

Changing Strategy Discourses for Internationalisation in UK Universities, 2010-2020, and their Implications for Practice.

Penelope Jane Carey

Submitted to the University of Hertfordshire in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Doctorate in Education (EdD)

January 2025

## **Abstract**

This study examines and evaluates internationalisation in UK Universities from the perspective of the themes which underpin institutional international strategy. The context for the study is my own professional practice as a senior academic manager developing and leading the operationalisation of school level international plans and contributing to institutional international strategy development and institutional practice in internationalisation.

The study involves analysis of a sample of UK university international strategy documents and thematic interviews with senior university managers responsible for institutional international strategy development in a post-92 UK university called Violet University. The research study objectives are to identify the dominant themes of internationalisation through institutional strategy at Violet and other UK universities and evaluate shifts in those themes between 2010 to 2020, a period where higher education policy has accelerated moves towards market-based approaches in UK higher education.

This study also considers how institutional strategy can influence and enhance internationalisation practice at Violet and other UK universities. I identify a conceptualisation of internationalisation as a process in UK universities which prioritises income generation and brand positioning through strategy documents. Whilst broad positive ideals of internationalisation also emerge through the theme of global engagement, problems and challenges associated with practice surface less readily. From this study, suggestions are made to improve connections between institutional strategy and internationalisation practice at Violet and UK universities. Adoption of the term internationality is proposed to promote positive ideals of global engagement alongside recommendations to bridge strategy and practice gaps. In this way, problems and challenges arising in practice which may otherwise be masked or silenced through strategy documents and strategy practice can be surfaced and addressed. Through this study, and the original contribution to practice made, development, implementation, reflection and review of global engagement strategy and practice will be enhanced at Violet and UK universities.

## Acknowledgements

Undertaking doctoral study feels, at times, like the equivalent of running an academic marathon. Undertaking it part time, whilst juggling the competing demands of a busy day job, and raising a family, translates into feeling like that marathon is almost entirely comprised of ever steeper mountains. Undoubtedly, without the support of a great many people, this dissertation would never have been submitted. Many people have supported and encouraged me, and I can't name them all, but I remain grateful to each and every one of them.

I would first like to thank my supervisors, Dr Roger Levy and Professor Karen Mpamhanga – you have supported me through many supervision meetings, drafts and redrafts of this dissertation and provided many helpful insights for this research study. You helped me to see the value in this study. Thank you as well to the colleagues and friends who, knowing I was undertaking this EdD, have so generously offered perspectives and comments. Thank you Dr Sylwia Holmes, Dr Barbara Henry and Dr Daniel Grey in particular for your positivity and endless encouragement. Thank you all, you helped me in more ways than you know. To my dear friend Dr Kit Thomas, you have been an enormous inspiration, as well as being one of the best writers I know. You have encouraged and urged me on when the impending deadline, and the amount still to be done, seemed insurmountable. Your insights, wisdom, and understanding have all helped to shape this dissertation for the better.

My family have said that it felt like they were all undertaking this doctorate. Thank you to my children, Hannah, Giles and Lucy, for putting up with me being closeted away in my study for more weekends than I can recall. And lastly, thank you to my wonderful husband Dermot. You have been endlessly supportive and patient throughout this whole process. I promise I will now have more time to do things at the weekend.

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother Patricia Evans. She encouraged me to go to university when no one from our family had before and she and my father made a lot of sacrifices to help me to qualify as a lawyer. She sadly died during the Covid pandemic, in 2021, but mummy thank you for always encouraging me and believing in what I could achieve.

# Table of Contents

Chapter one – Introduction to the study .....	8
1.1    Background .....	8
1.2    Internationalisation and Higher Education: issues from my own practice at Violet University .....	9
1.3    Focus of the research .....	10
1.4    The research questions for this study .....	11
1.5    Reflexive engagement with the research study .....	12
1.5.1    Reflexivity in thematic analysis .....	13
1.5.2    Changing conceptions of identity .....	15
1.5.3    The ‘journey’ metaphor .....	17
1.5.4    The metaphor of insider-outsider as a reflexive tool .....	18
1.6    Organisation of the dissertation .....	19
Chapter two Internationalisation of higher education – a critical review of literature .....	23
2.1    Introduction .....	23
2.2    Discourse A .....	24
2.2.1    Definitions and typologies of internationalisation .....	24
2.2.2    Rationales for internationalisation of higher education .....	27
2.3    The relationship between internationalisation and globalisation .....	29
2.4    Higher education policy developments in the UK and implications for internationalisation 30	
2.5    Representations of strategy .....	35
2.6    The development of strategy planning in UK universities and the adoption of international strategy documents .....	37
2.7    Discourse B .....	40
2.7.1    Section one - Counter narratives of internationalisation definitions and rationales .....	40
2.7.2    Section two - counter narratives of internationalisation practice .....	44
2.8    Summary - Influence of the literature review in establishing the research study .....	50
Chapter three – The research approach for this study .....	52
3.1    Introduction .....	52
3.2    Adopting a qualitative stance .....	53
3.3    Development of the research study framework .....	54
3.4    Conceptually locating reflexive thematic analysis within critical realism .....	60
3.5    Data gathering methods for this study .....	61
3.5.1    International strategy documents .....	62

3.5.2	Interviews with senior managers.....	67
3.6	The influence of my own professional position in this research study – issues of bias and ethical considerations arising.....	71
Chapter 4 Findings from University international strategy documents and interviews with senior managers – the dominant themes of international strategy at Violet University in 2010.....		77
4.1	Introduction.....	77
4.2	Overview of findings: Dominant themes of Internationalisation in 2010.....	78
4.3	Analysis of Dominant themes in 2010 .....	82
4.3.1	Global Citizenship theme .....	82
4.3.2	Market-Driven Growth theme .....	91
4.3.3	Academic collaboration theme.....	98
4.3.4	Cultural Exchange theme .....	103
4.3.5	Brand Positioning theme .....	107
4.3.6	Risk Management theme.....	113
4.4	Weaker themes of internationalisation strategy .....	118
4.4.1	Alumni and internationalisation theme.....	118
4.4.2	Technology and internationalisation theme.....	120
4.5	International strategy and influence on internationalisation practice in 2010 .....	121
4.6	Summary of dominant Themes emerging from data in 2010 .....	124
Chapter Five Changes in UK University strategy themes between 2010 and 2020 .....		126
5.1	Introduction.....	126
5.2	Analysis of dominant themes in 2020.....	131
5.2.1	Global Engagement theme .....	131
5.2.2	Global Citizenship theme .....	141
5.2.3	Brand Positioning theme .....	149
5.2.4	Market Driven Growth theme .....	157
5.2.5	Academic Collaboration theme .....	161
5.2.6	Technological Internationalisation theme .....	164
5.2.7	Cultural Exchange theme.....	167
5.2.8	Risk Management theme.....	171
5.3	International strategy and influence on internationalisation practice in 2020 .....	173
5.4	Summary .....	174
Chapter Six – Implications of the findings for internationalisation strategy and practice at Violet and sector Universities.....		176
6.1	Introduction .....	176

6.2	Section one – implications from findings of dominant strategy themes that promote positive ideals of internationalisation .....	177
6.2.1	The implications of Global Citizenship for internationalisation strategy .....	178
6.2.2	The implications of Cultural Exchange for internationalisation strategy.....	181
6.2.3	The implications of Global Engagement for internationalisation strategy .....	183
6.3	Section two - implications from findings of dominant strategy themes that promote economic rationales of internationalisation .....	185
6.3.1	The implications of Market Driven Growth and Risk Management themes for internationalisation strategy .....	185
6.3.2	The implications of Brand Positioning for internationalisation strategy .....	189
6.4	Section four The strategic importance of senior manager interviews at Violet University and the role played by.....	192
6.5	Section five Implications of findings for internationalisation strategy through sectoral convergence of vision, mission and strategic aspirations for institutional internationalisation ....	195
Chapter Seven	Influencing and enhancing internationalisation strategy and practice at Violet, and UK universities	199
7.1	Introduction .....	199
7.2	Section one – Recommendations to influence and enhance internationalisation strategy and practice at Violet University .....	200
7.3	Section two - internationalisation strategy and practice enhancement at Violet University; examples from my own professional practice .....	210
7.4	Section three Proposals for future research examining internationalisation strategy and practice in UK universities .....	214
7.5	Conclusion.....	215
References.....		217

## List of Tables

Table 1: Summary of Dominant themes of Internationalisation in 2010 – Page 80, 81

Table 2: Summary of Dominant themes of Internationalisation in 2020 – Page 128, 129,130

Table 3: University strategy document titles between 2010 and 2020 – Page 132, 133

Figure 4: Circular Strategy-Practice Bridge framework – Page 203

## **Chapter one – Introduction to the study**

### **1.1 Background**

This dissertation examines and evaluates an important area for universities, commonly known as internationalisation of higher education. I have chosen to consider internationalisation through the lens of strategy development as this is a driver of university activity and reflects much of my own practice over a long career in higher education. Throughout the last three decades, my own and other universities across the UK have operated through significantly shifting social, political, and economic contexts with higher education policy moving towards market principles, with changes in funding and increased demand for higher education creating a complex contemporary landscape within which universities must operate. Key indicators of policy shift in the UK are the introduction of home student tuition fees in 1998, and the 53% increase in students in higher education from 1,567,313 in 1994-5 (HESA, 1995) to 2,397,180 in 2021-22 (HESA, 2022).

In recent years, universities have placed increasing emphasis on institutional policy creation and development of Vision and Mission statements supported by strategy documents reflecting their thematic institutional priorities. In the context of internationalisation, for twenty years or more UK universities have included international aspirations in their strategic plans (Koutsantani, 2005), often through a distinct international strategy document. Even if once contained within a more limited sphere of international activities, internationalisation is now wholly absorbed within a university's core priorities of teaching, learning and research, and international activities make a significant contribution to maintaining institutional financial sustainability. In 2021-22, international students accounted for one in four students in UK universities, contributing 33.5 Billion GBP net to the economy (Higher Education Policy Institute, 2023). Adding in other revenue streams from international activity, such as academic collaborative partnerships, and international research highlights UK university economic reliance on internationalisation.

My academic career in higher education spans three decades, and a wide range of academic posts, with my current position involving senior management leadership of two academic schools which recruit large numbers of international students and have developed a wide range of international collaborative partnerships. As a senior leader, my role has included translation of institutional aspirations within the university's strategic plan into effective practice in my academic schools. I have sought to create internationally diverse and inclusive communities of learning on campus which model the values underpinning university life, whilst ensuring international partnerships develop collaboratively with mutuality of benefits for all partners. At the same time, and in common with other income generating areas, I am required



to contribute a surplus to maintain the financial sustainability of the institution. Prior to my current position I was significantly involved in promoting the internationalisation agenda at my University- at school, faculty and institutional levels, and it was those responsibilities that form the genesis of this research study, as outlined in 1.2. below.

Current frameworks of internationalisation have been presented as underpinned by an activity or process approach (Knight, 1994; Fielden, 2007) which it has been argued leads to privileging of economic rationales for internationalisation rather than academic and cultural rationales. This study proposes the adoption of a new approach to international strategy and practice at my own university which is referred to throughout this study as Violet University. Giddens asserts '*action depends upon the capability of the individual to make a difference to a pre-existing state of affairs or course of events*' (1984, p14). Through this study I want to show that international strategy can inform, influence and enhance practice in this important area for Violet and UK universities.

## **1.2 Internationalisation and Higher Education: issues from my own practice at Violet University**

Violet University has been actively engaging with an international agenda since it achieved university status in 1993, and it was an early adopter of international strategic aspirations. In 2004 the university won a Queen's Award for Enterprise in International Trade and in 2024 was the only UK university to be awarded the King's Award for Enterprise in recognition of excellence in International Trade. Through multiple academic roles – Institutional Associate Director for International Partnerships, Faculty Associate Dean (International), and now Dean of two large academic Schools, I have been significantly involved with my institution's strategic engagement with internationalisation. I have worked with senior institutional managers to develop and implement an international strategy which encompasses a wide range of international activity, from the recruitment of international students, and the establishment and running of collaborative partnerships, through to engagement with international alumni and the forging of international research links. Challenging income targets have been set, and my role has often involved translation of what have been described by colleagues as distant strategic aspirations and nebulous concepts, into practice-based activities, whilst working with colleagues with differing levels of international experience. Prior to embarking on this study, I began to reflect more deeply upon how the international strategy, and internationalisation more broadly, was developed, interpreted and understood by managers and academic and professional colleagues. My concerns about the rationales informing international strategy engagement grew over time and led to the development of the research questions for this dissertation outlined in 1.3.

### 1.3 Focus of the research

Initially I proposed to focus attention on developing a toolkit for colleagues in Law to draw from to facilitate their engagement with the university's international strategy in the specific context of study abroad. As a School, whilst we had a successful record in recruiting international students to study with us, we had experienced difficulties in persuading many home students to invest a year of time to study abroad. I thought that if I could demonstrate the benefits of study abroad, with evidenced improvement of employability prospects, as previous studies had suggested (Kuh, 2009), this might lead to increased student interest in studying abroad. From the proposed research study, I hoped a toolkit of good practice would emerge. With regard to colleagues, I thought that demonstration of such positive benefits, and attainment of linked strategic aspirations and targets around graduate employability, would achieve a greater buy-in to the desirability of expanding international strategic activity beyond international student recruitment alone. This initial research proposal led me to explore the general literature on internationalisation, considered briefly below and also in detail in chapter two.

Noting extensive literature in the area of internationalisation, I categorised literature reviewed into two discourse themes. One is significant in terms of volume of research studies (Discourse A) and is seen to construct internationalisation as a process whilst the second theme (Discourse B) highlights a counter narrative of concern. Discourse A focusses on the conceptualisation of internationalisation, predominantly as a process with a linked thematic priority centred around practical implementation of international activities and efficiency of operationalisation. Many research studies within Discourse A address a variety of international activities – principally study abroad; recruitment of international students; development of campuses overseas; and transnational partnership development. Common themes expressed within the studies are increasing take up amongst students of study abroad (as I was initially seeking to develop for this study); ensuring quality assurance and adherence to UK regulatory frameworks; and mechanisms proposed to establish collaborative partnerships. On the whole, Discourse A is suggestive of economic rationales for internationalisation, with a linked focus on enhancing international reputation through internationalisation. Early reflection on Violet's international strategic aspirations ascertained that they tended to align with the practical implementation themes within Discourse A. At the same time, I became aware of literature which was more critically challenging of the concepts and activities comprising internationalisation (Discourse B) This discourse questions the underlying economic assumptions of many institutional responses to internationalisation. One thematic concern of Discourse B is that approaches to internationalisation stem from Western centric philosophies

of education and pedagogic practice and that becomes the dominant or privileged discourse theme, with Global South culture and custom being masked or silenced. Broader issues of concern within Discourse B suggest many areas of international activity are contested, including study abroad, which was the initial proposed focus of my research study.

Considering the counter narratives within Discourse B, and the theoretical and philosophical challenges that presents to Discourse A, led to concern that in considering the merits of study abroad for law students, my research would potentially align with Discourse A. In doing so I might fail to surface and explore contested issues, diminishing the value of any findings. I wondered particularly whether focussing on students undertaking study abroad might prioritise graduate employability options that could be less accessible to the broad diversity of students at Violet University. That is not to say there is no longer any point in researching the outcomes of law students studying abroad but doing so as a future study within the context of a more informed approach to international strategy (and the practice that is developed in response to strategy) will, I hope, lead to more valuable findings.

Thus, the focus of this dissertation is centred on exploring and mapping the dominant themes of internationalisation arising through strategy at Violet University as a case study, whilst also assessing the changes, if any, in those themes over a critical ten year period for universities across the UK. My contribution to practice, detailed in chapter seven, seeks to translate those findings from analysis of internationalisation strategy into recommendations to inform and enhance internationalisation practice at Violet and other UK universities.

#### **1.4 The research questions for this study**

As indicated in 1.3 above, the research questions for this study have been developed to facilitate the mapping of the dominant themes of internationalisation at Violet University as a case study institution, to consider how those themes have changed between 2010 and 2020, and finally to address the implications that such changes present for internationalisation strategy and practice at Violet. I also want to compare the dominant themes emerging at Violet University with a sample of other UK universities to understand how themes at Violet converge or diverge at a sectoral level. Considering themes at a sector level will also lead to findings that have applicability beyond the context of Violet University. This dissertation thus seeks to make an original contribution to practice through institutional international strategy development and internationalisation practice at Violet University and across the UK university sector.

The three research questions for this study are:

## **1 What are the dominant themes of internationalisation in institutional international strategies in UK universities?**

In chapter four, dominant themes of internationalisation arising from analysis of data in 2010 are identified and mapped, demonstrating how they have shaped institutional strategy practice and approaches to internationalisation at Violet University. Drawing on Braun & Clarke's thematic analysis approach to data analysis, I will show that international strategy documents and senior manager discussion of international strategy present internationalisation as a set of themes, which influence and inform each other, constituting different but simultaneous ways of constructing the meaning of internationalisation at Violet University.

## **2 How have institutional international strategy themes in UK universities changed between 2010 and 2020?**

In chapter five, the dominant themes of internationalisation that emerge in chapter four from data gathered in 2010 are re-examined in 2020, to assess shifts in their construction and strength, and identify new themes emerging as dominant that are shown to have been less prominent or absent in 2010. Attention is also paid to any changes in the influence of one dominant theme on the others.

## **3 How can institutional strategy themes influence and enhance internationalisation practice in UK universities?**

The third research question is discussed in chapter six, drawing on data gathered in 2010 and 2020 to highlight the multiple ways that institutional strategy themes influence internationalisation practice at Violet University. Recommendations for enhancing institutional internationalisation practice at Violet University are outlined in chapter seven. These recommendations are informed by the conclusions reached through this research, together with my own professional practice, knowledge and experience of higher education. My research seeks to influence and enhance internationalisation practice to promote positive ideals and holistic approaches to internationalisation at an institutional and sectoral level.

### **1.5 Reflexive engagement with the research study**

From the outset I was mindful of issues associated with conducting research within my own institution especially given my own seniority and active contribution towards developing institutional strategies. Perspectives of insider-outsider, together with a journey metaphor, have been relied upon as reflexive tools. Such tools informed the decision to expand data gathering beyond Violet University to increase the rigour of findings and support the development of recommendations for Violet University regarding internationalisation practice.

Finlay (2002) notes that reflexivity is the defining feature of qualitative research. Yet, as Savin-Baden (2004, p365) adds, *'many.... struggle with it as a concept, a process and as a means of moving away from simplistic themed research categories towards in-depth interpretation'*. The difficulty, as Finlay acknowledges, is that qualitative researchers *'have to negotiate the 'swamp' of interminable self-analysis and self-disclosure'*, with the process of reflexivity being *'full of muddy ambiguity and multiple trails.'* (Finlay, 2002, p209) My challenge was to negotiate a path through this complicated landscape and ensure I made insightful discoveries which would enable me to develop recommendations informed by the research findings, not by preconceived ideas.

Reflection and reflexivity have informed every aspect of this research study leading to what Savin-Baden (2004, p368) refers to as *'a personal epiphany'*, in the sense of an *'interactional moment'* where I challenge my own, and other writers' conceptualisation of internationalisation of higher education as a *process*. But as Denzin (1989) notes, whilst all epiphanies are transformational, they are not always necessarily linked to a specific event or point in time. Thus, my own interactional moment emerged quite gradually, more akin to the form described by Denzin (1989) as cumulative epiphany. The significance of my transformative rethinking of internationalisation of higher education has only really come to be regarded as epiphanic through the comings and goings of reflexive thought, turning a critical spotlight onto my previous conceptualisation of internationalisation as a process.

### **1.5.1 Reflexivity in thematic analysis**

Whilst reflexivity has, as suggested above, become the defining feature of qualitative research, the need for reflexive engagement within this study is fundamental given that it is concerned with the unmasking of taken for granted meaning regarding internationalisation strategy at Violet and other UK universities. Recognising that meanings are contingent and therefore changeable is not enough for, as Jorgensen and Phillips (2002) point out, meanings become fixed precisely because they are naturalised and taken for granted, thus we do not view them as understandings of the world but as the world itself. A consideration from the outset was to recognise that I am embedded in higher education and actively working in the area of internationalisation, thus may be at risk of sharing the same understanding of internationalisation as everyone else. How could I provide alternative meanings? What Jorgensen and Phillips suggest is that knowledge production should be viewed as a collective process and thus reflexivity and critique help to build a more comprehensive picture:

*'The version of reality which one puts forward in research is not better than any other at the level of principle, and it can always be cast aside through discursive struggles'* (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p210).

Viewed in this way the social reality is therefore both the object of the analysis and its product. Thus, I began from the position that I had certain cultural resources available to me as a researcher looking at internationalisation strategy at Violet University and also a certain stance with regards to that research (Fairclough, 2001). This reinforces the importance of reflexivity in my research and the need to look for reflexivity tools to validate research approaches and findings.

The starting point of qualitative analysis is that knowledge is contingent and situated, so traditional reflexivity evaluation criteria such as reliability, validity and replicability are not well suited (Taylor & White, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Taylor and White (2000) suggest other reflexivity criteria such as systematicity of the investigation, the richness of detail and the explication of the process of analysis to the reader. It is also suggested that the status of the researcher as an insider might be an advantage in arguing for the quality of the analysis. However other researchers have stressed the problematic nature of being an insider, such as making erroneous assumptions based on the researcher's prior knowledge (De Lyser, 2001). There is also the risk that an insider's familiarity can provide '*an illusion of sameness*' (Pitman, 2002, p285). I have undertaken my research with an acknowledged perspective as an insider highlighting the hindrance to establishing the findings that such perspective might entail, whilst also conducting analysis of UK university international strategy documents in eight additional institutions. In that setting, I was an outsider, although arguably still an insider so far as the areas of higher education and internationalisation are concerned. Therefore, I aimed to strengthen the interpretative stories of internationalisation (Braun & Clarke, 2016) by using a larger pool of data in the form of twenty-four institutional and international university strategy documents.

I also drew on multiple reflexivity tools to validate my research. These include the use of a journey metaphor to illustrate my distancing from the dominant discourses of internationalisation, a focus on changing my conception of identity in the research and a demonstration of how ontological and epistemological principles have influenced my thinking. I also outline a more nuanced understanding of the insider-outsider metaphor, and a clearly articulated approach to analysis of the data. Each of these reflexivity tools is considered in turn.

### 1.5.2 Changing conceptions of identity

I chose an EdD because it enables me to situate my research into internationalisation strategy in UK higher education within my own world of practice and engage in a research study directly linked to my academic role within the institution. Yet, at the stage of scoping the research objectives, I reflected very little on the potential influence of my own identity in constructing and framing the parameters of my research, beyond an articulation that my particular academic role led me to have an interest in issues around internationalisation of and within UK higher education. However, if I had reflected upon it at all, I would have clearly aligned my identity within the academic community, regarding this identity as both stable and unitary - a clearly defined member of a community of practice located within a school context in a higher education institution. In this sense my notion of self accorded with Becher and Trowler's (2001) research findings as to how academics perceive themselves and colleagues within their disciplinary communities.

Becher and Trowler found that academics conceive disciplinary cultures and forms of knowledge disciplines as having recognisable identities and cultural attributes which create a sense of belonging to an academic tribe. However, I am also a member of a professional body through my qualification and prior practice as a solicitor, but I am only now seeing how this has created a strong co-located influencing identity alongside my academic self through the lens of the pracademic (Posner, 2009). When embarking upon this research I ascribed little or no importance to my professional legal identity, viewing it as separate and distinct from my work as an academic, even a previous identity left behind. My perception of self was referenced by notions of academic identity alone. Now, focussing more explicitly on identity, as experientially and discursively constructed, has enabled me to both dispel my preconceived notions of identity as stable and unitary and also to acknowledge the way that my legal identity has influenced this research. The impact of this renaming of self, coupled with a developing sense of shifting and reconstructing identities, is considered below.

By focussing more explicitly on identity as experientially and discursively constructed, I have been able to reflect on why I initially determined my research to be concerned with internationalisation as a problem/solution situation, because it is the story through which my identity is constructed. Giddens notes that:

*'The stories through which people construct their identities are not transparent insights into their essential selves but continuously revised biographical narratives'*  
(Giddens, 1991, p5)

which incorporate a variety of existing cultural texts which are woven together to make up identity (Hacking, 1986). Thus, adopting a specifically epistemologically-orientated reflexive approach allows me to see more clearly the significance of my own cultural and historical experiences. My location, both within a legal community and subsequently within a knowledge-producing community in a UK higher education Institution, has allowed me to construct an identity which aligned quite readily with the internationalisation as process discourse. I would now recognise that that this particular stance owed as much to my lawyer identity as it did to academic identity. As a commercial lawyer I was accustomed to ideas of problem and solution, with the lawyer providing the bridge between the two on behalf of the client. This problem/solution approach was reinforced by my academic identity as a senior manager, which, responding to internal economic imperatives, led to a focus on income generating activities through internationalisation efforts at Violet.

Despite my move towards a faculty-based role and a renewed focus on institutional strategic developments in relation to international recruitment and transnational educational (TNE) collaborative partnerships, the economic drivers remained constant. Prior to my senior management academic roles, my previous academic experience of internationalisation had been from the operational end of recruiting international students as school admissions manager. I had always experienced ambivalence about this role – the pragmatism of economic drivers necessitating the recruitment of international students at times seemed to jar with my underlying concerns about international student experiences of higher education. These concerns were played out variously in seminars and exam boards, where international students were problematised as struggling linguistically and culturally, the awarding gap in academic performance labelled as cause for concern by colleagues. Further concerns occasionally surfaced but were not explicitly acknowledged, about the dominance of a neo colonial constructed educational experience, and its pedagogic and cultural relevance for many international students, intending to return to their own countries in graduate employment. Viewed from a critical realist perspective what is reflexively revealed is that at the point of starting the EdD my experientially and discursively constructed identity was simultaneously co-located in the power nexus of my legal identity of problem/solution with strong economic drivers coupled with my academic identity's cognisance of the pedagogic and cultural relevance problem in relation to international students, again sited within the context of strong economic drivers.

I now see that I identified the apparent 'solution' to the international student 'problem' to have been facilitated by the drafting of a new faculty international strategy document. The written narrative of the strategy document articulated a strongly facilitative construction of internationalisation which emphasised the positive benefits inter alia of intercultural exchange,



and employability, based on surfacing desires to make sense of and justify what had hitherto been seen as essentially competing issues. Whilst not at this stage tacitly acknowledged, I undoubtedly took this problem/solution approach, inherent in the strategy document, forward in the earliest articulations of my intended EdD research themes.

In no longer seeing my emerging doctoral identity as a unitary stable self, but rather as one which was actively remaking itself, the significance of my academic research role, consequential shifting knowledge positions and influence of a critical realist stance has become clearer. Undoubtedly this new academic role played a significant part in driving the first iteration of my intended study which was to be a consideration of the benefits of study abroad in generating transferable graduate employment skills in students. In this mind set of process and consequence / problem and solution, I considered ways in which the benefits of study abroad could be distilled into a toolkit, captured within an institutional strategy and implemented through operational processes. Indeed, even my own early narrative convention of referring to internationalisation 'of' Higher Education assumes a process perspective. Clearly my decision making in framing the research at this stage was based on a strong value commitment to the broad positive ideals of internationalisation per se, but without fully understanding the power relationships and influence of economic drivers in shaping international strategy at Violet University.

### **1.5.3 The 'journey' metaphor**

During early stages of undertaking the EdD I made tentative references to the metaphor of journey to describe the process of moving from educational practitioner to researcher practitioner.

A quote from Hazlitt about the purpose of a journey formed the frontispiece to one of my first research journals:

*'The soul of a journey is liberty, perfect liberty, to think, feel, do, just as one pleases. We go a journey chiefly to be free of all impediments and of all inconveniences; to leave ourselves behind much more than to get rid of others.'* William Hazlitt (1822)  
From the Essay 'On going a journey'

Hazlett's quote seems apposite for although he speaks of journey in the traditional narrative of physically travelling to another place, in articulating '*the soul of a journey*' in terms of '*liberty... to think... free of all impediments and of all inconveniences*', he also captures the metaphorical journey I felt I was taking as an EdD student. I was beginning to acknowledge

the role played by my own cultural assumptions in framing the research themes in the area of internationalisation strategies in UK higher education.

As I began to read more widely around internationalisation, I pictured myself metaphorically journeying away from the impediment of my taken-for-granted assumptions and paradigmatic perspectives of what internationalisation meant. Reflecting back, I can see embryonic attempts as an emergent doctoral researcher to surface these taken for granted assumptions, using the vehicle of the journey metaphor, coupled with literary narrative, to illustrate my questioning of these assumptions. In particular, I can now see that in describing the development of my research topic in a study day presentation, I drew on the metaphor of Tolkien's novel 'The Hobbit or There and Back Again' to sketch a Home-Away-Home narrative emphasising both the relationship between time and narrative progress as well as a clear distinguishing of 'safe' from 'dangerous' in its geography. My use of the Hobbit journey metaphor can now be seen as symbolising my beginning to move, metaphorically, from the safe territory of internationalisation as problem/solution into the altogether more dangerous territory of internationalisation as a set of power relationships.

Yet, I now see the limitations associated with the simplistic metaphorical journey construction. The recognition of my own taken for granted assumptions and paradigmatic perspectives within the context of my discursively constructed identity as a researcher and practitioner at the outset of this study were too superficial and I failed to consider, in any real depth, the significant impact that my experientially and discursively constructed identities had at all stages of forming the research, analysing the data and synthesising the findings. And what I focussed on even less in my early research was the extent to which I needed to free myself from paradigmatic approaches in this area; approaches which had initially drawn me to naming and constructing internationalisation as a process.

#### **1.5.4 The metaphor of insider-outsider as a reflexive tool**

Using one's own practice as the location for knowledge development is positively received by some writers due to the centrality of the learner. Stephenson et al. (2006) describe this as:

*'the pivotal position of the candidate as the principal agent of control of a programme situated within critical and demanding academic and professional contexts.'*

Stephenson et al. (2006, p26)

Bourner et al. (2001) take this further, identifying distinctive features of professional doctorates which reinforce the binary of professional researchers (PhD) as opposed to researching professionals (Professional doctorates such as the EdD). Described by Bourner et al. (2001)

as transformative learning due to the commitment of participants to furthering the cause of their profession, I can nonetheless now see the potential for compromise inherent within such centrality. Certainly, considered reflexively, I have become aware of significant tension in not necessarily wanting to be seen to challenge the organisational status quo, and how this hesitancy of progressing into risky territory was acknowledged by my use of the Hobbit as a metaphor for the dual themes of safe and dangerous geography in a study day session.

Thus, whilst I began to identify the strength of the neo-colonial narrative within internationalisation as process discourses, the influence of being an institutional insider was not initially acknowledged by me other than in the sense of the insight I felt it offered me to really understand the phenomenon of internationalisation. I did not tacitly acknowledge the problems that being an insider might pose. Thus, I initially paid little heed to the hierarchical implications of researching into my own practice area, outside of the traditional concerns of confidentiality, and overlooked the influence of my own situational standing within that hierarchy. Viewed reflexively, I recognise the significance of the co-constitution of my EdD research; the findings from this research study are more clearly seen as having been negotiated within my own practice context; I recognise that another researcher might well unfold a different story.

## **1.6 Organisation of the dissertation**

To assist the reader, I have summarised the key areas that are covered in each chapter of the dissertation, whilst the table of contents provides page numbers for each chapter and the various subheadings.

### **Chapter 1**

Chapter 1 introduces my interest in and personal experience of internationalisation of higher education at Violet University which has led to development of the three research questions for this study to map the dominant themes of internationalisation, assess change in their strength between 2010 and 2020, and consider how internationalisation strategy at Violet University can shape internationalisation practice at Violet and other UK universities. There is also an account of reflexivity that underpins this study enabling me to view internationalisation differently – foregrounded conceptually as a process scaffolded by economic rationales - and how this conceptualisation was paramount in development of the research questions, approaches to data collection and analysis of the dominant themes of internationalisation, in the specific context of institutional international strategy development at Violet University.

## **Chapter 2**

Chapter 2 presents a review of the key literature on internationalisation of higher education, setting out the context of internationalisation of higher education, with a focus on definitions and rationales, and the meanings associated with international, internationalisation and globalisation. As this study focusses on Violet University and the UK university sector more broadly through strategy documentation, attention is paid to the development of marketised approaches to higher education in the UK with a chronology of key dates highlighting UK government policy decisions which are seen to influence internationalisation specifically at UK universities. The review considers studies focusing on the emergence of strategy in higher education, specifically international strategy. The chapter concludes by presenting the dominant discourses of internationalisation that emerge through the literature associated with definitions of internationalisation and approaches to operationalisation through international activities. This is identified as discourse A for this study. I conclude with consideration of competing discourses highlighting the contested themes of internationalisation in relation to specific international activities. This is identified as discourse B.

## **Chapter 3**

Chapter 3 outlines the research framework for this study with an exploration of the qualitative stance adopted. There is discussion of the data gathering in 2010 and 2020 to address the research questions, through international strategy document analysis and senior manager interviews. Consideration is also given to sampling decisions made and ethical considerations arising from my positionality as a researcher and senior manager at Violet. The approach to data analysis, drawing on Braun and Clarke's reflexive thematic analysis approach, outlines how data was coded and developed into the dominant themes presented in chapters four and five.

## **Chapter 4**

Chapter four addresses the first research question and presents the dominant themes of internationalisation arising from analysis of Violet and sector university strategy documents together with interviews with senior managers at Violet University. Data was gathered in 2010. Six dominant themes emerge, and whilst broad ideals and strategic aspirations for development of *Global Citizenship* emerge, *Market Driven Growth* and *Brand Positioning* are shown to prioritise income generation through internationalisation at Violet University, underscored by a need to address issues of *Risk Management* associated with the competitive environment within which UK universities are situated.

## **Chapter 5**

Chapter five addresses the second research question and presents the shift in dominant themes of internationalisation arising from analysis of Violet and sector university strategy documents together with interviews with senior managers at Violet University. Data was gathered in 2020 and shows strategic aspiration at Violet and sector universities to prioritise a holistic approach to internationalisation through the theme of *Global Engagement* that is strongly underpinned by Violet's institutional values and student focussed vision. At the same time, strategy at Violet and sector universities is informed by the challenging financial context within which Violet and UK universities operate, continuing to prioritise the economic rationales of internationalisation and *Brand Positioning* within a promotional genre that has strengthened over the ten-year period. Financial sustainability is highlighted as crucial by Violet strategy documents and senior managers to enable the broad ideals of *Global Engagement* to be achieved. Of relevance for the third research question explored in chapter six is the finding that interviews undertaken with senior managers in 2010 and 2020 are more likely to surface themes of concern regarding internationalisation than emerge through strategy documents.

## **Chapter 6**

Chapter 6 discusses the findings presented in chapters 4 and 5 to address the third research question- to identify how institutional strategy themes can influence and enhance internationalisation practice in UK universities? Implications of the dominant themes are explored, highlighting areas of convergence and divergence at Violet between strategy documents and senior manager interviews. Considered in relation to previous studies, specific recommendations to influence and enhance internationalisation practice at Violet and sector universities emerge. These are discussed in chapter seven. They address issues identified through the findings that inhibit vertical integration of strategy at Violet University and the surfacing of problems and challenges through practice.

## **Chapter 7**

Chapter 7 offers a new perspective through which to understand internationalisation, specifically through the lens of strategy development and practice. I draw together the research findings and outline the proposal for reconceptualisation of internationalisation strategy at Violet University. This is realised in four ways from this research study. The first recommendation has the potential to enhance practice beyond Violet University and this study's focus on international strategies. The construct of a circular strategy-practice bridge is

proposed to embed internationalisation strategy into practice at Violet, providing mechanisms for problems and challenges, emerging through practice to surface. At the same time the framework provides spaces for reflection and review of internationalisation practice, to inform the next strategy period. In this way, intentional decisions, informed by research and practice can influence the development of strategic aspirations and goals between one strategy period and the next at Violet University. A second recommendation follows from the first, with a strategy-practice group proposed, which operates at the centre of the strategy-practice bridge. It is essential that a diverse range of internal stakeholders are included to enhance internationalisation practice at Violet.

The third recommendation relates to the setting of KPIs, which the findings indicate relate predominantly to income generating activities or external internationalisation through study abroad. It is suggested that KPIs are extended to include the positive ideals of internationalisation, emerging through the findings, especially *Global Citizenship* and *Cultural Exchange* that embrace internationalisation at home as well as abroad.

The final recommendation has a changed nomenclature at its core, encouraging senior institutional managers and staff at Violet to move away from using the term internationalisation and to adopt the term internationality. This change in nomenclature is an important way to reframe strategy development and practice focus towards *Global Engagement*, *Global Citizenship*, *Academic Collaboration* and *Cultural Exchange*. Using the term internationality refocuses attention towards a conceptualisation which is more explicitly intercultural and underpinned by institutional values. In this way I believe that internationality will signal the positive benefits for institutional practice beyond economic and reputational advantage. I conclude this study with suggestions for future research in this area to build on the findings that have arisen.

## **Chapter two Internationalisation of higher education – a critical review of literature**

### **2.1 Introduction**

As discussed in chapter one, this study examines and evaluates internationalisation of higher education through the lens of strategy development as this is a driver of international activity at Violet University and reflects much of my own practice over a long career in higher education. In this chapter I will locate the study, conducted between 2010 and 2020, within the policy context of UK higher education and critically review literature relevant to this research study. A key focus of this review is to map the themes identified in academic writing and introduced in chapter one as Discourse A and Discourse B. These discourses are presented as two key perspectives that emerged through analysis of literature. I have defined them as follows:

**Discourse A** Academic studies that conceptualise internationalisation as a process approach. That conceptualisation is seen to prioritise economic rationales for internationalisation. Discourse A also comprises those studies that, underscored by internationalisation as a process, focus on operationalisation of internationalisation in a university setting.

**Discourse B** Academic studies that present a counter narrative of internationalisation as a contested concept, highlighting discourses of concern in relation to many elements commonly associated with internationalisation in a university setting.

I present the review of literature starting with the broad definitions, rationales and approaches to conceptualisation of internationalisation of higher education that were introduced in chapter one (Discourse A). The review moves on to consider the higher education policy context in the UK, highlighting the movement towards a marketised environment, leading on to consider emergence of strategic planning approaches in universities, and implications, in the context of international strategy in UK universities. This section concludes with approaches to researching higher education strategy arising through literature. Attention then shifts to consider discourses representing internationalisation as a contested concept (Discourse B) in relation to the definitions, and rationales considered at the start of the review, extending discussion to common elements of international activity at Violet University and other UK universities. Literature on areas including global citizenship development, study abroad, international student recruitment and establishment of academic collaborative partnerships highlight the necessity of this research study. Throughout this chapter I will indicate how this critical review of literature has informed development of the approach to addressing the three research questions for this study.

Whilst formal discourse analytical tools are not used in this literature review, the underlying critical challenging of language that underpins such approaches is adopted, and the literature is therefore reviewed using discourse narrative approaches. For example, those aspects of the review of literature considering definitions of internationalisation of higher education will highlight how internationalisation has come to be conceptualised as a process in UK universities. This conceptualisation is considered through the lens of neo-liberal ideological influences that have played such a significant part in shaping higher education policy in the UK in the last three decades.

As a general point of note, this review considers literature across a significant period of time, from early definitions of internationalisation developed in the 1990s, through to 2025, when this dissertation was submitted. Academic writing in the post Covid pandemic era is included, which, whilst not a focus of this study, reveals potential new ways to advance internationalisation strategy and practice.

## **2.2 Discourse A**

As noted in the short definition at the start of this chapter, literature conceptualising internationalisation has been categorised as Discourse A and this section evaluates that discourse in relation to definitions and typologies of approach to internationalisation of higher education (2.2.1) before moving on to address literature on rationales of internationalisation (2.2.2).

### **2.2.1 Definitions and typologies of internationalisation**

#### **Early definitions and typologies of internationalisation in the 1990s**

Few evaluations of the concept of internationalisation fail to acknowledge the work of Jane Knight (1994), whose definitions of internationalisation are comprehensively referenced in research studies and institutional strategy documents. Knight's initial definition of internationalisation highlights

*'the process of integrating an international/intercultural dimension into the teaching, research and service functions of the institution.'* (Knight, 1994, p3).

Over time, most definitions of internationalisation lean towards a view of internationalisation as a complex policy-driven process, integral to and permeating the life, culture, curriculum and research activities of the university and its members (Bartell, 2003). In endorsing the definition advanced by Knight, De Wit suggests that internationalisation should not be regarded as an



activity with a defined beginning and end but rather as a long process focussed on the integration of the many elements within the definition above (De Wit, 1998).

Alongside the definition of internationalisation of higher education, Knight (1994) and others (De Wit, 1998; Schoorman, 2000) identify typologies deployed by universities to inform institutional internationalisation strategy approaches, of which four are suggested by Knight to be most prevalent:

- i) An activity approach informing internationalisation through specific activities, particularly the recruitment of international students which dominated early international education approaches.
- ii) A competency approach, focussing on outcomes of education, linked to student knowledge, skills, interests, values and attitudes.
- iii) An ethos approach, drawing on organisational development theories, with emphasis placed on campus culture to promote and support international and intercultural initiatives.
- iv) A process approach which stresses integration or infusion of an international or intercultural dimension into teaching, research and service through a wide range of activities, policies and procedures. Knight and De Wit (1995) suggest that use of the term “process” conveys the ongoing and continuing effort of internationalisation, whilst the terms international, intercultural and global are used as a triad to reflect the breadth of internationalisation – capturing relationships between and among nations, the diversity of cultures within institutions, and a sense of the worldwide scope. The three concepts of purpose, function, and delivery collectively refer to the overall role and objectives of post-secondary education within a particular country, the primary functions of teaching, research and scholarly activity, and the offering of education courses both domestically and in other countries.

In research studies exploring the parameters of a process approach, (Van der Wende, 2001, Soderqvist, 2002, Teichler, 2004), attention focuses on inherent difficulties in identifying a process approach that is sensitive to the higher education context in a wide variety of countries and cultures. Implications of the difficulties noted in these studies are explored further in 2.4 in relation to the UK higher education context, where academic writers suggest the process approach prioritises economic rationales steering internationalisation towards activities that focus on income generation.

Schoorman (2000) proposes a transformative typology which she argues is best achieved by rethinking the curriculum to create graduates equipped to work within a multicultural world. A transformative approach is seen to align with the concept of global citizenship considered throughout this study. Global citizenship in the higher education context also draws attention to the values agenda of internationalisation (Clifford & Montgomery, 2011) considered in relation to Discourse B later in this chapter.

### **Knight's redefinition of internationalisation of higher education in 2004**

In 2004 Knight acknowledged the limitations of the institutional-based definition developed in 1994, noting the advantages offered by Van der Wende's 1997 definition proposing internationalisation is *'any systematic effort aimed at making higher education responsive to the requirements and challenges related to the globalisation of societies, economy and labour markets'* (Van der Wende 1997, p18). Knight observes that whilst the definition now includes important elements, the international dimension is only positioned in terms of the external environment rather than the education sector itself. This leads Knight to propose a redefinition of internationalisation as:

*"the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education."* (2004a, p2).

This definition has been described as the *'leading definition'* of internationalisation of higher education (Marginson, 2023, p1) yet, as will be discussed further in relation to Discourse B, Marginson suggests that although this definition seems *'innocuous and almost commonplace'*, he asserts it *'conceals a raft of assumptions, judgments, problems and issues.'* (Marginson, 2023, p2).

Many research studies have adopted Knight's definition and proposals for reconsideration of the definition have largely taken the approach of suggesting refinements rather than seeking to develop a completely new definition of internationalisation. For example, a major study undertaken by the European Parliament in 2015 through the Culture and Education Policy Directorate, considers internationalisation of higher education, across several countries, including the UK.

Internationalisation of higher education is redefined as

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

*a meaningful contribution to society.*' (European Parliament Culture and Education Report, Internationalisation of Higher Education 2015 p29).

Extension of the definition to include enhancement of the quality of education is an interesting addition and, whilst linked to making a meaningful contribution to society, a focus on quality enhancement could be seen to respond to policy drivers at a domestic and European level promoting internationalisation objectives. Lomer (2014) has suggested that policies on international students particularly, have '*constructed a marketised concept of quality, premised on the equivalence between student experience/satisfaction and educational quality*' (Lomer, 2014, p273). This research study also considers the ways in which conceptions of quality are drawn upon to strengthen particular discourses, especially those influencing brand positioning and drivers to enhance institutional reputation. However, in more recent studies, the concerns highlighted by Marginson in 2023, in relation to Knight's definition of internationalisation have increased in number and scope. These are considered in relation to the counter narratives of internationalisation, discussed later in this chapter at 2.7.1 within Discourse B.

## **2.2.2 Rationales for internationalisation of higher education**

Knight and De Wit (1997) suggest several potential rationales and motivations for internationalisation, synthesised initially by Knight (1994) into four main rationales – political, academic, cultural/social and economic. A political rationale is closely linked to issues regarding a country's status and role as an independent sovereign entity and was identified as a dominant rationale during the period before the 1980's (Knight, 1994). The academic rationale could be said to be directly related to the early history and development of universities – for many centuries there has been an international mobility of students and an international dimension to research. The cultural/social rationale focusses on the role and position of a nation's own culture and language and the acknowledgement of cultural and ethnic diversity within and between countries as a strong rationale for internationalisation (Knight & De Wit, 1997). However, it is the economic rationale in particular upon which most academic writing has focussed and the impact of economic drivers in the context of UK higher education approaches to internationalisation are considered in the section below.

### **The dominance of economic rationales of internationalisation**

The dominance of economic rationales for internationalisation, especially in the UK, USA and Australia has been highlighted in many research studies. This is suggested as leading to an increased emphasis on the importance of branding, as a response to increasing competition

at an international level, and substantial quantitative growth in the commercial, for profit, education sector (Knight, 2004b). Thus, institutions are seen to be concerned with developing a strong international reputation. Knight does not refer directly to the influence of league tables in this regard, but other reports and academic writing have done. A report by the Centre for Higher Education Research and Information (CHERI) (2008) noted concerns with the five main league tables then relied upon in the UK (The Times Good University Guide, The Sunday Times University Guide, The Guardian University Guide, The Academic Ranking of World Universities (Shanghai Jiao Tong University Institute) and THES-QS World University Rankings). It was suggested that these league tables fail to provide a complete picture of the sector, with some of the measures included being poor proxies for the qualities identified, and insufficient transparency in compilation of the league tables. Notwithstanding these concerns CHERI found that the league tables appeared to be having a significant influence on institutions' actions and decision-making. Hazelkorn (2015) has also suggested that internationalisation is operationalised through a global rankings culture whereby those outcomes that are more easily quantified, for example numbers of international students and staff, are privileged in measures which inform league table compilation. Hazelkorn suggests this creates a powerful weapon in what she describes as a battle for talent. Cebolla-Boado et al., suggest that higher ranked universities can capitalise on reputation to increase international student numbers (Cebolla-Boado et al, 2018). This focus on global ranking is suggested to influence many national university contexts with institutions in the Global South countries of Malaysia and Kazakhstan noted as seeking to mimic world-class universities (Lee & Naidoo, 2020).

Academic commentators (Knight, 2004, De Wit, 1998, Marginson, 2023) suggest that in the UK in particular, the economic rationale for internationalisation is increasingly prioritised as universities look for alternative sources of funds, given reduction in government funding of home students, leading universities to rely more significantly on international student recruitment to maintain financial sustainability.

Thus, international markets have come to be seen as an important source of revenue. Knight suggests that

*“there can be a direct and beneficial relationship between an international market orientation and the internationalisation of the primary functions of a university.... however, the key phrase is ‘can be’ which implies that this is not always the case”*  
(Knight, 1999, p8).

The effect is for an economic orientation increasing promotion and focus on the commercialisation and commodification of everything in the global market, including culture,

which becomes consumerist and pro-competitive (Jiang, 2008). Knight notes the increase in private commercial-based providers who are primarily in business to generate income on a for-profit basis which forms part of a much larger consideration in relation to the commercialisation and commodification of education (Knight, 2004).

The higher education landscape in the UK has witnessed significant change between 2010 and 2020 - the introduction of tuition fees, full scale recession, political turmoil through Brexit, the ongoing effects of Covid, coupled with shifts in immigration policy which particularly impact on international student recruitment. The influence of these national policy approaches on the UK higher education landscape is considered in 2.5 below, and will be revisited in relation to Discourse B, where counter narratives challenging the dominant definition of internationalisation of higher education will be explored.

### **2.3 The relationship between internationalisation and globalisation**

Whilst the definitions, typologies and rationales of internationalisation explored in 2.2 above are suggested as having '*come to exercise a discursive 'hegemony' in Gramsci's (1971) sense, referring to the manufacture of consent*' (Marginson, 2023, p3), the intersections between internationalisation and globalisation are suggested in many studies as being contested (Knight, 2004, Turner & Robson, 2008). Scott (1998) asserts that globalisation and internationalisation carry such different resonances that they stand in dialectical relationship to each other, with overlapping and intertwined strands. Teichler (2004) suggests a blurring of the terms in higher educational contexts where they are seen to collectively mean anything on a global scale characterised by market and competition.

For many commentators, globalisation in higher education represents the most negative aspects of the industrialised world. Yang (2004) makes a clear distinction between globalisation (with connotations of colonialism and inequitable power relations) and internationalisation (sharing practice on a more equal footing). Enders (2003) also distinguishes between processes of internationalisation, with the supposed goal of promoting further co-operation between different countries, and the notion of globalisation as a process of convergence and interdependence which could ultimately lead to a homogenised system of higher education. Jiang (2008) asserts that globalisation tends to integrate formerly national economies into one global economy through liberalisation of trade, free capital mobility and easy migration, blurring national boundaries. In this global economy, Jiang argues that the exploitation of knowledge has become increasingly crucial in wealth creation.

Whether neutrality or the exclusion of ideology within a definition can ever be achieved, is contested. Foucault asserts that language is never neutral or merely descriptive; discourses '*systematically form the object of which they speak.*' (Foucault, 1972, p49). In exploring patterns of globalisation in higher education Blass (2008) also questions whose socially constructed reality of globalisation dominates the agenda? Conflicts between meanings associated with globalisation and internationalisation are revisited in discussion of Discourse B later in this chapter. In recent academic writing, Marginson (2023) suggests that many of the relational problems between internationalisation and globalisation lie within the original definition of internationalisation itself as promoted by Knight and others. Attention now turns to focus on the UK higher education policy landscape, the national context in which this research study is located.

## **2.4 Higher education policy developments in the UK and implications for internationalisation**

In this section I consider the hegemonic process whereby UK higher education was brought to operate according to market practices and values (Fairclough, 1993). I chart the chronology of policy change from the late 1970s through to 2025 that have accelerated the shift towards marketised approaches, considering academic studies highlighting the impact on internationalisation in UK universities. I commenced my career as an academic in 1994, in the early years of the collapse of public service models of UK higher education (Brown, 2011). At the same time the numbers of international students coming to study in the UK, at my own, and other, universities began to increase. Whilst Clark has argued (Clark, 1983) that in practice all higher education systems are a combination of public service and market delivery models, in the UK in particular, higher education saw a radical shift from a public service model towards a market-based approach involving individual consumer student choices from the 1990s onwards. Marginson argues that the economic rationale becomes essential in quasi-marketised contexts (Marginson, 2012).

The transition of the UK towards market considerations, has been accelerated by government policy changes. The 1988 Education Reform Act enacted a move away from state subsidy of universities towards an economic organisation orientation through a quasi-market approach (Le Grand & Bartlett, 1993). In this quasi-market the state continued to supply some financial resource for home students whilst simultaneously encouraging universities to sell full cost academic services to others, particularly international students and educational establishments overseas through Transnational Educational (TNE) arrangements. This is detailed in the section below through a chronology of key policy changes between 1990 and 2024, followed by consideration of the growth in international students studying in the UK. This

section of the review concludes with more detailed consideration of the impact of government policy in strengthening economic rationales for internationalisation in the UK.

