996). There are various ways in which the meaningful life can be thought of in terms of providing a basis for the aims of education. For White (2002:442), one of the main aims of education should be “to help students to lead personally fulfilling lives” in the sense of supporting the development of capacities, knowledge, and understandings that will enable them to attain and maintain a sense of wellbeing. As White (2002) states, the educational market brings with it “an ethical conception of the final ends of human life” locating these in the pursuit and gain of individual preferences exercised through choice. This seems an impoverished vision. Wellbeing is not just about satisfying wants and preferences. It rests on a much more complex set of psychological, affective, and social factors through which individuals can create a sense of meaningful existence beyond economic utility (Ryan, Huta, and Deci, 2008).

Patrick (2013) states if it is to be argued that individual wellbeing, or eudemonia (as flourishing), is a valuable aim of school and university education, should it be based primarily on constructs of autonomy in relation to a theory of self-determination? It may be more fruitful to think of education as enabling agency in the sense of individuals having the capacity to make informed decisions about their lives and to choose well (in the sense of making beneficial choices which do not negatively have an impact on themselves or others, and which act for the individual and/or collective good). Bevir

(1999) makes an important distinction between autonomy and agency and argues for the importance of the latter. Bevir (1999) suggests that individuals cannot be autonomous in the strictest sense of the word. Since individuals are social constructs, following a Foucauldian perspective, they live in a society in which power is “ubiquitous”).

Individuals as subjects are therefore constituted always through regimes of power. “Yet this does not mean that they can never exercise some power, in the sense of agency over their own actions and own choices. In as much as the individual as subject can be constituted by “practices of subjection” they might also be constituted by “practices of liberation” (Bevir, 1999:65). Even to adopt a construct of autonomy following liberal conceptions of the aims of education leaves open the argument that autonomy (or the lack of it) is less the result of educational processes and more the result of social conditions and of internal psychological states (Ryan, Huta and Deci 2008).

Billett (2010:12) observes the same argument may be levelled at agency as an aim of education – but agency can be considered to be something that a subjective sense of wellbeing requires. Agency, in short, is one element that enables individuals to develop a sense of self. The agentic self is one who can resist “strong social suggestion through locating a position and role within social practice which is consistent with the individual subjectivity and identity” (Billett,2010:12). “One aim of education might then be to support the development of agency and agentic behaviours”. Clegg (2011) makes an important point about successful learning enabling individuals to imagine future-selves and to consider the role of knowledge in helping them to develop those selves.

Patrick (2013) indicates to do this, education practices should be developed from a complex model of learning which takes account of the ontological, heuristic, and epistemological bases of knowledge. In addition, education should be reoriented towards human development in a broadly-based sense, rather than reduced to skills acquisition. Biesta (2005) suggests that:

*“While learning as acquisition is only about getting more and more, learning as responding is about showing who you are and where you stand. It is about what I have called elsewhere a process of “coming into presence”... if education is indeed concerned with subjectivity and agency, then we should of education as the situation or process which provides opportunity for individuals to come into presence, that is, to show who they are and where they stand”.* (Biesta,2005:62).

“Education that enables coming into presence is about valuing diversity of opinions while questioning and exploring these opinions, it is about listening as well as contributing, it is about asking difficult questions that may have no conclusive answers, and it is about valuing other selves as much as we value our own”. In supporting students to develop their emergent selves, “it becomes clear that the first responsibility of the teacher is a responsibility for the subjectivity of the student, for that which allows the student to be a unique, singular being” (Biesta,2005:63).

### **Is it possible to reclaim education from neoliberalism?**

Bonnett (2009) states, in terms of educational aims, the needs of the individual as a human being have been subjugated to the needs of capital and the economy. Rather than the shaping of learners’ selves in accordance with “what are perceived to be current economic imperatives”, schools, colleges and universities should support practices that enable individuals to develop in ways that are consonant with “their sense of their own existence”.

However, it is important to continue to raise questions about the influence of neoliberalism on educational aims, policies, and processes. Without this exploration, there is a risk that neoliberal ideologies will remain entrenched while the aim of education are eroded to a set of functionalist outcomes.

Patrick (2013:6) argues “in order to reclaim education from neoliberalism, one place to begin might be to focus on education as the development of the self, not in accordance with economic imperatives but in accordance with wellbeing and individual flourishing as core aims of education”. If education is considered as a transformation of the self of the learner, we may ask what are the processes of teaching and learning what will support individual intellectual, psychological, emotional, and social flourishing? Only in asking these kinds of questions, we might be able to understand how agency can be encouraged in practice – partly as resistance to neoliberalism, but more with the aim of individual wellbeing as its heart.

## **Section 4**

In this section, I will discuss higher education and internationalisation. I start this section by discussing the definition and historical rationales for international mobility, followed by exploring the approaches and motivations to internationalisation in higher education. I conclude this section by exploring the shifting imaginaries in student mobility and the new discourse in international mobility i.e. 'student recruitment'.

Knight (2004:6) states "internationalization is a term that is being used more and more to discuss the international dimension of higher education and, more widely, postsecondary education. It is a term that means different things to different people and is thus used in a variety of ways. For some people, it means a series of international activities such as academic mobility for students and teachers; international linkages, partnerships, and projects; and new, international academic programs and research initiatives. For others, it means the delivery of education to other countries through new types of arrangements such as branch campuses or franchises using a variety of face-to-face and distance techniques. To many, it means the inclusion of an international, intercultural, and/or global dimension into the curriculum and teaching learning process. Still others see international development projects and, alternatively, the increasing emphasis on trade in higher education as internationalization".

To give some context to this, Altbach (2004) states, the international activities of universities has dramatically expanded in volume, scope, and complexity during the past two decades. These activities range from traditional study-abroad programs, allowing students to learn about other cultures, to providing access to higher education in countries where local institutions cannot meet the demand. Other activities stress upgrading the international perspectives and skills of students, enhancing foreign language programs, and providing cross-cultural understanding.

Furthermore, Rizvi (2011:693) observes over the past two decades, "considerable importance has been attached around the world to international student mobility as a way of internationalization of higher education. A whole range of institutional strategies have been employed to encourage students to consider education abroad, either on a short term basis, on a study tour or educational exchange, or enrolling for a longer period in degree awarding programs".

International mobility in higher education is not a new phenomenon. I will discuss the shifting historical context of international mobility in some detail.

### **International Mobility: The shifting historical rationales**

It is useful to understand the historical context of international mobility in higher education. Guruz (2008) states international mobility of students has always been an important feature of higher education. From their very beginning, universities have attracted scholars from abroad, stressing the importance of intellectual exchange of information and ideas. Historical evidence suggests that foreigners travelled long distances to study at ancient universities in India, China, and the Middle East. Thus, there is nothing new about international student mobility. In the seventh and eighth centuries, for example, students flocked to Indian universities such as Nalanda, Takshila, and Sarnath not only to study art, architecture, and religion but also the sciences and mathematics. Places like Alexandria, Fez, and Baghdad housed major centres of learning, hosting a large number of scholars and students from Greece and Rome. In turn, medieval European universities, such as Bologna and Padua, attracted students from Asia and the Middle East.

What was the essence of this type of mobility? Guruz (2008) states the notion of exchange of ideas and intercultural learning has always been a part of the mission of higher education. Beyond these broad objectives, student motivations for mobility, on the one hand, and the guiding principles and institutional forms around mobility, on the other, have varied greatly over the years. Rationales underlying international mobility of students and scholars have been historically situated, located within a broader understanding of the global dynamics relevant to the particular and shifting historical circumstances.

Rizvi (2011:694) states this can be evidenced by “pointing to the ways in which during the colonial period, from the eighteenth century, international student mobility was linked mostly to various colonial arrangements designed to develop a local elite that was sympathetic to the economic and political interests of the colonial powers. While these unidirectional and asymmetrical arrangements were often justified in terms of ‘the civilizing mission of education,’ they also masked a deeper imperial logic”. From the perspective of the colonizing powers, the rationale for international student mobility largely resided in the fact that the empires needed an educated administrative class, able to manage local populations. To perform this task, the development of ‘western’ knowledge, skills, and attitudes among the indigenous elite was considered essential. International education was designed at least in part to impart such attributes.

Bhabha (1994) argues, it was assumed graduates of European universities, would return to the colonies, not only appropriately socialized in western modernist dispositions but also indebted to their colonial masters. In this way, the western idea of modernity was fundamental to the role universities played in meeting the political needs of the empires. The local elites within the colonies, on the other

hand, viewed education at a leading European university, such as Oxford, Cambridge and London, or Sorbonne in France, as a kind of 'finishing' school, enabling them to 'mimic' the colonizers thus maintaining their position of power, by marking themselves apart from the rest of their fellow citizens. In this way, international education served as a social technology, designed to differentiate classes of people.

However, as time evolved, Oakman (2005) states after independence, in the post-colonial era, international student mobility was still highly prized, but now had to assume a new rationale, driven largely by the ideologies of nationalism and 'developmentalism.' Programs such as the Colombo and Fulbright Plans – and also similar plans in the Soviet Union – were created to provide opportunities for talented students in the newly independent countries to acquire advanced, technical, scientific, and administrative training. Designed primarily as a foreign aid program, the Colombo Plan, for example, represented a commitment by the richer Commonwealth countries to provide education that was considered necessary for the development of the new nations.

Nye (2005) argues the focus of this education, under these aid programs was to transfer knowledge and skills, and local capacity building, the elements of which were selected largely to meet the nationalist aspirations of industrialization and economic development. These programs, were not however crafted solely in support of these development aspirations. They linked to the strategic interests of the West within the broader 'cold war' politics. An 'aid' program, was viewed as a key instrument in public diplomacy, designed to make it less likely for the newly independent nations to fall into the communist bloc. This line of thinking was perhaps most clearly evident in the Fulbright Plan, created by the United States as an exercise in 'soft power' leading Soviet bloc to develop similar programs.

Escobar (1991) states by the mid-1980s, however, the 'developmentalist' assumptions underlying such educational aid programs were no longer popular. Not only was the cold war ending, making the programs of educational aid arguably unnecessary, but the discourse of development itself was also increasingly treated as ideologically suspect. It was argued, for example, that the ideology of development represented a new form of colonial practice that effectively institutionalized global inequalities of power, and that notions such as knowledge transfer served the interests of the economically developed countries more so than they helped the poorer nations.

Rizvi (2005) states it was pointed out, moreover, that a large proportion of international students did not return to their countries of origin to take up the developmental roles that had been envisaged for them, contributing to what became known as the phenomenon of 'brain drain'. At the same time, under the financial pressures of their own, universities in the developed countries felt they could no

longer continue to support international students, especially with a declining number of scholarships provided by governments. They noted moreover that many of these students came from elite families who could easily afford to pay tuition.

Jackson (1986) argues, against the backdrop of a shifting set of historical conditions, Australia became one of the first countries to recognize the potential of a new discourse of international student mobility, which did not entirely abandon the development aspirations of the Colombo Plan but supplemented it with the language of educational markets. It was widely believed that the legacy of the Colombo Plan, which had helped forge a powerful elite in Asia, well disposed toward Australian education, could be used to create an educational market in higher education, recruiting initially fee-paying students from the fast developing countries such as Singapore, Malaysia, and Hong Kong, where the demand for Australian education appeared considerable. Similar sentiments emerged in the UK, whose universities were able, due to their colonial legacy, to begin treating international students as a source of revenue, within the context of declining public funds.

Australia was seen as the first country to lead the way in this new discourse. Harman (2004) states, the Australian policy shift from 'aid' to 'trade' turned out to be relatively seamless leading to the emergence of a new 'markets' perspective on international education that is now widely celebrated. However, it would be wrong to characterize this perspective as totally market-driven. Instead it had a hybrid form that did not entirely abandon the older 'development' rationales for international student mobility, as it continued not only to stress the traditional values of education but also the notions of modernization, social and cultural development, capacity-building, and the role of education in promoting international relations.

However, superimposed upon these sentiments emerged a newer discourse of educational markets and institutional reform, linked to the concerns of revenue generation for universities, building institutional profile and reputation, diversifying the campus, and the development of human resources for a fast globalizing economy. Knight (2004) points out, this view of international student mobility contained a range of competing ideas and practices, focused, on the one hand, upon the need to integrate an international perspective into the primary functions of teaching, research and service, and to promote international activities for 'mutually beneficial relationship'. The opportunities to develop a robust set of market practices, enabling higher education to become 'an export industry' in which universities competed for students and funds, on the other.

Having set the historical context to international mobility in higher education, I will discuss the approaches and motivations to international mobility in higher education.



## Approaches to Internationalisation

An approach to internationalization reflects or characterizes the values, priorities, and actions that are exhibited during the work toward implementing internationalization. Within this context, given the changing, even chaotic world in which higher education is functioning, it is important to acknowledge that individual countries, education systems, and even institutions/providers are facing specific challenges and opportunities with respect to the international dimension of higher education. This means, of course, that there are many different approaches to addressing the process of internationalization.

Qiang (2003) offered a typology of approaches to internationalisation as presented within the literature summarised as:

1. The *activity approach*: 'promotes activities such as curriculum. Student/faculty exchange, technical assistance, and international students'.
2. The *competency approach*: 'emphasizes the development of skills, knowledge, attitudes and values in students, faculty and staff... the development of internationalised curricula and programs is not an end in itself but a means towards developing the appropriate competencies in the students, staff and faculty'.
3. The *ethos approach*: 'emphasises creating a culture or climate that values and supports international/intercultural perspectives and initiatives... this approach acknowledges that the international dimensions is fundamental to the definition of a university or any other institutions of higher learning'.
4. The *process approach*: 'stresses integration or fusion of an international/intercultural dimension into teaching, research and service... A major concern in this approach is to address the sustainability of the international dimension'.

However, the leading and respected voice in the field of internationalisation is Professor Jane Knight. Knight (2007) highlights the different approaches to internationalisation at national/sector level and at the institutional level, which are summarised in Table 1 and Table 2. What is the significance of an approach? An approach is not fixed and can change during different periods of development. In many cases, countries or institutions believe that they are using different approaches at the same time, or they believe that they are in a transition period from one approach to another. There is no right approach. The notion of approach is introduced to help describe and assess the manner in which internationalization is being conceptualized and implemented.

## National level/sector level approaches

Knight (2004) identifies five different categories of approaches at the sector level described in Table 1. These are not mutually exclusive categories, nor are they presented in any particular or progressive order. They are merely descriptions of dominant features of the general ways that a country or the education sector has decided to proceed with internationalization.

**Table 1**

<b>Approaches to Internationalization at the National or Sector Level</b>	
<b>Approach</b>	<b>Description</b>
Programs	Internationalization of higher education is seen in terms of providing funded programs that facilitate institutions and individuals to have opportunities to engage in international activities such as mobility, research, and linkages.
Rationales	Internationalization of higher education is presented in terms of why it is important that a national higher education sector become more international. Rationales vary enormously and can handle human resources development, strategic alliances, commercial trade, nation building, and social/cultural development.
Ad hoc	Internationalization of higher education is treated as an ad hoc or reactive response to the many new opportunities that are being presented for international delivery, mobility, and cooperation in postsecondary education.
Policy	Internationalization of higher education is described in terms of policies that address or emphasize the importance of the international or intercultural dimension in postsecondary education. Policies can be from a variety of sectors, for example, education, foreign affairs, science and technology, culture, or trade.
Strategic	Internationalization of higher education is considered to be a key element of a national strategy to achieve a country's goals and priorities both domestically and internationally.

**Table 2**

<b>Approaches at the Institutional Level</b>	
<b>Approach at Institutional Level</b>	<b>Description</b>
Activity	Internationalization is described in terms of activities such as study abroad, curriculum and academic programs, institutional linkages and networks, development projects, and branch campuses.
Outcomes	Internationalization is presented in the form of desired outcomes such as student competencies, increased profile, more international agreements, and partners or projects.
Rationales	Internationalization is described with respect to the primary motivations or rationales driving it. This can include academic standards, income generation, cultural diversity, and student and staff development.
Process	Internationalization is considered to be a process where an international dimension is integrated into teaching, learning, and service functions of the institution
At home	Internationalization is interpreted to be the creation of a culture or climate on campus that promotes and supports international/intercultural understanding and focuses on campus-based activities
Abroad (cross-border)	Internationalization is seen as the cross-border delivery of education to other countries through a variety of delivery modes (face to face, distance, e-learning) and through different administrative arrangements (franchises, twinning, branch campuses, etc).

The purpose of demonstrating these two frameworks is to highlight the dominant features of the current approach/s to internationalization in higher education at national and institutional level. I will further explore whether the dominant approach being used is consistent and complementary to the rationales, motivation and values driving the efforts to internationalization in higher education.

## **Internationalisation: Motivation, rationale and current context**

Middlehurst and Woodfield (2007) present an overview of rationales found in internationalisation strategies:

- Teaching and learning – curriculum design, approach to teaching, opportunities for overseas study, collaborative programmes and research;
- Research – capacity building (e.g. staff and student recruitment), developing international knowledge base, joint programmes, and new funding opportunities;
- Cultural – intercultural understanding, diversity, respect, communication (languages) global citizenship;
- Reputational – securing international standing and branding ( e.g. ‘research leader’, rankings in the world lists);
- Economic/market-led fees income from overseas student recruitment , generating research funds and consultancy income;
- Managerial – an emphasis on organisational efficiency, co-ordination and centralisation to avoid duplication of activity and to maximise viability;
- Developmental – capacity building (research and teaching) and assistance in developing countries.

However, a more comprehensive summary is offered by the leading academic de Wit (2002) who states, traditionally, the rationales driving higher education institutions towards internationalization has been presented in four groups: social/cultural, political, academic, and economic. More recently, the aspiration and desire for universities to have international recognition—whether it is for academic, economic, social, or political purposes, is clearly growing.

In table 3, I present and summarise the four categories of rationales by de Wit (2002). This framework of rationales does not distinguish between national- and institutional-level rationales. In table 4, I summarise, the new emerging rationales at the national level that cannot be neatly placed in one of these four groups. These cross-cutting rationales include human resources development, strategic alliances, commercial trade, nation building, and social/cultural development.

**Table 3**

<b>Rationales Driving Internationalization</b>	
<b>Rationales</b>	<b>Existing—National and Institutional Levels Combined</b>
Social/cultural	National cultural identity Intercultural understanding Citizenship development Social and community development
Political	Foreign policy National security Technical assistance Peace and mutual understanding National identity Regional identity
Economic	Economic growth and competitiveness Labour market Financial incentives
Academic	International dimension to research and teaching Extension of academic horizon Institution building Profile and status Enhancement of quality International academic standards

**Table 4**

<b>Level</b>	<b>Of Emerging Importance— Level National and Institutional Levels Separated</b>
National	Human resources development Strategic alliances Commercial trade Nation building Social/cultural development
Institutional	International branding and profile Income generation Student and staff development Strategic alliances Knowledge production

### **National-Level Rationales**

I will summarise the framework by De Wit (2002).

At the national level, some of the emerging, important rationales driving internationalization at the postsecondary level are the following.

#### **Human Resources Development: Brain Power**

An increasing emphasis on the knowledge economy, demographic shifts, mobility of the labour force, and increased trade in services are all factors that are driving nations to place more importance on developing and recruiting human capital or brain power through international education initiatives. Similarly, there is more attention being paid to enhancing the international dimension of teaching and research so that domestic students and academics can be better equipped to contribute to their country's effectiveness and competitiveness on the international stage. Finally, there is increasing recognition being given to the need for further development of intercultural understanding and skills for personal, professional, and citizenship development.

## **Strategic Alliances**

The international mobility of students and academics as well as collaborative research and education initiatives are being seen as productive ways to develop closer geopolitical ties and economic relationships. There has been a definite shift from alliances for cultural purposes to economic purposes.

## **Commercial Trade**

It is known that in the past decade, more emphasis has been placed on economic and income-generating opportunities attached to cross-border delivery of education. New franchise arrangements, foreign or satellite campuses, online delivery, and increased recruitment of fee-paying students are examples of a more commercial approach to internationalization by traditional public and private institutions. The fact that education is now one of the 12 service sectors in the General Agreement on Trade in Services is positive proof that importing and exporting of education and training programs and education services is a potentially lucrative trade area.

## **Nation Building**

Traditionally, international academic projects that have developed as part of development and technical assistance work have been considered an important contribution to the nation-building efforts of a developing country. International development work based on mutual benefits for all partners continues to be a key aspect of the internationalization of postsecondary education.

## **Social and Cultural Development**

The social and cultural rationales, especially those that relate to promotion of intercultural understanding, and national cultural identity are still significant. But perhaps their importance does not carry the same weight in comparison to the economic and political-based rationales listed above.

## **Institutional-Level Rationales**

There is a close liaison between national-level and institutional level rationales, but it is not always as close as one would expect. This depends on many factors, one of which is how much the internationalization process is a bottom-up or top-down process within any given country. It is probably accurate to say that, in countries where internationalization is not given much prominence at the national level, which is still very much the case in many regions of the world, then institutional-level rationales have greater importance and may also differ more from one institution to another.

There are many factors that influence the institutional-level rationales. These factors range from mission, student population, faculty profile, geographic location, funding sources, level of resources, and orientation to local, national, and international interests. Once again, the four categories of rationales apply to institutions, but it appears that the emerging rationales of greater consequence are the following.

### **International Profile and Reputation**

Traditionally, prominence has been given to the importance of achieving international academic standards (however they may be defined). This motivation is still important, but it appears to have been subsumed by the overall drive to achieve a strong worldwide reputation as an international high-quality institution. This drive relates to the quest for name recognition internationally in an attempt to attract the brightest of scholars/students, a substantial number of international students, and, of course, high-profile research and training projects.

### **Student and Staff Development**

It appears that there is renewed emphasis on internationalization as a means to enhance the international and intercultural understanding and skills for students and staff. There are a number of factors contributing to this. The escalating number of national, regional, international, and cultural conflicts is pushing academics to help students understand global issues and international/intercultural relationships. The mobility of the labour market and the increase in cultural diversity of communities and the workplace require that both students and academics have an increased understanding and demonstrated skills to work and live in a culturally diverse or different environment. On the other hand, the increased emphasis on accountability and outcomes-based education is requiring that more effort be directed to identifying student and staff competencies developed through internationalization initiatives.

### **Income Generation**

On the other side of the ledger from human (student and staff) development is the motivation of economic development. There is no question that more institutions are increasingly looking for internationalization activities as a way to generate alternative sources of income. Public non-profit institutions are caught in the squeeze of decreased public funding and increased operational costs, all taking place in an environment of increased accountability and, probably, increased competition. The motivation to undertake internationalization to generate income is a complex issue.



## **Strategic Alliances**

There is no question that the number of bilateral or multilateral educational agreements has increased exponentially in the past decade. During the early stages of internationalization, institutions are often reacting to the multitude of opportunities to establish international institutional linkages. These linkages can be for different purposes—academic mobility, benchmarking, joint curriculum or program development, seminars and conferences, and joint research initiatives.

## **Research and Knowledge Production**

The role of higher education institutions in the production and distribution of knowledge should not be minimised. Given the increasing interdependence among nations, it is clear that there are global issues and challenges that cannot be addressed at the national level only. International and interdisciplinary collaboration is key to solving many global problems such as those related to environmental, health, and crime issues. Institutions and national governments are therefore making the international dimension of research and knowledge production a primary rationale for internationalization of higher education, and so are many institutions.

In summarising the framework by de Wit (2002), the rationales driving internationalization vary from institution to institution, from government department to government department, from stakeholder to stakeholder, and from country to country. Differing and competing rationales contribute to both the complexity of the international dimension of education and the substantial contributions that internationalization makes. However, it is clear that economic factors such as income generation, take precedence over social and cultural aspects. Rizvi (2011) states, student recruitment is the new discourse in international mobility. Due to the changing nature of the knowledge economy, within which knowledge is increasingly viewed as a commodity, an emphasis upon student recruitment has become an increasingly dominant feature of higher education, with activities of international education filtered through the lens of marketing. In the last two decades, marketing initiatives of international offices at universities have come to occupy a central place within the administrative structure of universities. While other aspects of internationalization, such as teaching and learning, are not entirely overlooked, market concerns disproportionately attract the attention of senior university personnel, as universities struggled to balance their budgets within the context of declining public funds. The success of universities is now measured in terms of the number of fee-paying international students.

I will now discuss student mobility through the lens of differing imaginaries.

## **Student mobility and the shifting imaginaries**

Rizvi (2011) states, the concept of globalization has been defined in many different ways, but common to most definitions is the idea of social processes that describe the rapid movement of ideas, goods, and people around the globe, radically transforming relations among people and communities across national borders. This is driven largely by developments in information and communication technologies, globalization has given rise to new forms of transnational interconnectivity. It has implied that while people continue to live in particular localities, these localities are increasingly integrated into larger systems of global networks.

Rizvi (2011:698) states, crucially, however, it needs to be noted, “that globalization involves both an objective and a subjective dimension. It seeks to represent an objective account of the ways in which geographical constraints on economic, political, and cultural activities are receding; but on a more subjective level, it suggests that people around the world are becoming increasingly aware of this fact and are re-shaping their lives accordingly. As people – as well as governments and institutions such as universities – experience on a daily basis the realities of transnational economic relations, technological and media innovations, and cultural flows that cut across national borders, with greater speed and intensity than ever before, they increasingly use these experiences to make strategic calculations of their futures, and how they might take advantage of the opportunities global interconnectivity now offers”.

Rizvi (2011:698) states, “these calculations are not however made in a void, but within an imaginary of global conditions and possibilities”. To this end, Appadurai (1996) has argued that while we live in a world that offers a multiplicity of social imaginaries of the ways in which the world is now interconnected, a particular imaginary has become globally dominant. This imaginary is informed by the various assumptions of neo-liberalism, influencing not only the processes of state and institutional decision-making but also the strategic calculations individuals make. As a range of loosely connected ideas, the neo-liberal imaginary of globalization implies the extension of market relations through which people, communities, institutions, and states are now assumed to be globally interconnected (Steger, 2009).

