

What International Students Say Matters:

A Critical Ethnography of Internationalisation of Higher Education in

Aotearoa/New Zealand

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Abstract

Despite playing an integral role in the internationalisation of higher education, research on the experiences and perspectives of international students within higher education in countries like Aotearoa/New Zealand remains limited. Much of the research to date looks only at specific subgroups of international students or explores such experiences through the lens of adjustment, acculturation, integration, adaptation or assimilation. This thesis sets out to present a different outlook by taking into account the agency of international students. It puts forth an argument that the consumerist frameworks usually depict international students as fragile human beings whose cultural and academic backgrounds are deficient in some way and who must conform to the Western way of life in order to succeed in their academic endeavours. It argues instead to see international students as agentic because it may make higher education more inclusive by treating international students as partners rather than mere consumers. Interviews were conducted with thirteen international students from a variety of national and cultural backgrounds, disciplines and levels of study at a large comprehensive university in Aotearoa/New Zealand to explore their experiences. Critical ethnography was utilised as the main framework for this research because it could reveal the systemic power relations at work, and it was supplemented with auto-ethnographical reflection on the researcher's journey as an international student to add a level of detail not usually provided in studies of the international student experience in Aotearoa/New Zealand. This study found instances of communication apprehension and stereotyping in intercultural communication. It also reveals that support systems for international students may be inadequate under the neoliberal system of higher education that seeks maximum economic profitability as its main agenda. The thesis ultimately argues that the agency of international students should be integrated into the provision of higher education for them so that their voice is not only heard but also acknowledged and acted upon.

Dedication

To the Idea of a Fair and Inclusive Higher Education System

Acknowledgements

Completing a PhD programme appears to be an arduous task for every doctoral candidate. It requires a great deal of patience, passion, persistence, reflexivity and resilience. Yet, the journey to complete my doctoral studies has been the one to be exceptionally enduring. When I embraced the challenge to embark on this project in a foreign country, I could not have imagined that one day I would need to issue judicial review proceedings in the High Court of New Zealand against the University of Auckland, where I have studied, to protect my dissertation. Similarly, I could not have expected to replace my original supervisors, at the very final stages of thesis writing, with other expert academics who could effectively help me uplift my thesis to meet the established academic standards.

Things turned out to be different than what I had initially imagined, but so did my plans, ambitions, strategies, visions and perspectives. This completed thesis is the outcome of determined human agency through collaborative teamwork. Accordingly, I should express my gratitude to many outstanding human beings who have supported me to provide the narratives of tertiary international students in Aotearoa/New Zealand through this study.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Internationalisation for me is very financially-driven and as we all know in New Zealand, the international education is a 5-billion-dollar industry; it is super annoying to me because they see international students as just money, and then, I know from all the initiatives that the government is trying to do and the things that I am part of, they try to change that narrative that international students are not just money...but it is just stories that people want to create and that is what people are trying to use for advertising which is super, super annoying to me because when I see the advertisements, I can see how different it is in reality when you come to New Zealand. (Siti, a participant of this study)

In this thesis, I set out to explore the experiences of international students within the context of internationalisation of higher education in Aotearoa/New Zealand. I argue that intercultural communication may have not yet reached its full potential to bridge the gap between international and local students and their wider community. I also maintain that neoliberalism has important ramifications for higher education institutions, which may ultimately impact international students' experiences negatively. However, international students show significant agency to manage their studies abroad while they may bring further changes to their lives and surrounding environments, based on their goals, values, and visions.

Acknowledging that internationalisation, neoliberalism, intercultural communication and agency are contested and debated terms in the literature, I begin to unpack these concepts in this chapter but explore them more fully in subsequent chapters as outlined in Section 1.6. In this first chapter, I provide an overview of this study, state the researcher's positionality and its impact on every aspect of the research process, address motivations and rationales, provide aims and research questions, and discuss the significance of the study. Finally, I present an outline of the remaining chapters at the end of this chapter. I now begin by giving a brief context, introducing some factual notes and discussing key concepts.

1.1. The Context for this Study

The international higher education market is burgeoning. The internationalisation of higher education, in particular, is a prevalent term in higher education institutions' policies and/or strategic plans worldwide (Marinoni, 2019). According to data published by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2014), the number of international students globally has grown from two million students in 2000 to approximately 4.5 million students in 2012. In that report, international students were defined as students who were studying abroad. The global economic contribution of international students in 2016 was more than \$300 billion US dollars (Choudaha, 2019). In Aotearoa/New Zealand, the export education industry is ranked the 4th earner in the export industries after tourism, dairy and meat, and international students pay over one billion New Zealand dollars annually in tuition fees alone (Laxon, 2016). Thus, there seems to be an ethical responsibility for higher education institutions to understand international students' experiences in order to develop the internationalisation of higher education in all its aspects, not just the commercial one. After all, the quality of the international student experience may impact the market outcomes and poor experiences may lead to negative results. It once happened in New Zealand's private sector of the export education industry in the 2000s, when the number of international students attending those schools dropped drastically from 31309 in 2001 to only 4400 in 2007 because student voices appeared to be systematically ignored (Li, 2007; Marginson & Sawir, 2011).

Numerous studies criticise viewing students as mere consumers rather than learners because such a perspective can endanger the overall quality of education (Altbach, 2012; Eagle & Brennan, 2007; Gusterson, 2017; Huang, 2018). However, the New Zealand higher education system is in thrall to neoliberal agendas (Lewis, 2005, 2011; Marginson & Sawir, 2011,

Shore, 2010; Ramia et al., 2013; Smyth, 2017). Neoliberal higher education institutions essentially view students as consumers, who are mostly regarded as part of revenue-generating schemes (Giroux, 2002; Smyth, 2017). Neoliberalism, in general, considers human beings as material objects; hence its language is devoid of humanity (Davies, 2005; Gershon, 2011). However, higher education objectives, particularly as a tool to develop skills of humanity, is in contrast with tenets of neoliberalism (Marginson, 2019; Hil, 2015; Smyth, 2017).

This study is firmly based on the idea of higher education studies as self-formation (Marginson & Sawir, 2011; Marginson, 2014, 2019). It emphasises the role of agency, and it requires change in consumerist views that see international students as children with no power to decide for their lives or academic endeavours (Marginson, 2014). The self-formation perspective views international students, similar to local students, as self-determining agents who work to augment their lives, although in relatively more difficult circumstances. Their agency is usually an outcome of necessity. They first need to survive in order to be able to thrive. Throughout this thesis, and building on work of other scholars, I will advance the argument that we must move beyond a consumerist representation of international students and see them as agentic individuals who have forged their own destinies against a number of challenges (see Marginson, 2012, 2014; Marginson, Nyland, Sawir, & Forbes-Mewett, 2010; Ramia, Marginson, & Sawir, 2013; Marginson & Sawir, 2011).

The study sheds light on the agency of international students from their own perspective. In doing so, it discusses reflexivity as the main component of any form of agency. Accordingly,

the research belongs to an emerging body of research that emphasises the agency of international students in shaping current trends in internationalisation of higher education (see Marginson, 2014; Marginson & Sawir, 2011; Marginson et al., 2010; Matthews, 2017, 2018; Ramia et al., 2013; Tran & Vu, 2018). The research specifically focuses on the power relations that have shaped the internationalisation of higher education in Aotearoa/New Zealand. It reveals who may get the most from the process of internationalisation and who may be marginalised or ignored. The study is ultimately a critical one. It aims to expose inequalities that can impact the lives of international students in Aotearoa/New Zealand. In this study, I follow Anthony Giddens (1984), who says knowledge may raise awareness of individual actors in society and may eventually cause a shift in the way they see themselves and understand their stance in their society. They may be empowered as a result to exercise their agency and to change the status quo or to reform its structures. Even in the most constraining social environments, there is a degree of freedom for actors/agents (Archer, 1995, 2000; Carspecken, 1996; Giddens, 1984). Agents will, one way or the other, move towards their goals (Archer, 2007). I believe that the agency of international students needs to be acknowledged and appreciated whenever their experiences are talked about, if a balanced viewpoint is to be established, if they are to be seen as human beings within their full potential, if they are to be seen beyond the lens of consumerism, if they are to be considered as partners of higher education, and if they are regarded as the main source of funding for the internationalisation of higher education.

1.2. Who I Am and What my Positionality Is

Let me begin by tracing my path to the topic. I first began studying for a PhD in applied linguistics in my home country, Iran. I was fascinated by the power of education and its impact on my practice as a teacher of English to speakers of other languages. Higher

education has helped me understand the intricacies of teaching and learning. And it broadened my knowledge about linguistics. But more importantly, my tertiary education studies helped me better understand who I am. The lessons I learned were not exclusive to my field of studies, but they were more about life and how to live it. I had the opportunity to socialise and see different ideas. I formed an understanding of where I stood in society. I learned about my talents and skills, and I realised how they could advance my career. Through the complexities of life during my studies, I found a better understanding of my strengths and weaknesses. And I was able to envisage my future goals in life more clearly. According to Marginson (2014), this is how self-formation works. It is the work of self on the self. Higher education, accordingly, can be seen as a catalyst for self-formation. It helps students, local or international, develop their goals, plan their futures, and realise their dreams.

Social inequalities appear to be prevalent in our fast-paced globalised world, and it is not an easy task for researchers to fight them. The situation is similarly difficult when a critical researcher tries to go against the mainstream research trends (Carspecken, 1996), even for a pioneer in international education research such as Simon Marginson:

The \$16 billion international education industry in Australia is good at market research and image management but uncomfortable when critical research findings are discussed. Researchers not owned by the industry create a strategic dilemma for it. In the process of the research we, the authors, have been alternatively abused, invited, enticed and ignored. None of this blocked the research or changed our findings. Nor did the industry assist. (Marginson, Nyland, Sawir, & Forbes-Mewett, 2010, p. xi)

I have been particularly impressed and inspired by works of Simon Marginson such that my research has been influenced by his in several ways. He emphasises the agency of international students and criticises the negligence of mainstream research about this important trait of international students. Marginson's research inspired me a lot, but my

motivation to do this study about international students had formed before getting to know his scholarship. My values are oriented towards equity and social justice for all human beings so that everyone can get an opportunity to use their potentials to enjoy their lives. I firmly believe that only under such values, sustainable peace and development is plausible in a world that is already in turmoil of political, and military, wars. Inequality and injustice can fuel social problems, I believe. My values guide my life because they can help me move towards peace, my ultimate goal. Nonetheless, I had been involved in an extremely stressful life of competitive sports before entering the world of higher education.

Before going to the University, I used to be a professional sportsperson in gymnastics, swimming and diving. I trained eight hours a day as a member of the Iranian national team in diving. Even then, I had to be both reflective and reflexive, although in a different context. I had to be reflective in looking back at my performance and reflexive about how to improve my execution in future sport competitions. There were difficult days for me because the intense amount of training meant I had to stay in my hotel room in the sports complex for long periods, so I could see my family only irregularly. Similar to studying for a PhD, diving tends to be a solitary practice. A diver needs to constantly and exclusively be reflective and reflexive about her/his performance and how to improve it the next time she/he performs. It was harder than these days because we did not have access to the technological equipment that is available today. I could only visualise what my coaches told me. Doing professional sports is concurrent with sport injuries inevitably. I did encounter a lot of serious sport injuries, for which I was hospitalised on different occasions and underwent multiple medical surgeries.

At the end of my sports career, I decided to stop competing and start coaching. However, diving is not a popular sport, and I could not make a living through coaching, so I thought through different options as to what to do next. I chose to enter the university system and commence my academic studies. I could study physical education at the best University in Iran without the need to apply for admission. I just needed to express my interest and I did not have to pay any fees until the completion of my PhD programme due to the achievements in my professional sport career. But I was not keen to study sports academically. Throughout my sport career, I noticed the importance of English language as a lingua franca to facilitate communication in international settings. I did have coaches from different nations, and we all used English to convey meanings although the language was rather simplistic. English language was also the medium of communication when I travelled internationally for competitions. I considered the English language as a powerful and prestigious instrument to help me shape my future life trajectories. Therefore, I made up my mind to study English-Persian Translation for my BA. Following my bachelor's degree, I did English Language Teaching for my MA studies. I ranked 18 amongst some 5000 candidates for the entrance exam into the PhD programme for English Language Teaching. However, my ideas about continuing my PhD studies in my home country shifted after only a semester. I decided to drop out of the University and to pursue my PhD degree in another country, where all the hardships and struggles of a PhD journey might be more rewarding. My understanding was that the quality of education was not cutting edge in my home country, and I would find an international experience of education more fruitful, so I started looking for alternative options in pursuit of knowledge abroad. I could go to European countries, such as Germany or Sweden, where I did not need to pay for tuition fees. However, I considered the language barrier to be a major issue. My preference was an English-speaking country. Aotearoa/New Zealand seemed to be the best choice, especially financially. The tuition fees for doctoral

students were kept at a domestic level, compared to the usual three-times-higher international tuition fees in other English-speaking countries like the US, the UK, Australia and Canada. Also, the length of study was shorter than that of the US or Canada, and I could not overlook New Zealand's mesmerising and beautiful natural environment, landscapes, beaches, national parks and outdoors. More importantly, the barriers to visa application and immigration seemed to be relatively fewer than those of the other English-speaking destinations. Therefore, I chose Aotearoa/New Zealand over the other options at the end.

Who I am, and the fact that I aimed to act as an advocate for international students throughout this study, can impact different aspects of this research. I do not claim to present the only version of reality about internationalisation of higher education and experiences of international students in Aotearoa/New Zealand. I am cognisant that a different researcher, perhaps a white New Zealander, might reach different conclusions if they conducted the same research. Or if a different sample of international students were to be interviewed, different results may be reported. The unique reality shall remain the same, although different researchers may reach different understandings of the same phenomenon, based on their positionality and the data at hand. In other words, what may differ amongst different researchers, looking at the same social construct, would be the various perspectives about the object of inquiry through different angles (Stutchbury, 2021). I have to say, nevertheless, that I actively aimed to include counter evidence in my study, and I had not formed a priori in mind about what evidence I would find. While every effort has been made to reduce the natural bias when I, as an international student myself, have been the researcher of the study that aims to explore experiences of international students in Aotearoa/New Zealand, it might have been inevitable for some form of bias to be still present. I acknowledge my positionality and I will discuss the researcher's positionality further in Chapter 3.

1.3. Why the Internationalisation of Higher Education? Why International Students?

I have been fascinated by international education and the sheer number of international students on campus. Obviously, I can relate to a topic about international students because I myself am one of them. For my PhD, I decided to focus on “internationalisation” in higher education by first understanding it through the literature and then from the perspectives of international students. I wanted to know more about their stories. Were they similar to mine or different? Why were the students in Aotearoa/New Zealand? Could not they study in their home country? I had a great many questions. I am a sociable person, and I have always enjoyed getting to know different people from different walks of life because it can provide me with different understandings about life and who I am. I also noted a few negative incidents at the outset of my international education in Aotearoa/New Zealand that signalled the possible mismatch of policy and practice in terms of the internationalisation of higher education. I was interested to know if what happened to me was an isolated case or typical of the experience of international students. These factors led me to want to study the internationalisation of higher education in greater depth.

1.4. Theoretical Framework and Research Questions

The main aim of this research is to explore experiences of international students in higher education system of Aotearoa/New Zealand. I also want to check whether the reality and rhetoric match with regard to the internationalisation of higher education in Aotearoa/New Zealand. I will use the model of critical ethnography, proposed by Phil Carspecken (1996) to take into account international student voices in the process of internationalisation of higher education in Aotearoa/New Zealand. This systematic method can provide a better

understanding about international students' experiences. It examines the implicit power relations that shape the status quo of internationalisation of higher education in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Power relations are important in constructing any society because all human actions are mediated through power (Carspecken, 1996); internationalisation is not an exception. Such power relations are usually disguised. The task of a critical ethnographer is to rip the mask from the face of such relations and to go beneath the surface of what is initially observed as natural in social interactions (Carspecken, 1996). Critical ethnography provides the opportunity to identify and investigate further such invisible power relations because it focusses on the evaluation of the economic, political and sociocultural context of the phenomenon under the study. Any social phenomenon can be understood within its context (Carspecken, 1996). Addressing the power relations in the context of internationalisation of higher education in Aotearoa/New Zealand will enable me to find out how international students have been affected by this process academically, culturally, economically, politically and socially. The method collects its data and analyses it through five different stages, one of which is interviewing international students. Critical ethnography will also allow me to consider my own experiences as an international student. Unlike traditional ethnography that puts the researcher into an outsider position, critical ethnography explores experiences of the researcher as an insider, whom herself/himself is affected by the object of inquiry as well. Nonetheless, critical ethnography and its epistemology are systematic, and its stages are cyclical to reduce any bias from the researcher (Carspecken, 1996).

To incorporate my voice better as the data, I also use auto-ethnography, guided mainly by the works of Carolyn Ellis (2004), a widely known auto-ethnographer. She uses a reflexive approach to research writing as storytelling, where autobiographical data is connected with a

wider social, political and cultural sphere. The study has a sample of participants among international students who reside in an Auckland student accommodation at the University.

The research seeks to find answers to the following broad questions:

1. How do international tertiary students describe their study experience in Aotearoa/New Zealand?
2. How do international tertiary students describe the power relations at work in the internationalisation of higher education in universities in Aotearoa/New Zealand?
3. How can higher education institutions in Aotearoa/New Zealand pay closer attention to international students' agency?

1.5. Significance of the Study

In this research, I aim to explore the experiences of international students in the higher education system of Aotearoa/New Zealand. I use the lens of critical ethnography to have a holistic view about such experiences. Accordingly, I consider both the role of the host country and its higher education institutions. However, I mainly focus on universities, particularly the University, which is the biggest and the best-ranked University in Aotearoa/New Zealand. As a result, the findings in this study do not focus on private training establishments, polytechnics and language schools, which are also part of the higher education system in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The study may have the potential to influence and inform policies and practices in higher education not only in Aotearoa/New Zealand but in other contexts around the world, especially due to its emphasis on the agency of international students.

1.6. Thesis Outline

This thesis is divided into seven chapters, beginning with this chapter, the introduction, which has provided a brief overview on the context and my ambitions for this study, as well as the questions it sets out to explore.

In the next chapter, I will explore the internationalisation of higher education in more detail. I start with an argument about the meaning of the term and the confusion in the literature to find a standard definition. Nevertheless, I choose a working definition for the term, so there is clarity as to what is being discussed. Then I continue with rationales and strategies adopted by higher education institutions and their prospective governments and regulatory bodies to internationalise their higher education system. The internationalisation of higher education will be viewed as a process, which is associated with a number of issues. I will discuss the risks and potential pitfalls of the process in detail. Next, I will shed light on the context of internationalisation of higher education in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Then I will explore international students and their experiences in the literature, and I finally discuss experiences of international students in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

The third chapter discusses the methodology and theoretical framework of the study. I will explain critical ethnography, its ontology, epistemology, axiology, and its origin. I state why I have specifically chosen the critical ethnographic model of Phil Carspecken (1996) for this study. Then, I examine the five stages of critical ethnography in light of the current research design. Next, I will write about the participants of the study and the semi-structured interviews that were used as part of the data collection process. Thirteen international students, male and female, from different age groups, either single or married, from a variety

of nationalities and cultural backgrounds, who were studying at different programmes at various progress stages through their studies took part in this study. Then, I will explore the concept of power and its relevance to this study. Afterwards, I will explain auto-ethnography and its relevance to my research. Finally, I conclude the chapter with a discussion of ethical considerations for this study, prior to providing a brief summary of the whole chapter.

Chapters four, five and six include the analytical findings of the research. They account for stages four and five of the Carspecken's critical ethnography (see Chapter Three on Methodology). Chapter four discusses intercultural communication as an intended outcome of the internationalisation of higher education. My argument is that internationalisation is inevitable and necessary for higher education in an ever more globalised world. Key to its successful negotiation by higher education institutions is intercultural communication, through which students, whether local or international, develop their skills to live, work and understand others as global citizens. However, intercultural communication does not happen simply because local and international students are on campus and in classrooms together. In fact, the research shows that intercultural encounters may lead to internationals forming negative attitudes about locals, and vice-versa, if they are not adequately trained in intercultural communication (Hanassab, 2006; Leask & Carroll, 2011; Marginson & Sawir, 2011; Ramia et al., 2013). For example, some scholars propose activities like assigning a local student as a buddy to an international student so that they can both learn about their respective cultures (Campbell, 2012). However, there is not much evidence that intercultural communication is actually happening in higher education system of Aotearoa/New Zealand, nor is it usual for academic staff to undergo formal training in intercultural awareness and competence (Vaccarino & Li, 2018). The findings of this study show that there is a need for further training in intercultural communication for everyone at universities to foster mutual

understanding and avoid ethnic stereotyping by internationals and locals. It also indicates that an effective intercultural communication strategy should address Western ethnocentrism (Marginson & Sawir, 2011). Intercultural communication requires balanced power relations amongst the parties. Otherwise, understanding of the “other” will inevitably be biased (Marginson & Sawir, 2011). Finally, successful intercultural communication requires all the parties to welcome getting to know each other. It does not mean that parties need to change their values, norms or culture. It just means that the opportunity for a better understanding may be missed if stereotyping is present.

In chapter five, I discuss the relationship between the bureaucracy of neoliberal higher education and supporting international students. I introduce the topic from a global perspective, then I focus on its context in Aotearoa/New Zealand. I explain that neoliberal agendas have had a detrimental effect on higher education systems globally, mainly because economic profitability, marketisation, commercialisation and commodification of knowledge may eventually change higher education from a public good to a private good (Giroux, 2002; Hil, 2015; Smyth, 2017). It is the ethical task of everyone, especially academics in higher education institutions, to fight against neoliberalism; otherwise, everyone may be disadvantaged eventually (Giroux, 2015, 2016). Neoliberalism itself acts through bureaucracy (Martin, 2016). I will discuss the role of bureaucracy in neoliberal higher education systems in more detail. I will argue that it is important to know who actually gains from such neoliberal rationality. In other words, the outcome of the argument whether bureaucracy is positive or negative may depend on who bureaucracy serves in any given system. I will develop the argument with some of my lived experiences as an international student and those of other international students through the interviews. Finally, I discuss the adequacy of pastoral support for international students. I will use auto-ethnographic examples to illustrate

what I have experienced as an international student to showcase the wider implications of typical experiences for international students accordingly.

Chapter six is the culmination of the thesis. I discuss the agency of international students in detail. I start the chapter by looking at mobility patterns of international students as a common trend amongst all of them. Then I delve further into the interactive relationship between power and agency. Next, I discuss the notion of reflexivity, proposed by Archer (2000, 2003, 2007, 2013). I argue that not all human reflexive practices are the same because the direction and aim of their reflexivity may differ, based on their different values and goals. I then discuss international student engagement and its relevance to agency. Next, I examine different examples of exercise of agency by international students in this study. Overall, every participant in this study appeared to be determined, strategic, goal-oriented, and hard working. I argue that their agency can contribute substantially to significant improvements in policies and practices about their international education if it is recognised and acknowledged.

I provide a summary of the thesis and its arguments in chapter seven. I recall what I set out to do in this research and provide answers to my research questions. I also discuss the original contributions and the implications of this research and its findings for higher education institutions, internationalisation of higher education and policymakers at national, sector and institutional levels. I conclude the final chapter with recommendations for future research in studying the internationalisation of higher education and its relationship with international students, given the limitations of the current study.

Chapter Two: Review of the Related Literature

In this literature review, I aim to give an overview of what has already been discussed about the internationalisation of higher education and international students' experiences both globally and within Aotearoa/New Zealand. I first define the internationalisation of higher education (hereafter, internationalisation) and then talk about the relationship between globalisation and internationalisation. Next, I elaborate on rationales, strategies and associated risks with internationalisation. The section on associated risks with the term, in particular, shows that internationalisation should not be taken for granted as all positive. Many of the risks relate to international students' experiences and as such clarify the need for further discussion. Finally, I will discuss international students' experiences throughout the literature both globally and within the context of higher education system of Aotearoa/New Zealand. I will use the literature review as the initial stages of my critical ethnography, which I discuss further in Chapter Three.

2.1. Internationalisation as a Developing Concept

In this section, I look at different definitions for internationalisation and choose a working definition for the purposes of this study. No consensus exists on the definition of the term; however, it is important to review the various definitions of internationalisation to appreciate its development and to understand what is being discussed, so that it can be further examined. Knight (2012) claims that the confusion in defining the terms exists "because it means different things to different people, it is used in a myriad of ways" (p. 28). However, Neave (2016) argues that it is not internationalisation which is new because universities have always been universal entities; what is new is the separation of universities from their original goals of teaching and learning to improve humanism. He argues that universities, instead, have

recently become servants of new universalism. He defines the new universalism to be a complex of three elements – technology, market, and trans-national corporatism. He also refers to different names for the same process of internationalisation such as cross-border education and international education as terminological juggling, which he argues might be part a hidden agenda to cause confusion because different labels for the same thing might show progress, and when there is progress, the process would be considered successful.

de Wit (2017) argues that the common belief that recruitment of international students is equivalent to internationalisation is nothing more than a misconception. Internationalisation is not just about recruiting international students (de Wit, 2011, 2017; Yang, 2002).

Nonetheless, it has been a ubiquitous term for the universities all around the world, at least in the last two decades (Marangell, Arkoudis & Baik, 2018). However prevalent the term has become in the recent decades, de Wit and Merckx (2012) believe that universities have always been international institutions and internationalisation is not a new phenomenon, but its form has changed and evolved throughout its history. Similarly, Amaral (2016) says that “universities have internationalisation in their genes since their very early foundation” (p. 3). Stier (2006) likewise confirms that universities have always been international, and mobility of students and scholars has its roots in the foundation of universities. Universities have always been international institutions either regarding universality of research and knowledge or mobility of scholars and students (Maringe & de Wit, 2016). Nevertheless, over the past few decades internationalisation has become a major theme in policy statements and strategic plans of higher education institutions all around the world (Altbach, 2002; Knight, 2004; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). Craciun (2018) states that internationalisation has been increasingly important for governments all around the world “because of the academic, economic, socio-cultural, and political benefits associated with it” (p. 102). However, a consensus has not

been reached about the meaning of the term (Knight, 2004) and there is no globally accepted meaning, nor a standard definition of the term (Knight & de Wit, 1995; Knight, 2014).

Nevertheless, most universities around the world claim to be international, simply because they have international students as well as an international office on campus (Elkin, Devjee & Farnsworth, 2005).

Even the term “internationalisation” is not new; it has been used in political and economic relations for many years (Teichler, 1999). Before the 1980s, internationalisation was viewed as an unimportant phenomenon, which was scarcely examined (Brandenburg & de Wit, 2011). Meanwhile, the term started to be used extensively by the higher education sector in the 1980s to endorse international studies, educational exchange, and technical collaboration (Brandenburg & de Wit, 2011; Klasek, 1992). Although there has not been a unanimous agreement on the definition of internationalisation, similarities can be found. For instance, many researchers agree upon considering the term as a “process” (see Arum & Van de Water, 1992; de Wit, Hunter, Howard, & Egron-Polak, 2015; de Wit, 2014; Francis, 1993; Knight, 2004; Knight, 2007; Leask, 2015; Söderqvist, 2002) and on the fact that the process is not limited to only recruitment of international students (de Wit, 2017; Yang, 2002). However, confusion about a standard definition is apparent throughout the literature.

The search for a standard definition has been concurrent with the use of the term in higher education. Arum and Van de Water (1992) express the need for having a common definition and they refer to internationalisation as various activities, programs and services that are included under the umbrella of international studies, international educational exchange and technical assistance:

The need for a common definition of international education is more and more evident as the term is used to refer to and describe the important transition taking place in U.S.

higher education. As more serious attention is given to this transition, the need for defining the terms by which we communicate becomes more relevant. To debate the importance of international education requires an accepted definition of what is being discussed...To fail to provide a definition is to encourage misunderstanding, confusion, and a lack of clarity to the process of change involved in the transition to educating for an interdependent world. (Arum and Van de Water, 1992, p. 200)

On the other hand, de Wit (1993) argues that Arum and Van de Water's (1992) definition is limited to the American context and too rhetorical without explicit activities and programmes for the term, making it hard for international educators to implement and use. One of the earliest definitions in the literature is Harari's (1989, 1992). He argues that internationalisation encompasses international exchange of teachers as well as students, and knowledge exchange through developing internationally adapted curriculums. However, Taskoh (2014) claims that his definition might be appropriate for only its time because it does not account for branch campuses or the ever-increasing use of technology such as Massive Open Online Courses.

Local institutions also tried to define the term, but their definition did not encompass global concepts of the term because of their locality. For instance, the British Columbia Council on International Education set up a task force to establish a practical definition of internationalisation (Francis, 1993). Nonetheless, according to their findings, the meaning of internationalisation differs from one individual to another:

Internationalisation is a process that prepares the community for successful participation in an increasingly interdependent world. In Canada, our multicultural reality is the stage for internationalisation. The process should infuse all facets of the post-secondary education system, fostering global understanding and developing skills for effective living and working in a diverse world. (Francis, 1993, p. 5)

Although this definition defines internationalisation as a process, Knight (1994) expressed criticism from the individuals who were themselves involved in the task force. Their arguments were based on two grounds. Firstly, there is the possible limitation that referencing

to Canada could cause for the definition to be used in other parts of the world. Further, “there was a sense that the definition was too inward and campus-focused, and that an outward vision to the world was more important and relevant” (p. 3). Yet, Knight (1994) appreciates this definition to be the most comprehensive one to that date.

Ebuchi (1989) defines internationalisation as a process whereby higher education research, teaching and services develop to be cross-culturally appropriate for all students and compatible for different nations to foster mutual understanding among nations. However, Knight and de Wit (1995) criticise that definition because it presumes that the outcomes of internationalisation are homogenous. Meanwhile, Deardorff and Gaalen (2012) argue that there is no systematic measurement for the outcomes of internationalisation except output indicators such as the economic impact of international students or the number of agreements between institutions. They maintain that there is a need for measuring central aims of the whole process — employability of graduates, learning outcomes for students, and quality of education respectively. Van der Wende (1997) states that 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” (p. 18). However, Knight (2004) argues that Van der Wende’s (1997) definition puts the international dimension only with regard to the external environment, globalisation; therefore, it does not situate internationalisation within the education sector itself. Nonetheless, the effects of globalisation are prevalent everywhere, and universities are not immune to its powerful forces (Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2009). Ellingboe (1998) defines internationalisation as a process of incorporating an international dimension into a college or university system. She considers the process to be multidimensional and interdisciplinary as well as a leadership-driven initiative, which needs competent leaders at both national and institutional

level. However, Elinglobe (1998) has not explained what is meant by “an international dimension.” Söderqvist (2002) defines the internationalisation of a higher education institution as “a change process from a national higher education institution to an international higher education institution leading to the inclusion of an international dimension in all aspects of its holistic management in order to enhance the quality of teaching and learning and to achieve the desired competencies” (Soderqvist, 2002, p. 29). She stresses the process of change through a holistic perspective of management at the institutional level to enhance teaching and learning. However, she does not explicitly mention research as the main component of universities’ aims, nor she explains what constitutes desired competencies. Knight (2004) considers this definition to be uncomprehensive since it embeds the rationale for internationalisation in itself and acknowledges a transformation of the definition at the institutional, rather than a global, level. Knight (2004) elaborates that Söderqvist’s (2002) definition is problematic for nations and higher education sectors that perceive internationalisation as a broader term than teaching, learning and the development of capabilities. McAllister-Grande (2018) defines internationalisation as:

An understanding of the foundations of knowledge and of the academic disciplines; understanding how to think in complex deductive systems; and the skills required to go beneath the surface of immediate experience to historical, philosophical, and future-oriented conceptions of goodness, wealth, and wisdom. (p. 125)

He calls his definition a humanistic one because it is concerned with everyone involved in higher education to deepen their knowledge of the world around them. However, Lynch (2015) argues that in a neoliberal higher education, there is not much space for humanistic approaches or critical thinking. Indeed, the language of neoliberalism is devoid of humanity, as Davies (2005) suggests.

Adding to the confusion in reaching a standard definition is a lot of myths and

misconceptions about the term. For example, de Wit (2011) examined different misinterpretations of internationalisation. He states that for many, internationalisation in practice is still considered identical to teaching in English or studying abroad or teaching international content to international students. According to de Wit's (2011) argument, the term holistically encompasses much broader activities and/or initiatives. Another common misunderstanding that he refers to is that internationalisation implies having a lot of international students on campus or the assumption that the more strategic partnerships would result in more success in the internationalisation process. Later on, de Wit (2017) points out some additional misconceptions that clearly show the ongoing confusion in reaching a standard definition for the term. The repetition of his previous remarks about the misconceptions reflects the fact that internationalisation is still widely misunderstood. For instance, it is sometimes believed that having a few international students guarantees success, which is a myth rather than reality. He also reminds readers of a question for non-English-speaking countries whether courses should be taught in English if there are only one or two international students in classrooms. Another important, yet neglected, misunderstanding he mentions is that international or intercultural competencies are thought to be automatically acquired by students because they are in the same classroom or on the same campus, which is not true in reality, as some students are reserved in sharing their experiences with others and it should not be assumed that intercultural communication happens spontaneously.

It appears that most current definitions and perspectives of internationalisation are influenced by works of Knight (2004), as her definition has been comprehensive enough to cover almost all aspects of internationalisation (Beck, 2012; Maringe, Foskett & Woodfield, 2013). Knight (2004) defines internationalisation as “the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education” (p.

2). Knight (2004) explains that the words in her definition have been carefully chosen to cover all aspects of internationalisation. The word *process* is used to convey that internationalisation is an ongoing endeavour. *International* shows the relationship between and among countries. *Intercultural* represents diversity of cultures and *global* is used to give a sense of breadth of the phenomenon. However, she does not say why the term intercultural is used instead of multicultural if it is only a representation of diversity. *Integrating* manifests sustainability and centrality. *Purpose* refers to objectives of higher education in a country or a mission that an individual institute has. *Function* demonstrates the basic tasks and characteristics of higher education in a country or an individual institute. *Delivery* includes providing programmes and education courses domestically or in other countries by the higher education sector or even companies which are not necessarily focused on all dimensions of internationalisation, but they seek to deliver their programmes and services globally. Although Knight's definition is an appreciated extension to the literature, the process of internationalisation seems to be more complex and deeper than what has been drawn by Knight because her definition ignores intra-institutional initiatives, as Sanderson (2007) argues. As the most quoted definition of internationalisation in the relevant literature of internationalisation, Knight's (2004) understanding of internationalisation is questionable since it does not reflect the realities of the world of current higher education adequately and there is not sufficient evidence for the pervasiveness of this definition among people who actually lead and manage modern universities, as Sanderson (2007) argues. Moreover, the definition applies mostly to the Western tertiary education providers:

The definition does not explicitly tell us what an international dimension is, hence the variety of approaches we have witnessed being tried in different parts of the world. In addition, the notion of integration itself is problematic, not least because it can be achieved in many different ways, some of which could pass as simple additive or cosmetic approaches, while others seek to transform the culture and ethos of the organisation in more fundamental ways. (Maringe, Foskett & Woodfield, 2013, p. 11)

Maringe, Foskett and Woodfield (2013) believe there is a need to explicitly define the

international dimension and *integration* to distinguish different activities. Another definition, which attempted to be more expansive and inclusive, has been proposed by the National Association of Foreign Student Advisers in the US, NAFSA (2011):

Internationalisation is the conscious effort to integrate and infuse international, intercultural, and global dimensions into the ethos and outcomes of postsecondary education. To be fully successful, it must involve active and responsible engagement of the academic community in global networks and partnerships. (p. 1)

In this definition, the integration should be an intentional act, not something that happens on its own or because it is presupposed. However, international, global and intercultural dimensions are not clarified. Further, the role of students and administrative staff is unclear because the focus has been put on academics.

Overall, it is not surprising then that there is no accepted definition for the term because there is no single responsible authority for internationalisation internationally. There are numerous ministries, organisations, structures, and bodies setting out the rules and regulations globally. It would seem that the issue with having a firm definition continues to be unresolved for a foreseeable future as Knight (2007) says: “It is true and appropriate that there will likely never be a true universal definition” (p. 212). Knight (2014) claims that the main problem with the definition of the term internationalisation is that the definition has to be universal enough to be applicable to various countries, cultures, and education systems. She states that the term is not synonymous with its similar terminologies even on a morphological basis:

Worth noting is that the suffix ‘isation’ denotes internationalisation as a process usually implying change. It is equally important that internationalisation is not described as an ‘ism’ or ideology as in internationalism. Nor is it an ‘ality’ as in internationality or the condition of being international. It is firmly rooted as a process which further distinguishes it from the notion of international education per se. (p. 77; emphasis in original)

As Altbach and Knight (2007) put forth different nations in different parts of the world have a variety of cultures and belief systems, which essentially determines their goals.

Internationalisation is a choice, which higher education institutions opt to take according to their culture, needs, national agendas and benefits in response to the ever-growing forces of globalisation (Altbach & Knight, 2007).

The overlapping nature of the terms internationalisation and globalisation adds to the confusion in reaching a globally accepted definition. Knight (2004) points out that globalisation and internationalisation are connected, but they have different meanings. She also states that globalisation and internationalisation are used interchangeably and usually are confused with each other. One of the early definitions of globalisation, in relation to internationalisation, was expressed by Knight (1997) and de Wit (1997) as “the flow of technology, economy, knowledge, people, values, ideas. . . across borders. Globalisation affects each country in a different way due to a nation’s individual history, traditions, culture and priorities” (Knight & de Wit, 1997, p. 6). Altbach (2004) states that globalisation, which has a direct impact on higher education, is consisted of general and mostly irresistible economic, technological, political and scientific movements. In his view, globalisation acknowledges the massification of higher education in response to the increasing need of society for highly educated staff while internationalisation encompasses policies by both academic systems and governments to encounter and take advantage of globalisation. He argues that internationalisation allows creativity, autonomy and initiative in coping with the new world of globalisation. Globalisation, which translates into much faster movement of people, goods, technology, and ideas globally, has impacted every aspect of life in a modern world (Bauman, 2000). Altbach and Knight (2007) state that “globalisation is the context of economic and academic trends that are part of the reality of the 21st century” (p. 290). They conclude that internationalisation is a response to globalisation; there are choices to be made about how to internationalise.