### **Chronology of UK Government policy in relation to higher education**

Brown and Carasso (2013) chart the chronology of key developments in the marketisation of UK higher education between 1979 and 2012. Of particular significance for this research study are those developments specifically related to changes in funding representing a market-based approach such that universities might be compelled to seek alternative sources of income generation through the recruitment of international students and development of international collaborative arrangements:

- 1990 Increase in the undergraduate fee level and reduction in the level of the teaching grant to institutions
- 1994 Introduction of Maximum Aggregate Student Numbers (quotas) for undergraduate places at individual institutions.
- 1997 Government sponsored Dearing Report on Higher Education published in 1997.
- 1999 Performance Indicators Steering Group report published which recommends institutional performance indicators including statistical benchmarks.
- 2003 Publication of the White Paper 'The Future of Higher Education' proposes variable tuition fees with income-contingent loans.
- 2005 First National Student Survey
- 2006 England introduces variable fees capped at £3,000 and income-contingent fee and maintenance loans.
- **2010 First data gathering period for this research study**
- 2012 Introduction of new regime for student funding of undergraduate education with fee cap raised to £9,000
- 2012 Introduction of first Graduate Visa scheme permitting international graduates to work in the UK following graduation for up to two years
- 2014 Research Excellence Framework introduced
- 2017 Home student fee cap raised to £9,250
- 2017 Introduction of the Teaching Excellence Framework
- 2018 Creation of the Office for Students (OfS)
- 2019 International Education Strategy launched by Conservative Government
- 2020 The UK leaves the European Union following Brexit vote in 2016
- **2020 Second data gathering period for this research study**

- 2021 Revised Graduate Work Visa Scheme launched
- 2021 Turing scheme replaces Erasmus+ scheme
- 2022 OfS launches Quality and Standards Conditions for Higher Education providers
- 2022 HE Insight claims UK tuition fee is now worth only £7,450 due to the high inflation economy in the UK.
- 2024 Labour government launch review of 2019 International Education Strategy

The chronology above is particularly relevant to this research study, which examines internationalisation strategy in UK universities between 2010 and 2020, a period where significant acceleration of market approaches in UK universities is observed. Running in parallel with the quasi-market in UK higher education is the introduction of new conditions of quality and standards by the OfS in 2022, which applied to all English universities. These conditions have substantially increased performance measures against which university success is assessed. Attainment of benchmark levels for student progression, continuation, outcomes and employability is essential to maintaining registration as a degree awarding body (Bradley & Quigley, 2023). The chronology above presents a complex and challenging landscape for English and UK universities more broadly.

Within this complex and challenging landscape, in the section below, literature is drawn upon to chart the increase in international students studying in the UK over the last thirty years, which, together with increases in home student numbers, highlights tensions between funding and policy aspirations for growth in higher education going back to the Dearing Report in 1997. Bathmaker (2003) notes that whilst Dearing's vision was that higher education should contribute to the development of a learning society, the Dearing Committee had to deal with the urgent financial crisis in higher education in the 1990's, caused by expansion and insufficient funding.

### **Growth in number of international students studying in UK higher education**

While economic impositions were being imposed on the fee level that UK universities could charge for home undergraduate students, there was a significant rise in the number of international students studying in the UK with government strategies actively encouraging growth in this area.

The Migration Observatory at the University of Oxford has documented the increase in international students studying in UK higher education between 1994 and 2022, where by 2022 the number of newly enrolled international students comprises 30% of all students in UK higher education. By 2022 that number included students from the European Union following recategorisation of fee status post Brexit but the significant majority came from outside the



EU. In 2022/23 there were 758,855 overseas students studying at UK universities, 95,505 of whom were from the EU and 663,355 from outside the EU (House of Commons Research Briefing, 2024). While numbers of international students in UK universities have been growing, significant increases in the number of home students in higher education in the UK have been noted. Total registered home students increased from 1,567,313 in 1994-5 (HESA, 1995) to 2,175,530 in 2022-23 (HESA, 2023).

### **Impact of UK higher education policy on rationales for internationalisation**

Teichler (2008) suggests that an emphasis on financial factors, within a general marketisation discourse, has shaped internationalisation strategies in the UK more strongly than in other European countries. This, Teichler argues, is in part the result of regulatory modes embedded in the funding of higher education noted in the chronology in the section above. As a result, differentiation of fees according to the nationality of students is viewed by Teichler as a response to the caps introduced on fees for home students. De Vita and Case (2003) agree noting that

*'although the participation of overseas students in UK universities has a long history, the differential fee policy reconfigures them in such a way that they become part of a calculative cash nexus'* (De Vita & Case, 2003 p385).

Jiang (2008) also asserts that profit has become the major target and motivation leading to increasing trade in university education, what he describes as a *'bums on seat'* (Jiang, 2008, p348) approach to attract considerable income from international students to compensate for the reduction in public funding. This market trend in the internationalisation of higher education can be considered more part of a university's:

*'neoliberal globalisation agenda than a form of internationalisation'* (Currie et al. 2003, p11).

Teichler (2008) also notes that the marketisation discourse in the UK has been reinforced by government policies designed to improve the international competitiveness of Higher Education Institutions. Brady (2006) suggests that performance indicators for the then Prime Minister Tony Blair's Initiative called PMI 2 clearly articulate the continued primacy of economic priority in the UK internationalisation discourse:

- To attract an additional 100,000 international students to the UK.
- To double the number of countries sending more than 10,000 students per annum to the UK.

- To achieve significant growth in the numbers of partnerships between the UK and other countries.
- To achieve demonstrable improvements to student satisfaction.

Brady (2006) observes a clear location of the first three performance indicators within the objective of increasing fee income and the necessity to protect market position for UK Universities. Interestingly, Brady (2006) notes, there are no performance indicators set to measure the extent that understanding of other cultures is improved, and whilst there are targets for increasing the number of international students studying in the UK, there are no targets for UK students studying abroad. This is of interest in relation to this research study, which in seeking to map the dominant discourses of internationalisation at Violet and sector universities, also has a focus on the extent to which economic rationales are seen to prioritise particular areas of international activity, and the setting of key performance indicators could be seen as indicative of international priorities at an institutional level.

Further government policies to increase UK university competitiveness have included the Graduate Visa Scheme in 2012, providing international graduates with guaranteed work permits and the attention paid to developing efficiency of visa processes (although the recent tightening of regulations for the issue of student visas via the UK Border Agency might suggest the foregrounding of other influential discourses such as immigration). The infrastructure of the British Council, operating 211 offices in 147 countries, is also suggested as contributing to the international marketing of domestic Universities, with the recruitment of international students a central element of their work (Van Damme, 2001).

More recently, the International Education Strategy introduced by the Conservative Government in 2019 detailed ambitions to:

- increase the value of education exports to £35 billion per year by 2030.
- increase the total number of international students choosing to study in the UK higher education system (in universities, further education colleges and alternative providers) each year to 600,000 by 2030.

The latter ambition was met swiftly as in 2020/21 the Higher Education Statistics Authority (HESA) recorded 605,130 international higher education students studying in the UK. At the same time as setting out the ambitions above, successive UK governments have been suggested as sending out mixed messaging (House of Commons Research Briefing, 2024) regarding international students, and specifically whether they are to be included in net immigration figures. This creates tension in trying to reconcile objectives towards increasing

international student numbers in contrast with UK immigration policy seeking to lower immigration numbers. This has caused policy instability for successive governments, leading to changes in recent years to student visa holders' rights to work, and sponsor relatives. (House of Commons Research Briefing, 2024). The incoming Labour Government announced a review of the 2019 International Education Strategy in September 2024, but the statement announcing the review retains a focus on economic rationales drawing attention to the International Education Strategy as an effective tool in increasing the value of education exports (House of Commons Research Briefing, 2024).

Having considered the strong economic drivers for internationalisation of higher education in the UK context, this review of literature moves on to consider the increasingly important role played by strategy in UK universities, and implications in relation to international strategy documents which form the focus of this study. Before considering the context of strategy in universities there is a brief review of academic writing on strategy as discourse, given the focus of this research study on international strategy documents.

## **2.5 Representations of strategy**

As considerations of strategy and strategic planning processes have traditionally been situated within business and management contexts, some of the literature based in management and organisation studies has been considered in this review.

In a general management literature context, there are divergent approaches to representing and accounting for the kind of organising activity denoted as strategic management. Some academic studies have characterised strategic management as:

*'a process that deals with the entrepreneurial work of the organisation, with organisational renewal and growth, and more particularly, with developing and utilising the strategy which is to guide the organisation's operations'* (Schendel & Hofer, 1979, p11).

However, what counts as strategy is more contested. Thus, strategy may be assumed to exist 'out there' either in the variables that comprise or govern it (Porter, 1980; Barney, 1991) or in the meanings of organisational members who formulate and implement it (Pettigrew, 1987). What is also addressed in academic writing is the approach or methodology that best captures key features of strategic management. Some studies have addressed the constitutive effects of strategy as discourse through which a plurality of conceptions and accounts of strategy are articulated (Ezzamel & Willmott, 2008). It has been asserted that *'authors of traditional strategy frameworks virtually ignore the role of language in strategic decision making'* (Barry & Elmes,

1997, p432) leading to a lack of exploration of how discourse '*works to create some sense of stability, order and predictability*' (Chia, 2000, p514). Understood in this way, the neglect of strategy as a discourse is identified as a glaring omission (Ezzamel & Willmott, 2008).

Viewing strategy as discourse draws attention to the social as well as a linguistic construction. One approach conceptualises strategy as rhetoric so that strategy making becomes largely the management of meaning i.e. what managers do when they produce and use texts (Cooren, 2004), although Cooren suggests this does not address complex questions of how text and talk translate into a '*performative*' (Cooren, 2004, p374) view of organisational actions, nor does it illuminate the power relations that inform the creation of strategy.

Academic studies considering strategy as a discourse suggests that most views help to constitute a conservative, political neo-liberal ideology centred on profit, managerial power and the reinforcement of capitalist relations (Shrivastava, 1986). Within strategic discourse, the view that some subjects, such as senior managers, have a clear mandate to act whilst other actors are unheard and invisible (presumably employees and potentially other stakeholders in specific organisations such as students in universities) privileges development of strategic plans by particular actors, and so has political implications for the whole conceptualisation of strategy (Barry & Elmes, 1997). Hardy et al. (2000) assert that, as strategy is now present in a broad range of organisations, including universities, as well as the more traditional location in businesses, a phenomenon has been produced from which it has become difficult to escape. Thus, strategy has become so well ingrained in business (and by extension higher education) language that it is commonly accepted as a determinant of success and failure, by virtue of having a good or conversely a bad strategy.

One concern though, drawn out by Leitch and Palmer (2010) is that, on the whole, critical discourse analysis in organisation studies has not adequately addressed the key tenet of analysing texts in context. They argue that context itself is often treated as having a taken-for-granted status, and that too often researchers ignore major issues and challenges in linking specific texts to specific contexts, including the ability to separate text from context (Leitch & Palmer, 2008). Vaara et al. (2010) emphasise that strategy texts are not mere documents representing specific ideas, but they have force effects and textual agency. They assert that strategy documents serve several purposes: they communicate socially negotiated meanings, legitimate ways of thinking and action and de-legitimate others. They may produce consent but may also trigger resistance, and have all kinds of political and ideological effects, some more apparent than others.

In developing research methods and methodology for this research study, detailed in chapter three, attention has been paid to both understanding the themes of internationalisation arising

through international strategy documents in a university context but also how those documents generate force effects. The inclusion of interviews with senior managers responsible for developing, implementing, reporting on and reviewing university strategy, adds an important dimension to this study to understand the broader communication of socially negotiated meanings of internationalisation at Violet University. This review continues with consideration of strategy development, and international strategy development in particular, in a university context.

## **2.6 The development of strategy planning in UK universities and the adoption of international strategy documents**

### **Strategy planning in universities**

A focus in academic writing in relation to strategy planning in UK university explores institutional responses to what has been termed '*late capitalism*' (Fairclough, 1999, p71) or '*academic capitalism*' (Leslie & Slaughter, 1997, p240). Neo-liberalism, it has been suggested, has led to the adoption of '*simulacra of business*' (Sauntson & Morrish, 2011, p73) which accord with a market mode of operating. This has led to the development of university strategic plans and vision and mission statements (Leonard, 2014) as approaches to establishing long term institutional goals. This accords with more traditional descriptions of strategy as constituted of intended behaviours, analytical processes and action plans (Mintzberg, 1990). Such strategies have been described as deliberate and involve what is commonly referred to as a SWOT analysis, whereby strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats are assessed, in conjunction with an organisation's values and corporate social responsibility to inform that institution's strategy (Ansoff, 1980).

There is a linked focus in academic writing on the importance of brand positioning in university strategy documents, which are suggested as emphasising a university's unique attributes, prestige and standing, situated within a competitive environment (Kalafatis et al. 2016; Lomer et al. 2023). Fairclough (1993) asserts that an emphasis on brand by universities is but one example of marketisation and commodification in the public sector more generally. Thus, UK institutions of higher education increasingly operate as if they were for profit commercial businesses competing to sell their products to consumers (Lomer et al. 2023).

### **The adoption of international strategy documents**

Most academic writing on international strategy adoption in a university setting focuses on identifying the extent and spread of international strategy documents as evidence of increasing

importance of internationalisation in a university context. More recent studies considered later in this section begin to establish typologies of university international strategy documents.

Teichler (2005) notes a policy drive towards the creation of institutional international strategy documents and their ascendancy into mainstream institutional activity. Fielden notes (2007) the universal adoption of an international strategy by all UK HEIs. It has been suggested that the prevalence of university international strategy documents is indicative of a strengthening of the role of managerialism (Rouillard & Giroux, 2005), which has led to the overall promotion of neo-liberal ideology in public service (Fairclough, 1995) and the introduction of business sector strategic planning processes into public decision-making (Vaara et al. 2010). This is also suggested as evidence of greater senior managerial involvement in internationalisation, where previously international offices were responsible for international activities (Curtis, 2012).

Fielden's study (2007) observes that many UK Universities describe internationalisation as being a core element in all their activity, which he suggests may account for what he perceives to be general commonality of content of international strategy in UK universities. Whilst Fielden perceived some shift of emphasis in motivation visible in the strategies, principally between those that are university-centred and focus on the future reputation and capacity of the institution and those that are student-centred and articulated in terms of the qualities that students will be expected to gain from their university experience, he still found the content to be remarkably similar. In broad terms, Fielden noted that the university-centred rationale is expressed within research-intensive institutions, with the latter student-centred focus being more evident in post-92 institutions.

Those student-centred international strategy documents articulated a wide range of objectives including international ambience, with global citizenship, global employability prospects and international objectives being most prevalent. But even within these student-centred strategy documents Fielden suggests tension exists between drivers to maintain institutional economic stability through recruitment of international students and broader internationalisation objectives of global citizenship, multi-cultural ethos and cultural awareness. He suggests that, given the financial cost to an institution of a broad internationalisation engagement approach, such tension is perhaps inevitable. The international strategy objectives of those universities that Fielden described as reflecting a university-centred international strategy focussed to a greater extent on enhancement of institutional reputation, as a manifestation of quality subsequently highlighted by Knight (2011).

More recent studies have focussed on internationalisation from a strategic organisational perspective, with academic writers noting the lack of research studies exploring the

development of international strategies in universities (Soliman et al. 2019). Soliman et al. suggest that the concept of deliberate strategy, noted earlier in this section, can be applied to the context of international strategy development. In this way international strategy documents will define key international issues for a university, analyse where the university is currently positioned, and signal where they want to be in the future. Drawing on Mintzberg and Waters (1985), Soliman et al contrast deliberate strategies of international strategy planning processes with emergent strategies, where strategic response is seen to reflect adaptation to external turbulence. Their study sought to identify whether international strategies of English universities are deliberately planned or emerge over time. Four universities formed the sample, and interviews were conducted with senior managers alongside document review. The findings suggested that international strategies during each strategy period were deliberate, reflected by the way each strategy document was planned for and the performance indicators adopted to measure progress. At the same time, the international strategies were also seen to have emerged over time via embedding of internationalisation within institutional strategies. This led to internationalisation achieving a higher profile over several strategic periods. Whilst this study was reported after data was collected in 2010, it was interesting to consider the extent to which strategies analysed for this research study might be seen to be deliberate or emergent at Violet. Recent studies on international strategies in universities have sought to develop typologies of internationalisation. Lomer et al. (2023) conducted a qualitative ideal-type analysis of 132 institutional approaches to internationalisation in UK universities. The typology developed three dimensions seen to shape internationalisation approaches: reputation, mission and attitude. Their findings suggest that universities draw on perceptions of their reputations, and material contexts to develop missions. Lomer et al. assert that a combination of these factors shapes strategic approaches to internationalisation at an institutional level. This leads universities to '*shape their approaches to internationalisation to fit an existing status quo of global elitism.*' (Lomer et al. 2023, p1042). Their study offers useful insights for this research study– their sample of international strategy documents was significantly larger than that undertaken for this study and creates a multidimensional typology of internationalisation through the dimensions of reputation, mission and attitude, with three or four positions identified within each. Thus reputation, a concern for this study too, represents international reputation through positions of unrecognised, emerging, established and stellar. Within the context of this study, whilst the focus is on identifying dominant themes of internationalisation rather than developing typologies, it was interesting to consider how both studies converged or diverged. The advantage in this research study is that it assesses shifts in dominant themes over a ten-year period, which is not a feature of the research studies considered in this review of literature on international strategy planning.

Having focussed on the emergence of strategy planning approaches in a university setting, and the advantages of exploring international strategy documents as discourse at Violet and sector universities, I conclude this review with a more detailed consideration of academic studies within Discourse B, identified at the beginning of this chapter as those studies which draw attention to internationalisation as a contested concept. Discourse B highlights problems and challenges arising through theoretical conceptualisation of internationalisation as well as issues associated with implementation into university international practices.

## **2.7 Discourse B**

This concluding part of the literature review is split into two sections. The first section considers those studies that present a counter narrative from a theoretical perspective in relation to definitions and rationales for internationalisation. The second section is concerned with studies that focus on particular elements of internationalisation, also presenting those elements as contested. There is a significant body of literature that covers counter narratives in relation to many activities associated with internationalisation, but this review focuses on those that are most relevant to this research study. These include global citizenship development, study abroad, international student recruitment and establishment of academic collaborative partnerships.

### **2.7.1 Section one - Counter narratives of internationalisation definitions and rationales**

#### **Counter narratives of internationalisation definitions**

In 2.2.1 above it was noted that Knight's definition has been widely adopted in academic writing and many research studies. However, that universality of adoption has been subject to increasing critique in recent years, as aspects of the 2004 definition proposed by Knight are suggested as contested. The definition of internationalisation proposed by Knight in 2004 is:

*"the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education."* (2004, p2).

In 2015 the European Parliament Culture and Education Report on internationalisation, authored by De Wit et al. extended the definition to:

*'the intentional process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions and delivery of post-secondary education, in order to*



*enhance the quality of education and research for all students and staff, and to make a meaningful contribution to society.'* (2015, p29).

Whilst intentionality is emphasised by De Wit et al. the last ten years have seen an increase in research studies which challenge assumptions of intentionality, drawing on a range of approaches – from counter hegemonic studies through to internationalisation beyond the Global North. Studies by Stein (2021) and Marginson (2023) suggest a complex landscape of discourses informed by a country's historical and geo-political context influence definitions of internationalisation. Stein (2021) asserts that:

*'if power and resources are not reimagined, then this may intensify existing patterns of inequality within an already uneven global higher education landscape'* (2021, p1773).

This view is supported by Oleksiyenko and Shchepetylnykova (2023) who suggest that conceptual premises for internationalisation in stabilised political contexts may be entirely inappropriate in a war-torn context such as Ukraine (Oleksiyenko & Shchepetylnykova, 2023). In the UK, the economic context is accepted as most dominant (De Vita & Case, 2003; Marginson, 2012; Robson & Wihlborg, 2019) leading to adoption of market based approaches to higher education.

Building on concerns raised in some of the studies noted in the paragraph above, Tight (2022) draws attention to the existence of internationalisation of higher education beyond the typical western approach

*'whereby elite models of provision, most frequently delivered in the English language, are seen to have influenced practice globally'* (2022, p239).

Tight's review illustrates considerable research being undertaken with a variety of foci around internationalisation of higher education. Considered against Knight's (2004) and De Wit's (2015) definitions specifically, through a systematic review of recent academic writing, Tight questions whether the internationalisation of higher education can truly be defined as a global phenomenon. This question had previously been raised by Teferra (2019) who, responding to De Wit's notion of intentionality in the 2015 definition, argues that *'internationalisation as regards the Global South, particularly Africa, is far from being an intentional process.'* (2019, p1). Rather, Teferra argues that institutional rankings which invariably favour the Global North *'have pushed the internationalisation pendulum from intention to coercion'* (2019, p1). In support of this assertion, Teferra argues that institutions around the world, including those in Africa, are known to hire companies increasingly to raise their standing in the rankings. How this might be achieved is unclear. Teferra's claims are supported by Heleta (2022) who,

looking at the South African Department of Higher Education and Training's (DHET) 2019 Policy Framework for Internationalisation posits a missed opportunity by the government to rethink internationalisation in line with critical debates and scholarship focussing on the decolonisation of knowledge.

Heleta also challenges DHET's reliance on the Eurocentric definitions developed by De Wit et al. in 2015:

*'instead of developing approaches and concepts based on and relevant to their complex societal and higher education context.'* (Heleta, 2022, p7).

Marginson (2023) has noted the significant scholarly take up of Eurocentric definitions of internationalisation, especially Knight's (2004) definition, and argues that whilst the universal terms of the definition enhance its reach across practice, the equivalent support provided by the definition to any and every cross-border activity should be challenged. Marginson argues that internationalisation cannot be described as a good thing in itself, but the social relations in which it is practised must be taken into account. Thus, whilst in 2007 Fielden suggests there appears to be a general understanding of what the term internationalisation means, more recent academic writing suggests the term is contested (Marginson, 2023), and Eurocentric in orientation (Teferra, 2019; Heleta, 2022). Assertions of the contested nature of internationalisation also arise in consideration of rationales for internationalisation of higher education, discussed below, and delineation of the meaning of, and boundaries between, the terms internationalisation and globalisation. These counter narrative discourses follow in the section immediately after discussion of issues associated with rationales of internationalisation.

### **Counter narratives of internationalisation rationales**

Knight (1994, 2004) synthesised internationalisation into four main rationales – political, academic, cultural/social and economic. In recent years, academic studies have highlighted the contested nature of those rationales. Academic rationales are suggested to prioritise Global North values of higher education as a knowledge commodity in the global education market (Lomer et al. 2023). This is also the view advanced by Teferra (2019), Heleta (2022), and Marginson (2023). Concerns have also arisen regarding cultural rationales through potential dominance of one culture and language over another, as Marginson (2023) has suggested. Jiang (2008) asserts that the global spread of English language increases risks of internationalisation adhering to Western approaches. In the process of providing standardised educational products Jiang suggests this would inevitably lead to a loss of distinctive cultures (Jiang, 2008). Tight (2022) notes too that research on internationalisation authored in the

English language is led by the UK, USA and Australia which, in 2021 accounted for 41% of articles that wrote about internationalisation of higher education.

The most significant critique of the definition of internationalisation developed by Knight (2004) and refined by De Wit (2015) has emerged recently. Marginson (2023) raises not only substantive concerns with regard to the definition of internationalisation but argues a position that calls for a much broader consideration of approaches to fundamental aspects of internationalisation. These range from terminology, geography, relationality and power. Interestingly Marginson does not propose a redefinition of internationalisation but suggests that it is essential to start again. In response, De Wit (2024) agrees that critique is an important part of ongoing development in this field and suggests studies should stop searching for the ideal definition and focus instead on developing new directions for internationalisation informed by scholarship in the global north and global south. Concerns regarding the definition of internationalisation also extend into conceptualisation of globalisation, considered next in the review.

### **Internationalisation and globalisation as contested concepts**

Earlier in this chapter the relationship between internationalisation and globalisation was explored as a component of Discourse A establishing the parameters of both and noting that both terms can be used interchangeably due to lack of definitional clarity. Beyond issues of conceptual uncertainty, the term globalisation has attracted significant academic comment highlighting its contested nature. Discussion of globalisation and its assumed relationship with internationalisation has largely focused on connections with international power and dominance. Dale (2009) notes concerns that the most powerful actors, based in Western educational systems, praise internationalisation almost unconditionally ignoring influences of wider global political, economic and social processes. Globalisation thus becomes conjoined as a localism which has become hegemonic (Santos, 2003).

Developing countries are often confronted with the challenges of globalisation at a critical moment in their transformation. Teichler (2008) suggests the drive to expand higher education systems collides with the impact of global forces confronting developing countries. This situation reinforces the imbalance of power in favour of developed countries and has the potential to neo-colonialise higher education as inequalities grow between the rich, well-established countries of the developed world and the poorer and inevitably less well-resourced universities of the developing world. In a radically unequal marketplace, they are effectively deprived of the right to have a say about curriculum, quality standards and many other educational elements (Altbach, 2002; Sassen, 2006). In critiquing the leading definitions of internationalisation, Marginson (2023) suggests that whilst Knight and others who have

promoted the definition of internationalisation have constructed tension between internationalisation and globalisation, they fail to break away from that definition itself which Marginson argues uses a Western definition to shape worldwide practice (Marginson, 2023).

Considering the definitions, approaches and rationales for internationalisation through the lens of contested discourses, which I have categorised as Discourse B, has been significant in shaping this research study. As was noted earlier in this review, Knight's definition has dominated academic studies and appears in many national and international policy documents. Marginson states '*this is a level of visible impact that most scholars can only dream of*' (Marginson, 2023, p3). Knight's definition is also taken as a definitional reference point for some strategy documents which form the sample for this research study. This study therefore seeks to situate institutional strategy within the context of both Discourse A and B, mindful of the influence of definitions, rationales and approaches to internationalisation in relation to data gathered for this study. Consideration now moves to focus on counter narratives of internationalisation practice seen to arise through four elements of internationalisation - global citizenship, study abroad, the recruitment of international students and establishment of academic collaborative partnerships.

### **2.7.2 Section two - counter narratives of internationalisation practice**

Having considered those discourses presenting counter narratives with regard to the definition and rationales for internationalisation, and the contested relationship between globalisation and internationalisation, attention now turns to common elements of internationalisation activity and practice. Beginning with a consideration of the issues associated with the meaning of global citizenship, section two progresses to address issues arising from study abroad, the recruitment of international students and finally academic collaborative partnerships.

#### **Counter narratives of the concept of global citizenship**

Earlier in this review of the literature, it was noted that some academic writers have proposed a transformative approach to internationalisation (Schoorman, (2000) which may involve rethinking the curriculum to create graduates equipped to work within a multicultural world. A transformative approach ascribes meaning to global citizenship as someone who is aware of the wider world and who respects and values diversity. However, whilst global citizenship understood in this way may be viewed as promoting broad positive ideals of internationalisation, other academic writers have noted, within Discourse B, that there are competing versions of what it is to be a global citizen. Peters et al. argue that

*'there can be no one dominant notion of global citizenship... as notions of global, [and] citizenship... are all contested and open to further argument'* (Peters et al. 2008, p11).

Kraska et al. (2018) reinforce the notion of global citizenship as contested suggesting that perceptions can be based on radically different ideological positions. Within Discourse B the global citizen is suggested to be a graduate equipped with skills that enable them to be competitive, situating global citizenship within neoliberal agendas focussed on economic growth and international competition.

Global citizenship in the higher education context has also been noted, in relation to Discourse A to draw attention to the values agenda of internationalisation (Clifford and Montgomery, 2011). In Discourse A, global citizenship is suggested as offering a vision of moral responsibility to humanity (Nussbaum, 2002) and links to notions of transformative curricula which challenge traditional views and assumptions to permit consideration of non-dominant perspectives by students (Mezirow, 2003). However, within Discourse B, Clifford and Montgomery (2017) suggest that

*'the term global citizen has been widely contested not least because of the lack of a global state to which people could hold citizenship and the perception of it as a western colonial concept.'* (Clifford & Montgomery 2017, p1138).

As global citizenship has been closely associated with internationalisation of the curriculum, Clifford and Montgomery's research study also highlights that

*'indigenous knowledges and the positionings of marginal and diaspora peoples have been widely overlooked.'* (Clifford & Montgomery 2017, p1150).

Linked to contested notions of global citizenship within Discourse B, several studies have also highlighted counter narratives in relation to study abroad, which is often seen within Discourse A as reflective of institutional initiatives to develop global citizenship through internationalisation abroad. Those discourses are considered in the next section of this review of literature within Discourse B.

### **Counter narratives of study abroad**

Much of the research on study abroad within discourse A focuses on the benefits of studying abroad with numerous studies citing the expansion of global knowledge, acquisition of cross-cultural skills and competencies alongside development of intellectual curiosity and resilience (Twombly et al. 2012) leading to increased university engagement and student success (Kuh, 2009).

Alongside these studies, other academic writing has questioned the underlying assumptions associated with studying abroad as part of a university's efforts to internationalise. Such concerns manifest in a number of ways, from lack of equality of access to outbound mobility programmes, due to social, economic or cultural barriers, together with concerns being highlighted that a focus on study abroad ignores important initiatives such as internationalisation at home. Other studies argue that study abroad programmes may associate with brand promotion rather than reflecting genuine goals for internationalisation. Issues arising from those studies are considered below and highlight the decision to move away from researching study abroad for law students, as was the initial proposed focus of this study.

Teichler (2008) suggests that the situating of UK University International strategies within economic rationales ignores alternative discourses which have been prominent in other countries e.g. the knowledge/competence discourse, evidenced by the scant regard paid until recently by universities in the UK to the importance of internationalisation at home, with travelling overseas through study abroad prioritised. Difficulty has often been noted in encouraging UK students to study abroad as part of their studies. A Council for Industry and Higher Education (CIHE) report (2007) observed the numbers of UK students going on Erasmus schemes to Europe fell to 7,200 participants in 2004-5, whereas other European countries witnessed an increase in the number of participants. The CIHE study summarises the barriers to study abroad, the majority linked to economic factors with other barriers noted to be social or cultural. Thus, it is noted that the social mix of students in higher education include many more from backgrounds where overseas travel is uncommon. This is coupled with a perception that schemes like Erasmus+ (and by extension presumably Turing) are elitist and limited to middle class students who can afford the additional living costs. A further factor cited is the large number of students with part time jobs, and other domestic commitments, incompatible with studying abroad. It is also noted that the falling number of students studying a foreign language in state secondary schools has led to a higher proportion of those students wishing to study languages overseas coming from independent schools. Despite such challenges, Universities UK continue to report annually on numbers of students studying abroad with latest reported figures in 21-22 suggesting 26,000 students studied, worked or volunteered abroad (UUK 2023 International Facts and Figures). This remains an extremely small proportion of the 2,862,620 students reported by the Higher Education Statistics Authority (HESA) as being registered in higher education in the same year.

Other studies have identified the participation gap of black students in studying abroad including Boulden (2022) whose qualitative analysis of black students studying at predominantly white higher education institutions in the US suggests that:

*'institutions take a varied approach to study abroad marketing and that some institutions use imagery that could be described as colonialist, voyeuristic or patronising in nature'* (Boulden 2022, p205)

leading unsurprisingly to negative perceptions of the value of studying abroad for many black students. Apperson (2015) situates Study Abroad within a promotional perspective through a study analysing how five universities market study abroad on web sites. Apperson suggests that study abroad marketing often promoted a postcard view of an experience with emphasis placed on images of people and travel destinations. Apperson notes that whilst intercultural benefits of study abroad are highlighted on the five university websites, only one specifically mentions scholarly definitions of intercultural competence and its benefits to students, instead focusing on personal and academic benefits to students within a promotional context.

As long ago as 2007 Kehm and Teichler counselled against much further research rooted in assumptive modelling that students must study abroad to secure international experience. They argue that international experiences in the framework of studies, teaching and research have quantitative limits and that if internationalisation at home cannot be realised to a greater degree, institutional internationalisation efforts will lead to a polarisation of winners and losers. Moreover, Kehm and Teichler (2007) assert that study abroad relies on immersion into a foreign environment to trigger important experiential learning, however they add that

*'the genuine strengths of higher education lie in surpassing experiential learning by systematic learning set apart from daily life...it seems to be more important that higher education institutions strengthen international learning in their core activities of teaching, learning and research.'* (Kehm & Teichler, 2007, p271)

As universities have broadened their approaches to Transnational Education (TNE), to include Joint and Double Degree opportunities, interesting considerations have been posed for the concept of traditional study abroad. Knight and Lee (2012) note that whilst some double degrees offer opportunities for studying in two different countries, providing the experiential learning associated with study abroad, many do not. This suggests that the provision of double degrees may associate more with the economic rationales for internationalisation, emphasising the opportunity to gain double degrees as an advantage above one qualification.

Whilst studies falling within Discourse A highlight the positive benefits of study abroad, and association with development of global citizenship, those studies adopting a more critical stance within Discourse B regard study abroad as problematic for a number of reasons. As part of the research study, perceptions of study abroad and the broader discourse of global citizenship form a focus through Violet and sector strategy documents and senior manager narratives of internationalisation.

### **Counter narratives of international student recruitment**

Consideration of datasets earlier in this review have shown how internationalisation efforts in UK universities have prioritised the recruitment of international students. Figure 1, considered above in 2.4 charts the significant increase in the numbers of international students studying in UK higher education between 1994 and 2022, noting particularly that by 2022 the number of newly enrolled international students comprises 30% of all students in UK higher education, representing in number terms, 758,855 overseas students (House of Commons Research Briefing, 2024). The economic impact to the UK economy from those students being in the UK is impossible to fully quantify but London Economics analysis published in 2023 for the 2021/22 cohort of students estimated that total gross benefits to the UK economy would be £41.9 billion and costs £4.4 billion, a net economic benefit of £37.4 billion over the course of their studies. Whilst Discourse A strongly associates internationalisation with economic rationales through recruitment of international students, many academic studies highlight discourses of concern, categorised as falling with Discourse B. Whilst government policies have been seen to focus on benefits beyond economic factors, Lomer (2014) suggests that such policies are falsely premised on stated equivalence between student experience and satisfaction, and educational quality. Lomer cites Prime Ministers Initiatives 1 and 2 (PMI and PMI2) as evidence of this construction of a marketised concept of quality. Lomer asserts that through critical discourse analysis of both frameworks it is possible to establish that *'international students are seen to enhance quality by their presence as nationally and culturally diverse to promote reputation by word of mouth and to evaluate quality as consumers'*. (Lomer, 2014, p281). Lee and Bligh's (2019) critical literature review of the experiences of online international students identifies four types of narrative in academic literature about online international students. The second type of narrative identified by Lee and Bligh describes online international students as

*'specific others with deficits'* (Lee & Bligh, 2019, p5),



with a deficit of language proficiency most frequently cited. Stein (2017) also highlights the framing of international students as deficient learners. Akdağ and Swanson's discourse analysis of Scottish university policy documents (considered in detail below in relation to academic collaboration) highlights narrative within those documents where international students are '*othered*' and reduced to

*'a pawn and an instrument of the market.'* (Akdağ & Swanson, 2018, p18).

This is a relevant issue for this research study to assess whether deficit narratives of international students (whether studying in the UK or online) and 'othering' of international students is seen to emerge through analysis of the data sets.

Building on counter narratives of representation of international students in this section, discussion now focusses on discourses of concern in relation to academic collaborative partnerships.

### **Counter narratives of Academic Collaboration**

Academic collaboration, as considered within Discourse A, is seen to encompass a wide range of elements within the term. It may focus on the development of TNE partnerships, the establishment of international research collaborations, or delivery of international education online. As Knight (2005) has noted there is no universally accepted definition of TNE, and similar fuzziness is seen in relation to broader description of academic collaboration. Focussing specifically on discourses of concern seen to arise through Discourse B, in relation to TNE, Smith (2020, p7) highlights academic writing that presents TNE as a neo-colonial project. An example is Siltaoja et al. (2019) where International Business Schools are presented as superior and inherently Western (in a way that is represented as unproblematic). Earlier studies of TNE within Discourse B have highlighted conflict between the strong commercial imperatives seen to drive implementation of TNE with the values of educators delivering the programmes (Cheung, 2006).

A different focus on discourses of concern arises from Akdağ and Swanson's (2018) discourse analytical study of Scottish university policy documents which draws attention to two issues in relation to academic collaboration. The first arises through what they call the coercive use of 'we' where use of the personal pronoun is seen to draw ideology into a way of thinking about internationalisation with academic collaboration specifically noted. Akdağ and Swanson assert that emphasis on 'we' through international strategy documents

*'interpolate the reading subject into an ideology of institutional colonialism.'* (Akdağ & Swanson, 2018, p13).

The authors also draw attention to reliance on agricultural metaphors in international strategy documents through narrative that focuses on building sustainable partnerships. In this way, Akdağ and Swanson assert that academic collaboration, represented through the language of development, is underpinned by ideological assumptions of the benefits provided by economic development. Universities are suggested to offer these benefits to potential international partners with 'benefits' accepted within a view of the world where anything other than economic development is perceived as inferior. Further issues arising in academic literature involving narratives of '*specific deficits*' (Lee & Bligh, 2019) in relation to online education have also been noted as discourses of concern in the section above on international student recruitment.

This section of the literature review has focussed attention on the multifaceted narratives within Discourse B in relation to the four common elements of internationalisation - global citizenship, study abroad, international student recruitment, and academic collaboration. Attention has also focussed on contested discourses regarding definitions and rationales of internationalisation. This literature review now concludes with a summary of how the review has been influential in establishing the approach to addressing the research questions for this study.

## **2.8 Summary - Influence of the literature review in establishing the research study**

The critical review of literature concerned with internationalisation of higher education in this chapter has focussed on two discourses - Discourses A and B, which together have informed the approach for addressing the research questions for this study. In this concluding section I summarise the discourses considered in this review and link them to the development of the research questions outlined in chapter one.

In the first discourse, Discourse A, a significant volume of literature developing theoretical frameworks and conceptualisation of the meaning of internationalisation in higher education have been considered; this had itself witnessed a significant shift of its leading themes from early discourse in the 1990s about the meaning of internationalisation as something that could be clearly demarcated (Knight, 1994) to broader issues of globalisation, marketisation and commodification, with concomitant discourse on the move from the information society to the knowledge society and knowledge economy. Alongside these studies a linked element of Discourse A has been discussed, focussing on institutional implementation of

internationalisation. Many of these research studies have been publicly funded by national and supranational agencies and are rooted in the ideology of a competitive knowledge economy driving university internationalisation efforts. Alongside Discourse A, a counter narrative discourse, Discourse B, has been identified and discussed in this chapter. Discourse B is multi themed in its consideration of internationalisation but underscored by discourses of concern about the contested nature of internationalisation, as theoretically conceived, and as developed through international activities in universities. Discourse B draws attention to the prioritisation of economic rationales above political, social/cultural and academic rationales (Van der Wende, 2001). Discourse B suggests the dominant discourse A can mask, silence or resist altogether internationalisation discourses of concern. Some academic studies suggest it does this in multiple ways through silencing the Global South, reinforcing Western centric approaches to curriculum and pedagogy, promoting globalisation of western educational perspectives, and adopting a predominantly export model of higher education with examples arising through studies considered in this critical review of literature.

Discussion of Discourses A and B and the policy context influencing higher education approaches in the UK has focussed attention on the impact of universities operating in quasi-market conditions. At the same time, considering literature on the emergence of strategic planning processes in universities, and the adoption of international strategy documents links those discourses to strategic aspirations for internationalisation at Violet University. Institutional strategy goals will shape internationalisation practice at Violet, but this review has shown that common elements of international activity, considered through previous research studies, are contested. Throughout this critical review of literature, I have noted how the review has informed development of this research study. The research approach adopted is now outlined and discussed in chapter three.

## Chapter three – The research approach for this study

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter develops discussion of the proposed study, outlined in chapter one together with the research questions. In chapter two, a critical review of the literature was undertaken highlighting internationalisation at a theoretical and conceptual level, as well as exploring common elements of internationalisation practice at Violet and sector universities in the UK. In this chapter, I explain in detail the research strategy employed in the study. This will align to the presentation of the findings and analysis in subsequent chapters.

The purpose of this research study is to explore internationalisation strategy at Violet and sector universities through identification of dominant themes and assess shifts in those themes between 2010 and 2020. The study also asks how internationalisation strategy can influence and enhance practice at Violet and UK universities. As a reminder, the research questions outlined in chapter one address three important issues –

- *To identify the dominant themes of internationalisation in UK higher education with particular reference to the development of institutional international strategy*
- *To identify changes in institutional international strategy themes in UK universities between 2010 and 2020*
- *To consider the ways in which institutional strategy can influence and enhance internationalisation practice in UK universities*

This chapter outlines the research methodology and methods, noting the reasons for adopting a qualitative stance and drawing on reflexive thematic analysis as an approach to data analysis, underpinned by a critical realist theoretical perspective, to address the research questions.

In this chapter there is an account of the data gathering methods used together with the approach to analysis of the data and its interpretation. The data gathering involves two methods of strategy document analysis and senior manager interviews. Data was gathered in 2010 and 2020 offering a unique longitudinal insight into the evolving influences on, and impact of, international strategy through the lens of senior leader practice. Thirteen interviews were held with senior managers in a post-92 university referred to as Violet University. Thematic analysis of a sample comprising twenty four institutional and international strategy documents from nine different universities in the UK was also undertaken to broaden understanding of sector approaches to internationalisation strategy. The findings from those data are presented in chapters four (data gathered in 2010) and five (data gathered in 2020) with implications for Violet and UK universities discussed in chapter six.

### 3.2 Adopting a qualitative stance

It was realised from the outset that the research objectives for this study appeared to preclude the use of quantitative methods because, as Rubin and Rubin note (2005) numbers on their own may not tell the full story. Given that this study explores internationalisation strategy and practice, partly based within textual material of strategy documents, the quantitative research method of content analysis, defined by Kimberly Neuendorf as:

*'a summarising, quantitative analysis of messages that relies on the scientific method (including attention to objectivity, intersubjectivity, a priori design, reliability, validity, generalisability, replicability, and hypothesis testing' (Neuendorf, 2002, p10)*

was considered. The concern in using this quantitative approach is that it relies on frequency of text from which systematic relational meanings are then drawn, whereas it is the contextual meaning in which words come to be used rather than simply the number of times a particular word appears that seemed important in the context of internationalisation strategy and practice at Violet and sector universities in the UK.

Qualitative research approaches resonated with the aims of this research study to understand internationalisation strategy as senior managers experience it. To find out what senior managers think and feel, and how they act, suggested I would more readily uncover meanings and interpretations to give shape to internationalisation strategy and practice at Violet University (Sherman & Webb, 1988) through a qualitative approach. Internationalisation may be a phenomenon but the epistemological and ontological assumptions about how we come to know more about it clearly lie within the realm of qualitative research. As was considered in chapter one, reflections on my then professional role as an Associate Dean International in a broad and diverse faculty of three schools led to a shift in ontological stance from perception of internationalisation as a process, to reconsider it as a set of potential power relations. That shift suggested that a toolkit approach to conceptualisation of internationalisation strategy in UK higher education might serve to replicate extant conceptualisations without identifying areas of concern. My own ontological stance at the outset of thinking about internationalisation strategy of higher education could be situated within the dominant epistemological assumptions of internationalisation as a process, identified as Discourse A in the review of the literature in chapter two.

In considering the approach to the research study, focus is placed on the role played by theory, methodology and method and how they each influence the study, framing and shaping this examination of internationalisation strategy at Violet University and the sector universities in the sample. Theory is considered through the metaphor of a lens – leading to a questioning

of current conceptualisation of internationalisation as a process and the extent to which I adopted the same ontological stance at the outset. Thinking of theory as a lens is a powerful metaphorical device in my search for new:

*'ways of thinking and ways of seeing'* (Morgan, 1986, p12).

This is explored further in 3.3 below detailing development of the framework for this research study.

### **3.3 Development of the research study framework**

The development of the research framework for this study has been incremental and informed by the need to reveal rich detail, meaning, and understanding about internationalisation strategy in university settings. I am mindful that theoretical frameworks can also conceal meaning and understanding as:

*'when you provide a window for looking at something, you also... provide something in the way of a wall'* (Eisner, 1985, pp64).

Four potential research frameworks were considered for this study – qualitative content analysis, diffusion of innovation theory, actor network theory, and critical discourse analysis before I settled on reflexive thematic analysis as an approach to data analysis, underpinned by a critical realist theoretical framework. Considering the study of internationalisation strategy at Violet and other UK universities from multiple theoretical framework positions has strengthened the decision to adopt reflexive thematic analysis for this research study.

#### **Qualitative content analysis**

Content analysis can be deployed as a qualitative research technique, from several distinct approaches used to interpret meaning from the content of text data (Hsieh, & Shannon, 2005). Research using qualitative content analysis can be seen to focus on the characteristics of language as communication with attention paid to the content or contextual meaning of the text (Budd et al. 1967; Lindkvist, 1981). Given that it seeks to examine language for the purpose of classifying large amounts of text into an efficient number of categories (Weber, 1990) it was considered as a potential research method vehicle to explore the phenomenon (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992) of internationalisation strategy. Content analysis is advocated as a methodology which can provide insight into often symbolically laden connotations of various phenomena (Nueendorf, 2002; Krippendorff, 2019) with arguments in favour including stability of coding, increased reliability, and relatively easy manipulation of text to produce output

counts and frequency ratios (Bligh & Robinson, 2010). At the same time content analysis has disadvantages including the divorcing of words from their initial context and insensitivity to linguistic nuances (Bligh & Robinson, 2010). Content analysis was discounted for this study in favour of reflexive thematic analysis as an approach to data analysis on two grounds. First, thematic analysis can examine the social context behind a phenomenon such as internationalisation and investigate the way in which language is used to construct meanings. The classification of text into categories within content analysis would appear to overlook the social construction and reification of language, an important aspect in understanding how internationalisation is currently conceptualised. Second, thematic analysis facilitates a more nuanced consideration of the way in which textual and non-textual elements both reinforce extant understandings of a phenomenon, and at the same time stimulate the formation of new meanings. As this research study seeks to look behind the taken for granted conceptualisations of internationalisation strategy and reconceptualise thinking to improve practice, drawing on my own experience and perspectives as a senior manager as a source of data, reflexive thematic analysis is well suited for this purpose.

### **Diffusion of Innovation theory**

Diffusion of innovation theory was adopted in research by Van der Wende (1999) to assess the extent to which internationalisation of higher education can be said to have become institutionalised within university culture. Van der Wende (1999) identified institutionalisation as the most important stage of the innovation process and the area where innovation is most likely to transform or die. Her research asserts that internationalisation strategies will only succeed to the extent that they are compatible with the norms, values and goals of the institution and the actors and adopters within it. Given that international strategy documents are written with the intention of adoption and implementation by the university it seemed sensible to assess the extent to which internationalisation, perceived as an innovation, had become institutionally adopted as initially I felt this could offer broader insights into the sustainability of current conceptualisations of internationalisation. However, once I analysed some of my interview data in relation to diffusion of innovation theory, I became concerned that the findings were not insightful in terms of my research goals of understanding and then challenging extant conceptualisations of internationalisation. Indeed, focussing attention on internationalisation as an innovation reinforced its conceptualisation as a process in my initial findings and did not generate significant new insights. However, Van der Wende's research study has proved helpful in developing practice recommendation three in chapter seven, in relation to the development of a broad range of KPIs to guide internationalisation practice at Violet. This recommendation is supported by Van der Wende's findings that

internationalisation strategies must be compatible with the norms, values and goals of the institution.

### **Actor Network Theory (ANT)**

I also considered Actor Network Theory (ANT) as a theoretical framework for this study. At first the principles underpinning ANT appeared to relate well to the phenomenon of internationalisation. ANT examines the interaction between human and nonhuman entities and considers how they take form and acquire new characteristics – what Law, one of the primary proponents of the theory calls '*semiotics of materiality*' (Law & Hassard, 1999, p4). In ANT, 'actor' and 'network' refer to the framing of human (actor) and non-human (network) interactions through various methods which then transforms into a new entity. In identifying the non-discursive elements of internationalisation as reified into fact in the extant literature, I considered that they could be perceived as material objects from which human elements have been de-centred i.e. nonhuman entities (network). Then, when combined with human discursive elements such as the perspectives of senior managers about internationalisation (actors), they might be regarded as having become woven into objects i.e. the conceptual framework of internationalisation as process. Using ANT to examine the particular connections and translations that assemble such objects into a process of internationalisation, I considered that the movement and politics of internationalisation could be followed to determine its assemblage to order everyday practices of internationalisation into one particular conceptual framework; one which is rooted in a neo-colonial paradigmatic position of internationalisation as a process.

I was drawn to the theory's challenge at a fundamental level for changing:

*'matters-of-fact'* into *'matters-of-concern'* (Latour, 2004, p225).

However, doubts as to the appropriateness of this theoretical perspective for this study grew as I read more widely around the area. In particular I perceived limitations which would inhibit reconceptualisation, notably that the theory stresses that it does not try to explain the behaviour of social actors (Miles, 2014, p26) but rather takes the approach that actors already know what they do and how they are influenced by social forces. It is however a concern of my research, informed by my own practice as a senior manager that institutional actors are not always aware of what they do in relation to internationalisation when viewing it within the conceptual framework of process and the influence of social context forces in creating this construct. Thus, I decided that ANT would not fully account for the construction of extant conceptual frameworks of internationalisation through the descriptive methods advocated by



the theory's proponents. Thus, ANT can be criticised for treating organisations as essentially '*black boxes of actant networks*' (Hanseth et al., 2004) that can be opened and described.

Discounting Diffusion of Innovation Theory and ANT led me to reflect anew on the theoretical framework which would frame my research into internationalisation strategy in UK higher education. I returned to the objectives for this research – identifying dominant themes of internationalisation and their evolution over time to reconceptualise internationalisation strategy in UK higher education from process towards inclusive practice. At its heart my research is interested in a particular way of talking about and understanding internationalisation – both the way it is currently conceived and the way I think it could be reconceived – therefore I am interested in 'discourse' as indicated by the title of this research study. Underlying the term 'discourse' is the idea that language is structured according to different patterns thus discourse analysis, in seeking to analyse those patterns, could provide the insights I sought for my research into internationalisation, particularly given the identification of two distinct discourses through a critical review of the literature, discussed in chapter two. In 3.4 below I discuss approaches to discourse analysis I considered before I determined that reflexive thematic analysis was better suited to the research goals of this study and the positionality of myself, as a senior manager, within that research.

### **Discourse analysis**

My research objectives initially suggested using discourse analysis given that I was seeking to map and challenge current conceptual frameworks of internationalisation, making:

*'a theoretical and methodological 'package' containing ontological and epistemological premises regarding the role of language in construction of the world'* (Jorgenson & Phillips 2002, p4)

an appropriate theory and methodology. Internationalisation, as with other aspects of social life, is framed within a discourse, and sited in a particular social context, the institution of the university. A discourse approach to internationalisation proved helpful in undertaking the critical review of literature, leading to identification of Discourses A and B. The idea of discourse as a particular way of talking about and understanding internationalisation at Violet University seemed to resonate with my personal experiences as a senior manager. Yet, I was aware of general criticism of adherents of discourse analysis in terms of a too ready acceptance that '*anything goes*' in discourse work (Wetherell, 1998, p387).

## **Macro-theoretical critical discourse analysis**

Seeking to identify discourses of internationalisation, in university strategy, from a standpoint of advocating change, led me to consider critical theoretical perspectives within discourse analysis. Attractive features of critical discourse analysis for the purposes of this research are that the character of social and cultural processes and structures are partly linguistic-discursive. Thus, discursive practices through which texts are created and then received and interpreted are viewed as an important form of social practice which contributes to the constitution of the social world including social identities and social relations. As International strategy documents are drafted by senior managers, for interpretation and operationalisation at middle management level, I felt that critical discourse analysis could help me explore the role played by such documents in the linguistic-discursive dimension of internationalisation within the institutional university setting at Violet.