Rizvi (2011) states in policy terms, this view replaces an earlier imaginary that had assumed the importance of state provision of goods and services as a way of ensuring the social well-being of a national population, and as a way of forging social and national cohesion. In contrast, the neo-liberal imaginary advocates a minimalist state, concerned with the promotion of the instrumental values of competition and choice across national boundaries. It rests on a pervasive naturalization of the logic of the markets, justifying it on the grounds of both individual autonomy and social efficiency. It

preaches the principle of global 'free trade', applying it equally to both goods and services, including education, which had once been marked by its largely national character.

Guruz (2008) states, the neo-liberalism imaginary thus encourages a particular way of interpreting global interconnectivity, as an objective set of social processes, the logic of which is designed to steer people and institutions alike toward a particular subjective awareness of recent changes in global economy and culture. It thus promotes not only a specific way of interpreting the 'facts' of global interconnectivity but also the values attached to that interpretation. In this way, neo-liberalism is highly normative, and directs us toward a collective consciousness of the world as an interconnected space, in which new commercial opportunities exist for global trade in areas that had once been regarded as public goods. As mentioned above, Australia was one of the first countries to seize upon these opportunities, with its higher education institutions recognizing how the global knowledge economy had created a class of students who were prepared to invest in global mobility for higher education, and who considered the value of international knowledge networks in largely economic terms.

Rizvi (2011) states, Australian policies and institutional practices on student mobility were arguably developed within this neo-liberal imaginary and involved a set of assumptions about the calculations students and their parents make with respect to educational investment, and returns on international education. International students had traditionally been motivated by such factors as lack of opportunities at home; perceptions of better curriculum and pedagogy; prestige associated with international education; following family tradition and social networks; interest in travel and a more cosmopolitan life; and greater freedom and independence abroad, possibilities of immigration or permanent residence, and so on. However, what the Australian universities recognized early was that a new set of factors linked to the neo-liberal imaginary, such as assumptions about returns on educational investment and better employment prospects in transnational corporations, as well as beliefs about the value of international education in the global labour market, were also becoming important.

Through the 1990s, Australia became a global trend setter in developing policies and practices around this insight. Other systems of higher education viewed the Australian case with a great deal of interest, and soon embraced a similar discourse about the importance of global mobility of students, developing and following a similar set of industrial practices. The commercial opportunities in international trade in higher education from which Australia had benefited are now pursued by most countries.

Vertovec (2008) states, it is increasingly clear that the global context within which student mobility takes place is now characterized by multiple ties and interactions linking people and institutions across the borders of nation-states – not always mediated by international relations, but defined by systems of ties, interactions, exchanges, and mobility's that demand reciprocity and mutual benefit. As higher education systems around the world embrace mobility, there is a growing awareness of the new demands and possibilities of collaboration and networking among institutions dealing with knowledge production and dissemination.

However, Kirp (2003) states, although internationalisation is a two-way street—students move largely from south to north, for example—and serves important needs in the developing world. But the north largely controls the process. In summary, unlike the historical rationale for mobility in higher education, which was largely to do with the importance of intellectual exchange of information and ideas. There is a clear shift; the motivation of mobility is economic and to generate income. Higher education institutions in the UK place greater importance in student inward mobility (which generates international fees) rather than student outward mobility. Thus, there is more importance attached to the economic rationale for internationalization in higher education institutions, linking to the wider discourse of the commercialisation and commodification of education in a neoliberal dominant globalised world.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **Aims of this chapter**

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the methodology I used to undertake this research project, followed by the research questions and the profile of the participants.

### ***Methodological Approaches for my Research***

When designing an appropriate intervention for my research project, I need to have sufficient knowledge and critical awareness of practitioner – oriented research methodologies. As a researcher, it is really important to understand the limitations of different methodological approaches in order to critically examine the situation from different perspectives.

Action research is a methodological position where a practitioner undertakes research in order to improve his/her practices. It is also known as participatory research, collaborative inquiry, emancipatory research, action learning and contextual action research. In essence, action research is “learning by doing” – where a practitioner/s identify an issue, implement a strategy to resolve the issue, reflect on how successful their efforts were and try again, if required.

O’Brien (1998) states what separates this type of research from general professional practices and consultation is the emphasis on scientific study, which is to say the researcher studies the problem systematically and ensures the intervention is informed by theoretical considerations. A lot of the researcher’s time will be spent of refining the methodological tools to suit the exigencies of the situation, and in collecting, analysing, and presenting data on an ongoing, cyclical basis.

In action research the practitioner becomes the researcher, to resolve or improve current practices; therefore the researcher makes no attempt to remain objective, but has to openly acknowledge their bias to the research and other participants.

As an academic approach, we understand action research as being related to theory and to methodology. Action research relates to the concept of democracy. The reason was born out of necessity of a self-critical reflection in academic research in a historic situation characterised by extremely authoritarian cultures in the years around World War 2. Popper (1945 as cited in Nielsen & Nielsen 2006) argued that research based knowledge is not the exclusive guarantee for truth; but all kinds of knowledge need to be accepted until you can prove it is false. So for Popper (1945) knowledge is seen as a necessarily pluralistic phenomenon or an un-authoritarian kind of knowledge.

In a more radical sense Adorno (1969) and Horkheimer (1973) discuss the relationship between democracy and research or scientific knowledge. They relate the positivist domination in the scientific

society and in society as such to the authoritarian catastrophes. They argue that the separation of science (and research) from values or culture that dominate the scientific community is a constitutive part of authoritarian society and culture. If science only deals with observable facts and science at the same time becomes incremental in societal development and planning, you exclude humanism and democratic values from essential dynamics. This leads to not only the society but the culture in an authoritarian logic of development. Hence, intellectuals must become critical not only to principles of scientific research, but also to the material structures in society.

Action research as a methodological approach challenges the idea of a separation of culture and values from research. Involving ordinary people in the creation of (scientific) knowledge is also a reintegration of democratic values and in institutional change. Therefore, as a practitioner research I developed new knowledge for solving problems and better cooperation in my work place and for my project. There is a growing need for a combination of practical and theoretical knowledge in order to solve complicated problems.

Action research can be seen as a research tradition in which society is understood as being created in human action and, therefore, it can only be changed by human action; human beings are themselves creators of society and specific fields of society and are participants in the research and in the potential change processes. It is about gaining knowledge and experience, not as reflection of data but as a reflection and development of social culture itself.

The action researchers' role is to intervene normatively in social and cultural processes trying to organise them as a knowledge creating process. It is important that the action researcher finds tools to overcome domination and reification (frozen realities). In doing so, the action researcher contributes (critically) to the creation of truth and solid cultural knowledge.

In terms of ontological assumptions for action research, Lewin saw researchers' influence as something productive in the knowledge creating process. Lewin believed that the objectification in (social) science was incremental in the authoritarian and undemocratic social orientations in contemporary modern societies. He understood that positivistic objectification of people in organisations or social systems contributed to an increasingly authoritarian culture. He argued, that an organisational and cultural reorientation aimed at giving people and employees more responsibility was an important cure for authoritarianism and that action research could play a role in this reorientation towards a democratic society.

Through appropriate intervention research strategies, I will explore professionally related issues and designed a suitable work place interventions, using various methodological approaches. The various methodological approaches have their own strengths and limitations. This approach does not look for universal rules or laws and reality is always to be considered as unfinished; as something that can change in many directions – and hopefully determined by interactive decisions made by ordinary people. The criteria for truth or new knowledge are not only a question of measuring collected data from the field, but more a question of creating experiences which can, potentially, change all participants' values and beliefs in the same process. The truth or claims to knowledge are relative to the practitioner.

In contrast, the positivist approach of quantification seeks to apply universal laws i.e. a general policy to address a certain issues, following which an output can be measured and quantified. Positivism claims that the science provides us with the clearest ideal of knowledge. This approach is less successful, when it has to be applied to the study human behaviour and to understand the complexities of social and environmental factors that influence human behaviour. This approach sees facts as 'objective' and values and beliefs are subjective, therefore they must not interfere with the process of discovering facts. It is about discovering logical rules of explanation, independent of the world and its social practices.

Many academics have criticised this approach. Cohen et al. (2007:17) state the criticism towards this approach of quantifying knowledge in this manner is that it uses a mechanistic approach. It defines life in measurable terms rather than inner experiences, and excludes notions of choice, freedom and individuality. Ions (1977:2007) expressed his concerns with applying this method of quantification and how the rigid mathematical approach does not allow to understand human behaviour. Turner (1970) criticised this approach as it does not look at the subjective aspects that influence human behaviour, which allow the whole situation to be understood. In explaining the limitations of this approach, Habermas (1974) stated this approach does not allow human values, opinions, moral judgements and beliefs to explain data which diminishes the characteristics of how data can be perceived. Cohen et al. (2007) state the difficulty with this approach is that it regards human behaviour as passive, essentially determined and controlled, thereby ignoring intention and freedom.

In contrast, the interpretive approach allows the data to be explored from the standpoint of the individual. This approach allows data to be understood by a subjective viewpoint and experiences of people. It allows the reality to be seen through the eyes of the participants i.e. using interviews to evaluate the events, it allows for the involvement of people and their values, experiences in order to understand the broader reality.

Contrary to the positivist approach, this approach is not interested in applying generalised laws, rather it views participants as active, unique and largely non-generalizable. This approach allows data to be interpreted as the participants construct meaning and how they understand reality. It sees data as fluid and changing rather than fixed and static.

Furthermore, it allows people to interpret events, contexts and situations and act on the bases of those events. This approach recognises that there can be multiple interpretations and perspectives on, single events and situations. Reality is multi-layered and complex. This approach wants to gain deeper knowledge to understand different realities. Situations need to be examined through the eyes of participants rather than the researcher. Cohen et al. (2007) state the context of the interpretive approach is to understand the subjective world of human experience. This approach examines situations from within and is about gathering insight and understanding of people's behaviour.

Scott & Robin (2010) state the disadvantage of this approach is that it can be seen as soft, rigorous and subjective and always having to prove the validity of outcomes. Fine (2004) states the danger of presenting interview data, is that by critically examining and creating meaning of the data, it can be misrepresented by the researcher. The researcher needs to be careful to present the data neutrally as possible, without explicating their own stances.

### ***Rationale for using this Approach***

"Action research is a self-reflective, self-critical and critical enquiry undertaken by professionals to improve the rationality and justice of their own practice" (Briggs & Coleman 2007:156). Action research is normally associated with 'hands-on', small-scale research projects such as this project. The main defining characteristics of action research are that it is practical in nature, it identifies change, it involves a cyclical process whereby research involves a feedback loop in which initial findings generate possibilities for change which are then implemented and evaluated as a prelude to further investigation and involves active participation from practitioners in the research process.

Noffke (1997) characterized action research work as encompassing three dimensions: the professional, the personal and the political. The reason I chose action research is, as a researcher and practitioner this model allows me to connect research and implement action to improve my practice, making a stronger link between research and practice as discussed above. Action research was invented by Kurt Lewin (1946). His vision of action research was an alternative to the norms of decontextualized research; instead of focusing on surveys and statistical methods, action research's purpose was to improve social formations by involving participants in a cyclical process of fact finding,



planning, exploratory action and evaluation. Wilf Carr and Stephen Kemmis (1986) made further contributions to developing action research theory by locating it within the framework of critical theory. Action research is seen as a means of democratizing the power differentials in social groups and institutions. It allows action researchers to work collaboratively, to create 'ideal speech situations' in which communication between individuals would be open and free, unconstrained by considerations of power and status Somekh & Zeichner (2009:7).

Therefore, action research is a 'bottom up initiative, which requires top down support'. As a practitioner-researcher action research is a means to develop agency to bring about change; and the changes that I introduce are locally appropriate within the context of my practice.

McNiff and Whitehead (2010:181) raise an interesting point, in the context of educational knowledge, they state, it is a common assumption that only professional researchers are capable of doing research and generating theory, while practitioners are not. As a professional and a practitioner, it can be difficult to write authoritatively because of the wider discourse surrounding knowledge generation.

### ***Action Research as a Methodological Approach & Knowledge Claims***

For the action researcher epistemology is the key to understanding possibilities and conditions for creating new knowledge in a world we consider as always unfinished, and in which both researchers and ordinary people simultaneously find themselves in a reified and in an existential relation to the field of practice. The criteria for truth or new knowledge are not only a question of measuring collected data from the field, but more a question of creating experiences which can, potentially, change all participants' values and beliefs in the same process.

In spite of differences in basic methodological assumptions action researchers share the idea that knowledge creation is not something exclusive for scientists or experts.

In summary, I have identified 6 key principles for action research. Winter (1989 as cited in O'Brien 1998)

- Reflexive critique - the principle of reflective critique ensures practitioners reflect on issues and processes and make explicit the interpretations, biases, assumptions and concerns upon which judgements are made. In this way, practical accounts can give rise to theoretical considerations. In action research, the truth or claims to knowledge are relative to the practitioner.
- Dialectical critique - in action research, reality, practically social reality, is consensually validated. Phenomena are conceptualized in dialogue; therefore a dialectical critique is

required to understand the set of relationships both between the phenomenon and its context, and between the elements constituting the phenomenon.

- Collaborative resources – practitioners in an action research project are co-researchers. The principle of collaborative resource presupposes that each person's ideas are equally significant as potential resources for creating interpretive categories of analysis, negotiated among the practitioners.
- Risk – the change process potentially threatens all previously established ways of doing things, thus creating psychic fears among the practitioners; this was clearly the case when I was implementing the intervention. Practitioners need to invite everyone involved in the research to discuss ideas, judgements, and design strategies, to ensure learning takes place.
- Plural Structure – this methodological approach embodies a multiplicity of views, commentaries and critiques, leading to multiple possible actions and interpretations. This plural structure of inquiry requires a plural text for reporting. This means that there will be many accounts made explicit, with commentaries on their contradictions, and a range of options for action presented. There should be continuous on-going discussion among practitioners/partners.
- Theory, practice, transformation – for action researchers, theory informs practice, practice refines theory, in a continuous transformation. In any setting, people's actions are based on implicitly held assumptions, theories and hypotheses, and with every observed result, theoretical knowledge is enhanced. The two are intertwined aspects of a single change process. It is up to the researchers to make explicit the theoretical justifications for the actions, and to question the bases of those justifications. The ensuing practical applications that follow are subjected to further analysis, in a transformative cycle that continuously alternates emphasis between theory and practice.

Action research is more of a holistic approach to improving practice, rather than a single method for collecting and analysing data. This allows for several different research tools to be used to implement the intervention. I can use various methods, which are generally common to the qualitative research paradigm, such as research journals, document collection and analysis, participant observations recordings, questionnaire surveys, structured and unstructured interviews and case studies.

By using this approach, the key thing for me as a practitioner researcher is to produce mutually agreeable outcomes for everyone involved, to ensure long term impact and implementation of the research project. Therefore, as a researcher, conducting practitioner oriented research, I must adopt many different roles at various stages of the action research process e.g. designer, leader, facilitator, observer, reporter, listener etc.

### ***Limitations to Action Research as a Methodological Approach***

Brown & Jones (2006:8) write in traditional action research there appears to be a supposition that the researcher stays the same during the research period. It also often seems that the world they inhabit 'stops' long enough for them to look at it and then act. They propose that changes in both researcher and the world need to be documented within the writing process, since they are mutually constitutive. In engaging in this circular hermeneutic process, practitioner researchers pass through a sequence of perspectives, each capable of generating various types of writing and each susceptible to a variety of later interpretations. However, this writing becomes detached from the person who generated it. It becomes a historical artefact susceptible to multiple interpretations as to its origins and its situation within the social sphere through which it emerged. While individuals can, if they choose, wed themselves to understandings of themselves as intentional beings as they act professionally and write about their actions, such understandings are always temporary, subject to reformulations and re-contextualizations. Research enquiry can be revisited as a historical analysis of practitioners' writing, but a history that creates futures as well as presents and pasts.

Brown & Jones (2001:28) state within the traditions and movements of action research and reflective practice, becoming aware or critical is a pre-requisite. This is so any thinking or actions taken by the autonomous researcher are based on reason and not arbitrary directions of authorities. Generating or obtaining knowledge is not a linear process, hence in action research why should there only be linear narratives, with a beginning, middle and end formulation. Derrida (in Kearney 1984:122) suggests 'another approach' be used besides that of political liberation and one that is not driven by the powerhouse of rationality. An 'approach' of possibilities rather than certainties, where the task of bestowing meanings is left to 'anyone' rather than the authorial 'one'. For the practitioner researcher, the methodological implications for taking this approach would mean it would allow different perspectives to emerge, by exploring and re-exploring narratives and deriving different meanings. Knowledge is an evolving and moving phenomenon and does not have a rigid linear framework.

## **Interviews - Choice of research method**

To undertake this research project, I opted to conduct interviews as a research method. Murphy & Torrance (1987) discuss two distinct paradigms when undertaking educational research, the interpretive approach and the positivist approach. Whilst both approaches can be used when conducting policy-related research, they take different assumptions as starting point. The positivist paradigm looks at serving central decision-makers who are looking for standard policies to be applied. Positivist researchers seek to apply universal laws i.e. a general policy to address a certain issue, following which an output can be measured and quantified. Positivism claims that the science provides us with the clearest ideal of knowledge. This approach is less successful, when it has to be applied to the study human behaviour and to understand the complexities of social and environmental factors that influence human behaviour. This approach creates generality e.g. by designing universal educational policies and practices. However, using this approach could lead to 'good hypotheses', however, that was not the scope or nature of this research project.

Cohen et al. (2007:17) state the criticism towards this approach of quantifying knowledge in this manner is that it uses a mechanistic approach. It defines life in measurable terms rather than inner experiences, and excludes notions of choice, freedom and individuality. Ions (1977:2007) expressed his concerns with applying this method of quantification and how the rigid mathematical approach does not allow to understand human behaviour. Turner (1970) criticised this approach as it does not look at the subjective aspects that influence human behaviour, which allow the whole situation to be understood. In explaining the limitations of this approach, Habermas (1974) stated this approach does not allow human values, opinions, moral judgements and beliefs to explain data which diminishes the characteristics of how data can be perceived. Cohen et al. (2007) state the difficulty with this approach is that it regards human behaviour as passive, essentially determined and controlled, thereby ignoring intention and freedom.

This research was framed by an interpretative understanding of reality. Cohen et al. (2007) state this approach is interested in discovering how services can be improved and prizes subjective information that leads to this, which is difficult to standardise or quantify. The interpretive approach allows the data to be explored from the standpoint of the individual. This approach allows data to be understood by a subjective viewpoint and experiences of people. It allows the reality to be seen through the eyes of the participants' i.e. in order to understand the nuances, experiences and narratives of individual students. I therefore, conducted this research by using interviews as a research method, over questionnaires or running focus groups.

Interviews are very well positioned to conduct research under the interpretivist paradigm. Other research methods such as questionnaires tend to prefer quantification and standardisation in presenting data. Usually framed within positivist assumptions, data collected via questionnaires do not tend to explain the findings of the data or place them in a context or weigh the importance of certain factors in relation to the data obtained. It fails to articulate the varied concerns and questions of participants, as the purpose is to seek the 'objective truth' and to deploy statistical generalisation, rather than looking at the 'how' and 'why'.

Interviews, in contrast, are well suited to understand the nuances, variables that impact or influence the intervention, which I wanted to design to improve student mobility. Cohen et al. (2007) state that, through interviews, researchers can place emphasis on explanation and understanding the unique and particular individual case rather than the general and the universal. The interest is in a subjective, relativist social world rather than the absolutist external reality. Interestingly, this approach allows the scope to understand individual behaviour, which is beneficial to understand the data from a broader perspective. In my case, interviews provided opportunities for in-depth insight from the student perspective, their experiences and narratives on mobility and how and what was needed to improve student mobility. Through interviews, I could address some of these issues as it allowed for a much broader in-depth discussion. It highlighted and discussed the complexities that exist within which the intervention needed to be placed and identified those procedures and elements that impact positively and/or negatively, rather than discovering and applying, single and generalised rules.

### **Choice of sample, the sample process and limitation factors**

When conducting research, each methodological approach has its own strengths and limitations. As explained, I undertook this research by using interviews as a method of conducting research.

I approached the 5 Education Leads in my faculty and asked them to inform their students of my research project and if any students were potentially interested in taking part in the research. 10 students came forward, they completed the initial 'demographics biographical questionnaire' (see appendix 8). From the 10 students who expressed an initial interest in the project, 6 students confirmed they would like to take part and signed and completed the consent form (see appendix 9). Once I received this form, I arranged a mutually suitable time to conduct the interviews, with the students.

The sample for this research project comprised of 6 students studying 6 different subject areas, namely, MA Sociology with Applied Quantitative Methods, BA Spanish Studies, BA History, BA English,

BA Acting and Education Studies. (see full profile of students on page 59). From the 6 students, 3 students had opted for a mobility experience and 3 students hadn't opted for a mobility experience, during their undergraduate study. From the sample, there were 4 female participants and 2 male participants.

The scope of this practitioner led research project meant interviewing a small sample of students, both with a mobility and non-mobility student experience. This research project only looked at student experience and narratives of outward student mobility; hence there lies its limitation. This research could be further strengthened by conducting research with a larger student sample and/or triangulating the findings of this research by using questionnaires with a broader student population. This would add to the findings of this research. A further method of triangulation to strengthen the findings of the research project would be by conducting research and understanding the narratives of outward mobility from the academics perspective.

### ***The research questions & participant profile***

As I practitioner, the aim of the project was to identify and investigate opportunities and barriers to outbound mobility from a student perspective with the potential of how I could promote and encourage future outbound opportunities for undergraduates. In order to this, I wanted to explore the rich narratives of mobile and non-mobile students.

For the research project, I designed 2 sets of questions for the semi-structured interviews. The first set of questions were for those students who had opted for a mobility experience during their undergraduate studies. The second set of questions were for those students who hadn't opted for a mobility experience during their studies. In designing these, I wanted to explore which factors influenced students' choices/decisions regarding outbound mobility. I wanted to hear the narratives and experiences of students who opted/didn't opt for a study/work abroad opportunity during their undergraduate study. This would develop an enriched understanding in the pursuit of a more inclusive international mobility culture in my practice.

In order to understand the narratives and **experiences of students who undertook a mobility experience** during their studies. I asked the participants the following questions.

- Please tell me about your work/study abroad experience (where you went, how you felt prior to leaving, how was your experience, how you felt on your return etc., where you lived, who did you go abroad with, who did you interact with etc.)?
- Do you think your mobility experience added value to you and/or your studies? If so, how?
- Did you experience any barriers before, during or after your mobility experience?
- Were there any factors that influenced or hindered your mobility experience?
- What are the advantages/disadvantages of a mobility experience?
- What key skills have you developed as a result of your mobility experience?
- Would you recommend the mobility experience (opportunity) to other students? And why?
- What measures/steps do you think could be taken in order to encourage non-mobile students to consider study/work abroad?
- Would you have opted to study/work abroad if it wasn't a mandatory part of your course?

In order to understand the narratives and **experiences of students who didn't undertake a mobility experience** during their studies. I asked the participants the following questions.

- Please tell me what you are studying (programme, year of study etc.)
- Did you know about work/study abroad opportunities during your studies?
- Did you consider a study mobility (work/study – long/short term) experience during your programme of study?
- What factors influenced your decision for you to not take part in a mobility experience during your studies?
- In your opinion, what are the (are there any) barriers for studying/working abroad?
- Do you think a mobility experience could have 'added value' to you and/or your studies? (Please explain)
- What are the advantages/disadvantages of not taking part in a mobility experience?
- What measures/steps do you think could be taken in order to encourage non-mobile students to consider study/work abroad?

**Profile of students interviewed from the Faculty of Arts and Humanities at Manchester Metropolitan University** (*Appendix 2-7 for full-transcribed interviews*)

(Participant names are anonymised and initials of names are used to identify their responses)

<u>Participant</u>	<u>Gender</u>	<u>Mobility Experience</u>	<u>Type of mobility</u>	<u>Place of mobility</u>	<u>Languages Spoken</u>	<u>Programme of Study</u>
<b>Interview 1 (AW)</b>	M	Y	2 <sup>nd</sup> year, term 2 for 1 semester	Amsterdam	English Mandarin	MA Sociology with Applied Quantitative Methods
<b>Interview 2 (JC)</b>	F	Y	Third Year Abroad Work Placement via British Council	Spain	English, Spanish, Italian and French	BA Spanish Studies
<b>Interview 3 (HD)</b>	F	N	n/a	n/a	English	BA History
<b>Interview 4 (EY)</b>	F	N	n/a	n/a	English Welsh	BA English
<b>Interview 5 (DS)</b>	M	N	n/a	n/a	English Welsh French	BA Acting
<b>Interview 6 (CL)</b>	F	Y	Work placement 3 months Study placement 6 months	USA  Amsterdam	English	Education Studies

***First generation***

Three participants who went abroad stated they were first generation and 2 participants who didn't go abroad stated they were first generation. Only one participant (DS, interview 5) who didn't go abroad, stated he was not first generation and that there was a long tradition of his family going to university. In the following chapter, I discuss the findings from the interview and provide some analysis of the semi-structured interviews.



## **Ethical Consideration**

The key principles of research ethics are to ensure that people should not suffer as a consequence of their involvement with a piece of research. In accord with this principle, the researcher will have a duty to consider in advance the likely consequences of participation and to take measures that safeguard the interests of those who will participate in assisting with this research project. The researcher will take every step to ensure that participants do not come to any physical harm as a result of the research nor will they suffer personal harm arising from the disclosure of information collected during this research. The researcher will treat all information disclosed during the research as confidential, and will not disclose it to other participants or people not connected with this research. There will be full anonymity of individuals participating in this research project, and the use of name initials used to report participant's feedback.

The researcher will ensure participants give informed consent prior to participation in the research (see consent form appendix 9) and will provide them with adequate information about the research project. Furthermore, the researcher will specify what kind of commitment will be required with sufficient background information about the research and how the information will be used. The researcher will make it very clear from the onset that participation is voluntary and participants can withdraw consent from the process at any point without fear.