However, Scott (2000) argues that globalisation should not be regarded as an umbrella term for internationalisation. In his view, the relationship between these two is dialectical as each one influences the other. Quite the contrary, Knight (2004) argues that internationalisation is a subdivision of globalisation: “internationalisation is changing the world of higher education, and globalisation is changing the world of internationalisation” (p. 5). Yet, if we take internationalisation as a response to ubiquitous forces of globalisation, Giddens (1990) would agree with Scott (2000). Giddens’ (1990) definition of globalisation is in both harmony and contrast with localisation. He defines globalisation as “the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa” (p. 64). Although globalisation and internationalisation seem to be different, they are interrelated.

Globalisation and internationalisation are realities of the world today, and neither can be taken as unconditionally positive or negative. Brandenburg and de Wit (2011) mention the assumption that too simply internationalisation is usually referred to as the protagonist with a good force while globalisation is the antagonist representing the negative side. Moreover, higher education has been reshaped by other forces of the contemporary world such as neoliberalism or the massification of higher education. Nonetheless, Altbach (2013a) argues that the massification of higher education is also a result of globalisation, which has its own benefits and drawbacks. On the negative side, he mentions a consequent quality decline in tertiary education and the fact that governments are no longer able to provide funding for mass higher education systems; however, he also refers to wider access to tertiary education as a positive outcome of massification. Higher education has also been greatly impacted by neoliberal reality of today’s world through its processes of competition, privatisation, commodification and marketisation worldwide (Smyth, 2017; Yemini, 2017). However, Hill

(2005) views neoliberal higher education as an outcome of globalisation itself.

Neoliberal agendas for higher education have shifted the aims of internationalisation. Taskoh (2014) tries to illustrate the paradox between the original definitions of internationalisation, which are all in the form of international collaboration to increase the quality of higher education for skilled and knowledgeable graduates, and what is actually happening at neoliberal higher education institutions today. He comes up with a yet new definition that might match the current status of the term. Internationalisation is defined as:

the process of commercialising research and postsecondary education, and international competition for the recruitment of foreign students from wealthy and privileged countries in order to generate revenue, secure national profile, and build international reputation (pp. 158-159)

He concludes in his PhD research that internationalisation, at least in its Canadian context, is driven by a neoliberal policy, which advocates for free markets and encourages privatisation of higher education and revenue generating schemes. He adds that the problem with this kind of view about higher education is that it neglects humane aspects such as friendship as a result of marketisation and commodification of higher education for international students, who are viewed as mere customers of this market.

It is up for debate whether globalisation negatively affects higher education, but it has increased the mobility of international students drastically and hence facilitated internationalisation. Nonetheless, unequal allocation of resources, and the fact that not everyone who wishes to study abroad is privileged to experience international education, has caused skewed patterns of mobility (Marinoni & de Wit, 2019). Topics such as *brain drain* and *brain gain* have been concurrent with internationalisation (Boeri, 2012). However,

Knight (2012) rejects the terms brain drain and brain gain because she argues that the mobility pattern is more like a *brain train*. She says that students who want to pursue a degree in another country usually end up getting a new degree or internship in a third country and may eventually find employment in the fourth or fifth country. So, the direction is not just from the country A to B. The mobility circle has expanded drastically due to globalisation. Nevertheless, de Wit (2014) argues that the distribution of mobility as a result of internationalisation has not been proportionate across the world. He states that internationalisation has been practised predominantly by North American, European and Japanese institutions; a more neoliberal direction, focusing on competition for economic gains, comes from Australia, Aotearoa/New Zealand, and the UK. Besides hosting some branch campuses and franchise plans, Latin America, the rest of Asia, Africa, and the Middle East have mostly sent students to these nations (de Wit, 2014).

Irrespective of the overlapping nature of globalisation and internationalisation, the confusion in defining the term is apparent throughout the literature. Mwangi et al. (2018) reviewed top-notch higher education journals and articles, published between the years 2000 and 2016, to examine internationalisation through the lens of discourse analysis. They found out that the term has no clear standard definition; there has been a strong Western orientation of research regarding internationalisation; and research recommendations have not been straightforward; hence, they have not been practical. According to Mwangi et al. (2018), the most cited aim of internationalisation is competition in terms of rankings or prestige, followed by the rationales of economic growth and generating revenue, and, finally, international co-operation, which has only seldomly been mentioned.

As Knight (2012) suggests, there is no consensus for the meaning of internationalisation and there may never be one. However, for the purposes of this study, I adopt a definition that was prepared for the European Union Parliament by de Wit et al. (2015). They define internationalisation 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. (p. 28)

In this definition, Knight's original definition has been updated through the addition of three important pieces of information. Firstly, de Wit et al. (2015) emphasise that the process of internationalisation should be intentional and planned. Secondly, it should be considered a means to achieve a goal, not a purpose in itself. Thirdly, it includes students, academics and staff and contributes to the rest of society. Although it is not explained what constitutes meaningful contribution to society and whether economic gains are considered part of that meaningful contribution, I consider this definition to be the most comprehensive one to date.

Internationalisation is a dynamic process that changed contemporary higher education institutions while it has undergone changes to keep up with the fast-paced changing world of today. Knight (2012) observes transformation of trends in internationalisation as a powerful process of change, which has shaped the higher education today:

The international dimension of the curriculum has progressed from an area studies and foreign language approach to the integration of international, global, intercultural, and comparative perspectives into the teaching/learning process and program content. Academic mobility has moved from student to provider and program mobility. Cross-border education has gradually shifted from a development cooperation framework to a partnership model and now to commercial competition orientation. (p. 27)

It is highly likely that internationalisation causes further changes for universities and other higher education institutions. Nonetheless, the direction of local changes can be traced back to their rationales, which may differ regionally, based on different needs, policies, resources

and infrastructure.

2.1.1. Rationales for internationalisation

Different reasons and causes have been mentioned in the literature of internationalisation to explain why higher education institutions internationalise. Just as the definition of the term has not been agreed upon, the rationales of internationalisation in the literature vary as well. Based on a variety of national and institutional policies, rationales differ as “the discourse on internationalisation is one of the most complex and multifaceted discourses within contemporary education” (Yemini, 2017, p. 171). As de Wit (2011) proposes, rationales for internationalisation are usually different in their importance and priorities at any given regional or national level; however, an economic rationale is currently the dominant one. I summarise the key rationales below.

Knight (2004) divides the rationales for internationalisation into the two main categories of national and institutional; however, there are four common rationales in general, which play out on both levels: sociocultural, political, academic, and economic (Knight, 2004). Knight (2015b) suggests that some newly emerged rationales such as branding do not quite fit exclusively into any of the four main distinctions. She mentions the following items for national level: *Human Resources Development*, *Strategic Alliances*, *Commercial Trade*, *Nation Building*, and *Social and Cultural Development*. At the institutional level, she points out the following categories: *International Profile and Reputation*, *Student and Staff Development*, *Income Generation*, and *Research and Knowledge Production*. She concludes that rationales are different from one country to another because cultures and goals of internationalisation differ from one place to another. This is true about different higher

education institutions as no two institutions are the same. In fact, “studies investigating which rationales are chosen by whom and which ones are prominent or relevant for a specific higher education institution (HEI), are rare and based on only a few explorative case studies” (Seeber, Cattaneo, Huisman & Paleari, 2016, p. 2). Slightly different to the way Knight (2004) counts the rationales, Maringe and Gibbs (2008) categorise the main rationales of internationalisation into promoting world peace, economic, political, and sociocultural rationales. They state that after the Second World War, countries commenced rebuilding their infrastructures and economies, and hence retaining global peace was seen as a prerequisite for their development, which could be facilitated by internationalisation.

However, Stier (2004) categorises the rationales in contrast to the common sociocultural, political, academic, and economic ones. He names three main rationales for internationalisation: *idealism*, *instrumentalism* and *educationalism*. Firstly, the idealist rationale assumes that internationalisation is good in itself. According to this view, one of the aims of universities is to cherish global citizens who represent the liberal perspective of the world. However, the meaning of the term *global citizenship* has been widely argued in the literature (Streitwieser & Light, 2016). Global citizenship has also been viewed as a Western colonial perspective (Leask, 2015). Secondly, “instrumentalists consider higher education to be one means to maximise profit, ensure economic growth and sustainable development, or to transmit desirable ideologies of governments, transnational corporations, interest groups or supranational regimes” (Stier, 2004, p. 90). Lastly, the educationalist rationale states that exposure to different people with a variety of cultures and languages is learning in itself because it actually helps personal growth as well as self-actualisation.

de Wit (2014) claims that the recruitment of international students has been a key element of internationalisation, no matter what rationale is applied or given. Banks and Bhandari (2012) state that the number of higher education students has shifted from about 29 million students in 1970 to 165 million students in 2009; however, only about 2% of these students experience study abroad programmes. Meanwhile, half of the global international students are historically destined to go to five main English-speaking countries of the US, the UK, Canada, Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand (Banks & Bhandari, 2012).

There are different push and pull factors for international students that give them an incentive for their mobility. de Wit et al. (2008) regard the main push factors for international students to be the lack of specialised programmes at home or low-quality courses, which cannot prepare competent graduates, who can act efficiently in a globalised world. Nevertheless, there is a variety of reasons for international students to pursue their higher education ambitions abroad:

the cost and quality of higher education programs; the value of the degree or professional credential for future careers; the availability of certain areas of specialisation; access to the education system and a country (including, but not limited to, obtaining visas for entry); desire for skilled migration; and important historical, linguistic, and geographic links between the home and destination country. (Banks & Bhandari, 2012, p. 390; emphasis in original)

Overall, as there is not a standard definition for internationalisation, the rationales vary considerably. There is not a fixed prescribed set of rationales for internationalisation because various rationales are driving it, and different higher education institutions choose to follow different rationales (Seeber, Cattaneo, Huisman, & Paleari, 2016). Nonetheless, the *process* feature of internationalisation has been unanimously agreed upon, irrespective of different rationales. In the next section, I will provide a summary of common strategies that higher education institutions take to implement the process of internationalisation.

2.1.2. Strategies for internationalisation

In a very fast-paced globalised world today, coming up with the best strategy to internationalise a higher education institution is a daunting task: “The complex and shifting landscape of internationalisation, along with the speed with which new developments present themselves in the current context, makes managing internationalisation strategies (and their practical components) extremely challenging” (Rumbley, Altbach & Reisberg, 2012, p. 23; emphasis in original). Knight (2004) divides the strategies into the categories of national/sector and institutional/provider. She refers to the strategy at national/sector level as “policies related to foreign relations, development assistance, trade, immigration, employment, science and technology, culture and heritage, education, social development, industry and commerce” (p. 13). At the institutional/provider level, two main categories of *programme* and *organisational* strategies are introduced. Programme strategies include four subcategories of *academic programmes* such as student exchange, foreign language study, and internationalised curricula; *research and scholarly collaboration* such as joint research projects, international conferences and seminars and published articles; *external relations* such as community-based partnerships with NGOs or international partnerships; and *extracurricular* such as student clubs, intercultural campus events, and peer support groups. The organisational strategies include four subcategories of *governance* such as articulated rationale and goal for internationalisation, *operations* such as adequate financial support systems, *services* such as student support services for incoming and outgoing students, and *human resources* such as professional development activities for staff members. Further, Knight (2008) mentions that internationalisation can happen at home as well as abroad. Simply put, activities such as the internationalisation of the curriculum are regarded as internationalisation at home, while having campuses outside the borders of a country, outbound and inbound students, as well as academic mobility represent the cross-border

aspect of internationalisation. In a more limited description, Mariange (2010) puts forth five main categories of internationalisation strategies as recruitment of international students, student/staff exchange programmes, educational partnerships such as joint programmes, international research partnerships, and the internationalisation of the curriculum, the scope of which could range from minimal to fundamental changes.

Irrespective of rationales and strategies, internationalisation seems to be embraced positively in the literature; however, one should not ignore the fact that it comes with its risks and shortcomings, as Knight (2015a) signals. It is necessary then to go over the problematic areas of internationalisation in the literature to have both a more comprehensive understanding of possible issues and to have a context for further investigation and discussion.

2.2. Risks and Potential Pitfalls of Internationalisation

The aim of this section is to provide an overview of the issues with internationalisation. The International Association of Universities (IAU) published the findings of its 4th global survey on internationalisation in 2014 (Egroun-Polak & Hudson, 2014), which concluded that “the results determined that internationalisation remains, or indeed grows in importance for higher education institutions” (p. 3). But there were various concerns raised by higher education institutions about internationalisation. Unequal access, the commodification and commercialisation of education, as well as more competition among higher education institutions have been emphasised as worrisome issues by higher education institutions globally (Knight, 2015a). Later on, the International Association of Universities (IAU) published the findings of its fifth global survey on internationalisation in 2019 (Marinoni, 2019). The survey was conducted in 907 higher education institutes in 126 countries, which

makes it the most comprehensive survey of its kind to date. More than 90% of the respondents mentioned that internationalisation was explicitly a part of either their mission statement or their strategic plan. This data clearly shows how widespread the phenomenon has become. Notably, the main risk of internationalisation was said to be the fact that “international opportunities [are] accessible only to students with financial resources” (Marinoni, 2019, p. 25). The number of international academic staff members amongst the 907 higher education institutions worldwide remains less than 5%, while the majority of the institutes recruited international students on full degree programmes. The imbalance in the allocation of resources through internationalisation initiatives and activities can result in numerous pitfalls, which can impact international students’ experiences as well. Accordingly, the issues will be discussed in the following subcategories.

2.2.1. Internationalisation as an Economic-Driven Process

Neoliberalism has negatively impacted universities in a variety of ways (Smyth, 2017), and internationalisation may aggravate the impact if it is not managed well (Knight, 2015a).

Universities’ core objectives are teaching and learning, research and service; however, students attend universities for a number of reasons such as academic development, employability prospects, personal development and/or socialisation (Brennan et al., 2018).

According to Brennan et al. (2018), today’s modern world is “a world in which markets and competition for students, as much as any social or even educational mission, have come to dominate global policy debates” (p. 14). They also point out that government funding to support universities has been reduced in line with neoliberal views that encourage marketisation and privatisation of universities as entrepreneurial organisations. They conclude that “the focus on costs and who pays them shifts attention firmly towards the

economic with a relative neglect of the social and cultural role of universities at the policy level” (p. 17). Amidst the tensions for universities to keep up with the business model of higher education to survive and then to compete at national and international levels, recruiting full-fee-paying international students is of utmost importance for them to run their institutions in a globalised world (Neary & Winn, 2009; Vavrus & Pekol, 2015). Ziguras and McBurnie (2015) state that the main rationale for recruiting international students is economic, whether it is revenue generating via tuition fees or the economic impact of international students’ personal spending for accommodation, food, recreation, transportation and so on. In contrast, Neary and Winn (2009) suggest that students should be viewed as producers of knowledge rather than being merely consumers. They also recommend a shift at institutional level to address the imbalance between two core objectives of universities: teaching and research. In doing so, they promote the concept of education through critical inquiry, rather than rote learning.

2.2.2. The Role of the English Language

As half of the international students worldwide are destined to go to mainly English-speaking countries (Banks & Bhandari, 2012; Vavrus & Pekol, 2015), the English language plays an important role in internationalisation. Sword (2017) states that “for better or for worse, English has become the primary language of international research scholarship” (p. 90). She continues that:

when it comes to writing stylistically nuanced English, no one gets a free ride – except, of course, for the millions of Britons, Americans, Canadians, Australians, New Zealanders, South Africans, and other native English speakers born in countries or into families where their own local lingo just happens to be the lingua franca of international academe. (p. 93)

This is an apparent inequality of the higher education world today because some people are

privileged over others, simply because of their mother-tongue. But the dominance of the English language is not just limited to academic writing. Widdowson (1998) states that English is a tool to exercise power: “it is often the case that English is the gatekeeping language, and its acquisition, therefore, will often provide access to economic and political power, because power is exercised by means of that language” (p. 397). Altbach (2007) regards the English language as the imperial tongue. He mentions the fact that academic English speakers and authors are invited for publications and conferences more often while researchers of other languages are disadvantaged. He refers to the argument of using English as the international language at universities by bringing the example of the Netherlands whose minister of education suggested that English be the language of instruction for Dutch universities in order for them to be more internationally attractive. However, their parliament declined the proposition since they believed the Netherlands would lose its distinctive culture if Dutch were no longer used for its intellectual and tertiary education. Similarly, but in a broader sense, Phillipson (1996, 2010) considers English to be an imperialistic tongue which is used by English-speaking countries, mainly the US and the UK, to dominate over the other regions of the world. According to him, this trend is a continuum, following the British colonisation to invade non-English-speaking countries culturally. In Phillipson’s view, the English world is divided into the centre and periphery. The centre, which consists of native English speakers of a handful of English-speaking countries, uses the English language to expand its hegemonic power. Altbach, Reisberg, and Rumbley (2009) argue that the same division have always been present in higher education. They claim that the centre includes universities that are famous for excellence with great research productivity and financial strength. They argue that this gap in access to resources puts higher education institutions in developing countries at a great disadvantage.

2.2.3. Global Ranking Systems

The inequalities in higher education are not limited to the abuse of the English language. They are exacerbated by the global ranking systems for universities. Altbach, Rumbley, and Reisberg (2009) argue that the ranking systems are methodologically deficient. According to Altbach et al. (2009), the inequality is fuelled by international rankings, one of the important factors in developments of internationalisation. Rankings are not comprehensive or holistic. However, universities are competing intensely, based on the same flawed ranking systems, as Mwangi et al. (2018) put forth. Green et al. (2012) refer to ranking systems as the *arms race* in higher education, which does not seem to stop. Lynch (2015) argues that ranking systems use numbers as a controlling device. Numbers indicate what is expected of academics and students to increase key performance indicators, but not everything that a university does is quantifiable, nor are all the universities comparable. She regards rankings as a product of neoliberal higher education, which exacerbate the existing inequalities in higher education. In her view, ranking systems help resourceful universities to attract more resources, talented students and academics. Altbach (2013b) regards the overuse and abuse of rankings as a problematic area in which there is no transparency in selection of the universities worldwide. He argues that many distinguished universities do not even appear in the rankings since they do not fit into the categorical criteria of the ranking systems. The rankings emerged as a response to the market and increasing competition among higher education providers, “but these rankings are quite limited in what they measure and thus provide only an incomplete perspective on higher education and on the universities that are ranked” (Altbach, 2013b, p. 78). However, there are different outcomes of the prevalent use of the ranking systems.

Marginson (2017) argues that ranking systems have had three major effects on higher

education. Firstly, they have caused intense competition between universities and countries. Secondly, universities are now more interwoven into the political economy, labour market, and unequal communities surrounding them. Finally, rankings have made universities greatly involved with performance economy in which there is a manic atmosphere for constant development and improvement in every institution. However, Marginson (2017) also claims that rankings are inevitable elements of the world of modern higher education because people globally “want to understand higher education, and ranking is the simplest way to do so” (p. 6).

2.2.4. Fuelling Inequalities

Inequalities in internationalisation are not limited to the imperialist role of the English language or the overuse of ranking systems. According to Welsh and Yang (2011) inequality also exists in internationalisation research because the literature is “focusing on the experience of wealthy, White, and Western countries, especially the major, developed Anglophone nations. Less attention has been given to Asia, and even less again to Latin America and Africa” (p. 63). They conclude that this inequality could be explained as a continuum to “the inequalities of the international knowledge systems” (Welsh & Yang, 2011, p. 63). Mengyang (2018) observes the inequities in international knowledge systems and argues that they pertain to centre-periphery disparity, which is charged by the hegemony of the English language in academic settings. According to an analysis of the latest trends in internationalisation by Marinoni and de Wit (2019), inequality in internationalisation is particularly high in patterns of student mobility. This is, firstly, because only two percent of students globally are privileged to experience study abroad programmes, and secondly, the direction of the movement is towards a few countries, which are mainly Western. Moreover,

Marinoni and de Wit (2019) state that while internationalisation is highly important for most higher education institutions around the world, there are still some institutions for which the process of internationalisation is of low or no importance at all. They conclude that this disparity creates a global gap between institutions.

Vavrus and Pekol (2015), in their article *Critical Internationalisation: Moving from Theory to Practice*, argue that the increasing focus on internationalisation is simultaneous with the drop in public funding for higher education institutions, so competition is intense to recruit international students. At the same time, half of the international students, who are mostly full-fee-paying students, are destined to go to five main English-speaking countries of the US, the UK, Canada, Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand (Vavrus & Pekol, 2015). The US and the UK alone host more than 41 percent of international students from all around the world (OECD, 2016). Some countries send outgoing students and specific nations receive the students and gain from their tuition fees and spending in their countries: “Certain nations produce large numbers of students on the move, and certain nations specialise in educating them, while other nations remain relatively untouched” (Ramia, Marginson & Sawir, 2013, p. 1). However, Mathies and Weimer (2018) anticipate a decline in the number of international students for the two host countries of the UK and the US due to the aftermath of Brexit and Donald Trump’s immigration restrictions. They also signal further opportunities for recruitment of international students that these changes could provide, especially for emerging destinations in internationalisation. However, the trend still seems similar to the past, and hegemony of the main English destinations casts a shadow over the rest of the world (OECD, 2019).

Reisberg and Rumbley (2014) argue that the main inequalities in academic mobility are due to the fact that only developed countries gain from the mobility and other countries, which outsource students, are disadvantaged. In their view, the best research sites and facilities are in the hands of developed nations and, consequently, they receive the best talents as well as the economic advantage of having international full-fee-paying students. They claim that this trend might not be intentional by the developed countries, but it is a reality of the existing academic inequalities. They conclude that academic movement in pursuit of scholarship has been common for hundreds of years when people travelled simply to learn or teach what was not accessible at home; however, the reasons for the mobility of students and academics are much broader today.

For de Wit (2016), however, improvements in internationalisation have emerged. He states that until recently internationalisation was considered a Western experience in which developing countries were marginalised. They merely sent outgoing students to developed nations or established branch campuses of developed countries within their premises. But the trend is being changed as new economies are emerging and they are taking more active roles. However, he mentions the fact that the prevalent talk about internationalisation is still dominated by a few players, a handful of Western countries. Meanwhile, the main actors, who are students and academics, the ones that are influenced by internationalisation the most, are hardly heard (de Wit, 2016). He also states that it is unfortunate that so much emphasis has been put on national and institutional policies regarding internationalisation, rather than on the teaching/learning and research activities of universities. And, perhaps more importantly, de Wit (2016) points out that research about the values and ethics of internationalisation in practice has not been enough.

2.2.5. The Unintended Outcomes of internationalisation

Inequalities aside, there is a more significant danger in internationalisation. Altbach (2012) regards corruption as an unfortunate outcome of internationalisation. It is an inevitable downside as internationalisation becomes increasingly focussed on making money (Altbach, 2012). He illustrates the issue with examples such as tampering with the GRE (Graduate Record Examination) results and other common international exams that are part of the admission requirements of the US universities. He claims that there are agents who recruit financially rich students, although such students may not be qualified. Sometimes fake documents are used for admissions. And there are sometimes advertisements of universities and colleges that do not even exist in reality (Altbach, 2012). Similarly, Amaral (2016) talks about rogue institutions and degree mills in different parts of the world. He mentions the case of a fraudulent higher education institution in London, where a rogue university not only offered programmes at BA, MA, and even PhD levels, but it also provided medical degrees. He looks further at the relevant literature and sheds light on a similar case in Australia, where a cleaning and security company offered MBA courses. Reisberg and Altbach (2015) consider the role of recruiting agents of international students to be alarming, as the agents are not necessarily responsible to, or supervised by the authorities. This trend has resulted in the US universities to become the focus of scandals for enrolling non-qualified students or recruiting students with false qualifications and documents (Reisberg & Altbach, 2015).

2.2.6. Expanding Neo-Colonialism

Altbach (2004) regards current trends in internationalisation as a form of colonialism. He draws similarities between the Cold War and internationalisation. As the superpowers tried to dominate the hearts and minds of people everywhere during the Cold War, now wealthy

Western countries are doing the same by competing to attract students from all parts of the globe. For him, the direction of mobility, for both students and academics, is from the developing countries to the developed ones. The mobility is usually unilateral for students as most of them do not tend to return home after their studies. Meanwhile, “students who do return home often desire to transform their universities in unrealistic, irrelevant, and unattainable ways” (p. 66). This happens because their home countries do not have the infrastructure or political and cultural will to adapt to the Western academic norms. Most of the students choose to go to English speaking countries, namely the US, the UK, Canada, Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand for a variety of reasons, including but not limited to the prevalence of the English language (Altbach, 2004; Banks & Bhandari, 2012, Vavrus & Pekol, 2015). Altbach (2004) concludes that internationalisation has contributed to the inequalities of the world.

2.2.7. Quality Assurance

Altbach and Knight (2007) state that, except rare cases, there is no specific tool or instrument to compare foreign degrees and diplomas. Quality assurance is usually regarded as the same process with accreditation, but many countries do not even have the regulatory systems to assess foreign education providers’ degrees because the assessment criteria are not defined in their higher education system, as Altbach and Knight (2007) discuss. What happens is that low-quality providers take advantage of this systematic defect, which negatively influences not only degrees, but also the accreditation process: “A related, more worrisome development is the growth of no recognised, illegitimate accreditation mills that “sell” accreditation without any independent assessment. These mills resemble “degree mills” that sell certificates and degrees with no or minimal course work” (p. 301; emphasis in original).

2.2.8. Commercialisation and Commodification

Commercialisation and commodification of knowledge are inevitable components of neoliberal universities today (Smyth, 2017). The reality is that “earning money is a key motive for all internationalisation projects in the for-profit sector and for some traditional non-profit universities with financial problems” (Altbach & Knight, 2007, p. 292). This is part of a broad spectrum named commercialisation and commodification of higher education in which knowledge is seen as the commodity and students are considered to be consumers (Naidoo & Jamieson, 2005). Gusterson (2017) states that many state universities as well as most of the private ones in the US recruit international students because they are full-fee-paying students. However, this can endanger the quality of education since most of the universities do this through agents, who receive a commission fee for every student. Hence, agents may exaggerate the educational quality of the prospective students. For instance, Gusterson (2017) mentions a college president who implemented a system to identify students that would probably drop out in order to remove them from the college in advance so that the ranking of the college is not affected. He also talks about the universities that advertise about their recreational facilities and sport clubs while they decrease their educational requirements to recruit more students who come from affluent families.

Similarly, Knight (2015a) identifies commercialisation and commodification amongst the greatest risks of internationalisation. Furthermore, Altbach (2013a) regards the process of franchised campuses as the McDonaldisation of higher education:

One difference between McDonalds and a higher education franchise is that a McDonald's franchise requires a significant investment by the franchisee in facilities, equipment, and the like. In many cases, an education franchise just needs to rent space with little additional investment from either side. More worrisome, an easy exit is possible for either party with the possibility of leaving students in the lurch. Franchising is yet another example of the commodification of higher education, and

the entire purpose of the operation is to make money. (p. 112)

If the focus of internationalisation initiatives is solely based on economic profits, then it is really hard to ensure optimum educational quality (Altbach, 2012). Marangell et al. (2018) argue that the original aims of internationalisation are changed into gaining economic profits from the recruitment of international students:

The internationalisation of higher education has been a prominent focus of discussion among researchers, higher education administrators, and policymakers for over two decades. During this time, many initial aims of building capacity and international standards have been replaced with a focus on the commercial benefits of recruiting large international student populations. (pp. 1440-1441)

Altbach and Welsh (2015) warn higher education institutions of the dangers of commercial view about internationalisation. They give the example of Australia, where too much emphasis on recruiting international students and offshore programmes has led to scandals, which have damaged the Australian brand in internationalisation. They mention that official estimates for the revenue generated by international education in Australia is about \$15.5 billion USD, most of which belongs to the higher education sector. Similarly, internationalisation in Canada brought more than \$8 billion CAD to their economy and created more than 81,000 jobs in 2010 (Taskoh, 2014). This amount rose to \$11.2 billion USD for Canada in 2016 (Choudaha, 2019). International students delivered about £26 billion to the UK economy in 2015 while their presence created about 207,000 jobs (Universities UK, 2017). They contributed \$57.3 billion USD to the US economy in 2016 (Choudaha, 2019). International students in Aotearoa/New Zealand made a significant contribution of more than \$5.1 billion NZD to the New Zealand economy and created about 50,000 jobs in 2017 (Hipkins, 2018). Marginson et al. (2010) argue that while international students make a great economic contribution to their host countries, they do not usually receive the level of pastoral support they are entitled to.

Many of the issues about commercialisation and commodification of higher education originate from neoliberal agendas (Smyth, 2017), which shifted the higher education position from a public good to a private good (Giroux, 2002). Eaton (2014) states that the argument has been ongoing for many years whether higher education is regarded as a public good in which governments are responsible for funding and support, or a private good in which students are reliable for the costs. She concludes that higher education is generally a mix of both, but the inclination is towards being a private good in which students have to pay for their studies. She continues that higher education used to be responsible for educating students for life, career and intellectual reform; however, the role has been shifted into being an economic partner of societies, engaged in international markets and their consequent competitions.

Bureaucracy is the key feature of a neoliberal university (Martin, 2016), which usually impedes the smooth flow of internationalisation initiatives, whose aims are other than economic gains (Poole, 2016). For Brum and Knobel (2017) unrestrained bureaucracy undermines the efficiency of internationalisation, so they ask governments to minimise disruption in internationalisation activities by reducing red tapes to facilitate the process. For instance, they refer to research collaborations and point out that these co-operations are not always successful: “Misunderstandings, different jargon, unrealistic expectations, mismatched capabilities, political instability and excessive bureaucracy undermine effective cooperation. This can result in frustration, wasted resources and misused opportunities” (p. 93).

2.2.9. The Utopia of Empty Words

Streitwieser and Light (2016) refer to the term *global citizen* as an attractive phrase for marketing practices because it is appealing to international students and their parents and families alike. However, students do not have a clear idea of what it is, nor do they take it seriously after their enrolment (Streitwieser & Light, 2016). Bates argues that global citizenship “is not possible in strictly legal terms as there is no global state that could guarantee citizenship” (2012, p. 262). He continues that the proof of citizenship requires specific documents such as passport and/or visa. Nonetheless, Myers (2010) argues that education for global citizenship is a growing field of research. Bowden (2003) claims that the term is not a modern one because it has been in existence for nearly 2500 years as different scholars have talked about it with slightly different names. He says that it all started when Socrates said in 450 BC that his origin was the world. However, the use of the term may not always be positive. For example, Hassner (1998) uses the term when he refers to refugees around the world: “it is precisely because they are citizens of nowhere that they are potential citizens of the world” (p. 274).

The use of such terms is not limited to graduates, but it also encompasses the institutions that claim to develop such graduates. For instance, Wang and Liu (2014) insist the term *world-class university* is usually applied to research-based universities and it is commonly apparent in higher education institutions’ strategic plans and policies as well as their governmental policies to develop and promote their national stance in a competitive world. However, Altbach (2015) argues that the term is empty because it is neither defined, nor does it bear any specific meaning. Altbach (2015) explains the situation about the term *world-class university*, stating that everyone wants it, no one knows what it is, and nobody knows how to

get it. He argues that a simple search for the term *world-class university* on Google gives thousands of results for the universities world-wide, from Canada to Persian Gulf, each claiming to be the world-class one (Altbach, 2015).

2.2.10. Cultural Issues

Global citizenship as a term is not problematic just because of its alleged emptiness. Knight (2013) argues that national identity overlaps with the excessive internationalisation's focus on global citizenship. The question is whose culture should be adopted, the national one or the global one. Knight (2014) considers cultural issues as an important, yet neglected, risk of internationalisation. In this regard, she states two existing viewpoints about cultural diversity. Some people believe that opportunities have been increased for an individual to endorse and publicise his/her culture as a result of new communication and information technologies. This group think this is not so different from existing circumstances in higher education because the mobility of students/academics across borders is not a new phenomenon at all. The only difference is the speed of the process. Others, however, see mobility and its speed as a threat to indigenous cultures. Moreover, excessive focus on the culture of host nations induces cultural homogeneity rather than promoting cultural diversity and this trend is usually synonymous with Westernisation (Knight, 2015a).

To alleviate such cultural concerns, Leask (2015) states that international knowledge and awareness about different countries and cultures should be embedded into the curriculum as a part of the internationalisation process. She claims that a good curriculum is engaging and understandable for all students from a variety of backgrounds. The important point for curriculum developers to consider should be their audience (Leask, 2015). She continues that

if it was presumed that all students come along with the same cultural baggage, a complete disintegration from the learning process might occur for international students, who feel alienated due to encountering curriculum contents that do not address their culture.

2.2.11. Measuring the Outcomes

For Reisberg and Rumbley (2014), although the international experience is embraced as a positive educational factor, the outcomes of such experience have not been measured. In other words, it may be just trendy to have an international experience. Deardorff (2015) expresses her concerns about measuring the outcomes of internationalisation with regard to student learning. She argues that it either does not happen at all or its measurement tools are not designed well. She states that usually the measurement tools are used by one person or an office through commonly employing a pre-test post-test method. She views this method to be a result of keeping up with another university or a group of universities. She continues to argue that sometimes a higher education institution comes up with its own measurement tool without checking its validity and reliability. In her view, current measurement methods and their results are not really reliable.

Internationalisation has not only changed higher education, but it itself has also faced drastic changes. Knight (2013) expresses concerns about current changes in internationalisation, shifting from a positive aspect of higher education to a negative one:

Capacity building through international cooperation projects is being replaced by status building initiatives to gain world-class recognition and higher rankings. Some private and public education providers are lowering academic standards and transforming into visa factories due to revenue generation imperatives and immigration pressures. Diploma mills and rogue providers are selling bogus qualifications and causing havoc for international qualification recognition. Awarding two degrees from institutions located in different countries based on the workload for

one diploma is being promoted through some rather dubious double degree programmes. And all of this is in the name of internationalisation. (p. 85)

She argues that these negative changes have been unforeseen in the past, so caution is required to monitor future trends in internationalisation:

No one could have predicted that the era of globalisation would have changed internationalisation, from what has been traditionally considered a process based on values of cooperation, partnership, exchange, mutual benefits, and capacity building, to one that is increasingly characterised by competition, commercialisation, self-interest, and status building. (Knight, 2013, p. 89)

The origins of concerns for Knight, and many other critical researchers, are neoliberal agendas, which shifted the role of university from a public good into an entrepreneurial business enterprise (Giroux, 2002; Smyth, 2017).

Nevertheless, international students have played a very important role in internationalisation. Altbach (2007) refers to their role as *individual internationalisation*. He states that most of the international students, whose numbers were more than 2 million at the time, were self-funded so they continue to be the biggest source of funds for internationalisation. He concludes that students ultimately make the important decisions about internationalisation because they are the ones who decide where to go and what to study and whether they want to go back to their home countries. The global economic contribution of more than 5.1 million mobile students to the world's economy in 2016 was more than \$300 billion USD (Choudaha, 2019). However, Marginson et al. (2010) argue that they usually do not receive enough support from their host nations and/or higher education institutions to succeed in their academic endeavours, especially in English-speaking destinations. In the next section, internationalisation in its local context of Aotearoa/New Zealand will be discussed. In doing so, strategic plans of eight universities in the country with regard to internationalisation will be examined. The information here provides a context to study the experiences of

international students both globally and in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

2.3. Internationalisation in Aotearoa/New Zealand

In their survey *Beyond the Economic: How International Education Delivers Broad Value for Aotearoa/New Zealand*, Kalafatelis, Bonnaire, & Alliston (2018) state that international education supports more than 33,000 jobs in Aotearoa/New Zealand for an economic value of more than 4.5 billion dollars in 2016. There were 132,000 international students in Aotearoa/New Zealand in 2016. According to the authors, other significant benefits of recruiting international students is empowering soft diplomacy and international trade. The writers claim that, in what they call soft power, nations try to accomplish their international agendas through cooperation by representing their objectives as attractive ones rather than forcing other countries into compliance. Hence, international students can be considered unofficial ambassadors of their universities. Also, they claim that international students are a great source of skilled migrants for the host countries. Furthermore, they mention that international students have been responsible for a lot of start-up businesses and technological innovation and advancements. Finally, for the authors, the presence of international students on campus could foster an environment for improving intercultural competence in which people are exposed to other viewpoints, cultures, and ideas. However, most of their article acts against the title because the information is mostly about economic rationales. For intercultural communication to successfully happen, it is not enough to have international and domestic students on campus (Leask & Carroll, 2011). Further, their argument about the soft power may represent neo-colonial perspectives (see Altbach, 2004) because half of the global international students go to only five main English-speaking countries of the US, the UK, Canada, Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand (Vavrus & Pekol, 2015; Banks & Bhandari,

2012; OECD, 2016; OECD, 2019).

The contemporary higher education system of Aotearoa/New Zealand is driven by neoliberal agendas (Lewis, 2011; Marginson et al., 2010; Shore, 2010; Smyth, 2017). The New Zealand government, on one of its Ministry of Education websites, considers the role of internationalisation to be important, mainly because of its economic benefit to Aotearoa/New Zealand (Education Counts, 2017). It states that in 2016 international students at tertiary level made up over 15 % of the overall tertiary student population in Aotearoa/New Zealand. It is also mentioned that both international and domestic students are parties who benefit from internationalisation because they are exposed to other cultures and perspectives, which is a prerequisite to be successful in an international and cross-cultural context. However, there is no proof for their claims in this regard. Jiang (2005) argues that internationalisation in Aotearoa/New Zealand has transformed from what she calls *aid* into *trade*, from development programmes into marketing and revenue-generating plans. She mentions the former phase started in 1951 with the Colombo Plan, a programme for cooperative economic development in Asia and the Pacific, and it finished in 1971 when the first discussions began about charging international students with higher fees. The international students of the Colombo Plan were as few as six in 1951, but their numbers rose to more than 3500 in 1973 (Smith & Parata, 1997). Jiang (2005) argues that the introduction of full-fee cost recovery policy by the New Zealand Market Development Board in 1987 changed the perspective of internationalisation in Aotearoa/New Zealand towards commercialisation and economic rewards, which was followed by the government of New Zealand starting to apply higher fees for all international students studying at any New Zealand university in 1989. She mentions that some national and immigration policies about education have been transformed afterwards to attract and recruit more full-fee-paying international students. For instance,

having a quota on student visas was lifted in 1999, and as a result, the number of international Chinese students increased dramatically from 495 that year to 13683 only 3 years later in 2002. It appears that internationalisation has been influenced by two main forces: culture, which emphasises the educational side, and trade, which inclines much more towards the financial and monetary aspects, as Martens and Starke (2006) argue.