I initially identified my own research objectives as lying within the macro-theoretical approach of critical discourse analysis advocated by Foucault, which has, in contrast to critical linguistics, a focus on enactment of dominance and reproduction of inequality in text and talk (Van Dijk, 2001). In seeking to unmask taken-for-granted truths and make ideological outcomes visible, I thought I could contribute to showing that Internationalisation of higher education could be viewed differently through reconceptualisation; thereby making space for alternative interpretations of reality of internationalisation hitherto resisted through the dominant conceptualisation as process.

## **Issues associated with Foucauldian theoretical approaches**

The methodological concerns associated with Foucauldian theoretical approaches in part lie in the binary divide between macro and micro approaches noted above. Adhering to one or other approach leads to '*methodological and theoretical gaps*' (Van Dijk, 2001, p363); theoretical in the sense that the cognitive interface between discourse structures and the local or global social context is not made explicit and leads to general notions of knowledge and power alone (Van Dijk, 1998). Methodological gaps arise from an inability of macro approaches such as Foucault's socio-political analysis to engage in detailed analysis of text and talk. There is a further concern levelled at Foucault in that it is explicit within his writing that critique must be advocated without promoting any alternative reality or solution (Foucault, 2002a). To do so, Foucault argued, would diminish the value of the critique. From the researcher's point of view the problem inherent within this approach is that if no alternative is promoted, how can the emancipatory premise of critical discourse analysis be achieved? These criticisms have been advanced against Foucault by Habermas (1994) who suggests that critiquing from no standpoint is empty and unproductive.

## **Fairclough's approach to critical discourse analysis**

A potential theoretical and methodological bridge for this study lay in Fairclough's approach to critical discourse analysis. In advocating three integrated levels of discourse analysis mediating between textual, discourse and social practice levels Fairclough has found a way to address the concerns expressed in adopting an exclusively macro or micro discourse analytical research methodology. The assumptions of critical discourse analysis include the notion that not only is language a social phenomenon, but institutions and social groupings, as well as individuals, have specific meanings and values that are expressed in language in systematic ways (Kress, 1989).

Fairclough suggests that Foucault's work on discourse can be drawn on for two main insights—the notion that discourse constitutes the social including objects, and Foucault's insistence on the primacy of inter-discursivity and intertextuality – any discursive practice is defined by its relations with others', and draws upon others in complex ways (Fairclough, 1992b, p55). What Fairclough adds to Foucault's work is close linguistic analysis and reference to real texts in context.

In part it was the methodological requirement for close linguistic analysis of texts, inherent within critical discourse analysis together with adherence to a critical stance, regarding language as a set of power relationships, that drew me away from this approach. I came to recognise that the position of myself within the research, as a senior manager in a university, meant that the lens through which I regard internationalisation strategy does not reflect a common understanding of internationalisation but rather my own identity, status location within the institution, and experiences of working in this area, were playing an active role in creating my own ontological stance. Thus, whilst drawn to critical discourse analysis and its potential to highlight the role of language in constructing reality, identity, and power dynamics of internationalisation at Violet, there was a concern that ultimately my identity as a pracademic, but also a senior manager, could compromise and diminish those findings. Through this study I want to illuminate the inherent tensions between the idealised representations of internationalisation against the realities of strategic practice. A key driver of this study is to enhance internationalisation practice at Violet and sector universities, and to point clearly towards the implications for senior university managers in balancing economic and social realities. This study offers a unique longitudinal approach into the evolving influences on, and impact of, international strategy through the lens of senior manager practice. Senior manager practice is framed through the experiences of the participants focusing on changes in language and presentation of strategic documents. I therefore determined it was important to identify dominant themes emerging through analysis of international strategy documents and

senior manager experiences of internationalisation and illuminate how the substance of these themes evolved between 2010 and 2020. Identification of dominant themes of internationalisation strategy would enable me to address research question three - to consider the ways in which institutional strategy can influence and enhance internationalisation practice in UK universities. This led me to adopt reflexive thematic analysis as the approach to data analysis for this study. In the section below I outline why it was important to locate thematic analysis within a conceptual framework, and why a critical realist approach was adopted.

### **3.4 Conceptually locating reflexive thematic analysis within critical realism**

It was important to conceptually locate this research study within a theoretical framework. Braun and Clarke make clear (2022) that:

*‘there’s no such thing as Atheoretical thematic analysis’* (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p157)

However, as an approach to data analysis, reflexive thematic analysis is theoretically flexible. As I outlined in chapter one, my theoretical orientation in this research study aligns with critical realism, combining ontological realism with epistemological relativism. Thus, whilst I appreciate, as a senior manager, as no doubt would many colleagues at Violet, that internationalisation is economically important to Violet and all UK universities, in regarding internationalisation as a process, economic rationales are shown to be privileged above social and cultural rationales. In the critical review of literature at 2.2.2 the dominance of economic rationales for internationalisation, in UK universities, is noted in several research studies (Knight, 2004, De Wit, 1998, Marginson, 2023). These studies suggest that internationalisation is consequently positioned through university strategy documents as a brand proposition promoting universities as attractive to international students and collaborative partners. Brand focuses on university reputation and standing, whilst also emphasising how students will achieve high quality outcomes as graduates in a global workforce. There is an epistemological relativism that university international strategy provides a position that retains a concept of truth and reality whilst recognising that human practices always shape how we know and experience this. Hence the tensions I discuss in detail at 1.5.2 between the idealised representations of internationalisation with the imperative to meet economic goals and targets and simultaneously experiencing doubts and concerns about those strategic aspirations. The world of internationalisation as I perceive it as a senior manager at Violet University is necessarily mediated by the language used in international strategy and the cultural norms of the institution. I identify as a critical realist because I realise,

drawing on my pracademic identity and senior manager experience, that reality always delimits what is possible:

*'these constructions are theorised as being shaped by the possibilities and constraints inherent in the material world.'* (Sims-Schouten, Riley, & Willig, 2007, p.127)

Therefore, I am part of the world of university internationalisation I want to understand and cannot stand outside of the human and social reality I am observing through this research study (Pilgrim, 2014). Braun and Clarke (2022) neatly encapsulate this as follows:

*'Reflexive thematic analysis, from a critical realist approach, provides access to situated, interpreted realities, not simple, decontextualised truths.'* (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p 171)

Critical realism is a good fit for this project as an example of an explanatory research project which seeks to develop causal explanations (Fry, 2022) through the third research question – how can institutional strategy influence and enhance internationalisation practice at Violet University? Events are one of three concepts from critical realist theory, developed by Bhaskar (2008a), the other two being experiences and causal mechanisms. In this research study experiences are the perceptions and feelings of senior managers regarding international strategy and practice, both those interviewed, and myself, as a senior manager at Violet. Causal mechanisms are the things that produce the events (Bhaskar, 2015), but constituted as multiple causes which interact in complex ways. In this research study the extent to which economic rationales influence internationalisation strategy at Violet University is a potential causal mechanism, but so too are social and cultural rationales.

In the section below I outline the data gathering methods adopted for this study, noting that my own position as a senior manager and active agent in this research, led to particular decision making in the sampling of sector strategy documents, and formulation of senior manager interview questions, within the critical realist approach outlined above.

### **3.5 Data gathering methods for this study**

I chose data gathering methods that would enable me to address the research questions and identify dominant themes in international strategy at Violet University. Two methods were chosen – analysis of Violet's strategy documents, and also a sample of strategy documents from sector universities, together with interviews with a sample of senior managers at Violet.

In the next section I outline and discuss the data collection procedures via strategy documents and interviews. Data was collected to build a picture over time (between 2010 and 2020) of the dominant themes of internationalisation at Violet and sector universities. In the research design, whilst attention is paid to identifying the dominant themes of internationalisation in 2010 and 2020, consideration is also given to shifts in those themes over time to identify how those themes produce causal explanations of institutional strategy to address the third research question – how strategy influences and can enhance internationalisation practice at Violet and sector universities.

### **3.5.1 International strategy documents**

The first data gathering method for this study is analysis of international strategy documents, both at Violet University and a sample of sector universities, the selection of which sample is detailed in the section below. As indicated earlier in this chapter, analysis of international strategy documents was intended to offer insight into the evolving influences on, and impact of, international strategy on internationalisation at Violet. In the remainder of this section, I outline in detail the sampling decisions made for this research study, particularly noting the influence of league tables in selecting the sector sample beyond Violet University, to support the development of themes of internationalisation at a sectoral, as well as institutional level.

#### **International strategy document sampling decisions for this research study**

With 135 universities in the UK (HESA, 2009-2010) at the start of the strategy analysis period, and given the intensive nature of thematic analysis methods, I needed to make sampling decisions, both as to which UK university international strategy documents to analyse, and also as to how many to analyse to determine a sample which would be sufficiently broad to extract ‘thick, rich data’ depth (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007, p 242) but which would not be so broad as to be impossible logistically to manage to analyse and code into themes.

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) assert that qualitative researchers must confront issues of representation, legitimation and praxis which threaten the researcher’s ability to extract meaning from their data. Moreover, as a senior manager tied to the university domain I am researching, I had to be critical of my own role and position within the research (Bloor & Bloor, (2007).

With the aim of this research being to explore internationalisation strategy themes in UK higher education, conceptually driven and informed by my own positionality as a senior manager, I identified that a purposeful sampling method as advocated by Patton (2014) would be best suited to addressing the research questions. Even here there are multiple sampling schemes

promoted and thus it became necessary for me to reflect on the rationale for selecting one university's international strategy document over another, paying heed to the theoretical implications arising from the choices I made.

Miles & Huberman (1994, p34) suggest that sampling strategies can be evaluated in terms of six different attributes, which are outlined below; they were helpful in assisting my sampling decisions:

- 1 The sampling strategy should be relevant to the conceptual framework and the research questions
- 2 The sample should be likely to generate rich information on the phenomena
- 3 The sample should enhance the generalisability of the findings
- 4 The sample should produce believable descriptions/explanations
- 5 Consideration should be given to whether the sample strategy is ethical
- 6 Is the sampling plan feasible?

As I would be looking in detail at the conceptual framework of internationalisation as process, that suggested that strategy document analysis supports criteria one above. In relation to the second criteria, the maximum sample size was 135 being the total number of universities (but not institutions of higher education) in the UK. Thus, the optimum sample size to address both issues of breadth and depth to generate sufficiently rich data to comprise meaningful themes was considered. At the same time, as considered in the literature review at 2.4, the UK higher education sector has been characterised as vertically stratified due to the prevalence of national and international league tables (e.g. The Complete University Guide, The Times HE Guide, The Guardian League Table and Times HE World University rankings). Alongside this are sector driven groupings which have become synonymous with status orientations (the Russell Group for example explicitly references that it comprises 24 leading universities; other groupings included the 1994 group until 2013, University Alliance and Million plus). Thus, to account for implications of a vertically stratified grouping, I decided that regard would have to be paid to alignment of my sample within that hierarchy. The influence of league tables on the sampling decisions made is outlined in detail below.

### **Influence of league tables on international strategy document sampling decisions**

The sampling frame for my research comprised 135 UK universities based on HESA data for the total number of universities in the UK in 2010. When considering the league tables most referenced in my own practice as a senior manager, notably The Complete University Guide, The Times HE Guide, and The Guardian League Table I noted that there were fewer universities listed. There were 116 in The Complete University Guide and The Times HE Guide

and 119 in The Guardian. This suggested not all Universities were submitting data to permit their inclusion within the league tables, or there was insufficient data to enable a score to be produced. I also noted significant differences between a university's ranking within one guide compared to another because of the different methodologies deployed and weight given to metrics. I also observed that the metrics used to create the guides tended not to focus on international strategy factors explicitly, giving more weight to student experience, graduate employability rates, research strength, and average entry score. I considered the Times HE World University ranking guide as an alternative framework from which to sample university international strategy documents, sorted specifically with reference to those universities with the most international outlook. This metric, worth 7.5% overall in calculation of the guide is determined with reference to the number of international students (2.5%), the number of international staff (2.5%) and the number of international collaborations (2.5%) in addition to similar metrics found in the domestic league tables namely teaching and the learning environment (30%) research income, volume and reputation (30%) and research citation strength (30%) I sorted the group by this metric alone, focussing on just those universities with an international outlook based in the UK. Interestingly, sorted in this way, only 52 UK universities featured in this league table in 2010 and there was a clear dominance of those who were pre-eminent in the top two quartiles of the domestically focussed league tables. Only two universities located in the bottom two quartiles of the domestic league tables both Post 92 institutions featured in the Times Higher ranking of the top 400 universities in the world for international outlook. This led me to reject reliance on the Times Higher international outlook as this risked producing a sample which was far less representative of UK universities collectively. I returned to the three domestic league table guides for 2010 from which I determined the average ranking score for each of the 116 UK universities which featured in all three. I then divided the 116 universities into four quartiles based on average ranked score.

### **International strategy documents data gathering in 2010 – phase one**

I undertook a search of the 116 UK university web sites to ascertain whether they had published an international strategy document. The period covered by the strategy documents was also noted and where possible through internet searching alone if the university had published an earlier international strategy. Having determined the number of universities with published international strategy documents as distinct from a corporate strategy document (just over 25% overall had an international strategy published on their website) I then selected one, two or three universities from each of the four quartiles who had published an international strategy document. The quartiles were numbered 1-29, 30-59, 60-89 and 90-116 split as to average ranking score in all three domestic guides to determine a final sample group of nine universities. Universities selected in phase one of the analysis is noted below.



Quartile 1	1-29	Red University, Orange University and Yellow University
Quartile 2	30-59	Green University, Blue University, Brown University
Quartile 3	60-89	Violet University and Black University,
Quartile 4	90-116	Pink University

The universities chosen for this research study have all been allocated a colour to ensure anonymity but also to ensure that the reader does not apply any of their own preconceptions regarding a particular university and its strategy approach to the findings. The documents analysed as part of the sector university sample were publicly available on institutional websites. In the case of Violet University, given my position as a senior manager in that institution, I had access to a greater number of strategy documents than was published on Violet's website. Those documents publicly available are noted in discussion of the findings in chapter four.

Keen to explore shifts in international strategy themes over time, I undertook a second phase of analysis of international strategy documents for the same sample of nine universities in 2020. This has the added advantage of permitting longitudinal analysis, during what has been a period of substantial turbulence for the UK Higher Education sector, but also politically because of the decision to leave the European Union on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2016. Sectoral factors of significance between 2010 and 2020 are highlighted in the literature review at 2.4 and include the increase in UK and EU tuition fees from the £3,000 cap permitted under the Higher Education Act 2004 to a maximum of £9,000 per annum from 2012. The maximum fee cap for Home and EU students was increased again in 2018 to £9,250. There is no maximum limit that can be charged for international student fees, and these tend to be considerably higher than for home students (Migration Advisory Committee Report, September 2018). Further factors of significance included the Conservative government's significant restrictions on the granting of visas to international students to study in the UK and removal of the two-year Post Study Visa Scheme in 2012. Alongside these broader political factors, the higher education sector saw the introduction of additional metric-based assessments of UK Universities, including the Research Excellence Framework in 2014, and the Teaching Excellence Framework in 2017. As both frameworks contribute to league table metrics, this reinforced my decision to analyse further iterations of International Strategy documents for the sample of nine universities.

I was interested to assess any shift in the nine universities in the sample in average scores for The Complete University Guide, The Times HE Guide, and The Guardian League Table. I was

surprised at the significant difference in ranking for some of the universities in 2020 compared to 2010. Only three of the nine had improved their ranking between 2010 and 2020 which is considered in recommendations to enhance strategy practice at Violet University in chapter seven. It potentially calls into question the value of university strategy as a driver to improve an institution's league table ranking. A ten-year period might be considered long enough to see an increase. Of the six universities sampled in 10 who saw their average ranking fall, the most significant drop was 45 places (Black University) with two others experiencing a drop of between 20 and 30 places (Green University and Violet University) and two more a drop of between 10 and 19 places (Orange University and Brown University). These drops were sufficiently significant to move some universities into a different quartile in the second phase of analysis. This might speak to the way in which the metrics in the calculation of league table position (notably the weighting for research strength) favour the Russell Group of universities. For comparison the quartile location for each university in the sample in 2020 was as below, showing universities which had improved their ranking in blue and those whose ranking had declined in red.

#### **International strategy documents data gathering in 2020 – phase two**

Quartile 1	1-29	Red University, Orange University, Yellow University, Blue University
Quartile 2	30-59	Green University,
Quartile 3	60-89	Brown University, Violet University,
Quartile 4	90-116	Pink University, Black University

Also of note was that by 2020 several universities had changed the name of their international strategy document to either a Global Engagement or Internationalisation Strategy whereas the term International Strategy was more prevalent in 2010, and there were fewer distinct International Strategies than was the case in 2010. A number saw international objectives subsumed within the institution's corporate strategic plan. A further change was that whereas the international strategy documents analysed in 2010 had generally been for a period of between three and five years, time periods had lengthened in phase two of the analysis with some corporate strategic plans now covering periods of five to ten years, and fourteen years in one case. A final general point of note is that all bar one of the strategy documents analysed in 2020 included multi-modal features including visual imagery, and in many cases, design features linked to an institution's branding and logo.

The themes emerging from reflexive thematic analysis of the sample of nine universities are presented and discussed in chapters four and five. In the section below I move on to detail the

data gathering approaches through interviews undertaken in 2010 and 2020 with a sample of senior managers at Violet University.

### **3.5.2 Interviews with senior managers**

The second data gathering method for this study is interviews which were undertaken with twelve senior university managers, in Violet University. As indicated earlier in this chapter, the interviews were intended to offer insight into the evolving influences on, and impact of, international strategy through the lens of senior leader practice.

I particularly wanted to explore the different ways in which senior managers articulate their views on the broad importance of internationalisation for the higher education sector, to identify the meanings they ascribe to that concept in the context of Violet's international strategy, and the extent to which they perceive that written institutional strategy is implemented into practice. Another significant area for exploration was the extent to which senior managers see particular themes of internationalisation being undermined or silenced by seeking their views on challenges perceived with internationalisation as well as positive aspects and the extent to which they believe economic rationales influence approaches to internationalisation at Violet University. Such findings are critical in addressing the three research questions:

- 1 What are the dominant themes of internationalisation in institutional international strategies in UK universities?*
- 2 How have institutional international strategy themes in UK universities changed between 2010 and 2020?*
- 3 How can institutional strategy influence and enhance internationalisation practice in UK universities?*

As with the analysis of international strategy documents, the interviews were conducted in two phases in 2010 and 2020 to illuminate how the substance of these themes evolved between the two time periods.

### **Qualitative considerations in undertaking interviews for the research study**

In developing the interview questions, I reflected on different philosophies of qualitative interviewing as discussed by Rubin & Rubin (2012). For this aspect of data gathering, it was important to know how senior managers view internationalisation and the meaning they attribute to it to develop themes through the interviews. I would be paying attention to shared

meanings held by senior managers, including myself, in the '*cultural arena*' (Rubin & Rubin, 2012) of a UK Higher Education Institution but mindful that:

*'the cultural lenses that people use to judge situations are often taken for granted and as such are invisible'* (Schutz, 1967).

Therefore, the construction of the questions in advance of the interviews was necessary to provide a critical lens through which the cultural assumptions of those being interviewed might become apparent. Imperative to this was a recognition that my own cultural assumptions and positionality as a senior manager would inevitably influence what questions I would ask and how I would construe what I heard in the interviews.

The advantages of using qualitative interviews quickly became apparent. As Patton (2002) notes, qualitative interviews can yield in-depth responses about people's perceptions and opinions as well as knowledge. Thus, interviews with individual senior managers were identified as suitable for data gathering given that the initial objectives were likely to be revised, the range of answers could not be fully known in advance and, most importantly, the questions related to tacit knowledge and personal views on international strategy and practice at Violet University. Moreover, the opportunity to receive new viewpoints, potentially not anticipated, added value to utilisation of qualitative interviews in this situation.

### **Development of interview questions**

Rubin and Rubin (2012) describe qualitative interviews as conversations but note a broad spectrum of approaches to qualitative interviewing that differ in first, how narrow or broad the interviewer's questions are and second, whether they are about eliciting understandings or meanings or whether their purpose is to describe and portray events or processes. The nature of this research study is concerned with the evolving influences on, and impact of, international strategy through the lens of senior manager practice. To facilitate this, I prepared a series of semi structured questions that were suggested by the research questions outlined above and the themes and patterns emerging from previous research studies highlighted in the critical review of literature in chapter two.

Adopting Rubin & Rubin's description of interviews as structured conversations, I organised each interview by using main questions, follow-up questions and probes. The main questions were worked out in advance to make sure that the research questions would be addressed. The follow up questions were drafted to explore areas of internationalisation arising through the literature review and my own practice experience to illuminate the tensions between the idealised representations of internationalisation identified as Discourse A in chapter two,

contrasted with contested and problematised conceptions of internationalisation in Discourse B. Probes were used, as suggested by Rubin & Rubin to manage the conversation and keep it on topic. The core questions and follow up questions asked of senior managers in 2010 and 2020 are detailed below:

**1 What do you perceive internationalisation of higher education to mean?** Follow up question – what do you see as the relationship, if any, between globalisation and internationalisation?

**2 Could you tell me about your views on the importance of internationalisation for higher education and more particularly this institution?** Follow up question – Do you think some institutions have taken too much of a process approach?

**3 Do you think that the funding methodology within the UK has influenced internationalisation? If so, how?**

**4 How important do you think internationalisation at home is?**

**5 What is the value of, and role played by institutional strategy documents?** Follow up questions – do you think who authors the strategy document is important? Do you think strategy differentiation is important in UK higher education for internationalisation? Do you think having an international strategy document is a necessary prerequisite for internationalisation?

**6 How well do you think we have implemented international strategy at this university?**

**7 How do you think internationalisation is perceived by colleagues around the university?** Follow up question – how do you think internationalisation is perceived by students, especially international students?

Reflecting Violet University's renaming of the international elements within its institutional strategy documents with adoption of the term global engagement, an additional question was asked of senior managers in 2020 –

**8 Do you prefer the term internationalisation or global engagement to describe our strategic approach at Violet University?**

Thirteen interviews with twelve senior managers were held (one senior manager was interviewed twice in different role capacities over the two phases of data gathering) conducted in Violet University in 2010 and 2020 so that, as with analysis of the international strategy

documents, any changes in the themes over time, could be presented and discussed in the findings. The interviewees have been ascribed a number but in terms of composition the sample comprised a representative sample of academic and professional senior managers. Their role cannot be further identified as to do so would risk revealing identity. Each interview lasted between thirty and sixty minutes and was audio recorded, with the oral permission of the interviewee. In most cases the interview took place in the interviewees own office or online in the case of interviews in 2020 due to Covid restrictions.

### **Reflexive development of the interview questions**

My own influence is explicitly acknowledged throughout this dissertation, arising from my senior manager and pracademic role. As a senior manager with a remit for internationalisation I was aware of the inherent tensions between idealised representations of internationalisation and implications for senior managers in balancing economic and social realities. Deciding to undertake interviews with senior managers at Violet University provided further opportunity for reflexive engagement with the research study and some of the issues to which attention was paid, are noted below. The more considered influence of reflexivity in relation to the research study is discussed in chapter one.

Patton (2002) notes that reflexivity has entered the qualitative lexicon as a way of emphasising the importance of self-awareness and ownership of one's perspective. Whilst Patton commends writing in the first-person active voice to communicate the inquirer's self-aware role in the inquiry, he also observes that voice is more than grammar. Thus, even though I have mostly written in the first-person, attention has also been paid to the development of a credible, authentic and trustworthy voice in presenting the findings in chapters four and five. This has been reflected in the use of direct quotations from the interviews to evidence the findings.

Prior to embarking on the interviews, I reviewed the interview questions at length to consider whether they emphasised my own cultural assumptions about internationalisation within the context of international strategy, and thus whether they would get in the way of hearing the meaning of what the interviewees had said. I amended those questions which as initially drafted, simply provided interviewees with the opportunity to agree or disagree with a particular perspective on internationalisation. I initially proposed to ask interviewees '*do you believe that the funding methodology adopted within the UK has led universities to embrace internationalisation strategies?*' Upon reviewing the question, I decided that the word '*embrace*' suggested too clearly a willingness or eagerness to internationalise based on financial factors and was therefore too clearly an affirmation of dominant economic rationales which might bias responses of interviewees in respect of the first research question:

## *1 What are the dominant themes of internationalisation in institutional strategies in UK universities?*

The question as finally asked in the interviews was *'Do you think that the funding methodology within the UK has influenced internationalisation? If so, how?'*

Discussion now moves to focus on important issues associated with my own positionality in this research study, as a senior manager at Violet, including both the issue of bias, and broader ethical implications arising from this study.

### **3.6 The influence of my own professional position in this research study – issues of bias and ethical considerations arising**

I had already decided to examine UK international strategy through my own lived practice experience, which as outlined in chapter one, led me to choose an EdD over a PhD in order to make an original contribution to practice at Violet University. In developing the research study, two significant issues have arisen as a result of that decision – the first is recognising and addressing the issue of bias and the second is paying close attention to ethical considerations arising from undertaking research at Violet University. The implications of and approach to addressing both is discussed below.

#### **3.6.1 Addressing the issue of bias for this research study**

One concern associated with any qualitative research is the risk of bias. Those who eschew qualitative research methodologies in favour of objective quantitative research methods frequently question whether qualitative research can ever be free of bias. Patton (2002) suggests there is an assumption of bias inherent within subjective qualitative methodologies. However, Patton asserts that even the quantitative methods advocated for social scientists to attain objectivity are no less open to the intrusion of biases than asking questions in an interview.

*'Numbers do not protect against bias; they merely disguise it.'* (Patton, 2002, p476).

Of importance is the acknowledgement that bias may arise in any research context and for the researcher to develop counters to bias. For Scriven (1972) such counters are to be found in being factual about observations rather than being distant from the phenomenon being studied. In contrast, Lincoln and Gubba (1986) suggest replacing the traditional mandate to be objective with an emphasis on trustworthiness and authenticity by being balanced, fair and conscientious in taking account of multiple perspectives, multiple interests, and multiple realities.

By analysing international strategy in universities other than my own, it might be suggested that I was seeking to address potential issues of bias, but I was actually adhering to recommendations for producing methodologically coherent thematic analysis identified by Braun and Clarke (2023). Concepts of researcher bias, representing a positivist conceptualisation whereby the researcher's values and assumptions must be controlled and eliminated, are countered within a reflexive thematic analytical approach through emphasis on the importance of subjectivity, where the situatedness of the researcher, and their identities, values, experiences and skills are viewed both as a resource, but also an essential element to enrich analysis. I am an active agent in this research study as well as a senior manager.

To attempt to counter the risk of bias in this research study, would diminish the value of adopting reflexive thematic analysis as the approach to data analysis through what Braun and Clarke term '*positivism creep*' (Braun & Clarke, 2023, p2). Kidder & Fine (1987) distinguish between small q and Big Q qualitative research, with the former focussing on issues such as coding reliability to ensure objectivity and manage researcher bias. In contrast, Big Q qualitative research values researcher subjectivity as a resource for research. As an example of Big Q qualitative research, this study pivots towards the subjective value brought to the findings through my positionality as a senior manager at Violet University.

### **3.6.2 Ethical consideration for this research study and representation of senior managers through findings**

Throughout this dissertation I have noted my own positionality as a researcher and senior manager in Violet University. Attention was paid in chapter one to reflexive engagement drawing on my pracademic identity as experientially constructed throughout my higher education career. I noted the influence of reflexivity tools, especially the construct of insider-outsider in helping me to conceive internationalisation as a socially constructed process. Equally importantly I have paid attention to ethical considerations arising throughout this study, particularly procedural adherence to ethical protocols of the Doctoral College at Violet University once I decided to conduct interviews with senior managers. The Ethics Participation Form each interviewee received and signed explained the purpose of this research study, and that whilst this study is intended to influence and enhance internationalisation practice at Violet, the research being undertaken goes beyond idealised representations of internationalisation to consider contested issues too.

Ethical approval for interviews was granted but beyond protocol adherence, I also focussed on a broader range of ethical considerations for this research study related to the interpretation of interview data gathered. Braun and Clarke (2022) note that the interpretation of data is



always a political act requiring consideration of the ethics of representation of participants. This extends not only to ensuring no harm is done to senior manager participants through this study but also ensuring that the coding of data sets remains true to their discussions in interviews. In presenting the themes in chapters four and five, many quotes from senior managers are set out but always in a way that prevents identification of the individual, and mindful of the potential negative impacts that might emerge through the findings, in terms of how internationalisation is presented at Violet University. A relevant consideration in paying attention to ethical considerations for this research study is my own positionality as a senior manager through the concept of insider, noted earlier at 1.5.4. I believe there are advantages to being an insider for this research study for several reasons. First, it brought a level of trust to the interviews, both in terms of greater willingness by senior managers to share not only the positive aspects of internationalisation, but also to talk about more contested issues. Secondly, being a senior manager myself meant that assurances given as to ethical representation of senior manager views in the findings provided additional reassurance. I paid a lot of attention to representation of senior manager views in the findings, reflecting throughout the coding process on ethical issues as well as the development of meaning-making stories about internationalisation at Violet through coding of data sets.

In presenting the data findings it was important that I used direct quotes wherever possible to permit contextual clarity and authenticity. However, I had to ensure that individuals interviewed could not be identified. Given the small pool of senior managers available for interview there was a risk of identification. Therefore, I adopted a gender-neutral style for reporting the findings coupled with the presentation of the data referenced to those interviewed being collectively described as senior managers rather than as members of the Office of the Vice-Chancellor, a Dean of a Faculty etc.

Discussion now moves on to consider the approach to data analysis adopted for this study, noting not only how coding was undertaken and themes developed, based on data sets gathered through strategy document analysis, but also the role played by me as a source of data too.

As noted throughout this dissertation, my positionality as a senior university manager plays a significant role in this research study. As a pracademic I recognise that I am an active agent in my own research and practice, drawing on my own experience and perspectives of internationalisation as a source of data. My position offers a unique opportunity to illuminate the tensions in strategic practice that this research study will clearly evidence. As such, reflexive thematic analysis is well suited to the objectives of this research study. This approach to analysis of data is widely used in qualitative research studies (Braun & Clarke, 2023)

especially Braun and Clarke's field of psychology, but increasingly used in other fields too, including education (Xu & Zammit, 2020).

In the section below discussion focusses on how themes were developed for this research study drawing on thematic analysis approaches to data analysis.

### **3.7 Reflexive development of themes for this study**

Throughout this chapter I have detailed the research strategy employed such that it aligns to the presentation of findings and analysis in chapters four, five and six. In this section, attention is paid to how themes emerged through the analysis of data gathered, and illumination of how the substance of these themes evolved between 2010 and 2020.

Undertaking interviews alongside strategy document analysis offered the opportunity for senior managers to talk about their experiences of internationalisation at Violet University (and any other universities at which they had previously worked) and how they believed internationalisation strategy and practice should be developed in the future.

In analysing a sample of international strategy documents at Violet and sector universities as one component of data gathering for this research study, I sought to determine the dominant themes of internationalisation emerging from the strategy documents. With the inclusion of multimodal features amongst many UK university strategy documents such as visual imagery, and design features reflecting a university's particular brand identity, I included those features as well as textual elements in the development of themes.

Alongside analysis of the international strategy documents, I also explored influences on, and impact of, international strategy through the lens of senior manager practice via interviews undertaken for this research study with Deputy and Pro Vice-Chancellors, Deans of school and senior managers in professional units. I wanted to ensure that themes identified through this study were not simply topic summary themes, which Braun and Clarke note is a concern with some studies claiming to use reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2023, p2) but rather meaning-based interpretive story themes, developed through intensive, creative and organic coding. (Braun & Clarke, 2023).

Of relevance in development of themes is what Braun and Clarke describe as a potential issue in reflexive thematic analysis - that researchers too often present topic summaries as themes whereas such conceptualisations do not always map on to the data sets (Braun & Clarke, 2023, p2). Themes should present meaning-based interpretative stories which are built around uniting meaning, which cannot be developed in advance of analysis.

Mindful of the above concerns, in developing the dominant themes of internationalisation presented in chapters four, five and six, I followed a multi stranded approach to data collection and analysis. I used a sufficiently large pool of data, comprising thirteen interviews with twelve senior managers in one post-92 institution called Violet University. Interviews were adopted rather than surveys or questionnaires to gather rich thick data. I also analysed twenty-four corporate and international strategy documents selected using purposive sampling techniques. I have used numerous direct quotations from the interviews and strategy documents to illustrate the dominant themes and described the approach to analysis at every step in 3.8 below. In each instance my analysis was based on thorough and multiple reading of the textual and semiotic elements e.g. visual images through an iterative approach to coding and development of themes. This inductive approach, drawing on my own experiences as a senior manager alongside analysis of the datasets was used rather than simply paying attention to linguistic forms or the use of key words. Equally I recognise, as pointed out by Jorgensen and Phillips (2002, p175):

*'even if we were to follow such reflexive procedures conscientiously, we would never be able to produce fully transparent knowledge, whereby our results would accurately depict reality one-to-one, and whereby we could somehow achieve full control over the effects of these results.'* Jorgensen and Phillips (2002, p175)

Thus, the strength of adopting reflexive thematic analysis as the approach for data analysis for this research study, is the acknowledgement of the inseparableness of me as the senior manager and pracademic researcher and my research topic of internationalisation. There is both the recognised and unrecognised influence of my personal and cultural history. As Finlay (2002) asserts:

*'we recognise that research is co-constituted, a joint product of the participants, researcher, and their relationship. We understand that meanings are negotiated within particular social contexts so that another researcher will unfold a different story. Subjectivity in research is transformed from a problem to an opportunity'*. Finlay (2002, p212)

Below I outline in detail how themes, understood as interpretative, meaning-making stories, were developed through coding of datasets.

Coding of the datasets was organic, evolving and subjective. I familiarised myself with the data sets, reading through the strategy documents and interview transcripts repeatedly whilst noting down initial ideas and patterns. Coding was developed through adopting semantic approaches (capturing explicitly stated ideas in strategy documents and senior manager

interviews) and latent approaches (to capture hidden or concealed meaning informed by my own experience as a senior manager together with the critical review of literature outlined in chapter 2) to generate a series of analytical codes. Those codes were sorted into potential themes around which I collated relevant coded data extracts. This led to further review and refinement of themes to generate an analytic map which visualised the relative strength of each theme, and relationship with other themes. Themes were then reviewed to check if they worked in relation to the coded extracts and the data set. This iterative process continued until I was able to establish the order and hierarchy of the themes, presented in Tables 1 and 2 in chapters four and five.

Chapter three has outlined in detail how reflexive thematic analysis was selected as the data analytical approach for this study of internationalisation strategy and practice, underpinned by a critical realist theoretical framework. Recognising that reflexive thematic analysis permits flexibility around dataset development (Braun & Clarke, 2022) an account of why, and how, international strategy documents and interviews with senior managers at Violet University, were chosen to address the research questions was also addressed. The process of coding of the datasets to generate the development of the themes presented in chapters four and five is also discussed, recognising that my positionality as a pracademic and senior manager is:

*'the driving force of coding'* (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p72)

Chapters four and five present the dominant themes of internationalisation strategy in Violet and UK universities developed from analysis of data gathered in 2010 and 2020. In chapter six the findings are discussed and analysed to examine the potential for institutional strategy to influence and enhance internationalisation practice at Violet University and more generally at a UK university sectoral level, thereby addressing the third research question for this study.

## **Chapter 4 Findings from University international strategy documents and interviews with senior managers – the dominant themes of international strategy at Violet University in 2010**

### **4.1 Introduction**

In presenting the findings from 2010, this chapter engages directly with the focus of this study, *Changing Strategy Discourses for Internationalisation in UK Universities, 2010–2020, and their Implications for Practice*. As outlined in the literature review, mainstream processual perspectives (*Discourse A*) tend to emphasise marketisation, branding and institutional competitiveness and reputational standing, informed by economic rationales, while critical perspectives (*Discourse B*) foreground contested issues associated with how internationalisation is defined together with common forms of international activity including global citizenship, cultural exchange, academic collaboration and the recruitment of international students.

There are six dominant themes identified in Violet University's international strategies and senior managers' accounts. These provide an empirical basis for examining the interplay of discourses of internationalisation. By tracing how these discourses converge, diverge, and create tensions within the 2010 data, this chapter establishes a discursive baseline against which the shift in themes in 2020 can be analysed. By identifying these themes this chapter begins to illuminate how strategy discourses are not static but evolve over time, with implications for how internationalisation is both conceptualised and enacted in practice within the UK higher education sector.

This chapter and chapter five present the analysis of a sample of twenty-four university international strategy documents and thematic interviews with twelve senior managers in a UK university, which for anonymity is referred to as Violet University. The findings in this chapter address the first research question:

*1 What are the dominant themes of internationalisation in institutional international strategies in UK universities in 2010?*

Chapter five addresses the second research question drawing on data sets gathered in 2020 to assess:

*2 How have institutional international strategy themes in UK universities changed between 2010 and 2020?*

Whilst previous studies have addressed the themes that are prominent in international strategy, consideration has not been given to evolving influences on, and impact of, international strategy through the lens of senior manager practice considered as change over a ten-year period. Chapter six will discuss these findings to address the third research question:

*3 How can institutional strategy influence and enhance internationalisation practice in UK universities?*

As a reminder of the research strategy employed, and discussed in chapter three, sector and Violet University international strategy documents were analysed at two points in 2010 and 2020, encompassing multiple institutional strategy cycles. Interviews with senior managers in Violet University were undertaken in 2010 and 2020 with the same role holder, although not always the same person, given changes in roles over the period considered.

The findings presented in this chapter reveal the dominant themes of internationalisation, which have been developed through analysis of data gathered in 2010. I have discussed in detail in 3.8 how themes emerge through reflexive thematic analysis. In presenting the themes I highlight whether and if so, how institutional strategy documents and senior managers' perspectives converge or diverge, and dominant themes are observed to relate to other themes. I have also paid attention to themes that present as weaker in the data gathered in 2010, to consider how the substance of these themes evolves between the two time periods of data gathering. Dominant themes which emerge from analysis of data gathered in 2020, are presented and discussed in chapter five.

## **4.2 Overview of findings: Dominant themes of Internationalisation in 2010**

The findings indicate multiple, often overlapping themes that construct the concept of internationalisation within Violet University's strategies and through the lens of its senior managers. Violet University place strong emphasis through strategy documents (Strategic Plan 2007-2012, International Engagement Strategy 2010-2015) on plurality of contribution to vision, mission and values from staff, students and Board members, and whilst this suggests an open process in strategy development across the university community, the findings suggest both convergence and divergence in construction of internationalisation between the formal strategy documents and manager representations of international strategy practice, as outlined below. Six dominant themes emerge from the data gathered in 2010: *Global Citizenship*, *Market-driven growth*, *Academic Collaboration*, *Cultural Exchange*, *Brand Positioning*, and *Risk Management*. Each of these themes reflects distinct priorities and values

associated with internationalisation, and the analysis reveals that these themes are at times mutually reinforcing, while at other times they create tensions within strategic planning and practical implementation at Violet University. These tensions reflect those identified as mainstream processual perspectives on internationalisation in the critical review of literature as Discourse A and critical perspectives identified as Discourse B.

The table below summarises each dominant theme, ranked according to overall strength as emerged through the detailed process of analysis of data discussed in 3.8 with a brief description of each theme, and an indication of whether the theme was present or absent in sector strategy documents, Violet University strategy documents and interviews with senior managers. This is followed by a more detailed consideration of each theme, across the data sets with attention also paid to themes that are associated with the six dominant themes. In using the term '*association*' I recognise not only the themes which emerge as dominant, but also how those themes shape and influence, or are shaped and influenced by other themes. For consistency, each of the dominant themes is presented in identical format –considering the general sectoral position first as found through the sample university strategy documents. I then present Violet's strategy documents and finally I address Violet University senior manager perspectives.

**Table 1: Summary of Dominant themes of Internationalisation in 2010**

Theme	Theme construction in 2010	Deployed by Sector Strategy Documents	Deployed by Violet Strategy Documents	Deployed by Violet Senior Managers	Associated themes
<i>Global Citizenship</i>	Positioning students as part of a global community, emphasising intercultural competencies, digital capabilities and civic responsibility	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<i>Cultural Exchange</i> <i>Market Driven Growth</i> <i>Academic Collaboration</i> <i>Brand Positioning</i> <i>Risk Management</i>
<i>Market-driven growth</i>	Focusing on internationalisation as a means to attract international students and generate revenue	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<i>Brand Positioning</i> <i>Risk Management</i> <i>Global Citizenship</i> <i>Academic Collaboration</i>
	Emphasising partnerships with overseas institutions to foster				<i>Global Citizenship</i> <i>Market-Driven Growth</i>



<i>Academic Collaboration</i>	research and programme development	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<i>Brand Positioning</i>
<i>Cultural Exchange</i>	Promoting internationalisation as an avenue for cultural understanding and mutual exchange	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<i>Market-Driven Growth</i> <i>Global Citizenship</i>
<i>Brand Positioning</i>	Using internationalisation to enhance the institution's global reputation, and visibility	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<i>Market-Driven Growth</i>
<i>Risk Management</i>	Addressing geopolitical, regulatory, and competitive risks associated with internationalisation	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<i>Brand Positioning</i> <i>Market-Driven Growth</i>

### 4.3 Analysis of Dominant themes in 2010

The following sections provide a detailed examination of each dominant theme, drawing on specific data points from the analysis of international strategy documents and Violet University's senior manager interviews.

#### 4.3.1 Global Citizenship theme

The theme of *Global Citizenship* emerges strongly across the sector and Violet University strategy documents as well as senior manager interviews, demonstrating its overall strength and importance to internationalisation strategy and represented as a shared commitment to preparing students for a globally interconnected world.

##### **Sector strategy documents**

The sector strategy documents commonly frame *Global Citizenship* as a means to foster intercultural competencies, build social responsibility and develop global awareness. A strong link emerges between the *Global Citizenship* theme and the *Cultural Exchange* theme through the sector strategy documents, which mirrors the findings from Fielden's study (2007) of international strategies in UK universities, discussed in chapter two at 2.6. Sector strategy documents adopt a transformative approach to the concept of *Global Citizenship* involving a rethinking of the curriculum to create graduates equipped to work within a multicultural world (Schoorman, 2000) As noted in the literature review at 2.7.2, within mainstream narratives of internationalisation a transformative approach ascribes meaning to the term Global Citizen as someone who is aware of the wider world and who respects and values diversity, represented as positive ideals of internationalisation.

Brown University, a Post 92 Institution, highlight the importance of the application of knowledge in a diverse global community by encouraging:

*'students and staff in developing the cross-cultural ethos and sustainability skills needed by global citizens in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.'* (Brown University Internationalisation Strategy 2009-2012).

Brown University also highlights the lack of multicultural diversity in its geographical location advancing the role to be played by the institution in fostering cultural diversity and tolerance. Brown University is one of the first to signal the importance of *Global Citizenship* for staff as well as students through strategy documents in 2010, although, as considered in Chapter five, this becomes more prominent in strategies by 2020.

Cognisant of the risks associated with international student recruitment from a limited range of countries, sector strategy documents prioritise recruitment initiatives to broaden student diversity to achieve *Global Citizenship* goals. Whilst the strategy document data promotes these goals within a student-centred approach to internationalisation, the strategy text also hints at tensions between drivers to maintain institutional economic stability through recruitment of international students as much as the strategic aim to develop *Global Citizenship*. Thus, strategy documents highlight the potential adverse impact of recruiting international students in large numbers from particular countries (notably China and India) on the *Global Citizenship* theme and the *Cultural Exchange* theme considered in 4.3.4 below. At the same time the adverse impact appears to relate as much to potential loss of revenue streams within the *Risk Management* theme, considered in 4.3.6 below given geo-political and economic volatility in international student recruitment markets.

Red University specifically identify the volatility of the global economy and rapidity of market change, as requiring diversified international activity, especially with regard to the recruitment of international students to avoid:

*'overseas students being in classes composed of predominantly single nation groups'*  
(Red University International Strategy 2008-11).

Black University strategy documents echo these concerns noting that whilst its 2006 International Strategy had supported considerable success in increasing the overall number of international students to achieve diversity to support *Global Citizenship* goals, the headline successes hide a situation where recruitment is predominantly from just two countries. Black University note concerns that:

*'the university's international recruitment is currently dominated by two markets, India and China, and students are concentrated into particular disciplines and programmes.'*  
(Black University International Strategy 2009-2015).

Green university also hint at student diversity concerns adversely impacting on *Global Citizenship* by associating the building of a Graduate Attributes project to enhance *Global Citizenship* with a KPI to expand:

*'the numbers of high-quality international undergraduate and postgraduate fee-paying students across all disciplines and from a diversified range of countries by 50 per cent.'*  
(Green University International Strategy 2010-2015)

Whilst strategy documents appear to promote the importance of *Global Citizenship*, reflecting a positive and ideal theme of internationalisation, that theme is also impacted by imperatives

to assure income streams through international student recruitment. I recognise those tensions from my own practice, seeking to diversify student recruitment markets in order to spread risk, as much as to develop and nurture *Global Citizenship* within student learner communities.

The theme of *Global Citizenship* is strongly underpinned in sector strategy documents by a commitment to internationalisation through learning, teaching and culture, again linking this theme with the *Cultural Exchange* theme considered in 4.3.4 below. Black University prioritise:

*'a curriculum which is international in content and a range of co-curricular options that reinforce awareness of different cultures'* as key features of an International university (Black University International Strategy 2009-2015)

although as with Violet University, documents lack detail in translation of strategic aspiration into internationalisation practice. Black University only allude to this, through reference to the International College as the key organisational unit to promote the strategy, suggesting internationalisation as a future ambition rather than one fully embedded within the working culture of the university. Brown University strongly associate the *Global Citizenship* theme with development through and embedding across curriculum. Specific measures to translate this strategic aspiration are noted, particularly the inclusion of international themes across new degree programmes and where appropriate following programme review.

That detailed measures are highlighted in Brown University's strategy document to embed *Global Citizenship* within the curriculum may signal potential staff resistance to actively supporting operationalisation of this theme at curriculum level. This would mirror my own experiences as a senior manager where I encountered staff resistance when seeking to implement curriculum changes at Violet University to further *Global Citizenship* strategic aims. Although I was motivated by the strategic aim to foster intercultural competencies, build social responsibility and develop global awareness through the curriculum, staff disliked what they saw as interference with modular curriculum decisions by managers, requiring lengthy conversations to reach negotiated solutions.

Brown University strategy text highlights the need to:

*'develop a series of professional development training courses to encourage staff to have a more international approach in their curriculum development, teaching and assessment.'* (Brown University Internationalisation Strategy 2009-2012).

Brown University also proposes rewarding outstanding staff contributions to this area of activity, again signalling its strategic priority, but also potential staff resistance through the

express reference to reward of endeavour and initiative (Brown University Internationalisation Strategy 2009-2012).

Sector strategy documents all note the importance of *Global Citizenship*, but its construction varies across universities. A strong link emerges between *Global Citizenship* and quality as a strategic driver to advance student and institutional reputation in Red, Orange, Green and Yellow universities, all describing themselves as research intensive institutions. Red University links *Global Citizenship* with obligations to widen equality of access to higher education globally whilst simultaneously appearing to emphasise the importance of quality by highlighting;

*'The diverse nature of UK HE, being both stratified and hierarchical, and Red's position within it, need to be taken into account. Red must stress its leading position and unique qualities.'* (Red University International Strategy 2008-2011).

Orange University identify *Global Citizenship* with the development of skills and competencies:

to enable graduates *'to prosper in and contribute to an increasingly interdependent world'* (Orange Global Strategy 2009).

whilst also referring to quality in seeking to attract the:

*'most able minds'* (Orange Global Strategy 2009).

and viewing its students as:

*'the international leaders of tomorrow'*. (Orange Global Strategy 2009).

Yellow University's strategy documents also link quality with the development of global competencies through *Global Citizenship* signalling the importance of:

*'working with the best students' to effectively promote Global Citizenship'*. (Yellow university Internationalisation Strategy Plan 2010-2015).

Green University highlights the importance of ensuring its curriculum supports *Global Citizenship* whilst associating this with quality through the preceding strategy bullet point which signals aspiration to make available:

*'the highest quality undergraduate and postgraduate education to the most talented students, whatever their origins.'* (Green University International Strategy 2010-2015).

The association of *Global Citizenship* in sector sample universities describing themselves as research intensive aligns with Fielden's findings of reputation-centred international strategy

documents from the study undertaken in 2007 and discussed in the literature review in chapter two.

Translation of the *Global Citizenship* theme from strategic aspiration into internationalisation practice is also variable across sector strategy documents. University led initiatives are most evident with the provision of opportunities for experiential cross cultural learning prioritised in the development of *Global Citizenship*. Study Abroad features strongly across sector strategy documents to support the development of intercultural competences and mobility in graduate careers although many note the challenges in achieving institutional growth targets in this area.

*'The establishment of further formal study abroad agreements should be actively encouraged under the guidance of the International Office. The number of students studying abroad should be increased incrementally by a specific number established annually.'* (Red University international Strategy 2008-2011).

Blue University express an aspiration to increase levels of participation in study abroad aligned to the Bologna ideal of 20% but note that to achieve this:

*'In the area of student outflows, this will imply, over time, consideration of several modes of mobility that go beyond traditional term or year long academic study abroad activities undertaken on an exchange basis, in particular work experience with non-academic partners. Through these modes we aim to increase levels of participation towards the 20% Bologna aspiration.'* (Blue University International Strategic Agenda 2010-2013).

Black University strategy documents highlight the promotion of overseas study as an integral part of academic programmes but suggest inconsistency in delivery of strategic aspirations currently:

*'it is not sufficient to rely on the simple fact of overseas study as a desirable part of a student's experience. It is doubtful whether an unstructured period abroad delivers all of the appropriate transferable skills which employers may expect. For overseas study to be effective the curriculum must be designed around it, and staff must be able to ensure that the experience is focused and integrated.'* (Black University International Strategy 2009-2015).

Several sector strategy documents note language, social, environmental and financial barriers to enable students to study abroad with documents suggesting the need for development of

additional support frameworks or place based alternatives, to develop *Global Citizenship* opportunities for all students. Yellow University note:

*'Yellow university faces an array of particularly challenging circumstances by aiming for so many of its core activities to be carried out on a transnational basis. We face difficult choices by both encouraging mobility of staff and students and working strenuously to reduce the university's carbon footprint.'* (Yellow University Internationalisation Plan 2010-2015).

Green University highlight the provision of:

*'high-quality language learning to support our international students and those who wish to work and study abroad'* (Green University International Strategy 2010-2015)

combining recognition of the need for language support for incoming international students as well as home students seeking to study abroad. Black University note:

*'in an increasingly global society, it is clear that major employers will prefer graduates with an international awareness who can communicate across cultures'* but also state *'In reality the majority of students will not be able to undertake a significant period of study abroad, and therefore aspects of an international education must be embedded in the home institution.'* (Black University International Strategy 2009-2015)

### **Violet University strategy documents**

At Violet University, the *Global Citizenship* theme positions Violet as a site where students are prepared to engage as members of a global community, cultivating skills and values for responsible citizenship in diverse societies. Violet University strategy documents strategically link the *Global Citizenship* theme with development of student skillsets and intercultural competencies broadening the theme into one of graduates equipped to respond and adapt to fast paced, and technologically driven, change through the construct of global knowledge economies. This strategic orientation aligns with the student-centred transformative approach to internationalisation promoting broad positive ideals of internationalisation, discussed at 2.7.2 in the literature review.

Violet University's Mission Statement places significant importance on the ability of:

*'our students to operate in the global economy, and to engender international and multicultural understanding both within the university and beyond.'* (Violet University Strategic Plan 2007-2012).

At Violet University, as was found through the sector strategy documents, Violet's strategy documents suggest that *Global Citizenship* is best developed through curriculum content. Embedding:

*'the concept of global citizenship in our curricula'* is prioritised together with *'remodelling our curriculum frameworks to embed flexibility, sustainability and global perspectives'* (Violet University Strategic Plan 2007-2012).