A further ethical issue arises when undertaking action research as the researcher will be obtaining data from participants (students) from within the researchers own organization of practice. Therefore, the researcher will act with prudence in conforming to the usual standards of research ethics, permissions will be obtained before conducting the research project, confidentiality maintained and identities of the individuals participating in this research protected (including from other peers and academics).

### ***In Summary***

Action research is a self-reflective, self-critical and critical enquiry undertaken by professionals to improve the rationality and justice of their own practice (Briggs & Coleman 2007:156).

Action research is normally associated with 'hands-on', small-scale research projects such as this project. The main defining characteristics of action research are that it is practical in nature, it identifies change, it involves a cyclical process whereby research involves a feedback loop in which initial findings generate possibilities for change which are then implemented and evaluated as a prelude to further investigation and involves active participation from practitioners (co-researchers) in the research process. Initially, this research will look at micro level practices that have a positive and/or adverse effect on student outward mobility and factors that influence or hinder outward mobility. Furthermore, it will identify and highlight changes that could be implemented to have significant impact on student outward mobility in order to improve and increase outward mobility within my faculty. As noted by Denscombe (2010), the scale and the scope of changes introduced through action research will not be grand, it usually is focused on change at the micro level.

The crucial points about the cycle of enquiry in action research are that research feeds back directly into practice; and that the process is ongoing. The critical reflection of the practitioner is not only directed to the identification of 'problems' worthy of investigation with a view to improving practice, but can also involve an evaluation of changes that have been implemented. The intention of this research project for the co-researchers (participants) is to critically reflect on current practice, but crucially to identify and implement practices to improve and increase student outward mobility.

### ***Tensions and biases while conducting action research.***

Hans Skjervheim (1957 as cited in Nielsen & Nielsen 2006) developed, in philosophical terms, the ontological assumptions in action research. It is difficult for a researcher to establish neutrality or independence. As a practitioner researcher I am obliged to share the values and intentional meanings of the actor(s). In all interactive relations, I always face an element of performative commitments; therefore, if I avoid the performative dimension of reality in trying to strive for neutral observations, reality in itself becomes reified or frozen. As a researcher, I should normatively or intentionally communicate with the field against the elements of reification.

In action research, the practitioner becomes the researcher, to resolve a perceived problem and/or improve current practices; therefore, the researcher does not attempt to remain objective, but has to openly acknowledge their bias(es) to the research and other participants. Therefore, while

undertaking this research project, I was fully aware of my own biases towards student outward mobility and the tensions that existed for me as a co-researcher and a project manager/practitioner (whose performance are monitored by an institution through performance indicators). As a practitioner, I was aware the overall goal for conducting this research project was looking at how we could increase student outward mobility. While conducting the research and interviews, I was very careful, in ensuring I did not convey my biases towards the need to increase mobility and or indeed that student outward mobility was a positive phenomenon. During the interviews, my questioning and framing of the questions remained neutral. I provided the co-researchers (participants) the time, space and ability to express their own thoughts and feelings towards a mobility experience, without influence or prejudice. As co-researchers (participants), in this research their role within in the action research cycle was fundamental. The knowledge obtained during the interviews was a starting point and instrumental in designing strategies and interventions to improve student outward mobility. However, as co-researchers (participants) who were studying on undergraduate programmes at the university it was difficult to have them involved at the strategy implementation stage of the research. Implementing strategies and interventions across the faculty to improve student outward mobility would take a longer period, which due to the nature and length of this research was not feasible.

## **Chapter 4: Research findings and discussion**

### **Aims of this chapter**

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the research findings and provide some analysis of the semi-structured interviews. In order to present and analyse the data I collected through the semi-structured interviews, I have collated the interview questions into four broad themes for both groups of students.

#### ***The themes are:***

- 4.1 Perception of impact and benefits of mobility
- 4.2 Decision making factors
- 4.3 Barriers to participation
- 4.4 Other findings

#### **4.1 Perception of impact and benefits of mobility**

For participants who undertook a mobility experience during their studies, these included:

- What key skills were developed as a result of the mobility experience?
- Did the mobility experience add value to the participant?
- What were the advantages/disadvantages of a mobility experience
- Would they recommend the mobility experience (opportunity) to other students? And why?

For participants who hadn't opted to undertake a mobility experience during their studies, these included:

- Did they think a mobility experience could have 'added value' to you and/or your studies?
- What are the advantages/disadvantages of not taking part in a mobility experience?

#### **4.2. Decision making factors**

For participants who undertook a mobility experience during their studies:

- Were there any factors that influenced or hindered their mobility experience?

For participants who hadn't opted to undertake a mobility experience during their studies:

- What factors influenced their decision to not take part in a mobility experience during your studies?

### **4.3 Barriers to participation**

For participants who undertook a mobility experience during their studies:

- Did they experience any barriers before, during or after their mobility experience?

For participants who hadn't opted to undertake a mobility experience during their studies:

- In their opinion, what were the barriers (if any) for studying/working abroad?

### **4.5 Other findings**

For participants who undertook a mobility experience during their studies and those who hadn't opted to undertake a mobility experience during their studies:

- What measures/steps did they think could be taken in order to encourage non-mobile students to consider study/work abroad?
- Other key findings during the semi-structured interviews

### **4.1 Findings in relation to perception of impact and benefits of mobility**

The students surveyed in the British Council report (2015) nearly all perceived a positive link between mobility programmes of one year or less and academic, career and personal development. Developing independence and intercultural understanding were the most commonly reported realised benefits.

This was true in the interviews I conducted, both groups of participants agreed that a mobility experience was beneficial to develop skills, intercultural understanding, improve academic engagement and their future career prospects.

I have highlighted the key findings in relation to participant's perception on developing independence and personal growth, intercultural understanding, academic and future career prospects in relation to a mobility experience.

### ***Developing independence***

“Well now I’m not scared at all to travel by myself. It was the first time I’ve ever left without my parents and that was a big thing” (AW, interview 1).

“I have developed more self-confidence, you have to believe in yourself and I did believe in myself but nowhere near as much as I do now. I think seeing yourself overcome certain issues/difficulties it gives you that sense of satisfaction, thinking, “I actually can do this, I should have more faith”. So definitely self-confidence” (JC, interview 2).

...” I lived on my own so my independence is much greater” (CL, interview 6).

### ***Personal development***

“I think the skills that you acquire without even realising when you’re abroad are all transferable skills .... I think the ability to say you have moved countries, the ability to say you have done it on your own...you have worked in a foreign country, you have set up your life somewhere new ... it shows that you’re open minded...” (JC, interview 2).

“I didn’t know anybody... and then they said that they had an international student network... beforehand I wouldn’t probably have got involved with something like that. I grew in confidence as well which was good.... I started going to museums on my own, I would never usually do that” (CL, interview 6).

“Well I think personal skills because you’re communicating with people... I think taking you out of your comfort zone improves you as a person but also in general... even like improving your mind ... even if it is not directly to do with your course. I think it gives you a bigger perspective on life... It’s like real life work vs. school life isn’t it” (HD, interview 3).

In terms of personal development, there a number of studies which examine the benefits of mobility to students, drawn from data gathered from students themselves. The British Council/YouGov survey, Next Generation UK (2012) demonstrates that outward mobility supports the development of what are generally regarded as ‘soft skills’ such as intercultural competencies, self-reliance and communication.

There are two further recent studies that have addressed this. The report by Jacobone and Moro (2014), focuses on what outwardly mobile students acquire in terms of personal development compared to students who remain in their home country. Whether participation in an exchange programme enables students to acquire more, or a different quality of human capital than those who do not; and whether they consequently have potentially better prospects in both the labour market

and within the university environment. The study takes into account changes in students which took place before and after mobility and contrasts any changes with those experienced by students who had not been outwardly mobile.

Bridger (2015) states, personal development in this study was measured in terms of human capital and a student's 'sense of self-efficacy' – the student's belief in their own ability to face challenges and achieve their goals. It confirmed that 'a student mobility programme is ... a powerful tool in developing the personalities of students', identifying significant effects on personal growth for outwardly mobile students compared with those who remain at home and indicating that outwardly mobile students are more internationally connected.

The second study by Brandenburg et al (2014) was a large-scale, robust assessment of the impact of the Erasmus programme, with a focus on skills enhancement and employability. It included analysis of qualitative and quantitative data gathered from students, alumni, staff, institutions and employers across 34 participating countries in order to identify direct outcomes of mobility both in the short and the longer term. Similar to the findings identified by Jacobone and Moro (2014) 'transversal skills' increased during an Erasmus period abroad, resulting in a similar 'self-efficacy' impact. This then places these students in a better position to find their first job and enhances their career development. Both studies suggest, it is the impact of developing enhanced 'human capital' (including intercultural competency) and 'self-efficacy' that provides the potential for enhanced degree and employability outcomes.

### ***Intercultural understanding***

"This experience developed my understanding of other people and cultures. I met so many people from all over the world from different backgrounds, different cultures, and different outlooks on life, I'm a lot more understanding. I think the ability to just sit in a room and talk to anyone about anything because when you're sat in bars all over Spain that's what they do" (JC, interview 2).

"My best friend while I was there, she's from Austria and she was telling me how they hunt their own food, things like that we would never do in our culture. It was interesting to hear about other people's lives and meeting them just living in a different city and country it is... an eye-opener" (CL, interview 6).

The interviews I conducted correlate with the findings of the British Council report (2015) whereby over 90% survey respondents perceived increased independence and self-confidence, understanding and ability to engage with another culture, and development of new social networks and key positive impacts of mobility.

### ***Academic Engagement***

There are numerous reports that highlight the benefits of mobility to student academic engagement and degree classification. (King et al 2010) states the analysis data around better degree outcomes achieved by students who participated in outward mobility is problematic in that it is not sufficiently granular to take account of the numerous variables which might impact on a student's degree outcome both during and after the period of outward mobility. For example, the greater proportion of participating students are from higher socio-economic groups, or in terms of institution, attend Russell Group universities as discussed in the introduction. It may well be therefore that these students would be high achievers even without the mobility experience.

However, the British Council (2015:6) report highlighted the academic benefits of mobile students, "70% of those who had been mobile reported strong (44%) or some (25%) impact in regard to an increased commitment to their degree programme".

Furthermore, the UUKi (2017b:4)" highlighted mobile students are more likely to have obtained a first or upper second-class degree than their non-mobile peers: 80.1% of mobile students obtained a first- or upper second-class degree, compared with 73.6% of non-mobile students".

The interviews I conducted highlighted participants grew in confidence in their subject areas after their mobility experience and felt their academic abilities improved post-mobility. This could explain why mobile students obtain an improved degree outcome compared to non-mobile students.

"My Spanish came on unbelievable amounts. I understand now why the year abroad is so important. If I was to have gone from 2<sup>nd</sup> year straight into final year I wouldn't have even passed. You have to get your level of language up to a certain level and the only way to do that in my opinion is to live there. My Spanish couldn't have got any further being in England and doing grammar exercises, speaking to people as and when. Speaking to random Spanish people you meet when you're out, don't get me wrong that's a good experience and it's good to get your fluency levels up but in order to actually get your level to a fluent level you have to live there. I think it's just being immersed in it every single day, 24 hours a day for a whole year, that's what was very important and I now understand that... academically it has helped. (JC, interview 2).

"...you're given a research title and you have to write about it. I was so used to being spoon-fed at my home university. When I got there (placement university) they said "right you have a paper to write in 2 weeks" and all the Dutch students would leave and I would be there asking "well what do I write about?" and they said "well that's entirely up to you, anything we have studied, anything you find interesting" (AH, interview 1).



“...and doing on-site presentations. That added much more confidence to my presentation skills. When I did come back to 3<sup>rd</sup> year (to my home university) and I had to do presentations. It gave me a lot more ideas about how to do presentations instead of just standing up in front of a class and reading off a PowerPoint, I started to think of other ideas”. (CL, interview 6).

The findings from the interviews correlate to the British Council report (2015:8), which states, “students are more likely to perceive an academic benefit from mobility ... and many students who had been reported increased commitment to their degree programme.

This links to Dewey’s model of experiential learning (Dewey 1938) ‘problem solving’ and ‘learning by doing’ result not only in the acquisition and retention of knowledge, but also in personal development, which includes individual initiative and critical intelligence. Learning is more than assimilating; it is the development of habits, which enable the growing person to deal effectively and most intelligently with the environment. Where that environment is in rapid flux, as in modern society, the elasticity which promotes readjustment to what is new is the most necessary of habits. (Dewey cited in Warde, 1960)

It is these aptitudes – the ability to deal effectively and intelligently with one’s environment and the flexibility to adapt to change and the requirements of different environments – together with the development of transversal skills described by Brandenburg et al (2014), which provide the link between personal development and enhanced academic outcomes as a result of outward mobility. The participants/students I interviewed describe these aptitudes as ‘learning by doing’.

Bridger (2015) states from the perspective of social constructivism, understanding grows from social encounters and tackling situations, which move an individual beyond their ‘comfort zone’. In this context, outward mobility becomes relevant to academic outcomes as students begin to translate their experiences and apply them in the context of their programmes of study.

The evidence emerging from both the literature/reports and interview responses in this study indicate that the challenge of a placement abroad which takes a student out of their ‘comfort zone’ can be a transformative experience, with the potential to deepen understanding of different cultures, values, attitudes and systems of education.

### ***Future Career prospects***

In the context of outward mobility, employability is defined across a range of studies as those skills, competencies and personal attributes, which enhance graduates' attractiveness within the labour market and enable them to successfully compete for jobs in a global environment. These include the 'transversal skills' identified by Brandenburg et al (2014) encompassing curiosity, problem-solving, tolerance and confidence, and which are identified by 92% of employers as essential to employment and career development.

The British Council report (2015) states employability was the highest-rated external motivation, being ranked as very important or important by almost 90% of respondents. In my interviews, whilst most students agreed that a mobility experience would be an advantage for future employability, not all agreed this was the main purpose to undertake a mobility experience.

"I believe that they (employers) will see that you've put yourself out of your comfort zone...I mean if you are out of your comfort zone or under pressure, you have to perform. For most companies this is what they look for and I feel that if they look at you and think "oh he travelled here, on his own, he must be a bit fearless" ... because a lot of people wouldn't do that" (AH, interview 1).

"Professionally it would have been massive because that's partly what I have realised that I want to be very fluent in Welsh because my work opportunities grow massively. The pool of young male welsh speakers is a small pool, much smaller than the pool that me and many of my colleagues are in (e.g. young British male, speaking English). The work opportunities increase" (DS, interview 5).

"I never ever once sat and thought, "oh it will be good for your CV or employers". That never ever crossed my mind, I was more interested in where I was going, what am I going to do, where am I going to work, where am I going to study, am I going to the sunshine for the year, is it me? I think it's just a whole learning curve, once you go that doesn't even come into it" (JC, interview 2).

"I think that's something that the university factors in more than anything. Personally, for my course it doesn't lead you to a job... but I am not going to every lecture and seminar and thinking "Oh, I did this exercise today and that's going to help my employability skills" ... it wouldn't be my priority" (HD, interview 3).

The discourse continues to address the notion of a 'global graduate'. The report by Diamond et al (2011) focused on what employers and institutions understand to be global competency and how such

competencies can be nurtured through collaborative or individual endeavours – in other words, what it is that makes a global graduate. It identified that multinational employers, and increasingly employers of all kinds, require their workforce to operate readily and confidently internationally, using global perspectives to deal with challenges and identify new opportunities. Therefore, UK graduates, like their international counterparts, need to be able to work across national borders, manage complex international and intercultural relationships, and understand global aspects of the world of work.

In this context, many employers increasingly expect global employability skills, which take into account an international dimension. The CBI/Pearson Education and Skills survey (2014) makes it clear that graduates need to be able to operate in a global marketplace; the ability to adapt to different cultures and operate in an international context is of great importance to employers.

Jacobone and Moro (2014) suggest that self-efficacy and intercultural competency have the potential to contribute to graduates' success by equipping them to work globally, as well as influencing their career development by enabling them to understand themselves better and match their interests, skills and aspirations with employment options. In the Brandenburg et al (2014) study, 92% of employers and 80% of alumni interviewed opined that 'transversal skills' are relevant to employability.

Brandenburg et al (2014) also consider the employment situation of graduates and identify short- and medium- to long-term benefits for employability. According to Brandenburg et al (2014), in the short term, after graduation 50% fewer mobile graduates take more than a year to gain their first job compared with their non-mobile peers, and in the medium to long term, the risk of unemployment is 50% lower for mobile, compared to non-mobile, students. The study also indicates that mobile students are at an advantage as their careers progress, with 20% more Erasmus alumni holding management positions ten years after graduation than students with no mobility experience.

In concluding the findings in relation to perceptions of the impact and benefits of a mobility experience, I highlight the participants responses to the advantages of the mobility experience and if they would recommend this to others.

"Before I went... I met a girl who had just come back from her year abroad and I will never forget, she said to me "I went and I made friends for life and it was my favourite year of my whole entire life". I thought that's a bit deep but really, hands down she is so right because I did make friends for life (JC, interview 2).

“It’s brilliant really, just hearing all these different types of views and cultures. It’s really lovely, I wouldn’t understand why anyone wouldn’t want to do it. So the advantages are meeting loads of friends, becoming more confident, seeing new things, the opportunity to learn a language and becoming more independent. (AH, Interview 1).

“... that’s how we become the best people we can be and that comes from going to see different places. The benefits are enormous ...the advantages of taking part would be your understanding of the English language is improved dramatically through understanding different languages other than English. You will be more open to people around you because how great is it when you meet someone and you can both speak a different language that is not your mother tongue, I think it’s just a great feeling” (DS, Interview 5).

“Yes, 100% (I would recommend the experience abroad). Since I have come back, I have done a presentation of my time there (abroad) and why I think it’s good to do it... I also did a study abroad fair... telling (first years) about our experiences and the benefits of studying abroad”. (Interview 6, CL).

These are valuable insights into the added value of outward mobility which suggest that there is a direct correlation between mobility experience and employability. While they deal only with the impact of Erasmus mobility, it is likely that mobility to other international destinations will yield similar impacts.

## **4.2 Decision making factors**

The British Council report (2015) highlights some of the factors in decision-making about overseas mobility, based on the perceptions of those considering mobility; the most important factor were funding and finance, personal safety, destination/location of mobility, host reputation or perceived quality and language requirements.

In the interviews I conducted, these factors were prominent, in addition, parental support and influence was a factor to undertaking a mobility experience. AW (Interview 1) indicted his parents were influential in his decision to study abroad.

(AW, interview 1) “My parents were a big influence... my dad wasn’t pressuring me but he said I really should do it, it would be a great experience. I feel like not many parents do that... I think it was the lack of their mobility when they were younger because they didn’t go to university, they didn’t go

beyond high school... finished high school and went straight into work. Typical working class family, but they always pushed me to go do things... they didn't want me to miss out on opportunities they wish they could have had".

JC (Interview 2) indicted the importance of finance and funding, but also the preference of a paid work placement over a study placement was an influencing factor.

"I had a choice, I could either study abroad or work abroad... I'd say my decision was that I didn't want to go to university for another year. I thought "that's a year out, have a year out and go into the working world". I just thought... that I would learn a lot more and benefit more from being in a working environment in Spain compared to an academic environment... doing a working placement, rather than a study placement; the government gave me more money... I got just under £21000 last year overall from student finance, funding and payment from British Council" (JC, interview 2).

CL (interview 6) indicted both language and host (university) reputation were factors that influenced her decision.

"...one of the main reasons that I chose the Netherlands... I knew that they spoke English really well (not that I'm being naïve thinking they should speak to me in English because I'm English) ... I just knew that all the lessons were going to be taught in English, that's why I chose it. My decision was based on where (destination) it was and then also the course... MMU have a really close connection with the host school so that added comfort to me" (CL, interview 6).

EY (interview 4) stated the influencing factor not to take a mobility experience was due to the timing of when the mobility opportunity was discussed i.e. during the first year, when she was struggling to settle in university and felt moving abroad would mean lack of support from family.

"...timing mostly, general anxiety towards leaving, and I suppose because I was struggling to settle in Manchester in first year as it was and I knew that if I moved to another country I definitely wouldn't have my family as a support system so moving away entirely did seem very scary" (EY, interview 4).

### **4.3 Barriers to participation**

The British Council report (2015) highlighted some key barriers when considering a mobility experience. The most commonly cited barriers were personal (the fear of isolation and interruption to friendships or relationships), financial (insufficient funding), and a lack of knowledge (about mobility

opportunities, but also about funding). This was true for the students I interviewed; it was the more practical issues that concerned them. Overall, personal and financial barriers appeared to be critical to students and disruption to their course and/or living arrangements were the barriers they cited.

In addition, in the interviews I conducted, I included a question on any barriers mobile students experienced before, during and/or after their mobility experience. I present the key findings by interview below.

#### **AW (interview 1)**

AW (interview 1) stated pre-mobility barrier was the lack of support from the home university, prior to leaving and taking the mobility experience without any of your peer groups and navigating in a new country. “The one thing I did struggle with before I went was figuring out their (host university) website, how to enrol onto certain courses. I had no one in the (home) university help me with that, I had no clue how their system worked which I thought was bad. I missed out on getting onto certain courses because I didn’t know how it worked...” (AW, interview 1).

“One of the big barriers is getting over that your leaving by yourself because there was no other students from this university going... there was only me from the whole of my course going to Amsterdam and it was scary. That was one of the biggest barriers, what do I do when I get there. Even the fact that I hadn’t set up my phone correctly, so when I got there I didn’t have a phone and it wasn’t working and I didn’t know where I was. This was the main barrier, just getting to grips with where you actually are” (AW, interview 1).

#### **JC (interview 2)**

JC (interview 2) stated she experienced a language barrier despite studying Spanish at the home university.

“The language barrier was obviously a barrier... something I never anticipated. My mum couldn’t understand it, she said “but you’re doing a Spanish degree?” and I said “I can’t explain it, but they have no idea what I’m saying to them” and she said “well what are you doing in your Spanish degree!?”. ... The language barrier I over-came with time which I knew I would because living there, immersing yourself in it (the culture and language), it just has to improve there is no other way around it. I kept telling myself “give it time, be patient, it will all work out” and it did”. JC (interview 2).

### **HD (interview 3)**

HD (interview 3) hadn't opted for a mobility experience, it was clear from the interview response she didn't feel she had practical information about outbound mobility.

"The wider barriers in general are information on the things, like how you can do it (outbound mobility) and what to do but I'm sure that information is out there somewhere so maybe just putting it in a more obvious place for the students. ...practical stuff like if you're renting a place in Manchester it's already quite stressful paying bills and stuff never mind having to sort it out to go abroad for a semester. I guess lack of money, I don't know how much it costs or what the money resources would be on that front, I guess that could be an issue depending on if you have to pay or would you have to get a job out there, I don't know" HD (interview 3).

### **EY (interview 4)**

EY (interview 4) hadn't opted for a mobility experience, again it was clear from the interview response she didn't feel she had practical information about outbound mobility.

"..I suppose not having a support network anymore ... having just the general unease as you have spent pretty much all your college/sixth form life looking into universities and then to just suddenly going to a different one seems counter-productive I suppose... also all the information we had (about outbound mobility) was in one lecture. They just pointed at a map and said this is where you could go, they didn't say anything about how it would work, which system we would be following, like in America I know that the university system is much different to ours. It just didn't seem right" EY (interview 4).

### **DS (interview 5)**

DS (interview 5) stated he felt as he was doing a practical course (acting) his priority was to stay close to the industry in the home country, to get work related opportunities for acting roles during his studies.

"For me, I will be taken out of the industry that I want to be in if I went abroad... yes I could potentially make contacts... but I would be taken out of the bubble that I need to stay connected" DS (interview 5).

### CL (interview 6)

CL (interview 6) stated the barriers she faced were financial and other practical issues such as navigating in a foreign country of arrival and support with her disability.

“I think a massive barrier is expenses ... you do get the grant ... by the time I went it was reduced again because there is less funding apparently... I saved up money before hand to help with my rent when I was there. I have always had a job as well, when I was over there I did apply for jobs but no one got back to me.... Also I have dyslexia and I feel that the support may not have been as good as here and I think that is a lot to do with funding because I have to go through funding for the help and support I get here.

“...for the first couple of days I didn’t have any internet. You don’t realise how much you depend on the internet! ... So when I originally got there they set up a coach to take us to where we had to register, then it was “ok go on and find your flat now”. I didn’t have a clue how to get there, I had to ask people and someone just told me to get on a bus. I had two big suitcases and it was one of the windiest days I have ever experienced so it was so difficult. I think that in those situations you end up just having to cope instead of being dependant on the internet and things like that” CL (interview 6).

The British Council (2014) identified financial risk is a factor and a barrier to mobility, which includes the cost of living abroad and the financial implications of taking longer to complete a programme of study. In interviews, academic staff reported that it is generally the more financially secure or ‘well off’ students who readily access outward mobility opportunities. Where students rely on part-time jobs to support themselves through their studies, it is unlikely that they will give these up in favour of an outward mobility opportunity that might cost them more than a bursary will cover.

## 4.4 Other findings

As a practitioner researcher, the purpose of conducting this exploratory small-scale research project was to gain a better understanding of the factors which influence students’ choices/decisions regarding outbound mobility. I wanted to hear the narratives and experiences of students who opted/didn’t opt for a study/work abroad opportunity during their undergraduate study, with the potential of influencing how mobility experiences are promoted and encouraged among undergraduate students at MMU. Therefore, in this final section, I wanted to understand from a student perspective what **measures/steps** did the students think could be taken in order to encourage non-mobile students to consider study/work abroad.