In 2006, the New Zealand government introduced subsidised tuition fees to attract more international PhD candidates at its universities. In other words, international PhD students have been required to pay domestic tuition fees since then. Reddell (2018) criticises this policy, arguing that if an international student who would not normally choose Aotearoa/New Zealand as a study destination would do so just because of financial incentives, then how sure is the statement to say that such a student is talented academically? He argues that the strategy seems to be based on marketing schemes to generate more revenue rather than a search for talent. It is true that tuition fees are subsidised for PhD candidates, but Aotearoa/New Zealand might be even deprived of receiving such fees if prospective students were not motivated by the lowered tuitions. The Director International at the University states that this strategy has doubled the number of PhD students in Aotearoa/New Zealand and, on average, international students comprise 45% of the PhD cohort at any of the eight universities in the country (Berquist, 2017).

To have a better understanding of internationalisation at the New Zealand universities, it may be helpful to examine their strategic plans. The University's Strategic Plan 2013-2020 (The University of Auckland, 2013) does not have any specific details on internationalisation, except focusing broadly on international links, research collaborations and international students. Neither the term is defined, nor are the strategies elaborated. Perhaps the term is

discussed under another name on their website: *Global Strategy* (The University of Auckland, 2017d). In the aforesaid section, the role of the International Office, under the leadership of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Strategic Engagement), is defined as supporting “the development, maintenance and strengthening of key international relationships that will enhance our ability to perform as a globally competitive University.” The strategic objectives of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Strategic Engagement) are defined as follows:

- *Strengthening our strategic engagement internationally*
- *Diversifying and growing the University’s revenue base*
- *The internationalisation of the student learning experience*
- *Focusing outreach on priority countries and regions*

Moreover, the internationalisation strategy led by the International Office seems to be solely based on quantitative terms because the Office’s main priorities are said to be *international enrolment management* and an *internationalised student experience* for which the description provided is all about the numbers for the year 2020:

- *Grow international enrolments by 5% per annum to 18% of the student body*
- *Reach 25% participation rates for learning overseas*

The University of Auckland (2017a) also regards activities such as joining a student club to be considered under an umbrella term *Internationalisation at Home* on its website. This appears to be a rather simplistic view towards internationalisation at home. Beelen (2016) argues that the term should encompass the internationalisation of the curriculum as its main component.

Auckland University of Technology’s 2012-2016 plan (Auckland University of Technology, 2012) focuses on the same items as the University of Auckland, in addition to students’

international and intercultural competency, although these terms are not defined. Massey University in its *Defining Road to 2020* plan (Massey University, 2013) states that internationalisation is more than just recruiting international students. Part of the provided definition of the term is: “Massey students and staff benefit from engaging with other cultures and being exposed to a globalised economic and social environment in a university that has a distinctive New Zealand and Asia-Pacific orientation” (p. 14). It is not explained though how engaging with other cultures is different from exposure to a global environment. The University of Waikato in its 2014-2017 plan (University of Waikato, 2014) states that an internationalisation plan exists in their policy, but there are no details of it in the strategic plan. It is interesting that the University of Canterbury, in its 2015-2017 plan (University of Canterbury, 2015), claims to be *one of the most international universities* in Aotearoa/New Zealand, although it does not explain the basis of such a claim. Moreover, the question arises whether internationalisation is measurable. Lincoln University’s 2014-2018 plan (Lincoln University, 2014) is focused more on marketing strategies to attract more international students, rather than defining the term. Overall, it seems that internationalisation equals recruiting international students for Lincoln University. The University of Otago’s *Strategic Direction to 2020* (University of Otago, 2012) includes some information on increasing partnerships and more international students:

We will pursue growth in our international student numbers and we will maintain the diversity in our international student cohort. International and postgraduate growth will be closely linked, with new postgraduate options expected to appeal strongly to overseas students. The ongoing incorporation of international perspectives in the curriculum, and an emphasis on student exchange, will be the other key elements of Otago’s approach to internationalisation. (p. 5)

This statement appears to be the most comprehensive strategy about internationalisation amongst the eight New Zealand universities. And, finally, the University of Victoria claims to be *internationally respected* in its 2015-2019 Strategic Plan (Victoria University of Wellington, 2015). However, it does not explain why it might be the case. All in all,

internationalisation does not seem to be properly explained through the strategic plans although it is directly or indirectly referred to. When the term is used in the plans, it appears that its mere presence is enough to promote the university, although no clear explanation is given.

The representation of internationalisation in policy documents is not limited to universities' strategic plans. Internationalisation requires a policy at national, sector and institutional level (Knight, 2004). Rizvi and Lingard (2011) believe that the analysis of any policy in higher education, firstly requires the analysis of values underpinning those policies. The higher education system of Aotearoa/New Zealand is driven by neoliberal agendas (Lewis, 2005, 2011; Marginson et al., 2010; Ramia et al., 2013; Shore, 2010; Smyth, 2017). This means the ultimate goal is to maximise economic profitability. In Aotearoa/New Zealand, the export education industry is ranked as the 4th earner in the export industries, just after tourism, dairy and meat, and international students pay over \$1 billion NZD annually in tuition fees alone (Laxon, 2016). According to Education New Zealand (2019), in a report announced by the New Zealand Minister of Education, Chris Hipkins (2018), international education has contributed more than 5.1 billion dollars to the country's economy in 2017 and supported 49,631 jobs in the same year. It remains an open question if international students are satisfied with the services that they receive for the considerable economic contribution they make to the New Zealand economy.

2.4. International Students and their Experiences throughout the Literature

Kim and Kwak (2019) state that international students are defined by the immigration

policies of host countries. Similarly, in Aotearoa/New Zealand, international students are the students who are not residents or citizens of either Australia or Aotearoa/New Zealand. In other words, international students in Aotearoa/New Zealand are defined by who they are not, rather than who they actually are (see New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2017; The University of Auckland, 2017c). Accordingly, characteristics of domestic students are defined and if one's traits are not in consonant with the definition of a domestic student, they are considered international. To be considered a domestic student, according to the New Zealand Ministry of Education (2017), one must be either "a New Zealand citizen; the holder of a residence class visa; or a person of a class or description of persons required by the Minister, by notice in the Gazette, to be treated as if they are not international students." Similarly, the University of Auckland (2020) says: "You will be considered an international student if you are not a New Zealand citizen, or a New Zealand permanent resident, or a New Zealand resident visa holder, or Australian permanent resident, or an Australian citizen residing in New Zealand." However, I find these definitions problematic. Imagine, for instance, a Chinese tertiary student who had arrived in Aotearoa/New Zealand on a resident-class visa last week to study at a university this week. What is the difference between her and another Chinese tertiary student who came at the same time on a student visa? The information gap is still the same for both Chinese students, although the former may enjoy some government-funded support. For the purposes of this study, I choose the latest definition of international students by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development as the working definition: "International students are those students who left their country of origin and moved to another country for the purpose of study" (OECD, 2019, p. 202). According to this definition, it does not matter what visa type students are using and some residents may be considered international as well.

Jones (2017) states that the passport or nationality of students is not a correct indicator of being international. Furthermore, she argues that it may be better for universities to omit the division between domestic and international students as some of the domestic students have the same needs as internationals. For instance, Grimshaw (2011) gives an example of American students who went to the UK to study. For the American students, the British academic norms and their culture were unknown. The students considered the education systems to be very different, so it is not just the language barrier that would mark the difference between international students and locals. Grimshaw (2011) argues that for every student, the experience of entering a university can be challenging, irrespective their country of origin. Moreover, Jones (2017) argues that even students from the same country of origin have different needs and not all domestic students are native speakers of their country of residence' language. She claims that a division between domestic and international students might not be correct after all. However, Jones (2017) may have missed the fact that international students encounter a much broader information gap than any local student could possibly face, as Marginson et al. (2010) argue. They are away from family and friends. They may face language barriers in the English-speaking destinations, especially if they are not coming from an English-speaking country. They are not familiar with the rules and regulations of the host country, and they may easily become homesick (Marginson et al., 2010). Although the number of international students has been constantly increasing, their experiences do not seem to be well researched, as Ramia et al. (2013) claim:

However, despite their numerical prominence, the lives, needs, issues, challenges and problems of this large group of temporary migrants have been little researched ... Little attention is given to international students in their own right, to their needs as opposed to satisfaction levels, or to the "adjustment" of host nations to them. This lack of balance in the literature reflects the fact that international students are seen essentially as outsiders in their host environment. They are rarely seen as human agents in the full sense, as deserving of equal rights and respect. (Ramia, Marginson & Sawir, 2013, p. 8; emphasis in original)

Arthur (2017) argues that international students have been primarily important in terms of their economic contributions to host countries and their higher education institutions, but there is a great need for campuses to be prepared to accept the sheer number of international students in advance. International students need support because they enter a new environment to which they are unfamiliar (Marginson et al., 2010). Perez-Encinas and Rodriguez-Pomeda (2017) argue that the focus of universities with regard to international students should not be solely on academic aspects of their experiences, but also their experiences relating to their comfort and wellbeing in the host country. They note that macroeconomic factors such as living expenses are not under the control of universities, but they can offer lower prices in terms of accommodation or food. Moreover, the authors claim that universities are apparently able to provide international students with accurate details about the host cities, countries and universities in which prospective students desire to study.

The New Zealand Qualifications Authority (2020) says on its website: “When students come to study in New Zealand, education providers have an important responsibility to ensure that those students are well informed, safe and properly cared for.” To enhance the welfare and social life of international students, the New Zealand’s Ministry of Education introduced *the Education Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students* in 2002 (Sawir et al., 2009). Under the Code of Practice, certain services and protective measures should be considered by education providers to meet the needs of international students. The Code sets a standard to recruit international students ethically; for instance, and students must be accommodated in a safe place. Moreover, prospective international students must have received all the necessary information to live and study in Aotearoa/New Zealand before coming to the country so that they can be fully aware of the decision they make to study in Aotearoa/New Zealand. However, Sawir et al. (2009) found that nearly all international

students in their study, who were studying at two universities in Aotearoa/New Zealand, had no idea about the nature of the Code. Most of the international students did not even know that such a Code existed. The Code was revised in 2016. New Zealand Qualifications Authority (2016) says that the Code serves two main purposes: one is to require all educational providers to take every necessary step to provide international students with a safe environment, and the other is to ensure that international students have a positive experience in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Marginson et al. (2010) argue that the support systems for international students need to be more comprehensive than what they are. However, in a neoliberal system whose main agenda is maximising economic profitability, this seems far-fetched (Marginson et al., 2010). The neoliberal higher education is the source of issues, as Smyth (2017) suggests. Gusterson (2017) notes that many US higher education institutions recruit full-fee-paying international students for apparent economic rationales. Hil (2015) states that it is evident that economic rationales drive internationalisation in Australia. Taskoh (2014) confirms the same direction in the higher education system of Canada and Matthews (2017) views international students in the UK to be looked upon within the same framework:

The international student experience is also situated in an economic context that privileges a particular view of what it is to be a human – that of an autonomous actor, where society operates according to market rules and actors operate rationally in the marketplace. (Matthews, 2017, p. 9)

Nonetheless, domestic and international students already started to rise up against the neoliberal higher education systems in different parts of the world, as Giroux (2015) claims. International students in Aotearoa/New Zealand, in particular, do not want to be treated as cash cows, as reflected in the reports of the New Zealand International Students Association (NZISA, 2019).

Support is needed for international students to be successful in their academic endeavours, as Marginson et al. (2010) argue. There are different issues in the lives of international students that need to be addressed properly by the host higher education institutions. Marginson et al. (2010) conducted a comprehensive study on more than two hundred international students at different universities to find out about their actual experiences. The authors published the outcomes in a book called *International Student Security* in 2010. The findings show that international students deal with a range of issues, including immigration matters, information gap, language barriers, exploitation at work, mental issues, socialisation, accommodation, homesickness, racism and discrimination. The authors conclude that international students need more support to be secure so that they can thrive in their new academic environments. Marginson et al. (2010) argue that security is not exclusive to international students, but it encompasses all human beings. If internationalisation is anything beyond economic gains for the host nations, then issues of international students should be properly addressed, as the authors argue. If international students are always pressured to survive rather than thrive to enjoy the quality of their lives, intercultural communication may fail and they may develop a negative view towards the host nation, based on the findings of Marginson and his colleagues (2010).

In their book, *Ideas for Intercultural Communication*, Marginson and Sawir (2011) found out a mixture of common and uncommon issues surrounding international students. They state that intercultural communication has been a promise which is not delivered by international higher education institutions. International students are usually frustrated with the integration into the host countries' culture, and local students seem unwilling to make international friends. The authors claim that successful intercultural communication may happen only spontaneously if there is no plan for it. The authors ask a thought-provoking question:

“despite the marketing rhetoric, does anyone seriously believe that international education is an exploration of diversity?” (Marginson & Sawir, 2011, p. 6). They also note that international education has been a major source of revenue in the UK, Australia, and Aotearoa/New Zealand for the last 30 years. Moreover, they observe an apparent paradox that exists between the increased tuition fees international students have to pay and the less efficient service they ultimately receive. The governments have cut down on the public funds for the universities and higher education institutions, so these institutions need to charge international students more to cover the costs, but instead of using the extra money they receive from international students to improve the services on offer to them, the money is spent on local students and research (Marginson & Sawir, 2011). In most cases, curriculum and teaching remain the same as to when there were no international students in the classrooms (Marginson & Sawir, 2011).

Marginson and Sawir (2011) also reveal some of the underlying issues about the failure of intercultural communication in international education context. They indicate that there is a great potential on campus for intercultural communication to happen because the number of international students has been consistently increasing. However, it seems that everyone expects only international students to adjust to new environments and to fit into the cultural norms of the host country as if there is nothing to be learned from international students and the diversity they bring to the classrooms and campuses. The authors refer to this ethnocentrism as a destructive force, which regards the Western culture to be always superior. According to the writers of the book, part of the reason for this ideology to remain unquestioned and unexamined is related to the field of cross-cultural psychology, which can be both the problem as well as the solution: “but a large body of research in psychology feeds ethnocentric notions of cultural superiority” (Marginson & Sawir, 2011, p. 22). They

conclude that researchers in psychology, usually enclose a negative sense to being *different* when they consider international students, so internationals are often classified as the *others* throughout the related literature of psychology. Marginson and Sawir (2011) talk about the need to change the general attitude about international students. They argue that international students should be depicted as self-determining humans, who are able to thrive even in adverse situations.

Marginson and Sawir (2011) believe that issues of international students in the host countries are not just related to language barriers. The common assumption is that because there is a mix of domestic and international students on campus, they automatically join each other and interact. However, usually international students get together from the same countries and backgrounds. Montgomery (2010) in her book, *Understanding the International Student Experience*, based on her research at Northumbria University, notes that international students form groups, based on shared experience. They can find support within those groups as more experienced members can guide newcomers on the challenges of their international journey. However, Marginson et al. (2010) note that forming such groups can only act as a coping mechanism and should not be considered as the ultimate response to myriads of issues international students may encounter. On the other hand, Page and Chahboun (2019) argue that too much emphasis has been put on social integration of international student while they are literally deprived of choosing not to make any contacts with local students/people or even other internationals:

Social isolation has been a central focus within international student research, especially with regard to international/host national relations. While a worthy area of study, we argue that the sheer volume of such research stems from the fact that universities' recruitment of foreign students is often justified by the claim that a more international campus will engender cross-cultural skills. The main argument...is that, from this perspective, the "point" of such sojourns is seen as social, and any lack of interaction becomes problematic. This is an intellectually respectable position, but it is

problematic that it has come to dominate the field to such a degree that the students' own experiences and goals are rarely heard. (p. 871; emphasis in original)

What has been usually neglected in the literature about international students, according to Marginson and Sawir (2011), is that domestic students form their own groups and usually connect with their peers, too. Intercultural communication among students is a two-way road in which the key is to be open to the other culture in a respectful manner (Marginson & Sawir, 2011). International students' status in the host country is a temporary one, and domestic students do not seem to have any essential relations with them. There is a hidden division between local and international students, where they both stereotype each other. This is the platform that may lead to discrimination, bias and abuse. The authors claim that stereotyping is more frequent from the local students since they are in a more powerful position and do not need to adjust to a new set of cultural norms in their home country, while internationals need to form new practical relations with different institutions to succeed. Marginson and Sawir (2011) argue that it cannot be assumed that these issues can be simply tackled by more cross-cultural interactions because sometimes more intercultural communication can lead to more negative experiences by international students, especially when discriminatory behaviours are present.

Marginson and Sawir (2011) refer to discrimination as a very serious problem. They quote numerous cases of discrimination against international students and warn us of the detrimental effects of this problem on international students' wellbeing. Meanwhile, they note that such terms like *discrimination*, *abuse*, and *prejudice* are difficult topics for research because they are not directly observable. Moreover, the definitions of the terms could vary considerably. The authors conclude that international students, as self-determining human beings, are eager to expand their relationships with people from different cultures and backgrounds, but after having some poor encounters that involve racism or open

discrimination, they may naturally change their strategy and may prefer to exclude themselves from the community.

The issues for international students are not limited to outside of campus. They do need support within their classrooms as well. Marginson and Sawir (2011) characterise three types of lecturers in the international education context. Firstly, a few lecturers stretch their time and energy for both domestic and international students to create an intercultural atmosphere of learning in their academic practice. Secondly, there is a group of educators who change their pedagogical methodologies to meet the needs of students in an international setting, and they may spend more time on helping students who need extra support. Thirdly, there are teachers who make no changes to their pedagogical practices because they believe equality should be respected; hence, there should be no difference in curriculum design, assessment, teaching methodology, and available support for students, irrespective of their cultural or linguistic background. Such lecturers argue that it is the task of international students to adapt, not the other way around. Marginson and Sawir (2011) mention common assumptions about international students to be their excessive regard for authority, relying on rote learning rather than gaining practical knowledge, poor class participation and low levels of critical thinking and autonomy. These students are dominantly referred to as *Asian students*, who allegedly prefer memorisation to meaningful learning or focus too much on avoiding errors. However, there are always variations in learning of students, and they are not a homogeneous group (Marginson & Sawir, 2011). Marginson and Sawir (2011) eventually suggest that international education policy should respect international students as self-determining subjects rather than culturally deficient objects. The authors define international education as a means of self-formation for international students, in which they learn to develop their skills against their uncertainties, doubts, fears and confusions. They regard international

education in the UK, Australia, and Aotearoa/New Zealand to be a commercial industry, where the biased idea of *Superiority of the West over the Rest* is apparently governing their higher education system. The authors argue that the norm should move toward equal respect and celebration of diversity.

2.5. Experiences of International Students in Aotearoa/New Zealand

After my initial attempts to read around the topic, I noted a sharp drop in international student numbers in the early 2000s in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Therefore, I was curious to know why. Butcher and McGrath (2004) assert: “Currently, New Zealand’s export education industry is suffering a downturn, which has caused no shortage of hand wringing. Much of the cause of this downturn is seen to be external” (p. 549). However, they did not provide any explanation for the external factors. Ward and Masgoret (2004) reported the results of a national survey to the Ministry of Education. The report reads as follows: “The results of the national survey indicate that students have reasonably positive experiences in the New Zealand educational system.” (p. 70). But the same report admits:

The results of this survey indicate that institutions are not perceived as providing significant resources to meet the pastoral care needs of international students. Despite the standards set by the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students, less than 40% of the students believe that support is available from staff at their institutions for dealing with living arrangements, language and communication problems, and answering basic questions about life in New Zealand. Even less apparent is available assistance with emotional issues such as talking with students when they are upset or comforting them if they are lonely. (p. 51)

Then I learnt about Simon Marginson and his scholarship and found new explanations for the significant decline in international student numbers in Aotearoa/New Zealand during that period. Marginson and Sawir (2011) and Li (2007) discuss Chinese students concerns about the hostile media coverage, racial vilification, low-quality education providers, and a lack of enough support systems to meet their welfare needs in Aotearoa/New Zealand at that time.

Feeling no refreshing change in the circumstances, the Chinese Ministry of Education advised on its website that Aotearoa/New Zealand may not be a good option for international education and prospective Chinese students should consider alternative options (Marginson & Sawir, 2011; Li, 2007). Thus, the numbers went into a freefall mode. There are lessons to be learnt from the blow of departing Chinese students to the international education market of Aotearoa/New Zealand:

This debacle over Chinese students in New Zealand was instructive. The New Zealand government's first response was telling, falling back on the habits of marketing strategies and the devolution of problems to education providers rather than taking an open political approach; and it evaded responsibility for the moral dimension of the problem. This says much about the philosophy of state underpinning the governance and regulation of international education in New Zealand. The New Zealand stance was typical of a neoliberal state soaked in traditions of limited government and fascinated by its own commercialisation strategy. Yet the response also said something about the lacuna in the regulation of all international education, in all countries, regardless of philosophy or political traditions. The boundary between citizen and non-citizen is crucial to this industry, the product of which is often the first step to permanent migration. And that boundary enables the commercial providers of international education to ignore the broader human rights of students and to treat them mainly as consumers. That boundary also produces a fractured regulatory framework, dysfunctional not only in relation to rights but also in terms of a sustainable and stable market (Ramia, Marginson & Sawir, 2013, p. 4).

However, the Director International at the University still tries to downplay the Chinese departure in the early 2000s by relating it to sporadic security incidents and the collapse of a few private training establishments (Berquist, 2017).

More recent research about international students' experiences of higher education in Aotearoa/New Zealand appear to be limited in their scope of studies to specific nationalities like Chinese students (see Zhang & Brunton, 2007; Ho et al., 2007), or specific aspects or impacts of their journey like urban transformation (see Collins, 2010), teaching and learning (see Johnson, 2008), travel behaviour (see Payne, 2010), religious coping (see Gardner, Krägeloh & Henning, 2010), or specific fields of study like medicine (see Henning et al.,

2012). Some studies are funded by government agencies, such as the Ministry of Education, which usually talk about the overall satisfaction of international students in Aotearoa/New Zealand, conducted through surveys and quantitative research (see Ward & Masgoret, 2004; Generosa et al., 2013). For instance, one of those studies claims that “international students in New Zealand were highly satisfied with their learning experience as well as with their living and support services” (Generosa et al., 2013, p. 101). However, the same research reports the dissatisfaction of international students in universities in some respects: “International university students rated campus eating places poorly. The accounts and finance departments of the institutions, the accommodation offices and halls of residence support were also rated poorly” (p. 90). Further, claims of organisations run by international students who act for international students themselves provide a different perspective than those funded by the New Zealand government. The New Zealand International Students Association (NZISA, 2019), for example, believes that despite the economic contribution of international students to Aotearoa/New Zealand, they are marginalised in the process, they do not have access to enough support, and they most often do not get to have their say in policies and decision-making processes. Part of the reason for paradoxical information about the experiences of international students might lie within the neoliberal system of higher education in Aotearoa/New Zealand. As Marginson et al. (2010) argue, the main imperative in a neoliberal system is to maximise economic profits. Many studies view the New Zealand’s higher education system to be a neoliberal one (see Lewis, 2005, 2011; Marginson et al., 2010; Ramia et al., 2013; Shore, 2010; Smyth, 2017). Another reason might be the limitation of surveys and quantitative studies in capturing international students’ experiences fully. Beelen (2016) says that no quantitative data is going to give researchers and educators the deep understanding and knowledge that qualitative studies can provide with regard to complexities of teaching and learning in internationalisation. Jones (2016) states that much of the data is

quantitative about the learning outcomes of internationalisation and there is not much evidence about further education or career development of international students as a result of their international education. In a similar fashion, Amaral (2016) asks for qualitative data from face-to-face interviews to get a better understanding of international students' experiences.

There are also some doctoral studies focusing on international students' experiences in Aotearoa/New Zealand. However, the scope of their studies has similar limits. For instance, Xiaoping (2005) made a brief reference to the experiences of Chinese students in her study. She mainly addresses the negative impact of neoliberalism on the higher education systems of Aotearoa/New Zealand and China. Her thesis argues that neoliberalism emphasises unconstrained marketisation, privatisation and commercialisation of higher education, which in turn changes universities into entrepreneurial business enterprises pursuing profit rather than being hubs of critical thinking helping to change societies for the better. She recommended intercultural activities on campus and in classrooms as a solution to balance the negative influences of neoliberal higher education. Chinese students comprise most of the international student cohort in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Second to Chinese students, there are Indians.

Kukatlapalli (2016) says that his "review of literature on the experiences of international students reveals their mostly adverse experiences in academic and social lives during their stay in a host country. At the same time, despite facing challenging experiences, international student numbers are rapidly increasing" (p. iii). He studied Indian students' academic and social experiences in Aotearoa/New Zealand. He concluded that contrary to their Asian

counterparts, Indian students in his study were generally happy about their studies at eight different universities in Aotearoa/New Zealand. However, he referred to negative experiences of some Indian students at the outset of their studies and recommended that improvement of cross-cultural understanding between Indian students and their prospective universities may alleviate concerns about the initial issues of Indian international students. Yaghi (2019) studied international students and their partners who come with their children to Aotearoa/New Zealand from Saudi Arabia. The focus of her study was on the relationship of Saudi mothers and their children abroad. According to Doyle et al. (2017), there is also a handful of studies about African international students in Aotearoa/New Zealand universities.

2.6. Conclusion

There is no globally accepted definition for internationalisation (Knight, 2012). However, I have chosen a working definition for the term to be clear about its meaning in my research:

the intentional process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions and delivery of post-secondary education, in order to enhance the quality of education and research for all students and staff, and to make a meaningful contribution to society. (de Wit et al., 2015, p. 28)

This definition seems to be the most accurate one to date. I also discussed that countries may internationalise their higher education system through different strategies for a variety of social, cultural, political, academic and economic reasons (Knight, 2004). Nonetheless, there are a number of risks associated with the term (Knight, 2015), which may impact the experiences of international students.

The experiences of international students throughout the literature have been mostly viewed through deficit modelling, as scholars like Marginson and Sawir (2011) and Matthews (2017)

discuss. Accordingly, it is expected of students to adjust, adapt, acculturate and/or integrate to the host country's norms (see Ramia et al., 2013). Consequently, the agency of international students has been often neglected, as Marginson (2014) observes. The significant economic contribution of international students to the main English-speaking countries is undeniable (see Choudaha, 2019). However, they do not seem to receive enough support, especially for their wellbeing (see Marginson et al., 2010; Marginson & Sawir, 2011; Ramia et al., 2013).

The higher education system of Aotearoa/New Zealand is a neoliberal one (see Lewis, 2005, 2011, Marginson et al., 2010, Shore, 2010, Smyth, 2017), in which international students are viewed as consumers, as argued by Marginson and Sawir (2011) or Ramia et al. (2013). The research about the experiences of international students in Aotearoa/New Zealand appears to provide mixed interpretations. Some studies talk about the general satisfaction of international students (For instance, Ward & Masgoret, 2004); on the other hand, there are critical independent research that do not favour the consumerist view of the neoliberal higher education (see Marginson et al., 2010; Ramia et al., 2013). In this study, I generally build on the work of previous critical researchers that have explored the experiences of international students through their own voice and agency (see for instance, Marginson, 2014; Matthews, 2017, 2018; Tran & Vu, 2018). The participants of this research may be more diverse than previous similar research in the higher education system of Aotearoa/New Zealand. However, one might argue that the number of participants might still be relatively limited with regard to their representativeness. Nonetheless, this research can give an updated view about the experiences of tertiary international students in Aotearoa/New Zealand through the lens of critical ethnography. I discuss the methodology of my research in the next chapter.

Chapter Three: Theoretical Framework, Methodology and Method

Critical ethnography begins from the premise that knowledge is a resource as powerful as any tangible tool. As a tool, new ways of thinking become implements by which we can act upon our world instead of passively being acted upon. (Thomas, 1993, p. 62)

In this chapter, I discuss critical ethnography as well as autoethnography and their suitability for this study. I give an overview of the ontology, epistemology, axiology and theoretical framework underpinning critical ethnography, and I explain why it suits the aims of my study. I also describe how I employed autoethnography within the framework of critical ethnography in this research. I begin by an overview of qualitative and critical research and then move towards further discussion about critical ethnography as well as autoethnography within the broader sphere of critical qualitative research.

Over the past few decades, there has been a noticeable increase in interest in qualitative research for designing and conducting educational research (Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Since this study has attempted to research and understand the experiences and perceptions of a particular group of people within the higher education system, qualitative research could provide the thick and rich description of experience that is necessary to understand the international student experience. Moreover, scholars such as de Wit (2016), Jones (2016), Amaral (2016) and Beelen (2016) argue that there is a need for more qualitative studies about the internationalisation of higher education to complement the existing quantitative literature on the topic. In their book, *International Students at University: Understanding the Student Experience*, Gunawardena and Wilson (2012) state that although international students are currently central to financial survival of many universities, much of the research about international students has considered this group of students as a homogenous cohort, studying them via quantitative methods and neglecting their diversity, various cultural backgrounds of students and their differences. Moreover,

many scholars argue that the majority of mainstream research has depicted international students through a deficit lens with regard to their academic and/or cultural background (see Marginson et al., 2010; Marginson & Sawir, 2011; Matthews, 2017; Ramia et al., 2013). I use critical ethnography to address this inaccurate representation of the international student experience. Before the discussion on critical ethnography, I will start clarification about critical research.

Crotty (1989) defines the critical element of research as a process of deconstruction of social institutions, such as universities, to address social inequalities and to achieve social justice.

Carspecken (1996) regards qualitative research to be most suitable with studies that deal with human experiences: “Qualitative social research investigates human phenomena that do not lend themselves, by their very nature, to quantitative methods...Critical qualitative research is one of several genres of inquiry into non-quantifiable features of social life” (p. 1).

Gusterson (2017) argues that critical ethnography should be used in its critical stance to explore the hidden social life of higher education institutions in order to address their social inequities critically.

Critical ethnography is a value-driven methodology (Carspecken, 1996). As May and Fitzpatrick (2019) put forth, it is a conventional ethnography with a political goal because it deals with power relations that cause advantage/disadvantage in wider social and educational contexts. In fact, “Critical ethnography is an approach to conducting ethnography with a political purpose. Conducting critical ethnography means committing to addressing social injustice and inequality through the research process” (May & Fitzpatrick, 2019, p. 297).

Social justice and equity for all have always been my personal values, and I continue to orient

my research toward those values. I believe these values give every individual social actor a fair chance to pursue their aspirations. Accordingly, I have adopted critical ethnography to help me understand how the system of internationalisation works and why. To incorporate my own experiences as an international student, I used auto-ethnography. This method gives me the chance to raise awareness for readers of my thesis to understand better the hardship and the inconveniences that international students may encounter. Nevertheless, some may argue that the value orientation of critical ethnographers could make their research biased (Thomas, 1993) or lead to a narrow view of the events that the researcher experiences (Guba, 1990), but Carspecken (1996) argues that values of critical researchers do not necessarily distort the truth or represent them in a biased way. He differentiates between the value orientation of a researcher and the facts. Facts are not dependent on values. They exist whether a researcher likes them or not. The value orientation is what drives a study: values are not windows, but the inspiration to conduct research. Carspecken (1996) argues that critical social researchers share the same value orientation. They are all concerned about social inequalities and allow this value orientation to guide their work towards positive social change, addressing social structure, power, culture and human agency. In a similar fashion, I am concerned about the unfair treatment of international students in internationalisation of higher education of Aotearoa/New Zealand:

The difference between critical ethnography and conventional ethnography is that the researcher maintains commitments to critical reflection and raising awareness throughout the process. For example, when developing the purpose and research questions for a critical ethnography, researchers are encouraged to reflect on their life experiences and personal history and knowledge to determine what problems and issues are important to them and why. Rather than limit the researcher's positions on and experiences with social problems and inequalities, critical ethnography seeks to mine the researcher's knowledge of a topic in order to bring clarity of focus and depth of inquiry to the research. In this way, the critical ethnographers acknowledge that they are an active participant in the research process. (Norander, 2018, p. 297)

Critical ethnography and auto-ethnography can help me shed light on (un)paralleled power relations, (un)justified practices and (un)fair representation of international students.

International students have the right to have their concerns heard by higher education institutions and policy makers alike. Critical ethnography is a critical research practice in this regard.

Carspecken (1996) defines critical research by the following set of criteria. Firstly, critical researchers pursue positive change in society. Secondly, critical researchers do not find it right that specific communities of people are privileged over the rest. Hence, they resist social inequality. Thirdly, critical researchers claim that oppression has many faces, and acts in subtle ways, but it redoubles when subordinates accept their status quo as inevitable or just natural. They aim to reveal what lies beneath the surface of trends like internationalisation of higher education so that oppression is challenged and changed by making visible what would be otherwise invisible. Finally, critical researchers believe that mainstream research practices are usually inadvertently, and sometimes purposefully, oppressive. In a similar fashion, it appears that international students have been misleadingly represented in mainstream research through the lens of acculturation, adaptation, adjustment and integration, as some scholars argue (see Marginson et al, 2010; Marginson & Sawir, 2011; Marginson, 2014; Matthews, 2017). In this study I attempt to move against that narrowed perspective in pursuit of the truth about international students' experiences, using their own ideas and language. I discuss the ontology of my adopted critical ethnographic model in the next section.

3.1. The Ontology and Epistemology of Carspecken's Critical Ethnography

For Carspecken (1996), truth is a singular reality, but it is mediated through culture:

Critical methodologists are not "relativists"; we do not think that different cultures "construct" entirely different worlds and thus entirely different "truths." We acknowledge the mediation of culture in all truth claims, but we point out that all

human beings, wittingly or not, assume a common reality whenever any attempt is made to reach understandings. (pp. 57-58; emphasis in original)

Carspecken (1996) argues that cultures do not have different truths, but different ways of reaching truth. Take this example: Horses have two heads. Black is a horse. It has two heads. In this example, the claim is valid that Black has two heads because it is based on sound justification. However, whether horses have two heads or not is based on cultural views on what “horse” and “head” could each signify. If we take a horse to be a large plant-eating domesticated mammal with solid hoofs, and a flowing mane and tail, which sometimes is used for riding, racing, and to carry and pull loads, then the statement cannot be true. However, its argument is still valid. The truth of the argument, however, is a matter of discussion because it is not expected of our understanding for a horse to have two heads. Therefore, Carspecken (1996) points out that validity claims and truth claims are interrelated, but they are different. Moreover, he argues that no truth claim stays true once and for all. Truth claims are bound by their position in time and space (Carspecken, 1996). For example, Auckland was the capital city of New Zealand at one point in the 1800s, but it is no longer the case. This research likewise is bound by its place in time and space. However, the methodology of reaching the truth remains the same in critical ethnography because it is always concerned with relations of power as its key element.

Social reality for Carspecken is based on consensus about any phenomenon to be real. Further, he suggests that people do understand social situations holistically. In other words, an object of inquiry and its context are perceived together at the same time. Social situations are understood within the norms of a given culture, and this perception is always moderated through values and power relations (Carspecken, 1996). Carspecken (1996, 2001) claims that social interactions are based on shared understandings; it is the agreement of a given

community that validates a truth claim. In his view, truth is not always bound by its physical features in tangible reality, but it is rather the agreement of a given group, who view it as such that would validate its existence for that group. Nevertheless, not every majority is righteous in every given society, so truth claims may differ between societies. Carspecken (1996) gives a good example to remove any confusion: The statement “a broken glass is not sharp” can be regarded as the truth by a group, but one day, sooner or later, someone touches the broken glass just to see it cuts their hand. Then the actual truth will be revealed. Therefore, all truth claims are fallible in principle (Carspecken, 1996).

Carspecken (1996) uses ontological categories to reach the truth with regard to any social phenomenon. The social ontology of Carspecken’s theory of critical qualitative research, or critical ethnography, is based on multiple ontological categories. He does not believe in multiple realities; there is only one reality. However, there are different subjective, objective and normative/evaluative ontological categories; each requires its own epistemology to win the consent of research audience:

There is a subjective ontological category (existing states of mind, feelings, to which only one actor has direct access). Subjective truth claims are claims about existing subjective states (I/you are feeling such and such; I/you think such and such; I/you are being honest, etc.). There is an objective ontological category (existing objects and events to which all people have direct access). Objective truth claims are claims that certain objects and events exist (or existed) such that any observer present could notice them. There is a normative-evaluative ontological category (existing agreements on the tightness, goodness, and appropriateness of types of activity). Normative/evaluative truth claims boil down to claims that others should agree to the tightness, goodness, and appropriateness of certain activities. (Carspecken, 1996, p. 20; emphasis in original)

Each ontological category is grounded in a set of epistemological assumptions “about knowledge and how it may be validly obtained” (p. 23). For instance, to study why people use some pieces of paper as money, one cannot find the truth through subjective ontological category, saying because they are happy about it. However, the example can be studied

through the normative/evaluative ontological category. That is, people use bank notes as money because there is a social agreement, based on norms, that people use bank notes as a form of money in exchange for goods and/or services. Carspecken's (1996) critical epistemology "gives us principles for conducting valid inquiries into any area of human experience" (p. 8). His epistemology is based on the principles of communication for human beings. It mainly focusses on validity as the essence of human communication in every social action "because all truth claims are communicative acts that must meet certain formal conditions to win consent. These formal conditions are validity requirements, derived from the structures of human communication" (p. 84). In other words, the ontological and epistemological assumption of Carspecken's pragmatic social theory is that truth exists independently of individuals, but it is reached by social interaction and communication. Carspecken (1996) borrows from Habermas' (1981, 2003) theory of communicative action and consensus theory of truth (see Carspecken, 2001). Habermas's (1981) theory of communicative action states that human beings use communication to reach shared understandings and agreements. For him, the main function of speech is to evoke rational consensus. There is also strategic/instrumental action, which is against the communicative action. Communicative action aims to reach rational consensus, whereas strategic/instrumental action aims to reach success in its goals. The communicative action builds the lifeworld, and the strategic/instrumental action builds the system. Habermas (1981, 2003) explores the lifeworld, which is the ordinary and self-evident world that we live in, and lived culture, which is based on communication, face-to-face interaction, and the development of shared norms and values. In such a life world, according to consensus theory, a claim, an action, an attitude or a belief is to be considered true if the majority of the members of a society consent to it (Habermas, 2003). If other international students in Aotearoa/New Zealand agree with my viewpoints, for instance, my arguments are valid.