Whilst Violet University's Corporate Strategic Plan for 2007-2012 makes no mention of the development of *Global Citizenship* through study abroad, this is highlighted in Violet's International Engagement Strategy for 2010-2015. A key aspiration stated in the plan is for:

*'placement and exchange opportunities for staff and students within our key discipline areas, through our extensive international links'*

although the translation of that aspiration into specific strategic targets through Violet's strategy documents is modestly expressed and hedged with caveats as indicated by the aspiration that by 2015 all Violet University programmes will offer study abroad opportunities:

*'where appropriate'*

and for just:

*'5% of all UH undergraduates to engage in study abroad or other form of international experience.'* (Violet University International Engagement Strategy 2010-2015).

### **Violet University senior managers**

In interviews, senior managers at Violet University echo the importance of *Global Citizenship* as represented in sector and Violet University strategy documents describing it as a core goal of the University's internationalisation efforts and Violet University's obligations to students through the construct of social contracts. However, managers also identify challenges in translating this ideal into practice. While there is a consensus on its importance, several managers express concern about the limited resources and institutional structures available to fully support initiatives that nurture *Global Citizenship* beyond symbolic commitments in policy documents. Such concerns mirror those which emerge from Violet University's strategy documents suggesting modest student engagement with study abroad and similar long established modes of cross cultural learning. Whilst sector strategy documents cite alternative initiatives to promote *Global Citizenship* this is not clearly enunciated by senior managers in 2010. Senior managers did speak though to *Global Citizenship* involving the development of student skillsets, intercultural competencies, global awareness and employability skills in



readiness for graduate careers in a global environment aligning to a transformative approach to internationalisation.

*'As a social function I think we have a responsibility to our students here to make them global citizens.'* (SM3)

*'International students are important, enabling the British students to become more globally aware'* (SM2)

Senior managers strongly emphasise the development of *Global Citizenship* through the lens of employability and graduate careers of the future situated within a global workplace, predominantly corporate in orientation:

*'The students are certainly going to be working with people from diverse cultures and that's part of the social aspect for us, that we are ensuring that students are culturally sensitive as well as strategically aware.'* (SM2)

*'If you talk to employers you begin to realise that broad experience and having cultural awareness and the difference international experience makes in getting jobs with global corporates; I think it is about developing life skills.'* (SM1).

This is suggested by senior managers as particularly important for Violet University given its strong business facing strategic alignment, associating the *Global Citizenship* theme with development of entrepreneurs and an enterprise mindset well suited to working in a global environment.

Senior managers also speak of the importance of:

*'internationalising our curricula and creating students who have international perspectives and are culturally aware and able to mix'* (SM2)

as contributing to *Global Citizenship*, underpinned by teaching and learning, aligning with sector and Violet strategy document construction of the theme. Drawing on multi-cultural staff and student communities to foster and support the co-creation of an internationalised curriculum on campus is considered important by senior managers in developing *Global Citizenship*:

*'I don't think it needs to be about travel you know. The fact that you have a multi-cultural constituency in your institution in staff and students; you really ought to be able to use that and to the benefit of learning and interactions. I think in the classroom for instance you would not take a mono-cultural approach, and I think as teachers we*

*should be more skilled and aware of how we utilise the variety in the classroom with cultural backgrounds in the actual learning process. Simple things like using case studies from across the globe.'* (SM3)

However, whilst senior managers strongly supported the ideal of diverse communities of learning on campus to nurture *Global Citizenship*, they were hesitant in suggesting that this was being developed effectively across all areas of the university and spoke of competing financial pressures inhibiting the development of *Global Citizenship* effectively:

*'A lot of this stuff consumes resources'* (SM1).

SM1 also echoes the concerns evident in sector strategy documents from over recruitment of international students from one or two countries as adversely impacting on the development of *Global Citizenship*:

*'We have experience where people come from China to study in the UK a Post Graduate programme on which a lot of the students are Chinese so the international experience part of that is now lost and that is a challenge.'* (SM1)

Overall, senior managers in Violet University acknowledge that greater efforts are required to more consistently embed the *Global Citizenship* theme emerging through strategy into internationalisation practice, and that take up of study abroad as a university led initiative to support development of *Global Citizenship* is inconsistent and operating only on a relatively small scale at Violet in 2010.

*Global Citizenship* was the most dominant theme to emerge through data sets in 2010, promoting positive ideals of internationalisation through narratives constructing graduate identities of respectfulness and the valuing of diversity, highlighting students being equipped with skills and cultural competencies to navigate a range of multicultural work contexts in the future. At the same time, the theme encompasses economic realities and the need to recruit international students from a diverse range of countries, as much to maintain income streams, as to foster diversity in the classroom. *Global Citizenship* is informed by a reputational focus, in the case of those universities describing themselves as research intensive as was also noted in Fielden's study in 2007 whereas at Violet, and sector Post 92 universities, the focus is student orientated. Regardless of foci however, nothing emerges from the datasets in 2010 that recognises or speaks to the counter narratives of *Global Citizenship* and study abroad, discussed in the literature review at 2.7.2 beyond the practical difficulties of increasing study abroad opportunities for greater numbers of students due to financial, and social barriers. This mirrors my own positionality at the very start of undertaking the EdD, with the intention to

develop a graduate skills and competency toolkit to significantly increase the number of home law students at Violet undertaking study abroad. The aim of this initial research study proposal was to demonstrate a clear correlation between study abroad and enhanced graduate career prospects in line with previous research studies (Kuh, 2009). It was only after I had conducted the critical review of literature that I became aware of, and concerned by, critical perspectives on internationalisation, including study abroad despite having been academically active in this strategic arena for several years before embarking on this research study.

#### **4.3.2 Market-Driven Growth theme**

A pervasive theme of *Market-Driven Growth* surfaces in both the strategy documents and senior manager interviews, positioning internationalisation primarily as a revenue-generating activity. In sector and Violet University strategy documents, this theme is apparent through explicit references to targets for international student recruitment and related financial goals. These documents often quantify internationalisation's success in terms of increasing the student population, highlighting its role in achieving financial sustainability. As discussed above, the *Global Citizenship* theme also encompasses economic realities, promoting the recruitment of students from diverse countries to spread risk, as well as fostering a diverse student population on campus.

#### **Sector strategy documents**

Strategy documents signal the criticality of growing international student numbers but, as with the potential negative impact on the *Global Citizenship* theme, discussed in 4.3.1 above, highlight the adverse impact on financial returns should a small number of countries dominate student populations, linking the *Market-Driven Growth* theme with the *Risk Management* theme considered below. In strategy documents Black university note concerns that:

*'the university is heavily reliant on India, China and the European Union. Non-EU students are heavily concentrated in particular academic disciplines, and a large proportion of our overseas undergraduate entry is directly into years 3 and 4 and thus students often remain with us for only one year. In this context and recognising that the international HE market is not the same across all disciplines, it is important to diversify our recruitment activities. This will provide the university with a more stable overseas student body and make us less vulnerable to an increasingly volatile marketplace whilst allowing us to maintain steady growth.'* (Black University International Strategy 2009-2015).

Pink University strategy documents reflect similar concerns to Black University from over reliance on a small number of markets but also note the importance of *Brand Positioning* in achieving *Market-Driven Growth* objectives:

*'The university should continue its policy of maintaining diversity in recruitment to avoid over dependence on a single market which could present difficulties for the university if there were adverse changes. However, within this strategy of diversification the university should seek to build a strong reputation both in key geographical markets, for example the Indian sub-continent and in the nature of provision.'* (Pink University Towards Internationalisation 2008)

Sector strategy documents highlight *Global Citizenship* necessitating recruitment of international students from diverse countries to support the strategy goal of *Global Citizenship*, yet whilst this narrative is dominant in strategy documents, the *Market-Driven Growth* theme prioritising income generation at times appears from strategy narrative to be the overriding strategic imperative. For example, Blue University strategy documents highlight recruitment of significant numbers of international students from more than 120 countries as positively contributing to the establishment of an international community on campus and development of *Global Citizenship* aspirations. Yet, at the same time, strategy narrative voices concerns at declining international student numbers in preceding years.

Blue University strategy documents assert:

*'Having reversed the negative trend, our priority is to now secure a sustainable recruitment base for the medium and long term. In line with the university's wider strategic priorities, our aim is to shift emphasis towards a high quality intake, and towards the selection rather than recruitment of students.'* (Blue University International Strategic Agenda 2010-2013).

Blue University strategy narrative emphasises strategic priorities to diversify markets to spread risk and sustain recruitment successes:

*'in the context of a highly competitive global market'* (Blue University International Strategic Agenda 2010-2013).

This statement speaks to the primacy of income generation rather than the development of *Global Citizenship*.

Green University strategy documents highlight the importance of knowledge dissemination linking the aspiration to nurture *Global Citizenship* through the curriculum with an associated aim to expand:

*'the numbers of high-quality international undergraduate and postgraduate fee-paying students across all disciplines and from a diversified range of countries by 50 per cent.'*  
(Green University International Strategy 2010-2015).

Green University strategy documents do not indicate a baseline figure by which to assess the impact of such growth aspirations, yet a 50 per cent increase in international student numbers would inevitably be significant.

Whilst sector strategy documents prioritise income generation from international student recruitment, documents diverge as to strategic goals, with some stressing the importance of a significant overall international student number increase, such as Green University noted above, whilst others prioritise marginal increases in levels of recruitment but instead place greater emphasis on the recruitment of international students of a higher quality. The latter strategy aim links the *Market-Driven Growth* theme with the *Brand Positioning* theme which promotes recruitment of a high calibre of international students to reinforce or strengthen the global reputation of the university. Red University acknowledge that:

*'income generation is an important aim of much of Red's international activity'* (Red University International Strategy 2008-11)

but strategy documents also argue against undertaking activities producing short-term financial gains only, out with its broader institutional internationalisation aims. Red University strategy documents strongly associate with *Global Citizenship*, *Academic Collaboration* and *Cultural Exchange* themes but this appears to conflict with strategic imperatives to increase financial returns from international activity. Perhaps recognising this, Red University highlights the risks associated with the perception of itself as an institution:

*'composed mainly of the children of the wealthy, given that overseas students fees are extremely high'* (Red university International Strategy 2008-11).

Red University propose the creation of more bursaries and scholarships to address this issue rather than reducing overseas fees to a more affordable level, asserting the market association between price as a proxy for quality. Red strategy documents suggest the potential for negative external perceptions of the institution arising from charging high overseas fees alongside goals to increase student numbers. Responding to this, Red University assert the need to:

*'issue clear public statements about Red's commitment to fostering international understanding and co-operation and its commitment to be an institution that is working to help the developing world.'* (Red University International Strategy 2008-11).

Ambivalence between economic imperatives driving international activity and aspirations for broad internationalisation encompassing *Global Citizenship*, *Academic Collaboration* and *Cultural Exchange* themes emerge strongly across strategy documents. Pink University, a Post-92 institution, emphasise that recruitment of international students remains a critical goal, but strategy documents, as with Red University, situate international student recruitment within a much broader sphere of internationalisation aspirations citing the introduction of an international dimension into all aspects of the university coupled with the preparation of home and international students for *Global Citizenship*, as overriding financial sustainability goals alone. The *Market-Driven Growth* theme is thus complex and overlaps with many other internationalisation themes, at times creating ambivalence as to strategic priorities. Whilst the *Market-Driven Growth* theme is clearly prioritised as an institutional imperative in sector strategy documents, at the same time a narrative emerges of university financial sustainability being required to support broad engagement with internationalisation objectives to benefit all students. This is coupled with associated strategy concerns of negative impacts on *Global Citizenship* and *Cultural Exchange* aspirations arising from dominance of particular overseas nationalities on campus.

The *Market-Driven Growth* theme emerges as being most closely associated with the *Brand Positioning* theme. This surfaced most strongly through the sector and Violet University strategy documents but is also referenced in senior manager interviews as strategically important. Capacity to recruit international students and generate increased revenue streams is constructed through the metaphor of the international student-as-consumer. International students are represented through the strategy documents as autonomous buyers of educational products, with their purchasing decision making noted to be influenced by complex push-pull factors including reputational standing and league table position, alongside a university's geographical location. Orange University highlight that:

*'The expectations of all students as more sophisticated, informed consumers of learning experiences can be expected to rise and the ability to recognise and meet such expectations is likely to be a key source of differentiation.'* (Orange University Internationalisation Strategy 2009).

Pink University note a number of external drivers in strategy documents that inform its international strategy including:

*'changes in the global market for higher education, and increased competition between HEIs globally, publication of a number of papers on the significance of international recruitment for universities with Pink University recognised as an institution likely to be affected by any downturn in overseas recruitment, and impact of ranking and league tables on the university's image and status overseas'* also highlighted (Pink University Towards Internationalisation 2008).

Pink strategy documents go on to suggest that the university:

*'must ensure that's its procedures and support systems for all students are fit for purpose and that full risk assessment is made of all international activities given the potential risk to the University's reputation that can arise from a disappointing student experience at home or overseas.'* (Pink University Towards Internationalisation 2008).

Pink's strategy document later states the international student as consumer metaphor very explicitly:

*'satisfied customers are an important marketing tool both in the UK and overseas.'* (Pink University Towards Internationalisation 2008).

Green University note the importance of push-pull factors through strategy narrative asserting strategic aspiration to expand:

*'the numbers of high-quality international undergraduate and postgraduate fee-paying students across all disciplines and from a diversified range of countries by 50 per cent'* (Green University International Strategy 2010-2015).

with strategy narrative emphasising a requirement to ensure:

*'high levels of international student satisfaction as measured by the International Student Barometer and other indicators.'* (Green University International Strategy 2010-2015).

The *Brand Positioning* theme and its influence on university internationalisation is considered in detail in 4.3.5 below but the combined strength of the *Market-Driven Growth* and *Brand Positioning* themes is evident across all the other themes identified as dominant from the data gathered in 2010. The implications of this combined strength and reach in influencing other themes is considered in detail in chapter Six when I assess the effect of such pressures in shaping internationalisation strategy and practice at Violet University and more broadly across the UK university sector.

## **Violet University strategy documents**

Violet University's strategy documents also suggest a strong orientation towards the *Market-Driven Growth* theme through international student recruitment imperatives with a KPI set for:

*'at least 3,250 well qualified international fee-paying students'* (Violet University International Engagement Strategy 2010-2015)

strongly supporting strategic aspirations for growth in international student numbers. In Violet University's strategy documents, the strategy narrative promoting a business facing agenda as:

*'the lens through which we view the world'* (Violet University International Engagement Strategy 2010-2015)

is linked to the *Market Driven Growth* theme and *Brand Positioning* theme via assertions of:

*'unprecedented growth in student applications, allowing us to be more selective in key subject areas.'* (Violet University International Engagement Strategy 2010-2015)

Unlike sector strategy documents where the dominant narrative links reputational aspirations with the institution itself, Violet University strategy documents highlight the importance of:

*'advancing prosperity of the region and meeting national skill needs'*

rather than internationalisation to enhance institutional reputation per se (Violet University Strategic Plan 2007-2012).

## **Violet University senior managers**

Senior managers at Violet University reinforce the importance of a *market-driven* perspective, acknowledging that revenue from international student tuition fees is essential to the institution's economic viability. Managers speak of international strategy focus having prioritised the recruitment of international students but stress that whilst important this should not be the sole driver of internationalisation efforts:

*'I think for too long the UK has viewed internationalisation as recruiting overseas students to the institution and I think that while that is all absolutely imperative from an income perspective, it is not why we should be doing it.'* (SM1).

*'I think that international students now play a very substantial part of the economics of running the university in the UK and therefore one starts to automatically think about it*



*in economic terms naturally, but I don't want to overplay the economic importance.'*  
(SM2)

*'It is income generating and that's it, pure and simple. It is a very clear route to market for the product we offer, and I think we have to be quite sophisticated now about understanding that it was simpler a few years ago.'* (SM3)

*'I guess as far as Post 92s are concerned, certainly if you look at it in terms of proportion of international students here in the UK we are towards the top end and therefore just in terms of income I think it is important.'* (SM6)

Whilst managers acknowledge that income generation from recruiting international students and developing commercially viable collaborative partnerships is imperative for financial sustainability, they also speak of the potential development of *Global Citizenship* aspirations and opportunities for study abroad arising from *Academic Collaboration* partnerships:

*'As a social function I think we have a responsibility to our students here to make them global citizens socially and from the point of view of employability, so I think it's good for them in terms of them selling themselves but I think it's also good for them socially and I don't think we should shy away from that perspective and so I think internationalisation offers us the opportunity then to ensure that our students can have a wider outreach, and that means sending them there as well as bringing students here.'* (SM3)

*'I mean it's obviously financial, but it is a fact that as an education thing you would want to be multi-cultural and understanding of cultures and things like that to do with your business and until you have got that and until you understand you are not going to expand your education.'* (SM4)

Yet, whilst the development of *Global Citizenship* and study abroad are viewed as positive and important aspirations for internationalisation at Violet University, concerns are expressed by senior managers, as emerges through sector strategy documents about unintended negative effects through over dominance of nationalities on campus, and opportunities for study abroad remaining unrealised:

*'We have experiences where people come from China to study in the UK and to study a PG programme on which a lot of the students are Chinese so the international experience part of that is lost and that is a challenge.'* (SM1)

Whilst the theme of *Market-Driven Growth* aligns with managerial priorities, it creates tensions with other themes, such as *Global Citizenship*, as senior managers note that financial pressures can sometimes drive the university to prioritise recruitment over substantive intercultural engagement. This dual emphasis on financial targets and global competencies is also a feature of sector strategy documents and the implications arising from the interplay between both themes is considered in more detail in chapter six regarding the true purpose of internationalisation at Violet University.

### **4.3.3 Academic collaboration theme**

The *Academic Collaboration* theme emphasises partnerships with international institutions as a critical component of sector and Violet University's international strategies. This theme positions collaboration as central to enhancing the university's research impact and fostering academic innovation through joint initiatives with global partners. Sector and Violet University strategy documents frequently highlight goals related to collaborative research projects, faculty exchange programmes, and transnational education (TNE) partnerships. The capacity of TNE to generate income and maintain institutional financial stability is also woven through the data, closely aligning *Academic Collaboration* with the *Market-Driven Growth* theme.

#### **Sector strategy documents**

Ambivalence as to the true purpose of *Academic Collaboration* emerges across sector strategy documents. Red University signal the importance of the fostering of international research collaborations, emphasising those that have a bearing on global, social, environmental, legal and health issues in support of its institutional research grand challenges (Red University International Strategy 2008-2011). Strategy documents also draw close association between *Academic Collaboration* and *Global Citizenship* themes emphasising international partnerships and the fostering of research objectives leading to opportunities to develop *Global Citizenship* in students. Sector strategy documents highlight multiple projects. Red University emphasises it is:

*'ideally positioned to promote and lead a sense of global citizenship and contribute through research and scholarship to the relief of major international problems.'* (Red University International Strategy 2008-11).

Yellow University prioritises development of global competencies in students and staff as a basis for collaborative partnerships to support:

*'research and knowledge transfer in relation to some of the world's most pressing global human concerns and social problems'* (Yellow University Knowledge Without Borders Plan 2010-15).

Brown University highlight several research informed curriculum projects to develop and enhance *Global Citizenship* including a Master's Programme in International Relations Global Security and Development, noting its interdisciplinarity of faculty teaching on the programme coupled with field research undertaken in a range of countries and with collaborative partners to foster student understanding of:

*'the reality of development, democratisation and human rights across the world'* (Brown University Internationalisation Strategy 2009-2012).

Brown University strategy documents also highlight a student and staff exchange programme with Brazilian universities, which aims to create strong research links between the two countries.

*'This is a really exciting opportunity for our staff and postgraduate students to take part in leading-edge international research, gaining a truly global scientific experience whilst working in a different climatic and cultural region.'* (Brown University Internationalisation Strategy 2009-2012).

At the same time, strategy documents highlight the imperative for growth of partnerships with high-quality international research-led institutions suggesting a focus on enhancement of institutional reputation and profile through *Brand Positioning*, leading to financial sustainability through *Academic Collaboration* to achieve *Market-Driven Growth* is more important. Red University stress:

*'Red must develop its international strategy against a background of constrained resources, both in terms of finance and space; such constraints will require a flexible and creative approach to implementing this strategy. Collaboration with international partners will become increasingly important – although we shall also need to be vigilant to maintain a competitive edge.'* (Red University International Strategy 2008-2011).

Orange University strategy documents emphasise multiple benefits stemming from strong academic collaboration, linking the recruitment of more than 640 international colleagues from 80 countries to participation in international research collaborations:

*'attracting a significant amount of international research funding.'* (Orange University Internationalisation Strategy 2009).

Black University, a Post-92 institution note:

*'As the global education environment becomes even more complex and competitive, partnership activities are of increasing importance. Setting aside the immediate financial contribution that is made to the development of the university, the cultural and academic benefit from genuine partnership activities is increasingly recognised. Mutually beneficial relationships can result in joint research and knowledge transfer activities as well as improving the reputation of the university.'* (Black University International Strategy 2010-2015).

Black's strategy documents again speak to the overlapping of several themes with the *Academic Collaboration* discourse, especially the *Market-Driven Growth* and *Brand Positioning* themes and the interplay of these themes is mirrored in Violet University's strategy documents, discussed below.

### **Violet University strategy documents**

At Violet University, strategy documents highlight Violet's strong business facing aspirations, with international partnerships being prioritised to achieve strategic goals. A key theme emerges of far-reaching engagement with international partners, shaping *Global Citizenship* aspirations and success of graduates operating in the '*global environment*' and '*global economy*' (Violet University Strategic Plan 2007-2012). Yet, in Violet University's International Engagement Strategy 2010-2015 targets are set to grow and extend the breadth of franchise and external partners, with references to partners adding financial value, suggesting the importance of income generation imperatives. Violet University strategy documents speak of aspirations to develop Violet Global as a means of growing *Academic Collaboration* opportunities at a multi-disciplinary partnership level. This creates tensions between aspirations for collaboration to enhance research impact and develop opportunities for *Global Citizenship* through study abroad, emerging through strategy documents and the role of TNE partnerships in contributing to financial sustainability.

### **Violet University senior managers**

In interviews, senior managers elaborated on the importance of *Academic Collaborations* for Violet University with several describing them as essential for maintaining the university's competitiveness within a globalised research environment. This theme was often framed as mutually beneficial with partnerships enhancing both institutional reputation and the quality of research output. Managers emphasise that strategic academic collaborations serve as a cornerstone of the university's international strategy reinforcing the alignment between

institutional goals and academic values. Managers suggest that much of the importance of academic collaboration lies in the nature of work undertaken by academic colleagues:

*'I mean it is fundamental to the nature of what academic colleagues do, obviously their academic horizon is an international one, and clearly their relationship is with their disciplines internationally often more than with their host university, so I think it is fundamental to all that we do.'* (SM6).

Managers spoke of sectoral understanding of the nature of academic collaboration maturing beyond UK universities seeking to maintain a brand position through such activity:

*'The UK needs to learn that delivering in other countries means you learn from other countries, and I think the notion that we have got all the answers, and the world will always come to us is a notion we need to put aside now.'* (SM1)

Senior managers also spoke of perceptions of isolationism with regard to academic collaboration in UK universities, adversely impacting on effective engagement with the European policy agenda to drive closer collaboration across universities:

*'On the Bologna process, Britain just pays lip service to that and doesn't really engage at all but it should do. And another thing of course is Erasmus programmes and again British universities are not very closely aligned with those programmes and students tend not to want to go on exchanges.'* (SM2).

That manager however suggested that Violet University was bucking that trend and sending many students abroad for study and placements.

As with strategy documents, senior managers emphasised the financial benefits arising from Violet University's long established international collaborative partnerships and spoke of the need to streamline approaches to academic collaboration to maximise financial returns:

*'We have to move away from cottage industries based on academic relationships. I think at the moment it is totally disjointed and that's the challenge. We should be able to cross sell, and we need to move Violet Global forward to consolidate a lot of this stuff.'* (SM4).

Other managers signalled a lack of understanding about Violet University's objectives for academic collaboration through the development of Violet Global:

*'What is Violet Global? I am not clear even though I went to the presentation.'* (SM5)

Managers also suggested potential resistance to Violet Global, arising from its construction at the most senior levels of the university, but not yet effectively cascaded to Faculties and Schools:

*'I think Violet Global reflects challenge to that opportunistic freedom of Schools and Faculties in terms of negotiating and agreeing a partnership or franchise. I think there was very little appetite for any significant changes to that model.'* (SM6)

Overall, senior managers acknowledged that approaches to academic collaboration at Violet University had previously tended towards localised Faculty and School based collaboration whereas senior managers sought a consolidated, institutional approach that was multi-disciplinary in its orientation. Managers agreed that the creation of Violet Global to lead this approach strategically was not yet well understood beyond the level of senior managers and faced potential resistance in Faculties and Schools. Senior managers at Violet University echoed the ambivalence as to *Academic Collaboration* thematic purposes emerging through sector and Violet strategy documents between the development of partnerships with overseas institutions to foster research and programme development and partnerships to grow income and maintain institutional financial sustainability.

Ambivalence as to the true purpose of *Academic Collaboration* at Violet and sector universities which emerges through the data reflects my own experiences of developing TNE partnerships at Faculty and School level. As noted in 1.5.2, my identity as experientially and discursively constructed through both legal and academic practice lenses, captured in the term *pracademic*, led to a problem/solution orientation. Thus, in responding to internal economic imperatives, in my role as a senior manager I readily adopted a problem/solution approach to internationalisation at Violet in drafting a Faculty international strategy document, emphasising the broad positive ideals of *Academic Collaboration* through TNE. As an active agent in this research study, I can see how analysis of the data, and coding which led to development of the theme of *Academic Collaboration* mirrors the tensions in strategic practice I have experienced as a senior manager. The competing tensions observed through my own practice and this research study, together with the critical perspectives of *Academic Collaboration* discussed in the literature review can be drawn upon to develop new approaches to strategic practice in this area. In chapter seven I develop ideas for future strategic practice to address the third research question responding to the data gathered for this study - How can institutional strategy themes influence and enhance internationalisation practice in UK universities?

Attention now turns to the third dominant theme emerging through the data, named the *Cultural Exchange* theme.

#### 4.3.4 Cultural Exchange theme

The *Cultural Exchange* theme, while present in sector and Violet strategy documents, appears to hold less prominence in managerial narratives, and thus is less dominant than *Global Citizenship*, *Market-Driven Growth* and *Academic Collaboration*, discussed earlier in this chapter. This theme constructs internationalisation as a means of fostering cultural dialogue, mutual understanding, and personal enrichment, often associated with student exchange programmes and intercultural events. In sector and Violet strategy documents, cultural exchange initiatives are highlighted as key aspects of university *Global Engagement* agendas, reinforcing institutional commitment to creating opportunities for intercultural learning. The *Global Engagement* theme will be discussed in chapter five, when it emerges as the most dominant theme from data gathered in 2020.

##### Sector strategy documents

Sector strategy documents highlight the importance of multiculturalism and the role to be played by universities in fostering cultural diversity. Strategy documents of Brown University note the lack of multiculturalism in its geographical location emphasising:

*‘the University can and will be a powerful agent in fostering cultural diversity and tolerance.’* (Brown University Internationalisation Strategy 2009-2012).

Whilst Brown University strategy documents suggest the region will benefit from an increasing emphasis on multiculturalism, the translation into internationalisation practice lacks definition beyond statements highlighting interaction with different backgrounds and cultures to make:

*‘the educational experience more challenging, stimulating and valuable through the introduction of cross-cultural perspectives.’* (Brown University Internationalisation Strategy 2009-2012).

In this sense, the *Cultural Exchange* theme appears to associate most closely with ensuring a positive on campus experience for international students. This is suggested by strategy narratives of quotes from international students highlighting positive experiences at Brown University, ranging from the warmth of the welcome for international students to quality of academic and social experiences on campus. At the same time, ambivalence as to the true purpose of *Cultural Exchange* emerges through strategy documents where the *Cultural Exchange* narrative at Brown University is overlaid with the *Market-Driven Growth* theme promoting growth in international student numbers to achieve financial sustainability imperatives.

The translation of the *Cultural Exchange* discourse from strategic aspiration into internationalisation practice is variable across sector strategy documents. As is the case with the *Global Citizenship* discourse, university led initiatives are most evident, with the provision of opportunities for experiential cross cultural learning prioritised in the development of *Cultural Exchange*. Study Abroad features strongly across strategy documents linking the development of *Global Citizenship* with opportunities for *Cultural Exchange*. At Orange University, strategy documents highlight partnerships with 200 institutions worldwide enabling the institution to:

*'participate in exchange and mobility schemes that offer students a challenging and exciting international experience, providing them with new perspectives and an understanding of different cultures.'* (Orange University Internationalisation Strategy 2009).

However, as was noted in 4.3.1 above many documents highlight challenges in achieving institutional targets for study abroad, limiting opportunities for *Cultural Exchange* through external facing initiatives. Social, alongside language, environmental and financial barriers to study abroad require alternative approaches to facilitate *Cultural Exchange* on campus alongside the development of *Global Citizenship*.

### **Violet University strategy documents**

Violet University strategy documents position the University's mission as playing a key role:

*'in our region's economic prosperity and cultural development, by working closely with businesses, the public sector and the wider community.'* (Violet University Strategic Plan 2007-2012).

Associated narrative speaks to imperatives of being a leading university in enhancing the student experience and engendering:

*'international and multicultural understanding both within the university and beyond'* (Violet University Strategic Plan 2007-2012).

and the development of:

*'embedded, student-focused social and cultural activities to enrich the student experience.'* (Violet University Strategic Plan 2007-2012).

At Violet University, emphasis is also placed on promoting an integrated and multi-cultural mix of staff and students on all campuses, as integral to shaping the future success of Violet



graduates. Violet University strategy documents propose targets for internationalisation and mobility, but these are expressed in broad terms only and lack the clarity of associated targets for the recruitment of international students and income to be earned from commercial international activity. Violet University KPIs for mobility relate to the offering of study abroad opportunities:

*'where appropriate', (Violet University International Engagement Strategy 2010-2015)*

with a specific target of 5% of all Violet University undergraduates engaging in study abroad or other forms of international experience, and an aim for 100 university staff to be engaging in exchange or other international experiences by 2015. (Violet University International Engagement Strategy 2010-2015). 100 staff would equate to approximately 1% of staff at Violet University in 2015. However, beyond the signalling of importance of the *Cultural Exchange* theme, little emerges to support translation from aspiration to practice to any significant degree at Violet University through strategy documents.

### **Violet University senior managers**

Whilst strategy documents promote the importance of the *Cultural Exchange* theme, interviews with senior managers suggest that this theme is somewhat marginalised in practical terms. Managers reported that *Cultural Exchange* is often deprioritised in favour of initiatives that align more closely with financial or academic goals. As a result, *Cultural Exchange* activities are perceived as less central to the university's strategic focus. In part this marginalisation accords with strategy document concerns as to social and financial barriers contributing to low student uptake in traditional study abroad. Senior managers articulated a lack of student interest in study abroad, for a variety of reasons. Some asserted that a lack of fluency in relevant languages beyond English and an associated national resistance to new cultural experiences could be a factor:

*'I mean we are not as a country very good at this sort of thing. The sort of languages still taught in schools are frankly a joke. We should be saying we need Mandarin; we need Spanish. The last thing you need is a dying language like French.'* (SM4)

Senior managers spoke of broad social barriers reducing interest in study abroad at Violet University:

*'You have to be driven to a degree by your customers and what their ambitions are, and I think we have to accept that given the profile of a lot of students, it is a huge leap for many of them to have got to university full stop. So, it is quite a big ask on top of that to require them to spend time overseas, it just isn't for everyone.'* (SM6).

That manager spoke of short term decision making by students reflecting a transactional approach to study abroad, with lower prioritisation as students fail to see links with increased employability compared to their immediate degree studies, assessments and working to support learning:

*'You could well say what is the connection between studying abroad and increased employability. On one level we could all think that obviously it must be good for people having to do business with the Chinese but actually probably not many people in their working lives will ultimately have to do this. I suspect that a lot of students are much more focused on the here and now of what they are here to do and struggling to make ends meet. They are probably working hard to keep up with their studies as it is, and I just think they are probably not in the space where they are thinking you know shall I go to China or India because I might be in the boardroom one day.'* (SM6)

Overall senior managers spoke to study abroad and associated opportunities for *Cultural Exchange* having been deprioritised, leading to fewer institutional resources being allocated to these initiatives:

*'After my first 100 days I said that recruiting international students to this university is not what it is all about. The profile of Violet university in internationalisation is significant and so the strategy is not delivering some of that information. Mainly we need changes in the Schools of Study, we actually want to say that this is of vital importance. I want student exchanges to double next year, double the year afterwards, we need to start setting targets and start being brutal about that. I just got the impression that we wanted to tick boxes, that we really didn't care, and we didn't really feel we were going to be judged upon it in any substantive way which means the strategy is not sending the right messages.'* (SM1)

SM1 also spoke to concerns about Violet University's strategy documents, and others more broadly, demonstrating a lack of focus on differential outcomes for home students compared to international students:

*'The other thing I find quite interesting about a lot of international strategies, few of them ever look at international student performance in relation to different nations and in relation to home students and I think that is something that needs to be dealt with.'* (SM1)

Thus, whilst the *Global Citizenship* theme emerged strongly at Violet University, through strategy documents and manager interviews, the *Cultural Exchange* theme was far less

developed. Strategic commitments to multiculturalism were ill defined and considered predominantly through the lens of study abroad, which was identified as a lower institutional priority compared to international student recruitment and the establishment and growth of collaborative partnerships for commercial gain.

As was noted in 4.3.1 above, at the outset of undertaking this research study, my initial proposed focus was to increase uptake of study abroad at Violet University. Reflecting on the decision to move away from this proposal, once aware of critical perspectives of study abroad in Discourse B in the literature review, I can see that, as with the senior managers at Violet University interviewed for this study, I too accorded lower priority to *Cultural Exchange* than the recruitment of international students and development of TNE partnerships for income generation. In the same way that strategic commitments to multiculturalism were ill defined in the data gathered in 2010, as a senior manager I too had not considered critical perspectives on the scholarly meaning of intercultural competence and the participation gaps identified by academics between opportunities for white and black students to participate in study abroad, as well as students from lower socio economic backgrounds. Rather, I viewed *Cultural Exchange* and study abroad in particular, through the lens of *Brand Positioning*, focusing on personal and academic benefits to students within a promotional context.

The development of the *Brand Positioning* theme is discussed next, emerging as the fifth most dominant theme in data gathered in 2010.

#### **4.3.5 Brand Positioning theme**

The *Brand Positioning* theme underscores the role of internationalisation in enhancing the university's global reputation and visibility. In sector and Violet strategy documents, internationalisation is often framed as a means to build a distinctive brand that appeals to prospective students, faculty and partners worldwide. Key indicators of success within this theme include global and national rankings, international partnerships, and the geographic diversity of the student body.

##### **Sector strategy documents**

Strategy documents ascribe importance to global ranking and global reputation, aligning key indicators of internationalisation success with the ideal of the university progressing beyond a regional and national identity to an international global reputation. Sector strategy documents particularly associate a global reputation and strong brand position with the *Market-Driven Growth* theme, to increase income generation from international student recruitment and collaborative partnership development to achieve financial sustainability requirements. The

*Brand Positioning* theme emerges strongly through strategy vision statements at two sector universities:

*'To advance Red's position as one of the world's most prestigious universities, operating in a global context.'* (Red University International Strategy 2008-2011)

*'the overarching priority is to further enhance our global presence. Our reach and aspirations are international, and it is in that context we must be measured.'* (Orange University Strategic Plan 2008-2012)

Blue University, through their International Strategic Agenda 2010-2013 highlight an aim to achieve a series of goals that will characterise them as an international university, although suggesting at the same time that this is a current achievement:

*'central to our approach is the recognition that Blue University is already a highly internationalised institution, with a long list of achievements arising from international activities in education, research and development.'* (Blue University International Strategic Agenda 2008-2013).

Blue University strategy documents also assert:

*'we now need a more focused, integrated and deliberate approach to internationalisation, in order to raise our profile and visibility, especially in relation to our ranking in international league tables'*

with close links made to the *Risk Management* theme, discussed in 4.3.6 below noted as influencing this strategic approach:

*'Universities, wherever they are located, will be looking to secure themselves for the long term while simultaneously rethinking their purpose and reorientating their vision, so that these are appropriate for this uncertain future. In doing so they will recognise that they operate in an increasingly global context, and that they will compete not solely within their regions or countries, but increasingly and inevitably on an international stage.'* (Blue University International Strategic Agenda 2008-2013)

Pink University, a Post-92 institution emphasises in strategy documents that:

*'For Pink university, a well-developed international dimension could be a major selling and branding aspect of the university as a significant player in the provision of Global HE' (Pink University Towards Internationalisation 2008)*

later asserting in the same strategy document that:

*'it is anticipated that a holistic approach to international work will help to strengthen the university's position and reputation at home and overseas, and that it will support the university's efforts to maintain an academic portfolio that is attractive to home as well as international students' (Pink University Towards Internationalisation 2008)*

linking the *Brand Positioning* theme with the *Market-Driven Growth* theme. Black University, another Post-92 institution also asserts through strategy documents:

*'the university must move beyond a simple approach to internationalisation which involves basic international recruitment and delivery overseas coupled with attempts to internationalise the curriculum. A more holistic approach is required if the transformation of the institution into a truly international university is to be achieved.'* (Black University International Strategy 2009-2015)

At Orange University, a feature of the *Brand Positioning* theme in 2010 is nomenclature linking the University's name with the term '*global*' rather than '*international*' to signify global reputation. As will be considered in Chapter five (5.2.1), a shift in strategy nomenclature towards the term '*global*' becomes more prevalent by 2020 across strategy documents. The *Brand Positioning* theme associates closely with the *Market-Driven Growth* theme promoting institutional opportunities to recruit international students and establish collaborative partnerships for commercial gain, through a strong institutional brand. The *Brand Positioning* theme also links the concept of quality through strategy documents with the *Market Driven Growth* theme where high quality is seen to drive international student recruitment efforts and opportunities for overseas collaborative partnership development. Yellow University strategy documents associate:

*'working with the best students and staff worldwide' (Yellow University International Strategy 2010).*

to their assertion of the institution's '*global reach*' through campuses overseas making them

*'the closest the UK has to a truly global University'* (Yellow University International Strategy 2010).

Orange University state a strategic aspiration to:

*'become a place of first choice in the minds of the world.'* (Orange Global 2009).

Orange strategy narrative asserts:

*'This aspiration puts increasing our international reputation for quality – in learning, research and knowledge transfer – at the heart of our future activity. Enhancing our international reputation should create a virtuous circle, increasing our ability to secure sustainable income flows through offering increased opportunities to international students to study here.'* (Orange Global 2009).

Whilst key indicators of success of *Brand Positioning* include national and global rankings, few strategy documents in 2010 assign KPIs to particular goals for league table improvements, suggesting uncertainty as to the mechanism by which internationalisation efforts can enhance league table ranking through strategy.

### **Violet University strategy documents**

At Violet University, strategy documents in 2010 articulate the *Brand Positioning* theme through the lens of engagement with business, to equip Violet University with:

*'the agility and strength to thrive in the new global economy.'* (Violet University Strategic Plan 2007-2012)

Violet University prioritise institutional ambitions for brand development through the concept of enterprise, which strategy documents constitute as being international in orientation as well as national. However, Violet University strategy documents indicate some confusion as to *Brand Positioning* with a vision statement that speaks to graduates operating in the global environment but Violet University advancing the prosperity of the region in which it is situated. Strategy documents therefore suggest Violet University has a regional reputation in 2010 but aspirations for sustained growth of internationalisation efforts, through the recruitment of

international students, and establishment of collaborative partnerships overseas, will support Violet University efforts to establish a strong international reputation. Strategy representation of the *Brand Positioning* theme varies between those institutions that associate Internationalisation success with translation from a regional or national reputation into global standing, and those that prioritise the enhancement of an asserted present global reputation through internationalisation. The former *Brand Positioning* theme emerges at Violet University and other modern university sector strategy documents, with the enhancement of global reputation emerging through strategy documents at those universities describing themselves as research intensive.

### **Violet University senior managers**

Senior managers similarly emphasised the strategic importance of *Brand Positioning*, noting that internationalisation efforts are frequently directed towards strengthening the university's competitive positioning in global higher education markets. This theme often intersects with the *Market-Driven Growth* theme, as the university's brand identity is shaped in part by its ability to attract international students and partners. Managers acknowledge that enhancing the university's brand through internationalisation can yield long-term benefits, positioning Violet University as a globally recognised institution:

*'If the UK is going to maintain its brand position it has got to grow up and learn that in fact delivering in other countries means you learn from other countries.'* (SM1)

In speaking to the broader drive for internationalisation through the *Global Citizenship* and *Cultural Exchange* themes, one manager spoke of brand and reputation facilitating both:

*'Where it cuts across is that this all has to be paid for and if we become very professional at marketing ourselves for our franchise and our international recruitment, that all helps to pay for that sort of activity because that sort of activity pays for itself through reputation, it isn't going to actually bring in income. The Violet Global College won't bring in income, it will build reputation which in turn brings in income.'* (SM3)

Other senior managers reinforced the focus on the importance of league tables for *Brand Positioning* that emerged through sector strategy documents:

*'I guess some institutions will be international by their reputation, so if you take some of the Russell Group universities in a way, they are international in every sense of the word probably because they are in a high position in the International League tables,*

*they recruit a lot of international students, they attract the best staff across the world so there is a mix of various nationalities. So, in some ways they're probably more international than national in the sense they recruit students from all around the world.'* (SM2).

Whilst the importance of league tables was acknowledged by SM2, another felt that Violet should focus on international reputational standing through league tables rather than national rankings:

*'Well, like we are having this argument at the moment whether we should be going away from North London because that's all the problems on league tables and government and then you are saying well are we now a National university? No, we're not, we are an international university, and this country is part of one of the countries we trade in, it just happens to be our base.'* (SM4)

As with the sector and strategy document presentation of the *Brand Positioning* theme, senior managers spoke to *Brand Positioning* as playing a significant role in the development of Violet University's internationalisation efforts, also noting that *Brand Positioning* is influenced by many other themes, especially the *Market-Driven Growth* and *Academic Collaboration* themes, again speaking to financial imperatives driving broader internationalisation aspirations at Violet University and across the sector. Senior managers were less consistent in articulating an institutional perspective on league tables in the development of Violet's Brand Positioning suggesting ambivalence in perception of their importance at Violet University.

In the literature considered in chapter two, attention focused on academic writing considering the influence of neo-liberalism in development of a market mode of operation in UK universities, with an associated emphasis on brand (Fairclough 1993). As a senior manager I too identified *Brand Positioning* as important in strategy documents and practice, focusing on emphasising our unique attributes and opportunities for home and international students, in an environment I always regarded as competitive and underpinned by strong economic drivers. Perhaps because Violet University's league table positions for Law and other disciplinary areas were lower than competitors at that time, brand was more readily referenced to study opportunities and graduate outcomes, which may account for the ambivalence identified in senior manager interviews on the role of league tables in development of Violet's brand.

Attention now turns to the sixth dominant theme emerging through data gathered in 2010, of *Risk Management*.



#### 4.3.6 Risk Management theme

The final dominant theme emerging from the data gathered in 2010, *Risk Management* addresses the geopolitical, regulatory and competitive risks associated with internationalisation. Sector and Violet strategy documents outline the need for caution in international engagements, reflecting on factors such as visa regulations, geopolitical tensions, and potential threats to institutional stability. This theme reflects an awareness of the vulnerabilities that come with internationalisation, emphasising the importance of mitigating risks in planning and implementation.

##### **Sector strategy documents**

The strategy documents analysed, position universities as operating under government constraints, broadly attributed to the marketised higher education environment coupled with government higher education policies that restrict international student recruitment. Competitive risks are described as occurring bilaterally between UK universities and multilaterally between UK universities and universities in Europe and globally. The *Risk Management* theme is closely associated with the construct of international students as consumer considered in 4.3.5 above as associated with the *Brand Positioning* theme. The sector strategy documents suggest a taken for granted assumption that UK universities must broaden their income generation activities to be sustainable, in turn influencing internationalisation objectives. The *Risk Management* theme creates a strong imperative across the strategy documents that internationalisation in and of itself is necessary to achieve institutional fiscal sustainability. Sector strategy documents note increased competition for international students, not just between public universities, but from private providers too. This creates a strategic imperative for a university to secure its:

*‘fair share’ of international students’* (Blue University, International Strategic Agenda 2010-2013).

Red University, a member of the Russell Group, asserts multilateral competitive pressures requiring prioritisation of international student recruitment:

*‘There is significant growth in the number of corporate providers, which inter alia are ‘raiding universities.’* (Red University International Strategy 2008-2011).

In the same strategy document Red also states:

*'competition among suppliers is fierce, with increasing numbers of European universities now offering courses taught in English, often with very low fees. Also, several Asian countries are now not only investing much more heavily in their universities, but also explicitly competing in the international arena.'* (Red International Strategy 2008-2011).

Red University notes uncertainty in predictions of future international student numbers and potential destination countries highlighting a British Council prediction that international student numbers might triple from 350,000 to 850,000 between 2007 and 2020, whilst at the same time Red University note an unattributed pessimistic prediction of a potential fall in international students to 250,000 by 2020 suggesting considerable uncertainty as to the future international student population size. The *Risk Management* theme of market uncertainty manifests as both an internal call to action and an external signalling of the opportunities for competitive advantage through reputational strength, closely associating the *Risk Management* theme with the *Brand Positioning* theme considered above. The *Risk Management* theme therefore emerges as a response to geo-political and competition pressures asserting strategy imperatives to recruit international students in increased numbers. Examples of the *Risk Management* theme emerge across sector strategy documents, speaking to a dominant sectoral thematic priority. Orange University, another Russell Group university, noting the increasing involvement of the private and business for profit higher education sector highlights:

*'working with high-quality private providers to attract international students'* (Orange Internationalisation Strategy 2009)

also signalling the increasing role played by international agents in supporting international student recruitment, in the face of competitive pressures.

Pink University, a Post-92 Alliance Group member asserts external drivers including:

*'changes in the global market for higher education, and increased competition between HEIs globally'* (Pink University Towards Internationalisation 2008)

as a strong rationale for a new university international strategy. At the same time, Pink University strategy documents state that across UK higher education there is a growing

recognition that internationalisation has a range of dimensions including developing a university brand and competitiveness closely linking the *Risk Management* theme with the *Brand Positioning* theme.

Competition pressures driving the need to internationalise are suggested by sector strategy documents as one response to UK government policy statements on immigration with the associated potential to have a negative impact on international student recruitment. Yellow University notes it faces an array of challenges in its internationalisation aims including:

*'UK immigration policy and in particular continued policy changes aimed at reducing the number of students from overseas studying in the UK.'*

Whilst this references challenges, it implicitly links UK policy to reduced competitive advantage for Yellow and other UK universities. Red University also assert a need for them to hold an institutional influencing role with agencies that might reduce income generation from international activity:

*'Red should seek to engage with and influence national and international policy development in such areas as trade and immigration that could impact on Red international activity.'* (Red University International Strategy 2008-2011).

The competitive pressures highlighted in sector strategy documents also feature in Violet strategy documents, outlined in the section below.

### **Violet University strategy documents**

At Violet University, a post-92 university and member of the University Alliance Group, the *Risk-Management* theme emerges from the geo-political and financial pressures associated with the Higher Education Act 2004 and the introduction of variable fees requiring differentiation of university mission to catalyse:

*'the impact of the university activity on economic growth in an increasingly competitive global economy.'* (Violet University Strategic Plan 2007-2012)

The strategy document strongly references the need for strategic agility to enable Violet University to respond to a:

*'global environment that is more competitive and volatile than ever before'. (Violet University Strategic Plan 2007-2012)*

Violet strategy documents present the *Risk Management* theme as a call to action in the face of external pressures and reflect academic writing, discussed at 2.7.1 which describes the economic context in UK universities as most dominant (De Vita & Case, 2003).

### **Violet University senior managers**

Senior managers reiterated *Risk Management* concerns, with several highlighting the need for adaptive strategies to address evolving challenges in internationalisation. In interviews, senior managers described how *Risk Management* considerations frequently shape internationalisation decision-making processes at Violet University, particularly in response to external uncertainties. However, rather than articulating risk management in an exclusively negative way, senior managers also suggested that such challenges had facilitated proactive and informed strategy approaches at Violet:

*'The other way of looking at it actually is to say that the imperative of economics has driven our culture to recruitment which has led now to the more informed dialogue that is happening and you know, if we haven't had that market imperative we might not actually have folded our hands and said this is quite good we are running a tight ship with that income and we won't bother with frankly the hassle do you know but that is negative as well so I think there was a lot said about marketisation where I think there are benefits as well as downsides and they really are because some of those behavioural changes are good.'* (SM1).

That same manager also spoke of marketisation in response to external risks having led to evolution in internationalisation strategy development:

*'I think we have evolved and I think market forces are - you know I am not a market forces person - but I am reasonable enough to say that in my last institution we wouldn't have had the dialogues had we not asked the questions 'gosh we could be adding more money from international students but what does that mean' and then of course there is a more mature dialogue because later on in the process and looking at other institutions we said well we don't want ghettoisation, if we are doing this it is because we want to improve the opportunities for all our students'* (SM1).

Another senior manager spoke of markets maturing over time, requiring Violet University to adapt its approaches to better manage risk:

*'it is a very clear route to market for the product we offer, and I think we have to be quite sophisticated now about understanding that it was simpler a few years ago. Now it is more sophisticated, and we have to understand where the markets are saturated, where they are mature in their ability to offer education, not mature markets in the normal commercial sense but mature enough to offer their own education and understand then what we might sell them instead and so I think there's that aspect to it.'* (SM3).

As emerged through sector strategy documents, senior managers acknowledge the importance of national and European agencies in supporting Violet University and UK universities more generally to manage competitive risks globally that might impact on international student recruitment:

*'Funding is a big drive of course and the recruitment in some universities are very very heavily reliant on that. Universities UK has an international arm now and in fact they do some good work with universities, and I know that for instance their president was over a couple of weeks ago in Europe representing all UK universities with European ministers of education and so you know there is a real voice there. The British Council of course is very active in terms of the whole of that agenda.'* (SM2)

Overall, the data shows that the *Risk Management* theme plays a critical role in shaping a pragmatic and pro-active approach to internationalisation efforts at Violet University, balancing ambition and entrepreneurship with caution. What is absent in data gathered in 2010 is recognition, in strategy documents and senior manager interviews, of counter narratives of internationalisation and particularly the notion that Violet University, along with other universities in the Global North, are in a far stronger position to manage risks, through competitive advantage compared to universities in the Global South. What emerges as the *Risk-Management* theme is reflective of a taken for granted assumption by sector and Violet University of their opportunity to develop internationalisation intentionally, which accords with the extended definition of internationalisation, discussed at 2.7.1, and proposed by De Wit in 2015. Previous research studies have questioned whether internationalisation as regards the Global South is more coercive than intentional (Teferra, 2019) and attention is paid to this issue in assessing evolution of the theme of *Risk Management* in data gathered in 2020 and discussed in chapter five.

## 4.4 Weaker themes of internationalisation strategy

Whilst this chapter has specifically identified dominant themes of internationalisation strategy, addressing the first research question, two other themes emerged through sector and Violet strategy documents and senior manager interviews in 2010, but were weaker in construction than those identified throughout this chapter. They are presented here to assess change in their relative strength in relation to data gathered in 2020.

### 4.4.1 Alumni and internationalisation theme

#### Sector strategy documents

Less evident across sector strategy documents are themes outlining the role of alumni to support internationalisation efforts. Sector strategy documents identify international alumni playing a role in internationalisation but do not elaborate on translation of that role to internationalisation practice, beyond signalling their capacity to act as ambassadors, fundraisers and benefactors. Red University suggest:

*'Red should work with its international alumni to foster a dynamic relationship that benefits the university, since they can provide a powerful network of ambassadors, networkers, fundraisers and benefactors.'* (Red University International Strategy 2008-2011).