### **AW (Interview 1)**

"I feel like during the first years and second years there was mandatory units that they have to do... they should set aside 15 minutes/ half an hour for a student to come in and talk about their experience and tell them all. I feel like they probably believe other students a lot more, like say if a young student like myself went in and explained the brilliant experience I had they would say "oh I can relate to him, he is a similar age to me, I would really like to go and do that, where can I find more information". I feel like that would help a lot because luckily I was one of the people that followed up on the instructions of my tutor, told my parents and they said I should go, wrote it in my diary and then I was there. Then I found out all the information and I knew exactly what I had to do to get onto the course. It was a shame because there wasn't that many people there at the meetings and I feel like that's probably one of the big reasons, people just don't pay attention when it's the end of the lecture they just want to get out. It should be... in the first week, where students come in, maybe have a specific day or half a day dedicated to study abroad".

"I think they could hold workshops where there might be another 4 students who have been in a similar position to me. We all come in and sit round with some other students who wish to do it, who are thinking of doing it and maybe don't..."

### **JC (interview 2)**

"...I would say just give it more awareness and promote it more throughout the whole uni. ...I think promote the fact it's possible for anybody to go, not just language students. That's the kind of stigma that, before people look into it and before they are aware that actually they can go as well, they just subconsciously know "that's for language students not for us". So I'd say do a flyer do a twitter page make it social media based, do some meetings, flyers around university just saying "year abroad not just for language students it's for everyone".

"So I've been to quite a few of their open days and loads of parents/students were stopping at that case study wall, ...it was these pictures of real people that had done that particular course and where are they now. So I think maybe have a case study wall of students that have done certain things, where they are, what they are applying to do and put it on one A4 Sheet of paper (who they are, what they're doing and what they thought of their experience). Its real people, real experiences.

### **HD (interview 3)**

"it might have been that I was particularly bad at turning when those things were being spoken about. So maybe having the information come from somewhere else, or put into the Halls, or from the

students union, well actually... I don't know, just coming from somewhere else, which might be a beneficial part of it". "Other student ambassadors coming in and chatting and sharing".

"... maybe... someone who has actually experienced doing it like a year abroad but also someone who has experienced it who also did the same degree as me".

#### **EY (interview 4)**

"... other than completely changing the system of taking you out in your second year, which I feel is quite unsettling, I guess just creating a better network of...like I just wish I could have asked someone some questions but there wasn't anyone to ask or at least I didn't think there was. Or just advertise it more, because you see it a lot thrown around on posters, it'll be like "Oh take a year abroad, travel" and that all seems great until you read the fine print, or there isn't any fine print and your just wondering abroad thinking where is my year abroad I want to go to Japan and you can't because no one is telling you and suddenly you have deadlines and suddenly you have graduated.

"...and make it a seminar not a lecture, it definitely puts you on a back foot or who you can ask. Just making it real".

#### **DS (Interview 5)**

" I think events like the Routes for Languages the other day are incredibly beneficial, I think lots of those students will really get talking now and realise that its cool! There were activities where many of them felt...you could see that throughout the day you could see that it's like "yeah this is a cool thing to do ... and so I think that's fantastic work and the more of that at that level. ... I'd say the more of those sort of activities... I think the presentation at the start was very good. Look where it's taken me, look I've met my wife through this, the opportunities are endless... maybe I'm just being judgemental but I don't remember them being incredibly encouraging or inspiring".

#### **CL (interview 6)**

"...a lot of people get sent the emails but they don't take action on it, they just think "it's not for me" then when I go and speak to people and tell people what I did they say "I wish I could have done that" and then they could have but they probably thought "I don't want to". I think especially when you see someone else's experience, rather than it just being a university lecturer saying "you can do this" but

if someone actually sees it first hand, just looking through a few photos that they may have taken and maybe telling a story about when I was there. It definably gives more of an actual interest to them of how good the experience is.

One of the key things I wanted to explore were narratives of mobile students' pre and post mobility.

Part of the semi-structured interviews sought to explore how students perceived their pre and post-mobility attitudes and experiences.

### **AW (interview 1)**

#### ***Pre Mobility***

"Personally I was a bit scared, I would be in a different country on my own, how would I do that? It was so out of my comfort zone".

"Yeah hearing their experience and stories was a big thing for me because it sounded like so much fun".

#### ***Post Mobility***

"... It was a bit different for me because I became extremely close friends with my flat mate who I literally had to share a room with (we were living in a room) maybe 20m width. We became so close we decided to travel round Europe for a bit before we went home so we did that, we travelled in a few countries in Europe and he came to England to stay with my parents and see the UK and Manchester. Then I went over to Greece to stay with his family, he lives in Rhodes down in the south. After I had been to Greece and said goodbye to him it was a very sad time. I was crying, I was really emotional. When I got home it was third year, time to work, no fun anymore!"

"... the sadness when you come home, you get this travel bug inside you where you don't want to stop going around different places".

### **JC (interview 2)**

#### ***Pre Mobility***

"... so before I went I was very nervous, I had never been to that part of Spain before, I didn't know what to expect, I didn't know where I was going to live, I didn't even know how I was going to move abroad... it was massively daunting getting off the plane".

### ***Post Mobility***

"I hated it, I didn't want to come home....I had to finish my degree ... and I knew if I didn't go home, I would never go home. So I thought "be sensible, yes it's been a wonderful year but good things must come to an end".

### **CL (interview 6)**

#### ***Pre Mobility***

"I didn't live at Uni so it was my first period being away from home for such a long period of time so I was really nervous but excited as well".

#### ***Post Mobility***

"Oh, I just want to be in Amsterdam, I miss it so much".

### **Narratives of non-mobile students**

### **HD (interview 3)**

"I did consider it but I found that, me personally, I wanted to, I would have taken up the opportunity if it had been more obvious that I could actually do it as part of my course. I think I never really kind of got to grips with the fact that I could do that, or I could go abroad that year or do a semester here, so I never really got the chance to".

"I knew you could do them and do semesters abroad but I wasn't really sure because my degree was History, I knew that a lot of people who were going abroad they. I didn't know how History would link into going abroad and like maybe someone did tell me about it once but I can't actually really remember being actually offered saying you can do this at that point".

"... maybe... someone who has actually experienced doing it like a year abroad but also someone who has experienced it who also did the same degree as me. ...Say what they got out of it and then like this is how they did it because it just makes it more obvious and like well oh, they did do my degree and then they have got this out of it. That would be really beneficial and like it's possible with mine. Because if someone else tells you from a different degree "Oh I did this year abroad" it's like yeah ok that's great but can you do that with mine".

#### **EY (interview 4)**

“I remember it came up at a really awkward time. It was in first year, I had hardly been in Manchester about a month and there was a big lecture on why you should take a year out for your second year and go to a new country. And that did appeal but I had barely settled in Manchester and it didn’t appeal to suddenly just move again and to lose any friends that you might have made on the way and then to come back third year, with no friends and you would probably have to go back in halls again which would be the worst. So that’s what put me off. I remember the deadline for the application was really soon, it was in November, so you had to decide and I was like, no I won’t do it. Which I kind of regret but also I think that my initial fears still stand because if I had gone I could be coming back now with no friends and nowhere to live”.

“ I did think about it for a while but it just seemed too soon, too sudden, just too rash”.

#### **DS (interview 5)**

“No I wasn’t aware. My course is very intense and once you’re on it you’re there all the time and there is not really an option to go onto any other course really”.

#### **Discussion**

I will summarise the findings of the research in relation to the four broad themes identified at the beginning of this chapter. These are perception of impact and benefits of a mobility experience, decision-making factors, barriers to participation and other key findings.

The students, who took part in a mobility experience, describe how taking the opportunity to study/work abroad was a big decision. They all perceived the mobility experience as a positive experience. Pre-mobility they described the feelings of being scared, lacking in self-belief, post-mobility they describe how they developed their confidence and independence. Taking part in the mobility experience took them out of their comfort zone, which developed their skills and broadened their perspectives on life and of different situations and cultures. The challenge of a mobility experience was a transformative experience that deepened their understanding of different cultures, values, attitudes and systems of education.

These personal developments are what Bridger (2015) refers to as developing human capital and a student’s ‘sense of self-efficacy’, as the students learn to face new challenges and find ways to achieve their goals in new environments. The mobility experience is a powerful tool in developing student’s personalities and perspectives.

The students discussed the positive impact of the mobility experience on their academic studies post mobility. They discussed how being immersed in a different learning environment benefited them and improved their engagement within their subject area. Brandenburg et al (2014) state, students aptitudes improve as they 'learn by doing' which provides the link between personal development and enhanced academic outcomes. In this context, the outward mobility experience is relevant to academic outcomes as the students translate their experiences and apply them in the context of their programmes of study.

In terms of employability, all the students agreed that a mobility experience would enhance their career prospects and be favourable with employers, although it wasn't the primary deciding factor to take up a mobility experience in the first instance. Furthermore, various studies have focused on the value employers and institutions place on the study abroad experience. The mobility experience develops the relevant skills and competencies of students, which are required to work in a global context and fit with the notion of 'global graduates'. A mobility experience develops the relevant skills to adapt to different cultures and operate in an international context, which is of great importance to employers, placing mobile students at an advantage in the labour market after graduating.

In terms of decision making factors when considering a mobility experience, funding, finance and host university reputation were important factors. Parental support and encouragement was also an influential contributing factor. Those students, who didn't opt for a mobility experience, found the timing of when the opportunity was discussed with them was not appropriate. The major obstacle was that the opportunity was discussed during the first few weeks of starting university. This was overwhelming for them, at a time when they were settling in to university life and the challenges that was presenting.

Both groups of students faced barriers when considering a mobility experience. One of the major barriers for those students who opted for a mobility experience was leaving their home university, alone without their peers and friends. Various reports including the British Council (2015) report highlight the fear of isolation and interruption to friendships and relationships as a barrier to participation. A further major barrier for both group of students was the lack of information about funding, finance, accommodation and relevant opportunities available to their programme of study.

The key question for this study was to hear the student narratives and understand their perspectives on outward mobility and moving forward, what practical measures/steps could be taking to encourage non-mobile students to consider a mobility experience.

From a student perspective, the timings of when the information regarding a mobility experience is provided, how this is provided, who provides this information was important. Both groups of students felt, information regarding an outward mobility experience, should be delivered by previous students from the same course, who had undertaken a mobility experience. They would be the right ambassadors to promote this opportunity, talking from a place of experience. This would open the dialog for prospective students to ask relevant questions and obtain information that would directly impact on them and their situations. The information regarding outward mobility should be provided over several weeks and in a mixture of ways, i.e. in seminars, in workshops, through events and social media channels etc. rather than at the beginning or at the end of a lecture or during an optional lecture.

In summing up this section, I want to conclude by illustrating the pre and post mobility feelings and emotions of those students who took part in mobility experience and how this experience has a significant impact on their lives. Over the years, while training students/ambassadors I would ask a similar question, how did students' feel pre and post their mobility experience. The students in this research project all describe the pre mobility emotions as feeling overwhelmed and they felt it was a daunting experience. They describe how they had never left their networks of family and friends, for a foreign experience, they feared the unknown, the isolation, the uncertainty of the mobility experience. In contrast, they all report the post mobility emotions of sadness, for leaving the friendships they establish during their experience. They described the mobility experience as one of the best times of their lives and how all good things must come to an end.

I feel as a practitioner researcher, any intervention or strategy must look at the two polar opposites of these sentiments, that students experience pre mobility and post mobility. What can I do as a practitioner to eliminate the worries and fears that students experience pre mobility and how can I showcase the best and positive experiences and narratives of students post mobility, to encourage and promote the benefits of a mobility experience to non-mobile students. In the final chapter, I will discuss the recommendations from the student perspective based on their narratives and experiences.

### ***In Summary***

Prior to collecting data and analysing data for this thesis, I undertook a literature review. The literature review (chapter 2) for this explored globalisation, global education discourses, current discourses around the knowledge economy and the production of knowledge. This followed a section on the discourses of globalisation, education, and the impact on higher education, followed by how neoliberalism is influencing higher education policy and the internationalisation agenda.

In chapter 3, I discussed the research and research findings. The themes for this research were derived from exploring the current reports available on the topic of student outward mobility, namely, the British Council and UUKi reports. Using the current reports, I identified four broad themes. 1) Perception of impact and benefits of mobility. 2) Decision making factors 3) Barriers to participation. 4) Other findings.

In order to analyse the data for each theme, firstly, I highlighted the key findings linked to each theme from the reports. Following this, I presented the findings of the interviews that I conducted. In presenting the findings, I discussed how the findings of my research linked to the findings of the reports and/or how my research findings extended to the findings of the current research and reports available. These narratives, through the lived experiences of the participants, were the nuances and key to my research project.

The first theme that I explored was the perception of impact and benefits of mobility. All the reports perceived a positive link between mobility programmes of one year or less and academic, career and personal development. From my research findings, I highlighted the key findings in relation to and through the lived experiences of the participants. I drew on the participants narratives around their perceptions on developing independence and personal growth, intercultural understanding, academic and future career prospects in relation to their mobility experience.

The second theme I explored was the decision-making factors when considering a mobility experience. The reports highlighted the most important factors were funding and finance, personal safety, destination/location of mobility, host reputation or perceived quality and language requirements. In my research findings, the participants through their lived experiences discussed why these factors were important. In addition to these factors, participants highlighted parental support and influence was a key factor, when considering and undertaking a mobility experience. This was an additional finding to the current reports.



The third theme I explored was the barriers to participation. The most commonly cited barriers were personal (the fear of isolation and interruption to friendships or relationships), financial (insufficient funding) and a lack of knowledge (about mobility opportunities and funding). The participants, through their lived experiences, highlighted and discussed these concerns while considering a mobility experience and/or during their mobility experience.

The fourth theme I explored was other key findings, when considering a mobility experience. The purpose of conducting this exploratory small-scale research project was to gain better understanding of the factors that influence students' choices regarding outward mobility. In this final section, I wanted to understand from the student perspective what measures/steps did the participants think should be taken in order to encourage non-mobile students to consider study/work abroad. The key findings were to provide timely information regarding mobility, utilising existing ambassadors who had undertaken a mobility experience as role models to promote student outward mobility.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusion**

### **Aims of this chapter**

In this chapter, I summarise the overall research project and the key findings, I conclude this chapter by identifying recommendations and tailored remedial interventions to boost undergraduate students' outward mobility within my faculty/institution.

Anchored in my professional practice as an educational manager in one of the UK post-1992 universities with a large population of 'first generation' students, this thesis explores competing narratives (students' and agencies/public bodies) concerned with the opportunities and challenges associated with outward mobility at undergraduate level in UK higher education. Building on a theoretical framework focusing on the globalisation/education/mobility relationship and based on semi-structured interviews with undergraduate students and policy document analysis, the thesis identifies the similarities as well as some of the disconnects/mismatch between the two.

### **The challenge of globalisation for higher education**

Held & McGrew (2000) indicate globalisation permeates all aspects of social, cultural and economic life. Whilst there are many different views about what globalisation is, there are a number of common themes in the discourses on globalisation. Lewin (2009) identifies three: the borderless nature of the production and marketing of goods, the declining role of the nation state as the principal site of identity construction and the speed and scope of global communications, characterised by (resources permitting) instant access to information and dialogue around the world. A feature of many of the perspectives on globalisation is that it should be seen as a complex process of transformation of economic, political and cultural social relations, which I highlighted in chapter 2 (Held & McGrew, 2000).

Giddens (1991:64) suggests the key to understanding these transformations is, the way in which "local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa". There have been major debates within the academic community on the impact of globalisation on education and the need for all aspects of learning to be more international in outlook. Whilst much of the discourse has been around the economic impact of globalisation on education, some have recognised that globalisation raises some major new challenges for education and specifically for my thesis on higher education (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010).

Some of these challenges include the instant global access to information and knowledge (Kenway & Bullen, 2008). Increased geographic mobility, contact and dialogue with people from a wide range of cultural backgrounds, the impact of events elsewhere in the world on what and how people learn in a specific locality and, above all, the myriad cultural influences leading to challenges to one's own sense of identity and belonging within a community (Ray, 2007). The student interviews conducted within this research explored some of these challenges and how an outward mobility impacted on the participants growth, sense of self and development.

### **Taking the neoliberal turn: internationalisation as higher education's response to globalisation**

Bourn (2011) indicates there is considerable evidence from around the world of universities taking a decision to re-think the role, form and content of their curriculum in relation to globalisation. In the majority of cases, this has been done in a way that is dominated by economic considerations, hence the emphasis from universities on inward mobility rather than outward mobility. Patrick (2013) argues this is because the doxa of neoliberalism remains largely intact in education policy and practice in the United Kingdom, despite the challenge at a theoretical and social level and despite a lack of empirical evidence of the economic or educational efficacy of neoliberal doctrine.

As a direct result of globalisation, universities have become more fluid and mobile institutions. From a neoliberal perspective, student inward mobility is regarded important for its revenue-generating benefits to UK HEIs and to the wider economy and most discussion focuses around this. In terms of international mobility, Altbach & Knight (2007) indicate this has tended to be a one-way traffic, with universities in North America, Europe, Japan and Australia being recipients of staff and students from poorer parts of the world. Universities' responses to the challenges of globalisation have tended to be packaged under the themes of 'internationalisation' and the development of 'international strategies'. Although outward mobility has hitherto been the poor cousin of internationalisation strategies, there is a growing appreciation of the importance of outward mobility, in recognition of the fact that UK-origin graduates with foreign experience bring greater human capital to the knowledge economy.

Bourne (2011) observes that whilst there may be a degree of consensus within higher education that internationalisation should involve equipping the university and the staff and student bodies for learning in an international and multicultural context, in practice internationalisation has been subject to highly variable interpretations. This varies from, increased resources to recruiting international students, development of offshore campuses in other parts of the world, international partnerships and cultural exchanges between both academic staff and students, Higher Education Research &

Development, promotion of initiatives that promote intercultural dialogue and use of English as the medium for study, research and publication.

As discussed above, Middlehurst (2006) suggests that international strategies have tended to be influenced primarily by economic considerations but, Caruana and Spurling (2007) note there is evidence of moves to re-think the curriculum and life of the university. These differing approaches could be summarised as a university-led approach influenced by economic and market forces and a student-led approach linked to the needs of a 'knowledge society' and the need for graduates to compete in global labour markets.

Bourne (2011) suggests the result has been to link the discourses on internationalisation to a set of pedagogical principles based around empowering students to develop as critical beings, to show the relevance of global issues to their own lives and to demonstrate the relationship between local actions and global consequences.

### **The disparities that exist within outward mobility**

Sweeney (2012) highlights the largest proportion of UK students taking Erasmus mobility opportunities are from Russell Group institutions (42%), followed by pre-1992 institutions (33%). It is in these institutions, and particularly those in the Russell Group, where language degree programmes are most common. Furthermore, students studying a language degree or degree with a language make up the highest proportion of students under taking an Erasmus placement at Russell Groups institutions, (72.4%), compared to 30.2% of students under taking an Erasmus placement at post-92 institutions, which are more likely to recruit students from widening participation backgrounds and for whom language learning at school is less accessible.

This is reflected in my practice, at Manchester Metropolitan University, only 1% of students undertook a mobility experience, which was lower than the national sector average of 7.2% of students. Students from the lowest HE participation neighbourhoods (LPNs) were underrepresented in the internationally mobile population each year, while students from the highest HE participation neighbourhoods have been overrepresented by a greater percentage. In 2017/18, 30.0% of students who had an instance of international mobility were from the highest participation neighbourhoods compared to 25.1% of the comparable total student population. The university has an ambition to increase student outward mobility from 1% to 5% by 2021<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> MMU, 2019: online <https://www2.mmu.ac.uk/internationalisation-strategy/>

## **The benefits of outward student mobility**

Higher education institutions are increasingly interested in ways to support success by enabling students to engage with extra-curricular activities whilst at university (UUKI, 2017a).

Ultimately, data on attainment, achievement and progression shows graduate outcomes are influenced by students' background. The data presented (Appendix 1) highlights that as a university MMU recruits a high proportion of students from disadvantaged backgrounds. The findings of the reports by UUKi (2017a & 2018) indicate students from disadvantaged and underrepresented groups appear to have more to gain from mobility periods, while being less likely to participate.

The British Council (2015) report highlights outward mobility gives students life-changing experiences and contributes to graduates' skills and collaborative opportunities beyond the traditional academic outcomes a university offers. The sector has made great strides in widening access, but if the students who come to university from underrepresented groups are to be served well by their institutions they must be able to engage with the full university experience. Students are being encouraged to pursue additional activities within and alongside academic study, so that they can benefit from all the sector can provide. Outward student mobility can be an important opportunity for students, and its benefits are tangible on a personal, academic and employability level.

The British Council (2015) and UUKi (2017) reports highlight the positive correlation between mobility and improved academic and employment outcomes, particularly for students from underrepresented groups; this strengthens the case for outward mobility. International opportunities should be accessible to all students, not only those who make up the largest proportion of mobile students, namely language, socio-economically advantaged and white students. The importance of the participation of under-represented groups is also recognised and championed through the UK's Strategy for Outward Mobility.

## **Interrogating the literature aimed practitioners and learning from mobile and non-mobile students.**

As the theoretical framework outlined above demonstrates, outward mobility has hitherto been the poor parent of internationalisation strategies although this is changing as its benefits are now becoming widely recognised. As discussed above, evidence suggest that outward mobility is particularly beneficial for students from disadvantaged backgrounds such as typically so called 'first generation' students who make up a large proportion of the student population in the institution where I work. Using action-research as my guiding methodological rationale, the original study undertaken in this thesis seeks to give a voice to these students (mostly 'first generation' students - both mobile and non-mobile) and explore their narratives in relation to the literature/reports

produced by official bodies and available to practitioners working in a similar capacity to mine. Semi-structured interviews carried out with students showed similarities with the reports but also discrepancies and limits. The recommendations that follow are informed by student narratives, the analysis and learning which resulted from the study.

### ***In Summary***

In this thesis, and having considered the evidence in the literature review, I take the view that the hegemonic and dominant form of globalisation ‘we’ experience is ‘globalisation from above’. This is framed by an ideology of neo-liberalism (Steger, 2013). Neoliberalism is today’s dominant global ideology within society and within higher education policies and practices.

Higher education institutions are regarded in neoliberal policy as producers of knowledge that can enhance individual and collective human capital and so positively affect economic growth and development (Torres, 2011). However, it is clear that economic factors such as income generation, take precedence over social and cultural aspects. Rizvi (2011) states, student recruitment is the new discourse in international mobility. Due to the changing nature of the knowledge economy, within which knowledge is increasingly viewed as a commodity, an emphasis upon student recruitment (inward mobility) has become an increasingly dominant feature of higher education.

Linking this to my study, due to the economic and commercial value, higher education institutions, at least in some countries, place greater emphasis on student inward mobility rather than student outward mobility. The need to recruit international students (inward mobility) for commercial and economic reasons outweighs the need to promote outward mobility. Irrespective of the findings of this study, which discuss a positive link between mobility programmes of one year or less and academic, career and personal development.

As a Higher Education institution, Manchester Metropolitan University recruits and support high numbers of students from disadvantaged backgrounds with a significant higher proportion of students from Low Participating Neighbourhoods (LNP) and students from low-income households. Over 50% of full-time Home undergraduate students are first generation. The data (see appendix 1) indicates students from disadvantaged groups obtained lower percentage of good degree outcomes and had lower prospects of highly skilled employment after graduation.

The findings of the reports by UUKi (2017a and 2018) indicate students from disadvantaged backgrounds and underrepresented groups appear to have more to gain from mobility periods, while less likely to participate.

As a practitioner researcher, conducting research in my own institution, it is clear, if the MMU would like to achieve the ambitious target of increasing outward mobility from 1% to 5% by 2021, it would need to invest a significant amount of resources into student outward mobility and not just to student inward mobility. Longer term, by investing resources in student outward mobility, this will have a huge positive impact on the outcomes and lives of the students we recruit, in terms of their degree outcomes and future career prospects.

**Recommendations for remedial interventions to boost undergraduate students' outward mobility within my faculty.**

I conclude this thesis by exploring the next phase of the project, based on the narratives and experiences of mobile and non-mobile students from the semi-structured interviews I conducted. During the interviews, students discussed ways in which the university could encourage future students to consider a mobility experience during their studies. The next phase of the project is to strategically design and implement these remedial interventions with faculty colleagues, in order to work towards the university ambition to increase student outward mobility from 1% to 5% by 2021.

The key areas the intervention should be designed around are marketing, information, logistics, support pre and post mobility. The recommendations from the student narratives were to provide timely information to highlight outward mobility opportunities and to offer effective support pre and post mobility. The students indicated the discussion around mobility opportunities; these should be tailored to their subject and course e.g. Opportunities available for a student studying acting are going to be different for a student studying history. Providing information about taking up a mobility experience should be embedded within the programme of study and not feel like an added extra. When information is provided is important. It should be provided over a period of time, it should not be at the end of a lecture. Participants advised against intense activity in the first few lectures, as this was overwhelming. This was a period in which students were settling into university life and mobility was not a priority for them.

Participants felt the university should do more in terms of a visible campaign to promote outward mobility. This should be during open days, as parents/carers were influential in the decision making process to take a mobility experience. The campaign should involve students who had been abroad to share their experiences. This was to visually articulate how students felt before and after their mobility experience. Experiences of fellow students were more relatable and more specifically students who had studied a similar subject area rather than an academic member of staff giving a lecture on mobility. Hence using the narratives of the students who had been abroad was the key for highlighting and promoting the benefits of mobility. For perspective students, listening to these pre and post

mobility narratives from fellow students was more realistic and it was an opportunity to obtain richer and more detailed information to consider a mobility experience.

In order to promote outward mobility, any remedial intervention should consider better literature to promote mobility opportunities i.e. information regarding funding and finance, types of diverse mobility opportunities (short and long term, part of the course and non-credit bearing, during term time and non-term time), information regarding host university, key contacts, accommodation, in country support during outward mobility. This information should be accessible via student hubs, the student union, available online and through course/department tutors and reps. Taking these recommendations forward, I will be working with faculty colleagues to design and implement interventions to encourage and promote student outward mobility.