A system also exists based on supply and demand, which is heavily focused on money and power (Habermas, 1981, 2003). If the system tries to colonise the lifeworld, a more capitalist orientation and less dialogue and mutual understanding can result (Fultner, 2011). A prime example of intrusion of lifeworld by the system is neoliberalism. According to Giroux (2016), such a system has invaded higher education institutions. It has turned many higher education leaders into successful fundraisers rather than academic leaders (Smyth, 2017). Numerous studies support this critique of education to be viewed as a commodity, which is a response to commercial interests (see Altbach, 2013a; Egron-Polak & Hudson, 2014; Knight, 2015a; Naidoo & Jamieson, 2005; Smyth, 2017). I am not only preoccupied with the experiences of international students in Aotearoa/New Zealand in this study, but I also seek to find an explanation for their experiences. Considering the power relations at play in the context of the internationalisation of higher education in Aotearoa/New Zealand, I will attempt to discover how international students have been affected by this process cognitively, affectively, culturally, socially and economically. Critical ethnography can help me expose power relations that have shaped the current trends of international student mobility in Aotearoa/New Zealand and to understand how international students have been affected. In the next section, I will discuss critical ethnography as the main method of this study in more detail. In particular, I will examine the stance of critical ethnography about the argument between qualitative versus quantitative methods of research for social phenomena. I will also include other scholars into the discussion whose ideas can contribute to the critical ethnography model of Carspecken (1996).

3.2. The Concept of Critical Ethnography

The study draws upon the critical ethnography framework proposed by Carspecken (1996). This framework provides a systematic method that I could not find in other models of critical ethnography such as Madison (2012) or Thomas (1993). According to Carspecken (1996), my study may require a qualitative methodology because it deals with human experiences. He rejects the flawed discussion that supports only quantitative research as neutral. Carspecken (1996) argues whether a research is neutral depends on its freedom from distortion of power; it does not refer to qualitative or quantitative studies exclusively. He argues further that mainstream research, whether quantitative or qualitative, has not been always neutral. For instance, he brings the example of IQ test to represent its masked bias and concludes that “much of what has passed for neutral objective science is not neutral at all, but subtly biased in favour of privileged groups” (Carspecken, 1996, p. 7).

Carspecken (1996) believes that quantitative methodologies are not the best match for studies of social phenomena. Quantitative research deals with variables, which are abstractions from basic assumptions about social life. Quantitative variables do not apply to qualitative social studies because human experience and social structures are all variables, bound to their specific contexts. Human experiences must be studied in their specific context: “social action and human experience are always, in every instance, highly contextualized” (p. 25).

Moreover, experience, in its very nature, is a holistic and encompassing item that essentially makes sense in its context. Hence, it should not be considered as a discrete item. The other problem with relying on quantitative research to study experiences is the need in quantitative research for objective variables, but concepts like experience or attitude do not lend themselves to objectivity. For instance, a survey that seeks to measure an attitude does not consider the fact that respondents may lie in their answers to the questions, or they may not

take enough time to even read the questions, or that participants might not be self-aware enough to fill in the questionnaire. Nor does it take into account the Hawthorne effect, which means that responses may be distorted because of the presence of the observer (Carspecken, 1996). Similar issues might arise through the interviews, but they can be alleviated by further interview questions to check the understandings. Further, interview is usually in a form of dialogue rather than the monologue of questionnaires where there is often little room for clarifications. The participants do not have to choose their responses through pre-determined choice of answers, and they can provide detailed information rather than ticking yes/no option boxes. The interview data in critical ethnography can also be compared with fieldnotes, observations, research journal data, literature findings, and other contextual sources to be analysed further. Moreover, although social actions and experiences are conditioned by many items, they are not determined by those factors unlike quantitative variables. However, Carspecken (1996) believes that the dispute between quantitative and qualitative research is ongoing because “objective science has become a political battleground” (p. 7).

Carspecken (1996) also regards the role of agency to be crucial in studying social phenomena. Nevertheless, he argues that values, identities and cultural norms of individuals are influenced by social structures:

Conditions that influence operate internally to actors' volitions by helping to constitute their values, beliefs, and personal identity. With every act, actors draw upon cultural themes they are familiar with so that the act will uphold certain values, be consistent with certain beliefs, and reclaim certain social identities. In neither the case of external nor internal conditions are actors compelled to act as they do. A social act could always have been otherwise, regardless of the conditions under which it was performed. (p. 37)

Carspecken (1996) views every actor as having a degree of freedom in any given social structure. They have the opportunity to align themselves with the active social system and

reproduce its norms and structures or act otherwise in the hope of changing their social system. Giddens (1984) argues similarly about the relationship between social structures and agents. He claims, in his Structuration Theory, that individual actions can impact social structures as well. He refers to this phenomenon as the duality of structure, which discusses the mutual relationship between actors/agents and social structures. Giddens (1984) argues that social structures can enable or constrain individual actions. Nonetheless, there is a degree of freedom for every individual in any social structure. It means every actor in every social situation could have acted otherwise:

To be able to “act otherwise” means being able to intervene in the world, or to refrain from such intervention, with the effect of influencing a specific process or state of affairs. This presumes that to be an agent means to be able to deploy (chronically, in the flow of daily life) a range of causal powers, including that of influencing those deployed by others. Action depends upon the capability of the individual to “make a difference” to a pre-existing state of affairs or course of events. An agent ceases to be such if he or she loses the capability to “make a difference”, that is, to exercise some sort of power. (Giddens, 1984, p. 14; emphasis in original)

This degree of freedom which is considered for actors by both Carspecken (1996) and Giddens (1984) is called agency in crude terms (see Chapter Six for a detailed discussion of the term). Human beings are agents, even in the most constrained circumstances. Imagine a prisoner who is ordered to give a specific piece of information unless he chooses to be executed the next minute. This is a very extreme example, but at least two options are present: to die or to cooperate. Options shape the constitution of agency. I use critical ethnography in this study to shed light on an important aspect of international students’ lives – their agency.

Critical ethnography is also heavily influenced by critical theory (Carspecken, 1996). Critical theory focuses on “issues of power and justice and the ways that the economy, matters of race, class and gender, ideologies, discourses, education, religion and other social institutions

interact to construct a social system” (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000, p. 281). Critical ethnography incorporates critical theory as its main component to conduct a critical analysis of culture, its power and structural relations with a focal point of freeing people from domination and oppression (Anderson, 1989). The main goals of critical ethnography are to reveal invisible events by unmasking power relations, promote understanding and create insights into a social phenomenon (Anderson, 1989). Carspecken (1996, 2001) believes that critical ethnographers are concerned about social inequalities and aim to change the status quo for a positive social outcome. In other words, rather than just describing the social life, they tend to refine social theories. This fact helps them to look at social phenomena in a systematic way that also explains how the status quo was shaped and reproduced. In doing so, they place the emphasis on social structure, power, culture and human agency. This focus marks the difference between ethnography and critical ethnography, as Carspecken (1996) argues. While ethnography describes what the situation is, critical ethnography discusses what it could be (Thomas, 1993). Both critical and conventional ethnography attempt to view the world through the lens of participants; however, the former aims to situate this view within the wider sociocultural contexts through its focus on power relations and human agency. And there is more freedom for the researchers’ viewpoints to be included as an insider of a given community under the study (Carspecken, 1996). Palmer and Caldas (2017) state: “Critical ethnography is an approach that draws on research and theory to critique hegemony, oppression, asymmetrical power relations, and the normalisation of these structures in society, in order to potentially foster social change in direct or indirect ways” (p. 382). The principles leading to critical ethnography include the need for change in every society, the fact that inequality exists, and certain groups are privileged over others; oppression continues because subordinates, usually subconsciously, agree with it and accept it as natural or inevitable (Carspecken, 1996). Social oppression is masked and invisible; that

is the reason it is hard to be discovered, as Carspecken (1996) states. Further, Carspecken (1996) argues that mainstream research may be partly responsible for maintaining the status quo in societies because such research is usually funded by a privileged powerful minority, for whom their status needs to be depicted as normal, so they need research to back up their position. Using his model of critical ethnography for the current study enables me to talk about the issues of international students and explain, with a holistic perspective, why the issues may arise in the first place. Ideally, it will allow me to come up with recommendations to improve the international student experience. The thesis argues that unless there is a shift in the status quo of the affairs, it is highly likely that the current issues of international students will be reproduced.

The viewpoints of Anderson (1989) and Carspecken (1996) are confirmed by another key figure in critical ethnography, Soyini Madison (2012). She states that “critical ethnography begins with an ethical responsibility to address processes of unfairness or injustice within a particular lived domain” (p. 5). She continues to say that by “ethical responsibility,” she means “a compelling sense of duty and commitment based on moral principles of human freedom and well-being, and hence a compassion for the suffering of living beings” (p. 5). Similar to Carspecken (1996), she argues that the task of a critical ethnographer is to unmask operations of power and control that are taken-for-granted and seem to be natural and neutral. A critical ethnographer should challenge the status quo and dig deeper to find origins of the issues so that they may eventually change the situation and help bring justice and equity in their given societies. My ethical responsibility in this study, hence, is to give preference to marginalised voices of international students and to bring the power relations that have formed the status quo to the surface. Throughout the study, I will also use my experience to be what Gramsci labels as *the organic intellectual*, by which he refers to free thinkers who

are actively engaged with society in which they live (as cited in Mayo, 1999). For instance, organic intellectuals do not only watch teachers to interpret what is best practice; they teach alongside other teachers to find out what it actually means to be a teacher. In other words, Gramsci regards researchers as active agents of social change (as cited in Mayo, 1999). These intellectuals are the voice of the group to which they belong; hence, they can be either supporters of the dominant ideologies and concepts or challengers of the status quo and its existing hegemony in order to reform social structures. Gramsci (1971) refers to hegemony as unquestioned concepts and philosophies, exercised by dominant groups, which is an outcome of the structural forces as well as the individual actors' consent. He argues that hegemony is constantly reproduced in societies because oppressed communities accept oppression as an inevitable fact and do not try to change the status quo. He argues that the only way to empower those groups is to raise their awareness of the forces that shape their current circumstances. I view international students in Aotearoa/New Zealand as a marginalised community, based on the documents I reviewed, their representation in the media and literature and my lived experience (see Chapters Four and Five). They contribute billions of dollars to the country's economy, but it appears to me that they may not receive the proper service and support to which they are entitled. Hence, my aim is to shed light on their circumstances and to reveal the systemic unequal power relations that have shaped, and continue to reproduce, the status quo.

3.3. The Five Stages of Systematic Critical Ethnography

The systematic characteristics of Carspecken's methodology distinguish it from its counterpart models. Carspecken's methodology includes five stages. He firstly suggests brainstorming to generate a set of questions about a social issue or group. These questions

should be general and flexible and can be changed later during the stages of the study as new information will be discovered. Stage one is about “compiling the primary record through the collection of monological data” (p. 41). This stage involves taking copious notes about the site as well as audio and/or video recording. It has been called “monological” because the researcher speaks alone while collecting the notes and data. According to Carspecken (1996), it is important for me as a critical ethnographer to point out my value orientation(s) at this stage to reduce the possible bias. Carspecken (1996) regards reflexivity of the researcher to be very important in order to avoid biased claims. Madison (2012) also regards the reflexivity of a critical researcher to be crucial because all stages of any ethnographic research will be directed by the subjectivity of the researcher, or their “positionality.” She also mentions that dialogue is a very important part of critical ethnography to remove biases and to test the researcher’s ideas against those of other participants or subjects of the research: “we understand that our subjectivity is an inherent part of research, but in critical ethnography, it is not my *exclusive* experience” (p. 6; emphasis in original). For the current study, I use two chapters for stage one. In the introduction chapter, I discussed the value orientation and my positionality in this study. In the literature review, I explored different aspects of the internationalisation of higher education, including the previous experiences of international students to contextualise the study.

Stage two consists of “the preliminary reconstructive analysis” (Carspecken, 1996, p. 42). The previously collected data is analysed at this stage to find out about power relations and roles, interaction patterns, and hidden meanings in the data. Overall, I linguistically reconstructed what has been discussed in stage one of the study at this stage. I used the literature review again to cover the second stage of critical ethnography; I also used it to shed light on associated issues with internationalisation of higher education. Stage three is called

“dialogical data generation” (Carspecken, 1996, p. 42). It is at this stage that interviews emerge. Interviews are integral to critical ethnography: “in a full qualitative study implicit theories can only be reconstructed in a convincing manner through the analysis of many interactions and through conducting and analysing interviews” (Carspecken, 1996, p. 118). In stage three, findings of stages one and two can be tested against the data that emerges in the interviews. A central purpose of stage three is to democratise the research process, where participants are given a voice in the research process (Carspecken, 1996).

Carspecken (1996) claims that interviews are the best tool to gather information about truth claims based on subjective ontological realms:

1. In face-to-face interviewing, a larger number of checks can be brought to bear on the self-disclosures of people than can be brought to bear through instruments like attitude scales.
2. In face-to-face interviews, the problem of cultural blindness can be much better overcome than is the case with self-report instruments. Interviewing is flexible so that the researcher may continuously revise her understanding of core cultural categories employed by her subjects of study. She can alter her interview protocol after and even during every interview.
3. Only a face-to-face interview can adequately deal with the problem of layered subjectivity by facilitating the rise into awareness of subjective states routinely repressed or misinterpreted by an interviewee in most social settings. (p. 75)

Carspecken (1996) views face-to-face interviews as a productive tool to collect data. In particular, body language meanings and/or the tone of voice can be incorporated to reach an overall encompassing meaning. Also, if there is any ambiguity in an interviewee’s comments, follow-up questions can be used to add clarity. He adds that interviews may make interviewees aware of their awareness. In other words, interviewees may have a chance to think why they think the way they do. It is very common, he adds, for interviewees to change their stance about their attitudes or feelings during an interview because they may not be aware of their sub-conscious understandings at first, but the awareness tends to develop by the end of the interview. This may be true for all human beings because we do not see objects

or experiences in isolation from their background and context. For instance, if you were asked to say how many people whom you saw on your way to work today wore white shirts, you would almost certainly not remember. However, that does not mean that you were unaware that other people had passed when you were getting to work, but they were just not your focus, especially whether their shirts were white or not. Human beings see items around them within their background and in their contexts. For another example, speaking any language requires speakers to use grammatical rules of those languages. However, if English speakers are asked about the pluperfect tense, not everyone will know what it is without looking at a grammar book. Yet the tense is commonly used in everyday conversations. Speakers are all aware of the rules of their language, but they may not be aware of how their awareness of the language rules has been formed. The conscious awareness of subjects of social and/or educational studies may be accessible through interviews. Conducting face-to-face interviews can facilitate a deeper access to subjective ontological truth claims: “A truth claim is an assertion that something is true or false, right or wrong, good or bad, correct or incorrect” (Carspecken, 1996, p. 84). Through interviews, meanings can be understood: “understanding meaning includes understanding the reasons an actor could provide to explain expressions. Reasons will generally fall into the three categories of objective, subjective, and normative-evaluative truth claims” (Carspecken, 1996, p. 111). Interviewees have a chance to clarify their positions about their response to specific topics such as internationalisation of higher education or their international education experience. They may think at first that their experience was generally negative, but they may reach a different understanding by the end of the interview and vice-versa. My aim was to reach the deeper layer of meaning and in that I did not just focus on their words per se. Semi-structured interviews with international students were conducted for this third stage. I chose semi-structured interviews so that they were neither too loose, nor too rigid (Carspecken, 1996). While the interview in this way has

a main structure, there is freedom to move into different topics that may emerge as the interview progresses.

In light of the research findings from the first three stages, I then identify system relations and explain how the system generally works. According to Carspecken (1996):

In stage four, the idea is to discover particular system relations by examining several related sites. In stage five, the idea is to seek explanations of your findings through social-theoretical models. In stage five, additionally, existing system theories...will often be altered or refined in light of your findings. (p. 195)

Stages four and five are the essence of critical ethnography, although ethnographic research can be conducted by the use of the first three stages only (Carspecken, 1996). The initial three stages can perfectly describe how a specific group of people live under their specific context, but these stages may not fully explain why the people under study live their lives the way they do. It is in stage four that the system under study has its mechanics revealed, and it is stage five that explains how the research findings are explicable in light of the relationships in the system.

Stage four is about defining how the elements of a system relate to each other. It aims, in this study, to analyse how international students fit within the wider system of internationalisation of higher education in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Hence, the rationales, strategies and the ways the system is reproduced in society will be further discussed. Then stage five uses the first three stages in comparison with findings of stage four to explain how the system operates and why the people under study live their lives in their specific ways. In other words, I can show the impact of internationalisation of the higher education system of Aotearoa/New Zealand on international students' lives while I also explain the reasons for their experiences. Stages four and five in the current study account for the three main chapters on the findings of this

thesis. Chapter Four discusses the relationship between intercultural communication and international students; Chapter Five evaluates the relationship between neoliberal higher education and bureaucracy while it also sheds light on the adequacy of pastoral support for international students; and Chapter Six ultimately focuses on the agency of international students. According to Carspecken (1996), these five stages are cyclical, and researchers can choose which stages are most suitable to their study. For instance, system relations at stage four may require further analysis in any stages of one through three. The first three stages of critical study in the current study account for data collection, while stages four and five analyse the data and reveal the findings through the three body chapters.

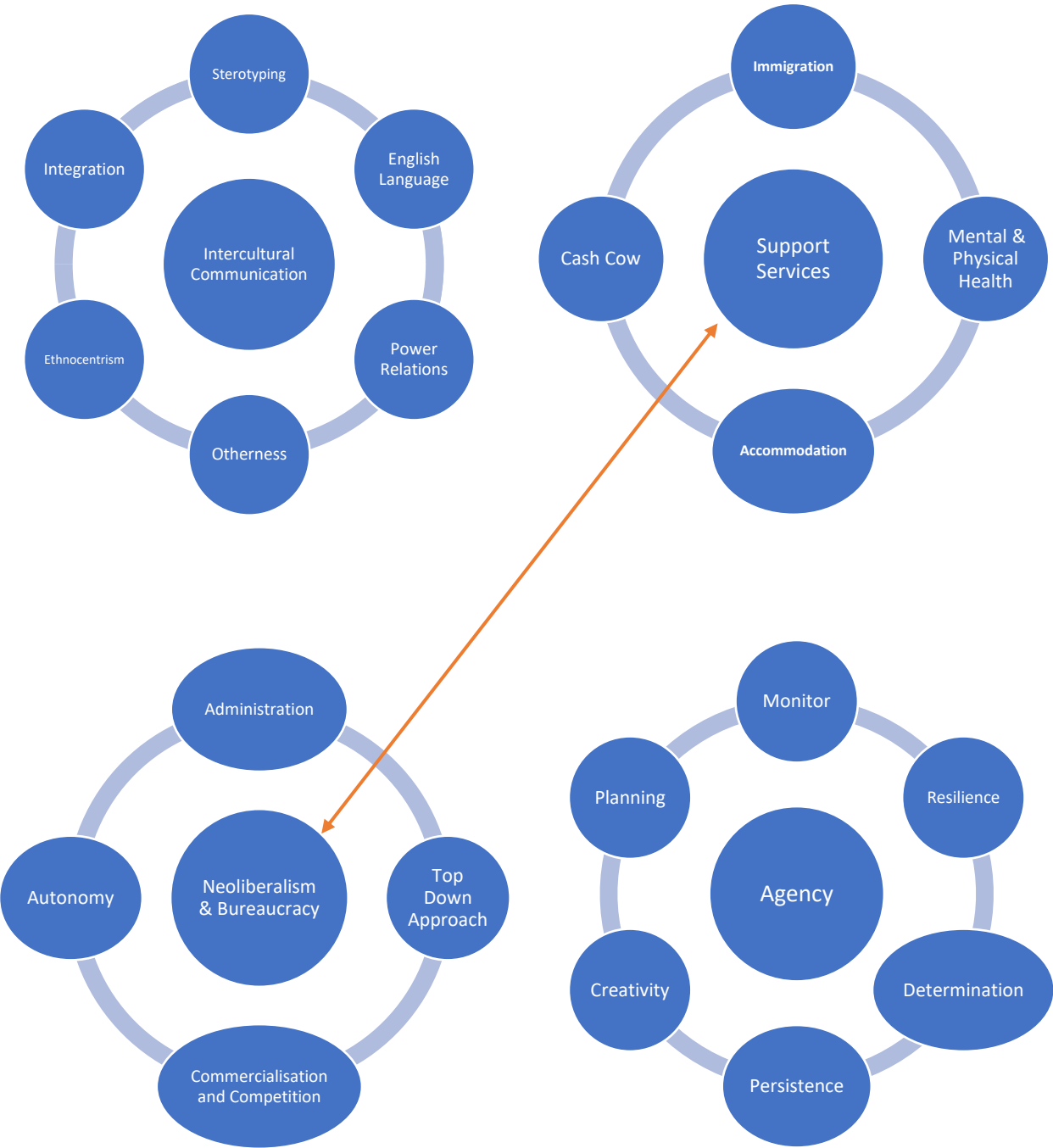
Table 1. Adopted Model of Critical Ethnography

Stages	Sources and Procedures
Stages 1 and 2	Review of the policy documents with regard to the definition of “internationalisation” and “international student” in Aotearoa/New Zealand, literature review, news media platforms, press releases of the New Zealand International Students Association, forming research questions, positionality and value orientation, personal reflection, research journal
Stage 3	Formal and informal interviews, autoethnography, research journal
Stages 4 and 5	Linking the interview themes with the findings of the previous stages, and reflecting on my own experience, to show how system works, given the dynamics of power relations at work

I expressed my positionality, reflexivity, and value orientation in chapter one, and throughout the rest of the research, which account for stage one. In chapter two, internationalisation of higher education, its rationales and strategies, its risk factors and benefits, and the role of international students within it both globally and in Aotearoa/New Zealand were discussed, which account for stage two. Stage three, four and five are represented in chapters four through six of this thesis. In other words, interviews and their analysis, system relations and their explanation for experiences, which were discussed through the interviews, will be presented. Themes around intercultural communication and the agency of international students have produced chapters of their own. And themes around supporting international students through the bureaucracy of neoliberal higher education were combined into one chapter, although they initially seemed to require two separate chapters. However, I finally decided to include them into one chapter because they share a lot of common contents as they are directly linked and very closely associated with each other. This merge of the themes into one chapter has helped me avoid unnecessary repetition of data and arguments.

I have maintained a research journal, in the form of a notebook, throughout the research process where I took notes of my observations, fieldnotes, memoirs, interview notes, and reflections. For instance, I noted the main points from my informal interviews with the former Vice-Chancellor as well as the Director of the International Office. However, I have not directly used such notes due to ethical considerations as I did not have their formal consent to be part of my study. I also took notes of the informal interviews with the participants of the study. In the next section, I will provide further explanation about stage three of critical ethnography, including the incorporation of the interview data as well as the examples of the coding and analysis, in this research.

Figure 1. Rough Outline Map of How Finding Chapters Emerged out of the Themes of the Interview Data



3.4. Participants and Interviews

Stage three of critical ethnography in this research includes face-to-face interviews with international students. Interviewees were selected from one of the University's student residences through convenience, purposeful and snowball methods. Sampling was convenience-based because the participants were at the same site and within my reach; purposeful because I only aimed to recruit international students; and one of the participants was recruited through snowball sampling. I did not take into account items such as gender, marital status, age, duration of stay in NZ, or means of funding amongst the international students who took part as participants.

The site of the study was a residence that hosted about 300 local and international students who were enrolled in a range of programmes at all levels. The residence had a private community page on Facebook for residents, which I used for the recruitment of participants. I randomly sent invitations via the contact information in that group to 25 different members who appeared to be international students. 16 candidates responded. I provided them with an overview of the aims of the interviews. Then, I sent detailed consent forms and participant information sheets to the candidates to read through and sign. They all agreed to take part in the study, but eventually only 13, including the one through the snowball sampling, showed up for the interviews. Others either expressed unwillingness because of their time constraints or they did not respond to my requests any further.

Interviews include candidates from different nationalities and backgrounds, male and female, single or married, enrolled at different programmes, studying at different stages of their programmes. Following the below table that shows the participants of this study, all with

pseudonyms, I will briefly introduce each of them. Interviews were conducted face-to-face at the residence, and they were all recorded. They took half an hour on average, but I engaged with most of the participants, who were interested to know more about my project and had more time to spare, in informal conversations following the recorded interviews. I took notes of those interviews in my research journal. The notes not only did help me to be clear about what they had already stated through the formal interviews, but they also provided more substantive information. Moreover, the participants' length of stay in Aotearoa/New Zealand appear to have direct relationship with the length of interviews in general. The students who spent longer periods of time in Aotearoa/New Zealand were the most talkative ones. Participants had a chance to read the information about the study and decide if they still wanted to take part. They also had a chance to ask for the interview to end at any stage, although no one did so. Moreover, they had a chance to withdraw from the study or change their comments within one month after the interview. But they all remained happy with their participation and previous comments. All interviews were conducted in 2017.

Table 2. Participants of this Study (other than myself)

Participant	Nationality	Field	Level	Funding	Time in NZ
Manpreet	India	Energy	Masters	Scholarship	1 Month
Cam	Vietnam	Public Policy	Masters	Scholarship	9 Months
Eloney	St Vincent and the Grenadines	Disaster Management	Masters	Scholarship	2 Years
Laura	Lebanon	Health Sciences	PhD	Scholarship	7 Months

James	Kenya	Geothermal Energy	Postgraduate Certificate	Scholarship	6 Months
Huan	China	Commerce	Bachelors	Self-Funded	3 Months
John	US	Energy	Masters	Self-Funded	7 Months
Anna	Jamaica	Psychology	PhD	Scholarship	8 Months
Abyasa	Indonesia	Food Science	Masters	Scholarship	10 Months
Ju	China	Pharmacology	Bachelors	Self-Funded	4 Years
Mike	US	Sociology	PhD	Scholarship	6 Years
Juan	Chile	IT	Bachelors	Scholarship	2 Years
Siti	Malaysia	Psychology	Bachelors	Scholarship	4 Years

Manpreet was in his late 20s and came to Aotearoa/New Zealand with his wife. He used to work in Denmark for a couple of years. Cam was a single female student in her early 20s. Eloney was in her early 30s and married. She had studied in the UK prior to coming to Aotearoa/New Zealand. Laura was single, in her mid-20s and had studied in the UK for her Master's. James was in his early 30s, married but alone in Aotearoa/New Zealand. He had already studied in the UK. Huan was a single teenage boy. John was single and in his mid-20s. Anna was single and in her late 20s. She had an extensive international education history as she had studied in Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago and Fiji prior to her studies in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Abyasa was a single male student in his mid-20s. He was admitted to the M.Sc. programme in a number of countries, but he chose Aotearoa/New Zealand as he got the scholarship from the New Zealand government. Ju was single and in her early 20s and has already got her residency in Aotearoa/New Zealand, so technically she was not an

international student. However, she considered herself to be international and focused on her Chinese status as a distinguished element of her identity. She advised me that she would never apply for a New Zealand citizenship and/or passport. Mike was single, in his mid-30s, and a full-time PhD student for 6 years. He was going through revisions of his thesis when I interviewed him. Juan was single, in his early 20s and chose Aotearoa/New Zealand over the US because of the scholarship that he has got from the University. Similarly, Siti was single, in her early 20s, and came to Aotearoa/New Zealand simply because of the scholarship that she had received from the Malaysian government.

There was not a strong rapport between me and the participants because we barely knew each other although we were staying at the same place, studying at the same University. I deliberately excluded any potential candidates who were friends of mine from the sample to reduce the possible bias because they all knew very well what I was doing in my research and what my positionality and value orientation was, but I did not want their narratives to be influenced by my views. Before the interviews started, I had once again briefly introduced myself as a PhD candidate who was curious to know more about international students' experiences for the main aim of my research. I note that power relations exist between the researcher and the researched. I acknowledge that my position as a PhD student might have seemed superior to some participants, undergraduates for instance. However, I gave all participants the opportunity to propose the suitable date, time and place of the interview themselves, and I was the one who followed their advice in this regard. This was an attempt to balance power dynamics a bit more. As Carspecken (1996) states, "neutral inquiry refers to empirical studies freed from the distortion of power relationships" (p. 8). Following the conclusion of the recorded formal interviews, I shared further details about my research and asked follow-up questions in informal interviews which were not recorded. Interestingly,

participants appear to have given me much further details about their experiences once the recording was stopped. I took notes of the key points of the informal interviews in my research journal to help me analyse the recorded interviews.

I did not transcribe the data but listened to the recording files to code the spoken language. I listened to the audio files multiple times to ensure everything was covered in my analysis and coding of the data. I note that “there is no one right way to analyse qualitative interview data” (Roulston, 2014, p. 297). I also acknowledge that transcription appears to be the first common step in analysing the interview data, but some common issues may co-exist with it:

There is in fact no transcription notation system capable of providing to the researcher a completely accurate and comprehensive narrative of the original performance: all transcription is in principle *selective* and entails the inevitable risk of systematic *bias* of one kind or another. Nonetheless, this risk can be countered by making decisions on the basis of reasoned choices rather than arbitrary, non-reflective ones. (Kowal & O'Connell, 2014, p. 66; emphasis in original)

I thought transcripts might not be fully reflective of the participants' statements because it could not completely capture their layered meanings, emotions, and frustrations in some instances. However, I had to ensure that my analysis of the interview data would be the same had I transcribed the spoken data. Therefore, the coding and recording files of the interviews were checked by my supervisors to maintain the integrity and representativeness of the interview data. Carspecken (1996) recommends the use of lower and higher-level codes for the analysis of the interview data. I coded every statement of the participants for lower-level codes and then grouped them into higher codes or themes: “High-level codes are dependent on greater amounts of abstraction. The higher the level of abstraction, the greater the need to base the code on something other than the primary record alone” (Carspecken, 1996, p. 148). Subsequently, I looked for patterns in the data, comparing all interviews together to see what points participants have made salient throughout the interviews in line with findings of the

first two stages of my critical ethnography and in response to my main research questions. Based on the main themes, three chapters were developed, focusing on Intercultural Communication, Supporting International Students through the Bureaucracy of Neoliberal Higher Education and Agency of International Students. Each of those chapters required literature reviews of their own to contextualise their themes. The table below shows an example of the coding system of the interview data; the full interview transcript can be found in Appendix E of this thesis.

Table 3. An Example of Turning the Lower Codes into the Themes

Statement	Lower Code	Theme
<i>...Essentially it ended up being part-time. You know, you're not allowed to, obviously, but in the transcript, it says part-time because when you are like not in for the entire year, it just says, for like 2017, I enrolled in August 2017, so it was four months out of the year, so they said part-time, so, but no, I'm full-time as an international student here.</i>	Enrolment Bureaucracy	Supporting International Students through the Bureaucracy of Neoliberal Higher Education
<i>...that's a document for changes in registration and it takes forever for changes to take place so, you know, you have to ask for permission for everything...</i>	Registration Bureaucracy	
<i>...I associate a lot of stress in interacting with, eh, you know, whenever I need to get something done at the University whether it's Doc</i>		

Statement	Lower Code	Theme
<i>6 form that I'm telling you about or whether it's getting something basic, the key to the door, they, you know, they did this to everybody in our room, they gave them the wrong key, so everybody had to wait three or four months until they could get the right key, so there's a lot of, so we joke about the fact that these guys just can't get anything right...</i>	Bureaucracy	Supporting International Students through the Bureaucracy of Neoliberal Higher Education
<i>...we applied for tutoring for this thing, for this course called introduction to international relations; they told us we weren't qualified, we found out who the people were, they were basically recent graduates of the University of Auckland and so that was one of the other push things that made me want to, you know, made me really upset, so the second semester, before the second semester, I walked into the deputy HoD's office and I said "what's it going to take?" like what's going on here? So, he said, well, talk to me, you know, we'll do that next semester, and the same thing happened again.</i>	Bureaucracy	
<i>...It was basically indifferent to the plight of this specific demographic, which is substantial here at this University, so that was very disappointing...</i>	Supporting International Students	
<i>...international students are cash cows...</i>	Revenue-generating rationale in recruitment of international students	

Statement	Lower Code	Theme
<i>...but still the point remains about not treating international students as cash cows...</i>	Treating international students as cash cows	
<i>...We did have a, back in the associate dean for international students, and that was good, of course, like you said it was voluntary, but, ah, it was nice of her to take a part in that, and encouraging that for us for a while, so I cannot say that it was completely, like something organically organised...</i>	Some great (individual) caring staff taking initiatives for international students	

I have compared the themes of all interviews to see which ones were the most salient and frequent throughout. Then I triangulated the interview data with other sources of information such as the mainstream media news, policy documents and press releases of the New Zealand International Students Association to situate the international student experience of the interviews within the broader sociocultural context. I have always asked myself: “what does the whole picture tell me?” And I have continued to search for the counter evidence of whatever I have come up with to provide a fairer account of the object under inquiry. I have also aimed to enrich the data via reflecting on my own journey as an international student to give a clearer image of the current situation of internationalisation in Aotearoa/New Zealand. For instance, the participants made their points salient about the adequacy of available support systems through the labyrinth of bureaucracy at the University. Their indication made me think further about my own experiences, and subsequently I reinforced their key points with my observations and memoirs through autoethnography in Chapter Five. I used four

different stories of personal narratives to show how the bureaucracy might work in a broader context of a neoliberal higher education system. However, my stories were not just my own stories. They reflected what participants have indicated in line with the previous aspects of the literature review that have been critical of the status quo in the Western higher education systems.

Table 4. An Example of the Reflexive Deliberation on Incorporating my Autoethnographic Accounts into the Critical Ethnography of my Research

What is it that the participants have made salient here?	Supporting international students through the bureaucracy of neoliberal higher education in this instance.
Do I have a similar point of view?	Yes, I do.
What do local New Zealanders think of my personal examples?	When I discuss my experiences with my local friends, some of them call my experiences upsetting while some others go further to view my personal instances as shocking issues that should not have occurred the way they did in the New Zealand higher education system.
What do international students think of my personal examples?	Surprisingly, they are not surprised, but they do see my experiences as normal. Either the participants themselves or their friends have gone through similar challenges.
Why do I use autoethnography?	I do foreground the arguments of the thesis around what the participants have already mentioned. However, the interview data I

Why do I use autoethnography?	have gained appears to be limited. While the participants frequently hinted at a number of issues, they did not attend to them at any depth throughout the formal interviews. Nonetheless, some of them were outspoken about such experiences in our informal conversations and they considered my experiences as both valid and normal. I could use my autoethnographic reflections as my entry into the interview data to provide my input like a participant. It might enrich the interview data and provide further insight into the lived experiences of international students.
Do I keep a diary of my experiences to return to?	Yes, part of my research journal includes memoirs of my own experiences. I acknowledge that memory is fallible, so I kept a record of events to address this concern.
How do I choose which experiences to talk about?	I only use the ones that speak to what the interviewees have made salient. I exclude the ones that may not be reflective of what the participants have pointed out.
Why do I not use my exclusive experiences that were not similar to what the participants have told me?	My autoethnography is not my autobiography. Although my experiences in general seem to be linked to the findings of previous research in the literature, I aim to use only the experiences that the participants and I may have in common to maintain the integrity of this study.

Carspecken (1996) also proposes a hermeneutical method to analyse the interview data. He calls it *pragmatic horizon analysis*, which is based on Habermas's (1981) theory of communicative action. This method allows the implicit meanings of participants to be

assessed on two axes. Firstly, the foreground and background meaning of the speech acts are identified, and then validity claims are assessed as objective, subjective or normative-evaluative. According to Carspecken (1996), each claim is valid at one of three levels of subjective, objective or normative-evaluative:

A claim referenced to any of the three main categories should be regarded as true to the extent that it wins the consensus. In a situation of total consensus, the claim may be viewed as pragmatically true, which means that it is still “fallible” in principle, still open-ended. (Carspecken, 1999, p. 77; emphasis in original)

He regards these claims as “fallible in principle” because the existing consensus over them might be changed in the future as time may change a lot of variables; however, claims are considered to be true in their present circumstances if they win the consensus of audience. Subjective truth claims can only be directly accessed by the speaker as they are about feelings and states of mind. They are not absolute because a sad person can be happy tomorrow. Objective truth claims are the ones that everyone has access to, for example, that Wellington is the capital city of Aotearoa/New Zealand is available for everyone to check. They are not definitive because, for example, the capital city of Aotearoa/New Zealand has been changed twice from Russell and then Auckland to Wellington and it may change again in the future. Normative-evaluative truth claims are concerned with appropriateness, which can be assessed against sociocultural rules and agreements in any given context. Again, this type of truth claims is not a universal but a temporal one because societies and their cultures can change over time. For instance, racial segregation used to be the norm in the US, but it is not the case today, at least much explicitly. Similarly, the findings of the current study represent their meanings within their current circumstances.

Irrespective of ontological truth claims, Carspecken (1996, 2001) emphasises the context in understanding participants’ speech acts because all human actions are bound to their specific

contexts, in which power relations play an important role. In addition, he stresses the importance of body language and facial expressions in analysing the interview data to find the implicit meanings. He recommends adding information to the transcription of interview data such as anger, frustration and happiness in a new category called *the interviewer comments*. This can help show the implicit meanings in linguistic structures and semantics. It may also show how participants have been affected by power relations. For instance, a person may express linguistically that she is happy, but her tone of voice and body language may say otherwise. I took quick notes during the interviews for this reason. The challenge was that I lost my eye contact for a brief moment although I only noted some keywords as well as the time to help me recall. As already discussed, I also listened to the audio files multiple times not to miss any nuances of information. Interviews help me better identify and examine the relationships of elements in the system that shapes the current situation of internationalisation of higher education in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Interviews also help me gain a better understanding of how international students have been affected by the process of internationalisation. Critical ethnography of this study is supplemented by auto-ethnography to provide my own interview input. Auto-ethnography is essentially a conscious attempt for reflexive practice (Ellis, 2004; McIlveen, 2008). Reflexivity itself can be viewed as an interview because it is all about an internal conversation (Archer, 2007). Archer (2003, 2007, 2013) argues that every human being engages in reflexive deliberations through internal conversations with themselves whenever a new situation is encountered that requires a decision-making process as to determine what course of action to take.