Orange University associate international alumni with their development of European and international reputation, noting:

*'But it was not just within Europe that the University developed a strong reputation. We were the first University in Europe to admit a Chinese student, who graduated as a Doctor of Medicine in 1855.'* (Orange Global 2009).

The most common rationale for engagement with alumni emerging through sector strategy documents is the provision of scholarships to fund future student recruitment:

*'We will work with alumni networks and international business partners to establish scholarships for international students donated by international alumni, companies or organisations.'* (Brown University Internationalisation Strategy 2009-2012).

Strategy documents of research led universities Red, Yellow and Green emphasise longevity of international student recruitment and thus being able to draw on international alumni of historical repute, closely associating alumni with the *Brand Positioning* theme as evidence of

the university's international standing, rather than a strategic aspiration for engagement of contemporary international alumni in internationalisation strategy and practice. Yellow University state:

*'we have a global community of more than 200,000 alumni and we are actively extending the networks of country, regional and special interest groups throughout this community'* (Yellow university Internationalisation without Borders Plan 2010)

but the purpose of such groups in promoting internationalisation goals is unexplained. Similarly, Green University strategy documents speak only of:

*'developing an international alumni network.'* (Green University International Strategy 2010-2015)

Blue University note the importance of widespread engagement with their international alumni:

*'our growing network of international alumni needs to play a major role in this Agenda. In addition to a major commitment to fundraising the Development and Alumni Relations Office can enable our alumni to support in other ways such as international student recruitment, careers, work placements and internships, research, business and knowledge transfer and capacity building activities'*

but the strategy document goes on to suggest that a specific Alumni Strategy is a future development, reinforcing the embryonic nature of the role to be played by alumni in support of internationalisation efforts at Blue University in 2010 (Blue University International Strategy Agenda 2010-2013)

### **Violet University strategy documents**

At Violet university, strategy documents align the shaping of the future success of graduates with *'establishing an active and self-managing international alumni network'* although the purpose of such networks remains unexplained (Violet university Strategic Plan 2007-2012)

### **Violet University senior managers**

Senior managers at Violet University did not clearly articulate a role to be played by international alumni, focusing attention instead on international student recruitment and future aspirations for supporting their graduate career development options through links with employers rather than alumni.

#### 4.4.2 Technology and internationalisation theme

##### Sector strategy documents

Sector strategy documents analysed in 2010 emphasise the importance of campus based education but allude to a requirement for openness to development of other approaches to delivery, especially distance learning and asynchronous learning. Mention is made of the potential for technological developments to transform approaches to internationalisation, but these are signalled as future considerations only, rather than emerging as immediate strategic priorities. In the sector strategy documents several universities note the potential for technology to both improve access to higher education in the future but also signal potential challenges arising from unequal access:

*'There is a global revolution in participation, driven by the possibilities offered by the new technologies. Continued growth in the world economy will depend upon access to HE being a reality in all countries. Global technological inequalities already exist and may be exacerbated by moves in the developed world to new, virtual learning environments.'* (Red University International Strategy 2008-2011)

The overriding priority for technology and internationalisation arising from sector strategy documents aligns with the *Risk Management* theme, positioning universities as needing to be adaptive to fast paced technological change to remain competitive. Orange University assert:

*'the implications of the increasing pace of technological innovation are likely to be profound. They include a huge shift in demand for 'borderless education'.'* (Orange University Internationalisation Strategy 2009).

##### Violet University strategy documents

At Violet University, strategy documents only hint at a role to be played by technology in meeting international strategic aspirations in the future through strategy commitment to:

*'develop new provision and new modes of learning which meet global skills needs'* (Violet University Strategic Plan 2007-2012)

and to:

*'review tutored e-learning partnerships and fly in faculty delivery on the basis of cost and profitability and establish the criteria for future developments of appropriate Violet University courses and programmes for international delivery by these means'* (Violet University International Engagement Strategy 2010-2015)



but Violet strategy documents do not develop the potential involvement of technology in internationalisation further.

### **Violet University senior managers**

Senior managers at Violet University suggest a role for technology in delivery of internationalisation efforts in the future at Violet University but suggest it is not strategically well developed in 2010:

*'I think that the markets are changing, and we have to have the variety of models, and we have to use technology a lot more.'* (SM3)

*'You need the diversification. I don't see how you can be global these days if you are a business or a university that's operating in a business-like manner you know. Working in the global economy could be what you're doing now, It may be something like X does with their distance learning which I think is just as important as any of the others and in fact I can see a huge expansion in that and using the Internet a lot more for overseas things than we currently do.'* (SM4)

Overall, the technology theme emerges as a potential future development across sector and Violet strategy documents and in senior manager interviews, linked most closely to the *Market-Driven Growth* and *Risk Management* themes in 2010. As was discussed in relation to the *Risk Management* theme above, there is a taken for granted assumption that universities can respond to and proactively engage with technological internationalisation, without acknowledging, as discussed in the literature review in chapter two, that this is an elite privilege of universities in the Global North, coupled with the advantage that comes from delivery in the English language whilst also influencing practice globally (Tight, 2022).

## **4.5 International strategy and influence on internationalisation practice in 2010**

### **Sector and Violet University strategy documents**

The dominant themes of internationalisation as articulated in sector and Violet University's strategy documents and by senior managers at Violet in 2010 reveal diverse and at times conflicting priorities. Sector and Violet strategy documents prioritise the *Market-Driven Growth* theme, with clear KPIs noted for targets to increase international student numbers and for defined growth in the number and nature of collaborative partnerships overseas. Strategy documents also frequently state institutional targets for students studying abroad as part of the *Global Citizenship* theme but broader goals around internationalisation of the curriculum and development of the *Cultural Exchange* theme remain undeveloped beyond policy

commitment. Managers at Violet University also spoke of ambivalence about the *Cultural Exchange* theme even though their strategy documents signalled its importance.

Translating international strategic aspirations and policy commitments into internationalisation practice emerges as inconsistent through those data. Sector and Violet strategy documents prioritise the performance indicators for success without signifying how internationalisation efforts and practice should achieve those metrics. Strategy documents generally speak to institutional structural changes to improve practice with less focus on the role played by people within the university, particularly staff and students. The role of strategy documents in influencing internationalisation practice therefore remains unclear, the implications of which are discussed in detail in chapter seven where I outline recommendations to enhance internationalisation practice at Violet University and more broadly across UK universities.

### **Violet University senior managers**

The inconsistency found in translating internationalisation strategy into practice through strategy documents was mirrored in senior manager interviews at Violet University. Managers spoke of the role played by strategy in leading institutional change, but were ambivalent about its effectiveness in achieving internationalisation efforts through practice:

*'I don't want to make a value judgement on this one, but I think one of the problems with strategy documents in general is that they often just give a lot of aspirational lovey dovey stuff'* (SM1).

That senior manager also spoke to concerns about the potential to over commit in strategy documents leading to accountability concerns with key institutional stakeholders:

*'The difficulty I think with something like an international strategy is making definitive clear signals. At my last institution it was a deeper document then with very very clear symbols and very clear numbers which in an international strategy is very frightening to do because you come to conclusions quite quickly and then you really feel terrified because there is so much uncertainty and so a lot of documents avoid the difficult stuff because they worry that a Board of Governors will judge them on what you state.'* (SM1)

Other senior managers spoke of internationalisation practice being driven by institutional structures or emerging organically through academic staff practices and approaches:

*'The Teaching Institute have a very clear mandate to drive internationalisation of the curriculum aspect particularly and also of course a lot of our research activity is internationally connected. You know the Research Assessment Exercise showed that*

*many of our staff are internationally recognised in terms of the excellence of their research.'* (SM2).

However, that senior manager also hedged in terms of awareness of and clarity of implementation of Violet University's international strategy into practice:

*'I think whether how well the strategy is known, and one can never be sure about that. However, I can actually see that whether they know the strategy or not somehow, they are engaged in internationalising the curriculum. You know you need to give it life through people and people who have the ability and the power to take it forward at different levels like you would do in your Faculties.'* (SM2)

Other senior managers spoke to awareness of Violet University's international strategy but expressed uncertainty as to how, or indeed even whether, it should translate into a collective approach to internationalisation practice:

*'Nobody was very sure if we were all broadly singing to the same hymn sheet, I think this establishes that we are broadly and if you were going to leave the Faculties as autonomous this would probably be good enough.'* (SM3)

*'Then there's all the other ones, well there was the draft strategy for the Violet Global College Plan and the European strategy proposal, and I don't quite know how they all sit together.'* (SM4)

Another senior manager suggested that at Violet University it was internationalisation practice in Faculties and Schools that had informed and influenced the development of Violet's International Strategy document, but this too was viewed as problematic, creating passionate advocates for particular areas of international efforts, but potentially leading to a resistance to change:

*'There is a tradition here of partnership development, working with partner organisations overseas, recruiting students, developing franchises. I mean arguably the biggest problem we have got here is the lack of strategy around that. You have got to make money in return or are we doing them for other reasons like the Violet Global College stuff? I suspect we haven't been clear on that traditionally. Many academic staff are directly involved with that activity and believe passionately in it and have seen the value of having both international students as part of the student body so I think there is, there are cynics within the organisation who would say well actually a lot of this doesn't make sense but because it is actually ironically, it is quite deeply engraved, I think it makes it hard to pull back from it.'* (SM6).

The same senior manager suggested that a lot more work was required to effectively institutionalise, through practice, Violet's international strategy aspirations:

*'how well do I think it has been institutionalised? Oh, I suspect like many other strategies not well at all. I mean I suppose one could say in a sense it's not a lot more than hopefully reasonable articulation of what we currently do. I mean clearly there is some aspiration in there as well, but I think some of it is embedded because it is a reflection of what we do; I think some of the other components some of the aspiration elements for example around student mobility and staff mobility and internationalisation of the curriculum for example I suspect we don't know the answer and therefore it will be at best inconsistent. We don't understand which I think in itself probably speaks volumes and I am not sure that's a case of the international strategy alone it is probably the case of relevant strategies as a whole then the whole issue is about actually how do you get those strategies embedded? I think you have got to have some clear KPI's and we could go further than that actually and have a whole process around how you develop an improvisation plan and how you monitor and how you record back and again I suspect that because we don't have some of the mechanisms and some of the structures then therefore there is a void there and there is a bit of a sense of oh well it's done, we have one, and we kind of tick the box.'* (SM6)

Overall, senior managers indicated uncertainty regarding the translation of international strategy into internationalisation practice at Violet University, and findings from data gathered in 2010 suggest that it may have been internationalisation practice in Faculties and Schools that informed the development of international approaches historically, leading to an unwillingness to change local practices to support the emerging international strategy at institutional level. My own experience as a senior manager would accord with Violet senior manager interviews in 2010. Situated in a Faculty setting in 2010 I would agree that internationalisation practice tended towards a bottom up approach, however, would question the extent to which this was deliberate and intentional and more a response to strong institutional economic drivers, but lacking, as SM6 suggests in the quote above, clearly constructed institutional strategic priorities and KPIs for each area of international activity.

#### **4.6 Summary of dominant Themes emerging from data in 2010**

Chapter four has outlined the dominant themes of internationalisation as emerged through analysis of sector and Violet University strategy documents and interviews with Violet University's senior managers from data gathered in 2010. The findings indicate that while

certain themes, such as *Market-driven Growth* and *Brand Positioning*, are very prominent across both data sources, others, such as *Cultural Exchange*, are less prioritised in practice despite their presence in strategy documents. These themes reveal the diverse and sometimes conflicting priorities that underpin internationalisation, highlighting how strategic aims and managerial actions are negotiated within a complex institutional context.

Alongside the identification of conflicting priorities underpinning internationalisation themes, ambivalence emerged as to the role played by international strategy documents in achieving internationalisation goals and positively influencing practice at Violet University. This is reinforced by reflection on my own practice as a senior manager in 2010, noted above, where internationalisation aligned more readily with mainstream processual perspectives on internationalisation, with far less attention paid to critical perspectives, beyond the underlying concerns noted in 1.5.2 regarding the extent to which international students had a positive experience at Violet University.

Chapter five will continue this analysis by examining how these themes have evolved between 2010 and 2020, offering insights into shifts in institutional priorities and the broader pressures shaping and influencing internationalisation strategy and internationalisation practice across the UK higher education sector.

## Chapter Five Changes in UK University strategy themes between 2010 and 2020

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of data gathered in 2020 from sector and Violet University international strategy documents and thematic interviews undertaken with senior managers in Violet University. The findings in this chapter address the second research question (as first outlined in chapter one):

*How have institutional international strategy themes in UK universities changed between 2010 and 2020?*

In chapter four, six dominant themes are identified from data gathered in 2010 comprising sector and Violet University strategy documents alongside thematic interviews with senior managers in Violet University. In this chapter, the construction of several of those dominant themes will be shown to have changed at the second data collection point in 2020. As indicated previously, this study offers both an opportunity to evaluate themes of internationalisation emerging through strategy and senior manager narratives but also addresses changes in the constitution of the themes and their dominance over a critical ten year period for UK universities involving significant shifts in government policies in the regulation of higher education. Of particular note is the creation of the Office for Students (OfS) on 1 January 2018 and its remit to regulate higher education in England, with performative expectations of universities introduced through comprehensive metrics assessing university performance in key areas of quality of student experience, student progression and student outcomes for all students, whether Home or International. The creation of the OfS represents just one of several UK Government policy shifts that have impacted the internationalisation agenda in UK universities over the period covered by this research study. These are chronologised in the literature review at 2.4. Coupled with a static fees regime for home students, which has failed to keep pace with inflation, and the financial and social demands placed on universities from the radical shift from a public service model towards a market-based approach (Marginson, 2012), an environment of significant policy and financial challenge emerges for UK universities between 2010 and 2020. I know from my own practice as a senior manager at this time, that such challenges increased strategic reliance on international activities to maintain financial sustainability at Violet University. In this chapter I focus on the changes in themes across strategy documents and senior manager interviews during this significant ten-year period, and in chapter six the findings are evaluated as to how dominant themes of internationalisation and strategy theme changes over time inform and impact on internationalisation practice. 2020

marks the end of one strategy phase for Violet University (Violet University Strategic Plan 2015 -2020) and the launch of the next (Violet University Strategic Plan 2020-2025). Collecting data at this important intersection between strategy documents offers a unique opportunity to consider evolution of the dominant themes of internationalisation between 2010 and 2020 in Violet University and simultaneously to consider the influence, and extent of influence, of one strategy period on the next. The influence and impact of one strategy period, on subsequent strategy documents and practice is considered in detail in chapter six at 6.5.

Table 2 summarises the dominant themes in 2020 emerging through analysis of sector and Violet strategy documents and senior manager interviews. One theme emerges as dominant in 2020 that was not found in 2010, that of *Global Engagement*, constructed by strategy documents and senior managers to signify a holistic approach to institutional engagement with internationalisation. Seven further dominant themes are identified, six of which also emerged from data gathered in 2010, with one additional theme identified as weaker in 2010 – the *Technological Internationalisation* theme, which assumes a far more dominant thematic position in 2020. Table 2 indicates the dominant themes in 2020 and notes shifts in construction of the themes between 2010 and 2020. This is followed by a more detailed consideration of the themes emerging from the findings in 2020.

**Table 2: Summary of Dominant themes of Internationalisation in 2020**

Theme	Theme construction in 2010	Theme construction in 2020	Deployed by sector strategy documents	Deployed by Violet University strategy documents	Deployed by Violet University senior managers	Associated themes
<b><i>Global Engagement</i></b>	Did not emerge as dominant in 2010	Positioning the university as ambitious, curious and enquiring, informing engagement with a holistic range of global activities. <i>Global Engagement</i> informs all aspects of university life, underpinned by institutional values and ethos and a commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion.	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<i>Global Citizenship</i> <i>Market driven growth</i> <i>Academic Collaboration</i> <i>Cultural Exchange</i> <i>Brand Positioning</i>
<b><i>Global Citizenship</i></b>	Positioning students as part of a global community, emphasising intercultural competencies, and civic responsibility	Positioning staff, students and alumni as part of a global community emphasising contribution to diverse communities of learning. Development of student skillsets, intercultural competences, digital capabilities and challenging mindsets in preparation for global graduate careers are prioritised.	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<i>Global Engagement</i>



<b>Brand Positioning</b>	Using internationalisation to enhance the institution's global reputation, and visibility	Promoting the university externally to attract international students, commercialise collaborative partnership arrangements, and increase international research income streams. internationalisation is presented as a means to enhance global reputation, associated with national and global league table ranking.	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<i>Global Engagement</i> <i>Market Driven Growth</i> <i>Academic Collaboration</i>
<b>Market driven growth</b>	Focusing on internationalisation as a means to attract international students and generate revenue	Focusing on internationalisation as a means to sustain institutional financial sustainability through income generation from international student recruitment and Academic Collaboration partnerships to facilitate engagement with broad Global Engagement ideals	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<i>Global Engagement</i> <i>Brand Positioning</i>
<b>Academic Collaboration</b>	Emphasising partnerships with overseas institutions to foster research and TNE programme development	Emphasising partnerships with overseas institutions to secure mutual benefit, facilitate collaborative research projects and opportunities for Global Citizenship	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<i>Global Engagement</i> <i>Brand Positioning</i> <i>Market Driven Growth</i>

<b>Technological Internationalisation</b>	Emerged as a weaker theme in 2010	Emphasising the role played by technology in developing new forms of internationalisation engagement and development of digital competencies in students and graduates	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<i>Global Engagement</i>
<b>Cultural Exchange</b>	Promoting internationalisation as an avenue for cultural understanding and mutual exchange	Promoting internationalisation as an avenue for cultural understanding and mutual exchange, particularly through the metaphorical concept of 'internationalisation at home'	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<i>Global Engagement</i> <i>Global Citizenship</i> <i>Academic Collaboration</i>
<b>Risk Management</b>	Addressing geopolitical, regulatory, and competitive risks associated with internationalisation	Stressing geopolitical, regulatory, and competitive risks associated with internationalisation adversely impacting institutional financial sustainability	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<i>Global Engagement</i> <i>Brand Positioning</i> <i>Market Driven Growth</i> <i>Academic Collaboration</i>

## 5.2 Analysis of dominant themes in 2020

### 5.2.1 Global Engagement theme

The *Global Engagement* theme is evident across sector and Violet University strategy documents and senior manager interviews, presenting *Global Engagement* as a term to signify a policy orientation away from ‘international’ and its perceived association with a more limited range of university international activities at Violet and other universities. The *Global Engagement* theme signals a strategy shift towards the terms ‘internationalisation’, ‘Global’ and ‘Global Engagement’ to suggest a holistic institutional approach in this area, strongly underpinned by university values and ethos. In strategy documents the theme presents in two ways – through the naming of strategy documents and also through thematic orientation within the strategy document narrative.

**Table 3** below indicates the change in nomenclature of strategy documents between 2010 and 2020:

**Table 3      University strategy document titles between 2010 and 2020**

University number	University colour	Strategy period	Strategy Document Title
1	Red	2008-11	International strategy
1	Red	2012-2017	International strategy
1	Red	2015	Global Engagement Strategy
1	Red	2034	Red 2034
2	Orange	2009	Orange Global
2	Orange	2011	Global Review and Impact Plan
2	Orange	2017-2020	Global Engagement Plan
2	Orange	2030	Orange Strategy
3	Yellow	2009	Internationalisation: Knowledge without borders
3	Yellow	2020	Global Strategy
4	Green	2010-2015	International Strategy
4	Green	2019-2022	Global Engagement Strategy
4	Green	2030	Strategy 2030
5	Blue	2010-2013	International Strategic Agenda
5	Blue	2019-2025	Blue Strategy
6	Brown	2009-2012	Internationalisation Strategy

6	Brown	2014 - 2020	Internationalisation Strategy
6	Brown	2030	Our Strategy
7	Violet	2007-2012	Strategic Plan
7	Violet	2010-2015	International Engagement Strategy
7	Violet	2015-2020	Strategic Plan
7	Violet	2020-2025	Strategic Plan
8	Black	2009-2015	International Strategy
8	Black	2020	Internationalisation Strategy
9	Pink	2008	Towards Internationalisation
9	Pink	2015-2019	Global Pink
9	Pink	2019-2024	Global Pink

### Explanation of Table 3

When data was gathered in 2010, ten strategy documents were analysed from nine universities, shaded grey in Table 3 above. Nine of those strategy documents had a strategic focus on international activity, with one being an Institutional strategy encompassing international strategy aspirations within. Of the nine, five use the term ‘international’ to signal the document’s orientation and focus- Red, Green and Black Universities title their strategy documents ‘international strategy’, whilst Yellow and Pink title their strategy documents ‘Internationalisation strategy’. Blue University name their strategy document ‘International Strategic Agenda’. Only Orange University use the term ‘Global’ as the strategy document title, in association with the name of the university itself. Violet University’s 2010 strategy document is named ‘International Engagement’.

Strategy document data gathered in 2020, involved analysis of seventeen documents, as several universities sampled had successive strategy periods, or international strategy documents became merged with institutional strategy documentation. This occurs at six of the nine sample universities between 2010 and 2020, namely Red, Orange, Green, Blue, Brown and Violet University too. The implications of the subsuming of international strategic aspirations within corporate strategy documents is considered in chapter six, as suggestive of the increasing importance and mainstreaming of internationalisation and the emergence of *Global Engagement* as the dominant theme at Violet University and UK universities more generally.

By 2020, none of the sector strategy documents analysed use the term international in the document’s title. Red, Orange and Green Universities adopt the term ‘Global Engagement’, whilst Yellow and Pink use the term ‘Global’. Brown and Black Universities entitle their documents ‘Internationalisation Strategy’. Blue university no longer publish a separate strategy for internationalisation, with international aspirations contained within the institutional ‘Blue Strategy’ document. At Violet University, international strategic goals and associated KPIs are contained within the 2020-2025 institutional strategy document, under the heading ‘Global Engagement.’

### Sector strategy documents

Beyond the naming of documents signalling a strategic refocus towards the *Global Engagement* theme, sector and Violet University strategy document narrative constructs the *Global Engagement* theme as universities being globally ambitious, but also curious and enquiring, with a critical mindset informing engagement with a holistic range of global activities.

Red University, a research-intensive institution, link their *Global Engagement* Strategy to the Institutional Strategy 2034 (as a twenty-year document this is the longest strategy period analysed for this study) using a combination of multimodal design and narrative features. Of note is representation of Red's Global Engagement strategic aspirations as one of six pillars of strategy metaphorically supporting Red's vision, mission and founding principles. Beyond the linkage of design with strategy, there is a depth of detail translating global aspirations into practice, with specific reference made to monitoring, on an annual basis to demonstrate progress against this thematic priority, including reference to case studies, although no specific examples are indicated. Strategic prioritisation of *Global Engagement* is reinforced through presence of visual images within the strategy documents alongside textual narrative. Visual images are suggestive of staff and student diversity at Red University, highlighting participation in cultural activities such as traditional dance. Red also draw on statistical references to highlight diversity of the student body, alongside the number and breadth of Red alumni globally. Red University reiterates its global status, but a strong place-based identity is also asserted:

*'We describe ourselves as 'in', 'of' and for both London and the world'* (Red University Global Engagement Strategy 2015-2020)

Beyond place-based association, Red strongly assert and link their reputation for radical and critical thinking with their ethos of *Global Engagement*, emphasising historical values and a belief in fairness, and higher education's capacity to improve the world, developing a broad and sophisticated notion of internationalisation through strategy narrative:

*'Our founding commitment to fairness gives us a contemporary interest in addressing inequality, including in the Global south. We will dismantle the barriers- linguistic, cultural and financial- that inhibit global co-operation in research, education and enterprise.'* (Red University Global Engagement Strategy 2015-2020)

Global strategy documents of other sector universities also strongly privilege the social and cultural benefits of internationalisation to develop broad global impact. Orange University stress:

*'As a truly global university, rooted in Scotland, we make a significant, sustainable and socially responsible contribution to the world.'* (Orange University Global Engagement Plan 2017-2020)

Blue University's strategy document prioritises national and global recognition for providing transformational education, which is a narrative developed across several strategy

documents, including at Violet. Blue University suggests its attainment of gold status in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) is evidence of global reputation through transformative education. TEF was introduced by the UK government in 2017 and formed a contributing metric in the determination of institutional ranking in league tables shortly afterwards. The importance of league tables to support economic rationales for internationalisation in UK universities was considered in the literature review, at 2.2.2, noting numerous research studies raising concerns that the major league tables relied upon in the UK fail to provide a complete picture of the sector, with some measures being poor proxies for the qualities identified (CHERI Report, 2008). However, league tables are noted to have created a powerful weapon in what has been described as a battle for talent whereby internationalisation is operationalised through a global rankings culture (Hazelkorn, 2015).

Blue University also align their strategic focus with the *Global Engagement* theme through research:

*'Our research will continue to focus on asking difficult questions, challenging conventional wisdom, tackling with rigour the questions that matter for people and communities.'* (Blue University Strategy 2019-2025)

Black University's Internationalisation strategy links the *Global Engagement* theme with the *Academic Collaboration* theme through research activity, specifically with collaborative partners:

*'To undertake research and innovation that provide solutions to economic, social and community challenges throughout the reach of our international partnerships and activities'* (Black University Internationalisation Strategy 2020).

Black University strategy documents broaden the *Global Engagement* theme, extending its reach to all areas of activity, and ways of working:

*'To embed internationalisation throughout our university, systems and culture, permeating the full range of learning and teaching, research and knowledge exchange activities by 2020'* (Black University Internationalisation Strategy 2020)

Pink University strategy documents also promote a holistic approach to *Global Engagement* with a focus on:

*'the sustainable development and promotion of the university as a global university of choice for students, staff and partners through the discovery, application and*



*dissemination of knowledge both in the UK and extending to the furthest corners of the globe.'* (Global Pink 2015-2019)

Brown University strategy documents specifically highlight its pre-eminence in research and education that relates to marine and maritime environments and societies suggesting it is:

*'uniquely placed to build upon this distinctiveness and global recognition.'* (Brown Strategy 2030).

The same strategy document goes on to assert:

*'environmental sustainability research, education and practice has been at the heart of the university over many years. We will nurture this vibrant and influential leadership.'* (Brown Strategy 2030).

Alongside this strategy policy commitment, visual images and text highlight students:

*'out in the field'* (Brown Strategy 2030).

in a marine biology class with boxed text highlighting:

*'in 2004, we were the first to describe microplastics in the ocean.'* (Brown Strategy 2030).

In this way, *Global Engagement* is seen to influence all areas of Brown University including education and research, reinforcing the strategic aspirations stated in adjacent text and promoting a strong driver of sustainability goals.

Overall, sector strategy documents construct the *Global Engagement* theme as holistically significant with significant reach across institutional global ambition. The theme highlights curiosity, criticality and enquiry driving strategy, and a wide range of global activities encompassed within *Global Engagement* strategy practice. Issues of sustainability are also represented in the theme but somewhat surprisingly the UN Sustainable Development Goals, published in 2015, do not feature in strategy documents as a driver of strategic focus in this area despite many of the Goals aligning with sector and as noted below, Violet University's sustainability ambitions.

## **Violet University strategy documents**

At Violet University, an International Engagement Strategy covers the period 2010-2015 which is distinct to the overall university strategy plan of 2007-2012, although international strategy goals are clearly identified in the university strategy document. However, from 2015 onwards, Violet ceases to produce a separate international strategy document and aspirations and goals are instead contained within the institution strategy documents of 2015-2020 and 2020-2025. The 2015-2020 strategy document still deploys the term international to describe strategic goals and activity. It forms one of six institutional strategy themes alongside Education, Business, Sustainability, Research, Community and Partners, all underpinned by reference to Violet University's People strand. The use of boxing accords equal value to each strategy theme under the vision statement to be:

*'internationally renowned as the UK's leading business facing university.'* (Violet University Strategy 2015-2020).

The 2020-2025 strategic plan marks a departure from the naming of this area of university focus from 'International' to '*Global Engagement*'. *Global Engagement* forms one of four thematic priorities alongside Education and Student Experience, Research and Enterprise, all underpinned by People and Values. The *Global Engagement* theme is linked to the strategic aspiration for transforming lives in broad terms through providing international opportunities for staff and students, building a global community on campus and by increasing flexible programme delivery for the international market. No further detail emerges in Violet University's strategy document for translating strategic aspiration into global practice in contrast to strategy practice examples, particularly of Global Engagement through research and sustainability noted above in relation to sector strategy documents. As will be discussed in chapter six below, my involvement with development of the 2020-2025 strategic plan, whilst focused on alignment with the new strategic vision for transforming lives, was strongly underpinned by development of income generating activities to maintain financial stability, predominantly through international student recruitment and *Academic Collaboration* partnerships.

## **Violet University senior managers**

In 2020, senior managers were asked about the importance of the *Global Engagement* theme at Violet University, since it is the term adopted in Violet's 2020-2025 strategic plan, which had been launched a few months prior to interviews being held. Senior managers at Violet University affirm the importance of the *Global Engagement* theme arising from analysis of sector and Violet University strategy documents speaking of alignment between *Global*

*Engagement* and Violet University's institutional values and aspirations for internationalisation and a preference for the phrases 'global engagement' or 'internationalisation' rather than the terms 'international' and 'globalisation':

*'Global engagement is the term I'm more comfortable with I suppose. I think international became rather old hat and tended to get connected with partnership working.'* (SM7)

SM7 also spoke to potential negative perceptions arising from use of the term globalisation:

*'I mean globalisation smacks of a particular kind of capitalism and particular kinds of market narrative around the global economy, and globalisation is about massive flows of people, products and services within a strong market narrative or discourse and internationalisation has a much more political and cultural narrative.'* (SM7)

The *Global Engagement* theme is described by managers as a term that signifies global ambition, encompassing a multilateral perspective of global activity:

*'When I think about global engagement, I would tend to think about the development of the identity of the institution into 'we're a global player' within a complex network of organisations beyond the UK. Global engagement is about partnerships, relationships, strategic network development and kind of flow. So, the emphasis being on the engagement.'* (SM7)

*'I think internationalisation can be divided into different themes and global engagement would be one of them.'* (SM9)

Senior managers also spoke of resonance between the *Global Engagement* theme and Violet University's institutional values and aspirations for internationalisation:

*'Partnerships might be altruistic and about providing access for people who can't afford to come to the UK. That's global engagement. And good practice. If you think back to the original purpose of the university, what is the university about? It's about knowledge, it's about community. I think if you were to go back to perhaps look at some of the original definitions of the university, I bet your bottom dollar there's something in there about the world rather than just the local context.'* (SM9)

*'Global engagement if you like is inward looking, around bringing an international perspective into the life of the domestic university not just through recruitment for the purposes of income generation but through the diversification of student experience within the host institution. It's the curriculum and mindset. Fun stuff to understand the*

*university as part of a network of organisations delivering higher education, research, learning and teaching and other core and incidental activities across the world and to parochial eyes is not the institution from its local or regional immediate anchor' (SM7)*

*'I think global engagement means many things. So I think some of this is around providing a more global outlook for all our students, regardless of what you're studying, and I think that is just a consequence of the world globalising. You know I don't actually like the word internationalisation because I think it still suggests separation. Individual things. Global is more representative of what's happening today. Having worked in international business, it's a term most businesses transitioned away from in the late 90s because it suggested segregation and I don't think that is how the world works today.'* (SM12)

When probed about the genesis of the move away from using the term international to adoption of *Global Engagement* at Violet University and more broadly at sectoral level, senior managers were unclear on the timing, and its origin, but the assumption was that it was driven by business usage or government policy nomenclature changes which then led to adoption of the term by a university subsequently flowing to others when new strategy plans were created:

*'I'm trying to think when I first started using that term, probably only actually in the last ten to fifteen years' (SM7).*

*'Business just operates in a completely different way nowadays, so I think that's probably what is happening across lots of sectors, including education. It's just behind the curve a bit I think.'* (SM12)

*'My guess is that some, I mean I don't know, but I would have thought some universities probably just decided to change their portfolio from international to global. Other universities were doing it you know, or the global engagement strategy sounds more grandiose, simply it sounds more ambitious than international. The fact one university might use a term can then be seen to sort of flow through into others over a period of time. Perhaps there was a shift in, I don't know, foreign policy or DTI policy at some point which started to refer to global engagement. The language being used by those dominant supra institutional actors with global engagement, and therefore to be a player you had to have global engagement in your portfolio. It would be quite interesting to track the use of that term outside the university, when that first started to get traction. I would be surprised if it was a university that came up with the term first.'* (SM7)

Therefore, whilst senior managers reinforced the importance of the *Global Engagement* theme at Violet University, they could not clearly articulate in interviews how the term came to be used, although they embraced the values and ideals espoused as important for Violet University. It was generally assumed to have arisen from external sources leading to its adoption at Violet University. This will be picked up in discussion of the findings in relation to sectoral development of internationalisation strategy as, having been involved with the development of this strategic priority at Violet as one of the senior manager representatives on the working group, I know this is precisely how the term *Global Engagement* came to be recommended for adoption and was subsequently approved by the Chief Executives Group and ultimately the Board of Governors.

Through analysis of sector and Violet strategy documents and senior manager interviews, the *Global Engagement* theme is highlighted as being very important to attainment of university strategic goals, and its strength influences and informs changes across other themes identified from data gathered in 2020 especially *Global Citizenship*, *Academic Collaboration and Cultural Exchange* although, as will be discussed in 5.2.3. the strengthening of the *Brand Positioning* theme in 2020 is seen to not only influence and inform *Market Driven Growth* but also strengthens the global ambition elements contained within the *Global Engagement* theme. This will be discussed further in chapter six as signifying tension between those elements of *Global Engagement* that are underpinned by institutional values and ideals driving positive ideals of internationalisation, and those that promote reputational standing and recognition. That tension is seen to emerge not only through strategy documents but also regarding practice in internationalisation at Violet University.

## **5.2.2 Global Citizenship theme**

### **Sector strategy documents**

The *Global Citizenship* theme emerges as dominant across sector and Violet strategy documents with its importance for Violet University continuing to be emphasised by senior managers, and the range of social actors within the theme is expanded compared to 2010, extending to staff as well as students. In 2010 only Brown and Black University highlight the importance of *Global Citizenship* for staff suggesting that by 2020 the *Global Citizenship* theme is influenced by the holistic approach to internationalisation represented through the *Global Engagement* theme. In 2010, alumni are noted as important to institutional international activity, but this emerges as a weaker theme as strategy documents and senior manager narratives do not articulate their contribution to internationalisation efforts. From analysis of strategy documents in 2020, alumni continue to be mentioned as playing an important role in

institutional internationalisation, but this is more clearly articulated as falling within the *Global Citizenship* theme. Pink University highlight the role to be played by alumni in providing greater access to student exchange options through increasing:

*'donations from alumni to support short-term outbound student mobility.'* (Global Pink 2019-2024)

Yet whilst the strategic priority for development of *Global Citizenship* is highlighted across sector strategy documents, its translation into stated aims varies. Red University and other research-intensive universities continue to link the *Global Citizenship* theme with notions of quality, emphasising the recruitment of talented staff and students. Red University also highlight a broad range of *Global Citizenship* attributes applicable to staff and students including:

*'imagination and insight to address questions whose significance are not yet readily apparent.'* Red University Strategy 2034)

For Red University:

*'the ability to cultivate and support these talented individuals is a critical test of a global university.'* (Red University Strategy 2034).

Emphasis continues to be placed on equipping students with the skills to contribute to society globally and to be leaders in their chosen fields or professions. Red University assert:

*'an innovative red university education will prepare our students for a globalised world through studies of cultural diversity, global citizenship and leadership and a modern foreign language.'* (Red University Strategy 2034).

Whilst the *Global Citizenship* theme in strategy documents broadens in scope to include staff and alumni as well as students, internationalisation efforts in this area emerge through sector strategy documents as focused on development through curriculum content. Orange University promote *Global Citizenship* within and beyond the curriculum through:

*'new courses and formats for introducing students to international and regional subjects, as part of a globally relevant curriculum'* (Orange Global Review and Impact Report 2012).

Similar strategic aims emerge in Black University, a Post-92 institution which prioritises the provision of:

*‘internationalised learning and teaching which enable our students to develop as global citizens’* (Black Internationalisation Strategy 2020).

The translation of the *Global Citizenship* theme into internationalisation practice is more evident in strategy documents in 2020 than emerged in 2010. Red University strategically foregrounds its Global Citizenship programme, noting 450 students participated in the academic year 2013-14. The nature of the programme is unexplained but the narrative’s proximity to visual images of students identified in accompanying text as Malaysian, who are dressed in traditional costume performing a dance, suggests it associates with the fostering of inter-cultural understanding. Brown University highlight an intention to work in partnership with the Students Union and student community:

*‘to develop the Brown global citizen charter capturing the international values and skills our students will need in the 21st century’* noting co-creation imperatives in the development of what *Global Citizenship* means at Brown university (Brown University Internationalisation Strategy 2014-2020)

The *Global Citizenship* theme in sector strategy documents is strongly associated with the *Academic Collaboration* theme, emphasising partnerships with institutional campuses overseas, and overseas institutions, as catalysts to accelerate the development of *Global Citizenship* for staff and students. This emerges as a theme constructed as increasing opportunities to enhance student skills as well as knowledge, with entrepreneurship noted alongside developing global awareness, community awareness, civic responsibility and strengthening intercultural competences. Yellow University, a research-intensive institution with campuses overseas as well as in the UK highlight:

*‘Yellow graduates from all our campuses emerge as global citizens, highly sought after due to their blend of knowledge and skills and a strong sense of entrepreneurship, community and social responsibility.’* (Yellow University Global Strategy 2020)

Alongside institutional imperatives to develop *Global Citizenship*, discipline specific projects, highlight staff and students working collaboratively, often in an overseas setting. Brown University cite leadership of the global discovery of ocean microplastics, drawing on experiential learning approaches to enhance student awareness of fragile marine eco-systems.

*'Learning in overseas locations creates graduate global citizens leading environmental practice in marine biology'. (Brown University Strategy 2030).*

Yellow University visually and textually reference students undertaking field work in China and Malaysia signalling a broad strategic intention to:

*'embedding internationalisation in all we do,' (Yellow University Global Strategy 2020)*

linking the development of cross-cultural ways of thinking through experiential learning to the *Global Citizenship* theme.

Black University broaden *Global Citizenship* into a strategy concept of an internationalised student and staff experience. Whilst a strong commitment remains to grow outward mobility activity, through credit bearing, short-term mobility initiatives or certificated activity, greater emphasis is placed on co-ordinated induction, social activities and clubs, alongside internationalised curriculum design toolkits to deliver an internationalised student experience. (Black University Internationalisation Strategy 2020).

The *Global Citizenship* theme is wide ranging through sector strategy documents analysed in 2020. Encompassing staff and alumni as well as students, it highlights a range of internationalisation approaches for development, through curriculum and cultural programmes on campus, through *Academic Collaboration* and traditional study abroad, although challenges in achieving significant growth in outward mobility continue to be noted.

### **Violet University strategy documents**

At Violet University, strategy documents identify *Global Citizenship* as the development of global perspectives and cultural awareness for all students and staff (Violet University Strategic Plan 2015-2020). The strategic responsibility identified by Violet University for *Global Citizenship* development in strategy documents is mirrored with the reciprocal responsibility of students to contribute to diverse communities of learning, on campus and also through partnerships overseas, which have assumed even greater strategic prominence for Violet University by 2020. Violet University's Strategic Plan 2020-2025 marks a significant departure from earlier ambitions to be internationally renowned as the UK's leading Business Facing University, with a new strategic aspiration of 'Transforming Lives.' through three key themes of Opportunity, Community and Flexibility. Alongside this, a nomenclature shift emerges in internationalisation strategy priorities at Violet University, from earlier references to 'international' into a new phrase of 'Global Engagement'. This shift in nomenclature from international to 'Global' or 'Global Engagement' to describe what is predominantly referred to within strategy documents as 'internationalisation' is noted in 4.3.5 to be limited in 2010, but



by 2020 emerges strongly through sector and Violet strategy documents. The emergence of this term at Violet University is considered in detail in chapter six in discussion of the findings. It speaks both to a broadening of strategy goals for internationalisation at Violet and to the way in which strategy change at one university informs and influences nomenclature change at others.

At Violet University, a strong commitment to developing social, environmental and global awareness, emerges through strategy documents in 2020 but, as with strategy documents in 2010, the *Global Citizenship* theme at the same time connects to the *Market-Driven Growth* theme through objectives to increase the number of international students on campus:

*'Global Engagement Objectives*

- Provide diverse international experiences that prepare our students for global careers*
- Encourage a global outlook by our staff*
- Extend our international programmes*
- Grow international recruitment*
- Positively improve our community's impact on our environment'*

(Violet University Strategic Plan 2020-2025). The success measures for *Global Citizenship* relate to the development of global perspectives at Violet University, but also extend to employability, learning skills for life and digital capability, linking this theme with the *Technological Internationalisation* theme which strengthens in dominance at Violet University and through sector university strategy documents in 2020, discussed below at 5.2.6. The provision of diverse international experiences that prepare students for global careers is prioritised, suggesting an institutional led approach that goes beyond study abroad, and this is closely associated with an aspiration to encourage a global outlook in staff. The translation of the *Global Citizenship* theme into internationalisation practice at Violet University is more evident in strategy documents in 2020. Violet University highlight the importance of adoption of a Global Perspective graduate attribute to support efforts to develop *Global Citizenship*, coupled with embedding the activity, knowledge and values outlined in the HEA "Internationalising HE Framework" in the design and delivery of all curricula. (Violet University Strategic Plan 2015-2020). Whilst not explicitly stated in strategy documents, Violet University's orientation towards the *Global Citizenship* theme can be seen to align with the construct of 'internationalisation at home which is highlighted by senior managers in the section below.

## **Violet University senior managers**

Senior managers at Violet continue to strongly support the ideal of having diverse communities of learning on campus to nurture *Global Citizenship* but have reservations about going so far as to suggest this is being developed effectively across all areas of the university.

SM10 spoke to the opportunities presented by Violet's strength in establishing *Academic Collaboration* relationships to catalyse study abroad and *Global Citizenship* opportunities:

*'We've opened a branch of the University in Egypt and one of the things we have agreed on is that we will co-fund short term mobility looking at getting students that experience where they can go to Egypt, they can spend a week learning a little bit of Arabic and learning some of the history and culture of Egypt and that's fantastic because it's a very different environment. It gives them a low cost way to get a global experience.'* (SM10)

SM10 also spoke of the concept of internationalisation at home being important for Violet University in realising internationalisation aspirations, and best developed through the *Global Citizenship* theme and curriculum content:

*'I really believe we should be internationalising at home soon, where we've got the opportunity to do that is at curriculum level looking at international case studies and getting students to understand international companies issues.'* (SM10).

However, senior managers express uncertainty as to whether academics are able to draw on the breadth of cultural backgrounds in the classroom to develop *Global Citizenship* ideals, with specific mention made of language barriers for international students and the potential for international students to sit within nationality groupings creating a negative impact in the classroom:

*'Obviously if people are at the highest operating level, you know seven and a half (reference to IELTS score they are right up at the top and they arrive and they're effectively bilingual. And then they go straight into Cambridge university law class and will be at no disadvantage compared with the native English speaker. And they've had the benefit of really strong secondary education. Maybe that's not such an issue but most of the students we're getting don't fall into that category. And so if you are relying on particular markets, expect non-native English speaking markets. They will always clump together.'* (SM7)

*'Once they are here, challenges typically are connected with language skills. Where everybody has to have IELTS 6.5 and is in some maybe borderline so I think the challenge is supporting that there's cultural challenges and having ghettos is the wrong word but you could call it clusters that don't really break out and they tend to stick to one another and maybe don't quite globalise in the way that we would want them to So that can be an issue. Possible resistance between UK students and international students in the same classroom. I'm not saying most as many actually welcome meeting people around the globe but there might be some who might not' (SM8)*

SM9 spoke about the importance of understanding the values underpinning the university to support a broader world view of curriculum linked to efforts to decolonise:

*'I think that's why universities often start to define their values before they find their actions because if you value equality, inclusion, diversity you need to understand where we exclude people. If you are designing curriculum and if you have a better world view, then it's only going to be a better understanding of a broader range of student experiences. The curriculum is a very British problem and internationalisation of the curriculum is a much more worldwide challenge. You know I would happily 15 years ago canter through a teaching session that only included UK or US authors and before I really got the challenges that we were facing in breaking down some of the false walls that we put up between an Anglo centric practice and world centric practice. I think for me internationalisation doesn't really mean anything until I look at the values that's behind that in the strategy' (SM9).*

SM9 also acknowledges the imperatives for *Global Citizenship* presented by institutional discussions around decolonisation, developing earlier approaches to internationalisation of the curriculum:

*'I think my position on this has changed over the years. There were the internal aspects of internationalisation, so how we demonstrated a broader, more aware presentation of the curriculum through internationalising and what we teach, so I guess this was a precursor to some of the discussions we're having now about the inclusive curriculum and decolonisation' (SM9)*

Overall, it was acknowledged more could be done to develop the *Global Citizenship* theme within Violet, but senior managers were keen to offer ideas ranging from provision of additional language support for students throughout their studies, which SM7 suggests could be partly funded by the higher international student fee paid, through to more effective staff induction

modules to develop understanding and awareness of the importance of *Global Citizenship* for all students, as well as cultural celebrations as noted above:

*'There's no guarantee for an international student that additional money they're paying is something that's going to be spent on their particular needs. Do we spend £1000 per international student on English language support? I shouldn't think so but that might be an offer – we will provide you with bespoke language support during your time at Violet' (SM7)*

Reference was also made by SM9 to the opportunities presented by the development of graduate attributes at Violet University, also highlighted as important in Violet's strategy documents:

*'That's my point about enabling our students to be world citizens and I want to get that into the graduate attributes. So, we've got our graduate attributes that exist from a previous strategy, I want to have embodied in some way that notion of being a citizen of the world - a bit about social impact and social responsibility, a bit about diversity and inclusion and a bit about consciousness and awareness. Basically, you know understanding worldwide ways of doing stuff as well as just local ways of doing things. It's about opening our students' eyes to alternative realities and Violet has to start that process giving students the confidence to go out into the world and not be afraid of challenging because in doing that and looking for the difference, the distance and the challenging you find lots of similarities and familiarities' (SM9)*

Strong recognition of the importance of and need for further development of *Global Citizenship* emerges across sector and Violet strategy documents and senior manager interviews in 2020, including staff and alumni as well as students within the theme. Whilst it is still seen to link to *Market-Driven Growth* through the recruitment of international students and staff to increase diversity on campus, the influence of the *Global Engagement* theme extends *Global Citizenship* to embrace all areas of university life, underpinned by institutional values and ideals of equality, diversity and inclusion encouraging the development of criticality, enquiry and the challenging of the status quo.

The section below develops the *Brand Positioning* theme in 2020, which is seen to have increased in dominance since data was gathered in 2010 where previously it was influenced by the then more dominant *Market Driven Growth* theme. As was the case in 2010 though, *Brand Positioning* is still less dominant than the *Global Citizenship* theme. The implications of

the shift in theme dominance is explored in chapter six, reflecting competing rationales for internationalisation at Violet and sector universities.

### 5.2.3 Brand Positioning theme

Analysis of data gathered in 2010 indicates a dominant theme of *Brand Positioning*, emerging through strategy documents and senior manager interviews. This orientates towards internationalisation as a mechanism to enhance the institution's global reputation, and visibility. The theme is influenced by the *Market-Driven Growth* theme where enhanced reputation is signalled as important to increase capacity to grow international student numbers and the number of collaborative partnerships overseas, to ensure financial sustainability. The two themes are shown to connect through the phrase 'high quality' signified by a high or significantly rising ranking in domestic and international league tables. The dominance of the *Brand Positioning* theme increases from analysis undertaken in 2020 and is now seen to influence and inform the *Market-Driven Growth* theme. This emerges in multiple, often overlapping, and reinforcing ways through sector and Violet strategy documents and senior manager interviews. At the same time the *Brand Positioning* theme will be shown to create tensions within construction of the *Global Engagement* theme, as noted in 5.2.1 above. Thus, whilst the *Global Engagement* theme is seen to promote a positive and holistic approach to institutional aspirations for internationalisation *Brand Positioning*, appears to strengthen the features of *Global Engagement*, which are more closely associated with economic rationales for internationalisation. An emphasis on global ambition, as one element of the *Global Engagement* theme, influences strategic goals associated with performative measures including the Teaching Excellence Framework and ranking in league tables domestically and internationally, as signifiers of institutional desire to increase income generation through internationalisation. The implications of internationalisation themes shaping and influencing others, through strategy documents and senior manager interviews is developed further in discussion of the findings in chapter six before I outline recommendations in chapter seven for strategy and practice changes to focus attention on the positive ideals of internationalisation to enhance practice at Violet University. In doing so, I draw both from the findings from data gathered for this research study but also from my own practice as a senior manager, especially as Dean of School, to show how economic rationales for internationalisation shape internationalisation practice such that positive ideals of internationalisation expressed through the *Global Engagement* theme, are pivoted towards the themes of *Brand Positioning* and *Market-Driven Growth* rather than *Global Citizenship*. This particularly emerges through the setting of KPIs for Deans which prioritise income generation through recruitment of

international students and development of TNE partnerships for income generation, out with KPIs which focus on *Global Citizenship* and *Cultural Exchange* strategic imperatives.

### **Sector strategy documents**

Sector strategy documents signal the importance of *Brand Positioning* in 2020 through multimodal features, including document design and visual imagery, alongside theme narratives and strategic goals. In 2020, sector strategy documents demonstrate high levels of sophisticated design, reflecting strong institutional brand identity, reinforcing narrative themes of internationalisation. Significant resource investment in document production is evident, highlighting the strategic importance internationalisation to sector institutions.

A feature of the *Brand Positioning* theme emerging in 2020 is reference to league table rankings as a signifier of global reputational standing, and as noted in the section above, those features are also shown to influence other dominant themes of internationalisation, including *Global Engagement*. An executive summary, published on Blue University's website in 2019 highlights Blue's progress in strengthening their position in national and global rankings since the start of their 2013-2019 strategy period. They note a particularly high ranking in the world, and UK for International outlook in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2019 (not specifically identified to maintain anonymity). This influences the *Market-Driven Growth* theme via a preceding bullet noting success in growing the size of the university student population, highlighting recruitment of 5,000 students from outside the UK in 2018 with aspirations noted to continue to grow numbers further as reputation rises further. Black University's Internationalisation Strategy 2020 also highlights the importance of the university's reputation and profile to future achievement of internationalisation goals associated with income generation and whilst SMART KPIs are not set for defined improvement, the *Brand Positioning* theme is shown to influence the *Market-Driven Growth* and *Academic Collaboration* themes:

*"A strong international reputation is essential to delivering all the other dimensions of the strategy, particularly the development of international partnerships, TNE (delivering of programmes outside the UK) and international staff and student recruitment."* (Black University Internationalisation Strategy 2020)

Yellow University, research-intensive and member of the Russell Group, highlight a very high ranking in the UK by research power in the Research Excellence Framework 2014, with a significant proportion of research recognised internationally (not specifically identified to maintain anonymity). The *Brand Positioning* theme influences the *Market-Driven Growth*

theme at Yellow University through narrative asserting the aim to increase international research income:

*'We now need to build on this success and further raise the quality of research across all of our research priorities, supporting research leaders, building international and industrial collaborations and delivering high-impact research along with an increased focus on commercialising our research.'* (Yellow University Global Strategy 2020)

Whilst strategy documents signal the importance of improvements in rankings in national and international league tables to further internationalisation goals, only Blue University include Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and targets for improvement in national and international league tables in strategy documents. Blue University highlight an institutional goal to be in the top 25 of UK league tables by 2019 (Blue University International Strategic agenda 2010-2013). The implications of asserting aspirations for league table rankings without associated KPIs in strategy documents will be explored in chapter six at 6.3.1 in relation to previous studies suggesting university strategy documents legitimise the hierarchal nature of league tables without questioning their contested position in a marketised higher education environment.