### **Final Reflections**

The purpose of undertaking the research was to obtain and understand the rich detailed narratives from students who had opted and those who had not opt for a mobility experience during their undergraduate study within the faculty of Arts and Humanities at Manchester Metropolitan University.

In conducting this research project, I interviewed six participants to understand the student perspective of outward mobility before developing a strategy and intervention to improve student mobility. The interviews provided in-depth insights from the student perspective, their experiences and narratives on mobility and pointed to what was needed to improve student mobility. It highlighted and discussed the complexities that exist within which the intervention needed to be placed and identified those procedures and elements that impacted positively and/or negatively when considering a mobility experience, from a student perspective. This was a useful first step prior to designing a strategy and intervention to improve student outward mobility within my faculty and then the wider institution.

The scope of this practitioner led research project meant interviewing a small sample of students, both with a mobility and non-mobility student experience. This research project only looked at a small sample of students. This research could be further strengthened by conducting research with a larger student sample and/or triangulating the findings of this research with a broader student population by using other research methods such as questionnaires and focus groups. A further method of triangulation to strengthen the findings of this research project would be by involving the narratives from academics and their perspectives on student outward mobility. These approaches would provide further insights to strengthen the initial findings of this research study.



Another limitation factor for this research project was the time duration in which this project was undertaken. Once the research was conducted, implementing strategies and interventions across the faculty to improve student outward mobility would take a longer period. . Higher education institutions have to navigate in uncertain times with the situation unravelling as I write this conclusion. The Covid-19 situation is inevitably going to have an impact on student inward and outward mobility, with institutions devising strategies and practices to run programmes and courses within the guidance issued by the government, in due course.

It was impossible to foresee the Covid-19 and Brexit situation prior to conducting this research and the impact this would have on student outward mobility. As a practitioner led enquiry, with the current moving situation, further research would need to be conducted to evaluate the impact of Covid-19 and post Brexit before devising any faculty/institution strategies, policies and practices to improve student outward mobility, with the findings of this research being a stepping stone to further research. Any policies and practices for student outward mobility during and post Covid-19 would need to be in line with guidelines offered by governments from across the world of when it would be safe to resume student inward and outward mobility.

## **Appendix 1**

### **Manchester Metropolitan University Student Demographics**

#### ***Access***

The proportion of Manchester Metropolitan University UK full-time first degree students from Low Participation Neighbourhoods (LPNs) is significantly above the sector level data, and showed a small increase in the most recent figures, and over the last five years:

#### **% Home First degree Full-time or apprenticeship students (from OfS data set)**

	<b>2013/14</b>	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>2015/16</b>	<b>2016/17</b>	<b>2017/18</b>
Manchester Met	13.9%	14.7%	14.5%	13.7%	14%
<i>Sector level data</i>	<i>11%</i>	<i>11.4%</i>	<i>11.6%</i>	<i>11.6%</i>	<i>11.8%</i>

A high percentage of Manchester Metropolitan's students come from low-income households. The table below shows the percentage of Year 1 full-time students with household incomes assessed below certain thresholds:

<b>Full time Home UG Students with household income at or below (from HE Bursary portal)<sup>12</sup>:</b>	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>2015/16</b>	<b>2016/17</b>	<b>2017/18</b>	<b>2018/19</b>
£25,000	47%	43%	39%	38%	35%
£42,611	60%	55%	51%	50%	47%

#### ***First Generation Students***

The University recruits over 50% of our full-time Home undergraduate students are first generation (no parent or guardian with any higher education qualifications). Our first generation students are more likely to be from low participation areas than those whose parents attended university, and they are also more likely to be Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME). We also know that the graduate outcomes for First Generation students are lower than for those whose parents have HE experience.

#### ***Attainment***

Over the last five years, the proportion of those from the lowest participation areas obtaining a good degree at Manchester Met has increased, and the gap between those from the highest and lowest participation areas has narrowed slightly. However, the gap remains significant and is above the sector level gap.

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<sup>12</sup> £25k is the threshold used for Manchester Met's Student Support Package. £42,611 was previously the upper limit of household income for a student to be countable under the plan and is included for comparison.

### Good degree outcomes for Home First degree full-time or apprenticeship students

(POLAR 4 from OfS data set)

Measure	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Manchester Met (Q1)	63.7%	66.6%	66.6%	67.3%	68.5%
Manchester Met (Q5)	75.2%	76.9%	77.7%	75.6%	79.4%
Manchester Met gap (Q5-Q1)	11.5%	10.3%	11.1%	8.3%	10.9%
<i>Sector level gap</i>	<i>10%</i>	<i>10.4%</i>	<i>9.6%</i>	<i>10.4%</i>	<i>9.4%</i>

Analysis of degree attainment shows a larger gap between quintiles 1 and 5, and in contrast to the above this has grown over recent years

### Good degree outcomes for Home First degree full-time or apprenticeship students

(English IMD from OfS data set)

Measure	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Manchester Met (Q1)	60.7%	63%	57.6%	62.2%	63.7%
Manchester Met (Q5)	75.9%	77.4%	79.1%	79.7%	81.1%
Manchester Met gap (Q5-Q1)	15.2%	14.4%	21.5%	17.5%	17.4%
<i>Sector level gap</i>	<i>18%</i>	<i>19.1%</i>	<i>19.1%</i>	<i>18.4%</i>	<i>18.1%</i>

### Progression

Over the last five years, there has been a steady improvement in graduate outcomes for respondents from all quintiles, although the University remains significantly below sector on this measure and the most recent year saw a drop in results for those from POLAR 4 quintile 1:

### Progression rate for Home First degree full time or apprenticeship

(Highly skilled employment or further study at a higher level – POLAR 4 from OfS data set)

Measure	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Manchester Met (Q1)	56.4%	52.8%	60.2%	64.1%	60.4%
Manchester Met (Q5)	58.8%	62.4%	64.5%	70.8%	71.5%
Manchester Met gap (Q5-Q1)	2.4%	9.6%	4.3%	6.7%	11.1%
<i>Sector level gap</i>	<i>7.7%</i>	<i>7.8%</i>	<i>7.1%</i>	<i>5.1%</i>	<i>4.6%</i>

## **Appendix 2**

### **Interview 1**

**Name:** AW

**Course:** Sociology with Applied Quantitative Methods, Masters Degree

**Profile:** Went abroad to study in Amsterdam

**Age:** 22

**Gender:** Male

**Languages Spoken:** English, Basic Mandarin

YS: Hi, Please tell me about yourself and introduce yourself

P: My name is AW, I study at Manchester Metropolitan University. I study Applied Quantitative Methods master's degree and I studied in Amsterdam in the Netherlands for the second semester of my second year at university.

YS: So please tell me about your work/study abroad experience. So where you went, how you felt prior to leaving, how was your experience, how you felt on your return? Where you lived, who did you go abroad with, what motivated you to and who did you interact with whilst you were there?

P: Right so, I studied at the University of Amsterdam I wasn't originally going to go there, I was originally going to go to America. Instead of the ERASMUS I applied for the overseas which was over to North Carolina university but I got a message back saying we're not accepting students this year from the UK, so I thought that was my opportunity gone but then Benedict called me up and she said "Hi Angus I'm sorry to hear about what happened, you didn't get accepted into the American university but would you like to go to Amsterdam on ERASMUS for 6 months" (so second semester of university) and I was like, "yeah of course I want to go," so I did that!

When I got there I lived on a big road on the outskirts of Amsterdam called [Dutch street name] and I was in a shared apartment with a Greek boy but I arrived there first and I was very scared because I was in a shared apartment and I didn't know what it was going to be like but it was amazing and we ended up being best of friends.

YH: Can I pick on one question there, how did you feel before you actually went abroad? How did it feel before you went and what motivated you? What I'm trying to get at is what was the driver behind you wanting to go, because not a lot of student want to go.

P: A lot of it was my parents, I never knew ERASMUS even existed until I came to university and my dad has looked at it previous to me starting university and he said "come look at this, in your second year you're going to have the opportunity to possibly study in a different country". Personally I was a bit scared, I would be in a different country on my own, how would I do that? It was so out of my comfort zone but my dad said "OK go to the meetings, make sure you go see the meetings". When I went to the meetings in the lecture halls there was people explaining their experience and it just became more and more attractive to me. I decided to apply for America, America is always a place I have wanted to go. Anyway, that didn't end up happening so I changed to Amsterdam which I was open to, I thought that would have been brilliant. Before it I was sceptical about it all but it was my parents and attending these meetings (seeing what other people's experience was like) and that made me really want to go and do it.

YS: So hearing other students experience?

P: Yeah hearing their experience and stories was a big thing for me because it sounded like so much fun.

YH: Can I ask the question; why America? I know you said initially you wanted to go to America. Is there a reason? Culturally did you feel more aligned?

P:Yeh I think simply that was it. They speak English. It would have been a lot more comfortable for me. Very similar cultures to the UK. But that wouldn't have been as good as going to a completely different country and seeing a completely different culture. I mean the Dutch speak very good English and are very similar to us in many ways but it's a lot more of a different culture than America I believe. And you can drink, you don't have to be 21.

YH: How did you feel after you came back?

P: I was very sad, even when I was there, we were saying... Because what had happened was we had a group, it was called the international society (ICN, INC something like that) and we all became members of that as soon as we arrived. So as soon as we arrived I was picked up from the airport by the university and taken to a big part of the campus where we would sort our bank accounts, you know all the things that generally you would feel very nervous about. Bank accounts, accommodation. Keys were there waiting for us after we had done everything online and we were encouraged to join this society where all the international students from all the other countries would meet up once or twice a week and have activities, all this kind of thing. We had this thing in there where everyone who had previously been (because it was run by students that had previously worked abroad) and they said "You're going to get ERASMUS blues" they said it was an actual thing, ERASMUS blues depression. It was a bit different for me because I became extremely close friends with my flat mate who I literally had to share a room with (we were living in a room) maybe 20m width. We became so close we decided to travel round Europe for a bit before we went home so we did that, we travelled in a few countries in Europe and he came to England to stay with my parents and see the UK and Manchester. Then I went over to Greece to stay with his family, he lives in Rhodes down in the south. After I had been to Greece and said goodbye to him it was a very sad time. I was crying, I was really emotional. When I got home it was third year, time to work, no fun anymore!

YH: That's really good to hear actually. Did you make lots of friends there, obviously you've talked about the society.

P: Yeah that was the main place I made friends. One thing I do regret is not making more friends with actual Dutch people because what happened was, when you're in this society everyone is from Spain or America, Poland, Norway, all over but no Dutch people come to the International Society because they're not international students. The only Dutch people we really interacted with were in classes and also the people that were running the society. That's one thing I regret, not becoming closer friends with more Dutch people. There was a girl I was living with, for the first half of my second year I had to live in Manchester, and there was a girl I was living with who had come from Amsterdam to the UK so I got to know her and went and met up with her, it was a really lovely experience.

YH: Do you think your mobility experience added value to you and your studies and if so how?

P: Yeah I think it really did. It made me so much more confident because the Dutch are very strong on presentation. They have weekly presentations where everyone does a reading and we all present a little section of the reading and what we felt about it. I feel that in the UK we don't do that enough. To me that is a very transferable skill to the workplace. I feel like English students get really nervous

in presentations and showing their work or saying what they think of something/stating their opinion. You don't get it as often. Over there everyone was so eager to have their point/argument put across. My presentation skills got 10x better and the workload is way more than here in the UK because I had experienced this 6 months of great happy times but it was very pressurised environment. I had a lot of work to do from the university. It was very good for me because the workload was doubled. I had in 6 months the same amount of work that we did in the whole of the second year.

YH: So that was accredited from the university in Amsterdam?

P: I had to choose, over there they are not set. So you have the faculty of humanities and you can just go and pick whichever courses that you want to do. So I picked one in a Psychology unit that looked into the build of morality in children and then I chose a sociology unit and then I chose a globalisation unit, apart from just Sociology I learnt bits from other areas of humanities. It opened my mind to how big humanities is, it's not just this specific thing which was really nice.

YH: Brilliant. So you talked about the experience adding value to you, you talked about confidence. What other things in other areas in terms of personally.

P: Well now, I'm not scared at all to travel by myself. It was the first time I've ever left without my parents and that was a big thing. I was really scared I was afraid. I was at the airport saying to my mum like a little baby "I don't want to go mum I'm scared" but I mean I got there, got to the apartment and thought what do I do? I don't know where I am, I have no WIFI! It's just getting over that and allowing myself to know that I can get through that is a big thing for me. So now, my girlfriend lives over in Asia and I have to travel there on my own and get to her apartment and that I believe was a lot easier for me because I have had that opportunity to travel abroad as part of my second year. I feel like I became a lot more independent and I don't mind living in the same room as someone.

YH: We never do that here

P: No we never do that here, it's more of an American thing. English put ourselves in a bubble, we live in flats of four and sometimes you may never talk to any of the other people because you can just lock yourself away. Whereas when you're in a room you're forced to talk which is good, because you're forced to make friends.

YH: You've also talked about how the experience has added value to your studies because you've said it helped you, the workload was much more intensive. What was expected of you was much more so when you came back it seemed easier in comparison

P: I feel like here in the UK we are babied throughout 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> years, you're given a research title and you have to write about it. I was so used to being spoon-fed. When I got there they said "right you have a paper to write in 2 weeks" and all the Dutch students would leave and I would be there asking "well what do I write about?" and they said "well that's entirely up to you, anything we have studied, anything you find interesting". For me that was difficult, I have never had to do that before. So the fact that I had to change the way I was doing things academically I was going and picking a topic which I found interesting, so for example I wrote about women's rights in Indonesia. I watched a video on YouTube, found it interesting and I said right I'm going to write about that. The teacher said "that was a brilliant essay, I really enjoyed it", I just loved that part of it and obviously the preparation for giving presentations was a big thing. I feel I became a lot more charismatic to groups of people which was nice.

YH: I find that point very interesting. So when you're here, you're given a framework or a criteria to work from and then not having that same framework can be a bit disorientating, you just think "where do I start?!"

P: Yeah exactly and that's where I was, but then when you do it you realise that you're really passionate about what you're writing about and you produce a much better piece of work because you have been given the choice and the teacher trusts you to write about something you like. Obviously, it has to be something linked to the course but it's something that, whatever specific subject area you felt was the best to you. I liked that, I also liked that (I mean you do have it here to a certain extent where you can choose what courses you want to do) but there are no mandatory courses. You choose courses in your field. I feel that's a lot better, but I did struggle. The one thing I did struggle with before I went was figuring out their website, how to enrol onto certain courses. I had no one in the university help me with that, I had no clue how their system worked which I thought was bad. I think that we should have a co-ordinator. Benedict should have known what the system is and how to choose options. I missed out on getting onto certain courses because I didn't know how it worked, luckily I was living with this Dutch girl who had come from Amsterdam (she had come from the same university I went to) so I said "how do I do this?" and she said "ok don't worry about it, it's very simple" so luckily she showed me how to do it but I couldn't find anywhere to find out how to do it.

YH: So the lack of information from here. Thank you for that, so that links to the next point, did you experience any barriers before, during or after your mobility experience? What kind of barriers did you face, before you went and whilst you were there. You've kind of touched on them anyway.

P: One of the big barriers is getting over that your leaving by yourself because there was no other students from this university going I don't think

YH: So no other students from your course?

P: No, there was only me from the whole of my course going to Amsterdam and it was scary. That was one of the biggest barriers, what do I do when I get there. Even the fact that I hadn't set up my phone correctly, so when I got there I didn't have a phone and it wasn't working and I didn't know where I was. This was the main barrier, just getting to grips with where you actually are. I did think the language would have been a barrier but it wasn't because they all speak very perfect English.

YH: Did you pick up any of the language whilst you were there?

P: No, it's a bad thing because I was saying, "I want to learn a bit of Dutch," and they said "It's pointless, don't bother we all speak English" which makes you rely on speaking English.

YH: Were they testing their English, practicing their English, or was that not the case?

P: Some were, a lot of them are very high level English but there are some who would ask about the grammar. It was nice to help, and they would teach me some funny words in Dutch (that kind of thing). They did offer Dutch classes if you wanted to, you could pay to do classes but I didn't do it.

YH: And any barriers whilst you were there?

P: When I arrived everyone was so confident in the class, one of the barriers was being able to open up and be myself. I was a bit shelled in, I didn't speak that much, I just listened to all these guys and girls tell their thoughts and feelings. It was only probably a quarter of the way into a lot of my courses where I was confidently stating my opinion.

YH: That's really good to hear. Again, we have talked about this in the first point but were there any factors (or what were the factors) that influenced your mobility experience. I think you've talked about your father.

P: Yeah, parents. My parents were a big influence and my dad wasn't pressuring me but he said I really should do it, it would be a great experience. I feel like not many parents do that.

YH: Why do you think your parents were different? Were they well-travelled?

P: No that's the thing, only recently have they started traveling a lot more since they are heading into retirement stages. I think it was the lack of their mobility when they were younger because they didn't go to university, they didn't go beyond high school they finished high school and went straight into work. Typical working class family, but they always pushed me to go do things they didn't get to do because they don't want me to miss out on opportunities they wish they could have had. My dad would say "I wish I could have done that" and I might go to my Dad and say "but I'm too nervous" and he says "stop being nervous I wish I could have done that when I was younger".

YH: So you're first generation going to university in your family?

P: Yeah I'm the only person in my family to get a degree.

YH: Brilliant, so are you the eldest?

P: Yeah I'm the eldest sibling, I have an older brother who didn't go to university.

YH: Angus, I am delighted, so not only are you first generation, you're the only one in your family to come to university and not only that, your parents encouraged you to go abroad as well. That's brilliant, honestly that's quite rare.

P: Yeah that's quite rare. The village I live in is quiet, you know there's a lot of narrow mindedness and I think it's just because they are sheltered from other things in life and coming to a city you meet all kinds of people and they don't have that. It's lucky that for some reason my parents have that, I don't know why.

YH: That's really really great. What are the advantages or disadvantages of a mobility experience?

P: I think the advantages are you meet a tonne of people, you have connections and friends from all over the world. Now I know I can go to America, I can go to the middle East, I can go to Russia, Japan, China, I can go to Greece, I have friends in most of the main countries in the world where I know that I know someone on a personal level and I know that I could meet with that person and get information off that person at any point. Its brilliant really, just hearing all these different types of views and cultures. It's really lovely, I wouldn't understand why anyone wouldn't want to do it. So they are the advantages, meeting loads of friends, becoming more confident, seeing new things, the opportunity to learn a language, more independent.

I would say the disadvantages are, I can't think of any! I would just say the sadness when you come home, you get this travel bug inside you where you don't want to stop going around different places.

YH: We have kind of covered the next one as well but again, just for the interview purpose, what are the key skills that you have developed as a result of your mobility. So again, you have said independence, confidence...

P: ...presentation skills, speaking more academic here aren't I?



YH: That's ok because again it would be good for me to look at the literature that keeps going on about employability. Do you feel that it links to that?

P: Yeah, and I suppose that if you do go into a workplace where there's people from different countries or cultures. I know that I've probably at least had a conversation with someone about their culture, then you have an immediate connection, you have something in common with that person because you can say "Oh I've spoken to someone, I used to have a friend that was from there, in your culture this is what happens etc."

YH: Can I ask a question; Do you feel like (employability wise) that this experience (from an employers point of view), do you think it will make you more employable?

P: I believe so, yeah. I believe that they will see that you've put yourself out of your comfort zone. I mean many companies like you to be... I mean if you're out of your comfort zone or under pressure you have to perform. For most companies this is what they look for and I feel that if they look at you and think, "oh he travelled here, on his own, he must be a bit fearless," because a lot of people wouldn't do that. It's definitely relevant for me because I am applying to and want to move to Asia to be with my partner and I feel like they will see this and think "oh he has already travelled, he won't have an issue coming here or working here because he has been and studied abroad". I think they would think like that.

YH: Would you recommend the mobility experience to other students?

P: Definitely, I think we know this already. I would tell everyone who has the opportunity to come and do it. Even if you are not a language student you should definitely go and do it because I learnt so much about (I didn't study languages I did Humanities) but you learn so much about your subject and how another country teaches that subject, what the professors think, their mind frame and the way they do classes is different to English classes. It's brilliant, definitely people should go and do it.

YH: It's just brilliant hearing from you. So this question is looking at those students who don't go abroad and most of your cohort didn't as you said you were the only one. What measures/steps can be taken to encourage, what can the university do, how can we encourage more people?

P: Well, what happened here is that we had maybe at the end of a lecture Benedict would flick up a slide saying "there's a meeting about ERASMUS and overseas exchange on this certain day go if you want to go". A lot of people forget about that, "what did Benedict say, where did she say to go?" and they just won't bother emailing her asking. I feel like during the first years and second years there was mandatory units that they have to do, the lectures they have to go to. They should set aside 15 minutes/ half an hour for a student to come in and talk about their experience and tell them all. I feel like they probably believe other students a lot more, like say if a young student like myself went in and explained the brilliant experience I had they would say "oh I can relate to him, he is a similar age to me, I would really like to go and do that, where can I find more information". I feel like that would help a lot because luckily I was one of the people that followed up on the instructions of Benedict, told my parents and they said I should go, wrote it in my diary and then I was there. Then I found out all the information and I knew exactly what I had to do to get onto the course. It was a shame because there wasn't that many people there at the meetings and I feel like that's probably one of the big reasons, people just don't pay attention when it's the end of the lecture they just want to get out. It should be...

YH: A core part of the lecture? Or feature somewhere quite highly?

P: Yeah or in the first week, where students come in, maybe have a specific day or half a day dedicated to study abroad.

YH: Do you think that the university does a lot, because obviously your experience was linked to your course, do you think that the university, the faculty or your department does enough to encourage shorter mobility, which isn't necessarily linked to the course. So for example if there was a short summer placement (for example 4 or 6 weeks going as part of another project or volunteering).

P: They have a lot of events here don't they in the Atrium. I think many people engage with that, I believe that is good.

YH: Would you have taken something like that if you hadn't done [the study abroad programme]

P: I think if I hadn't done this I would have definitely gone for one of those, if I didn't have the opportunity to do it in my course I would have chosen to do it in my holidays/spare time. But luckily I got to do that, get paid to do it (ERASMUS pay you to go there).

YH: And you did your degree in 3 years so it didn't add on, it wasn't longer. Like with languages students they have to do an extra year

P: No it was all part of it, I got all my credits for this semester and I got all my credits for the next semester I just had to discuss, because they have a different kind of system over there so I had to discuss with Benedict how many courses I had to do for it to add up (in order to go on to 3<sup>rd</sup> year). So it was just a matter of emailing back and forth with Benedict, giving her the catalogue to look at the courses when I was there. It was a "do this, this and this one because they add up to a certain amount of points" kind of thing.

YH: Brilliant, so any other things? You have talked about a key point there in terms of having that information more available to students. Is there anything else? How about someone like yourself, who has been abroad, how can the university utilise your experience for example?

P: That's true, I think they could hold workshops where there might be another 4 students who have been in a similar position to me. We all come in and sit round with some other students who wish to do it, who are thinking of doing it and maybe don't...

YH: I mean the way I see it, because the possible research question is about narratives and experiences, I find it a great shame that you have all this knowledge and experience that you could share, whether that was a little short biography or as you said a workshop or an event. How can we share your narrative, what platform can we use. I mean what kind of platform? You have done it, it's brilliant. In terms of our responsibilities, how can we get you to share that more?

P: Yeah we need to think of ways.

YH: I'm sure if more people heard you they would be encouraged.

P: Yeah I think so too. I have encouraged, well I have tried to at least because I was doing some teaching assistant work with one of the other PhD students teaching first years and I was telling them, about my experience and they all think "yeah I really want to be involved in that, sounds cool"

YH: Yeah as you can see I am really passionate. The last question is; would you have opted to work or study abroad if it wasn't mandatory as part of the course but I know the answer to that because it wasn't mandatory and you did.

P: It was a very stressful process, all the paper work I had to fill out. In a way you might think it's not worth all this hassle, I can't be bothered. That will be the mind frame of a lot of people but you just have to get on with it and you get this brilliant experience. For a couple of hours writing paper work it's not that bad.

YH: Thank you so much, that concludes the last question. Is there anything that you would like to add on? Anything else that comes to mind?

P: When I finished my ERASMUS, ERASMUS get in touch with you and you become a candidate for talks around the UK. So there's hundreds of people, obviously ERASMUS students, and you get chosen randomly I believe. There's a Facebook group and they put "there's a talk in, or there's a workshop in Stoke/Huddersfield/Leeds, who wants to come and be involved in that?". You can just send them a message and they choose you and you can go and do that.

YH: Brilliant, so you are part of this wider network?

P: Yeah, I don't know if they are in universities as I have not been to one yet so I am not entirely sure.

YH: I certainly think, closer to home, that your course tutor could have said "ok so this if your experience" and get you to...or whilst you were away maybe get you to write a blog. Just something like that

P: Yeah maybe I could make some videos

YH: Yeah exactly, those kind of things and I think the university could do that more. To have you make those narratives more visible, so you could have the screens, or international mobility week or something like that. Like a fair where students can do and find out information. Brilliant, I'm going to switch this off now.

### **Appendix 3**

#### **Interview 2**

**Name:** JC

**Course:** BA Spanish Studies

**Profile:** Worked for a year in Spain (British Council)

**Age:** 21

**Gender:** Female

**Languages Spoken:** English, Spanish, Italian (basic) and French (basic)

YH: Hi Jessie please introduce yourself

P: Hi my name is JC and I am a final year student studying at Manchester Metropolitan University I have just completed my BA in Spanish Studies. I am originally from Birmingham but I moved to Manchester for University.

YH: Please tell me about your work or study abroad experience, so for example where you went, how you felt before you went, how was your experience?