3.5. Interactive Power Relations in Critical Ethnography

Although Carspecken (1996) believes that power is an inevitable element of all social acts for both social structure and agents, he appears inadequate in his explanations for the mechanics of power when it comes to the agency of individual actors:

All actions “intervene” in the stream of events and therefore “make a difference,” no matter how large or small. Moreover, all acts could have been otherwise, in principle, and therefore they express the actor's power of determining one course of action over another. Even situations of extreme coercion, in which an actor is ordered to act in only one way, with the threat of a highly undesirable sanction for doing anything else, do not rob the actor of being able, in principle, to act against the orders and accept the consequences. (p. 128; emphasis in original)

Carspecken's (1996) typology of power is the same for both structure and individuals within a structure. It seems from his argument that representation of power of agents is in the form of resistance, but agency can manifest itself in different forms (see Chapter Six). He claims that every social act is, in essence, an act of power. The act differs from one individual to the other because the degree of the power that individuals may hold in different situations varies. For instance, a lecturer at a university classroom has more power than any individual student in the classroom. Carspecken (1996) refers to this kind of power relation as interactive power:

Interactive power relations occur when actors are differentiated in terms of who has most say in determining the course of an interaction and whose definition of the interactive setting holds sway. Interactive power is greatest when differentiations of this type are determined without equal communicative inputs from all people involved. (p. 129)

Carspecken (1996) further divides power into four main categories of normative, coercive, contractual, and charismatic versions. In other words, power determines the relationship of superordinate and subordinates in four different ways:

- a) In coercive power relations, subordinates agree with superordinate because they are afraid of punishment.
- b) In normative power relations, subordinates agree with superordinate because of the

established norms.

- c) In contractual power relations, subordinates agree with superordinate because of the rules.
- d) In charismatic power relations, subordinates agree with superordinate because of the latter's character and personality.

However, I needed a more detailed explanation of agents' power because Carspecken's (1996) typology of power does not appear to address the power of actors/agents adequately. Hence, I supplemented it with the arguments of other scholars like Archer (2000, 2003, 2007), Bandura (2001, 2008), Coleman (1986, 1988), Gecas (2003), Giddens (1984, 1990, 1991), Marginson (2014), and Sen (1985, 1992, 2000) to provide a more comprehensive representation of international students' agency (see Chapter Six).

3.6. Auto-Ethnography

To capture my experiences as an international student, I supplement the critical ethnography with auto-ethnography, which itself is a combination of autobiography and ethnography. Usually, autobiographical researchers write about epiphanies, remembered events and moments perceived to have greatly influenced the path of their life (Denzin, 1989). When researchers do ethnography, they study a culture's practices, prevailing values and beliefs, and communal experiences to enable insiders and outsiders to better understand the culture (Maso, 2001). In auto-ethnography, authors reflect on their personal experience and relate it to a wider cultural, political and social meaning. It thus combines elements of autobiography and ethnography. Auto-ethnography is used in fields of study like communication studies, performance studies, education, English literature, anthropology, social work, sociology, history, psychology, marketing and business (Ellis, 2004). It is a helpful method for the

current study because I am a participant of the study as an international student myself and I have personal access to a lot of stories about internationalisation of higher education in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Limited interviews could not give me this kind of detailed information. If an international student wanted to narrate their stories this way, it might take them days rather than an hour. Auto-ethnography can enable me to discuss the events I have been involved in as an international student that may be typical of other international students' experiences as well. My lived experiences are coordinated with the findings of interviews with other international students as well as other data sources of the first two stages of my critical ethnography – literature review, media news, field notes, research journal information, policy documents, and the New Zealand International Students Association's press releases.

Auto-ethnography appears to be an academic way of storytelling. Autoethnographic stories “are stories of/about the self, told through the lens of culture. Autoethnographic stories are artistic and analytic demonstrations of how we come to know, name, and interpret personal and cultural experience” (Adams, Jones & Ellis, 2015, pp. 21-22). Ellis (2004) positions auto-ethnography to be “for story as analysis, for evocation in addition to representation as a goal for social science research, for generalisation through the resonance of readers, and for opening up rather than closing down conversation” (p. 22). She rejects the duality of narration and theory, or story versus analysis, because story is the analysis itself to her. She argues if the story is told well, readers could feel the lived experience of auto-ethnographer, which is the ultimate goal. Ellis (2004) describes ethnography this way: “Ethno- means people or culture; -graphy means writing or describing. Ethnography then means writing about or describing people and culture, using first-hand observation and participation in a setting or situation” (p. 26). In other words, ethnography gives its readers a perspective about

how life is lived for a group of people in a specific time and space. Auto-ethnography, on the other hand, combines ethnography and autobiography (Ellis, 2004). It is like a case study of a participant under study, who is also the researcher of the study and a representative of a bigger community to which she or he belongs (Ellis, 2004). What makes an ethnography critical, however, is its ability to say why circumstances are the way they are: who gains from the status quo, and who is marginalised for the people under study (Carspecken, 1996). As Stanley (2020) argues: “any individual’s so-called “personal” narrative is necessarily situated, and it is the engagement with power relations that makes autoethnography “critical”” (p. 10; emphasis in original). Accordingly, it was my aim in this study to reveal who gains from the internationalisation of higher education in Aotearoa/New Zealand and who may be ignored or marginalised. As discussed earlier, I used my autoethnographic accounts in Chapter 5, following listening to the participants’ experiences, mainly to amplify their voice and to represent their challenges more vividly.

3.7. Ethical Considerations

Possible ethical issues, arising from this study, have been identified. Accordingly, I came up with solutions to alleviate concerns. As Creswell (2013) puts forth, guidelines of institutions regarding research ethics vary but the main focus is usually around the same topics:

Voluntary and informed consent of participants, confidentiality and protection of the participants’ identity, and protection of the participants from harm. These guidelines were closely followed. Some participants provided information about practice at their institution.

There is a possibility that a colleague at this or another university will be able to identify a participant based on their faculty, position or level. Participants were apprised of this risk in the Participant Information Sheet as well as the Consent Form. This issue was addressed by de-identification of participants and using pseudonyms. By the time this study was

completed, all participants had already graduated from the University. All potential participants were free to volunteer or decline to participate in the research. All participants were given information about the study and gave their informed consent to participate. The researcher explained that all participants had the right to withdraw within a month of the data collection. All participants were given a chance to edit their statements when a copy of the audio recording was sent to them. Some of them did not respond and others were either happy with what they have said and/or acknowledged further details that had been given through the informal interviews. All participants could ask to have the audio-recording stopped at any time during the interview. The University Human Participants Ethics Committee (UAHPEC) approved the ethics application for the current study for three years from 29/Nov/2016 to 29/Nov/2019.

3.8. Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed critical qualitative research, critical ethnography, autoethnography, and the adopted model of critical ethnography that I have implemented in this study. I also examined the procedures of data collection and data analysis for this research. Further, I introduced the participants and explained the formal and informal interview procedures. I demonstrated through examples how coding of the interview data was done, how themes emerged, and how I used my autoethnographic input, as a participant myself, alongside what interviewees had already made salient. Three chapters of outcome were formed around the themes of this research, which will be presented through chapters 4, 5, and 6. I begin to reveal the findings by discussing the arguments about intercultural communication in the next chapter.

Chapter Four: Intercultural Communication and International Students

This chapter is an attempt to critically analyse the social phenomenon of intercultural communication in its higher education setting. The main framework of the chapter is in line with the notion of *self-formation* of international students, proposed by Marginson and Sawir (2011) in their book *Ideas for Intercultural Education*. They argue that as long as students, whether local or international, are seen as consumers, rather than self-determining agents, intercultural communication may not be completely successful. They see intercultural communication to have great transformational potentials for both international and local students. It has the potential to make a better world by providing opportunities for personal growth, reducing conflicts and promoting peace (Marginson & Sawir, 2011). However, as Leask and Carroll (2011) argue, these items may simply remain at their theoretical level if intercultural communication in higher education continues to be practised the way it is today. In this chapter, I discuss intercultural communication, contextualise it within the internationalisation of higher education, and situate it within the power relations at work. I elaborate on the misconception of international students' cultural deficiency, then move towards further discussion about the phenomenon from the viewpoints of participants as well as the wider community of tertiary international students in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

4.1. A Contextual Introduction to the Social Phenomenon

The contemporary world is increasingly interconnected (Spiteri, 2017), where technology and the fast movement of people, products and ideas have been transforming higher education institutions (Altbach, 2013a, Marginson & Sawir, 2011). In such an environment, internationalisation of higher education has been a response to the inevitable forces of globalisation (Altbach & Knight, 2007). Accordingly, internationalisation of higher education

has been a common trend among universities in the last few decades (Knight & de Wit, 2018). Consequently, intercultural communication should be an integral element of multicultural campuses to promote mutual understanding of individuals from various cultural backgrounds (Spiteri, 2017; Vaccarino & Li, 2018). However, international students “must grapple with unfamiliar cultures in their educational institution and the society. Communication is often a problem” (Marginson & Sawir, 2011, p. 139). There are ambivalent views about international students in general:

On one hand, international education is a global exchange where the student is nominally valued and welcomed. International students are variously seen to offer revenues, research labour, international goodwill, and future human capital as citizens. On the other hand, international education triggers border anxiety, bureaucratic categorisation, and coercion. Officials from immigration or homeland security, perhaps reflecting anti migration sensitivities in the host-country population, focus on the potential expenditure burdens in relation to scarce national resources in education, health, welfare, and housing; and the dangers to property, life, and national character. It is variously feared that international students will overstay their student visas and attempt backdoor migration, engage in crime, or commit acts of terrorism. (Marginson, 2012, p. 218)

Marginson and Sawir (2011) argue that international students throughout the literature have been generally viewed as marginal subjects who struggle to cope with the demands of their international education. However, they found great agency in international students of their study. They believe that international students are agents who try to lead their lives through often difficult circumstances. The authors conclude that this is to some scope true for local students, lecturers and administrative staff members of universities. Hence, they propose that higher education should be viewed as a place of self-formation. They argue that international students are not empty vessels to be filled by the Western higher education, but they have ideas and objectives of their own. They state that as a result of the self-formation process, the *self* becomes different to what it used to be. And a key factor of transformational change for tertiary students can be intercultural communication (Marginson & Sawir, 2011). However, the change is an outcome of the complex of identity, values, experiences, knowledge and understandings of self and society (Marginson & Sawir, 2011).

The self-formation approach regards international students as reflexive and agentic human beings (Marginson, 2014). International students find their identity somewhere between their home country, host country and global trajectories (Marginson et al., 2010). As Marginson and Sawir (2011) describe it: “international students become a mixture of two different people: the person they were when they arrived in the country of education and the person they are becoming” (p. 138). However, self-formation is not exclusive to international students:

Self-formation means working on oneself. All people do it, but some do it more persistently and deliberately than others. In self-formation people consciously fashion themselves as they go, working critically and using feedback from themselves (and others). They have difficulty making themselves what they want to be. Mostly, things work out differently from the way that was imagined in advance. But people persist, reshaping their intentions as they go. They oscillate between pushing against what they see as their own inadequacies, temporarily accepting those limitations, and then thrusting forward again. For international students, changing themselves is the whole point of international education. (Marginson & Sawir, 2011, pp. 137-138; emphasis in original)

The change does not mean that something is wrong with international students before the change, but it means that international students do reflect upon their new situation in the host country and design and redesign their pathways to best meet their needs. The authors argue that “the animating vision of intercultural education is of self-forming individuals engaged with each other, within a common relational space criss-crossed by differences” (Marginson & Sawir, 2011, p. 163). This vision appears to be against common research trends that view international students as culturally deficient, as Marginson and his colleagues have argued many times (see Marginson, 2014, Marginson et al., 2010, Marginson & Sawir, 2011, Ramia et al., 2013). It can also have major implications for higher education institutions that host international students: “The idea of international education as self-formation encourages institutions and teachers to build strong, conscious student agency and work with it rather than suborning or coercing the student” (Marginson & Sawir, 2011, p. 139). In other words,

higher education systems can be more inclusive by listening attentively to what international students have to say about their international education experience.

Spiteri (2017) explains the change process differently but maintains the same complex of content that Marginson and his colleagues introduce. He argues that human beings, including international students, are in constant dialogue with their surroundings. This dialogue, which is not necessarily in the form of a usual conversation, may cause a shift in their values, how they perceive their societies, and where they envisage their stance. It is a combination of interactions, experiences, knowledge construction and self-awareness. Margaret Archer (2007) refers to this dialogue as the internal conversation that every human being has with themselves. According to Archer, this internal conversation shapes human reflexivity. It corresponds with what is happening (context), what matters to a person (values, goals), and what course of action would be the best fit (strategy). And evaluating the context seems to be the first step in every communication.

As Phil Carspecken (1996) argues, no social phenomenon happens in a vacuum. He provides a great example to illustrate the importance and complexity of contextual information. He asks us to imagine a situation in which a child on a playground throws a stone at another child who is standing at a distance, next to a road that borders the playground. What does the reader think is happening? Then, he explains that the boy who was hit by the stone has earlier hit the other boy. What do they think now? But then, he adds that the boy who was hit was not paying attention to a vehicle that was about to hit him. There are three contexts in this example, all of which, although the actors and action are exactly the same, would likely be interpreted differently by readers/observers. This dynamic can apply to intercultural

communication for international students in Aotearoa/New Zealand. It is increasingly crucial for everyone in the twenty-first century to be able to communicate with people of different cultures because the world has never been so intertwined as it is now (Thomas & Inkson, 2017). This interconnection brings with it challenges for higher education. For example, it is important to address the issues pertinent to increasing number of mobile students to enhance equity (Marginson et al., 2010). For the same purpose, critical praxis may be required. Praxis is “reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it” (Crotty, 1998, p. 151). Praxis is the key-element of critical ethnography because it seeks to unmask social phenomena to reveal inequalities and to empower marginalised individuals/groups (Silverman, 2015). Critical ethnography can enable me to disclose power relations at work in order to reveal what is underneath social phenomena such as intercultural communication in higher education.

4.2. Intercultural Communication within the Internationalisation

The number of international students has been increasing in the fast-growing internationalisation practices at higher education institutions (Gribble, 2008). The universities internationalise for different economic, political, social and cultural reasons (Knight, 2004). Yook and Turner (2018) argue that internationalisation of higher education is more of an educational and institutional imperative in a global world of fast and increased movement of ideas, technology and people. However, internationalisation of higher education is a contested topic because every country and every higher education institution in each country determine their internationalisation strategy based on their specific needs (Knight, 2012). Consequently, there is no standard definition for it. Moreover, internationalisation of higher education is a dynamic process which is constantly evolving: “internationalisation is changing the world of higher education, and globalisation is changing the world of

internationalisation” (Knight, 2004, p. 5). Nonetheless, I chose the following definition for internationalisation of higher education, in light of which I will analyse intercultural communication for international students. It is:

the intentional process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions and delivery of post-secondary education, in order to enhance the quality of education and research for all students and staff, and to make a meaningful contribution to society. (de Wit et al., 2015, p. 28)

This definition makes it clear that integration of intercultural dimension into higher education institutions must be both planned for and beneficial to all students, whether local or international. Similarly, Knight and de Wit (1995) claim that “the primary reason for internationalising universities is to increase international and intercultural knowledge and skills of students and to promote research which addresses interdependence” (p. 13). They state that the interdependence happens at different economic, environmental and social levels. However, internationalisation of higher education in Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand is mainly financially driven because the ultimate goal is to generate revenue (see Marginson et al., 2010; Smyth, 2017). As a result, Volet and Ang (2012) consider it very important “to ensure that educational and cultural objectives of the internationalisation are included alongside economic and political agendas” (p. 21). It is an unfortunate reality that international students may be treated as “cash cow” if the social and cultural objectives of internationalisation of higher education are not met (Choudaha, 2017). Meanwhile, intercultural communication in universities is not just about the presence of students from different countries (Volet & Ang, 2012). Multicultural campuses provide the opportunity for intercultural communication to take place, but intercultural communication may only remain a potential if there is no mechanism to exploit the opportunity (see Vaccarino & Li, 2018).

Knight (2014) argues that instead of celebrating cultural diversity, sometimes cultural

homogeneity is promoted by the host countries through internationalisation of higher education, which means intercultural communication is at times a one-way process. In such a context, only international students are required to learn about the culture of the host country, not the other way around:

Often students are expected to “adjust” to local educational practices without regard for their own educational and cultural backgrounds, implicitly modelled as inferior, while local monocultural educational practices continue unquestioned and unchanged. “Culture” is modelled as fixed and determining, and often it is simply assumed that international students must move from old to new culture in order to be academically successful. (Marginson & Sawir, 2011, p. 170; emphasis in original)

However, there is no evidence that cultural background or belief system and values of international students may hinder them to be successful in their academic endeavours, as Marginson et al. (2010) claim: “The notion that internationals must shed their chosen values is repugnant” (p. 441).

To get a better understanding of the term in its New Zealand context, the role of intercultural communication in internationalisation of higher education in Aotearoa/New Zealand and power relations at work need to be critically examined to identify what is beneath the surface, who may gain from it and who may be disadvantaged. Halualani and Nakayama (2010) argue that critical intercultural communication aims to:

pay close attention to and follow how macro conditions and structures of power (the authority of History, economic and market conditions, formal political sphere, institutional arenas, and ideologies) play into and share microacts/processes of communication between/among cultural groups/members. (p. 5; emphasis in original)

It may be via this critical examination that marginalised and/or oppressed groups can be identified. In terms of intercultural communication for international students in Aotearoa/New Zealand, it appears that inequality exists. The first instance of inequality is in terms of hegemony of the English language in English-speaking countries (Altbach, 2007),

including Aotearoa/New Zealand, because international students may not be aware of cultural intricacies of communication in English (Marginson, 2017). Thurlow (2010) explains:

We make meaning together, we learn meaning from each other, we share meaning. If we are to make sense to each other, we have to rely on the conventions of our language use, the traditions of our culture and the patterns of our relationships. (p. 229)

Culture and language are tightly interwoven and for the very same reason, international students may be disadvantaged. They may speak English, but it does not mean that they are aware of the cultural norms (Marginson et al., 2010). In other words, they use English as a means of communicating their own cultural norms. International students are required to have showcased competent levels of English proficiency before their enrolment in English speaking countries' higher education institutions. However, proficiency tests such as IELTS often times prove to be unreliable (Baker & Lenette, 2019; Muller, 2014). Moreover, some scholars say that language is actually a social institution that shapes our thoughts and/or constrains our words (Bakhtin, 1986; Foucault, 1981; Bourdieu, 1991). Hence, English as a second or foreign language may require students to acquire a new thought system because the role of language is not only a means of communication, but it may also act as a tool for thinking.

Cultural and linguistic issues are usually pressing problems for international students, which can make their lives more difficult than those of local students (Marginson, 2012). According to Cazden (2001) language plays three important roles in the context of teaching and learning. These are data communication, founding and keeping social relationships and expressing identity and/or viewpoints of individuals through language. Kettle (2017) argues that "English has become a source of capital, a fact that universities are keen to exploit. English permeates most discussions on international higher education...and [it] is a recurring

theme in the international students' accounts of their study experiences" (p. 56). Furthermore, the hegemony of English in academia and its position as the "international language" poses the threat of linguisticism: "Linguicism refers to ideologies and structures where language is the means for effecting or maintaining an unequal allocation of power and resources" (Phillipson, 1992, p. 55). For international students, it means that academic success is far-fetched if their English is not good enough. In this context, "doing" academic work is very much "doing" English" (Kettle, 2017, p. 56; emphasis in original). English in academia appears to be an imperial language because it gives more power and control to English-speaking countries (Altbach, 2007; Phillipson, 2010). Most of the prestigious research journals are also published in English (Altbach, 2007). If one does not conform to the language and methodologies set by them, s/he will be excluded, according to Altbach (2007). He points out that even in many non-English speaking countries, it is a norm to require their academics to publish in such journals. Moreover, delivery of classes in English has also dramatically increased globally (Altbach, 2007). Similarly, Phillipson (1996, 2010) considers English language to be an imperialistic tongue. He believes that this language is used by the English-speaking countries to dominate over the other regions of the world. Phillipson regards the hegemony of English as a continuum that follows British colonisation to invade non-English-speaking countries. The difference is that the invasion is not through military forces, but through culture. In Phillipson's view, the English-speaking world is divided into centre and periphery, in which the centre belongs to native speakers of English while the periphery is made of people whose English is just their second or foreign language. In this context, the central world of English has access to many of financial, political and technological resources and uses the language in order to expand its hegemonic power. In a similar vein, Tsuda (2010) says that the dominance of English contributes to control of information by English-speaking global powers as 70% of the internet pages are in English. Moreover, he goes on to

argue that the English hegemony is a possible tool to control the minds of people as non-native speakers tend to leave their mother tongues behind in favour of English because they want to have more access to resources. He provides some examples to show that good learners of English will usually be rewarded. For instance, they can end up in well-paid careers because of their English proficiency. Tsuda also gives an example of the Hispanic immigrants in the USA who refuse to educate their children bilingually as English is both more applicable and more prestigious. Such social concepts about the English language may put non-English international students in an unfavourable position in relation to their local counterparts whose English may be their native language. However, the issues pertinent to the global role of English language and their implications for international students should not translate into regarding international students as culturally deficient individuals (Ramia et al., 2013).

4.3. The Importance of Intercultural Communication

Neuliep (2018) counts different benefits for intercultural communication as developing healthy communities, increased commerce, reduced conflict, personal growth, and promoting diversity. Intercultural communication has the potential to be a transformational experience (Marginson & Sawir, 2011) because it helps everyone not only to understand “others,” but also to understand themselves better since “the development of identity and self-realisation are simply not possible without other individuals” (Rösinger, 2018, p. 240). Jackson (2010) reviews relevant studies regarding intercultural communication for international students on the premise that intercultural contact should result in mutual respect and understanding between locals and internationals. She concludes that the success of intercultural communication for international students depends on the quality of their educational experience in light of their expectations. Moreover, cross-cultural contact does not

necessarily result in intercultural communication. It can actually lead to perceiving the host country negatively if the contact is not based on respect and mutual understanding (Hanassab, 2006). Jackson (2010) argues that intercultural communication ought to facilitate a deeper appreciation of one's own culture by exposure to different norms and values. Accordingly, a successful intercultural communication demonstrates how to respect and tolerate different views, avoid stereotyping, experience new cultures and consequently communicate meaning across different cultures. Similarly, Marginson and Sawir (2011) regard cross-cultural and intercultural communication to be different. In their view, both terms refer to a relationship between two distinct cultures, but only in intercultural communication is there a potential for mutual transformation.

International students, however, enter a new environment in their host country, which poses a great information gap for them linguistically, culturally and bureaucratically (Marginson et al., 2010). English spoken in academia may seem very different from the English they learnt at school (Marginson & Sawir, 2011). In fact, international students may think that their English learning was not really helpful because they may not understand any of the spoken English in the first few days after arrival (Marginson & Sawir, 2011). In their classes they may be reticent because they may think they would not be able to keep up with local students' comments or they simply do not find the right words to communicate what they mean (Marginson & Sawir, 2011). Also, they may not be sure about the cultural and bureaucratic norms of the host country. In their new environment, whether on or off campus, their integration to their host community takes place at different levels (Owens & Loomes, 2010). One level is academic, comprised of students, tutors, and administrative staff members. Another level is where integration with people in a broader society happens outside campus (Andrade, 2006a; Rienties et al., 2012). A common trait of all those levels is

“intercultural communication” because inevitably they engage in conversations with local people (Bennett, 2012; Collett, 2015; Deardorff & Jones, 2012; Jackson, 2010; Marginson & Sawir, 2011). Their interaction with the host country can result in a better understanding of themselves as well as the wider community of local people and other internationals (Marginson & Sawir, 2011) or it can lead to forming stereotypical and racist views (Hanassab, 2006; Leask & Carroll, 2011; Marginson & Sawir, 2011). It all depends on “respect,” “openness to learn” and “mutual understanding” (Marginson & Sawir, 2011). It requires some level of empathy, sympathy and tolerance for different world views (Neuliep, 2018). Ideally, integration of international students should be based on “self-determining agency and cross-cultural relations in which both parties change” (Marginson et al., 2010, p. 391). Gudykunst and Kim (2003) similarly define the term as a “process” of exchanging meaning between people of different cultures, which does not necessarily occur only through spoken language. Stier (2006) argues that intercultural communication, like the internationalisation, should be regarded as a “process,” so it is not limited to mere encounters with different cultures. Intercultural communication is incremental knowledge that is built upon every interaction; it has the capacity to transform individuals as well as societies (Marginson & Sawir, 2011). Byram (1997) states that “intercultural communication” means the ability to interact and communicate with people of different cultures. He sees intercultural communication as a “process” that demands reflexivity because one should be able to question and rethink their own values and experiences while she or he stays open to the meanings of the culture with which communication takes place. He also distinguishes between a tourist and a sojourner. A tourist will not necessarily exhibit characteristics of intercultural communication because the contact usually happens at a superficial level; however, a sojourner could actually impact the society in which they live and could be affected by it as well. Having said this, international students appear to belong to the latter

category. They show great transformation both within themselves and their surrounding environment (Marginson & Sawir, 2011). This does not mean that they can change everything. International students make their way through numerous constraints in their host country (Marginson et al., 2010; Marginson & Sawir, 2011).

Intercultural communication is a process – with culture as the main element. Holliday (2009) regards culture as a shared set of norms, ideas, values and ways of thinking between members of society that can separate them from outsiders. He describes the notion of small and large cultures where national or regional categorisations belong to the larger dichotomy within which small cultures of schooling or academia exist. In his view “culture refers to the composite of cohesive behaviour within any social grouping” (1999, p. 247). He believes that even within a university system, for example, culture may be nuanced amongst different faculties as their views and practices may differ. He does not believe if “small” represents a specific size or if small and large cultures are necessarily connected. That is, nationality is not the best framework to describe people’s cultures as in Chinese people portray X or British people act like Y. He argues that culture cannot be a prescriptive homogenising factor but a fluid and dynamic social construct. In a similar fashion, what I try to present in this chapter is the complexity of the nature of encounters when international students attempt to communicate with their local New Zealand community. By no means, nevertheless, do I intend to assign any specific characteristics to specific nationalities here. I use the term *culture* as an indication of contextual elements where the participants come from. I am aware that a nation can represent different cultures. Therefore, it cannot be concluded, for instance, that all New Zealanders are the same because of their Kiwi culture. However, a rather nation-based view of culture is implemented here for the purposes of the study although it may be rather simplistic. After all, the word *nation* itself is used to categorise a community of

students as *inter-national*. Furthermore, I usually focus on intercultural communication between international students and local students and/or the general population of the host country. I acknowledge that intercultural communication is not just bidirectional but multidirectional; however, the emphasis is given to the former in this study because international students are situated within the broader context of Aotearoa/New Zealand in the first place. Of course, they may interact with other international students, but they are all generally positioned within the wider sociocultural context of the host nation. Moreover, my focus on bidirectional intercultural communication is grounded in what the participants have made salient throughout the interviews. A common message of the interviews, for instance, indicated to me that there might be an invisible wall between international students and their local New Zealand community, especially for students who came from non-English-speaking countries. Nonetheless, intercultural communication amongst international students themselves is also noted to some extent.

Some scholars argue that for successful “intercultural communication” to take place, agents need to be inter-culturally competent (see Deardorff & Jones, 2012; Stier, 2006). They suggest a variety of factors that contribute to intercultural competence. It involves content-competency as well as intrapersonal and interpersonal competency according to Stier (2006). He defines content-competency as general knowledge of items both pertaining to “home” and “other” culture. This content-competency does not make one fully culturally functional on its own. Stier continues to say that the other elements of intercultural competence, on the one hand, are cognitive skills such as the ability to put oneself in someone else shoes, and on the other hand, interactive skills, such as understanding linguistic as well as non-linguistic cues of communication, or awareness of cultural norms around the conversations. Intercultural communication requires both sides a degree of vulnerability. They take risk to enter this

“inter” as a new realm, which may not be familiar to them in keeping with their experiences, values, and understanding (Marginson & Sawir, 2011). However, intercultural communication acts as a bridge to connect the two cultures if the agents are eager to know more about one another (Rowe, 2010). Hence, both local and international students need to be open to this new environment (Marginson & Sawir, 2011).

4.4. Intercultural Communication and Power Relations

If both parties enjoy the same degree of power with regard to intercultural communication, then the process is facilitated, but Marginson and Sawir (2011) argue that international students are often regarded as inferior to local students. Similarly, Jones and Jenkins (2007) argue that today’s societies are still divided by economic, cultural and political dichotomies, so it cannot be simply assumed that everyone enjoys the same degree of power in a multicultural educational setting. One should, then, note that “intercultural communication” is not free from “power relations” (see Carspecken, 1996, 1999; Giddens, 1984; Sadan, 2007). Power is an integral element of social relations, which should be discussed in this context to show the big picture (Carspecken, 1996; Giddens, 1984). Power affects every social phenomenon, and it causes inequality because it “differentiates and selects, includes and excludes” (Blommaert, 2005, p. 2). Hence, to better understand the meaning of “inter” in any “intercultural communication” context, the relevant power relations need to be examined (Rowe, 2010). Because of the imbalanced power relations, international students have usually been required to adjust, acculturate or integrate to the host country (Marginson & Sawir, 2011). Local students often do not see the need to engage in communication with international students who are seen as “others” (Marginson & Sawir, 2011). Marginson and Sawir (2011) observe that even the ideas of global citizenship do not give local students a good incentive to connect with international students:

It seems that only the visitors are expected to gain from adjusting. The locals have nothing to learn. There is more than just laziness here. At the bottom of local complacency, this refusal to step through the doorway marked “intercultural” indicates a deep-seated unexamined belief that Western education and Western ways of life are always inherently superior. (Marginson & Sawir, 2011, p. 21; emphasis in original)

Marginson and Sawir (2011) refer to this complacent attitude of superiority as ethnocentrism.

It means that local students may regard their cultural traits to be better than those of the rest of the world. The authors believe one of the key factors that has contributed to this view is research from clinical, applied and cross-cultural psychology:

Too often counselling psychology assimilates individual difference and cultural plurality into an imagined social norm. The imagined final goal is smoothly functioning social equilibrium. This unrealisable utopia has obvious methodological attractions for those who manage large populations on a standard cost basis—including international students in those countries that run international education as a commercial industry, such as Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom. A forward move toward more cosmopolitan international education requires a decisive break from these approaches. Above all, it is essential to set aside ethnocentrism and all other notions premised on the cultural superiority of “the West” (or “Britain” or “America”) over “the Rest,” to place the international students in the centre of the frame, and to open the intercultural encounters to cosmopolitan relationships based on equal respect and appreciation of difference. (Marginson & Sawir, 2011, p. 164; emphasis in original).

This misrepresentation that views international students as culturally and academically deficient may be also due to the main focus of such research on adjustment, acculturation and/or integration of international students as if there is something wrong with them: “little attention is given to international students in their own right, to their needs as opposed to satisfaction levels, or to the “adjustment” of host nations to them” (Ramia et al., 2013, p. 8; emphasis in original). After all, the common belief in the host countries is that international students do not really know what is best for them while the host countries’ educators may know international students even better than they know themselves (Marginson, 2014). And there is “the ethnocentric logic, why else would international students enrol in our institutions, unless to become like us?” (Marginson, 2014, p. 8). Marginson and Sawir (2011) argue that psychology acts as a powerful social science and seeks to normalise human behaviour; however, there is no “normal” culture in intercultural communication. Culture can

simply be a way of life for a community of human beings. Furthermore, human behaviour cannot be mathematised by the use of quantitative research, but this is common through the lens of psychology:

The intention is to freeze-frame that ever-moving complexity with an unreflexive form and certainty that enables the regression-based modelling. Even something as organic, fluid, and open ended as “culture” becomes defined as a tightly bound category. (Marginson & Sawir, 2011, p. 49; emphasis in original)

It appears that psychology is too often in favour of “adjustment” strategies for international students because it “privileges cultural determination and cultural uniformity while problematising cultural difference” (Marginson & Sawir, 2011, p. 49). On the other hand, it is often the international students who should adapt to the host nation’s norms, not the other way around:

There is no need to adjust to the foreign student, it seems, because she/he is here in the country by grace and favour, he/she is temporary, and...she/he is not “one of us.” Although international students are a large population in countries such as Australia, New Zealand and the UK, in a curious sense they are also largely invisible. (Ramia et al., 2013, p. 8; emphasis in original)

The imbalance in power relations is not exclusive to intercultural communication; it exists in internationalisation of higher education as well. In the context of internationalisation, power is in the hands of Western countries that determine the West-to-East or North-to-South direction of the process, as Altbach and Knight (2007) argue. Thielmann (2007) states that “intercultural communication” is not free from dominant power relations because its direction is from West to East as it is the case for the internationalisation of higher education. Bhabha (2004) maintains that many of Western higher education institutions are strongly influenced by such belief systems of superiority whose roots are in Western colonisation. Consequently, local students may view themselves as superior to international students while there is a negative attitude toward international students whose language and culture is different from those of the West. However, “it is vital to abandon Anglo-ethnocentrism and cultural

essentialism— and the underlying assumptions about cultural and educational superiority that support both— so as to move forward” (Marginson & Sawir, 2011, p. 170).

In Aotearoa/New Zealand, Jones and Jenkins (2007) argue that intercultural communication appears problematic even within the local settings between aboriginals and settlers. Pākehā (White European) students sometimes show traces of coloniser attitudes to feel superior to indigenous Māori students (Jones & Jenkins, 2007). Intercultural communication “cannot happen if one is closed to or offended by the contribution of others” (Jones & Jenkins, 2007, p. 136). Jones and Jenkins (2007) give an example of the issues of intercultural communication between Māori and Pākehā at universities in Aotearoa/New Zealand and show how such encounters can exacerbate the tension between the two:

How do they answer questions which already assume a particular dominant perspective? How do they reply to questions (which are more like accusations) such as “why do you [Māori] always focus on the past?” “Can’t we just get on with the present and look to the future?” It may be that the Māori students could explain to their Pākehā classmates that cultural difference in relation to time often creates confusion among Pākehā. Māori understand the past (mua = ahead) as in front of us, and the future (muri = behind) as coming after us. (The future cannot be seen; the past is all that is in view. Therefore it is on the basis of the accessible past that we can move into an unknown future.) This apparently logical response assumes that Pākehā students will, as a result, revise their view that Māori are “stuck in the past”, and “backward looking”. But the Māori cultural explanation may not stop Pākehā saying: “We know that you think the past is “in front”, but that does not get us anywhere with trying to move towards to a better future!” For Māori students, such a response from Pākehā is disappointing, perplexing and hurtful. (p. 139; emphasis in original)

Māori and Pākehā are both local students in Aotearoa/New Zealand, albeit with different cultural backgrounds. The above example shows how the potential of intercultural communication can fuel hostility rather than friendship. It also demonstrates the detrimental impact of imbalance in power relations when it comes to intercultural communication. To apply intercultural communication from theory to practice, it is imperative to fight against ethnocentrism and the ideology of superiority of the Western culture (Marginson & Sawir, 2011). At the core of any successful intercultural communication is the idea of inclusion of

“others,” not their exclusion. If the parallel power relations for intercultural communication exist, then “different” should not translate into “deficient.”

4.5. The Fallacy of International Students’ Cultural Deficiency

A fundamental limitation in much (but not all) of the academic knowledge about international students is failure to grasp the central fact that international students make their own futures, under often-difficult circumstances. These are strong human agents, not weak, fragile, or dependent agents. Yet much of the research, many of the teaching strategies, and some local students fundamentally treat international students as if they are people in learning and cultural *deficit*. (Marginson & Sawir, 2011, p. 10; emphasis in original)

International students are different from local students for a variety of reasons such as their linguistic and cultural differences; however, this does not mean that they are culturally or academically deficient (Heng, 2017; Marginson et al. 2010; Page & Chahboun, 2019).

International students are known to mingle with other international students rather than the locals (Arthur, 2017; Brown, 2009; Montgomery, 2010; Page & Chahboun 2019; Trice, 2007). Forming same-culture groups can help international students share their experiences and receive informal advice (Montgomery, 2010). Marginson et al. (2010) found out that local students were also self-segregating from international students. The authors argue that in practice “institutions expect and encourage students to sustain same-culture networks” (p. 293) because it appears to be an easy way to have international students’ issue resolved, “but informal mechanisms are better for coping than solving” (p. 293). Marginson et al. (2010) claim that another reason for forming same-national groups might be the lack of confidence with the English language:

Language barriers often prevent students from raising problems and establishing ongoing service relationships with university personnel. This is convenient for universities. It protects them from more extensive and intensive servicing responsibilities. It also conceals serious problems, and throws students back onto the less reliable protections and capacities of family and informal same-culture networks (Marginson et al., 2010, p. 292)

Marginson et al. (2010) are not against the same-culture or same-nation support groups of international students as “there is no consistent evidence to show that same-culture networks weaken effective agency or block friendships with locals” (p. 441). Nonetheless, Ramia et al. (2013) argue that universities do not seem to have used the opportunity by these same-culture or same-national groups to develop agency, and to promote autonomy, of international students.

Another issue is that international students throughout the literature are depicted in a way that usually requires them to make contact and engage with local students, which is problematic on two grounds, as Page and Chahboun (2019) claim. Firstly, it is wrong to only expect international students to approach local students. For instance, Marginson and Sawir (2011) argue that “locals, too, need to improve their skills of communication and interaction with people from other cultural backgrounds” (p. 173). Marginson and Sawir (2011) state that intercultural communication is a two-way road, which demands local students to contribute to it, too. However, local students may not have enough incentives to do so. A solution, for example, might be a compulsory course, embedded in local students’ programme of studies, which requires them to engage with international students, as Marginson and Sawir (2011) argue. Secondly, it is a myth to consider non-integration of international students with local students as problematic (Page & Chahboun, 2019). In other words, some international students may be just fine with non-interaction with local students. After all, the main aim of their international journey is the pursuit of knowledge, which does not necessarily entail social interactions, as Page and Chahboun (2019) put forth. Breaking this deficit modelling does not seem to be possible in the neoliberal higher education systems because “it means making the educational task more complex and, in the short term, more expensive” (Marginson & Sawir, 2011, p. 173).