Green University strategy documents incorporate strong visual elements referencing Green students with images associated to Green's metropolitan location with the *Brand Positioning* theme emerging as affirmatory of institutional reputation:

*'our global engagement strategy puts our leadership excellence, impact and innovation on the world map',* (Green University Global Engagement Strategy 2019-2022).

Green strategy documents are strongly constructed around the metaphor of 'the student as consumer' but there is an absence both temporally and specifically as to how aims will be achieved. In an interesting departure from other strategy documents, alumni are positioned in a promotional context to develop the *Brand Positioning* theme at Green:

*'We will fully engage with our internationally based alumni and other stakeholders working with them as partners to create a truly global network of active ambassadors, advocates and supporters of the university. Through this partnership we will raise our profile and reputation on the global stage.'* (Green University Global Engagement Strategy 2019-2022)

A feature of the *Brand Positioning* theme emerging through analysis of sector strategy documents in 2020 is a shift in the intended document readership, from a largely internal facing narrative orientation in 2010 given strategy representation of internationalisation through documents as a call to action for staff in particular, towards an external stakeholder readership, particularly prospective students and potential international collaborative partners in 2020. Brown University strategy documents explicitly state an intended external readership for and relevance of strategy documents for prospective students, staff, alumni and potential collaborative partners:

*'Our internationalisation strategy will be relevant to you if you are a student, staff at the university, alumni, partner or potential partner.'* (Brown University Internationalisation Strategy 2014-2020).

Brown University highlight their commitment to developing exciting and enriching ways to engage with the world through studies, with the strategy directed to both home and international students through reference to collaborating with diverse students from around the world coupled with opportunities to study abroad or gain a Brown University degree overseas. Alumni are specifically mentioned to support establishment of groups and events worldwide, with Brown wishing to support the impact of alumni as leaders and contributors to a global society. The relevance to partners is Brown's commitment to sustaining and growing the depth and number of global partnerships with key features for engagement in partnership working noted.

Although Brown University's strategy document clearly indicates its intended readership, a similar indication emerges from analysis of other strategy documents through specific language representation that is observed to be situated within a promotional genre. Orange University strategy documents adopt first-person plural pronouns throughout its Global Engagement Plan 2017-2020, which is a change compared with Orange strategy documents analysed in 2010 and highlights its global learning community, offering a welcoming environment for students:

*'Our global community of staff, students, alumni and supporters is key to our future success and is our greatest asset.'* (Orange University Global Engagement Plan 2017-2020).



The same promotional approach emerges through Orange's Strategy 2030, which was launched in 2020. The 2030 Strategy contains far less narrative than previous documents with key phrases highlighted including:

*'We foster a welcoming community, where staff, students, alumni and friends feel proud to be part of our university.'* (The University of Orange Strategy 2030).

Associated visual imagery features students from apparently diverse backgrounds and ethnic groups socialising in informal, not class-based settings, reinforcing the *Cultural Exchange* theme as well as *Brand Positioning*.

Yellow University strategy documents also emphasise the *Cultural Exchange* theme through *Brand Positioning* in promoting the institution to prospective students with narrative linked to institutional values and frequent reference to terms such as 'value' and 'sustain' (Yellow University Global Strategy 2020). Strategy document narrative emphasises the benefits to students from studying at Yellow University, in particular enhanced graduate employability prospects, reinforcing the idea of international students as consumers of Yellow's educational products. At the same time, Yellow strongly emphasise the social and cultural benefits of studying with them with an emphasis on students informing educational approaches. Yellow University highlight a strategic goal to:

*'Put students at the heart of our university and make them active partners in their own education.'* (Yellow University Global Strategy 2020)

Through sector strategy document narrative, the *Brand Positioning* theme emerges in ways which promote economic priorities, influencing the *Market Driven Growth* and *Risk Management* themes which together assert a taken for granted assumption of UK universities operating in a market context with international students positioned as consumers, reinforced by strategy narrative highlighting the importance of institutional global ranking in league tables. Whilst *Brand Positioning* therefore represents a theme orientation that has responded to the competitive market, strategy documents also highlight institutional commitment to the broad ideals within the *Global Engagement* theme whereby scholarships and bursaries to support diverse student recruitment and opportunities to access higher education for students from the Global South are highlighted. So too are the civic, community and cultural benefits to be gained from university education in the UK. Students, regardless of whether they may be international or home students are presented in sector strategy documents as active learners, engaged in co-creation of curriculum as well as social and *Cultural Exchange* opportunities.

This suggests ambivalence in university strategy alignment with the *Brand Positioning* theme where financial sustainability requirements are prioritised, but internationalisation goals emerge as much broader in aspiration than supporting economic rationales alone. The implications arising from these findings are explored further in chapter six, in relation to influence of the *Brand Positioning* theme on Market Driven Growth, but also as potentially signifying a positive move away from the ‘othering’ of international students that also emerges through literature in Discourse B.

### **Violet University strategy documents**

Violet University strategy documents analysed in 2020 represent two strategic plan cycles (2015-2020 and 2020-2025). The current strategic plan reveals a significant shift in strategic vision, moving away from previous aspirations to be the UK’s leading business facing university with a clearly stated vision to ‘*transform lives*’ expressed at the start of the new strategy period. (Violet University Strategic Plan 2020-2025). In relation to the *Brand Positioning* theme, Violet align towards collective endeavours of staff and students, underpinned by strong values, with a focus around:

*‘offering opportunity, building community and embracing flexibility.’* (Violet University Strategic Plan 2020-2025).

As with sector strategy documents, there is a focus on external stakeholder engagement with the strategy document, it is highly designed, and consistent with Violet University branding across the website. The strategic plan is only available to download from the website from 2024, having previously also been circulated in hard copy to all staff, suggesting alignment with stated ideals to support sustainability strategies across the institution. Textual theme narrative adopts the first-person plural (as also emerges across sector strategy documents) reinforcing Violet strategy orientation *towards Brand Positioning* and a promotional orientation. The *Global Engagement* theme is also evident throughout the strategy document:

*‘We offer every student the opportunity to succeed, with varied and well-signposted routes into university and clear pathways through study. We support students to achieve to the best of their ability and will support them in preparing for global opportunities after graduation. We will use our links in business, our research expertise, and our global outlook, to transform lives.’* (Violet University Strategic Plan 2020-2025)

Visual images feature strongly in Violet University’s 2020-2025 strategy document, focussing on groups of staff and students studying and socialising together, emphasising the *Cultural*

*Exchange* and *Global Citizenship* themes. At the same time, the *Brand Positioning* theme at Violet University is seen to influence the *Market Driven Growth* theme through the clearly expressed strategic aspiration to '*Grow international recruitment.*' (Violet University Strategic Plan 2020-2025). However, Violet University strategy documents differ from others analysed in 2020 by not including any Key Performance Indicators for success measures in the strategic plan and no statements asserting aspirations to enhance reputation through ranking. In this way, the *Brand Positioning* theme emerges at Violet University in a less overt manner than sector strategy documents, represented through strategy design and textual narrative to be attractive to prospective students, supported by visual images that present Violet as a welcoming institution for study and work.

Noting the shift away from reference to *international students* towards *students* that emerges across sector strategy documents in 2020, Violet strategy documents thematically refer to *students* rather than *international students*. A feature of sector and Violet University's most recent strategy documents is reference to *graduates*, and it seems reasonable to suggest this is reflective of increasing strategic focus on student employability and graduate careers linking the *Brand Positioning* theme with the *Risk Management* theme which may in turn be informed by increasing expectations of the OFS for student success outcomes in B3.

Condition B3 of the Office For Students regulatory framework requires that:

*'The provider must deliver successful outcomes for all of its students, which are recognised and valued by employers, and/or enable further study.'* (Office for Students Baselines for Student Outcomes Indicators, 2022).

The impact of, and influence arising from the B3 outcomes for measurement of success are considered further in chapter six regarding the establishment of KPIs at Violet and sector universities to assess measures of success in relation to *Global Engagement*.

In the section below, senior manager perspectives on *Brand Positioning* are presented, highlighting perceptions that this theme has a strong relationship with *Market-Driven Growth* at Violet University, and indeed influences its construction.

### **Violet University senior managers**

Senior managers at Violet University spoke much more directly about the importance of the *Brand Positioning* theme than was evident from analysis of Violet strategy documents. Reflecting on why this might be the case, from reviewing the interview transcripts multiple times, I decided this was due in part to our shared status as senior managers at Violet University, wherein my insider status for this research study, invited greater trust and elicited

more honest comments from those being interviewed than might have been the case for a researcher regarded as an outsider. One senior manager spoke of the importance of a commercially led operation to support *Market Driven Growth* expectations for Violet, strongly influenced by *Brand Positioning*:

*'I think we are absolutely there with recruitment being an integrated strategy where we have seen that the admissions process, the marketing process, the sales process, the relationships and having in country managers and the whole integration of that is very secure. We've seen huge increases, and I think that's because of integration.'* (SM3)

Whilst *Brand Positioning* is signalled as important at Violet University, senior managers did not prioritise international standing as a component of the theme other than in the specific context of developing international research funding bids:

*'Trying to write bids to win money from overseas governments, companies, charities or whatever else it might be is more complex. I know it's a tricky thing to do in the UK. I'd imagine it's even more difficult to do it when the potential funder doesn't actually know you particularly well. Our international standing as well, we have one but it's not as high as many others.'* (SM8)

Senior managers highlight *Brand Positioning* strength at Violet University through the range of global opportunities offered through study abroad and placements in particular, with mention also made of the attractiveness of the UK in general as a destination for international students:

*'I think the ability for Violet to offer global placements abroad and study abroad experiences is becoming one of the key selling points of students choosing a degree or choosing a university to go to whether or not they take that up and that is coming from young people. Recognising the importance of broadening their horizons and having a broad outlook not just what's going on in their country. With international student recruitment I think when you look at where we are competing with Australia and the United States, I think the UK is a destination to come to study to, the profile of that has definitely improved over the last 20 years and the perceived quality of education in the UK is high despite what we may think.'* (SM12)

SM12 also suggests that global reputation has an impact on Violet's home reputation, but this was not linked to performance in league tables:

*'what we do internationally or globally is part of our overall reputation and brand in the UK'* (SM12)

Overall, the *Brand Positioning* theme emerges as dominant across sector strategy documents and senior manager interviews, although at Violet University it is also seen to influence the *Global Citizenship* and *Academic Collaboration* themes within the holistic *Global Engagement* theme underpinning internationalisation at Violet University. Senior managers also highlighted the influence of *Brand Positioning* in relation to *Market-driven Growth*, considered in the next section.

## 5.2.4 Market Driven Growth theme

### Sector strategy documents

The setting of revenue generation expectations through international student recruitment emerges across sector strategy documents. Orange University's Global Review and Impact Plan (2011) cites significant exceeding of strategy targets to recruit an additional 1,000 international students noting numbers increased threefold. The document associates this success with the inception of the construct of Orange Global demonstrating the value of strategic investment in internationalisation, and strongly affirms economic rationales of internationalisation. At the same time an additional KPI is set to increase international student recruitment from beyond five well-represented countries. This is drawn forward into Orange University's Global Engagement Plan which is described metaphorically as:

*'a map to deliver our strategic goals'* (University of Orange Our Global Engagement Plan 2017-2020).

Within the theme of Global Community in the plan, Orange note:

*'we are one of the most international universities in the United Kingdom'* (University of Orange Our Global Engagement Plan 2017-2020).

and prioritise achievement of a global community through increasing numbers of international students from a more diverse number of countries:

*'We will focus our efforts in supporting greater access to the university through the removal of barriers to entry whether financial, cultural, practical or linguistic and through external engagement with a more diverse range of nations. We will attract the world's best talent irrespective of background or location to produce the next generation of leaders, innovators, academics and researchers and work to deliver enhanced services for students and staff joining our community from overseas.'* (University of Orange Our Global Engagement Plan 2017-2020)

Orange are seen to simultaneously focus on *Market-Driven Growth* to support *Global Citizenship* whilst the *Brand Positioning* theme is also shown to be important through reference to talent and the representation of international students as consumers with service level expectations of the university signalled as important.

Pink University, a Post-92 institution, suggest that institutional strategic aspirations contained within 'Making Pink Great – The University of Pink Strategic Plan 2017-2022':

*'commits the university to increasing the number of international students by a quarter'*  
(Global Pink Strategy 2019-2024),

alongside imperatives to:

*'enhance international transnational education (TNE) partnerships to ensure they deliver both high-quality academic outcomes and financial success'* (Global Pink Strategy 2019-2024),

signalling the dual importance of the *Market Driven Growth* theme and *Academic Collaboration* theme in supporting aspirations for income growth. The importance of Market Driven Growth is also seen to present as dominant in Violet strategy documents, considered below.

### **Violet University strategy documents**

In strategy documents, Violet University continue to prioritise the *Market Driven Growth* theme in Strategic Plans for 2015-2020 and 2020-2025, both of which are analysed in 2020 The 2015-2020 strategy asserts a strong business facing agenda supporting the recruitment of international students and establishment of *Academic Collaboration*. This continues to be prioritised in the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan, where Vision shifts significantly towards *'transforming lives.'* The *'Global Engagement'* strand asserts the need to continue to:

*'grow international student numbers'*. (Violet University Strategic Plan 2020-2025).

The factors underpinning the dominance of *Market Driven Growth* in Violet strategy documents emerges, in senior manager interviews, as directly linked to sectoral concerns regarding university financial stability should international student fee income diminish. This is explored in detail below.

### **Violet University senior managers**

Senior managers at Violet University highlight the fiscal challenges universities face should international student numbers reduce, with higher tuition fee income from international recruitment contrasted with a static, and declining value of the government set home student fee. This reflects the same narrative emerging through sector strategy documents in 2010. In this way the *Market Driven Growth* theme is closely associated to *Risk Management* influencing *Global Engagement* at Violet:

*'Internationalisation is becoming more important, and, in some respects, that's driven by UK government policy towards home students and also demographics as well playing against us. So, the need to internationalise has been there to sustain the size of the institution at Violet. We haven't grown very much, I mean it's very modest in the past couple of years overall but it diversifies our income and we come away from relying on the UK government which is always a good thing in many respects.'* (SM8)

Senior managers spoke of taking a commercialised approach at Violet University, underpinned by effective structures and approaches to international student recruitment and the development of *Academic Collaboration* partnerships overseas:

*'If you start with the commercial aspect of selling our goods and services overseas either through bringing students to us or bringing our education through TNE to various overseas countries, and what you actually take out to those countries depends on their level of education and the level of middle class and so on and so forth. So, you know the sort of economic demographics and the resilience and maturity of those countries varies considerably but you have a strategy for each of those regions. So, it's the sale of goods and services no different to any other.'* (SM10)

Senior managers at Violet University reinforced the importance of the *Market Driven Growth* theme that emerges through Violet strategy documents, acknowledging how successful Violet University have been in generating income from internationalisation:

*'I think from the aspirations that we had over the past five years we've achieved those objectives quite well it was a good kind of 95% of things we have achieved realistically there are new opportunities and new areas to look at and that's with this next five years there's a lot of growth that we can build on.'* (SM10)

*'There is a commercial advantage to be had by being successful in international recruitment and the Business School makes money for the university. When we are*

*operating at larger volumes, the more you can push the staff student ratio the more surplus you are going to make.'* (SM11)

Whilst success in recruitment of international students is highlighted by SM10 and SM11, SM12 notes concerns regarding diversity on campus, that were also raised in interviews undertaken in 2010. These concerns centre around dominance of international students in some programmes at Violet, suggesting greater complexity arising from the strategic aspirations to recruit international students to increase diversity on campus than emerges through Violet's strategy documents:

*'International students that come on and are trying to interact and integrate it very much depends on what programme you're on as to the volume of international students because from what I can see they tend to be recruited in pockets against certain programmes. So, I imagine the experience is very different for a student in engineering to humanities.'* (SM12)

SM8 and SM10 acknowledge success of *Market Driven Growth* at Violet University but also focus on the *Global Citizenship* benefits arising from recruitment of international students at Violet:

*'The biggest part of global engagement probably is international students from other parts of the world coming to the UK that's the biggest for the whole sector and definitely the biggest part for University of Violet and obviously that ends up with having a nice diverse population plenty of cultural differences'* (SM8)

*'In terms of the make up of the student body attracting a wide variety of international students and reaching a certain percentage of students on campus makes the campus experience feel like a global campus.'* (SM10)

In interviews, senior managers recognise the success of internationalisation efforts at Violet University in generating income to maintain financial stability, but issues are also noted, as indicated above, about potential adverse impacts on diversity of student populations on campus due to dominance of international students in particular programmes. Similar concerns are raised by senior managers in 2010. At the same time, senior managers welcome the opportunities presented by *Market Driven Growth* at Violet University to develop *Global Citizenship* as well as *Academic Collaboration* considered in the section below, together with the stability that is derived from a strong financial position institutionally.



## 5.2.5 Academic Collaboration theme

### Sector strategy documents

From data gathered in 2020, the theme represented in *Academic Collaboration* is seen to prioritise opportunities for research collaborations with overseas partners, governments, NGOs and international businesses, particularly through TNE partnerships. This theme is informed by the application of knowledge globally, especially in the global south to contribute to the resolution of what strategy documents variously describe as grand challenges, wicked problems and global concerns, with climate control and sustainability emerging as key strategic themes. This research focus on resolution of issues of global concern emerges strongly in strategy documents of research-intensive universities in 2010 but in 2020 is seen to have broadened beyond enhancing institutional reputation through research collaboration into a theme that draws on academic expertise to:

*'create mutual trust and respect essential to long-term international collaborations'*  
(Red University Strategy 2034).

Interdisciplinarity is emphasised, across subjects less commonly linked including business, engineering, and earth sciences, alongside social, cultural, political and historical studies. (Red University Strategy 2034). Orange University strategy documents highlight *Academic Collaboration* partnerships of equivalence with key aims including:

*'impactful global partnerships' that 'build capacity with and for all of our global partners.'* (Orange University Global Engagement Plan 2017-2020).

Orange University also highlight the:

*'building of global communities of learners through digital and transnational education'*

linking the *Academic Collaboration* theme with the *Technological Internationalisation* theme considered below at 5.2.6.

Whilst sector strategy documents highlight the opportunities for research through *Academic Collaboration*, a strong focus remains on supporting the *Market Driven Growth* theme through TNE partnerships. A strategic theme emerging in Pink University strategy documents is to:

*'enhance international transnational education partnerships to ensure they deliver both high quality academic outcomes and financial success.'* (Global Pink 2019-2024).

In the same strategy document Pink University also highlight sustainable growth in TNE provision as a KPI:

*‘whilst FTE heads have declined over the past five years, revenue from TNE activities has been maintained due to a more effective pricing strategy. We continue to work closely with our overseas partners to develop effective marketing and student recruitment plans ensuring an appropriate return on investment.’* (Global Pink 2019-2024).

Black University, a Post-92 institution, like Pink University, emphasise in strategy documents the strong influence of *Market Driven Growth* as well as *Brand Positioning* through the development of TNE partnerships:

*‘TNE is a central component of the university’s internationalisation strategy in terms of global reach, reputation and revenue.’* (Black University internationalisation strategy 2020)

Overall, sector strategy documents more closely link the *Academic Collaboration* theme with *Market-Driven Growth* but in sector strategy documents of those universities that describe themselves as research-intensive, the *Academic Collaboration* theme is seen to more closely align with *Brand Positioning* whereby international partnerships are seen to operate as a vehicle to enhance institutional reputation and standing, and strengthen the quality of research collaborations and outputs.

### **Violet University strategy documents**

Violet University’s 2015-2020 strategy document highlights the delivery of Violet’s business facing leadership vision through:

*‘developing international partnerships’* Violet University Strategic Plan 2015-2020).

and:

*‘fostering and strengthening research with global partners’* Violet University Strategic Plan 2015-2020)

noting the impact of Violet’s education and research around the world:

*‘we now have more than 6800 studying our courses outside the UK.’* (Violet University Strategic Plan 2015-2020).

At the same time, key performance indicators prioritise:

*'financial surplus' and 'income from overseas activity'* (Violet University Strategic Plan 2015-2020).

linking the *Academic Collaboration* theme with the *Market Driven Growth* theme, as was noted in strategy documents at other post-92 institutions including Pink and Black Universities. Violet University's 2020-25 Strategic Plan orientates the *Academic Collaboration* theme towards institutional research objectives, more closely aligning *Academic Collaboration* with international research collaborations, as was observed in strategy documents of research-intensive universities. Violet stress the strategic importance of developing:

*'sustainable global partnerships that address societal and industrial priorities and grow our global research profile'* (Violet University Strategic Plan 2020-25).

At the same time, objectives for *Academic Collaboration* prioritise a focus on extending international programmes, with growth in overseas partnerships and growth in international student numbers, to achieve financial sustainability, associating *Academic Collaboration* more closely with the *Market Driven Growth* theme as emerges in earlier Strategy periods at Violet University.

### **Violet University senior managers**

Senior managers also highlight the significance of *Academic Collaboration* at Violet, influenced by the positive ideals of the *Global Engagement* theme explored in 5.2.2. SM7 explains it through the metaphor of an octopus:

*'I've always thought of global engagement as being the outward looking tentacles from the institution so transnational education, branch campuses, international campuses of the host university, so the presence if you like of the institution in an international nondomestic environment.'* (SM7)

SM8 acknowledges the commercial drivers for *Academic Collaboration* but articulates partnerships as opportunities to recruit international students through enhanced presence outside the UK:

*'The franchise and delivery of stuff overseas is modest in its size. I think it's important more to keep relationships going within country with institutions and possibly them helping us recruit from those places rather than being businesses in themselves. Some of them are fairly small but it does give us a presence overseas.'* (SM8)

Another senior manager links opportunities for *Academic Collaboration* to contribute to the development of *Global Citizenship* for students and staff through decolonisation initiatives at Violet:

*'Some of the discussions we're having about the inclusive curriculum and decolonisation, that might be lived through international recruitment or through international partnerships and through the internationalisation of the perspectives of staff either by broader recruitment or by giving staff the opportunity to be exposed to different international environments.'* (SM9)

Overall, senior managers spoke predominantly of *Academic Collaboration* as supporting broad positive ideals contained within the *Global Engagement* theme. SM10 sums up similar sentiments expressed by other senior managers in interview:

*'It's about our educational offering around the world and looking and exploring different models to enable that to happen in giving access to potential students across the globe to enable them to get a degree and get a qualification.'* (SM10)

Predominantly, senior managers at Violet University spoke to *Academic Collaboration* as prioritising partnerships with overseas institutions for mutual benefit, to facilitate collaborative research projects and provide opportunities for *Global Citizenship* development rather than the *Market Driven Growth* theme emerging through Violet's strategy documents. The implications of this divergence between Violet strategy document aspirations and senior manager narratives are explored further in chapter six, as the true purpose of *Global Engagement* at Violet University is assessed, with areas of divergence specifically highlighted, as offering unique insights at an institutional level beyond those offered through strategy document analysis alone. How senior managers spoke to *Academic Collaboration* at Violet University reflects my own professional experience as a senior manager, particularly my current role as a Dean responsible for financial stability of two academic schools, to align this important area of work towards models of *Academic Collaboration*, such as Supported Distance Learning that promote positive ideals of internationalisation, and create space for genuine development of mutual benefits, whilst meeting income expectations. This is explored further in chapter seven at 7.3 where I describe my experience of establishing an *Academic Collaboration* partnership in Malaysia in 2019.

## **5.2.6 Technological Internationalisation theme**

Sector and Violet's strategy documents analysed in 2010 signal the need for openness to development of other approaches to delivery, especially distance learning and asynchronous

learning. Technological developments are noted to have the potential to transform approaches to internationalisation, but these are signalled as future considerations only, rather than emerging as immediate strategic priorities.

However, by 2020, the contribution of technology to internationalisation strategy is noted to be far more significant across data gathered and assumes a more dominant theme position across strategy documents and senior manager interviews. The theme emerges in two ways. The first is through technologically driven international activity, especially in the delivery of *Academic Collaboration* partnerships overseas. There is a second linked technology theme associated with the development of digital competencies in students, which reinforces the *Global Citizenship* theme.

### **Sector strategy documents**

Sector strategy documents highlight technology as both a facilitator of, and potential disrupter to, internationalisation efforts, with the latter theme associated with increased competition and challenges to traditional campus-based delivery modes of higher education:

*'disruptive new technologies and increased competition for the best talent means we must regularly review our goals and actions if we are to achieve long term success yet remember our values and heritage'* (Yellow University Global Strategy 2020)

Yellow University strategy documents (Yellow University Global Strategy 2020) note Yellow will make the most of new technology in a variety of ways to support internationalisation aspirations with a stated focus on virtual spaces for effective teaching and learning and to support *Academic Collaboration* partnerships coupled with increased capacity for online meetings between their campuses in the UK and overseas. Pink University highlight a strategic aspiration to:

*'launch a portfolio of attractive online programmes which enhance our global reach.'* (Global Pink 2019-2024).

Blue University strategy documents highlight the potential for new and innovative modes for the delivery of educational provision. The development of new distinctive and different types of provision is highlighted alongside expansion of online and blended learning provision to make the benefits of a Blue education more widely available and accessible. Strategy narrative emphasises the importance of Blue University continuing to grow to ensure that the university develops the critical mass needed to create a sustainable institution. This suggests that the *Market-Driven Growth* theme is informing and influencing the *Technological Internationalisation* theme at Blue University (Blue University Strategic Plan 2013-19). The

focus on growth aspirations through technological internationalisation to drive aspirations for *Market Driven Growth* and income generation through *Academic Collaboration* partnerships emerges through sector strategy documents in 2020 and is similarly prioritised in Violet strategy documents and senior manager interviews.

### **Violet University strategy documents**

Violet University strategy documents also signal the importance of technology to deliver Global Engagement goals:

*'We will increase flexible programme delivery for the international market.'* (Violet University Strategic Plan 2020-2025).

While this might suggest broader aspirations beyond technology driving *Global Engagement*, this also links to the development of digital capabilities in students through strategy narrative setting the objective to:

*'develop employability, global perspectives, digital capability and learning skills for life in our students'.* (Violet University Strategic Plan 2020-2025).

The introduction to Violet University's 2020-2025 Strategic Plan also highlights how its development was informed by student presentations to the Board of Governors at an early stage:

*'In 2018, we asked some students to present to our Board of Governors on the challenges that they anticipated they would encounter in the future. They focused on new technologies, the changing world of work, the challenges of climate change and increasing interconnectivity across the globe. They were excited about the future, but they recognised that they needed to be ready for it.'* (Violet University Strategic Plan 2020-2025).

Whilst Violet strategy documents signal breadth in the scope of the *Technological Internationalisation* theme, senior manager interviews, noted below, predominantly associate the theme with new modes of online delivery.

### **Violet University senior managers**

Senior managers spoke in broad terms of *Technological Internationalisation* as being of importance at Violet University, but this is predominantly focused around responding to

opportunities to develop new modes of online delivery, achieving efficiency and reducing costs associated with delivery of *Academic Collaboration* goals, more closely associating the *Technological Internationalisation* theme with the *Market Driven Growth* theme.

### **5.2.7 Cultural Exchange theme**

From data gathered in 2010, a dominant theme of *Cultural Exchange* emerges promoting internationalisation as an avenue for cultural understanding and mutual exchange. This presents as distinct to other themes but is closely associated with the development of *Global Citizenship*, particularly where opportunities for intercultural learning through study abroad, other exchange initiatives, student societies and cultural events on campus are highlighted. From data gathered in 2010, the *Cultural Exchange* theme is shown to prioritise study abroad to facilitate intercultural exchange. In 2020 sector and Violet strategy documents, and particularly senior manager narratives, the *Cultural Exchange* theme is reorientated from focussing on study abroad to encompass the development of intercultural competencies and intercultural awareness of students and staff on campus. The metaphor of internationalisation at home is referenced in sector strategy documents and by senior managers at Violet University as providing opportunities for intercultural exchange out with traditional study abroad as social, financial and sustainability barriers impact such initiatives, but also reflecting increased focus on development of intercultural awareness on campus for all students and staff.

#### **Sector strategy documents**

Sector strategy documents in 2020 present the theme of *Cultural Exchange* as holistic in orientation and responsive to the *Global Engagement* theme already discussed. Black University strategy documents highlight objectives:

*‘to ensure every student can access mobility, language study and intercultural competencies’* and to *‘promote intercultural awareness for all staff.’* (Black University Internationalisation Strategy 2020).

At the same time Black University note that successful delivery of these objectives:

*‘will ensure all home and international students irrespective of their location or origin benefit from internationalisation.’* (Black University Internationalisation Strategy 2020).

Orange University state:

*'we will progress 'internationalisation at home' initiatives to ensure that we can further internationalise our living and learning environments for all of our community. We will strengthen international and intercultural competencies on our campus within and outside of our curriculum'. (The University of Orange Global Engagement Plan 2017 to 2020).*

Orange University are the first sector strategy documents to strategically highlight the metaphorical concept of internationalisation at home within the *Cultural Exchange* theme although it features in literature on internationalisation, considered in chapter two within both Discourse A and Discourse B. Beyond the policy commitment to internationalisation at home through the strengthening of intercultural competencies, no detail emerges from Orange University strategy documents as to how this will be translated into internationalisation practice.

### **Violet University strategy documents**

Violet University strategy documents highlight the *Cultural Exchange* theme through strategic objectives that include:

*'demonstrating and promoting our positive social, cultural and economic impact' and 'strengthening the diversity of our community' (Violet University Strategic Plan 2015-2020).*

although equal importance is accorded to the *Global Citizenship* theme through:

*'strengthening the global perspective in the curriculum.'* (Violet University Strategic Plan 2015-2020).

At Violet University, emphasis continues to be placed on promoting an integrated and multi-cultural mix of staff and students on campus. Violet University strategy documents signal continuing importance for:

*'opportunities to study abroad and collaborations with likeminded educational and research organisations to offer a dynamic international dimension to study programmes' (Violet University Strategic Plan 2015-2020)*

but these lack specific targets unlike the recruitment of international students and commercial international activity which both have KPIs for income generation goals. Violet University's Strategic Plan 2020-2025 directly links the *Cultural Exchange* theme to the *Market Driven Growth* and *Global Citizenship* themes by reference to building students:



*‘social and global awareness, increasing the proportion of international students on campus, and the number of UK students who have an international experience.’.* (Violet University Strategic Plan 2020-2025).

*Cultural Exchange* is also highlighted through Violet’s People Strand within the Strategic Plan:

*‘We provide opportunities to attract, retain and develop individuals. We are building a diverse and inclusive community, and we respond with flexibility to the challenges of the changing world’.* (Violet University Strategic Plan 2020-2025)

However, as in strategy document analysis undertaken in 2010, beyond signalling of the importance of the *Cultural Exchange* theme, little emerges to support translation from aspiration to practice to any significant degree at Violet University through strategy documents in 2020.

### **Violet University senior managers**

Interviews with senior managers in 2010 suggest that *Cultural Exchange* is somewhat marginalised in practical terms and often deprioritised in favour of initiatives aligning with income generation goals or measures to develop *Global Citizenship*. In interviews undertaken in 2020, as noted in 5.2.2 above, senior managers strongly support the ideal of diverse communities of learning to nurture *Global Citizenship*, but they had reservations about going so far as to suggest that the *Cultural Exchange* theme is similarly well developed at Violet University. Positive examples of the *Cultural Exchange* theme are noted to have arisen through efforts of the Students Union to build diverse societies and clubs on campus, with reference made to events to promote and celebrate different cultures and National days, such as Chinese and Europe Week events. In this way, the *Cultural Exchange* theme in 2020 is now very closely associated by senior managers with the *Global Citizenship* theme. SM7 spoke in detail about how a Director of International at their previous institution was very proactive in celebrating international student contributions to really drive the development of *Global Citizenship* on campus outside the curriculum and spoke of Global Impact weeks supported by international ambassadors:

*‘Having international student ambassadors at the forefront of activity, peer support networks, really kind of putting all bells and whistles into international food weeks and cultural celebrations. Having a calendar for every single national holiday of every nationality and putting something on social media to wish all of our students from Malaysia, Happy Malaysia Day.’* (SM7)

SM10 also noted successful initiatives in support of the *Cultural Exchange* theme at a previous institution through a focus on cultural events on campus:

*'So having worked at a few institutions and looking at festivals like Diwali it wasn't just targeted on those who celebrated it, but actually involved the whole campus and it had this kind of fantastic atmosphere. There were events in the build up to it and it felt like a really exciting activity for our students. I think that would be a really nice way to celebrate diversity and celebrate the international on campus.'* (SM10)

Both SM7 and SM10 spoke of initiatives to develop the *Cultural Exchange* theme at previous institutions but were less clear, as were other senior managers, in being able to assert that this is well developed though internationalisation practice at Violet University. Overall, senior managers more closely link the development of the *Cultural Exchange* theme through the concept of internationalisation at home which emerges in interviews in 2020. This concept is seen to link the *Global Citizenship* and *Cultural Exchange* themes at Violet. It reflects the diverse communities of home as well as international students at Violet, recognising social and financial barriers that preclude engagement with traditional *Cultural Exchange* activities, particularly one year study abroad programmes. SM11 emphasised the role that could be played by 'internationalisation at home' in developing *Cultural Exchange* at Violet University:

*'I've thought for a long time that you don't have to go overseas to have a global or international experience, that's the nature of globalisation it comes to you. It is a feature of modern life -mobility, freedom across borders, whether that is actual movement of people, movement of technology, information, media, culture. You can't say in England I'm not going to be international because it just comes here anyway.'* (SM11)

In 2020, senior managers indicate greater importance of the *Cultural Exchange* theme at Violet University, with some emergence of the concept of internationalisation at home but examples predominantly relate to initiatives developed in previous institutions or through the efforts of the Students' Union, rather than being seen as indicative of widespread adoption across Violet University.

In 2020 the *Cultural Exchange* theme remains dominant in sector and Violet strategy documents and whilst in 2010 senior managers suggested that *Cultural Exchange* was considered to be a lower priority for Violet University, in 2020 senior managers are seen to place greater importance on *Cultural Exchange*, specifically through the opportunities presented to develop 'internationalisation at home' initiatives. However, this emerges predominantly through reference to development of activities at universities other than Violet

suggesting this remains a policy commitment as opposed to well developed and embedded *Cultural Exchange* practice in 2020.

The next section considers the influence and impact of the *Risk Management* theme at Violet and sector universities in 2020, at the culmination of a ten-year period of significant increase in regulatory and competitive policy developments in England and more broadly across the UK.

### **5.2.8 Risk Management theme**

Whilst the *Risk Management* theme emerges as dominant from analysis of data gathered in 2010, its strength is not seen to increase in 2020 from data gathered in 2010. This is somewhat surprising given reduction in the value of home tuition fees across the UK university sector against rising inflation levels during this period.

#### **Sector strategy documents**

Strategy documents highlight increasing multilateral competition across the UK university sector, and whilst this is not presented in documents as the principal driver for internationalisation, *Risk Management* presents a theme narrative of potential impact on financial sustainability strengthening the *Market Driven Growth* and *Academic Collaboration* theme focus towards generating income from internationalisation. Pink University note

*‘Competition for students, ideas and resources is greater than ever before. Pink’s future, like its past, must mark us out as a beacon in a network of international collaborators.’* (Global Pink 2019-2024).

Brown University’s 2030 strategy documents link the building of institutional reputation through excellence in education and research with achievement of competitive advantage:

*‘We will build institutional reputation through our areas of excellence in education and research, the culture of our location that is steeped in collaborative partnerships and global discovery and our staff who are committed to university success. The university will be ahead of the competition in a rapidly changing higher education environment through being ambitious, confident, agile, and outward looking.’* (Brown University Strategy 2030)

#### **Violet University strategy documents**

Violet University allude to concerns arising from *Risk Management* in strategy documents, but the theme does not emerge as any more dominant in articulation than documents analysed in 2010. In the 2015-2020 Strategic Plan Violet assert:

*'we will play a leading role in addressing the economic and social challenges facing the UK in increasingly competitive global markets'* (Violet University Strategic Plan 2015-2020)

but no further detail emerges beyond strategy narrative which highlights key performance indicators of ‘

*commercial income*’, *'achievement of an agreed financial surplus'* and *'income from overseas activity'* (Violet University Strategic Plan 2015-2020)

as appropriate for Violet University to achieve its vision, suggesting close links between *Risk Management* and *Market Driven Growth* but this presents as a Taken For Granted acceptance of the funding position in UK universities rather than as a particular challenge at Violet. The 2020-2025 Strategic Plan makes no explicit reference to the *Risk Management* theme which reflects a similarly lower presence in sector strategy documents in 2020 too. Senior manager interviews in 2020 reflect a diminishing reference to *Risk Management* as a theme that drives internationalisation efforts at Violet University although both *Market-Driven Growth* and income generation through *Academic Collaboration* are both seen as strategically important for Violet University.

### **Violet University senior managers**

The importance of the *Risk Management* theme is noted by senior managers, but its dominance is not observed to have increased from interviews undertaken in 2010. Senior managers describe it as a Taken For Granted context in which Violet and UK universities generally operate:

*'Once home recruitment starts to be challenged by demographics and increased competition like we've seen in the past or reluctance and uncertainty to go to university because of COVID etc the international market effectively becomes a substitute and source of students.'* (SM11)

The implications arising from there being no significant increase in the theme strength of *Risk Management* in strategy documents between 2010 and 2020 is considered in chapter six, as the decline appears to be mirrored by an increase in strategy adopting a promotional

approach, suggesting economic rationales for internationalisation become less visible as the *Brand Positioning* theme strengthens.

### 5.3 International strategy and influence on internationalisation practice in 2020

In interviews undertaken in 2010, senior managers express ambivalence regarding the extent to which internationalisation strategy goals are embraced by staff and embedded within practice at Violet University. Whilst an overarching dominant theme of *Global Engagement* emerges in sector and Violet strategy documents and interviews in 2020, senior managers remain ambivalent as to the extent to which staff align with Violet's strategic goals for *Global Engagement*. At the same time, they acknowledge that their seniority means they are somewhat disconnected from practice on the ground, so they may not be able to fully articulate perceptions around internationalisation practice across the institution vertically, although all stated that horizontally, at senior manager and governance levels, there is uniformity of support for, and proactive engagement with, the strategic aspirations stated in Violet's strategy documents. It was suggested by senior managers that some disciplinary areas, such as astrophysics, have a very strong reputation which attracts staff to apply from across the world which then leads to the creation of vibrant international research networks on campus. Senior managers suggest that inclines staff in areas that are more predominantly comprised of international staff to view efforts to internationalise more positively at Violet University. At the same time, senior managers thought staff in other areas would be less welcoming of internationalisation and its implications for practice on the ground, because they view internationalisation as predominantly income generating:

*'I would imagine the rank and file who are not particularly research active, Work horses you know doing their work, day in day out. I would imagine they would see internationalisation as being a cash cow for the university for which they don't see the benefit. Student numbers make student support more challenging which impacts negatively on other students which isn't properly resourced. Which is entirely instrumental in its ambitions and which is designed at the policy level you know for outward and inward staff and student mobility but which actually never really delivers on that because there isn't the resource to be able to fulfil that promise and it's actually understood I think largely by most staff as a necessary thing and I won't say a necessary evil, I don't think people think it's evil but a necessary component of Higher Education Funding.'* (SM7)

Senior managers spoke of mixed responses from academic staff to the University's strategic goals to internationalise and recognise that professional staff may be more disconnected from internationalisation aims, potentially viewing the *Global Citizenship* theme through the lens of administrative tasks alone rather than focussing on the people involved (SM8). At the same time, senior managers see ways in which the *Global Citizenship* theme could be developed through new curriculum approaches, although again several referenced practice initiatives at former institutions rather than at Violet to evidence their claims in this regard.

Overall senior managers acknowledge potential inconsistency across staff towards efforts to develop *Global Engagement* ideals on the ground. SM10 articulates it as mixed responses from staff:

*'I think it's mixed. I think we have got a lot of people who are international whether you know that international they are genuinely international in their working with us people with an international outlook there are those you know quite frankly who want people who speak good English and have got good qualifications and you know that sort of a bit worrying that they hold that mentality we're often accused of not getting them the right sort of students.'* (SM10)

The importance of effectively translating *Global Engagement* strategic aspirations into *Global Engagement* practice is noted by several senior managers and summed up by SM12:

*'With something like global engagement which is at an institutional level and yet cannot be executed at an institutional level it is delivered at a school level how those two things going to come together I think it would be interesting if you asked everyone what global engagement means to them and their school you will probably get a different answer from each of them and therefore how do you create one institutional approach.'* (SM12)

Whilst senior managers in 2020 highlight the strategic importance of *Global Engagement* and articulate more examples of translation of strategy into practice at Violet University, ambivalence still emerges as to how effectively strategy is effectively and consistently embedded within academic schools and professional support units.

## **5.4 Summary**

Chapter five has outlined the dominant themes of internationalisation as identified through analysis of sector and Violet University strategy documents alongside interviews with Violet University's senior managers, from data gathered in 2020. The focus is on shifts in dominant themes between 2010 and 2020. The findings indicate the emergence of a new dominant theme in 2020, of *Global Engagement*, which theme informs and influences institutional approaches to internationalisation at Violet and sector universities. Other themes are seen to strengthen in dominance, particularly *Global Citizenship* which broadens in scope to include staff and alumni, compared to a focus on students only in 2010. At the same time, the *Brand Positioning* theme emerges as stronger in 2020 with its dominance now seen to influence other themes, namely *Market Driven Growth* and *Academic Collaboration*.

The dominant themes identified in 2020 reflect complexity in construction of internationalisation strategy and practice at Violet University with diverse and at times conflicting priorities for internationalisation identified, reflecting negotiation of strategic aims within a challenging and evolving higher education landscape.

Chapters four and five have presented the dominant themes of internationalisation strategy, and highlighted changes in those strategy themes between 2010 and 2020. In the next chapter I will discuss the implications of the findings for internationalisation strategy and practice in relation to the broader pressures shaping and influencing internationalisation strategy and practice at Violet and UK universities.

## Chapter Six – Implications of the findings for internationalisation strategy and practice at Violet and sector Universities

### 6.1 Introduction

Chapter six discusses the implications of the findings for internationalisation strategy and practice at Violet University. I situate these implications within the broader economic, political and social pressures shaping and influencing internationalisation strategy and practice at UK universities. Chapters four and five presented the findings from sector and Violet strategy documents and senior manager interviews in Violet University. The analysis sheds light on the dominant themes of internationalisation strategy emerging in 2010 and assesses their movement over a ten-year period, indicating significant shifts in some of the themes and their relative strength. Of note is the emergence of two new dominant themes - *Global Engagement* that is seen to be the most dominant theme in 2020, and a dominant theme of *Technological Internationalisation*. In interpreting the findings from sector and Violet strategy documents and senior manager interviews, I will consider their relationship to previously published research and draw on my experience as a senior manager at Violet University, which mirrors the inherent tensions between the idealised representations of internationalisation and the realities of practice at Violet which emerge through the findings. Consideration of the implications of the findings for internationalisation strategy and practice in this chapter also addresses the third research question posed for this research study:

*3 How can institutional strategy themes influence and enhance internationalisation practice in UK universities?*

Discussion moves beyond the identification of dominant and changing themes of internationalisation strategy and considers how strategy themes can influence and enhance internationalisation practice at Violet University with suggestions made that are indicative of having broader application to practice at a UK university sectoral level too. In this chapter, in response to implications arising from the findings, I will introduce two initial recommendations, for institutional strategy themes to influence and enhance internationalisation practice in UK universities, which are explored in detail in chapter seven, alongside additional recommendations. The first proposes a framework to connect internationalisation strategy and practice to construct a metaphorical strategy-practice bridge (which will be developed in the form of a circular bridge) between *Global Engagement* strategy and *Global Engagement* practice at Violet University. Alongside this, a change in nomenclature is proposed, moving away from the term *internationalisation* and its construction as process prioritising economic



rationales for internationalisation at Violet and other universities in the UK. Adoption of the term *internationality* is proposed to pivot strategic focus towards the *Global Citizenship* and *Cultural Exchange* themes informed by the dominant *Global Engagement* theme.

Chapter six is divided into four sections with a final summary outlining the implications of the findings regarding influence on and enhancement of internationalisation strategy at Violet University to inform recommendations in chapter seven. In section one (6.2) I consider those dominant themes that are seen to promote a holistic positive approach to internationalisation strategy and practice at Violet and sector universities. This is followed in section two (6.3) by discussion of the dominant themes that create economic imperatives shaping and influencing internationalisation strategy and practice towards income generating activities. In section three (6.4) implications arising from the inclusion of interviews with senior managers alongside strategy document analysis is explored. Of note is how interviews undertaken for this research study have highlighted a broader range of problems and challenges associated with internationalisation practice at Violet than is seen to emerge through strategy documents. Attention is paid in section three to the significance of these findings, discussing the findings in light of existing literature and drawing on my own professional practice in internationalisation strategy practice at Violet University. Section four discusses another key finding, namely the extent to which dominant themes of international strategy promote distinctiveness of vision, mission and strategic aspirations for institutional internationalisation strategy, drawing specifically on my own practice as a senior manager to contextualise and triangulate the findings, in terms of the influence of one university's strategy documents on others. In the summary I will conclude with an exploration of the ways in which dominant themes promoting positive ideals intersect and mutually influence those themes in section two that promote economic rationales of internationalisation at Violet University. The summary will also consider the role played by the *Global Engagement* theme in connecting dominant strategy themes at Violet University. *Global Engagement's* construction as a unifying theme, operates as a catalyst to influence and enhance internationalisation strategy and practice at Violet through recommendations introduced in this chapter and developed further in chapter seven.

## **6.2 Section one – implications from findings of dominant strategy themes that promote positive ideals of internationalisation**

In this section, the implications of the findings for internationalisation strategy, at Violet and sector universities, are discussed, and referenced to the dominant themes identified. Presentation of the findings in chapters four and five illustrate how dominant themes can

promote positive ideals of internationalisation whilst other dominant themes prioritise financial imperatives to focus internationalisation efforts. Implications are first considered through the dominant themes of *Global Citizenship*, *Cultural Exchange* and *Global Engagement* that promote positive ideals within internationalisation strategy at Violet University. The impact of these themes is explored in 6.2.1, 6.2.2 and 6.2.3 below.

### **6.2.1 The implications of Global Citizenship for internationalisation strategy**

From data gathered in 2010, the *Global Citizenship* theme emerges as the most dominant theme and is prioritised in strategy documents and senior manager interviews as fundamental to the success of internationalisation efforts. Whilst constructed as a theme emphasising positive ideals and values aligned to cultural and social rationales of internationalisation identified in the literature, at the same time *Global Citizenship* is seen to be influenced by economic rationales contained within the *Market Driven growth* and *Academic Collaboration* themes. This link emerges through some sector and Violet University strategy documents as well as senior manager narratives encouraging growth in the recruitment of international students to increase diversity of student populations on campus. The development of *Academic Collaboration* partnerships to increase study abroad opportunities is also highlighted. Variation in construction of the *Global Citizenship* theme between research-intensive universities in the sector sample and the Post-92 universities, including Violet, is discussed in 6.5 below, where data gathered in 2010 in particular suggests closer association between *Global Citizenship* and *Brand Positioning* amongst research-intensive universities, through strategic orientation towards enhancement of global reputation and standing in league tables. In contrast, post-92 strategy documents associate *Global Citizenship* most closely with the *Market Driven Growth* theme, driving strategic goals for expansion of international student numbers to increase diversity on campus to develop global communities of learning.

In terms of the implications of the findings for practice, few examples of development of *Global Citizenship* through practice emerge in data gathered in 2010 beyond links made to the importance of curriculum content to support diversity in the classroom coupled with longstanding institutional led initiatives, typically identified in strategy documents as study abroad. *Global Citizenship* is also associated with challenges which arise from recruitment of international students in significant numbers, specifically coalescing around dominance of students from particular countries on campus, with China and India highlighted, leading to some UK degree programmes described in strategy documents and senior manager interviews as almost wholly comprised of international students. And whilst study abroad is

emphasised as important in developing *Global Citizenship*, challenges in increasing the numbers participating, also identified in the literature emerge.

Whilst the *Global Citizenship* theme remains dominant in 2020 its construction broadens from earlier foci on development of intercultural competences and skillsets to equip students for a globalised work environment. Aspirations for *Global Citizenship* are seen to extend to staff and alumni as well as students, and that does not emerge strongly through the literature on *Global Citizenship*, which focuses on the theme in reference to students (Kraska et al., 2018, Gaitan-Aguillar et al. 2024). This suggests opportunities for Violet University to more clearly align strategies for development of *Global Citizenship* with strategic priorities to promote equality, diversity and inclusion and link practice with its clearly stated and well embedded institutional values.

The broadening of the theme of *Global Citizenship* is seen to link to strategy document nomenclature movement away from the binary divide between home and international students suggestive of a more holistic approach to *Global Citizenship* informed by the emergence of *Global Engagement* as a dominant theme in 2020. Violet strategy documents also more clearly identify internationalisation practice approaches to develop *Global Citizenship*, from analysis of data gathered in 2020 with several examples noted in Violet strategy documents including expansion of graduate attributes to include *Global Citizenship* with curriculum developments also signalled as important. Senior managers are also noted to embrace the metaphorical construct of 'internationalisation at home' in interviews. Although the concept of internationalisation at home is presented by senior managers as a response to low uptake for study abroad initiatives at Violet University, such an approach could be seen to address concerns suggested as arising from the prioritisation of *Global Citizenship* initiatives predominantly through study abroad. Such concerns arise through the literature, in diverse contexts ranging from the identification of participation gaps between black and white students in study abroad to much broader concerns highlighting the contested nature of study abroad noted in Discourse B at 2.7.

Whilst the *Global Citizenship* theme is presented by senior managers as reflecting positive strategic aspirations for internationalisation at Violet, senior managers also highlight factors which they identify as hampering the effective development of *Global Citizenship*, such as language barriers in the classroom and the concentration of international students in particular programmes of study reducing diversity on campus being specifically mentioned in interviews undertaken in 2010 and repeated in 2020. Senior managers also indicate growing awareness of external movements such as 'Black Lives Matter' creating a strong impetus to focus

internationalisation practice towards decolonising the curriculum at Violet University as a feature of the *Global Citizenship* theme in 2020.

The broadening of the *Global Citizenship* theme, at Violet University provides opportunities to accelerate efforts through 'internationalisation at home' and curriculum content. Previous research studies discussed within Discourse B in the literature review at 2.7.2 highlight the continuing effects of coloniality in teaching and learning environments with the risk of marginalisation of colonised communities specifically highlighted (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). Alongside studies addressing the contested aspects of *Global Citizenship*, Montgomery and Trahar (2023) suggest opportunities are presented through internationalisation and decolonial agendas in higher education to align internationalisation and decoloniality in ways that are mutually supportive:

'to enable an understanding of culture, race and whiteness'. (Montgomery and Trahar, 2023, p1057).

Whilst this study has not specifically addressed theories of race and ethnicity, Violet University's senior managers highlight the importance of institutional values informing all areas of university life including internationalisation, and the findings, coupled with my own professional practice discussed in chapter seven at 7.3 in relation to a Secondary School Cultural Exchange Project, and employment of a Fellow through the Council For At Risk Academics, signal opportunities to align institutional imperatives with the findings arising from this study, promoting development of *Global Citizenship* at Violet within the metaphorical construct of '*internationalisation at home*'.

The findings discussed above and the shift in construction of the *Global Citizenship* between 2010 and 2020, suggest a new space for Violet University to develop strategy understanding of and internationalisation practice approaches to *Global Citizenship* in parallel with the expanding literature highlighting imperatives for decolonisation in all areas of university life, but especially through curriculum content.

Given that decolonisation is itself a contested term, effective development of internationalisation practice in this area must be informed by academic debate and the sharing of lived experiences to avoid:

'sterile theorization, historical fixity, and an overt romanticization of the Global South'. (Lee 2023 p187).