P: As part of my degree its compulsory to do a work or study placement abroad, it's called a third year abroad so I applied to work for the British Council and had to go through the assessment process and got accepted. I was placed in the south of Spain in a place called El Maria in Andalusia and I worked in two schools, one secondary school and one primary school and I was employed for 12 hours a week by the British council. You only find out where you go a month before you're due to fly out so before I went I was very nervous, I had never been to that part of Spain before, I didn't know what to expect, I didn't know where I was going to live, I didn't even know how I was going to move abroad. I found out where the majority of my friends where going and the majority were going to universities so they were instantly added into a Facebook/social media group with people they knew they were going to be meeting and on their course. I had none of that. I didn't really know anyone, the nearest person to me was 3 hours away so that was daunting. All of that changed once I actually got there. I flew from Gatwick, so it's the process of going into a new and big airport and it's just me and 2 suitcases, nobody else. But it was good, very daunting, a bit scary but I think I was more excited than anything. Then once I had gotten there the realisation kicked in of, "ok you're here, now you need to find somewhere to live, you need to look at where you are going to be living for the next year of your life. I made it as stepping stones, so do one thing at a time because it was massively daunting getting off the plane and I couldn't make myself understood and they couldn't understand me.

YH: Despite speaking Spanish?

P: Yeah I've done Spanish since I was 9 years old so I had a good level of Spanish. But it's very different. Learning Spanish at universities is very proper, you learn your grammar and syntax, nobody teaches you Andalusian slang Spanish. Their accent is very different, the dialect is so different and it was really difficult just to have a really simple conversation. Which I struggled with massively for the first few weeks, they kept saying "you speak really posh Spanish". I thought "wow how am I supposed to communicate, how am I going to find somewhere to live if they can't even understand me". Because of where I was placed (I was in a tiny fishing village) so there was no English, that was interesting. It was bit by bit, I booked into a hotel for the first 5 days and then the first stepping stone was to find somewhere to live. That was a lot harder than anticipated because I had to organise viewings and the viewings weren't very nice, I had to then go for a different part of town. Originally I was going to live in the city centre, Val Maria, not in the town I would also where my schools where. That's like a 20

minute drive, literally around a mountain and I thought ok there's a university there, there will be students it will be quite vibrant, live in the city centre but after viewing the flats I thought I can't live here and after seeing how unreliable the transport was going around the mountain I thought I will be late to work every day because the busses don't even turn up. The first time I got on the bus the man stopped as it was siesta time and said "you have to get off now" and I was literally on the side of a mountain in 38 degree heat while he was going for his lunch and I had to walk round the side of the mountain. It was not idea. So that's why I decided it would be a better option if I lived in the town where the schools were so I could walk to school. Then I got a flat with a lovely landlord, who was a university lecturer and his daughter was on her year abroad in England so we had a bit of a connection which was good. I enjoyed it, I loved it. I lived on my own so it was me in a flat right on the beach with 2 bedrooms and it was just me.

YH: So you've mentioned the socialising (so there were no students who went from the university) so how did you make friends?

P: I flew out on the 31<sup>st</sup> August so I was quite early to fly out, I didn't start work until October but I deliberately did that knowing I needed to find somewhere to live, settle in, make friends or at least try to make friends and try and immerse myself in the whole situation. So the week before I arrived I found a Facebook group from the previous year 'Anne Maria ERASMUS' and I thought there must be one for this year. I eventually found it and I wrote a post saying "I am going on this day, I am at these schools, is anybody else going, is anyone else aware of this, are they around the area". I had about three responses, all of the people weren't flying out until September and the latest November so I had a good month and I'm thinking ok, I need to do something. So what I did, there was this tiny little beach hut and I thought if I go there every day (I went there for breakfast the first day I arrived, I didn't have a clue what they said to me). The horrible thing was, on the menu I could understand everything, I could read it, I could pronounce it but they had no idea what I was saying to them. I thought how is my Spanish so different to what they are saying to me?! So my aim was to, in that month, understand what they are saying to me. So my mission was every single day, I went to the same beach bar, I spoke to the same men who owned it and day by day I could see the progress. He was really trying to make the effort, knowing I had a good level of Spanish but it was just too posh for where I was. So he invested a lot of time in me and was trying to get me drunk most nights. One night he ordered a big crate of Whiskey and he couldn't translate the back of it so he rang me and asked me to come and help him. He wanted me to sit and translate the back of the bottle of Whiskey. So that was how we bonded, every day I understood more and he understood more. Then come a month in, I ended up meeting the head teacher of the school at this beach hut before I even started school. Which I now know later on that he rang the school (it was his brother) and said "I've got your employee at the beach hut, come down and meet her she's a nice girl". So it was a very small, tight knit community which was wonderful. Everyone was so friendly and within the first week I had made 2 Spanish friends, Huan being one of them (who owns the bar). I had no WIFI and he kept saying (by now I had the flat, literally a 2 minute walk from there) "whenever you want to come, just come and use the Wi-Fi, here's the password". So I could FaceTime my mum and my family, try to organise viewings, try to go on the Facebook group. So that was good, it was reassuring to know that there was someone there.

YH: So how did you feel when you had to return?

P: I hated it, I didn't want to come home. The school knew I wanted to go into teaching and after 2 weeks you were meant to just do certain activities with classes you were given on your timetable but they asked me if I would take over their equivalent of GCSE group. I thought it was a really good experience, I could say I had been in charge of a group of students that size. So I said "OK it's a bit of a challenge but I'll try". I loved it. They then asked me if I wanted to train, they had the equivalent of

a teacher training school within their trust of schools. Very very different to what they do in England but it was their equivalent. They said “if you don’t want to go home and if you want to train to teach in Spain, we are willing to fund you” so they offered me the job, they said “if you stay we’ll do this”. The one thing that held me back, because if I accepted that offer would only be trained to teach in that region of Spain, in that city of Spain and you can’t move anywhere with it. The qualification you get you have to redo every year. It’s very backwards, it’s very Spanish. I thought “that’s not idea, I don’t want to have a job where it’s not confirmed for the next year”. Whereas you do your teacher training in England and you’re qualified all over the world, you don’t have to re-sit exams, that’s for your own personal development if you want to do that, it’s not compulsory. Obviously, I had to finish my degree anyway and I knew if I didn’t go home, I would never go home. So I thought “be sensible, yes it’s been a wonderful year but good things must come to an end.” I was out there for the whole year, I came back for my younger brothers prom then I flew back out. I stayed for my 21<sup>st</sup> birthday and all my friends flew over to me so that was good. So, I was there just over a year and then it was back to final year of university which was a bit of a shock.

YH: In what way?

P: It was just that with the Spanish lifestyle (and I think it’s a bit of a problem out there) there’s no hurry, no stress. Here you must have a list, you must go to work and you must do this. It was so chilled in Spain, do what you want to do when you want to do it and it will get done but you just don’t know when.

YH: Was that a problem for you, in terms of your own expectations? Or did you immerse into that really quickly? Did you pick up that and think “oh that’s great” or was it “why are they really calm about things”?

P: It was a bit of a shock to begin with, you had to get your head around it because their way of thinking is so different to an English mind-set and that was quite hard to understand, at first I remember I was in the bank one day and I was trying to pay my rent and I knew siesta was a thing but I didn’t realise how much of a thing it actually was. In the little town where I was, in the south of Spain, everything closed. It’s not just about going home and resting, it’s about family time. Every single family sits around their table and had their meal. I was lucky enough to be invited to my teachers, every single Wednesday I would go to theirs for lunch. I used to tutor their kids English privately on the side, which was so nice to see and experience the real Spanish siesta life. That was what opened my eyes to it. She had a daughter that was a year older than me, another daughter that was a year younger and two sons, one was 14 one was 3 and another son who was 6. I tutored the 6 year old and the 14 year old. Now if you think about an English family at home, my brother will sit there on his phone and my mum works shift work so it’s very rare we will actually sit around a table, when we do its nothing like the Spanish. It’s their natural reactions, like the youngest will just start laying the table which is very normal. They still have their arguments and bicker but that’s just their normal Spanish family thing, very family orientated, very aware that its family time. It was just lovely to see. That was good. Getting used to the whole ‘laid-backness’ was hard.

Anyway, when I went to pay the rent (sorry I got lost off topic) it was about quarter to 2 and there was about 15 people in front of me and 2 people behind the desk at the bank and they said, “sorry, we are closing now,” regardless of who is in the queue, who isn’t in the queue, come back tomorrow. I thought “I need to pay my rent!” and they said “don’t worry about it come tomorrow” and that’s their whole outlook, just don’t worry about it you don’t have to pay it now as long as you pay tomorrow it’s ok. That was difficult to get used to but I’m quite a laid back person anyway so once I got into the swing of things and I had to stop thinking. It’s the typical thing of an English person to be on time,

Spaniards are never on time, never. That was, I don't think frustrating is the right word, it was very strange. You're sat there waiting for a meeting at 10.30 and they rock up at 11.30. That's just their way of doing it, they're not being rude they're not doing anything different that's just an overview of that time. They will be there around that time but not bang on that time. As an English person, you're there 5 minutes before and that was quite hard to get used to but I'd say 2 months in I loved it. That made it harder to come back to England because your back to the rush, the hustle and bustle and you've got to go there at that time, do this, in Spain there was none of that.

YH: So readjusting to do your final year where you had deadlines.

P: Exactly. I had work as well, going from 12 hours a week in Spain and having 4 day weekends every single week for a year, doing what you want to do and having enough money because the funding that you got for only the 12 hours was enough. You can travel; I went somewhere new every single weekend. So having that freedom with that little time actually at work, coming back to having to work properly in Manchester. Having to actually go to university, lectures and seminars and do your deadlines, revision and exams, trying to fit everything in I thought "how on Earth do people do this, how did I do this before I went to Spain?" My whole mind-set and body clock was in Spanish style and I had to change that very quickly.

YH: So linking exactly to what you have been describing there, do you think that your mobility experience has added value first of all to you and your studies.

P: 100% yes. Before I went on my own experience at Manchester Met, I met a girl who had just come back from her year abroad and I will never forget, she said to me "I went and I made friends for life and it was my favourite year of my whole entire life". I thought that's a bit deep but really, hands down, she is so right because I did make friends for life. You had to think differently, I was put in a position I had never been put in before and you have to overcome it, there is nobody else there to help you out. When you're thrown in at the deep end you have to sort yourself out quickly and you have to keep swimming because if you don't you're just going to sink. That's what I found out quite quickly in Spain. There were so many things I had to sort out and overcome and I had to do it on my own. There was nobody else there to help me or to guide me or even to give any kind of assistance. It was "off you go, you need to sort it out now". I'd say that is a massive skill, it's a skill that not many people have and I think it gave me a bit more self-confidence to believe I actually can do this. I genuinely got there and thought I can't do it but a year on it's done and it's finished, I overcame it. I think the skills that you acquire without even realising when your abroad are all transferable skills that employers want and need. I think the ability to say you have moved countries, the ability to say you have done it on your own. The ability to say you have worked in a foreign country, you have set up your life somewhere new. I think that's a massive skill that employers would want to see, it shows that your open minded, it's a new culture, its new people. It's not just you're in England, you've worked in England, you've got all your 2:1's and your 1<sup>st</sup>'s but you've never really been abroad or met people from different cultures, different backgrounds, different outlooks on life. I think that was what I was able to see because I met so many people from all over the world, some doing ERASMUS. Different backgrounds, different people and that's what it enabled me to see.

YH: How do you think it impacted, or did it add value to your studies?

P: My Spanish was good before I went abroad, it was very grammar oriented before I went abroad. That's why I kept getting the comment "you speak really posh Spanish". 3 months in, I was fine, communication was no problem, I'd picked up Spanish slang, I'd picked up some of the Andalusian accent and there was no issues or hindrance with what I was trying to say or understanding what they

were trying to say to me. Of course there were a few vocabulary issues, I had to learn quickly. But when you're there every single day having to speak Spanish, my Spanish came on unbelievable amounts. I understand now why the year abroad is so important. If I was to have gone from 2<sup>nd</sup> year straight into final year I wouldn't have even passed. You have to get your level of language up to a certain level and the only way to do that in my opinion is to live there. My Spanish couldn't have got any further being in England and doing grammar exercises, speaking to people as and when. Speaking to random Spanish people you meet when you're out, don't get me wrong that a good experience and it's good to get your fluency levels up but in order to actually get your level to a fluent level you have to live there. I think it's just being immersed in it every single day, 24 hours a day for a whole year, that's what was very important and I know understand that.

YH: Just to pick up on a point you made earlier, in terms of you said that "employers love the skills that you pick up" if you think back, was that one of the things in your mind when you were thinking of doing a year abroad. Were you thinking at that time that this would have a really good beneficial outcome?

P: No not at all

YH:...for employability? What was it about, was it more personal? What was it?

P: If I'm being really honest it was just something I knew had to happen for my degree. Knowing I was going into a Spanish degree everyone who goes into a linguistic based degree, you know you have to go abroad its compulsory. So I have known that from A-level, that I would have a year abroad and I was very excited for it but I knew it was coming. I never ever once sat and thought "oh it will be good for your CV or employers". That never ever crossed my mind, I was more interested in where am I going, what am I going to do, where am I going to work, where am I going to study, am I going to the sunshine for the year, is it me? I think it's just a whole learning curve, , once you go that doesn't even come into it. Once you're there you develop all these skills, subconsciously realising you've got them. You live that different life and you meet all these different people and you have to fend for yourself in a foreign country. When you come back and realise what you have achieved you think, "Actually, if anyone asks me a question it would give you something more to talk about." I can talk anyway, which I'm aware of, but for someone to ask you certain questions sometimes I wouldn't really be able to comment. Now you have that extra edge, you have something to talk about and it's something that's very close to my heart, it's something I really thoroughly enjoyed. I'd do it again. So now coming back it's always something that I would always promote, I would always encourage. I do think, regardless of what job you go into, where you go, it's something that shows you as a person. If your able to go anywhere that gives an employer an insight into your capability. You're brave, courageous, you're willing to go elsewhere, you're not set in the same place every day for the rest of your life. No ambition, no drive to go anywhere different and experience different things. I think that's very important. Once I came back from my year abroad (I've worked in care now for more than 4 years) and I had to come back and re-apply to a different agency because I work in dementia units, that's the opposite end of the field from languages and going abroad! Even in the interview they would ask "where have you been" and my interview finished at that moment because I sat and spoke to her about my year abroad. Little did I know that her parents were from Spain so for something that is so opposite, me doing the year abroad enabled me in a way to get that job.

YH: Growing up, did you used to travel? Did you come from a family that travelled? What kind of vacations.



P: I live with my mum, my 2 brother and my nan and my grandad did live with me but he passed away 2 years ago but before that every single year, from being a new born, we used to go on holiday once a year. We did quite a few caravan holidays with nan and grandad to the south of England. I've been abroad quite a few times with all of my family, we went first when I was about 6 to Spain. We've been to France, Greece, Dominican Republic with my family. We kept going back to the same part, we always used to go to Malaga on the Costa Del Sol and that was where Spanish came into my life which I think for any English family it's a cheap package holiday, go straight to the Costa Del Sol. So we'd always go abroad and I went on quite a few school trips. From the age of 16 I went camping with my friends. I enjoy traveling so I go away maybe 3,4,5,6 times a year if I can.

YH: Did you experience any barriers before, during or after your mobility experience?

P: Before I went there, were loads of barriers which I didn't even realise were barriers. Things like not being aware of the culture barrier, which was going to be very different. Culture shock was an actual thing which I didn't realise! The language barrier was obviously was a barrier but that was something I never anticipated. My mum couldn't understand it, she said, "but you're doing a Spanish degree?" and I said "I can't explain it, but they have no idea what I'm, saying to them" and she said "well what are you doing in your Spanish degree!?". The only way I could explain it to her was when we had a British council conference, before I started in Madrid and I was panicking, (this was 4 weeks in since I had arrived). I was thinking "this is a sick joke, this is crazy, I'm in Spain and I'm really struggling to get by." Then I went 4 hours north and all my friends were there and they said "Jes your Spanish has come on so good" and I thought "really?" One of my good friends said "I can't believe how much your Spanish has improved, you've only been here a month" I thought "thank god, I have learnt some, I'm not being silly". It was just the accent, listening to a Madrid accent was like music to my ears. Every single thing they said I understood perfectly, I said to my mum "it's not me, it's the accent, it's the dialect difference and now, coming up from the south I can see the improvement already". Then I thought there's one barrier ticked, I have overcome it, we're OK. So that was a barrier before and still during the year. Making friends, that was a barrier that I overcame quite quickly. I ended up meeting two really good friends (we've actually got matching tattoos). One is from London, University of Durham, one is from Somerset (but University of Swansea).

YH: So these are people that worked in the same school?

P: These are people that worked in the city centre, not in the same school. So we were in the same province but we made friends via the Facebook group with about 4 other lads (two were Italian 2 were Spanish) so we formed quite a quick close knit group. We travelled abroad each weekend and did bits and bobs together so I overcame that barrier quite quickly. I'd say coming home, the barrier was trying to get back into English mode and that was the hardest barrier to overcome out of everything. The language barrier came with time which I knew it would because living there, immersing yourself in it, it's just got to improve there is no other way around it. I kept telling myself "give it time, be patient, it will all work out" and it did! Coming back I had to reverse and put it all back to how it was a year ago and that was very difficult but it's done.

YH: So you know the experience, did that help you with your studies when you came back?

P: Academically?

YH: Yeah

P: Yes, massively. As I've said your Spanish has got to improve, you can't go into a final year of a Spanish degree at your second year level. I think especially for me, I went straight from A-levels to

university so quite a few people on my course had already done a year out and quite a few of them had already lived in Spain for a year, they had done a season. Quite a few of them did Ski seasons then went to Spain, working in restaurants and bars. That was very noticeable from their level of Spanish and from certain things they knew from living there. If you go straight out of A-levels and your exam based you're just not going to know it which after coming back from living abroad I now understand even more. So that helped, the listening, the awareness. Every single element of your course is in the language you have when you come back and that would have been a shock to the system for a second year. When you have been there for a year that's just second nature to you, you can flit in and out. That was noticeable, so it definitely helped with my academic studies yes.

YH: What were the factors that influenced or hindered your mobility experience? What influenced your experience? So I know that one of them for you would be the fact that it was mandatory as part of your course but was there anything that hindered your experience?

P: I had a choice, I could either study abroad or work abroad. Knowing I had to go abroad there was so many options, South America, Spain, whatever you wanted to do really. I'd say my decision was that I didn't want to go to university for another year I thought "that's a year out, have a year out and go into the working world". I just thought, in my head that I would learn a lot more and benefit more from being in a working environment in Spain compared to an academic environment which I had been in for the past 15 years of my life anyway. So that was a factor that I was aware of.

YH: Was it paid work, was that a factor? Did that influence you, the fact that "I can get paid for this and I can have better opportunities whilst I'm there as well"?

P: My second option was University of Seville, so I knew that if I didn't get my placement I knew that I was going to the university of Seville. It was very bizarre because with European funding, if I worked I got more money than if I went to the university. Doing a working placement, rather than a study placement, the government gave me more money, which I didn't really understand because the people that were studying weren't really getting paid for it. So I got just under £21000 last year all in all from student finance, funding and payment from British Council. That was a lot of money, when you're in Spain everything was cheaper. That was why I was able to travel as much as I did. That was a factor, I knew I wanted to see everything I could see in Spain and I knew that studying would limit that. You'd be limited by having to go to university so many days a week and exam season, I knew you would have to be there for that. Compared to someone saying to you "you can work 12 hours a week and you have plenty of 4 day weekends and your paid very well for doing that". That definitely came into it and of course knowing I wanted to go into teaching anyway, the experience of being able to teach in a foreign country. It ticked every single box for me compared to going to another university in Spain

YH: So you had done that search, you knew there was lots of options. Did you get academic help? Were any of your lecturers an influencing factor, in terms of "if you go here this will be really great" or "if you go here this will be great"

P: Yeah definitely

YH: So were those conversations happening because it was mandatory? You were given guidance?

P: Yes, we had lots of meetings, as soon as we started 2<sup>nd</sup> year, the meetings started two weeks in and ran all the way through. So it was different elements each week like how to open a bank account, how to do different things.

YH: So that was embedded in your course

P: Yeah, there was so many things to go through. We had different organisations come in for example an organisation called Skip that was in South America came in. All different things like that to encourage you and promote options. That was very interesting.

YH: So those conversations are happening anyway?

P: Yes

YH: Brilliant because they don't happen in the other areas. So what are the advantages or (if you can think of any) disadvantages of a mobility experience?

P: I think the whole experience was a massive advantage to me as a human being, as I have said previously it gives you so many new skills that you didn't even think were possible. It enabled you to achieve so many things that you didn't think you would be able to achieve. You experience things that, if you don't go abroad, you're never going to experience. It's all good when you go on holiday for 2 weeks a year and you go here and there but that is very different to living there for a year. I didn't see my mum for over 9 months and that is a long time, me and my mum are very close, we spoke every single day but not seeing her face was difficult. She knew that I was enjoying myself, I was safe, I was all fine, I was really having an amazing time. She flew out to see me quite a few times. I think the whole experience in general, I couldn't promote it or encourage it more if I tried. I think every single person should be given an opportunity to go abroad I think it opens doors, opens your mind, enables you to see things from a whole different perspective. It's something (regardless of what you go into, whether it be medicine, being a vet, banking) the skills you will acquire are skills you could use in any field of work. As a person it's something for you to sit and do for yourself, you can sit and talk about it to whoever and it's an experience that you will have for the rest of your life.

YH: So if you could sum up, what skills did you develop/have you developed as a result of your experience?

P: More self-confidence, you have to believe in yourself and I did believe in myself but nowhere near as much as I do now. I think seeing yourself overcome certain issues/difficulties it gives you that sense of satisfaction, thinking "I actually can do this, I should have more faith". So definitely self-confidence. I'm a lot more organised, I'm a lot more aware of different people, different cultures, I'm a lot more understanding. I think the ability to just sit in a room and talk to anyone about anything because when you're sat in bars all over Spain that's what they do! The English thing, if you sit in a bar, you give a nod or you say, "hello how are you" you don't start a full conversation. That's regarded as really rude in Spain. Regardless of the colour of your skin, your hair colour, wherever you are they will buy you a drink. They want to know every single thing about you. It's very friendly, it's a massive European community out there which I feel, in England, you don't feel it as much. Having said that though I think that's more South of England, I'm being very stereotypical but in Manchester it's much friendlier here compared to Birmingham. I think in general the English outlook is a lot more reserved compared to other European communities.

YH: Just picking up on the question, you said you would recommend the mobility experience to other students, so would you recommend it and why?

P: I would recommend it 159% because without this experience I would be a very different candidate. I would be a very different person.

YH: So you would be a different person?

P: Massively. I personally would not employ myself without my year abroad, I think it's because of what I've seen, what I've experienced, what I now have under my belt. I am a very different person to who I was in 2<sup>nd</sup> year. I think that goes for every single person who does a year abroad. You go as this mould of a second year student and you come back as someone who is fearless, who can do whatever you put your mind to do. You have that sense of ambition and drive to go and achieve what you want to achieve which I didn't really have in 2<sup>nd</sup> year.

YH: Do you think that you become very independent?

P: Yeah that's fair to say. I was quite an independent person anyway but I think purely because I lived on my own in Spain and that wasn't ideal, it wasn't what I wanted to do but it was how everything fell into place. It just worked out better. I think living on my own in a foreign country, in a flat, I had to pay my own bills, just me. That was very rewarding, it was very independent compared to being in a family home or living with 6 girls in 2<sup>nd</sup> year so going from big houses to lots of people to just be was very different.

YH: One of the things that I discussed earlier was that not many students actually opt for a year abroad, obviously your circumstances were different because it was part of your course. What do you think, in hindsight, what steps can be taken from the universities point of view to encourage more students to think about study or work abroad?

P: Quite a few of my friends from home are at universities across the UK and I do think MMU does promote it. I've got quite a few friends who I lived with in 2<sup>nd</sup> year and they have had the opportunity to study or do an internship abroad. So I do think in certain faculties it is promoted and encouraged but I think it is very different for languages. I would say just give it more awareness and promote it more throughout the whole uni. Everyone knows you're a language student and you do your third year abroad but I think that should be a whole university thing and not just because you're a language student. I think it should not be a stigma for language students. So I think promote the fact it's possible for anybody to go, not just language students. That's the kind of stigma that, before people look into it and before they are aware that actually they can go as well, they just subconsciously know "that's for language students not for us". So I'd say do a flyer do a twitter page make it social media based, do some meetings, flyers around university just saying "year abroad not just for language students it's for everyone".

YH: I know that you have spoken at a couple of our events to sixth form students to encourage them, share your experience, and inspire them about what you have experienced. You have a fantastic narrative that we have just discussed, how do you think one can share and capture that? You are a fantastic ambassador, so what forms can be taken to share your narratives? Everyone says its "brilliant", "best year of my life", how can we share that with more students, how can we use your narrative to encourage those students who won't consider it?

P: When I was doing A-level, I'm still in contact with my A-level teacher, and they've got a case study. Each department has a case study, most of them have A\*'s but I'm never going to be that student, my case study is about my year abroad at A-level. That's going back 4 years ago but they still wanted my year abroad as a case study on their wall to say "she achieved a grade B at a push at A-level, she got C's and D's in the other subjects but this is what she's achieved now, going into her final year at university". It is on a wall! So I've been to quite a few of their open days and loads of parents/students were stopping at that case study wall, that one wall, not the beautiful displays. It was these pictures of real people that had done that particular course and where are they now. So I think maybe have a case study wall of students that have done certain things, where they are, what they are applying to

do and put it on one A4 Sheet of paper (who they are, what they're doing and what they thought of their experience). Its real people, real experiences.

YH: Once you had experienced the mobility experience you realised it was a benefit to you as a person and subsequently how it might impact on your future life and career. Is that right?

P: Yes exactly

YH: So think about this question, it's the last question. It's interesting that you say "the person I am today, had I not done the year abroad, with and without it, I would have been a different person graduating". If it wasn't a mandatory part of your course, do you think that you would have opted to study abroad? So thinking of all the barriers that there might have been because it wasn't part of your course and you might not have had the information through from your course tutors. Thinking about whether you wanted to graduate in 3 years or 4 years, so if it was an option would you have studied abroad or not?