Freeman and Li (2019) maintain that it is not the international students who are deficient, but the foreign environment where they study. In fact, “local educators and local students must change” (Marginson & Sawir, 2011, p. 173) in order to incorporate intercultural elements in teaching and learning. If the lecturers and teachers are trained for teaching and learning in a multicultural setting to incorporate intercultural communication elements into their lessons, they can greatly facilitate the process of intercultural communication in the classroom (Freeman & Li, 2019). Freeman and Li (2019) studied first-year international students’ experiences of intercultural communication in the classroom and discovered that some international students felt ignored by local students in the classrooms as if they were ghosts who did not even exist. Tolerance for different ideas and ways of life, openness to learn about different cultures and awareness of cross-cultural issues are required from both local and international students if successful intercultural communication is envisaged for higher education institutions (Marginson & Sawir, 2011).

4.6. Intercultural Communication within the Wider Context of this Study

The higher education system in Aotearoa/New Zealand is heavily influenced by neoliberal agendas (Collins & Lewis, 2016; Shore, 2010; Smyth, 2017). Research shows that in today’s world, international students may be treated as cash-cow in the neo-liberal system of higher education (Choudaha, 2017, Hil, 2015; Marginson et al., 2010; Marginson & Sawir, 2011; Ramia et al., 2013). Revenue generation and economic rationales are on top of the list for the New Zealand export education system (Marginson & Sawir, 2011; Smyth, 2017). Jiang (2005) finds that the direction of internationalisation of higher education has shifted from “aid” to “trade” in Aotearoa/New Zealand. It started with the Colombo Plan, an intergovernmental organisation that seeks economic and social development of member countries. However, the trend shifted in the 1980s when the New Zealand government

decided to multiply tuition fees for international students (Jiang, 2005). A research report at Victoria University of Wellington revealed that different higher education stakeholders were concerned about the integration of international students into the New Zealand community:

Anecdotal and limited research evidence has further suggested that the integration of international students into our educational institutions and the wider society is a matter of concern expressed by students, teachers and members of the host communities in New Zealand (CACR, 2005, p. iii)

This report was prepared by the Centre for Applied Cross-cultural Research (2005) and included more than 1300 domestic and international students, some key stakeholders, members of community as well as teachers in tertiary education. Some concerns about crimes committed by international students were also raised. Observation of the news about international students in the New Zealand mass media platforms shows that international students are depicted as problematic as if they may have ulterior motives to come to Aotearoa/New Zealand and they may use education as a cover up. For instance, the NZ Herald, a leading news media organisation in Aotearoa/New Zealand, reports that a great number of international students are not genuinely in Aotearoa/New Zealand to study, but to pursue other activities such as immigration, illegal work, or other illegitimate activities (see Laxon, 2016). This incomplete image of international students has been depicted in the media for, at least, the last decade when they were labelled as fraudulent in terms of their prior qualifications or visa application documents (see, for instance, Tan, 2013, 2015). These concerns eventually have led to new legislations to enforce much tighter rules for international students to be granted visas and to stay in the country after graduation (see Davison, 2018). International students have already been under strict surveillance by the immigration authorities (Marginson et al., 2010). International students are also viewed as two-step migrants because many of the graduates seek permanent residency (Hawthorne, 2012). To understand the attitudes of New Zealanders about immigrants, one of the major news agencies in Aotearoa/New Zealand joined Massey University to conduct a survey on

almost forty thousand New Zealanders (Huffadine, 2017). They found that 86 % of respondents believed that migrants should keep their international culture to themselves and should adapt to the New Zealand lifestyle if they intend to live in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Tāmaki Makaurau/Auckland is the main field of research for the current study. It hosts three of the eight universities in Aotearoa/New Zealand. It is the most populous city in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Annually, international students contribute over 2.2 billion dollars to Auckland economy and create over 15,000 jobs in this city (The University of Auckland, 2017e). In 2017, the University had 42,302 students, 7426 of whom were internationals (The University of Auckland, 2018). On their International Office webpage, their aim for international education is clearly stated: “International Education stimulates creativity and innovation, and drives our economy” (The University of Auckland, 2019a). While the economic contribution of international students is pointed out on the University’s website, there is no further evidence for intercultural communication or how international education stimulates creativity and innovation. Under the University’s 2013-2020 Strategic Plan, it is stated:

Through the creation and maintenance of a curriculum that reflects New Zealand and its distinctive place in the Asia-Pacific region, as well as embedding diverse international and intercultural perspectives, we can prepare our students to be citizens of the world. (p. 10)

The University talks about embedded international and intercultural perspectives, but it is not clear how this has been achieved. Also, the meaning of citizens of the world is not explained. Meanwhile, Wang and Liu (2014) argue that terms like “global citizen” or “world-class University” need to be carefully used because these terms sometimes appear to be empty as the main rationale for their existence is due to marketing purposes. In fact, the use of the term “global citizen” might be counterintuitive. For example, Hassner (1998) uses the term “global

citizen” when he refers to refugees around the world: “It is precisely because they are citizens of nowhere that they are potential citizens of the world” (p. 274). It appears the main aim of recruiting international students at the University is based on economic rationales. After all, it is the most tangible outcome. The University neither explains what is meant by intercultural perspectives, nor shows how it measures the outcomes of such perspectives. It seems that intercultural perspectives are only assumed to exist because many international students are present on the University’s campus. However, financial benefits from recruiting international students appear on different webpages of the University. The economic contribution of international students is easily understood, which is not the case for intercultural communication.

Considering the context of internationalisation in Aotearoa/New Zealand, I will discuss the viewpoints of international students that emerged from the interviews. The participants in this study generally expressed willingness to know more about different people from a variety of cultures because it helped them shape and develop their knowledge about the world. This is in line with their pursuit of “qualities of critical global citizenship, such as resilience, empathy, understanding one’s place in the world, and an ethical understanding of inequalities” (Hill, Salter & Halbert, 2018, p. 103). However, there is more to global citizenship than just knowing about other cultures as Orsini-Jones and Lee (2018) say: “A “global graduate” should be able to both recognise and value cultural difference and communicate effectively in a variety of contexts and through a variety of media” (p. 7; emphasis in original). This concept requires a deeper understanding of cross-cultural differences to navigate through them rather than some basic knowledge about different cultures.

4.7. Viewpoints of the Participants

The international students in this study generally sought opportunities not only to get to know people from different cultures, but a number of them were also eager to meet people from their own country, which gave them a sense of relief to feel they were not alone. For instance, Eloney suggested that engaging in intercultural communication is as important as getting acquainted with people from her home country. That is, to alleviate her homesickness and to remind her that she is not alone in confronting the challenging situations in a foreign country:

Even something as simple as socialisation, yes, we are far from home, yes, we are here to mix and mingle with people in New Zealand, but meeting persons with similar culture, once in a blue moon, once in a while, it will help to ease the tension; helps us to feel more at home.

For international students, it is also important that they integrate with their counterparts coming from their home country, not just from the host nation. Perhaps that is the reason international students are known to form same-national groups throughout the literature (Marginson et al., 2010). Similarly, Cam observed the presence of students from her home country on campus, which made her feel at ease. She asserted that she could talk to other Vietnamese students without any linguistic or cultural barrier:

When I study in class with students from many other countries, especially from Asia or Asian countries, I am feeling of community – it's not just me and the White people, we usually have more the same thinking, the way of thinking, and we usually gather together in groups when we approach the class, and we sit together, and we find ourselves closer to those people. It doesn't necessarily mean that I don't talk to other people, especially the Kiwis, but it is easy to talk to people who come from the same area.

However, this is not always true. Siti, for instance, appeared to be conservative about connecting with her Malaysian counterparts. In fact, she did not even want to get in touch with them as she put it: "I guess I am racist toward my own race." She felt more connected to the Western lifestyle. For example, she liked drinking alcoholic beverages, but she said it was not the case for many other Malaysians. When it comes to international students' contact with others, the literature mainly focuses on international students' encounters with local students,

teachers, and broader local community (Page & Chahboun, 2019), yet these comments show that it is also important to study international students' interaction with each other. I asked Juan why international students prefer to connect with each other rather than locals. In response, he asked me what I would do if I was in a new environment and saw someone from my country therein. For him, the answer was self-evident. He claimed that internationals feel more comfortable to engage with students who share linguistic and cultural commonalities:

It's clear you feel safe in your own environment, right? Most people tend to assimilate and the reason for assimilating is to adapt and wanting to be in your own environment per se, like you'd feel more comfortable in your own room rather than if I just put you in a random place with 10000 people.

Manpreet advised of reasons, in his opinion, for forming same culture groups a bit differently:

I think students tend to be more, I think they'll be looking for groups of their common interests, and where I come from, I mean I have been working for 6 years, and then, my thinking will be different, so it's not so easy to find commonalities with the students here, so I try to make friends with people like you, erm, or other graduate or even Bachelors' [degree] students, so I try to make friends with those because the frequency [of thinking] matches.

Similarly, Abyasa mentioned:

What I like most [about studying in New Zealand] is that I get to meet a lot of people from a lot of different countries, so many different countries, and it's like, I think we blend quite well.

However, he was surprised about the presence of too many international students in his classes:

From what I see from my major, we have fewer number of Kiwis, maybe like less than 5% of Kiwis [laughs], yea, we have so many people coming from China, from India, so it's like, sometimes I feel like I'm not studying in New Zealand, I'm like studying in Hong Kong or something [laughs] because we have a lot of Chinese here right now.

Similarly, Ju was surprised that a lot of students at the University happen to be international:

"I think Jacinda [Referring to the New Zealand Prime Minister] wants more domestic students to study at universities, but I do not know why they do not study [laughs]."

But every international student in the current study, including Abyasa, was eager to know people from different cultures. As Anna puts forth:

I'm a psychology student. I'm really interested in world cultures, understanding behaviour, not just in my own region, I think you develop a more holistic understanding of behaviour if you travel and experience different cultures.

Or Ju reflected on her positive experiences that have expanded her views:

I think New Zealand is such a multicultural country, so I am more exposed to different cultures, before that I didn't know much about other cultures, but here I think I know more about the world now, I'm more exposed. In my country there is only one way, we don't know much about other cultures, we see them through movies, the TV news don't tell us everything, so we are narrow minded, but here I'm more open minded and values have changed now. Back in China, I think differently. I didn't know Malaysians too much, I didn't even know they speak Chinese before I came here, so oh, OK, you speak Chinese too, so that's how ignorant was I, yea, and I didn't know, I didn't know Middle Eastern culture much, I knew they were conservative, that's it, nothing much, I didn't know Indian culture that much, we were aware of the Western culture when we were in China, yea, but that's it, not many other cultures, lots of other cultures I didn't know.

It appears that they all had the main prerequisite of intercultural communication: the openness to learn about other cultures (Marginson & Sawir, 2011). However, intercultural communication does not happen automatically (Marginson & Sawir, 2011). Six participants explicitly expressed the need for a systematic plan to engage students in intercultural communication. For instance, Eloney advised:

If the university can have or organise get-togethers...maybe once a term, so at least you get to know who is there, to meet, [and] network...that would be really nice.

Huan also showed a similar attitude about organising events to meet people:

The University itself can organise some events to encourage cultures to exhibit different cultures in New Zealand, I think the University can hold more events.

Their comments are reflected in Leask and Carroll's (2011) argument that there is a need for a mechanism or a forum for students to engage in meaningful intercultural communication to promote mutual understanding. For instance, assigning a local student to an international student as a buddy to help them get to know each other cultures may be useful, as Campbell (2012) claims. After all, one of the aims of intercultural communication is actually to

encourage getting to know different norms and cultures so that deeper understandings may result in reducing conflicts (Neuliep, 2018). At the University, there are occasionally some get-togethers named “Doctoral Morning Teas” where some PhD students gather in a room and listen to a speaker who talks about a topic, relevant to PhD studies. The idea behind these meetings is that there is potential to increase socialisation, but there may not be ongoing contact among participants as Mike responded when I asked him whether he had been to such meetings:

I have, I have, those, generally, ah, yea, I wonder, I'd be more interested to know what that does, I think my experience of those is that students are generally shy and [laughing] sort of...these guys are generally shy and reserved, so getting them to talk to each other is, PhD students, their social skills are not their forte, so getting them to be able to mingle and stuff like that is another thing, you know, they are sort of, I don't mean to generalise, but a lot of them are introverted by nature, so getting them to, you know, feel free to talk to each other, to do that, that was kind of a challenge, um, so I think that Doctoral Teas, I haven't been to any recently, but I feel like people are shy and deferential and just wanting to listen to the speaker and then, you know, disperse. I don't know if your experiences have been different.

And I cannot say that my experience of Doctoral Morning Teas has been different although I would not claim that all doctoral candidates are introverts and/or shy. Perhaps, such meetings need to be redesigned to encourage more meaningful interaction.

Another issue that may hinder the process of intercultural communication is politeness (Marginson & Sawir, 2011). It is closely attached to the use of English language because communication is not all about vocabulary and grammar. Communication is also about pragmatics, register and discourse, which are all about cultural knowledge beyond the linguistic norms. Huan, for example, described his hesitation about starting a conversation in Aotearoa/New Zealand because he was unsure whether he was well-aware of cultural norms to communicate effectively. In spite of this issue, he achieved a good result at IELTS (International English Language Testing System):

Even though we all speak English, I think we still cannot fully understand other people's values and their beliefs, so I think that also cause[s] a gap between people...in future, many companies are also in multicultural environment, so before I get work, it is advantageous for me to communicate with people from different cultural backgrounds, and I think it is a good practice...I think I need to focus more on my manners in case maybe some of my behaviours may offend some others and I think I need more courage to face the communication with others...I have not had such experience yet, but I am just afraid that it may happen.

A successful intercultural communication might be beyond reach if one is not secure to even start a conversation. McCroskey (1997) refers to this instance as “communication apprehension” where a barrier to communication is “an individual's level of fear or anxiety with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons” (p. 78). Effective intercultural communication is not solely based on linguistic features as language is only one of the main factors alongside norms, values, and customs of the other culture.

To facilitate intercultural communication, the university can help students with cultural knowledge about the host country. I do not mean that it should be done simply in a form of a travel brochure, for instance, because culture is not a fixed social construct, but a fluid phenomenon bound by its place in time and space: “Cultures are diverse and dynamic social systems, not static monoliths” (Bandura, 2018, p. 131). What I mean is a safe and engaging environment where locals and internationals can get together. For example, it might be a good idea to organise events for some local and international students to join each other for a couple of hours at weekends to engage in conversations and discuss life in Aotearoa/New Zealand. There is an orientation day for international students at the University, but as Siti said: “too much information is given in only a two-hour session.” Such an orientation day may confuse international students rather than helping them with a better understanding.

If the right mechanism to manage intercultural communication is absent, then there may be a risk of forming negative ideas about other cultures (Hanassab, 2006; Marginson & Sawir, 2011; Ramia et al., 2013). For example, Anna expressed unpleasant experiences with her local counterparts. In an event that she referred to as “shocking,” she narrated a story where she was totally ignored by her local classmate on two different occasions when she was outside her office although she had regular greetings with that person back at the office. She said she did not know what to make of it and how to perceive these actions. Then she concluded that perhaps they did not want to interact with her outside of the office. This had given her a lot of anxiety when she presented her research in front of the class as she did not feel welcomed. She continued to say that she still felt emotional about this event, and she has never been treated this way before although she had studied in two different countries, other than her home country, for her BA and MA studies. Aotearoa/New Zealand was her third international experience. She also stated that these events made her distance herself from “the others” even at the office. I asked her if she thought there was any chance for this incident to be a simple misunderstanding, but her firm assertion was that this has been continuous, and she has reflected upon it a lot — this was beyond a cultural misunderstanding to her.

Marginson and Sawir (2011) state: “If the international student experiences stereotyping, abuse, or discrimination, then her or his engagement with and learning from people in the country of education is more restricted than it might otherwise have been” (p. 139). When I asked her about the New Zealand culture, she told me:

It is very diverse; I am not sure what New Zealand culture is...you can try different foods and you can go to different events, but culture is something in-group and if you are not in that in-group then you are not going to be part of it.

She found the New Zealand culture to be very distant from hers. Marginson and Sawir (2011) consider openness to other cultures to be the steppingstone in any intercultural communication setting, but it appears that Anna saw the doors closed to her.

In another instance, Eloney was eager to know about different cultures, but she was reserved when it came to the Middle East. She referred to engaging into conversation with Middle Eastern students as “tricky.” Subsequently, I asked her why she had that idea. She elaborated:

Maybe you would have to excuse my ignorance based on what is in the media; however, they have been, in terms of the media, Middle East is a big place, at least Asia is a big place, and there is always talk about one culture and in my eyes you are all the same, but some persons may find that thinking to be offensive that you are all similar, for example, I do not know what the interaction would be like between an Israeli and a Palestinian or I do not know. It is tricky because of politics; it should not be tricky because you are all from the same place, it is a similar culture, there are just differences because I am looking from Caribbean, very far away, it should not be tricky. Actually, in an academic setting where we should be able to put our differences aside to elevate humanity, you know, but I am just weird [laughs].

She advocated getting to know cultures that she was familiar with, yet she resisted getting to know cultures that she was unfamiliar with, which appears to be against the basic tenets of intercultural communication, as Marginson and Sawir (2011) advise. She stereotyped Middle Eastern people as being “all the same.” This all-the-same categorisation seems faulty because not all Arabs, Indians, Persians, or Europeans are the same. In another instance, Ju referred to international students as “black” and when I further asked her why she used that dichotomy, she did not have a clear idea why she had stereotyped. She thought she may have said so because of the colour of their hair. She also thought most of the students in her field, and some others, were internationals whose skin or hair colour might be different. This all-the-same categorisation type appears to be similar to Eloney’s. According to Jackson (2010), stereotyping is a sign of failure in achievement of intercultural communication. Stereotyping is obviously against the openness to learn about different cultures (Marginson & Sawir, 2011). Even South Korean and Chinese students are different, so they should not be simply categorised under the “Asian” dichotomy (Moon et al., 2020), but Ramia et al. (2013) state that the term Asian is closely associated with Chinese students when it comes to international education. Traces of mass media in forming this kind of stereotyping could be noticed and she acknowledged it herself. Chomsky and Herman (2002) argue that the mass media acts in

favour of people in power who fund it, and their interest is not always to benefit the public, but their hidden agenda. Middle East has been a conflict zone for a long time and the Western media has represented it as the centre of war and terror (Avraham, 2013). Similar attitudes of conservatism can apply to Chinese students. For instance, Li (2007) states that there was negative publicity about Chinese students via the New Zealand media at the beginning of the twenty first century. Ramia et al. (2013) confirm this negative representation in Aotearoa/New Zealand:

The use of the generic categories swept up and “Othered” every student in New Zealand who came from East Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia or the Middle East. Reports highlighted the involvement of “Asian students” in alleged crimes. Chinese students were said to be bad drivers, a new threat to safety on the New Zealand roads. They had poor communication skills. They were lowering the standard of tertiary education. They were crowding into unsanitary inner-city dwellings. “Asian street smells” from non-European restaurants in the largest city, Auckland, were destroying the traditional urban ambience. In other words, “Asian students” were incompatible with the New Zealand way of life. (Ramia et al., 2013, p. 2; emphasis in original)

However, Eloney’s openness to get to know different cultures was more evident when I asked her how the University could improve her intercultural experience:

I honestly think that professors, members of the faculty, they also need to be encultured, and when I say encultured, I use it in the English sense, they need to learn about other cultures, so they would not be tempted to show their particular bias – any particular bias. If I know about your language, your culture, your country, then I would be more likely to accept you as an equal, rather than automatically put up a figurative wall between us.

She was annoyed by the administration staff’s assumption that her English would not be good enough because of her “international” status in Aotearoa/New Zealand. However, her first language was English, so she generally encouraged the idea that staff members at the university should increase their intercultural communication competence by enriching their knowledge about different countries and their cultures around the world. She also emphasised that intercultural communication should not be exclusive to only students as she talked about the importance of intercultural communication among academics:

I think having students, for example, in my programme from different parts of the world has caused tutors to expand their outlook, so instead of just thinking oh teaching

this material pertains to this origin, they had to expand it to be more global to make it more applicable. I hope that is the same in the other faculties and all the other course areas.

Irrespective of her conservative view towards Middle Eastern students, she apparently advocated intercultural communication for everyone involved in higher education because the interconnected world requires global citizens, who are inter-culturally competent, as Spiteri (2017) argues. Perhaps, if she was provided with an environment to engage in conversation with Middle Eastern students, she would have had the opportunity to develop a more inclusive intercultural awareness. Collett (2015) states that intercultural communication should be practised by everyone who is involved in higher education. She reiterates that everyone, irrespective of their rank or position, has a responsibility to be inter-culturally competent and to engage in relevant activities accordingly. Eloney's comments are also in line with the definition of internationalisation by de Wit et al. (2015), in which intercultural aspects of internationalisation are noted and the intended outcomes of the process are to be for everyone involved, not just students. The definition focuses on the words "intentional" and "meaningful," so intercultural communication cannot be considered to be a part of successful internationalisation if it is not actually planned for. Moreover, the outcome of intercultural communication at higher education institutions needs to be "meaningful" which may be different from merely knowing which languages or foods are used in other nations.

It is not only the failure of intercultural communication that may be problematic, but also the negative ideas that may be formed as a result of unsuccessful cross-cultural contact (Arkoudis et al., 2018; Hanassab, 2006; Leask & Carroll, 2011; Marangell et al., 2018; Marginson & Sawir 2011). For instance, Siti who was going through her final year of studies in Aotearoa/New Zealand considered New Zealanders to be hypocrites. She believed that most of the advertisements about internationalisation in Aotearoa/New Zealand have been

economic with the truth because they do not mention anything about the dark side of internationalisation, which would be the exploitation of international students as a source of cheap labour and/or treating them as cash cow. Mike also regarded the main role of international students in Aotearoa/New Zealand as that of a cash cow. Siti also stated: “New Zealanders are smiling and friendly, but it does not mean that they want to be your friend.” She thought friendliness of New Zealanders is something pertaining to their culture; however, she did not consider it to be genuine. She concluded that the main aim of internationalisation for New Zealand is revenue generation while international students are merely the cash cow, and their humanity and aspirations might not be respected. It appears that the voices of international students may have not been heard by appropriate authorities when the official reports of national surveys, like the one presented by Ward and Masgoret (2004) to the New Zealand Ministry of Education, indicate general satisfaction of international students in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Another statistics website, whose purpose is to provide official information for the education sector and Ministry of Education in Aotearoa/New Zealand, talks about the same national survey which was done in 2004:

The results of the survey indicate that increasing the frequency and enhancing the quality of intercultural contact between international and domestic students merit high priority in New Zealand educational institutions (Education Counts, 2018).

It is surprising that in the fast-paced and globalised world of today, results of the same survey are still used as a marketing strategy even 14 years after its original publication. Yet, another survey of the same kind, *The Satisfaction of International Students in New Zealand Universities and ITPs*, which was published by a private company called Business and Economics Research Limited (Generosa, Molano, Stokes, & Schulze, 2013), signals high rate of satisfaction by international students in Aotearoa/New Zealand. However, the New Zealand International Students’ Association asks the authorities to pay heed to voices of

international students and raises concerns about the international students' experiences in Aotearoa/New Zealand (NZISA, 2019).

I had an informal meeting with a high-ranked official at the University when I interviewed him. I stressed that there are numerous issues with internationalisation of higher education. He agreed that some issues exist, but he justified overlooking them according to the business imperatives and marketisation of higher education. This attitude towards higher education is noticed by international students. For instance, Siti said:

Internationalisation for me is very financially-driven and as we all know in New Zealand, the international education is a 5-billion-dollar industry; it is super annoying to me because they see international students as just money, and then, I know from all the initiatives that the government is trying to do and the things that I am part of, they try to change that narrative that international students are not just money: they bring value to this country, they bring the world to you, they can open your mind, you can learn a lot of things from them, you can learn about other cultures, they can help you make things more productive, they bring more ideas, but it is just stories that people want to create and that is what people are trying to use for advertising which is super, super annoying to me because when I see the advertisements, I can see how different it is in reality when you come to New Zealand. And then, [sighs], and yea, the thing when I am part of certain things, which is trying to advertise how great the international education, the industry here, is – I'm like it's not that great guys, please! [laughs] All these things that they are trying to sell, it depends how the people are active in trying to seek that. Some people come to New Zealand, a lot of them from the Malaysian community, I'm talking about the Malaysian community, they just stick with the Malaysians here and you cannot blame the government for the choices these people make, so these people, they are mostly choosing not to try, to learn things from the locals, but also, it's not just that, it's possible that the locals are not very welcoming as, as, as it has been advertised to be. Of course, when they come, they try to be friendly with the locals and they do a lot of things and then they realise I don't feel connected, I don't feel that I belong, I feel scared, and all that, so they just go back to where it's comfortable. Because I went through that, I pushed through it but not a lot of people will do that and it's just more comfortable to stay with your own people.

Siti denounced (over)commercialisation of higher education. She stated that the host country, their government, or the University may have not caused this situation directly, but they can certainly improve it. She argued that an international student who has made some effort to integrate with the New Zealand community and feels not welcomed, not connected, and not

belonged into that environment, may eventually prefer to engage with a community to which s/he feels closer.

Participants also mentioned that language barriers played an important role whether their intercultural contact was successful or not. Cam regarded the language barrier as “a big problem.” Mike questioned the reliability of English proficiency tests as he did not find international students to be competent and confident in conversations or within their academic endeavours. This has been pointed out by some other researchers (Baker & Lenette, 2019), who think English proficiency tests, such as the International English Language Testing System, may not be reliable measurements. This is because students who were identified as competent users of the English language could not perform well academically due to their low level of English proficiency, which is contradictory to their test results (Baker & Lenette, 2019). John referred to the “language barrier” as an issue in his intercultural experience although his first language was English. I asked him why, and he regarded “accent” and “slowed down conversation” in Aotearoa/New Zealand to be the items that he needed to get used to. He added that accent was not much of an issue when he talked to internationals although English may be their third or fourth language because he had similar interactions back in the US. John regarded his interactions with internationals in Aotearoa/New Zealand to be extremely rewarding because it gave him a chance to see the world through them and understand how they do things in their parts of the world:

I've never been in a situation that is so diverse where I would be in a class and I'd be the only American, it was unique, back home, I mean I played a Rugby team, so there was a few international students that would be from a country that played Rugby and, you know, would be on my team, but I mean, if you were in the area that you grew up in or from that state, like, exotic people would be just from the neighbouring state, so it's definitely a huge, huge growth experience for me to be able to work with that, that being said, it's been a huge challenge, because of one – language barrier, cultural differences and stuff, but, I mean, but that's a part of it too, I mean you get to learn that there's more than just yourself and the big thing is getting that understanding that

you may have a way of doing something and the way that you're thinking about it, but there's merit in other ways of doing and thinking about it and blending those together to get a better outcome cause if you had another person doing and thought the same and acted the same as you, that's almost as the same as yourself, so in that, it's been very challenging.

However, not all interactions are positive. For instance, Laura said that New Zealanders are conservative which may make them to be negative, at least, in terms of research:

What I felt is that when you're surrounded by Kiwis, they kind of have a bit more of, erm, conservative mindset when it comes to like, erm, work in a way that, erm, I don't know if it's the physical world because they're so far away from everything that they haven't connected with other people enough or what, but the problem is just that they're kind of a bit more negative, so I felt like that the workplace, my workplace, is particularly very, quite, negative, so like students are a bit more, it's kind of a bit over toxic environment if you want [laughs], so they're a bit more negative when it comes to research there, they nag a lot, and it's not something that I'm used to because I'm usually very super optimistic, very motivated and driven, but yea, that's what I would say.

On a brighter side, James stated that his intercultural experience led him to a better understanding of his own culture and position of his country in the world. He said that there were a lot of political problems in Kenya, and he thought he lived in one of the worst countries in the world. However, after closely getting to know different cultures, he said: "Now, I think the situation in Kenya is not that bad after all." James regarded his international education experience to be eye opening:

Politics is basically the same all over, everybody has problems with their political leaders, everybody has their own political problems, everybody has their own religious conflicts, you talk to people and realise that it doesn't matter where people come from, you want the same things, you'll have the same dreams and aspirations, it teaches you to realise that maybe we're not completely messed up where we come from. This is how the world works. That's a good thing for me. It's eye opening.

James' statements might show how effective intercultural communication can be in terms of personal growth, raising awareness, and reducing conflicts, as Neuliep (2018) suggests.

To achieve successful intercultural communication in higher education, it appears imperative to note that "respect" and "mutual understanding" are the foundation of any successful intercultural communication (Marginson & Sawir, 2011; Neuliep, 2018). As Marginson and

Sawir (2011) put forth, respect requires balanced power relations to show due regard for the feelings, wishes, or rights of others. Intercultural communication seems far-fetched if superiority of the West views the rest of the world as inferior because then there would be no willingness to learn from non-Westerns by the West. Neuliep (2018) argues that intercultural communication requires some level of sympathy, empathy, and the attempt to view the world through different perspectives by different sides to achieve mutual understanding. Marginson and Sawir (2011) recommend three steps to improve the process of intercultural communication in English speaking higher education, where more than 50% of global international students are hosted. Firstly, international students need to be better informed about the host country, supported in their English use and enhanced in their intercultural competence. Secondly, structured mixing arrangements should be in place to engage international and local students in conversation and communication. Finally, there needs to be some “work on the attitudes and competences of local students (and staff)” (Marginson & Sawir, 2011, p. 174; emphasis in original). Ethnocentrism should be challenged, and local students should be encouraged to engage with their international counterparts on campus and beyond (Marginson & Sawir, 2011).

4.8. Conclusion

Internationalisation is an inevitable and necessary part of higher education in a globalised world (Arkoudis et al., 2018; Gregory, 2018; Kalafatelis, de Bonnaire, & Alliston, 2018; Marangell et al., 2018; Mwangi et al., 2018; Sa & Sabzalieva, 2018; Universities New Zealand, 2018; Wang, 2018), which needs to include intercultural communication as its integral element to achieve its non-economic aims (Deardorff & Jones, 2012; Vaccarino & Li, 2018; Volet & Ang, 2012). Spiteri (2017) argues that “multicultural education is based on the interaction among individuals who are free to be themselves and who each have a

richness of personal qualities and aptitudes” (p. 54). However, intercultural communication may not happen on its own just because local and international students are on campus and classrooms in close proximity to each other (Bennett, 2012; Knight, 2011; Leask & Carroll, 2011; Lee et al., 2012; Marginson & Sawir, 2011). In fact, Rost-Roth (2007) states that there is a need for training in intercultural communication as it cannot be automatically successful. For example, Campell (2012) proposes assignment of a local student as a buddy to an international student so that they both learn about their different cultural aspects. However, it is not usual for academic staff to undergo formal training to be inter-culturally aware and competent, especially in its New Zealand setting according to research findings of Vaccarino and Li (2018) at Massey University — one of the eight universities in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

People from different cultures and backgrounds co-exist at universities and intercultural training appears to be helpful in avoiding misunderstandings and stereotyping when they encounter each other (Marginson & Sawir, 2011). Nonetheless, international students are generally in favour of getting to know new people, cultures and norms if there is a safe environment where this can be achieved and enjoyed (Marginson & Sawir, 2011). In a report by the New Zealand International Students’ Association (NZISA, 2019), higher education institutions in Aotearoa/New Zealand were urged to act upon international students’ voice rather than using them as cash cow if the internationalisation of higher education in Aotearoa/New Zealand is to be enjoyed by everyone involved. It is obvious that “intercultural education in the English-speaking countries could be much better than it is” (Marginson & Sawir, 2011, p. 21), because the increasing multicultural nature of university campuses can provide great potentials for the successful achievement of intercultural communication.

Intercultural communication is not limited to international and local students, but it can be extended to international students and their teachers (Doyle et al., 2017), or international students and their local community (Hanassab, 2006; Leask & Carroll, 2011), or even among international students themselves as the findings of this study have shown. International students are not all the same. For them, the intercultural communication depends on their access to resources, agency, reflexivity and the attitude(s) of local community about them (Marginson & Sawir, 2011). Overall, “intercultural learning in higher education is not going to happen simply because it is imagined in theory and asserted as a good idea” (Marginson & Sawir, 2011, p. 10). Marginson and Sawir (2011) argue that amendments need to be made if the situation is to be improved. In a similar vein, Deardorff and Gaalen (2012) recommend some strategies to foster intercultural communication at higher education institutions. For example, curriculum content should include materials from different cultural perspectives to promote intercultural communication and its learning outcomes. They also mention establishing systems to connect international students with the local community; specifically stating what is desired to be seen in a global-citizen graduate in terms of intercultural communicative competence; providing safe and relaxed atmosphere to engage international and local students in meaningful interactions; introducing intercultural training schemes for staff and academics; and inviting guest speakers from a variety of cultures and backgrounds to talk about their experiences and viewpoints for academics, staff, students, and administrators.

Marginson and Sawir (2011) believe that successful intercultural communication requires balanced power dynamics. However, inadequate support for international students might cause disequilibrium in power relations (Marginson et al., 2010). Jackson (2010) argues that international students may simply need some support, especially in the early days of their

sojourn to cover the information gap; however, “resources for support services are limited in large-scale commercial international education, of the type in the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand, where the purpose is to maximize net revenue per student” (Marginson & Sawir, 2011, p. 120). Andrade (2006b), likewise, claims that international students should be supported by the higher education institutions to which they are admitted because it is not ethical for them to be left on their own to cope with the issues of living in a new environment. Accordingly, I discuss the relationship between the bureaucracy of neoliberal higher education and the support mechanisms for international students in the coming chapter.

Chapter Five: Supporting International Students through the Bureaucracy of Neoliberal Higher Education

For more than three decades, universities around the world have been assailed and assaulted by the tenets of neoliberalism—marketisation, managerialism, audit accountability, entrepreneurialism, competitive individualism, rating and ranking performance, and internationalisation. (Smyth, 2017, p. 56)

This chapter seeks to show the impact of neoliberalism on higher education institutions and their students. It then argues that the main aim of bureaucracy in the contemporary higher education may be supporting neoliberal agendas rather than supporting academics or students. In other words, neoliberalism operates through bureaucracy. Next, the chapter evaluates the neoliberal higher education system of Aotearoa/New Zealand to better understand the position of international students within its system. Finally, the chapter ends by analysing the international students' experiences, including four example stories of my autoethnographic reflections, in this study.

5.1. The Context of Neoliberal Higher Education

In order to understand how excessive bureaucracy can negatively impact international students' experiences, one first needs to understand how neoliberalism has affected higher education. Olssen and Peters (2007) state that neoliberalism shifted the aims and missions of higher education institutions:

The traditional professional culture of open intellectual enquiry and debate has been replaced with a[n] institutional stress on performativity, as evidenced by the emergence of an emphasis on measured outputs: on strategic planning, performance indicators, quality assurance measures and academic audits. (p. 313)

For Olssen and Peters (2007), neoliberalism is linked to globalisation, but it is also a political imposition that contributes to the hegemonic economic discourse of Western nations.

According to Smyth (2017), neoliberalism has detrimentally affected higher education institutions globally because it has produced a toxic culture of economic competition and

privatisation that works against the idea of universities as hubs of critical thinking. He regards neoliberal universities to have lost sight of the actual meaning of education because they have turned it into a business enterprise. He argues that neoliberal universities are not in favour of critical thinking, but they promote conformist views that lead to what Smyth (2017) calls structural stupidity. He argues that critical thinking may discover the failure of neoliberalism, which is against neoliberal agendas. For instance, there is an intense competition among neoliberal universities for global rankings and league tables whose systems and mechanisms appear to be flawed (Altbach, 2013b; Altbach, Rumbley, & Reisberg, 2009), which may be revealed through critical research. He also warns about the dangers of the imbalance in power relations between policymakers, academics and students, and argues that “power” in neoliberal higher education systems has always disguised itself as their saviour from chaos in the form of efficiency, transparency and accountability. He argues that everyone in a neoliberal university should submit to market logics, which requires non-academic managers to ensure the submission. Smyth (2017) states that “power in universities has become concentrated more and more in the hands of non-academic managers” (p. 16) because they are often at the top of the decision-making hierarchy and that vice-chancellors as effective CEOs have the ultimate power. In addition, for Giroux (2002), neoliberalism has caused higher education institutions to shift from serving the public good by monitoring and fighting injustices and inequalities in society to serving the private good of self-interested individuals who benefit from higher education study to augment their own lives. He argues that commercialisation, privatisation and deregulation of higher education serve marketisation, which fosters individualism, competition and consumption. In other words, everything produced at a neoliberal university should have some financial value. This value can come from research grants, students’ tuition fees, or from items that lead to such financial gains such as status, rankings and the number of citations. Nevertheless, it is not easy to fight

back against neoliberalism because it is a ubiquitous force in the modern world (Clarke, 2008). In Aotearoa/New Zealand, Collins and Lewis (2016) argue that higher education has been impacted by neoliberal government policies over the last thirty years in that it is seen as a powerful export industry and contributor to the country's economy. Smyth (2017) regards Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand as the leaders of neoliberal higher education. Shore and Davidson (2014) say: "As an early pioneer of market-led institutional reforms and New Public Management policies, New Zealand arguably has one of the most "neoliberalised" tertiary education sectors in the world" (p. 12; emphasis in original).

In such an environment, academics may be co-opted by entrepreneurial, individualised and competitive aspects of neoliberalism when their work is guided by market-driven agendas (Shore, 2010), while students are considered to be consumers of education as a marketised commodity in the form of qualifications (Giroux, 2002). For Davies (2005), neoliberalism acts through subjectivity. Academics can only survive if they consent to be a subject of neoliberal forces, which promote economic gains from marketising higher education as it needs competition to maintain profitability. In doing so, "it undermines the very value and meaning of academic life" (Davies, 2005, p. 4). Davies (2005) states that neoliberalism puts the responsibility on individuals to be successful. Hence, there is no responsibility left for society. For instance, employees need to upskill in order to have a job in a casualised market. The market is not responsible if they cannot secure any employment though. There is no duty of care in neoliberalism because its language is devoid of humanity (Davies, 2005). In other words, governmentality of neoliberalism is achieved through subjectivity of individuals. There is a need then for the neoliberal systems to maximise surveillance because there is no trust in individuals in such systems (Davies, 2005). That is where auditing and measurement of outcomes for academics start because every subject must be closely monitored in a

neoliberal system (Davies, 2005). Lorenzini (2018) states that there is an illusion of freedom for individuals in a neoliberal system, but the freedom lasts only if the individuals act as subjects of neoliberalism: “far from being emancipatory, neoliberalism is inherently oppressive because it perpetuates and radicalises the economic and social domination of the few over the many” (p. 154). Humanity is not a concern for neoliberalism, but the key factor for it is marketing schemes in order to sell (Davies, 2005).