The proposed framework, introduced above in 6.1, to connect internationalisation strategy and practice through a metaphorical strategy-practice bridge, which is discussed in chapter seven,

provides, I believe, the space for academic understanding and practice in regard to the *Global Citizenship* theme at Violet University to be appropriately informed and guided by academic debate and previous research studies. The advantage of connecting strategy and practice through a bridge which is conceptualised as circular, is precisely to capture critical perspectives on internationalisation as well as mainstream processual perspectives.

### **6.2.2 The implications of Cultural Exchange for internationalisation strategy**

Alongside the emergence of the *Global Citizenship* theme, promoting positive ideals of internationalisation discussed above, a dominant theme of internationalisation promoting *Cultural Exchange* also emerges across strategy documents. Those documents highlight the importance of multiculturalism and the role to be played by universities in fostering cultural diversity, both on campus and through collaborative partnerships overseas. Initially it was unclear from those data whether *Cultural Exchange* might simply be constitutive of elements within the *Global Citizenship* theme, especially from analysis of strategy documents in 2010. However, whilst the themes are seen to overlap through a strategic focus on traditional forms of intercultural learning such as Study Abroad, which is also located within development of *Global Citizenship*, *Cultural Exchange* emerges as broader than citizenship aspirations alone. The *Cultural Exchange* theme strengthens through analysis of data gathered in 2020, where, as discussed in 5.2.7, *Cultural Exchange* broadens to include the development of intercultural competencies and intercultural awareness of students on campus rather than overseas. The metaphorical construct of 'internationalisation at home' is explicitly referenced by senior managers at Violet University as a mechanism for internationalisation strategy to influence practice to develop intercultural competencies and intercultural awareness on campus. Senior managers recognise that traditional study abroad is inaccessible to many students at Violet University due to social, cultural and financial barriers but concerns regarding environmental impacts should *Cultural Exchange* exclusively focus on external forms of intercultural exchange also surface in strategy documents and senior manager interviews.

The broadening of the *Cultural Exchange* theme reflects a trajectory of evolution of the *Cultural Exchange* theme noted in the literature review in chapter two. The contested nature of study abroad has already been identified in 6.1 above in relation to the *Global Citizenship* theme, but recent research studies also speak to the need to use technology to support strategic aspirations for more holistic engagement with 'internationalisation at home' rather than 'internationalisation abroad.' (Wu et al., 2021) The increasing prominence of the *Technological Internationalisation* theme moving from a weaker theme in 2010, to a position of dominance in 2020 provides further opportunities to develop practice at Violet and across the sector.

Undoubtedly, significant investment in digital infrastructure at Violet and UK universities from 2020 has been accelerated through necessity due to the Covid 19 pandemic, but this presents Violet with an ideal opportunity to catalyse strategic aspirations for *Cultural Exchange* into practice beyond cultural events on campus, as appears to be promoted by senior managers in interviews. Innovative programmes to develop Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) developed from previous research (Leask, 2020) suggest ways for Violet University to extend *Cultural Exchange* practice, building on the dominant *Technological internationalisation* theme which emerges through data rather than continuing a strategic focus on more traditional forms of intercultural exchange through study abroad.

One feature of the reorientation of the *Cultural Exchange* theme towards the development of intercultural awareness on campus, is increasing reliance on visual images in strategy documents analysed in 2020. Examples of visual images within strategy documents are noted in 5.2.7 and many more emerge through analysis. These images are seen to influence themes of internationalisation in two ways. First, they reinforce narrative focus in strategy documents that presents the *Cultural Exchange* theme in 2020 as prioritised in relation to development of intercultural awareness on campus through colourful imagery that is celebratory of cultural events on campus to illustrate student diversity. This implicitly ties narrative and visual images to the metaphorical construct of 'internationalisation at home'. Second, the incorporation of visual images in strategy documents can also be seen to link to *Brand Positioning* where strategy documents assume an identity not unlike a university prospectus welcoming international students supported by imagery suggesting a university offers a culturally rich experience on campus, aligned with perceived cultural heritage of international students. Given reference in strategy documents to international student recruitment predominantly drawing students from India and China, it is perhaps unsurprising that visual images in sector strategy documents associate with Indian and Chinese cultural celebrations such as Chinese New Year. The increasing reliance on visual images within strategy documents analysed in 2020 mirrors previous research studies considered in chapter two highlighting the increasing rise of promotional genre in higher education settings. In 2.6 it was noted by Lomer et al (2023) that brand positioning has assumed greater importance in university strategy documents, to emphasise a university's unique attributes, prestige and standing. In relation to strategy documents analysed in 2020, images of cultural events on campus recognising culturally significant dates such as Chinese New Year are drawn upon to bring meaning to the *Cultural Exchange* theme which is also seen to reinforce the *Brand Positioning* theme promoting the university as welcoming to international students and a place they would wish to study. The implications for

internationalisation strategy and practice through the strengthening dominance of *Brand Positioning* in university strategy are explored in 6.4 below.

Yet whilst *Cultural Exchange* is dominant in strategy documents analysed for this study, senior managers are less clear in suggesting its dominance at Violet University. It was particularly interesting that whilst some senior managers offered a few suggestions for ways to develop *Cultural Exchange* at Violet University, such examples related to experience of working at other universities. This again speaks to a potential disconnect between Violet University's strategic aspirations for *Cultural Exchange* and being able to evidence it through extant practice on campus. As with recommendations noted regarding *Global Citizenship* in 6.1 above, both themes present opportunities to engage academic and professional staff with *Global Engagement* ideals at Violet to bridge potential strategy-practice disconnect. Embedding *Cultural Exchange* more effectively through practice at Violet also reorientates strategy and practice away from economic imperatives of internationalisation towards the facilitative role played by financial sustainability in enabling the broader engagement emerging through strategy documents and senior manager interviews constituting the *Global Engagement* theme.

### **6.2.3 The implications of Global Engagement for internationalisation strategy**

As was discussed in detail in chapter five at 5.1, the *Global Engagement* theme emerges as the most dominant theme across sector and Violet University strategy documents and senior manager interviews in 2020, presenting the *Global Engagement* theme as holistically signifying an intentional policy orientation away from 'international' and its perceived association with a more limited range of university international activities at Violet and UK universities. The theme is seen to be constructed in two ways. First, through renaming of strategy documents to incorporate the terms 'Global' or 'Global Engagement'. Second, beyond the renaming of strategy documents, the theme is constructed through Violet and sector strategy documents, and senior manager interviews to represent engagement with internationalisation strategy and practice through the lens of global ambition, but also underpinning internationalisation through intellectual curiosity, enquiry and challenge, informed by institutional ethos and values. The *Global Engagement* theme is therefore suggested as influencing a broad range of global activities and institutional priorities at Violet and UK universities.

As discussed in 5.2.1, the *Global Engagement* theme emerges through data analysed in 2020 as important to catalysing strategic aspirations in the broad area of internationalisation at Violet and UK universities, and its strength influences and informs other themes identified from data gathered in 2010 especially *Global Citizenship*, *Academic Collaboration and Cultural Exchange* emphasising positive ideals. However, it was also noted that the strengthening of the *Brand Positioning* theme in 2020 is seen to not only influence and inform *Market Driven Growth* but also strengthens the global ambition elements within the *Global Engagement* theme which associate *Global Engagement* with institutional reputation, performance in Government measures of success such as the Teaching Excellence Framework contributing to standing in national and international league tables. The influence of *Brand Positioning* therefore focuses strategic emphasis through Violet and sector strategy documents on global ambition as well as the broader ideals of internationalisation within *Global Engagement*. This dual focus within the *Global Engagement* theme creates tension between those elements of *Global Engagement* that are underpinned by institutional values and ideals driving positive and holistic engagement with internationalisation, and those that promote reputational standing and recognition and privilege economic rationales for *Global Engagement*.

This tension as to the true purpose of internationalisation at Violet University arising from analysis of strategy documents and senior manager interviews mirrors the competing themes identified through previous research studies on definitions of, approaches to and rationales for internationalisation in higher education in the UK especially. Discourse A, discussed in chapter two, which promotes definitions of internationalisation that privilege a process approach underpinned by economic rationales (Knight, 2004) is seen to conflict with narratives of concern arising through Discourse B. This binary construction of the *Global Engagement* theme is imperative to be resolved at Violet University due to concerns raised in interviews undertaken in 2020, which cast doubt on effective implementation vertically down through Violet of the broad institutional priorities for *Global Engagement* promoted by senior managers. Senior managers suggest that academic and professional colleagues may perceive *Global Engagement* to be underpinned by economic rationales, associated with the global ambition elements of *Global Engagement* together with *Market Driven Growth* imperatives. This is reinforced by the problems and challenges associated with some areas of internationalisation practice at Violet University, which are identified by senior managers as adversely impacting on effective operationalisation of *Global Engagement*. Given several of the problems and challenges, such as language barriers in the classroom and lack of student diversity in some programmes of study cited as issues by senior managers in 2010 and in 2020, a disconnect between strategy goals and practice at Violet emerges. In chapter seven I outline recommendations to bridge this strategy-practice disconnect, not only to facilitate better



vertical integration of strategy into practice but to also provide opportunities to address problems and challenges associated with internationalisation practice, which are identified by senior managers as longstanding concerns at Violet University. The implications of problems and challenges associated with internationalisation at Violet by senior managers is discussed further in 6.4 in relation to the *Brand Positioning* theme and its influence in generating promotional effects in strategy documents such that issues of concern, categorised as Discourse B in the literature review are masked or silenced. How those themes came to be surfaced through interviews with senior managers and my reflexive engagement with this research study is also explored in 6.6 below.

### **6.3 Section two - implications from findings of dominant strategy themes that promote economic rationales of internationalisation**

Section one above details three dominant themes of internationalisation that are shown to promote positive ideals of internationalisation strategy and practice at Violet University, *Global Citizenship*, *Cultural Exchange* and *Global Engagement*, with the latter emerging as the most dominant theme in 2020. In section two, consideration will now turn to focus on four other dominant themes that together impact on internationalisation strategy and practice by reinforcing economic rationales for internationalisation. These are the themes of *Market Driven Growth*, *Risk Management*, *Academic Collaboration* and *Brand Positioning* discussed in 6.3.1 and 6.3.2.

#### **6.3.1 The implications of Market Driven Growth and Risk Management themes for internationalisation strategy**

In this section I consider how economic rationales for internationalisation, emerging strongly through literature considered in chapter two from the conceptualisation of internationalisation as process are represented in sector and Violet strategy documents and senior manager interviews. As I have shown in chapters four and five, analysis of sector and strategy documents in 2010 and 2020 highlights two dominant themes which are constitutive of an economic approach to internationalisation. *Market-Driven Growth* and *Risk Management* are seen to play an important role in promoting economic rationales for internationalisation at Violet and sector universities. There are also elements within the construction of the *Academic Collaboration* theme that prioritise income generation through Trans National Education partnerships, but as this does not present consistently across data sets, the construction of *Academic Collaboration* and implications arising, are considered separately in 6.2 in relation to the *Global Engagement* theme.

*Market-Driven Growth* emerges as stronger in dominance than *Risk Management*, particularly from data gathered in 2010 where *Market-Driven Growth* is ranked second overall in theme strength (Table 1 at 4.2 refers). Although *Market-Driven Growth* is seen to emerge less strongly in data gathered in 2020, ranking fourth overall out of eight dominant themes (Table 2 at 5.1 refers) it is still shown to be dominant across data sets. Conversely, the *Risk Management* theme presents as the lowest ranked of the dominant themes in 2010 and 2020. This low ranking is highlighted as a surprising finding, and particularly that theme dominance is not observed to have increased between 2010 and 2020 given the significant policy drivers over that period reinforcing competitive approaches to higher education affecting Violet and UK universities alike.

A feature of the *Market-Driven Growth* theme emerging through Violet and sector strategy documents is language conveying a high level of authority. Strategy documents are seen to combine text which moves reader understanding from the declarative to the imperative such that the purpose of the text becomes to guide future action. An example from sector strategy documents is presented in chapter four at 4.3.2 from Blue University's strategy document:

*'Having reversed the negative trend, **our priority** is to now secure a sustainable recruitment base for the medium and long term. In line with the university's wider strategic priorities, **our aim** is to shift emphasis towards a high-quality intake, and towards the selection rather than recruitment of students.'* (Blue University International Strategic Agenda 2010-2013).

The representation of the *Market-Driven Growth* theme through the phrases 'our priority' and 'our aim' (highlighted in bold above) might be suggested as emphasising a collective endeavour of staff at Blue University assuming the social actor represented by 'our' is the university not senior managers in the university. The extract above would suggest it is the university that has agreed that a sustainable recruitment base is necessary with university wide agreement that institutional strategic aspirations will focus on recruitment of higher-quality students through selection rather than recruitment. And yet it is more likely that the strategy document has been drafted by senior managers such that promotion of the *Market-Driven Growth* theme emerges through the strategy narrative.

Presentation of the *Market Driven Growth* theme through strategy documents also involves frequent reliance on the pronoun 'we', and whilst it has been noted in previous studies that 'we' can be used both inclusively and exclusively (Clegg and Smith, 2010) the strategy documents analysed tend to use it in a more exclusive sense with declaratory manner suggesting a collective organisational responsibility to respond to *Market Driven Growth* imperatives prioritising generation of income through internationalisation at Violet and sector

universities. An example noted in 5.2.4 is found in Orange University's Global Engagement Plan 2017-2020 (I have emphasised in bold):

*'**We will focus our efforts** in supporting greater access to the university through the removal of barriers to entry whether financial, cultural, practical or linguistic and through external engagement with a more diverse range of nations. **We will attract** the world's best talent irrespective of background or location to produce the next generation of leaders, innovators, academics and researchers and work to deliver enhanced services for students and staff joining our community from overseas.'*

(University of Orange **Our** Global Engagement Plan 2017-2020)

Key elements of this extract are reference to "we" and "our" in the naming of the Plan, which could be read as examples of inclusive language, within the overall context of the sentences to support the recruitment of international students from diverse backgrounds, but reference to attracting the world's best talent and delivering enhanced services for international students are shown to situate the word 'we' more clearly in an institutional setting of competition for students. The effects of language deployed through strategy documents analysed for this study are repeatedly shown to reinforce economic rationales for internationalisation through words and phrases creating strong obligation to act. *Market Driven Growth* statements in sector and Violet strategy documents are also generally located very early in the document, and before consideration of the ways in which internationalisation strategies are to be realised, reinforcing a compulsion to respond to economic imperatives. These findings prompted personal reflection on the development of international strategy at Violet, in 2020 when I led the international strand working group. Whilst a cross-university staff group was convened and contributed to development of the strategic plan, the findings suggest that attention needs to be paid, in the drafting of international strategy documents in future to the influence of nomenclature on strategy meaning such that economic rationales are privileged. The findings coupled with reflections on my senior manager experience of leading this working group informed development of the contributions to practice outlined in chapter seven, specifically the conception of strategy and practice through the metaphorical construct of a circular bridge.

Sector and Violet Strategy documents, also signal dominance of the *Risk Management* theme arising through data gathered in 2010 and 2020. A key feature of the theme emerging through analysis of strategy documents is to reinforce organisational imperatives for income generation through internationalisation which strengthens the dominance of the *Market Driven Growth* theme in response to external forces. Situated within the geo-political landscape of competition across the university sector in the UK, the *Risk Management* theme aligns with previous studies considered in 2.5 suggesting strategy documents draw on external forces to

validate the need for new organisational strategic priorities (Vaara, et al 2010). The key feature in the theme is assumption of the imperative to actively engage with internationalisation to generate income to maintain financial sustainability at Violet and sector universities.

However, whilst sector and Violet strategy documents represent *Risk Management* as a driver for internationalisation efforts, interviews with senior managers suggest the theme is less important in catalysing internationalisation efforts at Violet. Senior managers spoke of the broader competitive environment within which Violet and other universities operate as a taken for granted context and not something that is seen to be a significant strategic driver for internationalisation. Senior managers acknowledge the importance of the economic imperatives for internationalisation with income generation through recruitment of international students and *Academic Collaboration*, specifically Transnational Education partnerships highlighted. but within the *Risk Management* theme this is very clearly orientated by senior managers towards facilitation of the broader engagement desired for internationalisation objectives allied to the emergence of *Global Engagement* as the dominant theme in 2020. Senior managers acknowledge the taken for granted reality of the funding methodology in relation to home students as simply a landscape creating a specific economic context against which Violet University has developed a far more sophisticated and nuanced approach to internationalisation that whilst prioritising the imperatives of *Market Driven Growth* to ensure financial sustainability simultaneously translates into broad internationalisation ideals encompassed within *Global Engagement*. Seen in this way economic rationales for internationalisation are represented by senior managers as both push and pull factors although managers also recognise a likelihood that academic and professional staff at Violet University predominantly associate internationalisation with economic push factors alone. The potential disconnect between internationalisation strategy and practice at Violet University is a recurring theme through senior manager interviews, and drawing on my own experiences of strategic practice grounded in this tension, instrumental in development of recommendations in chapter seven to 'bridge' perceived gaps.

### **The role played by Key Performance Indicators in promoting economic rationales**

An important finding emerging through data gathered in 2010 and 2020 is that across the dominant themes, *Market Driven Growth* and *Academic Collaboration*, expectations for translation of strategic aspiration into internationalisation practice are clearly stated through the setting of KPIs, with multiple examples emerging through Violet and sector strategy documents of measurements for successful attainment of strategy goals. Common examples of KPIs include defined numbers, expressed as a percentage or in absolute numbers, for growth in international student recruitment with benchmarked numbers at the start of the

strategy period also often indicated. Other KPIs, associated with international student recruitment include an increase in diversity of countries from which students are to be recruited. Alongside this, strategy documents highlight strategic aspirations for growth in the number and diversity of *Academic Collaborations*, with multidisciplinary partnerships most frequently highlighted. Such clear signalling of translation of strategy into practice expectations was far less evident with the themes of *Global Citizenship* and *Cultural Exchange*, apart from the setting of targets for growth in numbers of students studying abroad. Senior managers also prioritise *Market Driven Growth* and *Brand Positioning* themes signalling their importance with reference to KPIs and contribution to institutional financial sustainability creating a nexus between strategy document and manager narratives which prioritise those themes with KPIs attached to them above those where clear targets and expectations are less clearly expressed. Findings from this study are seen to reflect similar findings in previous studies, for example Lewis whose research study in 2021 examining university strategic plans identifies that:

*‘where key performance indicators (KPIs) are included within strategic plans the majority relate to institutional profile, reach or income.’* (Lewis, 2021, p6).

In this research study, senior managers found it easier to articulate successful translation of the *Market Driven Growth* theme into internationalisation practice at Violet University compared with the *Cultural Exchange* theme where senior managers expressed reservations with regard to their understanding of what successful outcomes in practice arising from *Cultural Exchange* might constitute at Violet University. This lack of consistency with regard to the setting of KPIs to assess success measures for internationalisation, with prioritisation of international student recruitment and *Academic Collaboration* commercial objectives, reinforces the conceptualisation of internationalisation as a process underpinned by economic rationales rather than a value proposition for holistic engagement across all the dominant themes emerging through these data. This also leads to one of the key recommendations in chapter seven to refocus nomenclature away from the term internationalisation towards *internationality*, with SMART Key Performance Indicators for all strategy aspirations at Violet University, especially those which catalyse efforts to develop *Global Engagement*, *Global Citizenship* and *Cultural Exchange* strategy and practice.

### **6.3.2 The implications of Brand Positioning for internationalisation strategy**

In discussion of the findings in chapters four and five, the *Brand Positioning* theme is seen to strengthen in dominance between 2010 and 2020. Whereas data gathered in 2010 shows the *Brand Positioning* theme is informed and influenced by *Market Driven growth*, data analysed

in 2020 shows this theme relationship has now been reversed whereby *Brand Positioning* influences and informs the *Market-Driven Growth* theme. This emerges in multiple, often overlapping, and reinforcing ways through sector and Violet strategy documents and senior manager interviews. For example, I have detailed in 6.2 above how the *Brand Positioning* theme creates tensions in construction of the *Global Engagement* theme, strengthening elements of global ambition within the theme which more closely associate with esteem measures of reputation and league table position driving economic rationales for internationalisation.

*Brand Positioning* is therefore seen to strengthen over time and influences other theme elements to prioritise those that constitute promotional genre. This is shown to arise in several ways through data gathered for this study. In chapter five at 5.2.3 I noted how In 2020, sector strategy documents have significantly evolved in contrast to analysis undertaken in 2010. In 2020 strategy documents incorporate sophisticated design features, which are seen to reflect institutional brand identity through colour, font and visual design. Considerable resource has been invested in document production, highlighting the strategic importance of internationalisation to sector institutions. Moreover, whereas strategy documents analysed in 2010 were predominantly specific international strategy documents, produced in addition to institutional strategy, by 2020 most universities sampled for this study, including Violet, have subsumed internationalisation aspirations within the overall corporate plan. Rather than such merging being suggestive of the diminishing importance of internationalisation at Violet and sector universities, the opposite is shown to emerge through strategy documents. Strategy theme instead signals, through text and visual elements that internationalisation has assumed even greater importance and is now mainstreamed as a core element of strategic aspirations at Violet and sector universities.

One element of the *Brand Positioning* theme that emerges through analysis of strategy documents in 2020 is representation of international students through the metaphorical construct of 'students as consumer', emphasising consumer expectations of such students from obtaining a degree from a particular university, with associated promotion of the additional benefits of studying in the UK rather than the US or Australia, both key competitors of the UK for international students. The findings arising from this study, especially analysis of sector and Violet strategy documents, illustrate the metaphorical construct in multiple, overlapping and reinforcing ways. As detailed in 5.2.3 in chapter five, strategy document narrative shifts focus from what is shown to be an internal focused audience in 2010 (with international strategy operating largely as a call to action by staff and other internal stakeholders) by 2020 the emphasis is almost exclusively on external stakeholders. This

emerges most explicitly in the example below from Brown university, considered in 5.2.3 but repeated because of its clear signalling of strategy focus:

*'Our internationalisation strategy will be relevant to **you** if you are a student, staff at the university, alumni, partner or potential partner.'* (Brown University Internationalisation Strategy 2014-2020).

Brown University write in the first-person plural to convey an inclusive message to prospective students (assumed to be international given located within the institution's internationalisation strategy) and collaborative partners. A similar promotional approach emerges through Orange's Strategy 2030, which as well as containing far less narrative than previous strategy documents highlights its welcoming community and a sense of civic pride arising in those who study and work there.

*'We foster a welcoming community, where staff, students, alumni and friends feel proud to be part of our university.'* (University of Orange Strategy 2030).

Both examples extracted above refer only to 'students' which as noted in 5.2.3 is one of the most obvious examples of international students represented as consumers in strategy documents analysed for this study. Whilst a clear binary division was observed between strategy documents analysed in 2010 differentiating between 'international' and 'home students', this is far less evident in strategy documents in 2020. The implications of this convergence in nomenclature might be said to have potential positive or negative connotations. Focussing on the potential for positive impacts, such convergence might be seen as signifying a strategic focus away from the 'othering' of international students, raised as a masked contested theme of internationalisation, in Discourse B in 2.7.2. Studies by Lee & Bligh (2019) and Akdağ & Swanson (2018) draw attention to the othering of international students through online degree programmes and university policy documents. There is very little published research focussing on this, and nothing in relation to the implications of nomenclature convergence observed through this study regarding strategy documents. And even such research that has been published is suggested as focussing mainly on experiences of Asian students and their adjustment to the UK. In a report published in 2021, by Zewolde for the Centre of Global Higher Education, he highlights that:

*'issues of racial discrimination rarely appear in UK research literature on the experiences of international students'* (Zewolde, 2021, p4)

going on to state that even where studies have addressed issues of racism and othering, focus has rarely been on the experiences of Black African international students. He also suggests that many studies situate within a deficit model framework with the onus being placed on international students to integrate to combat isolation, rather than considering the complex range of social factors that lead to international students feeling isolated in UK universities. Thus, whilst homogenisation of students in strategy documents suggests all students are perceived as consumers, the issues raised by Zewolde and others are likely to remain and may even be further masked through strategy focus on students as a homogeneous group. Reinforcing this possibility, the specific attention drawn by the OfS on imperatives to protect students as consumers (OfS, 2023) discussed in chapter two focuses exclusively on consumer rights of students protected by specific legislation, not on social and cultural factors and particularly not issues associated with race and ethnicity, in outlining obligations of English universities in this regard.

Thus, the increasingly transactional construction of universities as service providers by the OfS and other regulatory bodies is suggested as contributing to increased prominence of the metaphor of 'student as consumer' informing UK university strategy development (Naidoo et al, 2011) and the strengthening of the *Brand Positioning* theme at Violet and sector universities. As has been noted in the paragraph above, this may further mask the negative effects of internationalisation associated with the othering of international students as an unintended consequence (one assumes) of the move towards exclusive reference to 'students' in strategy documents. Given these highly contested issues relating to identity and belonging for international students studying at Violet and sector universities, a key focus for recommendations in chapter seven is to develop practice approaches that enable such concerns to be surfaced, and openly discussed across the academic community, and draw on previous studies to develop practice that begins to address issues of identity, belonging and 'othering' (that can affect all university students but may be particularly exacerbated for international students)

#### **6.4 Section four The strategic importance of senior manager interviews at Violet University and the role played by**

In chapter one I highlighted the importance for this study of including interviews with senior managers at Violet University alongside analysis of Violet strategy documents. If the study had solely comprised analysis of strategy documents, attention would have been focused on the end product of strategy development i.e. the strategy document itself whereas, the aim of this research study is not only to analyse the textual features of a document but also to link



these characteristics to the production of the document, by senior managers, drawing reflexively on my own positionality as a senior university manager as a source of data. The concerns noted in the critical review of literature and my own reflexive engagement with internationalisation, about the potential problems for international strategy development and practice at Violet University arise from conceptualising internationalisation as a process and it has been important that this research study draws on additional data sets to support the third research question.

Therefore, my research design also included interviews, at Violet University, with several of the senior managers responsible for the creation of institutional strategy and operational plans, to assess tension between the idealised representations of internationalisation against the realities of strategic practice, as understood by those senior managers. It would have been equally interesting to explore the impact of international strategy documents on themes vertically down through the university, and specifically at the level of the international academic and international student, but I had to curtail my research, for the purposes of this dissertation, due to limitations of time and resource.

Previous studies have analysed university strategy document creation and found a disconnect between managers and academics, even where academics had been explicitly involved in the strategy's creation (Clegg and Smith, 2010). Other studies considering strategy and textual effects have suggested that the mobilisation of strategy theme, and particularly the reproduction of corporate rhetoric, through the form and vocabulary of strategy documents create tension lower down in the organisation (Vaara & Laine, 2007).

Senior manager interviews at Violet University and the findings arising from them, together with my active agency in this research study, are hugely significant to developing recommendations to influence and enhance internationalisation practice at Violet University on two grounds. First, senior manager narratives suggest that strategic aspirations and goals at Violet may be misunderstood or perceived as driven exclusively by economic rationales for internationalisation. At the same time senior managers acknowledge they are more divorced from practice occurring on the ground with academic and professional staff and may therefore not accurately represent views of staff around internationalisation objectives at Violet University. However, tension in academic and professional staff perceptions of internationalisation may also be a response to the conceptual framework of internationalisation as process, scaffolding economic rationales that was identified as the dominant rationale in UK higher education in the literature review. This suggests that reconceiving internationalisation through a shift from internationalisation towards internationality, built on a shared semiosis of internationalisation, could operate to diminish

tension and facilitate staff buy in. Thus, aligning internationalisation at Violet University to values and ideals shared by the university community of academic and professional staff actively dispels sources of tension and aligns senior managers vertically to all levels within the organisation as well as horizontally at the level of senior management and institutional governance.

Senior manager interviews have also been shown to be important in a way that was not anticipated at the start of this research study. Violet and sector strategy documents only occasionally identify concerns arising from internationalisation compared to negative themes labelled as Discourse B that are documented in the literature review. Sector strategy documents analysed in 2010 identify concerns within the *Global Citizenship* theme specifically a lack of diversity on campus, due to dominance of students from China and India on some programmes of study. Other concerns, identified within sector and Violet strategy documents regarding effective development of *Global Citizenship* relate to a stated lack of engagement with study abroad by students and other traditional forms of intercultural learning involving travel outside the UK. Such concerns are less evident in strategy documents analysed in 2020, not because they are seen to have been resolved, but are suggested as a consequence of strengthening of the *Brand Positioning* theme such that strategy documents operate more like prospectuses to attract international students to an institution. This may explain why, in the findings, strategy documents analysed in 2020 are seen to be directed towards an external audience, specifically prospective international students, leading to exclusively positive themes of internationalisation featuring in strategy documents, supported by visual images also depicting internationalisation in a positive way. This contrasts with strategy documents analysed in 2010 where the theme orientation was more explicitly towards an internal audience, leading to greater inclusion of problems and challenges of internationalisation to be addressed during the strategy period.

Compared to strategy documents, senior manager interviews undertaken in 2010 and 2020 highlight a significantly greater number of issues of concern regarding internationalisation strategy at Violet University and its translation into internationalisation practice than emerges through strategy documents. Senior managers present a very comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the challenges arising at Violet University alongside the desire to engage positively with internationalisation to enhance *Global Engagement* at Violet, notwithstanding economic imperatives to maintain financial sustainability. Those positive ideals, underpinned by well understood and embedded institutional values, whilst noted by senior managers to drive strategic engagement in this area were mirrored by senior manager willingness to articulate various issues of concern, that reflect to some degree the critical theorisations of internationalisation arising through Discourse B in the critical review of literature in chapter

two. Recommendations for Violet University discussed in chapter seven highlight the importance of surfacing issues of concern if *Global Engagement* strategy at Violet University is to be integrated vertically through internationalisation practice by academic and professional staff.

## **6.5 Section five Implications of findings for internationalisation strategy through sectoral convergence of vision, mission and strategic aspirations for institutional internationalisation**

The findings presented in chapters four and five provide a detailed map of the dominant themes identified from data gathered in 2010 and 2020. One aspect of particular interest through this research study was the extent to which universities adopt differentiated strategy documents or whether dominance of themes is seen to converge or diverge, and if so how. As seen in the presentation of the findings in chapters four and five, dominant themes emerge across Violet and sector strategy documents, with the sample representing a wide range of university visions and missions, with quite significant degrees of variation in league tables both nationally and internationally. Despite undertaking broad sampling for this study, the themes emerging through analysis of sector and Violet University strategy documents that are identified as dominant, from data gathered in 2010 and 2020, demonstrate a remarkable degree of convergence. In this way, the findings from this study accord with previous research undertaken in 2011 examining UK university Mission statements. Using corpus analysis, Sauntson and Morrish found that whilst universities appeared to adopt mission statements to represent institutional distinctiveness, this was '*displaced by a tendency to discursive uniformity and standardisation*' (Sauntson & Morrish, 2011, p83) mostly due to use of a very small number of nouns and adjectives, asserting positive images of the university, its staff, students and alumni. They did identify some differences across mission groups (Russell Group, 1994 Group and Million +) reflecting variation in lexical priorities between research, student, learning and teaching. In this study, I have also noted variation in construction of certain themes, most particularly *Global Citizenship* where research-intensive universities Red, Orange and Yellow, all closely associate the *Global Citizenship* theme with *Brand Positioning* and *Academic Collaboration* themes. Thus, whilst the recruitment of international students is signalled as strategically important, Red, Orange and Yellow Universities prioritise the recruitment of high-quality international students from a diverse range of countries to support the development of *Global Citizenship* rather than growth in overall student numbers. This is especially noted in relation to data gathered in 2010. A similar association emerges through analysis in those research-intensive universities between quality and the *Academic Collaboration* theme with a focus on developing high quality academic collaborations that

enhance international research activity at Red, Orange and Yellow Universities, supporting goals to enhance international reputational standing and performance in national and international league tables. Through this construction, *Global Citizenship* is seen to directly link to *Brand Positioning*. Apart from the research-intensive university strategy documents analysed for this study, Violet and post-92 sector strategy documents are seen to construct *Global Citizenship* through growth in numbers of international students together with diversity of countries to establish global communities on campus influenced by the *Market Driven Growth* and *Risk Management* themes.

Considering the findings from analysis of Violet and sector strategy documents in relation to my own practice as a senior university manager adds context to the convergence of university strategy document vision, mission and articulation of purpose seen to arise in this study. By gathering data in 2010 and 2020 this research study offers a unique longitudinal approach to provide insight into the evolving influences on, and impact of, international strategy through the lens of senior leader practice. I have been able to consider the presentation of strategic documents over several strategy periods and have been surprised at how little one strategy document at Violet and sector universities appears to be drawn upon in informing the next strategy period at an institutional level. And yet, as Table 2 notes, over time most strategy documents analysed shift nomenclature from 'international' strategy to adopt the terms 'Global' or 'Global Engagement' strategy.

Whilst this narrative realignment might indicate positive changes in strategy and internationalisation practice of internationalisation in Violet and sector universities, noting from my own experience and perspectives how Violet University came to adopt the term "Global Engagement" might be indicative of practice at other universities, I have been involved in three iterations of strategy development, at Violet University. Initially this was as a member of the international strand working group for the 2010-2015 and 2015-2020 strategic plans. In 2019, I was appointed by the Chief Executives Group to lead the working group for international strategy development for the 2020-2025 strategic plan. Drawing on some of the findings from this study which emerged from data gathered in 2010 together with some of the issues of concern identified as Discourse B in chapter two, I was determined to undertake broad and wide ranging consultation to inform the construction of internationalisation objectives in the new strategic plan selecting members of the working group from academic and professional staff from different schools and areas of expertise. Colleagues were particularly invited from those areas that might not be student facing but whose remit and work influence approaches to internationalisation (thus staff from finance, academic registry were included, alongside professional staff from library and computing services). International students were also invited to participate in the working group. Reflecting on my involvement with previous strategy

development I recalled discussions had focussed on what targets to set for international student recruitment and Academic Collaboration partnerships promoting economic rationales for internationalisation above others. For the 2020-2025 plan, wide ranging engagement with a holistic approach to internationalisation was encouraged drawing on different stakeholder perspectives, and one of the decisions universally agreed was to move from the term 'international' to 'global engagement'. In doing so many group members acknowledged the influence of nomenclature changes elsewhere in the sector, as strategy documents of other universities were considered throughout the development of Violet's new strategy. I relate this example of strategy narrative change at Violet University as it clearly illustrates how the relationship between strategy documents 'before' and 'after' (Fairclough 1995a) may be more likely to influence across sector university strategy documents rather than between one iteration of strategy and the next in one institutional setting. Viewed reflexively, I can see how the work of the strategy group at Violet was influenced by the *Brand Positioning* theme, albeit unconsciously, to better represent Violet's international aspirations through a promotional lens that may be more attractive to potential international students and *Academic Collaboration* partners. This is relevant to the recommendation in chapter seven to bridge strategy and practice, to create connections at all stages of Violet University's strategy life cycle, to inform strategy development, strategy practice as well as strategy reflection and assessment of attainment of positive ideals of internationalisation.

## Summary

Having considered the implications of the findings for internationalisation strategy and practice at Violet and UK universities in chapter six, and particularly noting the pressures shaping and influencing *Global Engagement* strategic aspirations, in chapter seven I will draw together responses to the three research questions which inform recommendations for internationalisation strategy to influence and enhance practice at Violet and UK universities.

In developing these recommendations, it is useful to summarise here how they have been shaped by and developed in response to the dominant themes of internationalisation. In chapter six it has been noted that some dominant themes arising from the findings promote positive ideals of internationalisation whilst other dominant themes prioritise financial imperatives to generate income. *Global Citizenship*, *Cultural Exchange* and *Global Engagement* themes are all shown to promote positive ideals within internationalisation strategy at Violet University, with *Global Engagement* emerging as the most dominant theme signifying Violet's holistic approach to internationalisation efforts underscored by its strong institutional values. At the same time the dominant themes of *Market Driven Growth*, *Academic Collaboration*, *Brand Positioning* and *Risk Management*, are shown to reinforce the economic

drivers for internationalisation at Violet and sector universities. This creates strategic tension as to the true purpose of internationalisation practice at Violet University. This tension is clearly represented within the *Global Engagement* theme which while shown to promote positive ideals of internationalisation at Violet University is influenced by other themes promoting economic rationales. This is shown to arise through the connection of *Global Ambition* (an element within *Global Engagement*), which focuses strategic attention on institutional reputation (an element within the *Brand Positioning* theme). At the same time the *Global Citizenship* theme (another element within *Global Engagement*) is seen to connect to *Market Driven Growth*, whereby growth in international student numbers is promoted to increase student diversity on campus. Yet, the *Global Engagement* theme also creates opportunities to connect the multiple dominant themes, representing what appear to be divergent strategic aspirations for internationalisation at Violet University. Overall, the findings clearly present economic rationales as facilitative of the broader positive ideals for internationalisation advanced in Violet's strategy documents and interviews with senior managers, and my own hopes for this research study. The implications of the findings therefore position *Global Engagement* as a theme that unifies internationalisation aspirations and operates as a catalyst to influence and enhance internationalisation practice at Violet University. The recommendations introduced in this chapter and developed further in chapter seven signal ways in which this unification can be achieved to enhance internationalisation strategy and practice at Violet University.

## **Chapter Seven      Influencing and enhancing internationalisation strategy and practice at Violet, and UK universities**

### **7.1      Introduction**

This concluding chapter draws together the strands developed throughout this dissertation – identifying the dominant themes of internationalisation in institutional international strategies in 2010 and determining how those strategy themes in UK universities have evolved between 2010 and 2020. The findings were presented in chapters four and five, and the implications arising from the findings, and the tensions in strategic practice that this research clearly evidences, discussed in chapter six. In this chapter the focus now turns to consider how institutional strategy theme can influence and enhance internationalisation practice at Violet and UK universities more broadly. These elements are explored in this chapter in three sections. In section one recommendations to influence and enhance internationalisation practice at Violet and UK universities are explored, having been introduced in chapter six. These recommendations form my original contribution to practice through this research study. The recommendations respond to the three research questions, noted below, which have been addressed through this study. In section two I move on to highlight examples from my own professional engagement in this area, demonstrating how this study has already influenced and enhanced internationalisation strategy and practice at Violet University. I conclude this dissertation in section three with consideration of how the findings from this study suggest imperatives for further research examining internationalisation strategy and practice in UK universities in the future.

Throughout this research study I have noted my strong interest in issues associated with internationalisation strategy and practice which has led me to explore and understand the themes that are seen to shape and influence strategy practice in a higher education setting. Whilst my interest initially arose in the context of my role as a pracademic, my subsequent career progression into senior leadership positions has meant that the focus on strategy development and consideration of how strategy can influence and enhance practice, is extremely important. And indeed, timely as so many universities, including Violet, are increasingly dependent on income generated from the recruitment of international students, and establishment of commercially driven TNE partnerships, to maintain overall institutional financial sustainability.

As a reminder, the three research questions posed for this study are:

- 1     *What are the dominant themes of internationalisation in institutional international strategies in UK universities?*
- 2     *How have institutional international strategy themes in UK universities changed between 2010 and 2020?*
- 3     *How can institutional strategy themes influence and enhance internationalisation practice in UK universities?*

Section one below will examine the dominant themes of internationalisation in institutional international strategies and evolution of those strategy themes between 2010 and 2020. In doing so I will identify the ways in which the themes can influence and enhance internationalisation practice at Violet and UK universities through the recommendations proposed in this chapter.

## **7.2     Section one – Recommendations to influence and enhance internationalisation strategy and practice at Violet University**

In this section I will detail specific recommendations to influence and enhance internationalisation strategy and practice arising from the findings. In preceding chapters, I have charted the dominant themes that are seen to emerge through analysis of a significant number of data sets, over a critical ten-year period for Violet University and the UK higher education sector. Through analysis of Violet and sector strategy documents I have recorded and discussed those themes that dominate and identified variation in their strength between 2010 and 2020. I have also assessed the extent to which they inform and influence, or are informed and influenced, by other themes emerging through analysis. At the same time, a distinctive focus of this study has been the inclusion of interviews with many of the senior managers responsible for strategy development and strategy practice at Violet University, again considered over a ten-year period. A further strength of this research study has been my positionality as both researcher and senior leader at Violet, where, by adopting a reflexive thematic analytical approach to data analysis, located within a critical realist theoretical framework, I have been able to draw on my own experience and perspectives as a source of data. As noted in chapter six, the interviews undertaken for this research study have been significant in helping to build a more comprehensive picture of internationalisation themes at Violet than emerges through strategy analysis alone. At times senior manager narratives have been shown to converge with findings arising from Violet and sector strategy document



analysis, at other times to diverge. Interviews have revealed a more nuanced and complex theme in relation to a key concern of this study, the extent to which economic rationales for internationalisation are seen to dominate approaches to internationalisation at Violet, through construction of internationalisation as a process. Over both data gathering periods, senior managers have repeatedly described economic drivers as facilitative of more holistic strategic aspirations which are seen to be important elements within the dominant theme of *Global Engagement*.

In this section I draw together those findings and consider how they can be translated into recommendations to enhance practice at Violet University, reflecting issues arising from discussion of the third research question in the preceding chapter:

*How can institutional strategy themes influence and enhance internationalisation practice in UK universities?*

Whilst this question suggests potential broad application of the findings from this study and the recommendations which are developed in this chapter, the principal focus is always on Violet University, as the case study institution at the heart of this doctoral submission, to influence and enhance practice in this post-92 institution. Although consideration of data regarding the higher education sector more broadly was restricted to consideration of a sample of UK university international strategy documents, the recommendations discussed below should have application, through generalisation, for the UK university sector. Robinson and Norris (2001) suggest that generalisation can be the linchpin of evidence-based practice. In the context of this research study, the idea of situated generalisation may be relevant. Simons et al. (2003) found:

*'practices came to be refined or adopted only if they connected closely with the situation in which the evidence for improving practice arose'*. (Simons et al., 2003, p347).

As international strategy and internationalisation practice has been shown to be critical for all UK universities, it is anticipated that the recommendations discussed below will influence and enhance practice at UK universities as well as at Violet University.

Section one continues with identification and discussion of four recommendations for Violet University internationalisation practice to deliver institutional strategic aspirations for *Global Engagement*.

## **Recommendations for Violet University internationalisation practice to deliver Global Engagement strategic aspirations**

As was introduced in chapter six, the findings from this study have informed the development of four recommendations to influence and enhance internationalisation practice at Violet University, and, through analysis of a sample of sector internationalisation strategy documents, more broadly at a UK university level. The first recommendation discussed below comprises a proposal for a new framework to influence and enhance institutional international strategy development, and its implementation into internationalisation practice at Violet University. This framework has been developed to more effectively bridge internationalisation strategy and practice at Violet University to reduce the disconnect seen to emerge through the findings and introduce elements of reflection and review arising from *Global Engagement* practice into future strategy development.

### **Recommendation one – the circular strategy-practice bridge**

The framework I propose is constructed as a strategy-practice bridge. Although the metaphor of a bridge is suggested, it is conceived and presented as a circular bridge. Whilst that might seem just a theoretical construct there is an innovative circular bridge that spans Laguna Garzón, a coastal lagoon in southeastern Uruguay. It is a bridge that is formed of two joined semicircular bridges. The advantages for institutional international strategy development and institutional international strategy practice at Violet mirror, to some extent those identified in an article reporting on the bridge's construction:

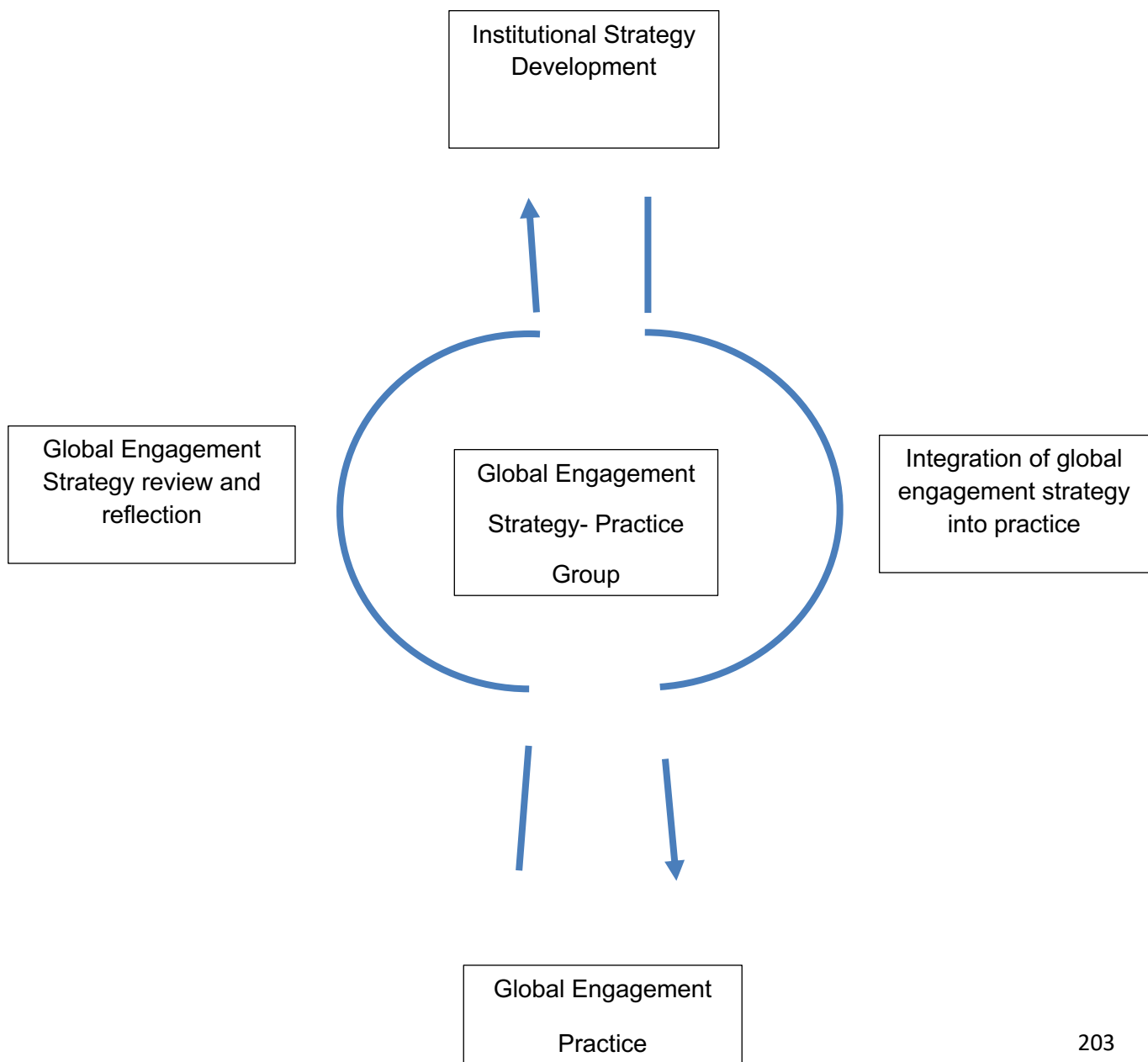
*'Just like a roundabout, it will slow down drivers heading over the environmentally sensitive lagoon, while providing new pavilions and views for pedestrians'* (Capps, Bloomberg UK, 2016).

Whilst implementation of strategy, once developed in a university tends to be driven (to extend the metaphor further) at pace, the strategy-practice bridge proposed here can also be conceived as slowing down the implementation of institutional international strategy into international practice approaches at Violet University. The rationale for doing so is to ensure that *Global Engagement* strategic aspirations and associated KPIs are understood and supported by academic and professional staff, before translation and integration into *Global Engagement* practice. Ensuring staff engage and align with strategic aspirations is a key consideration in ensuring this strategy- practice bridge is successful, and this is developed

below in recommendation two proposing the creation of a strategy and practice group at Violet University.

Whereas the Laguna bridge is suggested as operating akin to a roundabout, the framework proposed here operates as a bridge not a roundabout in that it reflects the two distinct elements of *Global Engagement* at Violet – strategy and practice. If the framework were to be developed as a roundabout, important opportunities to reconnect strategy and practice, identified in the findings as at times disconnected, could be lost. A framework for the strategy-practice bridge I propose Violet University should adopt is outlined below in Figure 4, which is followed by more detailed consideration of how this framework can influence and enhance internationalisation practice at Violet University and more broadly at UK university level.

**Figure 4      Circular Strategy-Practice Bridge framework**



Discussion of the operation of this framework starts with the development of strategy at Violet University, at the top of Figure 4. As noted in chapter six, Violet launched its new strategic plan 2025-2030 just as this dissertation was being submitted. This provides a perfect opportunity to implement this framework at Violet University. Once the institutional strategy has been developed, *Global Engagement* strategy aspirations enter the bridge on the right-hand side of the framework, where KPIs are developed, informing an operational plan for delivery through elements such as *Global Citizenship* development, study abroad, international student recruitment and approaches to *Academic Collaboration* partnership establishment and monitoring. At this point in the framework academic and professional staff need to be fully engaged with operational planning to support integration of *Global Engagement* strategy into practice at Violet University through core functions of teaching, learning and research. Once the operational plan has been drafted and *Global Engagement* practice gets underway, an innovative feature of this framework comes into play. Active sharing of *Global Engagement* practice highlighting initiatives that support success measures should be shared across Violet University (through the strategy-practice group proposed in recommendation two) whilst problems and challenges arising through *Global Engagement* practice should also be surfaced throughout the strategy life cycle. The findings from this research study show, through the senior manager interviews and my own experience and perspectives as a senior leader, that talking about positive and negative features of *Global Engagement*, is a more effective means of surfacing issues of concern. In contrast, strategy documents are far less likely to surface contested issues of internationalisation which, due to the promotional nature of international strategy documents, emphasising *Brand Positioning* and *Market Driven Growth*, leads to such issues being masked or silenced.

In conceiving the strategy-practice bridge as a circular framework, the second phase of the bridge operates during and towards the end of the strategy period. Outcomes from *Global Engagement* practice, identifying positive practice and negative issues adversely impacting on *Global Engagement* aspirations are considered, through the framework as strategy reflections and review against KPIs up the left-hand side. Reflection and review can support assessment of the extent to which positive ideals of *Global Engagement* strategy have been fully realised through the strategy period. Formal review can then inform future development of strategy documents at Violet University. This element of the framework is designed to enhance reflection on the extent to which strategic aspirations have been achieved in one strategy period, to inform future strategy development at Violet University.

Inclusion of formal review into strategy practices at Violet University as a component of this first recommendation relates to the rationale for developing strategy documents, and international strategic aspirations at Violet University. In establishing the sampling approach

in chapter three, consideration was given to shifts in league table positions at Violet and sector universities between 2010 and 2020. In 3.6.1 it was noted that quartile mapping of each university in the sample in 2020 indicated that only three of the nine universities had improved their ranking (indicated in blue below) between 2010 and 2020 whereas the ranking of six had declined (indicated in red below):

#### University average league table position in 2020

Quartile 1	1-29	Red University, Orange University, Yellow University, Blue University
Quartile 2	30-59	Green University,
Quartile 3	60-89	Brown University, Violet University,
Quartile 4	90-116	Pink University, Black University

Of the six universities sampled in 2020 where average ranking fell, the most significant drop was 45 places with two others experiencing a drop of between 20 and 30 places and two more a drop of between 10 and 19 places. These drops were sufficiently significant to move some universities into a different quartile in the second phase of analysis. Given the increasing dominance of the *Brand Positioning* theme emerging through strategy document analysis in 2020, when considered in relation to league table positions, suggests this will be a concern for Violet and sector universities. The *Brand Positioning* theme, emerging through analysis of strategy documents, is seen to promote enhancement of reputational standing, and influence *Market-Driven Growth* which is concerned with income generation through internationalisation. This reinforces the advantages of the circular strategy-practice bridge discussed in this recommendation, providing opportunities to focus attention on the influence of international strategy practice through *Global Engagement* when considered in relation to other elements of Violet's corporate strategy.