P: Yes definitely. I think that being as open minded as I am I would have always looked into an option to study abroad. I would have looked at the ins and outs of it and wanted to understand what it actually meant, what the opportunities and options were but as long as it was promoted to me (as I feel it is promoted in the vast majority of the faculties at MMU) as long as there was someone for me to talk to as a point of call to discuss it further and as long as I knew the option was there for me to go abroad and to have abroad I would definitely have looked into it, regardless of it being mandatory or not

YH: Thank you, that's the last question

## **Appendix 4**

### **Interview 3**

**Name:** HD

**Couse:** BA History

**Profile:** Didn't go abroad

**Age:** 23

**Gender:** Female

**Languages:** English

YH: So if you don't mind introducing yourself, your name what you studied.

P: Yeah sure, so my name is HD, I've graduated in a BA History. I'm currently working for the sociology department as an intern which finishes in October, I'm 22 and I live in Manchester.

YH: Thank you for that, and during your studies (obviously this research is about student mobility and students who, as part of their undergrad programme decide to either go abroad or don't go abroad for work or study) did you ever consider studying abroad during your undergrad?

P: I did consider it but I found that, me personally, I wanted to, I would have taken up the opportunity if it had been more obvious that I could actually do it as part of my course but I think I never really kind of got to grips with the fact that I could do that, or I could go abroad that year or do a semester here, so I never really got the chance to.

YH: OK that's interesting. So did you know about work or study abroad opportunities during your study

P: I think I did know about them , I knew you could do them and do semesters abroad but I wasn't really sure because my degree was History I knew that a lot of people who were going abroad they, I don't know, I didn't know how History would link into going abroad and like maybe someone did tell me about it once but I can't actually really remember being actually offered saying you can do this at that point.

YH: So who do you think could do more to encourage you?

P: Who could do more to encourage me?

YH: So would it be...

P: I think it would be either doing it within my lectures or whatever but they probably did do that, I think maybe it will take, I don't know, maybe it would take someone who has actually experienced doing it like a year abroad but also someone who has experienced it who also did the same degree as me

YH: Sure

P: So say what they got out of it and then like this is how they did it because it just makes it more obvious and like well oh, they did do my degree and then they have got this out of it. That would be really beneficial and like it's possible with mine. Because if someone else tells you from a different degree "Oh I did this year abroad" it's like yeah ok that's great but can you do that with mine.

YH: OK

P: I don't really know how it connects

YH: So someone who had probably studied History at some point

P: Yeah

YH: Did you feel that you got guidance from lecturers (so staff for example) on opportunities or was it discussed in your lectures to say there's is a possibility of doing a semester say for example here.

P: I think it wasn't really particularly discussed by the lecturers I think it was more, I think from what I remember vaguely someone came in and took over half a lecture and told you about the year abroad scheme so it wasn't from your lecturer or anyone who was in your department it was more a separate group of people who came in, did half an hour, and that was it. They left some leaflets, I can't remember properly

YH: So again, it might sound like a bit of repetition, so it said did you consider a mobility experience during the programme or study so you said if there as more information you would have considered it and certainly if it was more from someone who has actually studied your area of work. In terms of your family, could you explain in terms of, did your parents go to university, or your siblings?

P: My parents never went to uni

YH: Are you first generation?

P:Yeh I'm first generation. My sister did go to uni but she did Graphics and she did it in London

YH:Is she older than you?

P:She is older than me yeah, she's five years older but she didn't do a year abroad either. I don't think she knew she could either

YH: Ok so your first generation and you're the second person in your family to go to university. Do you think your family would have been supportive if they knew..

P:...to go abroad? Yeah I think they would have been they never put me off doing anything. But I would be left to my own devices to sort it out if that makes sense and also sorting out who would rent my room and all that stuff because obviously I rent in Manchester so, if I did a semester abroad, would I swap my room with them or how does that work? All those questions, but I guess there would be a leaflet for that.

YH: So practical things? Practicalities of going abroad. So what do you think in terms of... wait no let me ask another question. Growing up, did you travel a lot with your family?

P: We went to Spain, which was quite nice, Spain and France.

YH: For holidays?

P: Yeah, for holidays.

YH: And do you speak other languages?

P: I try, I have tried to learn Spanish quite a lot, because I really enjoyed Spain when I was younger and I used to go and my Dad knew it, he was really good at actually picking it up while we were there which I thought was really cool because he didn't have a little book or anything and he never learnt it in

school. I mean I've tried, I took lessons last term. I would really like to go to South America and travel round and learn Spanish and be able to do it that way. I guess if I missed out doing that I could teach abroad or something.

YH: Fantastic. OK so then, the question is; what factors influenced your decision for you not to take part in a mobility experience during your studies?

P: I wouldn't say any factors particularly stopped me from doing it, it was more that I just didn't look into it enough. I don't think any of the reasons would actually stop me from doing it, like if I saw something that I wanted to do abroad I'd just do it, but I didn't see that so then I didn't do it and that's probably what stopped me.

YH: Sure. So what do you think the barriers are. Not just personal barriers but wider barriers as well

P: The wider barriers in general are information on the things, like how you can do it and what to do but I'm sure that information is out there somewhere so maybe just putting it in a more obvious place for the students. Practicality for a lot of people, for example some people wouldn't want to sort out all that stuff which is fair enough, like if your renting a place in Manchester it's already quite stressful paying bills and stuff never mind having to sort it out to go abroad for a semester. I guess lack of money, I don't know how much it costs or what the money resources would be on that front, I guess that could be an issue depending on if you have to pay or would you have to get a job out there, I don't know. What else, what else could be a barrier.

[Pause].

Also a lot of people don't like leaving home which is one barrier, that's not me personally but a lot of people wouldn't want to leave for 3 months. Like their friends and family, like they just like to stay. So I guess they are the main barriers I can think of.

YH: And not just in your course but in maybe in your wider circle, do you know of anyone who did go abroad.

P: Yeah I know a few people that went abroad. One of my friends just came back from Holland, they really enjoyed it actually, they did a placement abroad. Not a lot of my friends actually but a few people did a semester abroad in different universities. One of my friends went to Sydney, which looked amazing actually, but they did a full year out there, it was almost like an exchange programme. So I guess you didn't have to sort out all those annoying things, I guess you did a year out there then you come back again which I think is quite a good system because I think that takes a lot of the worries away from people.

YH: Brilliant. Ok, so, again, kind of think about this one. Do you think that a mobility experience could have added value to you or your studies?

P: Yeah 100%. I think experiencing different places and meeting new people is always beneficial especially if you're doing something that is related to your course or whatever alongside of. Yeah definitely.

YH: In what way? In your personal life? What kind of skills might you develop?

P: Well I think 1. Personal skills because you're communicating with people. I think taking you out of your comfort zone improves you as a person but also in general, your navigating skills and all those things, they all build up to creating a better, even like improving your mind even if it's not directly to do with your course. Thinking in another language is also a completely new exercise for your brain. So



in that respect 1. It improves your brain and obviously meeting new people and experiencing new cultures, I think it gives you a bigger perspective on life. Also, depending on what you're doing while you're out there, I'm guessing either the course you're doing or the work you're experiencing is going to have a massive bonus as well. It's like real life work vs. school life isn't it?

YH: And what about things like, do you think you grow as a person in terms of independence and things like that? Because you talked about fitting outside your comfort zone.

P: Yeah definitely. I think you just grow as a person and an individual.

YH: OK, so, when you're, from a student point of view (because obviously at the moment you're working) looking at literature, a lot of it talks about skills for employability, when you're actually studying, is that actually something you think about, is your end goal developing employability skills or is that something that doesn't factor in?

P: I think that's something that the university factors in more than anything. Personally, for my course it doesn't lead you to a job, well I personally don't think it leads you to a job but it was more of an interest. An interest that I wanted to explore but also, you do in the back of your mind think well I am still getting a degree which will help me get a job and also teach me more so I guess so are factoring in a job in some way but I am not going to every lecture and seminar and thinking "Oh, I did this exercise today and that's going to help my employability skills". That wasn't really part of it for me, not personally.

YH: The fact that, if I did a mobility/went abroad for work or study, that might make me more employable, or less employable. That doesn't cross your mind?

P: I mean I guess it would make you more employable. I guess that would actually be a factor but I mean, I guess, that would be another one that would be beneficial but also it wouldn't be my priority. [Laughs]

YH: So obviously it's interesting that you studied History. So you didn't have a career in mind or have you got something in mind now.

P: I mean when I was 18 years old I didn't really have a full set out life plan of a career, I mean that was never going to happen. And then I got the job in the Sociology Department and at the moment I'm looking at jobs which I find interesting, I found that in History I found a lot of social history really interesting but not only with History, it wasn't really about getting a job I guess it was more about the world around me and why things are the way they are and that's why I'm actually quite upset that I didn't go abroad because I think that to apply that to different places I think is really amazing. From there I'm just trying to take it into things which have sparked my interest, Sociology is linked with the social history, I am still learning loads here, I get to read everyone else's research.

YH: Fantastic. What are the advantages and disadvantages of not taking part in a mobility experience?

P: I think the disadvantage of not taking part is that I feel like I have missed out, and obviously it does improve your employability. A disadvantage of going might be that, I don't know, it depends on the characteristics of going abroad are- like if you're going for a year, does that mean that you're taking a year out of your studies and then you're a year behind everyone else or does that mean that, if you're going for a semester, that you would have to come and sort somewhere else out to live?

YH: Everyone that goes abroad, you've mentioned these that talk very positively of the experience. I sense a tinge of regret from you, I sense that you feel if you were given the opportunity you would

have liked to have gone abroad. What measures, what steps, can be taken from the university, from your course tutors in order to encourage more people.

P: There's one issue that I have, which is bad of me, because they might actually have done it but I didn't actually go to an amazing amount of my lectures in first year and normally a semester abroad takes part in second and third. So it might not have been on their behalf, it might have been that I was particularly bad at turning when those things were being spoken about. So maybe having the information come from somewhere else, or put into the Halls, or from the students union, well actually I didn't really go into the students union either. I don't know, just coming from somewhere else, that might be a beneficial part of it.

YH: So, one of the earlier things you mentioned was possibly having people who studied your course, or a similar course, talking to other students like kind of..

P:..Coming in, chatting, and sharing...

YH: Yeah, rather than it coming from an academic. So just picking up on that point that you made, you missed quite a big chunk of your first year. What was that?

P: No, it was just that I didn't go to all of my lectures. I was a bit useless.

YH: So a lot of the additional events that are not considered mandatory, students might not turn up to those kind of things so having something more..

P: Yeah having something more within the lectures would be better

YH: OK, brilliant. Is there any comments you would like to make just to wrap up the interview?

P: No not really. I guess maybe just...no I guess that's it.

## **Appendix 5**

### **Interview 4**

**Name:** EY

**Course:** BA English

**Profile:** Didn't go abroad

**Age:** 19

**Gender:** Female

**Languages Spoken:** English, Welsh

YH: Hello! You can say hi in Welsh if you want

P: [Welsh hello]

YH: Please tell me about yourself, what are studying at Manchester Metropolitan?

P: P Well I have just finished my second year of doing English BA Honours level

YH: Ok so if you could just introduce yourself, so your name....

P: I'm EY, I'm in my second year

YH: Tell me about yourself in terms of where you grew up

P: Well I was born in England but I grew up in Wales, in a very small very Welsh village all my education has been in Welsh until I came to Manchester where I was actually allowed to speak English

YH: So did you move back to England to carry on your studies, or did you move back as a family?

P: Just to do my studies, my family is still in Wales

YH: Fantastic. So, you're an English family moving to Wales. How did you find the education, how did you find studying in Welsh, can you remember? How old were you when you when you moved?

P: Less than 2, so very young. I went to an all Welsh primary school, we weren't actually allowed to speak English. You either had to learn or leave. That was tricky, I really struggled in primary school but luckily, I was good at maths so I kept my grades decent enough by doing maths. Then I went to high school, where it was again all Welsh, no English allowed. By that point I was pretty OK with speaking Welsh, I didn't do very well in my exams because I still struggled with writing Welsh, I would have a lot of tutoring sessions with my Welsh teacher. Then I finally got to come to university where you can actually speak English.

YH: Brilliant. So did you have the opportunity to also peruse English, was English taught as part of the syllabus?

P: Yes, it was, I can't remember at primary school but it was definitely at high school hence why I got an English A-level allowing me to come here

YH: So did your parents compliment that at home?

P: Yeah well they can both only speak English, my brother and I can also speak Welsh so most of my English comes from my parents

YH: Brilliant, and what's the dynamics of your family, are you the eldest?

P: I'm the youngest

YH: OK, and did your parents go to university?

P: No

YH: So your first generation?

P: Yeah

YH: Did your brother go to university?

P: We actually came to university at the same time, even though he is older. We're actually at the same university.

YH: What's the gap between you?

P: 3 or 4 years

YH: So he's come much later. So you did your college equivalent and then you came straight away whereas he waited. If you don't mind me asking, what is he studying?

P: Engineering

YH: So over in John Dalton. That's really interesting actually, so did you know about (or do you know about) work/study abroad opportunities during your studies. You've just finished your second year, has anyone ever talked about (as part of your programme) the opportunity to work abroad, go and study abroad, volunteer abroad. Has that ever come up or do you have any friends in these situations?

P: Well it came up, I remember it came up at a really awkward time. It was in first year, I had hardly been in Manchester about a month and there was a big lecture on why you should take a year out for your second year and go to a new country. And that did appeal but I had barely settled in Manchester and it didn't appeal to suddenly just move again and to lose any friends that you might have made on the way and then to come back third year, with no friends and you would probably have to go back in halls again which would be the worst. So that's what put me off. I remember the deadline for the application was really soon, it was in November, so you had to decide and I was like, no I won't do it. Which I kind of regret but also I think that my initial fears still stand because if I had gone I could be coming back now with no friends and nowhere to live.

YH: So a lot of it was to do with time, it was the wrong timing and your fears about settling again and friends. I'm assuming that would have been a second year, accredited at another university, where your programme would still remain as three years and you would have taken one year on a different. Did they talk about some of the countries that you could have gone to or can you not remember?

P: I know there was one that took you to Amsterdam, which a lot of students were excited about and there were a couple that took you to America which I was eyeing up because it was English so I would have felt more comfortable. But again, it just didn't seem right to go so soon.

YH: OK. So it might be a bit repetitive, but did you consider a mobility experience during the programme?

P: I did think about it for a while but it just seemed too soon, too sudden, just too rash.

YH: So what factors influenced your decision not to take the experience?

P: Timing mostly, general anxiety towards leaving, and I suppose because I was struggling to settle in Manchester in first year as it was and I knew that if I moved to another country I definitely wouldn't have my family as a support system so moving away entirely did seem very scary.

YH: In your opinion, what are the barriers for studying/working abroad?

P: I suppose for a lot of students, it's money, like I said not having a support network anymore, having just the general unease as you have spent pretty much all your college/sixth form life looking into universities and then to just suddenly going to a different one seems counter-productive I suppose. Also all the information we had was in one lecture, they just pointed at a map and said this is where you could go they didn't say anything about how it would work, which system we would be following, like in America I know that the university system is much different to ours. It just didn't seem right.

YH: That's really interesting. Do you think a mobility experience could have added value to you or your studies.

P: Yes, definitely. I think it would have made me grow up a bit faster, become a bit more independent and it always looks good on your CV but I don't really regret not doing it because I know I can just do it after university there are plenty of programmes that will take you abroad for a small fee.

YH: Just picking up on the last point about looking good on your CV, is that something you think about whilst your studying? Or is that an afterthought. At the time is that important.

P: Yeah, I find myself thinking about it a lot. I have tried to do the stuff that I think would look most appealing to employers. I do sometimes have to stop myself from thinking a lot because I should probably just be living my life for as long as I can without worrying about employers or jobs but it is our reality. (employability)

YH: So again, what would you like to do, have you got a plan in terms of what would you like to do after?

P: Probably do a year abroad

[Laughs]

But I don't know, it depends what I'm like when I'm older. In all honestly I am just trying to put off getting a real job for as long as possible. Whether that's doing an internship, an MA or even PhD or a year abroad, getting more qualifications as like a teach English as a foreign language.

YH: It's interesting you say "put off getting a real job". How do you define a 'real job'?

P: In my mind, it's an office 9-5, but obviously I don't know what a real job is.

YH: And why would you want to put that off, is that because you don't want to get drawn into that?

P: Mostly because my parents got into that at 15/16, they just got a full time job and they never left, they are still working. I just want to put that off for as long as possible.

YH: Explore, do other things that you want to do?

P: Yeah and learn more, I really love learning, I don't want to just stop.

YH: And you feel that that could be a barrier if you become kind of become static.

P: Yeah

YH: That's really interesting. So what are the advantages and disadvantages in taking part in a mobility experience

P: I don't know

YH: So what do you think would be the advantages, you eluded to some of them (it looks good on your CV, you grow up and such like that)

P: Yeah, all of those are applicable, and just going on an adventure would be fun

YH: And initially you said that one of your fears was trying to make new friends again and things like that, possibly one of the advantages being that you could meet new people?

P: Yeah for sure, learn about other cultures, possibly learn another language. Yeah, it's all exciting, but also very scary.

YH: And the disadvantages?

P: I mean other than the ones of that, if you were scared you would probably miss home. Unless there was a financial issue, there aren't any disadvantages to doing it.

YH: This is a really important question, just think about it, and I think I know how to prompt you. What measures and steps could be taken in order to encourage someone like yourself and cohorts of students who don't undertake mobility, to consider it. What do you think the university could do, or your lecturers could do? Or much wider, what can be done?

P: Perhaps, other than completely changing the system of taking you out in your second year, which I feel is quite unsettling, I guess just creating a better network of...like I just wish I could have asked someone some questions but there wasn't anyone to ask or at least I didn't think there was. Or just advertise it more, because you see it a lot thrown around on posters, it'll be like "Oh take a year abroad, travel" and that all seems great until you read the fine print, or there isn't any fine print and your just wondering abroad thinking where is my year abroad I want to go to Japan and you can't because no one is telling you and suddenly you have deadlines and suddenly you have graduated.

YH: So having someone who is studying your programme, or has studied your programme come to talk to you about it.

P: Yeah that would work.

YH: Would that make it more real?

P: Yeah and make it a seminar not a lecture, it definitely puts you on a back foot or who you can ask. Just making it real.

YH: Would it have helped if it wasn't just done in one lecture and possibly later on?

P: Yeah definitely.

YH: And again, the point about student mobility is that it doesn't have to be a yearlong or a semester long, the point is that if someone came to talk to you about the volunteering opportunities in summer for example, if it wasn't "ok you have to decide by this date".

P: Yeah definitely, I didn't really see that many opportunities for that around. I saw a couple on my Career, there would be table set up in the school but again, your busy, unless it's in your timetable

you're not really going to do it. Maybe I'm just not seeing them, there weren't many advertisements for that.

YH: Would you have considered something like that, like to say if it was volunteering for 6 weeks in summer in America?

P: Yeah definitely! I would have definitely considered that, especially since often my summer plans are to travel independently I think that would definitely appeal

YH: So what are your plans this summer?

P: I'm going to America!

YH: Whereabouts in America?

P: Well I'm meeting my friend, she's doing Ameri-camp and then she finishes in August and I'm going to meet her in Chicago and we're going to travel East Coast before going over to the West Coast, and we're just making it up as we go along.

YH: Brilliant. Growing up did you travel very much, with your family for example?

P: Not massively. We did a couple of holidays when I was very young, but other than that not really.

YH: Where did you go?

P: Turkey, we have always stayed in Europe, very close to home.

YH: Brilliant, anything else that you would like to add, anything really

P: Um, no.

YH: Thank you very much

## **Appendix 6**

### **Interview 5**

**Name:** DS

**Course:** BA Acting

**Age:** 21

**Profile:** Didn't go abroad

**Gender:** Male

**Languages Spoken:** English, Welsh, French (conversational)

YH: Hi please tell me about yourself, what you are studying, what brought you to Manchester, what made you choose what your studying.

P: So my names DS, I came to Manchester in 2014 currently in my third year graduating as an Actor on the acting course. When I was in college I decided I wanted to go to drama school and train as an actor and so I searched around, there's many different schools across the UK, I went to audition often 3 times at many of these schools and decided on the drama school that's linked on, attached to, Manchester Metropolitan University. This was because I had fantastic auditions here and I felt that this was a good place to come to. Many of the schools were also in London and I felt it would be nice to be in a tighter city, a smaller city, where I can really just focus on getting good at what I wanted to do and not necessarily be part of this massive buzz.

YH: Brilliant. Where did you come from? Where did you grow up?

P: So I lived in South Wales for quite a long time but I also lived on the East Coast but I came directly from Cheshire to Manchester.

YH: So you're English, you grew up in Wales

P: I'm half Welsh and half English

YH: So which side of the family?

P: Well my mother's side is all Welsh, very very Welsh. That's why I can speak Welsh because my mother's spoken Welsh to me all my life

YH: So your parents are bilingual, did your parents go to university or are you first generation?

P: I am not first generation, there is a long tradition of my family going to university

YH: So your schooling, was it bilingual?

P: It was to a certain extent, but I left when I was 6

YH: How did you feel growing up, being bilingual? What were your feelings, did you feel the same? Did you feel different? Did you want to feel the same?

P: I think when I was in Wales it was a normal thing because most people where I was were bilingual, could speak the same. But then when I moved to the East coast, to Cleethorpes, there was nobody else who was Welsh there, we were the only Welsh people. So therefore, that was not normal and that was therefore something that I did not want to be. It was not cool to speak Welsh. Unfortunately therefore I held back from it and then I became out of practice as a result and now I am regretting



that slightly because I would really like to be really sharp with my Welsh, much sharper because it means I can talk to all my Welsh family in Welsh, they can speak English but there's just a feeling, it's hard to articulate I guess, that feeling of when your speaking Welsh with others who can also speak Welsh. There's a heritage thing, it feels strange when my Welsh family starts speaking English it feels like it's not their mother tongue and therefore it's not entirely natural so yeh I do regret that, that's what happened. My father's not Welsh either so my mum was the only Welsh influence on me and mums aren't cool when your that age either.

YH: So does your dad speak any Welsh?

P: My dad only speaks a little bit of Welsh. But he travels the world and he can speak French and a little bit of German and things as well.

YH: Can you remember the turning point when you started feeling proud of speaking Welsh?

P: I think it's actually VERY recent, it's probably coming to university.

YH: A lot of kids say that, and this is the thing, for example Manchester has over 200 languages spoken in the city and yet kids, if you ask them if they're bilingual, it's exactly that point that you made, it's not cool to be seen as the other and so they won't identify, they won't raise their hands to say. You know like the event you took part in, I'll ask them, "how many of you are bilingual?" and you know by looking round the room that most of them are but they won't put their hand up. At the end of it, when you ask them (because they have done all of the activities) they think it is cool, and that's what we are trying to switch. We're trying to make it much sooner that they realise it's cool. But you want to be like your friends at that age, you don't want to feel different. So it's quite sad and I absolutely find it fascinating. It's the same like you, I can speak 5 languages but I wasn't proud when I was younger. It wasn't until I was a bit older that I thought I can speak all these languages and that's great. But when you're growing up you don't want to acknowledge it which is a shame really.

P: Yes

YH: So I'll move on, what are your plans now have you got it all sorted. I know acting is kind of different as you have to go through auditions and find work that way but have you been lined up for things?

P: Yeah there's certain things in the schedule for the next few months, I'm doing a show in Manchester next month and I'm also working in London all of July but the post in London is more of a facilitator, so leading workshops, managing/co-ordinating summer courses with the national youth theatre of great Britain. So there's various work whether that be acting or in a facilitating role lined up. But it is like you say, I have got an agent who works on my behalf sending me up to auditions with her contacts and then I've just been auditioning in London and in Manchester over the last few weeks.

YH: So what's the show can you tell me about it?

P: It's a show that's on the Manchester fringe and it's a coming of age story where a guy is grappling with his sexuality and grappling with that and not really sure what he is, it's a short story.

YH: Could this be my claim to fame at some point?

P: [Laughs]

YH: In terms of the research, as part of your studies did you know about opportunities to study abroad or work abroad during your studies

P: Was that studies at high school?

YH: No during your undergrad

P: No I wasn't aware. My course is very intense and once you're on it you're there all the time and there is not really an option to go onto any other course really.

YH: And there is no kind of exchange that they do across acting schools in Europe?

P: No there isn't but they do do that at other schools actually, my friends in Guildhall, they go to Italy for a couple of months in the summer. I know there are other courses that I was successful at getting a place at where they do do Erasmus they go to Latvia or Poland for a year and they go to the drama schools there but for this one there isn't and it's a shame really because the benefits are massive.

YH: We will come to the benefits. Did you consider a study mobility or work experience?

P: I did consider a study abroad but for me it was always the course that came first, what I wanted to study came first for me. So, like I said, I auditioned at all these different places and then I wanted to do a classical acting course so that was the principle reason.

YH: So what factors influenced your decision to not take part in the mobility, and I think you've already said that but if you don't mind

P: Not at all, so it was that I wanted to do this course so that was the reason so what else would there be. It's as simple as that really, it was "I want to do an acting course" and "I want to do this acting course" and I should have looked into the courses in more detail but I think the majority of courses are so intense with acting they just focus on being inside a studio and working on you and being natural and what not and so we don't really go abroad.

YH: And in your opinion what are the main barriers to for studying or working abroad?

P: For me, I will be taken out of the industry that I want to be in. If I went abroad now, yes I could potentially make contacts in Poland or what not but I would be taken out of the bubble that I need to stay connected to its quite a weak answer I guess.

YH: No there's no such thing as a weak answer at all. I take your point, what your saying is your focus was on the course and working in the networks and auditioning yourself so you didn't feel like you were missing out so you didn't feel like you had to go out and come back and start from scratch

P: In a way yeah, that's what happens

YH: But I want to pick up on a point that you made earlier because you said you didn't know about the opportunities to study abroad that this university or the course had but you said it's a shame really. What do you mean, because that tells me that you think there would be many advantages if the university did have connections?