The drive to marketise education, as a characterisation of neoliberalism, encourages universities to view students as consumers (Smyth, 2017). This consumerist view of students has made higher education a lucrative business (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Fairclough and Wodak 2008; Morley, Marginson & Blackmore, 2014; Wihlborg, 2019) and “a state-facilitated means of capital accumulation in the neoliberal era” (Stein & Andreotti, 2017, p. 173). However, students don’t see themselves as mere consumers, as Giroux (2002) claims: “students are refusing to be treated as consumers rather than as members of a university community in which they have a voice in helping to shape the conditions under which they learn and how the university is organised and run” (p. 454). For instance, the New Zealand International Students’ Association raised concerns about the treatment of international students as cash cow (NZISA, 2019). Andrade (2006a) argues that, instead, international students’ voice should be heard as active members/stakeholders of higher education institutions. Andrade (2006b) calls for universities to enable international students to be heard through qualitative data from face-to-face interviews rather than statistical data from surveys, which do not have detailed information, so that universities can understand international students’ experience better and support them more effectively. Similarly, Smyth (2017) says:

There is a conspicuous absence of studies that give existential accounts of what life is like for students in the contemporary university. We need to know more about the

nature of the stresses and strains, and the consequences these market-driven distortions have for the learning experiences of students, their lives and futures. (p. vii)

The marketised view of higher education as a commodity for sale has created higher education institutions that have made it easier for their students to pass the courses by lowering the pass grades to increase economic profitability of their organisation (Eagle & Brennan, 2007; Gusterson, 2017; Hil, 2015). Corruption, fraudulent credentials, and degree mills are the other issues of such a view towards students (Altbach, 2012; Gusterson, 2017), which have adversely affected internationalisation of higher education as well (Knight, 2015). Giroux (2002) says that students are considered consumers in such a neoliberal system because neoliberalism's concern is not higher education per se, but economic profitability although "many students reject the model of the university as a business, which increasingly views students as consumers, the classroom as a marketplace, and the public space of the university as an investment opportunity" (p. 454). Furthermore, Nash (2019) argues that the consumerist perspective about students would be against the main mission of higher education systems, which is promoting an "open-ended search for deep understanding" (p. 184).

English-speaking countries tend to treat international students as consumers for economic gains (Marginson et al., 2010; Marginson & Sawir, 2011; Ramia et al., 2013). Poole (2016) confirms that in "Australia, Britain, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, and the United States, "internationalisation" of university campuses is a profitable venture – big business" (p. 66; emphasis in original). And, indeed, according to Education New Zealand (2019), in a report announced by the New Zealand's Education Minister, Chris Hipkins (2018), international education contributed more than 5.1 billion dollars (NZD) to the country's economy and supported 49,631 jobs in 2017, which makes the export education industry its fourth biggest export earner.

The extensive economic view of neoliberalism about universities has shifted the aims of these higher education institutions. For Smyth (2017), neoliberalism has changed universities from places where knowledge should act in the cause of social justice into places of “pathological organisational dysfunction” (p. 5), where competition, commercialisation and marketisation are promoted. Furthermore, researchers have warned policymakers of the perils of excessive commercialisation and marketisation in the internationalisation of higher education (see Altbach, 2012, 2013a; Altbach & Welsh, 2015; Knight, 2015a) because they can change cooperation and collaboration between higher education institutions into intense competition, cause corruption, and endanger the quality of higher education. Whelan (2015) states that there are a lot of challenging topics around neoliberal universities including marketisation, commercialisation, managerialism and privatisation. Neoliberalism is haphazard, ubiquitous, and a very powerful force that can be viewed from different perspectives (Clarke, 2008), but for the most part in higher education, neoliberalism can be seen as a drive to promote revenue-raising agendas, auditing academic productivity, and commodification and marketisation of knowledge (Smyth, 2017). Bureaucracy, especially in its form of centralised top-down management, is an organisational element of such a consumer-driven system, where financial efficiency is the key to stay competitive internationally and to manage resources better; however, it often acts counterintuitive when the whole system becomes more inefficient (Graeber, 2012, 2015; Martin, 2016). In other words, bureaucracy may act to ensure the economic efficiency of neoliberal systems. Martin (2016) says that vice-chancellors in neoliberal universities invariably seek to show “growth” in their university’s performance. This growth can be translated into the increased size of their universities via the number of full-fee-paying international students, research publications, the number of staff and lecturers or the amount of revenue vice chancellors manage to bring to their universities. The growth is needed by vice-chancellors because they “feel it is essential to demonstrate to

those who appointed them that numbers have gone up during their period in office, not least to justify the sizeable salary increases they have come to expect as a right” (p. 10). He argues that the growth in a neoliberal university is not about quality, but it is a numbers game. Nash (2019) states that excessive bureaucracy in higher education exists because the number of students has been increasing as a result of the growth, but Martin (2016) argues that bureaucratic features of management are increased in line with the growth of neoliberal universities in order to increase the control over the system for the managers. However, Nash (2019) states that bureaucracy in itself is not the problem, but the issue lies with the way it is implemented and utilised. She argues that bureaucracy is not all negative, and that *marketising bureaucracy* differs from *socialising bureaucracy*. The former is in the name of consumer choice to promote neoliberalisation and involves ranking systems of higher education institutions, while the latter is in favour of impartiality to promote academic practices for the value of education (Nash, 2019). Socialising bureaucracy provides freedom of localised management to increase academic freedom, creativity and autonomy, rather than providing a rigid centralised top-down managerial system, as Nash (2019) argues.

5.2. Situating International Students within the Bureaucracy of Neoliberal Higher Education in Aotearoa/New Zealand

Poole (2016) says that bureaucracy has negatively impacted higher education institutions as well as everyone who is involved with these places of critical thinking and academic freedom. It is because the rigid nature of bureaucracy limits creativity and innovation (Poole, 2016). Academics in a neoliberal system are encouraged to follow a market-driven agenda, which focusses on economic profitability (Shore, 2010). Similarly, bureaucratic features of neoliberalism have impacted internationalisation of higher education. For instance, de Wit

(2018) writes about the negative impact of bureaucratic processes on internationalisation of higher education on the University World News website:

However, all too often, decisions around internationalisation are taken by a select group of senior leaders with academics and administrators simply expected to implement those decisions and students expected to accept internationalisation in whatever form it is offered... This bureaucratisation of internationalisation isolated academics as well as administrators from its further development.

He does not ask for bureaucracy to be removed altogether but believes excessive bureaucracy aggravates the situation. In his view, the positive way forward would be giving back the responsibility to academics and administrative staff not only to implement the managerial decisions, but also to take part in making those decisions in the first place. What he proposes is something like what Nash (2019) refers to as socialising bureaucracy: “Socialising bureaucracy encodes the ethos of impartiality in practices that support academic judgement – both against marketisation and against abuses of collegiality” (p. 178). Nash (2019) divides socialising bureaucracy into formalisation of equal treatment and contractualisation of learning. The former relates to the selection criteria for recruitment of academics and/or their promotion, while the latter corresponds to setting guidelines to both assess students’ performance and to evaluate teaching practices.

Scholars like Giroux (2002) go a step further and argue that even students should be able to contribute to the decision-making process at higher education institutions if these places are to be looked upon as democratic places that act for the public good of society. Likewise, the New Zealand International Students' Association (NZISA, 2019) asked universities in Aotearoa/New Zealand to have international students involved in the decision-making process with regard to internationalisation of higher education. However, the bureaucracy at the University appears to be more similar to what Nash (2019) refers to as the marketising bureaucracy, which advances neoliberal agendas: “Marketising bureaucracy is, in the classic

Weberian sense, means–end oriented, where the ultimate value is money” (p. 190). Shore (2010) states that neoliberal higher education system of universities in Aotearoa/New Zealand is derived from the wider national agendas of the New Zealand Government. Production of wealth from the knowledge economy has been at top of the neoliberal agenda through the New Zealand Governments since the 1980s (Shore, 2010). In fact, Smyth (2017) regards Aotearoa/New Zealand as one of the leaders of neoliberal higher education world-wide.

The key element of management in neoliberal universities is bureaucracy (Martin, 2016). A major bureaucratic feature of internationalisation of higher education in Aotearoa/New Zealand is the legislation for education providers to meet the pastoral needs of international students, the Code of Practice, with which international education providers in Aotearoa/New Zealand must comply (Ramia et al., 2013). It was introduced in 2001 and came into effect following the discussions about improving the quality of education offered to international students and also improving support systems for them, although the Code may have been used as a marketing strategy to maintain the competitive edge for Aotearoa/New Zealand in the international education market (Lewis, 2005; Marginson et al., 2010). Neoliberal higher education institutions view students as consumers (Giroux, 2002; Hil, 2015; Smyth, 2017). Hence, the Code of Practice only protects international students as consumers against fraud and loss with regard to their tuition fees (Marginson et al., 2010), while international students do not benefit from “civil, political, or industrial rights” (Marginson, 2012, p. 210). It only asks higher education institutions to provide students with basic information about living in Aotearoa/New Zealand before they enrol into their prospective courses and programmes, yet international students may encounter many more issues which are not covered under the Code of Practice (see Marginson, 2012). Lewis (2005) views the Code of Practice as the

manifestation of neoliberal techniques, which requires the appealing design of products for sale. To illustrate different functions of the Code of Practice, he says: “The Code makes “the industry” visible, makes a market, controls brand NZ education, regulates through consumer assurance, and imposes direct disciplinary controls on institutions” (p. 5; emphasis in original). He also emphasises that the Code of Practice moves the responsibility from the New Zealand Government to institutions. He argues that higher education institutions should inform students and/or their guardians or parents about the basic information such as housing, living costs and safety, but he concludes that the Code views students as consumers. Similarly, Sawir et al. (2009), as well as Marginson (2012) and Marginson et al. (2010), confirm that the Code of Practice in Aotearoa/New Zealand protects students only in terms of payment of their tuition fees. For instance, there are provisions of refund if the visa application of international students is declined. Sawir et al. (2009) found out from their qualitative study of seventy international students in Aotearoa/New Zealand that most international students were not even aware of the existence of the Code of Practice and those who knew about such a support mechanism were not informed about its structure, so they did not know how to raise a grievance with an education provider if it was required. Although Lewis (2005) thinks that “the Code is more than simply a marketing strategy lurking behind an insincere rhetoric of pastoral care” (p. 6), in the early 2000s, the Code failed to provide support mechanisms to mitigate quality concerns about some unreliable tertiary education providers to international students, so the New Zealand’s export education industry was hit hard by a very sharp decline in the number of international students due to quality concerns (Li, 2007; Marginson et al. 2010; Sawir & Marginson, 2011; Ramia et al., 2013). This drastic decline was caused especially by the departure of Chinese students when their enrolment decreased by 80% between 2003 and 2006 (Lewis, 2011).

In the next section, different attitudes about bureaucracy will be further discussed to better understand why there is a need for such managerial mechanisms. Some scholars believe bureaucratic systems are ultimately inefficient, some view their existence as inevitable features of management for which there is no alternative, and some try to modify the concept of bureaucracy to make it more efficient.

5.3. Different Views on Bureaucracy

It appears that there is a consensus about the managerial function of bureaucracy, but there are contrasting approaches in evaluating how bureaucracy may achieve this function. Similarly, there are arguments about the power relations that bureaucracy shapes in any organisation. In other words, different views about bureaucracy may originate from the main question: “who does it serve?” On the positive side, Manning (2013) compares traditional organisational management techniques with that of modern bureaucracy and says that “bureaucracy was invented to revolutionise the excesses, favouritism, nepotism, and lack of procedures of parental organisations. Credentials replaced favouritism; standard operating procedures traded for opinion; and objectivity supplanted subjectivity” (p. 114). In other words, bureaucracy is an expansion of rationality in hierarchical organisation management where expert staff are trained, categorised and assigned into specific groups with definite objectives that correspond to the overall aims of the organisation (Serpa & Ferreira, 2019). In a bureaucratic system, standard procedures exist to increase objectivity and control in order to decrease personal judgements and to ensure ultimate loyalty of staff members to the culture of organisation (Manning, 2013).

On the other hand, Graeber (2015) refers to bureaucracy as “the utopia of rules” because, contrary to its promises of transparency and efficiency, the system may only serve people in power and marginalise subordinates. While bureaucratic rules were introduced to regulate and facilitate access to resources, they may actually do the opposite, so bureaucracy may just be the utopia where there is a rule for every matter, but it rarely helps to get things done (Graeber, 2012, 2015). This appears to be very much against the ideas of Max Weber, the father of modern bureaucracy, who thinks the advantages of bureaucracy outweigh its disadvantages (as cited in Reed, 2005). Weber himself believes that members of bureaucratic systems might think they are imprisoned in an iron cage of rigid rules, but he argues that bureaucracy would rationalise organisations by standardisation of impersonal procedures of decision making and developing a culture of meritocracy where different divisions of organisations act only in their areas of expertise for their assigned tasks (as cited in Reed, 2005). Nash (2019), similarly, believes bureaucracy in higher education should not be considered as an entirely negative element. However, she maintains that neoliberalism has contributed to negative impacts of bureaucracy by establishing excessive rules and regulations which in turn has caused more paperwork. Nevertheless, she maintains that bureaucracy precedes neoliberalism, so it cannot be regarded as an outcome of neoliberalism. On the other hand, she regards bureaucracy in higher education as a helpful force in, at least, two ways. Firstly, it is what she refers to as “formalisation of equal treatment.” By that, she means rules and regulations to avoid discrimination and to develop transparency. For instance, when deciding on recruitment of new academic staff at higher education institutions, bureaucracy can help in reviewing their CVs, shortlisting, interviewing, and appointments. It can also do the same when deciding on recruitment of post-graduate students via the designated selection criteria. Moreover, bureaucracy may limit academics in abuse of their power, for instance, it increases objectivity when they mark papers. Secondly,

bureaucracy can help with “contractualisation of learning.” Nash (2019) argues that bureaucracy would clarify what learning outcomes are expected from courses or programmes, so both academics and students are well aware of what is expected in terms of teaching and learning. Hence, Nash (2019) believes that bureaucracy can simply act as a “contract” which may help to mitigate future complications. She concludes that audit culture might be the only working mechanism that actually promotes and retains these forms of useful bureaucracy. However, Nash (2019) herself claims that some forms of bureaucracy, where the main aim is economic profitability, are detrimental to the educational nature of higher education institutions. She refers to this kind of bureaucracy as marketising bureaucracy, which she considers to be against academic freedom.

For Graeber (2012, 2015), however, it does not matter what sort of bureaucracy is used because he believes the current function of bureaucracy is the source of problems. He argues that a lot of bureaucratic processes are generally not clear and functional; hence, they lead people, even intelligent ones, to act in awkward ways as a result of complicated processes of bureaucracy. He exemplifies this by giving an instance that he has experienced himself. He needed to obtain a power of attorney for his sick mother to be able to pay her rent as well as other living costs on her behalf. Therefore, he had to fill out a lot of documents to go through the bureaucratic procedure. Because of the wrong advice he had received from a notary public, he did not sign the documents before going to the bank. Therefore, he was compelled into going back to the notary to ask for advice. However, the notary did not take any responsibility for what happened. Instead, they blamed inexperienced bank staff. This time he signed the forms anyway; however, there was another minor mistake: he signed the place where he was asked to print his name and he wrote his name where he was supposed to sign because he was in a hurry. For this mistake, he could not proceed with his intended plan since

the bank could not accept his signed document because it was not in line with the guidelines of their bureaucratic procedure. The forms and paperwork are designed to facilitate rational decision-making processes, but for Graeber (2012, 2015), they can push people to act in stupid ways. He ponders on the example above and asks why he could not simply sign the form and write his name. Was it too much to ask from an academic person? He considers his experience as a typical example of tangible outcomes of bureaucracy. That is the reason he refers to bureaucracy as structural stupidity. Similarly, Smyth (2017) views the pursuit of flawed ranking systems by universities to be an example of pathological organisational dysfunction because competing in rankings should not be the aim of universities in the first place. In the aforesaid example of Graeber, although he was simply a victim of what he later referred to as “structural stupidity” (2015), and what Smyth (2017) regards as “pathological organisational dysfunction,” he empathised with bank staff, notary public, and all other involved members of society as they were just doing their jobs in his view, but the question was raised if people in power had the same empathy with him. Graeber (2012, 2015) calls this unilateral thought system “interpretive labour.” He argues that people in power do not care what other people, whom have been affected by their decisions, feel or think. In other words, in what Graeber (2012, 2015) calls “dead zones of imagination,” the policy makers are ignorant of people as human beings because they are seen as material objects of the bureaucratic systems. For the powerful members, only the utilitarian outcomes of systems are important, not the emotional state of affected people nor how they may suffer from the inadequacy of such systems, and it may not matter if the system is humane or not (Graeber, 2012, 2015). If the people who have been disadvantaged by the system raise their voice about the unfair process they have been through, a form of “structural violence” such as the police force may be used against them by the powerful authority to silence their voice, so the vicious circle just reproduces itself, as Graeber (2015) claims. The conclusion of Graeber is

that bureaucracy eventually spread stupidity rather than rationality, obscurity rather than clarity, irresponsibility rather than accountability and inefficiency rather than efficiency.

Alvesson and Thompson (2006) recognise both positive and negative viewpoints about bureaucracy, but they conclude that bureaucracy is inevitable in managing a contemporary organisation. Alvesson and Thompson (2006) note there are both positive and negative views about bureaucracy, but they maintain that there is no escape from bureaucracy as a managerial system, irrespective of different viewpoints. They argue that there are some areas of concern with bureaucracy and its outcomes in any company/corporation, for instance, dehumanisation or inefficiency; nonetheless, “bureaucracy remains a vital part of organisational life” (p. 500). They also acknowledge that some scholars, like Graeber, completely reject bureaucracy because they see it as an inefficient mechanism. However, Alvesson and Thompson (2006) argue that there is no functioning alternative, so attempts to remove bureaucracy have only increased the number of rules rather than eradicating bureaucracy in the end. In this regard, Reed (2005) refers to bureaucracy as *the necessary evil*. Later on, Alvesson (2013) talks about irrationality of negative ideas about bureaucracy. He argues in his book *the Triumph of Emptiness: Consumption, Higher Education, and Work Organisation* when bureaucracy is discussed, usually its negative connotations of slow processes, inefficiencies, and complications come to mind, but it should be noted that bureaucracy could stand for rational organisation by division of workforce, assigning standardised tasks to labour force, establishing hierarchies and rules, which eventually would facilitate predictability of outcomes and efficiency of procedures. He also disagrees with post-bureaucratic ideas because he believes such theories of modification of bureaucracy will always remain at the theoretical level. He thinks post-bureaucratic organisations are nothing beyond myth when they claim to be “decentralized, loosely coupled, flexible, non-

hierarchical, and fluid” (p. 121). He brings some examples to show the alternatives to bureaucracy would be only more problematic. He also shows examples of corporations that tried decentralisation, but eventually became more centralised because allocating resources in any organisation is a centralised activity anyway. Alvesson (2013) argues that human beings have indulged themselves into excessive grandiosity and as a result bureaucracy seems to be a thing of the past in a fast-paced world of today. However, he maintains that alternative versions of bureaucracy are not really practical, so there is a need for solutions that actually work instead of rejecting organisational systems like bureaucracy.

5.4. Bureaucracy of Neoliberal Higher Education and Supporting

International Students

International students contribute positively to the host countries and their higher education institutions intellectually, culturally and economically (Martirosyan, Bustamantea & Saxona, 2019). However, they need specific support systems in place so that they have the freedom to focus on their studies (Martirosyan et al., 2019; Marginson, 2012, Marginson et al., 2010). Marginson (2012) states that “international students have different lives than the students who are citizens of the nations where they are educated” (p. 207). He observes that international students face numerous issues inside and outside campus, mostly due to cultural differences and language barriers, but also because of their transient status in the host country. The information gap for international students is huge; they may encounter language barriers in expressing themselves and in understanding others, and they may be unfamiliar with the norms, rules and regulations of the host country (Marginson et al., 2010). Meanwhile, the neoliberal framework of higher education views students as mere sources of revenue (Giroux, 2002; Hil, 2015; Smyth, 2017). Therefore, “existing government policies

cover student welfare in a patchy fashion. In the commercial export nations of Australia, New Zealand and the UK there are few mandated minimum standards of welfare, aside from consumer protection provisions” (Ramia et al., 2013, p. 20).

Ramia et al. (2013) state that international students “are non-citizens in the host country of education, where the legal framework addresses them, in an incomplete and unsatisfactory fashion, and fails to provide adequately for their welfare” (p. 12). Meanwhile, mainstream research promotes vague marketing terms such as global citizenship, as Streitwieser and Light (2016) argue. However, the term “is not possible in strictly legal terms as there is no global state that could guarantee citizenship” (Bates, 2012, p. 262). But internationalisation of higher education is a very lucrative business (Altbach, 2012), and neoliberal universities relentlessly aim to take a bigger share of its available economic gains by intensely competing in the global ranking systems (Smyth, 2017). International students are sometimes considered to be potential sources of crime by the host nations (Forbes-Mewett, McCulloch, & Nyland, 2015). They can also be a threat to national security: “International students are temporary migrants and student visa holders, yes, but a threat to national security because temporary visa holders are liable to overstay” (Ramia et al., 2013, p. 8). And immigration authorities are notorious for their poor treatment of clients, especially students, while local students never have to deal with them (Marginson et al., 2010). From the viewpoint of Ramia et al. (2013), “the UK, Australia and New Zealand have broadly similar commercial approaches to education export and parallel political regimes” (p. 41). The authors conducted interviews with more than 200 international students in Australian higher education and found out that “so many international students had to work. Some internationals faced exploitation and abuse at work, in forms and with severities not faced by their local counterparts” (p. 10). Internationalisation can bring a lot of economic and sociocultural benefits, but it “is not

always the win-win that happy graduation days suggest. Nor is it easy. Nor are its problems always transparent” (Marginson et al., 2010, pp. 9-10).

Marginson et al. (2010) give an example of an Asian tertiary student in Australia whose corpse was found weeks after her death in her apartment. The vice chancellor of the university she was enrolled in put the blame on her poor social connections instead of taking responsibility for the horrific incident (Marginson et al., 2010). The history seems to repeat itself. In 2019, a similar incident happened to an England-born student of commerce in Canterbury, Aotearoa/New Zealand. His dead body was unnoticed for weeks in one of the University of Canterbury’s student accommodations (Nichols, 2020). Once again, the blame was partially put on the student for choosing to isolate himself from other residents and having limited social circle around him (Nichols, 2020).

Ramia et al. (2013) found in their study of international students in Australia:

Several students reported unprovoked abusive incidents that had profoundly distressed them. In these incidents they were made to feel alien, often with lasting effect. Further, in such cases there was no process for claiming rights and for seeking redress. They needed more than comfort and support; they needed to reassert their dignity and agency, to claim the right to respect and to belonging, but they often could not. Some blamed this on the universities. Some blamed it on the government. Others blamed it on themselves, or blamed no one, and felt the psychological consequences of doing so. (2013, p. 11)

The University has psychologists in its Health and Counselling department to help students, both local and international, with such issues. However, a Chinese student who attempted to commit suicide due to a number of issues, including sexual harassment, was expelled by the University (see Hutt, 2020; Tan, 2020). The argument of the University in this case was that it was unable to support the student under the Education Code of Practice, considering her new mental situation (Hutt, 2020). The University claimed that the action was based on

consultation with health professionals. However, the Chinese student posted a letter from a general practitioner at the University who claimed that it was in the best interest of the student to continue her studies. The University then asserted that it could not disclose more information due to privacy reasons (Hutt, 2020). Immigration New Zealand consequently said in an email to the student that she would be deported because she was no longer a student (Hutt, 2020).

Neoliberal systems act through bureaucracy (Martin, 2016). I will narrate four stories of mine to show how neoliberal bureaucracy might work in the higher education system of Aotearoa/New Zealand in section 5.4.1 through to 5.4.4 of this chapter. I shared such stories with other participants of the current study in our post interview conversations (informal interviews) but interestingly none were shocked or surprised. They considered such examples to be “normal” since they have either experienced similar events or have frequently heard of similar ordeals. For instance, Mike was particularly critical of the lengthy labyrinth of bureaucracy at the University. He has changed his supervisors twice due to academic issues, but he was especially annoyed of the bureaucratic process involved:

...because of the paperwork delays and stuff like that, I took a break because I didn't want to lose six months while they were figuring out the paperwork. I don't know if you have ever gone to Doc 6 drama...that's a document for changes in registration and it takes forever for changes to take place so, you know, you have to ask for permission for everything whether you want to go overseas, whether you want to, whether you have an illness or something like that, a suspension, an extension, or research absence like I said for going overseas you have to, basically, if I may crudely say if you want to wipe your ***, you need fill out a doc 6, so it's very infantilising, the procedure, so that's my take on it.

He was also dissatisfied with the lack of transparency in bureaucracy at the University:

...one of the things when I mentioned, the supervision change, the first one, I was in the Politics Department, that would have been where my project was most suitable, but I didn't have adequate supervision and so on, so they had a policy, one year of just hiring, erm, domestic students, I just put it that way, they didn't explicitly call it white student or anything like that, so myself, I have a Master's in international relations, I have another colleague who has the same from the University of York as a Master's in international relations, we applied for tutoring for this thing, for this course called

introduction to international relations; they told us we weren't qualified, we found out who the people were, they were basically recent graduates of the University of Auckland and so that was one of the other push things that made me want to, you know, made me really upset, so the second semester, before the second semester, I walked into the deputy HoD's office and I said "what's it going to take?" like what's going on here? So, he said, well, talk to me, you know, we'll do that next semester, and same thing happened again. So, after a year of basically not being, I mean I have a scholarship going so they think, you know, you're good to go, but the thing is as PhD students, I believe, that you should also be getting experience in teaching and professional development and so this was one of my grievances and, um, this wasn't fulfilled so I switched to the Sociology Department, partly because of the supervision non-relationship, but also because of the attitude of that department. I don't know if things have changed.

Siti, similarly, talked about numerous similar examples, especially the inefficiency of support centres' staff who were supposed to address international students queries and concerns:

Problems that other international students have shared with me is mostly about, like, academic stuff, so the issue about how student service centres are not really reliable, staff there are not really reliable, a lot of problems, I don't know, I think about classes, classes clash, timetable clash, they are not helpful in trying to help them, so they always say things like: "oh, I can't help with anything cause you were late" or something, they don't really try cause you're an international student, you paid a lot to be here and, to study here, you know, and you made a mistake, or forget it, or didn't see it, or whatever, and the staff is not really trying hard enough, try to help you, and I think, there should be a little bit of, more, leeway for international students. I don't know if it's just me being biased, I don't know...there's informal complaint which people say to me; there's also formal complaint, [for] which there's a process and you need to say "things" [significantly extends the vowel, smiles, and raises her eyebrows], and I don't know, fill out a survey, students hate that.

I asked her why she thought students were not happy to fill out such forms and if it was because of their English language skills. She responded:

No, it's just annoying [laughs]. It's just annoying to fill a long survey, trying to tell how the University is being bad. You have to have a certain amount of, like, you have to care to fill that survey...and the other thing that I have noticed is that the University staff, erm, some of them, are not really student friendly. So, I can tolerate, I know I can tolerate, I can connect with a lot of people from different generations, I can connect, but a lot of other students, they rather have someone that is more like them, you know, that can relate to them, that is just very approachable and all that...but, like, International Office, and the ones at Student Centres, they're not very student friendly.

I mentioned that the University has established a new student support centre called Ask Auckland and wondered what she thought about it. She continued:

Ask Auckland, oh my God [laughs out loud], I think they are such a waste of money. I don't know, they are trying really hard, which I really appreciate what the University

is trying to do, I appreciate the intention, but they need to do better if they want better results.

In a similar fashion, Marginson et al. (2010) view the relationship between international students and administrative staff of universities to be faltering:

Students experience relations with the university as uncertain. It fails to provide sure backup in a crisis. It also fails to meet many routine non-crisis needs in the areas... such as finances, work, health, housing, immigration problems, English language assistance, loneliness, and lack of social networks. Here, the problem is more than one of a spare commercially driven cost structure joined to system and service overload. It is also a communication failure and organisational pathology. (p. 292)

Further, Eloney talked about the biased bureaucracy in the form of stereotypical attitudes of some support staff members at the University:

...there is this, um, unwritten code that if you're not from England or Australia or America, although your first language is English, [and] you're already proficient in English, then this person [referring to staff] automatically assumes that what you're asking is not what you want to ask and you don't understand what is being said to you. That has nothing to do with where you're from. That is just, erm, bias, yes, bias, it's a bias that is very annoying.

She also thought the form and meaning, or the rhetoric and reality, of bureaucracy may not quite match at the University:

I just wish that, um, sometimes, erm, less formal relationships, interactions, would translate for, would translate in all cases to actual accessibility because there is a difference between accessibility and informality. I'm not sure if I'm making sense there. While, for example, you may say "you can call me by my first name" and you give me the generic "oh, if you need any help, just let me know"; actually, finding you or getting help from you, there is a question, there is a query. It's kind of hard not all professors are accessible or willing to help.

She explained further in our informal conversation that not every information on the University's website is trustworthy because students can only test the reality of claims there if they actually have used the advertised services themselves. She gave an example about the employment support from the International Office, that is advertised on their website, but she was disappointed when she actually sought the service as it turned out to be some public information that was already available to her.

All the participants of this study have unanimously mentioned that the University accommodation rental fees were very expensive. James, for instance, argued:

I have problems with the cost of living. It's, um, it's really expensive down here. I live, where I live, you know what it looks like, OK, it's one room self-contained, studio apartment, what I pay for a month, is around \$1600, I have to calculate, \$1400 actually, that's enough to pay for my family's house in Nairobi for two and half months. In Nairobi, I live in a three-bedroom house, it suits myself, my wife and my two kids. With the money I'm paying here, I could rent a penthouse in Nairobi. Every time I'm paying rent, I'm thinking this is too much money, it's a lot, so that's a little shocking.

However, some of them, like Eloney, were just curious to know the explanation behind it:

I'm not sure where this comes under, but, um, I spoke to a lot of other students and residents here in New Zealand and we have all complained "Auckland is very expensive" [laughs]. In terms of housing, yes, we have University accommodation where I live, I really like the accommodation, but there is not one single good reason why the accommodation should be expensive, so expensive, you know. Yes, cost of living is high, and I would venture to say that persons are paid accordingly; however, there is no reason why the University accommodation [laughs] should be that costly.

As already discussed, the report of the New Zealand International Students Association (NZISA, 2019) confirms the malfunction of current bureaucracy and denounces the consumerist view about international students.

To clarify the above points, I now turn to my lived-experience examples which may be typical of the wider experiences of international students in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The first common hurdle for almost all international students would be the application processing, admission to the University and visa grants. It is the focus of the first story. The second issue discussed is the mismatch of policy and practice, where the University boasts about its support systems that may not actually work in reality. Finally, transparency and accountability of the University for its promises of support systems will be discussed through the third and fourth stories.

I use auto-ethnography in this section to elaborate on my own lived experiences as an international student in Aotearoa/New Zealand. I have also used interviews with other international students, but “not all international students talk readily about their own reflexive evolution and changing identity in interview” (Marginson, 2014, p. 14). Auto-ethnography is a combination of autobiography and ethnography (Ellis, 2004). Jago (2002) regards auto-ethnography as an emotional introspection. It is an explorative journey to find meaning in one’s depth of self. For her, the journey is a reflexive practice. The aim of auto-ethnography is to analyse personal experience in order to facilitate understanding of cultural experience for both insiders and outsiders of a cultural group (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011). Stories are important elements of auto-ethnography because they can be evocative and add empathy, vision, affection and awareness to auto-ethnographic material: “There is no closure on the story, only awareness that what I attend to and how I attend to it are choices I make on an emergent, moment to moment, basis, as I interact with my world and the world affects me” (Ellis et al., 2011, p. 170). Stories show the depth of lived experiences and can promote understanding of specific culture under the auto-ethnographic study for its audience. The main auto-ethnographic method I use here is the personal narrative (Ellis, 2004). I agree that memory is fallible (Ellis et al., 2011); however, by using memoir, “I make it obvious who is speaking in my writing, I make myself answerable—fully responsible for what I write” (Scott, 2014, p. 3). Auto-ethnography can also give me the chance to have my voice as an international student heard. My voice here is concerned with the complexities of international student life that may be typical of other international students’ lived experiences. I note that my autoethnographic reflections tend to be a bit more descriptive to focus on the mechanics of bureaucratic processes that might be common for other international students.

5.4.1. Enrolment, Immigration and Visa Application

Firstly, the initial encounter of any international student with bureaucracy could be their admission to a programme of study and their student visa application. Abyasa was frustrated with his admission processing timeframe as he needed to wait for a few months while he had been admitted to other universities in Europe. However, his destination preference was Aotearoa/New Zealand. Likewise, I had been concerned and stressed out about both my admission and grant of my visa to come to Aotearoa/New Zealand. I had waited two months to be admitted to the University before applying for my visa. There is an estimated processing timeframe for a student visa, notified by Immigration New Zealand. This time-frame changes from time to time, depending on the number of visa applications. At the time of lodging my application, this period was said to be twenty working days. However, it took me two months to be granted a student visa. Immigration New Zealand generally does not advise applicants if the timeframes are exceeded. Similarly, they will not update applicants any further on the expected timeframe for processing their visa application. Accordingly, applicants are expected to wait for an unspecified time in the future to hear about a decision from INZ. It was discussed earlier that bureaucracy, in principle, would increase “accountability,” but INZ does not seem to be accountable to its clients. The delay in processing of my visa application happened while I had presented a “priority letter” for my visa application provided by the University, where I was going to study. The eight universities and Immigration New Zealand have had an agreement to expedite the visa application process for their tertiary students. This limbo, which sometimes gets very lengthy, may make it difficult to manage the academic life for an international student. Iranian students generally experience visa issues to come to Aotearoa/New Zealand, as the media reports show (see, for example, Fonseka, 2018). For instance, an Iranian PhD applicant who was also supported by scholarship from the University of Canterbury had to wait more than a year to hear a decision on his visa until his

offer of place expired (Wood, 2010). This protracted visa process occurs while, according to the University's Key Statistics, Iran has consistently been among the top 10 countries to send students to the University for at least the last decade. Further, not only does this way of processing student visa applications may show a lack accountability and transparency, but it also seems to be discriminative and racist in some respects. Some students are granted visas for the whole period of their studies while others need to renew theirs annually. There appears to be no guidelines or information about how and on what basis this distinction is enforced. Immigration New Zealand does not explain this prejudice either. It only suffices to say that INZ does its best to process applications as soon as possible. Kim and Kwak (2019) state that "international students are defined by their relationship to the state via immigration policy" (p. 3), which does not acknowledge them as a whole. They are human beings with strong agency (Marginson et al., 2010), but immigration policies may regard them as a potential threat (Sawir & Marginson, 2011). Marginson et al. (2010) argue that

immigration is an older form of state power that displays awesome force in that it diminishes the potential of self-managing subjects rather than empowering them to do its work. (p. 262)

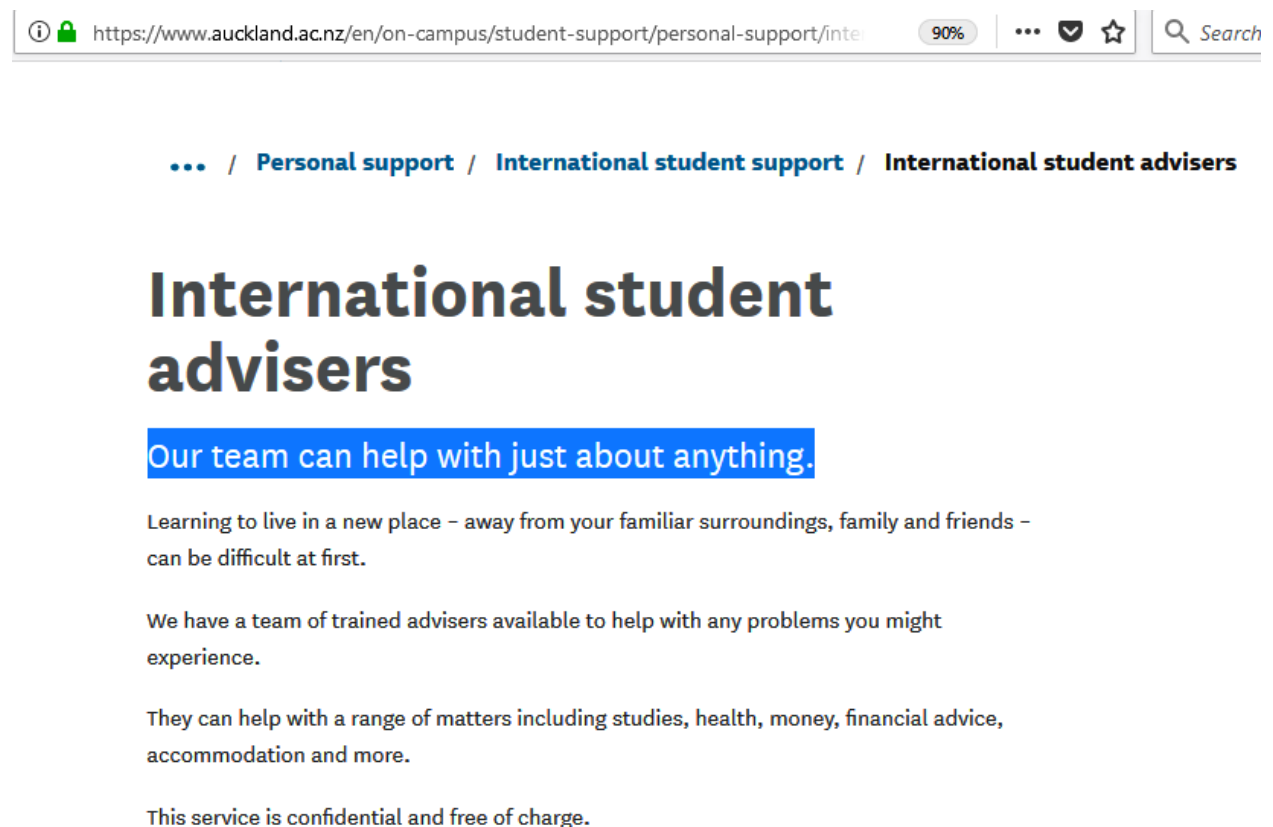
And they see the current power relations to be skewed in the Western immigration system:

Here the old Weberian authority of the nation-state makes its final stand. Standing war-like at the border, towering over tiny human figures scurrying ant-like below, it casts a long traditional shadow over the economic, educational and cultural purposes of cross-border rights. (p. 62)

Unfortunately, the University's International Office has never been able to address my queries about visa applications. It appears to me that the University might use its International Office as a shield to fend off criticism about the lack of enough support for international students as it may help to mask alleged inefficiencies about the support systems for international students. The webpage of the International Office says: "Our friendly International Student Support team can help with a range of matters, including immigration, health and wellbeing, finances, work and accommodation" (The University of Auckland,

2019a). Over the years of studying at the University, I encountered different issues, both within and outside the University campus, but I cannot recall a single instance in which the International Office was able to help me when I reached out to them. The staff could only give generic advice, which was not helpful. And sometimes, they simply did not respond to my correspondence.