Recommendation two, discussed below is linked to recommendation one, suggesting that *Global Engagement* practice at Violet University will be enhanced through establishment of a *Global Engagement* strategy and practice group. This group is positioned at the centre of Table four, representing its importance in translating strategic aspirations into effective *Global Engagement* practice at Violet University and informing reflection and review throughout the strategy period.

## **Recommendation two – Global Engagement strategy and practice group at Violet University**

The findings from this research study, discussed in chapter six, and evidenced in interviews with senior managers, indicate gaps exist at Violet University between one strategy period and the next, where one strategy document is not seen to be actively reflected upon, in terms of success measures particularly, to influence and inform the next. Influence was observed however in relation to adoption of aspects of internationalisation from another university context (specifically adoption of the term *Global Engagement* to signal Violet's strategic aspirations in relation to what had previously been termed international). Gaps have also been observed to arise in relation to senior manager perceptions of academic staff engagement with *Global Engagement* in practice, including my own experience as a senior manager, as noted in 1.2 where I reflected on issues arising through the challenges of navigating challenging income targets and the translation of what colleagues described as distant strategic aspirations and nebulous concepts into internationalisation practice. To address this, in conjunction with the circular strategy-practice bridge proposed in recommendation one above, a point for consideration at Violet University is to create a *Global Engagement* strategy and practice group. Some groups have already been established at Violet University, bringing together senior managers and academic and professional staff in several areas, including education and student success and student community development. However, no group exists at present to link *Global Engagement* strategy and practice and given this study has not involved interviews with academic staff or international students, their active participation is considered imperative to success of a strategy and practice group. One focus of the group may involve monitoring of progress against KPIs within the institutional strategy plan, although a primary focus suggested as necessary through the findings of this study, is to ensure problems and challenges of internationalisation practice are surfaced, and addressed, during the strategy period. A focus on KPIs links to recommendation three below where it is suggested that KPIs are broadened to extend to all aspects of *Global Engagement* at Violet University.

## **Recommendation three – Key Performance Indicators for all Global Engagement strategic aspirations**

From my own professional knowledge as a senior manager, I am aware that Violet University has developed formal processes and approaches conducive to the development of strategic goals around student experience and success with central departments that proactively support practice development in academic schools. This is coupled with a comprehensive set

of measures informed by data and intelligence to assess attainment of KPIs, many of which derive from The OFS B Measures for success introduced in 2017. However, this research study has shown that in the area of internationalisation, these are largely associated with performance measures relating to international student recruitment, income to be generated through *Academic Collaboration* partnerships, and targets for study abroad. These are noted to be responsive to the economic drivers that promote income generation through international activity. In response to the findings from this study I would recommend that Violet University implement KPIs not just in relation to those aspirations which support economic rationales for internationalisation but in addition key performance indicators are assigned to measure success with regard to the broader *Global Engagement* goals associated with cultural, social, and academic rationales. This will undoubtedly be challenging, as what success looks like, for example in relation to *Global Citizenship* at Violet University, is less obvious, and has been shown, through the critical theorisations in Discourse B, as discussed in chapter two, to be contested. Notwithstanding these challenges, engaging academic and professional staff, together with students in establishing measures, will sharpen strategic focus of this aspiration at Violet University. KPIs can be developed that support the strong institutional values at Violet University that underscore all aspects of university life. In adopting KPIs for all elements within the *Global Engagement* theme, Violet University will be able to more readily link ownership of targets and measures of success vertically throughout the institution as well as horizontally at senior manager and governance levels at Violet University. Moreover, as was noted in 3.2, Van der Wende's research study (1999) identified institutionalisation as the most important stage of the innovation process to embed internationalisation within a university context. Her research suggested that this is the area where innovation is most likely to transform or die. Van der Wende argues that internationalisation strategies will only succeed to the extent that they are compatible with the norms, values and goals of the institution and the actors and adopters within it. Her research study, together with data gathered for this study, both signal the importance of KPIs that go beyond those which exclusively promote economic rationales, such that the strong values at Violet are incorporated within future KPI targets, to reinforce institutionalisation of the positive ideals of internationalisation vertically throughout the university.

The final recommendation arising from implications of the findings discussed in chapter six relates to a proposed nomenclature change in the specific context of *Global Engagement* endeavours at Violet University to more clearly align that theme with the *Global Citizenship* and *Cultural Exchange* themes already discussed.

#### **Recommendation four- A move towards adoption of ‘Internationality’ to signal positive ideals of Global Engagement at Violet University**

Alongside the recommendations explored above to influence and enhance institutional international strategy and practice at Violet University, a final recommendation arising from this study relates to a proposed nomenclature change. In addition to the strategy-practice bridge discussed in recommendation one, a further way to focus strategy and practice attention on the positive ideals of *Global Engagement*, is to develop a new term to describe activity in this area at Violet University. I propose the term ‘*internationality*’ be adopted at Violet as a bridging concept to link *Global Engagement* strategy and *Global Engagement* practice. This research study and previous studies, discussed at 2.2.1, have highlighted that the term internationalisation is most closely associated with a process approach, drawing from Knight’s initial definition in 1994, whereby a focus on process prioritises economic rationales for internationalisation. Alongside the scaffolding of economic rationales through a process approach, recent research studies present mainstream internationalisation definitions, discussed within Discourse A at 2.2.1 as a contested concept. Most significantly, as discussed at 2.7.1, Marginson (2023) raises substantive concerns with regard to Knight’s definition of internationalisation suggesting that the definition is inherently Western in construction and yet is used to shape worldwide practice. As the findings from this study show, economic imperatives are strategically prominent in strategy documents and senior manager interviews but presented as necessary to facilitate the broader ideals of *Global Engagement*, rather than being viewed as ends in and of themselves. It is therefore important to pivot attention away from the process-economic association noted above, in development of *Global Engagement* practice at Violet University.

As was noted in the literature review, previous research studies have proposed alternative nomenclature including ‘*intentionality*’ (Teichler 2009) whilst Lewis (2007) in her study of internationalisation strategy in UK universities proposes the term ‘*integrated internationalism*’ to signal alignment between internationalisation aspirations and internationalisation practice. Whilst the nomenclature changes proposed in previous studies are suggested to operate at a macro-sectoral level, the nomenclature change I propose is more directly linked to the context at Violet University as it emerges through analysis of its strategy documents and senior manager interviews. The strategic imperative for Violet University to engage with positive ideals, through the theme of *Global Engagement* is underscored by strong commitment to its institutional values. Yet, as was discussed in chapter six, whilst the *Global Engagement* theme is seen to promote positive ideals of internationalisation, at the same time influence of *Brand Positioning* creates tension in construction of the theme and translation into practice at Violet University. To focus *Global Engagement* more explicitly on the positive elements of the theme,



within the circular strategy-practice bridge I suggest Violet University adopts the term *internationality*. I believe this will more clearly signal how *Global Engagement* is underscored by Violet University's strong commitment to values.

Reliance on the term *internationality* to prioritise social, academic and cultural rationales for *Global Engagement* alongside the *Global Citizenship* and *Cultural Exchange* themes may serve to decouple *Global Engagement* from a focus on process, which the definition and understanding of internationalisation has been seen in this study and previous academic studies to prioritise. The term international has been suggested (Knight, 1994) as leading to a narrow focus on activities, whereas internationalisation has come to be associated with prioritisation of economic rationales. The importance of *Global Engagement* to Violet University is such that this proposed nomenclature change may be necessary to shift thinking and practice away from terms that may no longer reflect its strategic aspirations.

A recommendation for change to nomenclature may at first blush seem counterintuitive given Knight's definition of internationalisation as a process (1994) and subsequent definitional refinement emphasising intentionality of process (European Parliament Culture and Education Report, 2015) has been widely criticised. Whilst Knight's definition remains the leading definition within Discourse A, counter narratives of the definition of internationalisation discussed in Discourse B at 2.7.1 suggest that what appears as innocuous or even commonplace is suggested to conceal '*a raft of assumptions, judgments, problems and issues*' (Marginson, 2023, p2) which privilege Global North approaches, whereas the reality for Global South internationalisation is rarely one that can be described as intentional (Stein, 2021). Yet, as has been discussed throughout this dissertation, drawing upon the findings and my own professional experience, there is a compelling requirement to pivot internationalisation practice towards the positive ideals of *Global Engagement* at Violet, emphasising academic and cultural rationales. To refocus academic and professional colleagues' attention initially through a change in nomenclature opens up a new space at Violet for the implications of counter narratives of internationalisation, identified in Discourse B, to influence and enhance future internationalisation practice.

Having identified four recommendations as implications of the findings discussed in chapter six, section two moves to outline further examples, from my own professional practice alongside those already noted and discussed throughout this dissertation, that outline multiple ways in which this research study has already influenced and enhanced *Global Engagement* practice at Violet University. Alongside my own practice, such examples also reinforce the importance of the strategy-practice group discussed in recommendation two, as a vehicle to

share aspects of *Global Engagement* practice arising in one academic school, that may have applicability more broadly across Violet University.

### **7.3 Section two - internationalisation strategy and practice enhancement at Violet University; examples from my own professional practice**

In this section I note, through examples from my own professional practice at Violet, the diverse ways in which the findings from this study have already influenced and enhanced internationalisation practice at Violet University and beyond the institutional context, more broadly at a sectoral level. In doing so I seek to show that not only do the findings and recommendations developed in 7.2 above evidence an original contribution to practice in the future but have already made a positive contribution to shaping strategy and practice at Violet University throughout the period of this research study.

At various points in this research study, I have noted my personal motivation for pursuing an EdD specifically because it enables me to make a contribution to practice. I felt this was particularly relevant for my own professional development as a '*pracademic*', having moved into an academic environment from working as a solicitor in private practice. I have found the term '*pracademic*' to be particularly helpful in developing an identity within the academic community that draws on my practice-based knowledge and experience and has enabled me to forge a rewarding career in higher education. At the point where I began the EdD I had recently been promoted into a senior management post in a faculty setting at Violet University with broad-ranging responsibility for internationalisation as Associate Dean European and International Affairs. I particularly wanted this EdD study to influence practice within the faculty but insofar as possible, more broadly at Violet University. Over the course of this research study, my senior management career has developed further through appointment eight years ago as Dean of a large and complex academic school at Violet, taking on leadership of a second school in 2023. These career developments have increased the importance of this study even further. The process of undertaking this research study has been revealing, stimulating and has already actively shaped and informed internationalisation and more recently Global Engagement practice at Violet University, demonstrating the value and applicability of the findings from this study to the case study institution and beyond to other sector universities .

#### **Secondary School Cultural Exchange Project**

Data gathering in 2010 identified issues associated with the *Global Citizenship* theme, specifically concerns as to language barriers inhibiting the development of *Global Citizenship* in the classroom and dominance in terms of numbers of students from countries also being

seen to adversely impact on practice. An early internationalisation practice project which I developed and led at Violet University in 2011 sought to address those concerns. I developed a mentoring scheme for a group of international students from China studying on the Master's in Law (LLM) programme at Violet University Law School. The perception of language barriers I identified in senior manager interviews in 2010 was echoed by the students themselves, resulting in a loss of confidence in achieving the qualification in which they and families had invested significant resource.

A mentorship programme was established with a local secondary school, which had a long-standing relationship with China recognised by Confucius Institute status. LLM students were asked to deliver introductory Mandarin classes to pupils from years 7 to 11, alongside a number of cultural collaboration projects (through the medium of art and dance principally) to foster *Cultural Exchange*, also identified in sector and Violet University strategy documents in 2010. The students designed, organised and delivered the sessions. Through this project and drawing on active participatory approaches to the co-creation of learning, at the conclusion of the one-month project, my students reported significantly increased confidence and language competency, and they went on to achieve higher grades than previous cohorts from China. Reflective logs written by the LLM students associated an increase in confidence with metaphorically and pedagogically moving away from what had been a partially self-imposed deficit model viewing themselves as operating under a burden of communicating in English as a second language, towards a more understood appreciation of the learning and *Cultural Exchange* benefits that came from having studied law in two jurisdictions. This project serves to illustrate how issues of concern identified in chapter two through Discourse B might be addressed through practice initiatives. Lee & Bligh's study of online international students, discussed at 2.7.2 noted how deficits of language proficiency were most frequently cited, whilst Stein (2017) also highlights the framing of international students as deficient learners. It was having my attention drawn to the contested concepts of internationalisation and *Global Citizenship* together with reflection on my own experience as a pracademic and senior manager, that formed the genesis of the mentoring project.

In the second example below, I will briefly outline how surfacing of themes of concern in relation to *Academic Collaboration* partnerships, in data gathered for this study, together with previous research studies discussed in chapter two, have influenced practice at Violet University through a realignment of academic programme developments and implementation into practice in a way that pivots attention towards the promotion of mutual benefits through collaborative arrangements.

## **New models of Academic Collaboration promoting reciprocity of benefits**

I have been able to draw on early findings emerging through this research study, together with my own experience as a senior leader, to integrate new approaches to *Global Engagement* and *Academic Collaboration* through curriculum development at school level, strategy development at institutional level, and by articulating global legal education perspectives internationally.

The dominant theme of *Academic Collaboration*, emerging through analysis of Violet strategy documents and interviews with senior managers in 2010 suggested a lack of clarity as to the true purpose of *Academic Collaboration* at Violet University. Whilst strategy documents and senior managers emphasised that strategic academic collaborations serve as a cornerstone of the university's international strategy reinforcing the alignment between institutional goals and academic values, senior managers also prioritised the financial benefits arising from Violet University's long established international collaborative partnerships, which reinforced my own positionality with regard to *Academic Collaboration* at Violet. Senior managers also spoke of the need to streamline approaches to *Academic Collaboration* to maximise financial returns. In leading the development of *Academic Collaboration* partnerships as Dean of School I have drawn on the findings to develop new models of international collaborative partnerships. These both seek to address power differentials in TNE Partnerships, and surface concerns arising from previous research studies about *Academic Collaboration* discussed in 2.7.2. Concerns within Discourse B are presented through previous studies as highlighting tension between strong commercial imperatives seen to be at odds with the values of educators delivering TNE programmes (Cheung, 2006). Akdağ & Swanson (2018) also draw attention to the coercive use of 'we' in *Academic Collaboration* whereby the reading subject is interpolated within an institutional colonial ideology.

Mindful of the contested narratives of *Academic Collaboration* arising through Discourse B and the findings from analysis of data gathered in 2010, In 2019 I championed and oversaw the validation of a Supported Distance Learning LLB degree with a longstanding recruitment partner in Malaysia. The student learning benefits of this form of international collaborative partnership are highlighted through research studies (Smith (2020) with greater opportunities for reciprocal sharing of pedagogy, compared to other forms such as franchise, which can focus on knowledge transference from one jurisdiction, usually Western, alone. This model of partnership can also be delivered at lower cost to the partner and students without compromising economic return expectations of senior managers at Violet University.

In 2010 the Law School at Violet University was asked to set up a 2+1 credit transfer agreement with the leading private provider of legal education in Malaysia. At the outset this

mirrored traditional credit transfer agreements between UK universities and institutions overseas. I quickly became aware of the political context that had led to the growth of private providers in Malaysia due to insufficient supply of higher education in the public university sector. Yet many private providers were unable to secure degree awarding powers requiring establishment of collaborative partnership arrangements with UK universities. 2+1 study can be challenging for international students as they face significant financial costs in being able to complete their degree studies within the UK coupled with a relatively short period of time of one year to integrate into a new country and education system.

When additional UK universities began to work with the private provider, the insights I gained from data gathered in 2010, and reflection in my then senior manager role of Associate Dean, led to development of a new form of collaborative partnership between the private provider and all the UK law schools working with them on a 2+1 basis. A consortium arrangement was established in 2015, informed by the positive ideals of *Academic Collaboration* for mutual benefit and I was appointed co-chair. This partnership has now grown to 15 university law schools working together, from across the UK, representing a wide spectrum of traditional and contemporary UK universities.

The consortium is, as far as I am aware, entirely unique. Whilst there is inevitably a commercial element for the UK universities and private provider to generate income from the recruitment of students, the partnership has strengthened its collaborative endeavours for mutual benefit of all parties, to support student learning in Malaysia and in the UK. Collaboration takes many forms including staff development in both countries, and shared co-curricular opportunities in trial advocacy and mooting to share two examples, Summer Schools and active mentorship of Malaysian students by graduates working in Malaysia. It has also led to fruitful research projects across the UK universities and with the Malaysian partner. My own experience of working in this way has clearly enhanced *Academic Collaboration* practice at Violet university,

The last example below shows how the breadth of the *Global Citizenship* theme arising from the findings can serve to promote positive ideals of *Global Engagement* in unexpected ways.

### **The development of Global Citizenship at Violet Law School**

My position as a senior manager at Violet University has provided unanticipated opportunities to enhance *Global Engagement* practice at Violet University. In 2021, a call came out to UK university law schools from the Council for At Risk Academics (CARA), an organisation which has been supporting academics for the last 90 years. CARA Fellowships were sought for upwards of fifteen university academics at significant personal risk in Afghanistan. Partly in response to research undertaken for this study but predominantly driven by the desire to

nurture positive ideals of internationalisation, I was determined to welcome an academic from Afghanistan if possible. Highlighting the strategic significance of *Global Engagement* and *Global Citizenship* underpinned by Violet's strong institutional values through data gathered in 2020 provided persuasive arguments to the senior executive group to invest what was a considerable financial sum to enable Violet to take a CARA Fellow. Violet University Law School welcomed a CARA Fellow and his wife and child after a period of uncertainty as to whether they would be able to safely leave Afghanistan. The Law School CARA Fellow has made a significant positive contribution to development of the *Global Citizenship* theme enabling law students to better understand, through their lived experience, the importance of academic freedom, cultural tolerance, and the role that must be played by graduates to support conflict resolution in their graduate careers. The CARA Fellow has received permanent leave to remain in the UK as an academic member of staff and is developing collaborative research projects with academic colleagues. It is a very personal example of how institutional strategy themes of internationalisation have influenced and enhanced *Global Engagement* and *Global Citizenship* practice at Violet University.

Alongside the examples noted above and considered throughout this dissertation, demonstrating the reach of this research study in enhancing *Global Engagement* practice at Violet University, I expect the recommendations developed in section one to have greater future impact at institutional level as well as sectorally.

This dissertation concludes in section three below with consideration of proposals for future research in internationalisation strategy and practice, building on the findings from this research study.

#### **7.4      Section three                      Proposals for future research examining                  internationalisation strategy and practice in UK universities**

In this concluding section I note how the findings and recommendations proposed in chapter six and seven, which form my original contribution to practice have identified ways to influence and enhance internationalisation practice at Violet University. Most particularly, the findings arising from analysis of data present opportunities for Violet University to enhance its strategic practice aspirations for internationalisation which are in harmony with the positive ideals for *Global Engagement* identified through this study. At the time of writing this dissertation, Violet University are launching a new strategic plan for 2025 to 2030 and *Global Engagement* remains a strategic aspiration for internationalisation efforts at Violet. The dominance of this theme has been expressed through strategy documents and senior manager interviews and is seen to coalesce all areas of internationalisation efforts at Violet. Alongside this, the

recommendations discussed earlier in this chapter suggest ways to more clearly foreground the cultural, social and academic rationales within the *Global Engagement* theme. Yet at the same time concerns have been raised by senior managers regarding the potential for academic and professional staff to be disconnected from Violet's strategic aspirations or to perceive them through economic rationales alone. The challenges faced at Violet in this regard can be assumed to be similar at UK universities more generally given the significant size of, and complexity of activities undertaken, within many contemporary universities. Alongside this, senior managers have identified problems and challenges both in relation to internationalisation strategy and practice, many of which are beyond the scope of this research study. This research study therefore calls for continued research to inform practice at Violet University to address those challenges, both particular to Violet but which sector strategy document analysis suggests are present in many UK universities. Such research will inform and enhance internationalisation or '*internationality*' practice within the strategy-practice framework developed in section one, whilst also offering research informed reflection opportunities to enhance future strategy development at Violet University.

Given the paucity of research focussing on the relationship between strategy and practice in a UK university setting (the few studies previously undertaken prior to this one have been highlighted in the literature review in chapter two) it is suggested that this should form a key focus for future research endeavours.

And finally, I return to what was the original proposed study for this EdD, a consideration of the benefits of study abroad for law students to assess whether their employability prospects, through internationalisation abroad, have been enhanced. Reflecting on the data gathered for this study suggests a new perspective for this study as originally conceived. Research which focuses on enhanced employability through '*internationalisation at home*' is suggested as being even more important in the post-Covid era when fewer students are able, or seemingly willing, to study abroad during their studies. Fresh insights through reflexive thematic analysis and other qualitative research methodologies are suggested as offering potential research insights in this and other areas of internationalisation strategy and practice in the future.

## **7.5 Conclusion**

This study has shown that internationalisation is a strategic priority for UK universities. That strategic imperative is influenced by a complex policy landscape in the UK wherein the massification of higher education is prioritised, but funding for domestic students is insufficient to maintain institutional economic sustainability. Over time, Violet and other universities have sought to diversify income streams, with the only financially viable option seen as recruitment

of international students, and the development of *Academic Collaboration* partnerships for commercial returns. What this study has shown, through analysis of international strategy documents and senior manager interviews, is that *Market-Driven Growth* and *Academic Collaboration* are prioritised through strategy KPIs to manage financial risk arising from the complex, and increasingly uncertain, policy landscape informing higher education in the UK. And yet, whilst economic rationales are clearly important influences for internationalisation at Violet and other universities, this study has shown that strategic aspirations are far broader than the maintenance of financial sustainability alone. Internationalisation is enacted strategically in multiple ways which promote positive ideals, especially through the construct of *Global Engagement*. Violet University signals a strong strategic commitment to *Global Engagement*, realised through development of the *Global Citizen* with a focus on skills and competences that equip students to operate in complex and increasingly global workplaces. Exposure to critical perspectives, through the curriculum suggest ways to develop cultural understanding and respect in promotion of *Cultural Exchange*. 'Internationalisation at home' is as much a strategic priority at Violet as internationalisation abroad, reflecting the broad constitutive representation of students from diverse backgrounds at Violet University.

My research also points to complexity in how strategic aspirations for internationalisation are realised through practice at Violet University. The themes that shape and influence institutional strategy have no distinct beginning and end, rather they intersect, merge, and re-form in complex ways, over time. Inevitably, this creates tension in the translation of strategy into practice, and the dominance of *Brand Positioning* particularly inhibits the surfacing of problems and challenges through strategy. At the same time, identification of problems and challenges in the realisation of internationalisation objectives by senior managers demonstrates a nuanced and informed understanding of contested issues, opening a space for those issues to be addressed through practice. This study identifies ways in which contested issues of internationalisation can be raised, discussed and addressed. As an original contribution to practice, reframed consideration of practice through the construct of 'internationality' is proposed, alongside the framework of the circular strategy-practice bridge. Through this study, the reconnection of strategy and practice signal optimism in the realisation of strategic aspirations for *Global Engagement* and internationalisation at Violet and other UK universities in the future.



## References

- Akdag, E.G. and Swanson, D.M. (2018) 'Ethics, power, internationalisation and the postcolonial: A Foucauldian discourse analysis of policy documents in two Scottish universities', *European Journal of Higher Education*, 8(1), pp. 67–82.
- Altbach, P. (2002) Knowledge and Education as International Commodities: The Collapse of the Common Good *International Higher Education* 27 pp. 1-4
- Ansoff, H.I. (1980) 'Strategic issue management', *Strategic Management Journal*, 1(2), pp. 131–148.
- Apperson, G (2015) How University Websites Portray Study Abroad, *Elon Journal of Undergraduate Research in Communications* 6(2) available at <http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/a?id=1357>
- Barney, J (1991) Firm Resources and Sustained Competitive Advantage. *Journal of Management*, 17 (1) pp. 99-120
- Barry, D. and Elmes, M. (1997) 'Strategy Retold: Toward a Narrative View of Strategic Discourse', *The Academy of Management Review*, 22(2), pp. 429–452.
- Bartell, M. (2003) 'Internationalization of universities: A university culture-based framework' *Higher Education* 45: 43-70
- Bathmaker, A. M. (2003) The expansion of Higher Education: A consideration of control, funding and quality' in Bartlett, S. and Burton, D. (eds) *Education Studies. Essential Issues*, London: Sage, pp.123-143
- Becher, T. and Trowler, P.R. (2001) *Academic Tribes and Territories*, Buckingham: Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University Press 2<sup>nd</sup> Edn.
- Blass E.V. (2008) From international to Global: A future model for the development of Higher Education; SRHE conference paper
- Bligh, M. C., & Robinson, J. L. (2010). Was Gandhi "charismatic"? Exploring the rhetorical leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 21(5), pp. 844-855.
- Bloor, M., & Bloor, T. (2007). *The Practice of Critical Discourse Analysis: an Introduction* London, Routledge.
- Bone. D. (2008) *Internationalisation of Higher Education: A ten year view; Report to DIUS*
- Boulden, K. (2022) 'Black Student Experiences with Study Abroad Marketing and Recruitment', *Frontiers* 34(2), pp. 205–234.
- Bourner, T., Bowden, T. & Laing, S. (2001) Professional Doctorates in England, *Studies in Higher Education*, 26(1), 65-83
- Bradley, A. and Quigley, M. (2023) 'Governments harnessing the power of data to get 'value for money': a simulation study of England's Office for Students B3 Proceed Metric', *Studies in Higher Education*, 48(8), pp. 1289–1302.

Brady (2006) Internationalisation begins at home; Conference paper at Going Global II conference, London

Braun, V., Clarke, V.(2006) Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qual. Res. Psychol.* 3(2), 77–101 (2006). <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp0630a>

Braun, V., Clarke, V.(2022) *Thematic Analysis A Practical Guide*, London. SAGE Publications Ltd.

Brown, R. (2007) Global horizons for UK Universities; Executive summary; *CIHE*

Brown, R. (2011) The March of the Market in Molesworth, M. In Scullion, R & Nixon, E (Eds) *The Marketisation of Higher Education and the Student as Consumer* Chap 2pp11-24. London. Routledge

Brown, R. and Carasso, H. (2013) *Everything for sale? The Marketisation of UK Higher Education*. London. Routledge

Budd, R., Thorpe, R. & Donohew, L. (1967) *Content Analysis of Communications*. New York: Macmillan

Capps, K. (2016) *This Circular Bridge Actually Has a Point*. Bloomberg article. Available at <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-01-21/a-roundabout-bridge-designed-by-rafael-vi-oly-architects> (Accessed 25 January 2025)

Cebolla-Boado, H., Hu, Y. and Soysal, Y. N. (2017) 'Why study abroad? Sorting of Chinese students across British universities', *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 39(3), pp. 365–380. doi: 10.1080/01425692.2017.1349649.

Centre for Higher Education Research and Information (CHERI) (2008) '*Counting what is measured or measuring what counts?*' *League Tables and Their Impact On Higher Education Institutions in England*. Report to Higher Education Funding Council. Available at [https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/id/eprint/11536/1/08\\_14.pdf](https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/id/eprint/11536/1/08_14.pdf) (Accessed 30 January 2025)

Cheung, P.P.T. (2006) 'Filleting the Transnational Education Steak', *Quality in Higher Education*, 12(3), pp. 283–285.

Chia, R. (2000) 'Discourse Analysis Organizational Analysis', *Organization*, 7(3), pp. 513–518.

Clark, B. R. (1998) *Creating Entrepreneurial Universities: Organizational Pathways*, Oxford, Elsevier Science

Clegg, S and Smith, K (2010) Learning, teaching and assessment strategies in higher education: contradictions of genre and desiring, *Research Papers in Education*, 25:1 115-132

Clifford, V. and Montgomery, C. (2011) Ch 1 Introduction: internationalizing the curriculum for global citizenship in higher education. In V.Clifford and C.Montgomery (eds.) *Moving Towards Internationalisation of the Curriculum for Global Citizenship in Higher Education*. Oxford, UK: OCSLD, Oxford Brookes University

- Clifford, V. and Montgomery, C. (2017) 'Designing an internationalised curriculum for higher education: embracing the local and the global citizen', *Higher Education Research & Development*, 36(6), pp. 1138–1151.
- Cooren, F. (2004) 'Textual Agency: How Texts Do Things in Organizational Settings', *Organization* 11(3), pp. 373–393.
- Currie, J., DeAngelis, R., Boer, H., Huisman J. and Lacott, C (2003) *Globalising Practices and University Responses: European and Anglo-American differences* Westport, CT: Praeger
- Curtis, S. (2012) 'Implementing internationalisation', *Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education*, 17(2), pp. 42–47.
- Dale, R. (2009) 'Editorial', *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 7(3), pp. 233–235.
- Dearing Report (1997) *Higher Education in the Learning Society*. Available at <https://education-uk.org/documents/dearing1997/dearing1997.html> (Accessed 25 January 2025)
- De Lyser, D. (2001) 'Do You Really Live Here?' Thoughts on Insider Research. *Geographical Review* 91, pp441-453.
- Denzin, N. K. (1989). *The Research Act* (3rd ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: *Prentice Hall*
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (2005). *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications Ltd.
- De Vita, G., & Case, P. (2003). Rethinking the Internationalisation Agenda in UK Higher Education. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 27, 383-398.
- De Wit, H. (1998) Rationales For Internationalisation of Higher Education; *Millenium*, 11
- De Wit, H. (2002) *Internationalization of higher education in the United States of America and Europe: a historical, comparative, and conceptual analysis*. London; Westport, Conn; Greenwood Press.
- De Wit, H. (2024). 'Everything That Quacks is Internationalization' - Critical Reflections on the Evolution of Higher Education Internationalization. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 28(1), 3-14.
- Downe-Wambolt, B. (1992) Content Analysis: Method, Applications and Issues. *Health Care for Women International*, 13, 313-321
- Eisner, E. (1985). Aesthetic Modes of Knowing. In E. Eisner (Ed.), *84th Yearbook of NSEE: Learning and Teaching the Ways of Knowing*. Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press.
- Enders.J. (2004) Higher Education, internationalisation and the nation-state: education to developing and transitional economies. *Higher Education*, 47, 361-382
- European Parliament: Directorate General for Internal Policies. Policy Department. Structural and Cohesion Policies B. Culture and Education Report. Internationalisation of Higher Education. Brussels (2015) 1-326

- Ezzamel, M. & Willmott, H. (2008) Strategy as Discourse in a Global Retailer: A Supplement to Rationalist and Interpretive Accounts *Organization Studies* 29(02): 191–217
- Fairclough, N. (1989). *Language and Power*. London. Longman.
- Fairclough, N. (1992). Discourse and Text: Linguistic and Intertextual Analysis within Discourse Analysis. *Discourse and Society*, 3, 193-217.
- Fairclough, N. (1992b). Discourse and social change. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Fairclough, N. (1993) Critical discourse analysis and the marketisation of public discourse: The Universities; *Discourse and Society*, 4(2), 133-168
- Fairclough, N. (1995a) *Critical Discourse Analysis: The critical study of language*. London and New York: Longman.
- Fairclough, N. (1999) 'Global Capitalism and Critical Awareness of Language', *Language Awareness*, 8(2), pp. 71–83.
- Fairclough, N. (2001). *Language and Power* (2nd ed.). London: Longman.
- Fielden, J., Woodfield, R. and Middlehurst, S. (2007) *Global Horizons for UK Students: A report on student mobility* ; Council for Industry and Higher Education
- Finlay, L. (2002) 'Negotiating the swamp: the opportunity and challenge of reflexivity in research practice' *Qualitative Research* 2(2), pp. 209-230
- Finlay, L. (2021). What makes constitutes a good Thematic Analysis? *European Journal for Qualitative Research in Psychotherapy*, 11, 103-116.
- Foucault, M. (1972) *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, (A. M. Sheridan-Smith trans). London: Tavistock
- Gaitán-Aguilar, L, Hofhuis, J & Jansz, J 2024, 'A review of research on global citizenship in higher education: Towards a holistic approach', *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*. 102, 102050
- Giddens, A. (1984). *The Constitution of Society*. University of California Press, Berkeley
- Giddens, A. (1991) *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, Stanford University Press.
- Habermas, J. (2004) *Theory and Practice*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Hacking, I (1986) 'Making up people. In T.C.Heller, M.Sosna and D Wellbery (Eds), *Reconstructing individualism: Autonomy, Individuality and the self in Western thought* (pp 222-236), Stanford C.A. Stanford University Press
- Hanseth, O., Aanestad, M. and Berg, M. (2004) Guest editors' introduction: Actor-network theory and information systems. What's so special?, *Information Technology & People* 17(2), pp. 116–123.

Hardy, C., Palmer, I. and Phillips, N. (2000) Discourse as a strategic resource, *Human relations (New York)*, 53(9), pp. 1227–1248.

Hazelkorn, E. (2015) *Rankings and the Reshaping of Higher Education*. London. Palgrave Macmillan

Hazlitt, W. (1822) *'On Going On A Journey'* 1951 Ed by New York: The Marchbanks Press

Heleta, S. (2023) 'Critical Review of the Policy Framework for Internationalisation of Higher Education in South Africa', *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 27(5), pp. 817–833.

Higher Education Policy Institute (2023): *The benefits and costs of International Higher Education Students to the UK Economy*. Available at <https://www.hepi.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Full-Report-Benefits-and-costs-of-international-students.pdf> (Accessed: 25 January 2025)

Higher Education Statistics Authority website. Available at <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/publications/students-1994-95> (Accessed:25 January 2025)

Higher Education Statistics Authority website. Available at <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/news/19-01-2023/higher-education-student-statistics-uk-202122-released> (Accessed:25 January 2025)

House of Commons Library (2024) *Research Briefing. International students in UK Higher Education*. Available at <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-7976/CBP-7976.pdf>. (Accessed 25 January 2025)

Hsieh H-F, Shannon SE. (2005) Three Approaches to Qualitative Content Analysis *Qualitative Health Research*. 15(9):1277-1288.

Jiang, X. (2008) 'Towards the internationalisation of higher education from a critical perspective', *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 32(4), pp. 347–358.

Jørgensen, M. and Phillips, L.J. (2002) *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*. SAGE Publications Ltd., London, 1-23. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781849208871>

Kalafatis, S.P., Ledden, L., Riley, D. and Singh, J. (2016) 'The added value of brand alliances in higher education', *Journal of Business Research*, 69(8), pp. 3122–3132.

Kidder, L. & Fine, M. Qualitative and quantitative methods: When stories converge. New Directions for Program Evaluation: Volume 1987, Issue 35

Knight J. and Lee J. (2022) *International Joint, Double and Consecutive Degree Programs The Handbook of International Higher Education* Stylus Publishing LLC

Kehm, B. and Teichler, U. (2007) Research on internationalisation in Higher Education; *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 260-273

Knight, J. (1994). *Internationalization: Elements and Checkpoints*. CBIE Research No. 7. Canadian Bureau for International Education. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED549823.pdf>.

Knight, J (1999) *A time of turbulence and transformation for internationalization* (Research monograph no14); Canadian Bureau for International Education

Knight, J. (2004a) 'Internationalization Remodelled: Definition, Approaches, and Rationales.' *Journal of Studies in International Education* 8 (1): 5–31.

Knight, J. 2004b. "New Rationales Driving Internationalisation." *International Higher Education* 34: 3–5.

Knight, J. (2011) 'Education Hubs: A Fad, a Brand, an Innovation?', *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 15(3), pp. 221–240.

Knight, J., and H. de Wit. (1995). "Strategies for Internationalisation of Higher Education: Historical and Conceptual Perspectives." In H. de Wit (Ed) *Strategies for Internationalisation of Higher Education: A Comparative Study of Australia, Canada, Europe and the United States of America*, pp. 5–32. Amsterdam: European Association for International Education.

Knight J., de Wit H. (Eds.). (1997). *Internationalisation of Higher Education in Asia Pacific countries*. European Association for International Education in cooperation with IMHE/OECD and IDP-Education Australia.

Knight, J. and Lee, J. (2022;2023;) 'International Joint, Double, and Consecutive Degree Programs: New Developments, Issues, and Challenges', in D.K. Deardorff, H. de Wit, B. Leask, and H. Charles (eds). *The Handbook of International Higher Education*, pp. 415–428. London, Routledge

Koutsantani,D (2005) Leadership Foundation International Summit, Background Paper

Kraska, M; Bourn, D; Blum, N; (2018) From internationalization to global citizenship: Dialogues in international higher education. In: Davies, J and Pachler, N, (eds.) *Teaching and Learning in Higher Education: Perspectives from UCL*. (pp. 85-98). UCL IoE Press: London, UK

Kress, G.R. (1997;2005;) *Before Writing: Rethinking the paths to literacy*. 1st edn. London; New York; Routledge.

Krippendorff, K. (2019). *Content Analysis*. SAGE Publications, Inc.,

Kuh, G.D. (2009) 'The national survey of student engagement: Conceptual and empirical foundations', *New Directions for Institutional Research*, (141), pp. 5–20.

Latour, B. (2014) 'Agency at the Time of the Anthropocene', *New Literary History*, 45(1), pp. 1–18.

Law, J. and Hassard, J. (1999) *Actor Network Theory and After*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Leask, B. (1999) 'Internationalisation of the Curriculum: Key Challenges and strategies', IDP, *Australia Education Conference*

Leask, B. (2020). Internationalization of the Curriculum, Teaching and Learning. In: Teixeira, P.N., Shin, J.C. (eds) *The International Encyclopaedia of Higher Education Systems and Institutions*. Springer, Dordrecht

- Lee, J. (2023) Romanticizing decolonization and Asian epistemology: reflections on identity and space *Asia Pacific Education Review* 24:187–197
- Lee, J. and Naidoo, R. (2020) Complicit Reproductions in the Global South: Courting World Class Universities and Global Rankings, in Rider, S, Peters, M, Hyvönen, M, Besley, T (EDs) (2020) *World Class Universities: A Contested Concept*, Springer Singapore pp. 77-91
- Lee, K. and Bligh, B. (2019) 'Four narratives about online international students: a critical literature review', *Distance Education*, 40(2), pp. 153–169.
- Le Grand, J. & Bartlett, W. (eds.), *Quasi-markets and Social Policy* London: Macmillan, 1993
- Leitch, S. and Palmer, I. (2010) 'Analysing Texts in Context: Current Practices and New Protocols for Critical Discourse Analysis in Organization Studies', *Journal of Management Studies*, 47(6), pp. 1194–1212.
- Leonard, W.P. and Huang, C.-H. (2014) 'Linking Classroom Performance to the Institutional Mission Statement', *SAGE Open*, 4(1).
- Leslie, L.L. and Slaughter, S.A. (1997) 'The development and current status of market mechanisms in United States postsecondary education', *Higher Education Policy*, 10(3), pp. 239–252.
- Lewis V. (2007) 'Integrated internationalism' in UK higher education: interpretations, manifestations and recommendations. DBA Thesis. Available at <https://researchportal.bath.ac.uk/en/studentTheses/integrated-internationalism-in-uk-highereducation-interpretations> (Accessed 25 January 2025)
- Lewis, V. (2021) *UK Universities' Global Engagement Strategies: Time For a Rethink?* Available at <https://www.vickylewisconsulting.co.uk/global-strategies-report.php> (Accessed 25 January 2025)
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Lincoln and Guba (1986) '*But is it Rigorous? Trustworthiness and authenticity in naturalistic evaluation*', Jossey-Bass
- Lindkvist, K. (1981). Approaches to textual analysis. *Advances in Content Analysis*, 9, 23-42
- Lomer, S. (2014). Economic Objects: How Policy Discourse in the United Kingdom Represents International Students. *Policy Futures in Education*, 12(2), 273-285
- Lomer, S., Mittelmeier, J. and Courtney, S. (2023) 'Typologising internationalisation in UK university strategies: reputation, mission and attitude', *Higher Education Research and Development*, 42(5), pp. 1042–1056.
- London Economics (2023) The benefits and costs of international higher education students to the UK economy: Analysis for the 2021-22 cohort – May 2023. Available at <https://londoneconomics.co.uk/blog/publication/the-benefits-and-costs-of-international-higher-education-students-to-the-uk-economy-analysis-for-the-2021-22-cohort-may-2023/> (Accessed 29 January 2025)



Marginson, S. (2012) 'The impossibility of capitalist markets in higher education', *Journal of Education Policy*, 28(3), pp. 353–370. doi: 10.1080/02680939.2012.747109.

Marginson, S. (2023) 'Limitations of the leading definition of "internationalisation" of higher education: is the idea wrong or is the fault in reality?', *Globalisation, societies and education*, pp. 1–20.

Mezirow, J. (2003). Transformative Learning as Discourse. *Journal of Transformative Education*, 1(1), 58-63.

Migration Observatory (2024), University of Oxford Number and Share of International Students in UK Higher Education between 1994/5 and 2021/22. Non-UK domiciled students. <https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/briefings/student-migration-to-the-uk/> (accessed 25 January 2025)

Miles, A. (2014). "Interactive Documentary and Affective Ecologies." In *New Documentary Ecologies Emerging Platforms, Practices and Discourses*, edited by K. Nash, C. Hight, and C. Summerhayes, 67–82. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative Data Analysis: An expanded sourcebook* (2nd ed.). Sage Publications, Inc.

Mintzberg, H. (1990) 'The design school: Reconsidering the basic premises of strategic management', *Strategic Management Journal*, 11(3), pp. 171–195.

Mintzberg, H. and Waters, J.A. (1985) 'Of strategies, deliberate and emergent', *Strategic Management Journal*, 6(3), pp. 257–272.

Montgomery, C., & Trahar, S. (2023). Learning to unlearn: exploring the relationship between internationalisation and decolonial agendas in higher education. *Higher Education Research and Development*, 42(5), 1057–1070.

Morgan, G. (1986) *Images of Organization*. SAGE

Naidoo, R, Shankar, A & Veer, E. (2011), 'The consumerist turn in higher education: policy aspirations and outcomes', *Journal of Marketing Management*, 27(11-12), pp. 1142-1162

Neuendorf, Kimberly A. (2002). *The Content Analysis Guidebook*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Nussbaum, M. (2002). Education for Citizenship in an Era of Global Connection. *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, 21, 289-303.

Office for Students (2022). Office for Students website. Available at <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/for-providers/quality-and-standards/changes-to-our-approach/> (Accessed 25 January 2025)

Oleksiyenko, A.V. and Shchepetylnykova, I. (2023) International students and Ukrainian universities: dilemmas of agency and change, *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, 32(2), pp. 531–558.

Onwuegbuzie, A. J., & Collins, K. M. T. (2007). A typology of mixed methods sampling designs in social science research. *The Qualitative Report*, 12, 281-316



Oxfam Development Education Program. (2006). *Education for Global Citizenship: a guide for Schools*, Oxford, Oxfam.

Patton, M.Q. (2014) *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods* London, Sage Publishing

Peters, M. E. (Ed) (2009) *Governmentality Studies in Education*, Rotterdam, Sense Publishers.

Pettigrew, A (1987) Context and Action in the Transformation of The Firm. *Journal of Management Studies*, 24(6) pp649-670

Pilgrim D. (2014). *Understanding mental health: A critical realist exploration*. London, UK: Routledge.

Pitman, G. E. (2002). Outsider/insider: The politics of shifting identities in the research process. *Feminism and Psychology*, 12, 282-288.

Porter, M. E (1980) *Competitive Strategy: Techniques for Analyzing Industries and Competitors*. New York: Free Press, 1980.

Posner, P. (2009) The Pracademic: An Agenda for Re-Engaging Practitioners and Academics *Public Budgeting & Finance* 29(1) pp 12-26

Presidential Policy Directive on International Education (2000) *Memorandum on International Education Policy*, available at <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/memorandum-international-education-policy#:~:text=April%2019%2C%202000,educate%20future%20leaders%20from%20abroad.>

Qiang, Z. (2003) 'Internationalisation of Higher Education: towards a conceptual framework' *Policy Futures in Education*, 1(2), pp. 248-270.

Robson, S. and Wihlborg, M. (2019) 'Internationalisation of higher education: Impacts, challenges and future possibilities', *European Educational Research Journal*, 18(2), pp. 127–134.

Robinson, J.E & Norris, N.F.J (2001) Generalisation: the linchpin of evidence-based practice?, *Educational Action Research*, 9:2, 303-310

Rouillard, C. and Giroux, D (2005) 'Public Administration and the managerial fervour for values and ethics: of collective confusion in control societies', *Administrative Theory and Praxis* 27(2): 330-57

Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. S. (2012). *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of hearing data* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA:

de Sousa Santos, B. (2006), Globalisations, *Theory, Culture & Society*, 23(2-3), 393-399.

Sassen, S. (2006) *Territory, Authority, Rights: From medieval to global assemblages,update edition*. Princeton University Press.

Sastry.T. and Bekhradnia.B. (2007) *The Academic Experience of Students in English Universities*, Higher Education Policy Institute Report, available at

<https://www.hepi.ac.uk/reports/the-academic-experience-of-students-in-english-universities-2007-report/>

Sauntson, H. and Morrish, L. (2011;2010;) Vision, values and international excellence: The “products” that university mission statements sell to students, in M. Molesworth, R. Scullion, and E. Nixon (eds). *The Marketisation of Higher Education and the Student as Consumer*, pp. 87–99. London Routledge

Savin-Baden, M. (2004) ‘Achieving reflexivity: moving researchers from analysis to interpretation in collaborative inquiry’ *Journal of Social Work Practice* 18(3), pp. 365-378

Scott, P. (ed) (1998) *Massification, Internationalisation and Globalisation*. Buckingham, OUP

Schendel, D. E, and Hofer, C.W. (1979) *Strategic Management: A new view of business policy and planning*. Boston, MA: Little Brown

Schoorman D. (2000). How Is internationalization implemented? A framework for organizational practice. *Contemporary Education*, 71(4), pp. 5-7.

Schutz, A. (1967) *The phenomenology of the social world* Northwestern University Press

Scriven, M (1972) *Objectivity and Subjectivity in Educational Research* University of Chicago Press

Sherman, R.R and Rodman B. Webb (1988) , *Qualitative Research in Education*, edited by ProQuest

Shrivastava, P. (1986). Is Strategic Management Ideological? *Journal of Management*, 12(3), pp. 363-377.

Siltaoja, M., Juusola, K. and Kivijärvi, M. (2019) ““World-class” fantasies: A neocolonial analysis of international branch campuses’, *Organization*, 26(1), pp. 75–97.

Simons, H , Kushner, S.J, Jones, K and James, D (2003) From evidence-based practice to practice-based evidence: the idea of situated generalisation. *Research Papers in Education*, 18(4), pp. 347-364

Sims-Schouten, W., Riley, S.C.E. and Willig, C. (2007) ‘Critical Realism in Discourse Analysis: A Presentation of a Systematic Method of Analysis Using Women’s Talk of Motherhood, Childcare and Female Employment as an Example’, *Theory & psychology*, 17(1), pp. 101–124.

Smith, K. (2020) *Engaging in Transnational Education*. St Albans: Critical Publishing.

Soderqvist (2002) *Internationalisation and its management at higher education institutions: Applying conceptual, content and discourse analysis*. Helsinki. Helsinki School of Economics

Soliman, S., Anchor, J. and Taylor, D. (2019) The international strategies of universities: deliberate or emergent?, *Studies in Higher Education* 44(8), pp. 1413–1424.

Stein, S. (2017) ‘Internationalization for an uncertain future: tensions, paradoxes, and possibilities’, *Review of Higher Education*, 41(1), pp. 3–32.

Stein, S. (2021). Critical Internationalisation Studies at an Impasse: Making space for complexity, uncertainty, and complicity in a time of global challenges. *Studies in Higher Education*, 46(9): 1771–1784

Stephenson, J, Malloch, M, Cairns, L (2006). Managing their own programme: A case study of the first graduates of a new kind of doctorate in professional practice; *Studies in Continuing Education* 28(1) pp. 17-32

Taylor, C & White, S (2000) *Practising Reflexivity In Health And Welfare: Making knowledge* Buckingham, Open University Press.

Teferra D. (2019, 23 August). *Defining Internationalisation – Intention versus coercion*. University World News. Available at <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20190821145329703> (Accessed 25 January 2025)

Teichler, U. (2004). The Changing Debate on Internationalisation of Higher Education. *Higher Education* 48: 5–26.

Teichler, U. (2005) Research on higher education in Europe; *European Journal of Education*, 40(4), 447-469

Teichler. U. (2008) International students and mobility: reconsidering the challenges of higher education; *Globalized learning and earning conference*, London, UK

Teichler, U. (2008) Diversification? Trends and explanations of the shape and size of higher education *Higher Education* 56, Springer

Tight, M. (2022) 'Internationalisation of higher education beyond the West: challenges and opportunities - the research evidence', *Educational Research and Evaluation*, 27(3-4), pp. 239–259.

Tolkien, J.R.R (1937) *The Hobbit, or There And Back Again*. New Edition (17 Sept. 2007), HarperCollins;

Tuhiwai, S (2012) *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, 2nd Edition London and New York: Zed Books

Turner, Yvonne, and Sue Robson (2008) . *Internationalizing the University*, Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

Twombly, S.B., Klute, P., Salisbury, M.H. and Tumanut, S.D. (2012) *Study Abroad in a New Global Century: Renewing the Promise, Refining the Purpose*, ASHE Higher Education Report. 1. Aufl.;1; 38(4).pp 1-152

Universities UK (2023) Higher Education in Facts and Figures. Available at <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/what-we-do/policy-and-research/publications/features/higher-education-facts-and-figures-2023> (Accessed 25 January 2025)

Vaara, E. and Laine, P.-M. (2007) *A critical discourse analysis perspective on strategy*. In J. Todoli, M. Labarta and R. Dolon (eds.). *Critical Discourse Analysis. L'analisi Critica del Discurs. Quaderns de Filologia. Estudis Linguistics (Universitat de València)*, 301-315.

Vaara, E., Sorsa, V. and Pälli, P. (2010). On the force potential of strategy texts: a critical discourse analysis of a strategic plan and its power effects in a city organization, *Organization* 17(6), pp. 685–702.

Van Damme, D. (2001) 'Quality issues in the internationalisation of higher education', *Higher Education*, 41(4), pp. 415–441.

Van der Wende, M (1999) An innovation perspective on internationalisation of Higher Education; *Journal of Studies in International Education* 3(1), 3-14

Van der Wende, M. (1997). Missing Links: The relationship between national policies for internationalisation and those for higher education in general. In T.Kalvermark & M. Van der Wende (eds.). *National Policies for the Internationalisation of Higher Education in Europe* (pp. 10-31). Stockholm: Hogskoleverket Studies, National Agency for Higher Education

Van Der Wende, M. (1999). An Innovation Perspective on Internationalation of Higher Education Institutionalisation: The Critical Phase. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 3(1), 3-14

Van der Wende, M. (2001). Internationalisation Policies: About new Trends and Contrasting Paradigms. *Higher Education Policy* 14, 249–259.

Van Dijk, T.A. (1998) *Ideology*. London: Sage.

Van Dijk, T. A. (2001). Critical discourse analysis. In D. Tannen, D. Schiffrin, & H. Hamilton (Eds.), *Handbook of Discourse Analysis* pp. 352-371. Oxford: Blackwell.

Vickers. P and Bekhradnia.B (2008) The economic costs and benefits of international students, *Higher Education Policy Institute Report*, available at <https://www.hepi.ac.uk/reports/the-economic-costs-and-benefits-of-international-students/>

Weber, R. P. (1990). *Basic Content Analysis*, second edition. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Wetherell, M. (1998). Positioning and interpretative repertoires: Conversation analysis and post-structuralism in dialogue. *Discourse and Society*, 9(3) pp. 387–412.

Wu, A., Leask, B., Noel, G. and Wit, H. de (2021) 'It Is Time for the Internationalization of Medical Education to Be at Home and Accessible for All', *Academic Medicine*, 96(9), pp. e22–e22.

Xu W and Zammit K, 'Applying Thematic Analysis to Education: A Hybrid Approach to Interpreting Data in Practitioner Research' (2020) 19 *International journal of qualitative methods*

Yang, R. (2004) Openness and reform as dynamics for development: A case study of internationalisation at South China University of Technology; *Higher Education*, 46(4) 473-500

Zewolde, S. (2021) *Working paper Racism and othering in international higher education: experiences of black Africans in England*: Centre for Global Higher Education, University of Oxford