P: Incredibly so yeah, I think that I would have really liked to have studied abroad during my time and I think that it's a shame that we didn't have that Italy trip to go away on because our principle aim as actors is to make a text come alive therefore we do a lot of critical analysis of text and like Alan said (I think his name is Alan) in that speech, he said that by learning lots of different languages you have a greater understanding of English in itself and so going abroad I might have been introduced to more languages and therefore I my ability to analyse that text would have been enriched. I think going abroad is fantastic because of all the different cultures you can see and going to see different places, it's how we enrich our lives. One of my friends visited me recently in Manchester he grew up with me in Cleethorpes in Grimsby and he's staying in Grimsby and I'm like you need to get out and experience the world and you can see it in him he's narrow minded and you can see it in many ways. He's narrow

mindful, in many ways his view could be a bit more liberal if he looked out and travelled more and understand different people. That's how we become the best people we can be and that comes from going to see different places. The benefits are enormous and I think Alans presentation was really good, all the places that he has managed to go through language and I think that sort of thing is what would be very beneficial for people like me, I think that is the perfect platform event to think "Oh number 10, White House" that's cool.

YH: Do you think a mobility experience, whether it was a short term mobility, work mobility, whatever , do you think a mobility experience could have added value to you and your studies? Would it make you a better long-term actor or an individual? In what way, so think of all the personal things that you might have achieved and then if you can think of any of the professional things?

P: So personally I think there is a downside. In many ways it's bad, but it's the same thing that in many ways you don't want to be the other and sometimes if I meet people whose first language isn't English I don't attach the same level of, I don't know, we like being with people like us don't we, as a society. We like people like us and therefore we often mix with people like us and I think if I studied a language I would just be more open to people, to meeting other people, not be having that head "oh their first language isn't English so I'm not necessarily going to be drawn to that person." That wouldn't happen. I would be able to meet different people, that's the point really.

YH: So having a wider circle of friends, having a connection with lots of people and being able to adapt in different situations

P: Exactly yeah, adapt to different situations not block out certain people, not that I hopefully would anyway. With languages I would be able to meet lots of different people and that's how we enrich our lives more.

YH: Even if you went to an English speaking country? It wouldn't have to be a country where English wasn't spoken. In what way do you think it would have added value in terms of professionally?

P: Professionally it would have been massive because that's partly why I have realised that I want to be very fluent in Welsh because my work opportunities grow massively. The pool of young male welsh speakers is a small pool, much smaller than the pool that me and many of my colleagues are in (e.g. young British male, speaks English). The work opportunities increase.

YH: Were you conscious of that whilst you were doing your undergrad, have you got that in mind, that the aim is (when I finish this) the work opportunities that this links to? Or do you think, doing an undergrad (I know that acting is different as acting links very closely with what you're going to do at the end of it, it's a different kind of degree), but do you have that in mind I suppose?

P: Incredibly so. The lady that I mentioned who is working on my behalf, sending me up for auditions, she works for a Welsh company and they get a lot of Welsh work in and if I can say that I speak Welsh, I know that there are lots of opportunities there. In my industry, you have to find your niche; you have to find how you can squeeze into this massive industry. You have to find out what your thing is. And then once you weave in more opportunities will be there for you. It's a massive professional thing but personally you just become a lot more understanding of different cultures and different people when you study abroad and you might even get a tan as well.

[Laughs]

YH: I know that some of the questions are quite repetitive but I am just trying to see you can come up with something else. So what do you think are the advantages of taking part and the disadvantages of not taking part in a mobility experience? So if you don't mind just wrapping up.

P: The advantages of taking part would be your understanding of the English language is improved dramatically through understanding different languages other than English. You will be more open to people around you because how great is it when you meet someone and you can both speak a different language that is not your mother tongue, I think it's just a great feeling. One of the ambassadors here the other day, Ellis, she also spoke Welsh and it's just brilliant to connect. Like I said before it's just hard to articulate that feeling.

YH: Because you'd never met before

P: No we had never met before, it's hard to articulate that sense of ...

YH: Connection

P: Yeah that sense of connection. Because I have lived in England most of my life so meeting Welsh people has not been a regular occurrence [Welsh greeting]. It's quite a big thing to me, there's that feeling attached to it as well and the work opportunities are immense.

YS: And you kind of talked about the advantages being that you would be able to adapt in different situations and meeting different people, opening your mind in terms of culture and those kind of experiences.

P: Yeah

YS: Disadvantages, can you think of any?

P: Disadvantages of studying abroad? It's difficult really because even if you have a bad time you learn something..

YS: You learn something about yourself..

P: You will be learning something about yourself. It will take you out of your comfort zone, probably one of the principle reasons why people don't travel abroad is because it will take them out of their regular routine and their comfort zone but what better than taking you out of your comfort zone and making you scared, making you stretch yourself,. There isn't much better. Disadvantage wise it's difficult really.

YS: And then, can you think of any measures that can be taken to encourage non-mobile students to consider studying abroad because everyone who goes abroad talks about how fantastic it is yet how can we best share those narratives. What can a university do or what can your course do, is there anything? How can you highlight the opportunities?

P: I think actually it all starts in teaching, the people that are most likely to study abroad study a language and people who are most likely to study a language are inspired by their high school teachers. So in terms of active things you can do it's making sure that those high school teachers, it's making sure that they know about the benefits. But whether they inspire their students is a different matter. I don't think my teachers at high school were inspiring in the right light. I remember Miss Finnay who taught French was almost very military and defensive about the language and she said, "you won't be able to go to university if you don't study a language" and saying things like this and that was merely a put off. It wasn't encouraging and so I think the teachers in high school, maybe they can go on some training day? Maybe that's insulting their intelligence, they all know the benefits but I think it starts

with that. I think events like the Routes for Languages the other day are incredibly beneficial, I think lots of those students will really get talking now and realise that it's cool! There were activities where many of them felt...you could see that throughout the day you could see that it's like "yeah this is a cool thing to do" and so I think that's fantastic work and the more of that at that level and also at the end of high school level into deciding what you want to do at university those are two very important stages. I'd say the more of those sort of activities, yeah. I think the presentation at the start was very good. Look where it's taken me, look I've met my wife through this, the opportunities are endless. More of that at maybe year 10 or 11 stage, I don't remember sitting through anything like that at all. I just remember teachers being, maybe I'm just being judgemental but I don't remember them being incredibly encouraging or inspiring.

YH: Do you think more could be done in universities?

P: Yeah! I mean I don't think we have the funding for it but how great would it be if we managed to go to drama school in Europe, it would be amazing.

YH: Or even in the summer

P: Yeah in the summer, the school has links to Poland and it would be incredible. It's incredible for us all individually but for us as a group as well. If we all managed to go and spend the time with each other, grow as friends. Yeah why can't that happen? Its because we spend a lot of money on our course anyway and I think the funding is not there anyway.

YH: The University could maybe make those links?

P: Yeah it could make those links and facilitate it and push that more. I think it could. We could go away and it would be amazing to go away and experience different drama schools

YH: Because I'm thinking of acting, you know the kind of nuances you can pick up, that you can pick up when you immerse yourself in a situation. Those nuances do matter, when you're acting a scene or playing something or understanding something or analysing text. There's that many different ways of doing something and not doing it in one way. So having had that experience of even observing, one of the best things that I enjoy doing when I'm abroad is people watching.

P: Exactly

YH: Because you can learn something about yourself but also about a different culture. It's really fascinating, it really is. Have you any other comments?

P: Not really no, I think it's funny that when I have come to university I have realised that Welsh is something that I want to continue becoming good at, it's funny that has happened. Before then it was not a cool thing, it's not been necessary. I think I have probably realised the professional capabilities of it, that's probably the principle. The fact that what I love doing can be further enriched. Then, having known that, when I see all my Welsh family when we have a big meet up, how great would it be if I would be able to use it in those situations and be more comfortable in those situations, that's quite an interesting reflection for me to realise that.

YS: Do you speak Welsh to your mum?

P: Always, most of the time, we try to

## **Appendix 7**

### **Interview 6**

**Name:** CL

**Course:** Degree in Education Studies

**Profile:** Went abroad, USA (3 months for work) and Amsterdam (6 months study)

**Age:** 23

**Gender:** Female

**Languages Spoken:** English

YH: Hi please introduce yourself

P: Hi my name is CL, I'm 23 years old and I've just finished my degree at Man Met Uni doing education studies and I will be starting my PGCE teacher training in September.

YH: Tell me where you fit in your family make up, do you have siblings, did they go to university? Did your parents go to university?

P: I've got one brother, he went to university and he actually left then had to re-sit a year then didn't actually leave with a degree. My mum and dad didn't go to university so my mums depending on me now to come out with a degree.

YH: So your first generation coming to university and you're the first one in your family to graduate. Fantastic. Please tell me about your work/study abroad experience.

P: So the first one was working in New York in America and that was with children who had disabilities, it was a lot of caring for them as many couldn't feed themselves but also trying to promote their independence and trying to get them to do things on their own and assisting them. I did that for 3 months in the summer.

YH: Which year sorry?

P: First year sorry. Then in my 2<sup>nd</sup> year (so I was meant to do my study abroad in August that year but because of when I was returning from America I could not start until January) so I did my study abroad in Amsterdam, Netherlands. That was January 2016-July 2016 so I ended up just doing 4 of the 6 months, so I did the first half of the year in Manchester then I went to uni in Amsterdam.

YH: So let me get this straight, after your first year you went to America to do a 3-month summer placement and then in your 2<sup>nd</sup> year you started the first term in Manchester Met and then the 2<sup>nd</sup> term you went to Amsterdam and that was accredited as part of your degree programme. So there's two experiences there. How did you feel prior to leaving?

P: On both of them?

YH: Yes

P: With America it was a lot harder because I wasn't going to be seeing anyone for 3 months. I didn't live at Uni so it was my first period being away from home for such a long period of time so I was really nervous but excited as well. I flew from London and there was people all doing the same thing so you just speak to anyone and you feel a bit better. Then with the 2<sup>nd</sup> experience, Amsterdam, I was really looking forward to that so it was more excitement than nerves and because it was only an hour flight away I felt a lot more comfortable, being able to see my friends and family if ever needed.

YH: So when you came to university you still stayed at home?

P: Yeah I stayed at home

YH: When you were in America and Amsterdam where did you live and who did you live with?

P: In America I stayed on the camp, the children lived below us and we lived at the top. I shared a room with a girl from Michigan and a girl from Wakefield in England, I didn't know them before and then I got put in a room with them. In Amsterdam I had my own flat so I didn't live with anyone.

YH: Did you go with any of your peers to any of those experiences?

P: No, America was a jobs fair and I got employed there. With Amsterdam, there were two girls there from MMU but they studied English so I just met them out there.

YH: So none of your fellow classmates?

P: No

YH: Then how did you feel when you returned, say when you came back from America and when you came back from Amsterdam?

P: With America I was really happy to be home because I did get quite homesick but when I was in Amsterdam I was like "oh I just want to be in Amsterdam, I miss it so much". I think it may be because of how far away America was and it was my first time doing that on my own. Eventually I really did miss America a few weeks later

YH: So there's you, you've never left home, you come to university, you go to this jobs fair after year 1. What made you want to go to America? Your friends didn't want to go, where did that come from?

PP: I think I might have seen something in uni, you know where they just advertise these summer camps. I actually know a girl I went to college with and she did it the year before and she kept saying to me, "you'd really enjoy it" so I thought I'm just going to go for it and see what happens. I ended up setting up a profile (because it's with an agency called Camp America) and then I just went to the jobs fair and I ended up getting employed there. Working with children with special needs is something that I'm really interested in so that was a bonus as well.

YH: And what about your experience in Amsterdam that was part of your degree programme, so you didn't have to go, what was it that inspired you to take that opportunity?

P: Well when I applied for the course, originally I could see that you could go abroad and I've always wanted to travel. I was with a boyfriend and I said to him before uni "let's go traveling together" and he said "no I'm not interested in that, it's not for me" and I just really wanted to do it. Anyway, we ended up splitting up and I just thought this is what I have always wanted to do and make the most of it, the world is a lot smaller now you can get to things easier. So when I saw that you could go abroad I just enquired about it, it was actually in my 1<sup>st</sup> year of uni that I had to make the decision and then I just thought I'd see how it goes and I just ended up going for it!

YH: And again I am just emphasizing the point, none of your fellow classmates went? That's such a brave thing to do. Do you think your mobility experience/going abroad has added value to you /your studies and if so how?

P: Yeah 100%. For me, I ended up meeting people from all over the world and hearing about other people's experiences. My best friend while I was there, she's from Austria and she was telling me how

they hunt their own food, things like that we would never do in our culture. It was interesting to hear about other people's lives and meeting them just living in a different city and country it is a

YH: ...Eye-opener?

P: Yeh that's the word. I always thought I was an open-minded individual and now I think I am even more open minded about it.

YH: So what did it teach you about yourself?

P: Well firstly I lived on my own so my independence was much greater. Just never judging anybody, it's really interesting to just speak to people. I went there, I didn't know anybody and then they said that they had an international student network and beforehand I wouldn't probably have got involved with something like that. I grew in confidence as well which was good and I joined the international student network and ended up meeting loads of other people. I started going to museums, I got a museums card for 60 euros and I started going to museums on my own, I would never usually do that. I thought that was a really good thing because I learnt a lot going to them as well.

YH: And what about your course and your studies, do you think that the experience has added value to your coursework or your work?

P: With Amsterdam, I did feel it was a lot more hands on so when I returned to Manchester I felt it was a bit more difficult because I felt like I hadn't done any academic writing. I think I did 2 pieces of academic writing but they were a lot easier in terms of referencing. Whereas over here it's a lot more strict and I'm not sure whether that's just because I was an exchange student and they used different referencing to what I did, I'm not sure if it was just more convenient than that. With the courses I had, one of them was putting together a documentary and the other was a tour guide (showing someone an area in Amsterdam) and doing an on-site presentation. That added much more confidence to my presentation skills. When I did come back to 3<sup>rd</sup> year and I had to do presentations. It gave me a lot more ideas about how to do presentations instead of just standing up in front of a class and reading off a power point, I started to think of other ideas. I didn't actually get to put them to use though as we had to do a poster presentation in 3<sup>rd</sup> year, but going forward (if I ever were to do presentations again) it's given me so many more ideas about different ways to present them.

YH: Obviously you speak English, how was the language?

P: No, that's one of the main reasons that I chose the Netherlands because I knew that they spoke English really well (not that I'm being naïve thinking they should speak to me in English because I'm English) I just know that all the lessons were going to be taught in English, that's why I chose it. I did start learning Dutch while I was there, to be honest I did find it quite difficult. In the end I didn't actually do the exam, everyone who I know that was English and did the exam didn't pass it but the Germans did because the language is very similar. Then again, it is quite similar to English. I do wish I had kept going with that but then again it was quite a short period of time. I did try to teach myself and speak to my other Dutch friends which I found was more useful than being in the classroom.

YH: Were you supported? Who supported you to go to the university in Amsterdam? Was that something that was supported through the course, who helped you select where you went and the modules you did?

P: My uni teacher in 2<sup>nd</sup> year called Sarah helped me; she did a lot of information days telling us what the options were. These happened in first year and the list of universities was there, then I just applied and she supported me massively.



YH: What was the deciding factor? Was it based on the courses or whereabouts it was?

P: It was based on where it was and then also the course as well. They have a really close connection with the host school so that added comfort to me. Also then the time that it was because a lot of them had to go from August whereas I couldn't because I was working in America. Amsterdam was always first on my list anyway. Sarah helped me massively and she even came to visit me whilst I was over there. It was funny because I had a bike in Amsterdam and I was riding home from the gym back to my flat and just by chance I bumped into her, I knew she was coming over but we weren't meeting until a few days later. She had come for leisure over the weekend and by chance, her hotel was near my flat. It was so strange.

YH: Did you experience any barriers before, during or after your mobility experience?

P: I think a massive barrier is expenses, so finances. So you do get the grant, which used to be 300 euros a month then but by the time I went it was reduced again because there is less funding apparently. So I saved up money beforehand to help with my rent when I was there. So that was a massive factor. I have always had a job as well, when I was over there I did apply for jobs but no one got back to me. I think it was because I was an English speaker, which was a big barrier. Another one was the university had a laptop policy so you had to have your own laptop, so if I wanted to print something off I couldn't because unless you take in your own laptop, I'm not 100% sure how it works. You had to use their computers but there was only two computers in the whole of the university whereas here we have really good facilities. The woman on the desk said they had a policy where you had to have your own laptop. Also, I have dyslexia and I feel that the support may not have been as good as here and I think that is a lot to do with funding because I have to go through funding for the help and support I get here. I'm not going to say that was a big barrier but it did add to it.

YH: In terms other barriers linked to the experience of actual mobility, were you nervous before you went? Or were you excited that you were going to go?

P: I was probably more excited nervous this time than nervous because I had had the experience before. In terms of emotional feelings...

YH: So you had been out of your comfort zone before

P: Yeah and I think America is so different to England that was a big shock so with Amsterdam, they are very different but also quite similar in many respects. It had prepared me definitely, so I felt a lot more comfortable going there. The first thing when I got there (so I had a contract for my internet) and then originally it wasn't working, so for the first couple of days I didn't have any internet. You don't realise how much you depend on internet! I had it in my flat but I didn't have a router, I had to provide the internet to my laptop. It's strange how you depend on it so much. So when I originally got there they set up a coach to take us to where we had to register, then it was, "ok go on and find your flat now". I didn't have a clue how to get there, I had to ask people and someone just told me to get on a bus. I had two big suitcases and it was one of the windiest days I have ever experienced so it was so difficult. I think that in those situations you end up just having to cope instead of being dependant on the internet and things like that.

YH: This was when you were in Amsterdam?

P: Yeah that was when I first got there so at that point I was feeling not that comfortable because I was lost. Once I got settled in it was a good feeling.

YH: How was that process of settling in was that ok?

P:Yeh, the international student network was a big benefit because I met people and as soon as you make friends that makes your whole experience better. Sometimes it was strange because I was living on my own and I like having company (I do like living on my own as well) and there were certain times when we were having to do work so a lot of people were studying and it was a massive change to being in a house full of people back home.

YH: So what made you choose to live on your own, was it a house or an apartment?

P: My friend is at Crewe at MMU and she said she might apply when I told her that I had applied so she applied but then she went for the first semester. She went to the Netherlands but she wasn't in Amsterdam, she told me that she was sharing a room with other people. I didn't want to share a room, I didn't mind sharing a flat with us having our own rooms then sharing a bathroom and kitchen. So when it came to applying for the housing there wasn't much guidance so I think they referred to living on your own as 'self-contained' and I went with that option. Where I was living was really nice, it was only 10 minutes on the underground to the centre and 20 minutes on bike. It was a really good location, it was close to my uni and the price I was paying wasn't much different to what people were paying for sharing so I thought I might as well just live alone. I think that had a large impact on my experience because I saw people that shared with other people and I felt they were a lot closer and knew more people. I still knew a lot of people but they all lived in one building so everyone knew everyone. They would all just be at each other's flat but I had to arrange to see my friends as they weren't living as close to me. I think even with university in England that makes a massive difference in how close you are to other people. I commute and I was only in university 3 times a week so I probably wasn't as close as I would have been to people if I lived at uni and met people through halls and accommodation.

YH: What were the factors that influenced or hindered your mobility experience? What was it that made you go? Did your parents encourage you? Was it your teachers? When you spoke earlier, it almost felt like it was something within you or was it that you have just always wanted to go? Where did it come from, I am curious.

P: Definitely, within me, I love travelling, I love being in other countries and being spontaneous. To say that you've lived in another country even if it was just for 6 months I think that is such an amazing thing and definitely it adds to in terms of when I do want to get a job in teaching, I would like to consider being able to teach abroad. When I apply for things like my PGCE it will put me in a better position (I'm not being big headed) than people who may not have had experiences like that.

YH: Is that in your mind when you're doing it, that it will make you stand out when you want a job?

P: Yeah definitely, even before it when we went to the information days they said it would add to your CV and definitely, it would

YH: And your conscious about that? That it's not just about doing a course, that you're thinking about your future as well.

P: Yeah definitely. When people go to uni I think in my first year I was just thinking "I'm here and I'm doing my course". I don't think until my 2<sup>nd</sup> year I started to realise that there are all these other things that you can take advantage of to try and better yourself. If you are struggling (not that I was struggling doing this) but it is a good opportunity. Also when I was speaking to my mum (she didn't go to uni, she just went straight into work because that's what she had to do) she said "we didn't get these opportunities so you really need to do it and I'm behind you 100%"

YH: And growing up did you go on holidays abroad or did you stay more local?

P: Yeah we went abroad. My mum was one of 9 so they never really got to go on holiday so my mum always used to take us on holiday every year so we were very lucky. We've got a really big family so a lot of us would go over to France and Spain on caravan sites and stay there. Then she also took us to America twice, which was really lucky. I also have family in New York so we stayed with them one year. I'm very lucky.

YH: Again, what are the advantages or disadvantages of a mobility experience?

P: Well meeting people that live all over, so for example my friend that I met who was my roommate from Michigan, she came and stayed with me last year, it was nice to see her and show her around Manchester. Then even just the girls I met from London, they came to stay with me and that was nice. The friends that I met in Amsterdam are from Germany, Austria, and Switzerland so we are all going to meet up again. Just picking up little bits of language, even though I am not fluent in anything I can say the odd thing now and then. When I was in Amsterdam I was able to go to other countries easier so I went to Belgium by train, it's making use of being able to travel to other places.

YH: What skills have you developed as a result of going to America and Amsterdam?

P: Definitely being more open minded.

YH: So you talked about being independent and confidence.

P: Yeah so being more independent and growing in confidence certain things that I wouldn't have done before

YH: You also said you've become more open minded

P: Yeah more open minded definitely, and less judgemental. I don't think I was really judgemental person but everybody judges but it's just about how you process that in your mind so you know beforehand. Everybody looks at someone and they judge them but it's just how you deal with that. Take time to get to know someone rather than thinking "they might be this" "they might be that" and then take in how you feel about someone. Actually listening to other people, it's interesting to just speak to other people.

YH: Would you recommend the mobility experience to other students and why?

P: Yeah 100%. Since I came back I have done a presentation discussing my time there and why I think it's good to do it.

YH: So you're inspiring other students

P: Yeah and I also did a study abroad fair. It was here downstairs and we were going up to people and telling them about our experiences (first years) who were in our situation. That was good, then I actually got to meet other people who went to different countries as well because it was with all different departments of MMU. I do know that if I lived at uni I probably couldn't have afforded it which is why I think a lot of students may not do it because I think, in terms of money, that is a big barrier to some people.

YH: Finance

P: Finance yeah

YH: What measures or steps do you think could be taken to encourage more students to go abroad? Because obviously a lot of students don't want to go abroad.

P: I know. I think it would be encouraging people to go to the talks or maybe doing it in a lecture when they initially come. A lot of people get sent the emails but they don't take action on it, they just think "it's not for me" then when I go and speak to people and tell people what I did they say "I wish I could have done that" and then they could have but they probably thought "I don't want to". I think especially when you see someone else's experience, rather than it just being a university lecturer saying "you can do this" but if someone actually sees it first hand, just looking through a few photos that they may have taken and maybe telling a story about when I was there. It definably gives more of an actual interest to them of how good the experience is.

YH: So having students talk about their experience

P: Their own experience to other students, which I did actually do but the turnout was low, considering how many people are on the course

YH: Were other fellow students/your friends envious of you?

P: Yeah, they actually came to the talks and then they shyed away from it.

YH: It wasn't mandatory, it wasn't part of your course no?

P: No

YH: Thank you so much, I think that's it

## **Appendix 8**

### **PART A: GENERAL INFORMATION**

**NAME:**

**AGE:**

**GENDER:**

**NATIONALITY:**

**ETHNICITY:**

**RELIGION** (if applicable):

**OCCUPATION:** Full-time / Part-time - Temporary / Permanent

**EDUCATION** (please specify the highest qualification obtained, the subject and place of study):

**CURRENT PLACE OF RESIDENCE IN (GREATER) MANCHESTER:**

**Did you study/work abroad during your undergraduate study, if so, where did you study/work?**

**YOUR TIMELINE:** please add what you regard as important events in your life on this timeline.

Year:

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Event:

How many languages can you speak? (Please list)

**What is the research project about?**

Exploring the narratives and experiences of students undertaking mobility and the narratives and experiences of students not undertaking mobility.

**What does the interview consist of?**

The interview includes biographical questions along with questions about your experience of **studying abroad/not studying abroad** during your undergraduate studies.

**Who undertakes the research?**

Yasmin Hussain, Routes into Languages, Project Manager, Department of Languages and Information Communication, Geoffrey Manton Building, Room 113, Oxford Road, M15 6LL  
Email address: [yasmin.hussain@mmu.ac.uk](mailto:yasmin.hussain@mmu.ac.uk)

**Who is funding this research project?**

The Research is part of my EdD studies at the Manchester Metropolitan University.

Please understand that your participation in this study is entirely voluntary.

If there are any questions that you do not wish to answer, you do not have to answer them. You have the option to withdraw your consent and to stop the interview at any time.

The researcher will ensure that the anonymity and privacy of the participant is respected.

The identities and research records of those participating in this research project will be kept confidential.

If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to raise them at any time during the interview.

If you have any questions or concerns after the interview, please feel free to contact Yasmin.

**DECLARATION**

I have read and understood the above information; I agree to participate in this research project.

I am aware that I may discontinue my participation at any time; I understand that the information I give will be kept in strictest confidence by the researcher.

I consent to have my interview audio-recorded. YES - NO

I give my permission to transcribe my recorded interview, in whole or part. YES - NO

I agree to share the right to use this information for publication purposes. YES - NO

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Print Name)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

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