Figure 2. The University of Auckland (2019a): International Student Advisors.



The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL <https://www.auckland.ac.nz/en/on-campus/student-support/personal-support/international-student-advisers>. The page has a breadcrumb trail: **... / Personal support / International student support / International student advisers**. The main heading is **International student advisers**. Below the heading is a blue box with the text **Our team can help with just about anything.** The page content includes the following text: "Learning to live in a new place – away from your familiar surroundings, family and friends – can be difficult at first." "We have a team of trained advisers available to help with any problems you might experience." "They can help with a range of matters including studies, health, money, financial advice, accommodation and more." "This service is confidential and free of charge."

I contacted the University's International Student Support Services Manager to understand why it has been the case. She advised:

The International Student Support Team can assist with students' visa questions based on information that is publically [sic] available (eg: on the Immigration NZ website, or the University website). The International Student Support Team is not able to give immigration advice as they are not licensed immigration advisers. The AskAuckland Central staff accept student visa applications on behalf of Immigration NZ, in accordance with Immigration NZ requirements – they are not licensed immigration advisers and so are also not able to give immigration advice. Students are able to submit their student visa applications online directly with Immigration NZ or they can submit their student visa documents through AskAuckland Central (the International

Student Support Team are no longer involved in student visa applications). Students may want to submit their student visa application through the University as they may prefer having someone assist them with the process and check their documentation. However, other students prefer to submit their application online themselves. Some students may want to submit their application through the University but may not be able to as their application doesn't meet Immigration NZ's requirements to be able to do so – this is often due to not meeting evidence of funds requirements. In this situation the student would be advised by AskAuckland Central staff to submit their student visa application directly with Immigration NZ. (personal correspondence, 23 February 2020)

It appears to be a valid argument that staff at the University's International Office cannot, legally, provide immigration advice as they are not licensed immigration advisers. But could they have recruited an immigration adviser to help international students with their immigration questions? The irony is that the University has recruited a licensed immigration adviser but only to help with the recruitment of international staff and academics:

All University of Auckland staff working within New Zealand, who are not citizens or residents, must have the correct visa. To make the immigration process as easy as possible for our applicants, we have a licensed Immigration Advisor on staff. (The University of Auckland, 2022)

5.4.2. Illusory Employment Support

Let me move to the second story about the mismatch of policy and practice at the University. It was a month since I arrived in Aotearoa/New Zealand, and I did not have any job. The University offers career advice and support to all students, whether domestic or international. Hence, I booked an appointment with a career support professional to help me find suitable jobs in Aotearoa/New Zealand. However, I did not achieve anything from the meeting, and I could only secure employment once I realised that I had to forget about the meeting and the wrong information that was passed on to me. The consultant held a PhD in an irrelevant field, and he said his skills got him this job, not his qualification! I asked him if I could find a casual job as a translator. He said those jobs were really hard to find. Then I asked him if I could find a job as an English language teacher because I used to work in that profession, too. He said that would be very difficult as well. I remember when I left the room, I felt deflated

and depressed. The financial issues and uncertainty were pressing hard, and my future prospects appeared to be precarious. But why could not the consultant help me? One of the main tenets of bureaucracy is the division of workforce, each of whom need to be expert in what they do (Alvesson, 2013, Manning, 2013), so I expected the career consultant to be familiar with what he was supposed to do; however, he did not seem to have a clear idea about how he could help me. All he said was some generic advice that could apply to everyone else. If I had received the right advice about finding relevant jobs to my qualifications and experience, I may not have remained unemployed for the first six months in Aotearoa/New Zealand. When I finally secured my first employment, I understood that his advice was wrong. I could see that it was way easier to find a relevant position than the complicated fictional process that he had described to me.

The neoliberal University acts as a business enterprise that needs to sell its products to customers (Giroux, 2002; Hil, 2015; Smyth, 2017). The departments may help the University to maintain its competitive edge in the global market through advertising the available support services for the students. Their confusing bureaucratic nature, also, may help the University to be immune to criticism because the issues might be considered individual mistakes rather than a systematic failure (see Graeber, 2012, 2015). Ironically, in their YouTube video to promote their practice, the representative of the Career Development and Employability Services says: “No matter what your question is, there will be something to help you. Our team of career development consultants have met thousands of students like you [pointing her index finger to the camera] and they are here to help you answer your questions.” (The University of Auckland, 2019b). Two years after the experience, I wrote a detailed complaint email to the manager of Career Development and Employment Services, and I received a letter of apology. But I wondered if the letter meant that their practices have

changed, or it was more in line with the consumerism and marketing practices where the customer should be kept happy by an apology.

The propaganda model of media by Chomsky and Herman (2002) may explain the functioning of the International Office or Career and Employment Services, and its relation to power at the University. Chomsky and Herman (2002) talk about the way in which the consent of the majority of people to political agendas in societies may be manufactured. The authors delve into the world of mass media where the ownership is in the hands of a few powerful entities. People in power need the consent of the general population so that their power is maintained. Therefore, media news may not always be true because it may be biased in certain ways. It is always shaped into a form which favours the owners. The opposing views about the news are often marginalised, ignored and/or flaked. Now, what happens at the University as a smaller society is that their website may act as a form of media. Its role might be both to attract students and to show the world that systematic support systems for students, both local and international, are available at the University. However, international students may only assess the actual efficacy of such systems once they arrive in Aotearoa/New Zealand and deal with the University closely. As Siti put forth:

...it is just stories that people want to create and that is what people are trying to use for advertising, which is super, super annoying to me because when I see the advertisements, I can see how different it is in reality when you come to New Zealand.

The University does not have advertisers, but they do have donors whose consent is needed to donate. Similarly, Universities need to get funding from the government. Most importantly, they have to be able to sell their own products — degrees, courses, and programmes to domestic and international students. The University seems to take every opportunity to boast about its global ranking to hunt more students whether domestic or international; however, the global ranking systems are methodologically flawed because they only take a few items

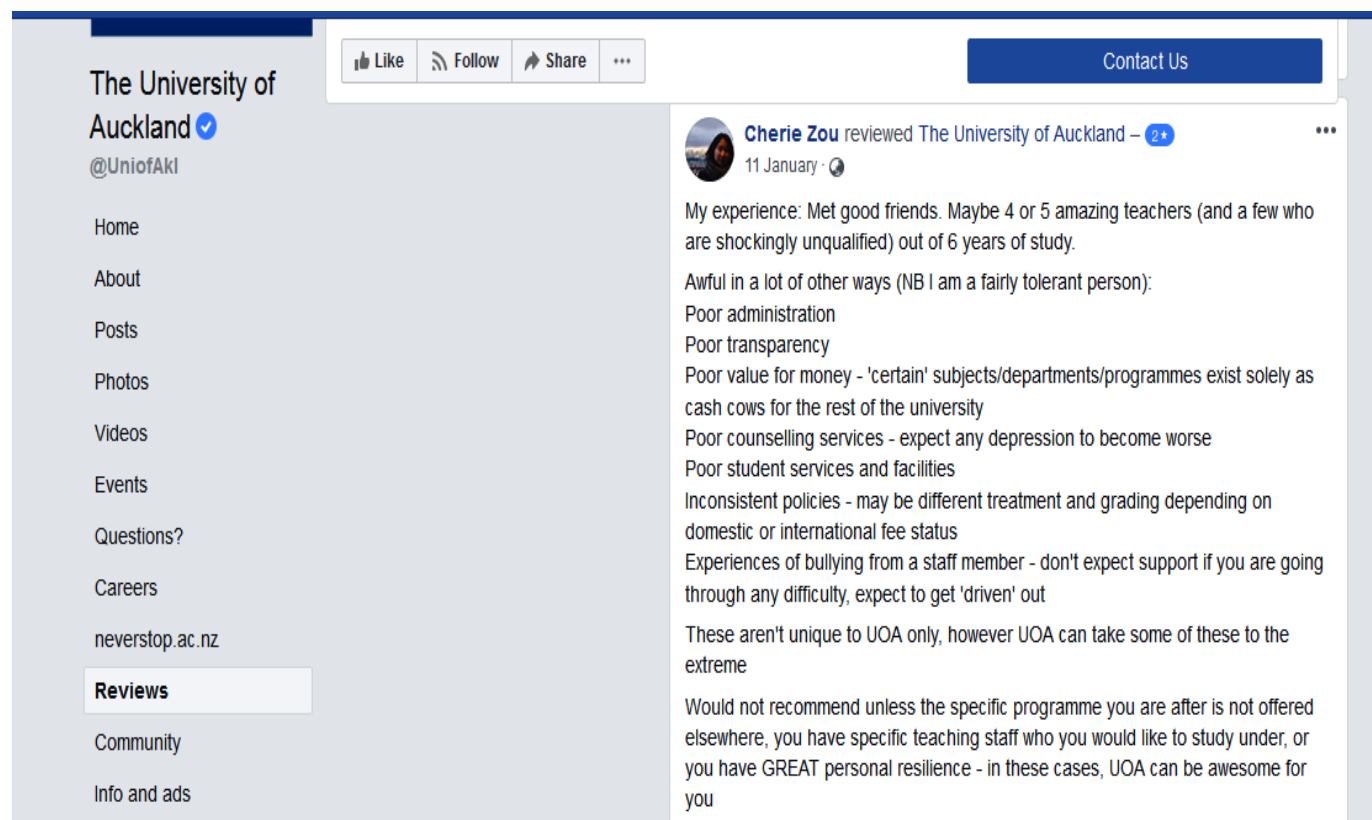
into account, as Altbach (2013b) argues. Overall, similar to what happens in the Australian higher education system, where students are attracted by empty/false promises of higher education institutions (see Hil, 2015), international students may not be fully informed about the available support systems while the University may not be held accountable for its marketing words.

In such a system, the role of bureaucracy is not to add clarity and transparency to the system; it actually might make processes more obscure and opaque (Graeber, 2012, 2015). Graeber (2012, 2015) argues that it is how control is increased and bureaucratic systems may act as a shield to protect economic profitability of the whole system. The issues with bureaucracy at the University was also noted by other international students throughout the interviews. Siti was totally frustrated with paperwork at the University and said that administrators are not well-trained to help international students. She added that the admin staff usually either do not know the answers or, even worse, provide a misleading response. On the other hand, she stated that bureaucratic system of complaints at the University is so time-consuming and complex that students prefer to only share their frustration with their friends rather than taking the official steps. A combination of non-expert administrators and a confusing system of complaints would make a vicious circle, which eventually may immunise the University from even receiving the complaints, let alone responding to them. The multi-layered escalation system might be designed to frustrate complainants and to satisfy them with minimum rewards, as Dukes and Zhu (2019) put forth, such as an apology. This was confirmed by Mike who stated that going through administrative channels and paperwork at the University was like a series of nightmares for him. The bureaucratic complaint procedures, and generally any administrative work, at the University appear to be so vague and frustrating that he referred to the complaint forms as “the mental patient form” in our

informal conversation. He also mentioned that international students would discuss their issues, whether academic or otherwise, in private with their friends, who happen to be internationals as well, for two main reasons. Firstly, the confusing paperwork makes it unsuitable to go all the way to make a formal complaint when an international student is busy with many other aspects of their international education — there is a language barrier, they need to progress in their studies, they need to fund their studies, they need to deal with loneliness/homesickness, and they need to stay sane throughout, so it may be wise not to get involved with an unwanted bureaucratic matter any further, which is also discussed by Marginson et al. (2010). Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, they are already categorised as different by the label “international,” so they do not want to be looked upon as troublemakers by escalating the issues further, which is again confirmed by Marginson et al. (2010). However, the international students who are represented on the University’s website may give the audience a very positive view about their studies at the University and they usually talk about how their lives have been changed for the better because of their studies in Aotearoa/New Zealand. According to Chomsky and Herman (2002), specific groups’ ideas are privileged while dissidents and opposition views are suppressed, ignored, and/or marginalised when media news is released to maintain the strategic advantage. Hence, the University does not seem to tell the whole story when it talks about its international students’ experiences because it obviously does not want to go into disrepute. If the reputation of the University is damaged, it may lose its competitive edge in the global international education market. While the University talks about different available support systems for its international students on its website, the efficiency of such systems in reality might be questionable. On its official public Facebook page, I noticed many negative reviews and comments, especially from international students. The University did not choose to respond,

although the negative comments had been increasing. Instead, they removed the review section from their Facebook page altogether. The following snapshot was captured in 2017.

Figure 3. The University of Auckland (2017): A Facebook Review. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/UniofAkl>, on 30/05/2017.



5.4.3. A False Promise

Let me move to the third story. I could see on numerous pages of the University's website that dental treatment is supported by the University's Health and Counselling Services and there would be subsidised services available. Nonetheless, all international students are required to have a proper full-insurance cover while they study in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Just a month after our arrival, I chipped a tooth unexpectedly and because I was in pain, I

needed to see a dentist as soon as possible. I contacted the University, but I was advised that no dentistry services were available. Because I was required to visit a dentist soon, I did not bother to enquire any further and I did not dig deeper to see why the University advertised such a service if it did not actually exist. The insurance did not cover the fees either because they only pay for extractions or if the toothache is a direct result of something like a car accident.

Eventually, I contacted the University's Health and Counselling Services again to ask about their alleged information. The representative who talked to me over the phone said the same statement firmly: "We do not have dentistry services at the University." As I was sure then that such a service did not exist, I decided to contact Student Services via email. In my email, I mentioned that the University claimed dentistry service was available on campus while I could not access it. I also provided them with web addresses of five alleged cases. The person who responded to my email wrote that she was not able to see anything about dentistry services on those pages and she asked me for snapshot of the pages, although I had already sent the links. I was surprised to get such a response because I would probably be accused of mastering a very low-level of English proficiency and poor reading skills, as an "international" student, if I could not find a simple sentence repeated five times through five different webpages! I provided clear snapshots of the alleged pages. The response I received this time was even more confusing. It was stated that "the University offers discounted dental support for all of its students, under our personal support scheme." Contact details of the Health and Counselling Services were given for more information at the end of the email. I started to doubt myself, so the next day I contacted the Health and Counselling Services in person. It was a bit crowded, and I needed to wait in line for about half an hour. Not surprisingly, when I asked the question about the dentistry services, the receptionist said the

same old statement: “We do not have dentistry services at the University.” However, I raised the issue that official statements of the University, besides Student Support Services claim otherwise. The receptionist had no clue, so she went on to talk to her supervisor and when she came back, the answer was the very same – there were no dentistry services available to students, whether domestic or international.

Given the circumstances, I replied to the email I had received earlier from the Student Support Services and wrote that no one at the University’s Health and Counselling Services had the slightest idea about the so-called dentistry service. I also asked to correspond with the person in charge of the dentistry service, if there was any. Once again, I got the response asserting there were dentistry services available at the University:

I’m extremely surprised about the student health and counselling service, not knowing anything about our offered health benefits, as that is not only a benefit that we offer, it is something that can be found on their website. (personal communication, January 10, 2018)

I felt I was being played with, so I replied and persisted with questioning. In the end, the representative forwarded my email to someone else “who might be able to help more.” Eventually, I received a response from another higher-ranking representative, confirming no such services exist at the University as the Student Support Services made direct contact with the Health and Counselling Services to enquire about this case, and they were told that no dentistry services were available to students. I was also advised that:

The information on the faculty web pages may be out-dated. I will forward the links and screen shots provided by you, to our web programme team. They should be able to get the information updated. (personal communication, January 11, 2018)

According to the Code of Practice for Pastoral Care of International Students by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (2016), the information that education providers give to students should be accurate and updated. Moreover, I understood, after further inquiries that

the alleged service has never existed. I waited for about three weeks to see if there was any change on the website's information, but everything was all the same. Hence, I decided to make a formal complaint to the New Zealand Qualifications Authority for the alleged breach of the Code of Practice. They advised that the matter was outside their jurisdiction, and I could contact the Ombudsman Office for further investigation. I decided to write an email to the Vice Chancellor of the University instead, sharing my previous communication with concerned staff to see if this matter could be resolved eventually. Surprisingly, the same correspondence took place from the Vice Chancellor, starting with denial:

What specifically are the errors you are complaining about? I have looked at the web pages you referred to at the start of this email trail and they do not seem to me to claim that we offer dental services. (personal communication, February 02, 2018)

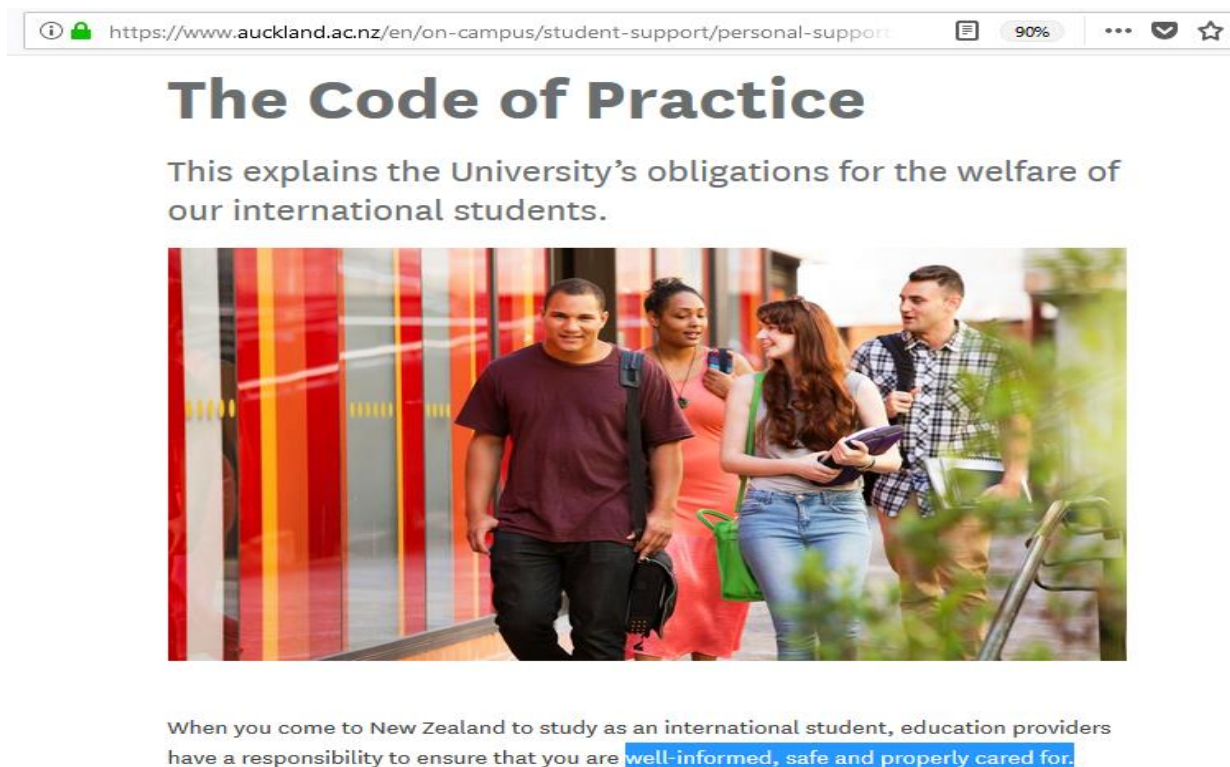
I started from scratch and explained further. In the end, he agreed to have the information corrected. That was a progress, but I could not ignore the fact that neither he thanked me nor apologised for what has happened under his management. His response looked as if he has done me a favour. Just to complete the internal and external cycle of complaint procedure, I did contact the Ombudsman Office afterwards. They advised that the webpages were no longer available, so if I still had a complaint, I should take it back to the University. As Marginson et al. (2010) put forth: “students cannot secure assistance from authorities that are themselves the problem. International students need places where they can receive understanding and sympathetic support” (p. 455).

5.4.4. We Have a Place You Can Call Home

It brings me to my last story about the accommodation services of the University for international students. Marginson et al. (2010) claim that housing on the private market for international students is known for its dire conditions with unkind landlords, noise, mould, damp, unfriendly neighbourhoods, and poor value for money. They argue that there are

simply not many affordable accommodation options to meet the increasing demand of international students. They also observe that universities are generally reluctant to provide accommodation because they are not in favour of giving subsidised rents to international students, but they prefer to cooperate with university-affiliated private parties to increase the revenue. I will discuss my personal predicament about accommodation at the beginning of my studies in Aotearoa/New Zealand to shed light on this issue. The accommodation webpage of the University says: “Whether you’re a recent school leaver, a current undergraduate, a returning, or postgraduate student, we have an accommodation solution for you” (The University of Auckland, 2016b). The University promises providing its students with suitable accommodation, somewhere that students can call home. Higher education institutions’ obligations in this regard originate from the Code of Practice for Pastoral Care of International Students, regulated by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority, (New Zealand Qualification Authority, 2016).

Figure 4. The University of Auckland (2017b): The Code of Practice.



The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL <https://www.auckland.ac.nz/en/on-campus/student-support/personal-support>. The page title is "The Code of Practice" in a large, bold, dark blue font. Below the title, a subtitle reads: "This explains the University's obligations for the welfare of our international students." Underneath the text is a photograph of four diverse international students walking outdoors on a university campus. At the bottom of the page, a paragraph states: "When you come to New Zealand to study as an international student, education providers have a responsibility to ensure that you are well-informed, safe and properly cared for." The phrase "well-informed, safe and properly cared for" is highlighted in a blue box.

Figure 5. New Zealand Qualifications Authority (2016): The Education Code of Practice.

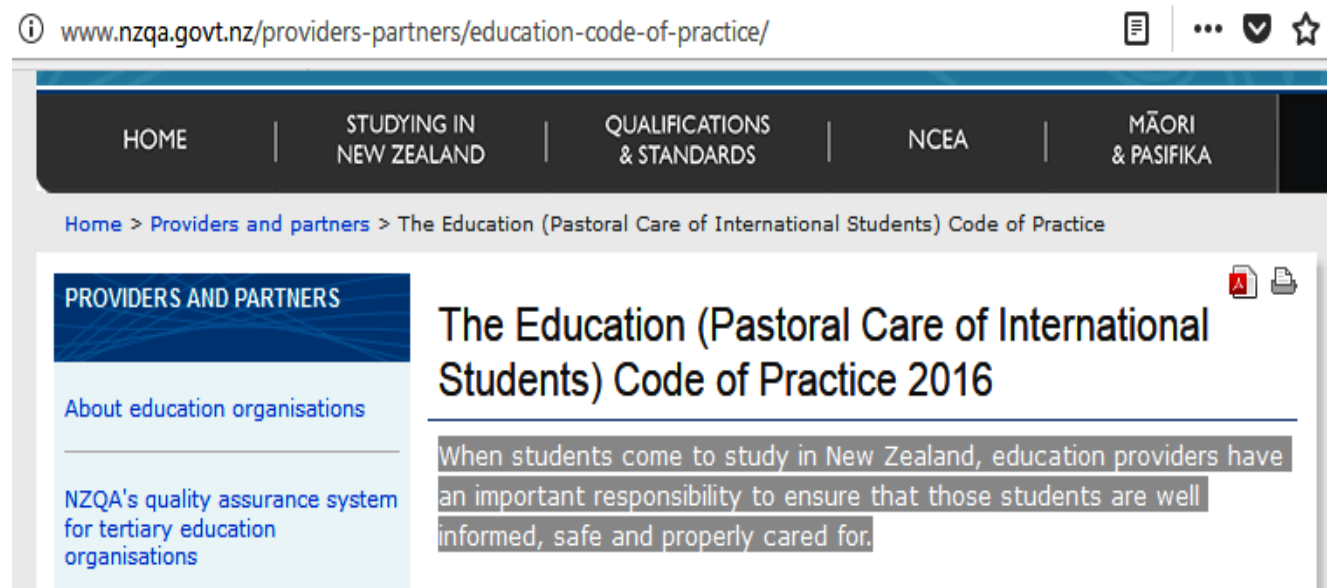
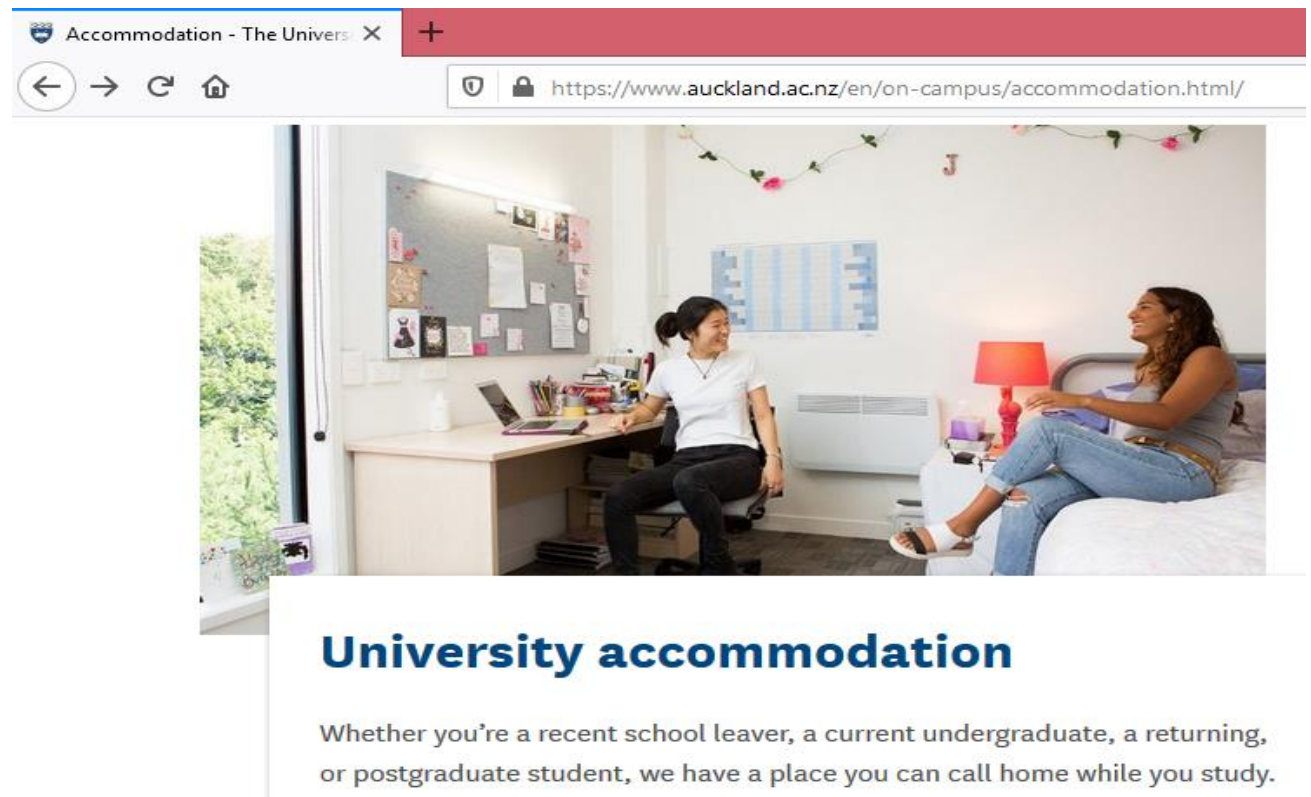


Figure 6. The University of Auckland (2016b): Accommodation.



I had contacted the University to inquire about my options a month before the move to Aotearoa/New Zealand. The University advised that there was no accommodation available at that time. Nonetheless, they also stated that they could provide me with a temporary accommodation for two weeks until I find a rather permanent residential option. In the meantime, they gave me a list of other temporary places. For reservation, I needed to book online and pay the fees, at least partially, via a credit/debit card. However, the University did not consider the very fact that Iran was severely hit by international sanctions, which made it nearly impossible to make an international bank transaction via credit/debit cards such as Visa or MasterCard as they were not available to Iranian residents. Hence, direct booking was not an option for me. I looked online for other possible options, but I understood that I needed to be physically present in Aotearoa/New Zealand in order to sign a rental contract. Therefore, the only possibility I was left with was to ask the University for the temporary solution that they advised me of earlier. I did notify the University about the urgent need to have some type of accommodation because I could not reserve any while I was in Iran. The accommodation team at the University responded just a day prior to my flight, saying there was nothing available at the time. I was shocked about the news, and its timing, but I could not do much about it. I have had a very hard time for the first two weeks, changing between different modes of residences from a motel, hotel, backpacker and Airbnb, an international temporary accommodation rental website, to an actual apartment at the end. The accommodation team could not help me with the issue other than repeating the same list to me over and over again. I later raised a letter of complaint for the seeming mismatch of policy and practice and the accommodation manager officially apologised for what happened in a reply email. But apologies without action appear to be hollow, so I escalated the issue to the Vice Chancellor of the University. The Vice Chancellor, too, initially thought the accommodation team might have simply followed their guidelines, but eventually understood

what went wrong, acknowledged the issue and followed the matter up with the accommodation team. It was only then that I could secure suitable accommodation in one the newly built student residences of the University. But the key questions continued to play on my mind: Why was meeting the Vice Chancellor the only way to resolve the issue? And is it expected of every international student who may face a similar problem to meet the Vice Chancellor?

Neoliberalism is a hegemonic project that has self-interest, individuality and competition at its core (Barnett, 2005). And a neoliberal higher education system may use bureaucracy to serve its hierarchy of power (Martin, 2016). The neoliberal higher education is based on free markets and markets need assurances (Smyth, 2017). Ranking systems have emerged to make it easier for everyone to understand the overall quality of education at different institutions (Altbach, 2013b; Lynch, 2015; Marginson, 2017). The Education Code of Practice may act to give the required assurance to its international markets about the quality of pastoral support for international students (Lewis, 2005, 2011; Ramia et al., 2013). However, Marginson et al. (2010) observe that “in international education, the language that appears in formal regulation does not reflect the student experience on the ground” (p. 155).

5.5. Conclusion

Neoliberalism has changed higher education from a public good to a private good (Broom, 2011). In this environment, that “a university qualification is a private consumer good and a lever for individual benefit has become an accepted truth within the discourses of higher education” (Black & Walsh, 2019, p. 51). The neoliberal university seeks maximum economic profitability to stay competitive in the global market (Giroux, 2002; Hil, 2015;

Marginson et al., 2010; Smyth, 2017). It is not optional, but mandatory to resist the neoliberal university, as Giroux (2015, 2016) argues. Giroux (2015) claims that students are already rising up against this dangerous phenomenon in different parts of the world and it is now up to academics to act against the notorious forces of neoliberalism at universities to reclaim these public spheres of thought. Resisting the neoliberal university has “an overarching missive that knowledge produced within universities should above all serve in the interest of our humanity” (Darder, 2019, p. ix).

Bureaucracy is the mechanism through which managerial power is exercised in the neoliberal university (Martin, 2016). Graeber (2012, 2015) laments its inefficiency, Nash (2019) views it as a double-edged sword, and Alvesson (2013) regards it in its Weberian rational form as an inevitable contemporary form of management. I would argue that bureaucracy could benefit everyone, not just the managers, if it is designed and used to be democratic. For that, it needs to take into account the agency of academics, students and administrators. The unilateral top-down management system appears to be autocratic, and it may not serve the interests of all stakeholders. The neoliberal university uses bureaucracy to achieve its economic agenda, which may not be in line with the values of education as a public good to serve the whole society (Giroux, 2002, 2015, 2016; Smyth, 2017).

The universities in Aotearoa/New Zealand follow a neoliberal agenda (Lewis, 2005, 2011; Marginson et al., 2010; Shore, 2010; Smyth, 2017). The neoliberal university regards international students as sources of revenue generation (Gue & Gue, 2017; Hil, 2015; Ramia et al., 2013). The bureaucracy exercised by the University, like any other form of bureaucracy, is in the name of clarity, time-management, efficiency, and accountability (see

Alvesson, 2013; Alvesson & Thompson, 2006; Nash, 2019; Serpa & Ferreira, 2019), but in reality, it appears to be implemented through such a vague mechanism that even the person responsible for administrative errors may not be identified (see Graeber, 2012, 2015). The experience of internationalisation of higher education by international students could be much better than what it is in Aotearoa/New Zealand if the goals of protective mechanisms for international students as well as their bureaucratic features were not to serve the neoliberal agendas, merely based on the commercialisation and marketisation strategies. In a neoliberal university's agenda, economic gains and profitability are the top priority (Clarke, 2008; Collins and Lewis, 2016; Giroux, 2002; Poole, 2016; Smyth, 2017), but "one thing seems certain: opposition to the neoliberal university is on the rise" (Hill, 2015, p. 197). An element of such opposition by international students may be rooted in their agency, which I discuss in the next chapter. While international students need support from their host institutions, their agency is undeniable (Marginson, 2014; Marginson et al., 2010; Marginson & Sawir, 2011; Matthews, 2017; Ramia et al., 2013; Tran & Vu, 2018).

Chapter Six: International Students' Agency

The course of our lives is shaped by many forces and events, not the least of which by ourselves. For good and bad, we are to a large extent architects of our life course. Within the constraints imposed by biology, history, social structure, good and bad fortune, and other factors we may or may not be aware of, we try to control the direction of our lives by exerting our will, pursuing our goals, and affecting our circumstances. While we are indeed products of social and physical forces, we are also causal agents in the construction of our environments and ourselves. (Gecas, 2003, p. 369)

I write about the agency of international students in this penultimate chapter. I begin by a quick review of what I have previously discussed about the term and look at the mobility of international students as the initial representation of their agency. Next, I will elaborate on the concepts of power and agency and introduce reflexivity as the founding element of agency. I continue to consider the relationship between student engagement and agency before concluding the chapter by canvassing the agency of participants in this study.

I have already presented that a number of scholars argue that the vast majority of the existing literature on international students represents them as individuals who lack the cultural and academic capital to succeed in the Western academic environment (Lee, 2015; Matthews, 2017, 2018; Ramia et al., 2013; Tran & Vu, 2018). However, Marginson et al. (2010) argue that international students are not passive actors, with deficits in their cultural, linguistic, and educational backgrounds, who are just happy to pay higher tuition fees to study. Lomer and Anthony-Okeke (2019) regard deficit modelling of international students as a form of neo-imperialism in terms of which anyone who is not in line with the Western academic requirements would be considered deficient. Marginson (2014) argues that studies which negatively stereotype international students and depict them as problematic fail to grasp the basic tenet of student development – their agency. Similarly, Jones (2017) argues that

stereotypical views of international students as culturally and academically deficient individuals must be revisited.

Mobility appears to be the common ground for all international students. The mobility of international students is not merely the outcome of push-pull factors; in fact, their decision to cross borders in pursuit of knowledge could be seen as a strong form of reflexive and agentic action (Baker, 2019). Arkoudis et al. (2018) differentiate between neoliberal and cosmopolitan approaches towards international student mobility. According to the neoliberal approach, individuals are in pursuit of capital and qualifications, and degrees represent cultural capital. International students need this capital in order to secure a well-paid job in a competitive employment market. Higher education institutions, on the other hand, need the new source of revenue generation that international tuition fees provide in the face of government funding cuts. Gershon (2011), similarly, argues that neoliberal structures demand specific form of agency, in particular, autonomous one that requires agents to make their decisions on the basis of market rationales:

A neoliberal perspective presumes that every social analyst on the ground should ideally use market rationality to interpret their social relationships and social strategies. This concept of agency requires a reflexive stance in which people are subjects for themselves—a collection of processes to be managed. (Gershon, 2011, p. 539)

She elaborates that neoliberal agency desires conformist agents who treat themselves as businesses to be managed by the market rational choices. In her view, neoliberalism favours autonomy as the specific form of agency. Agents may not pursue their own creative ideas through neoliberalism unless they succumb to the options provided by the market (Gershon, 2011). According to the cosmopolitan approach, on the other hand, individuals move in line with the forces of globalisation to be globally informed citizens who can function well in different professional settings and intercultural encounters while they are aware of cross-

cultural differences (Arkoudis et al., 2018). Mobility of international students can stem from a variety of reasons but “mobility decisions can never be entirely devoid of agency” (Cairns & Sargsyan, 2019, p. 21). Mobility of international students compels them into reflexive deliberations to manage their pathways abroad while their previous habits and routines may not be applicable to their new environments (Matthews, 2017). Concepts of agency and reflexivity can apply to all human beings, yet their mechanisms may work a bit differently for international students:

The notion of the student as a reflexive and self-determining person, guided by agency freedom, applies to all forms of higher education and not just international education. Self-formation among international students is especially interesting because it can involve substantial changes in compressed time periods. International students move across geographical, political, cultural, and linguistic borders; they are engaged in rapid learning about the new country; and they negotiate plural identities on a more or less constant basis. (Marginson, 2014, pp. 11-12)

I discuss the concept of agency in further details through the next section.

6.1. Power and Agency

Power is a contested topic for which there is no standard definition (Pusser & Marginson, 2013). Haugaard (2012) describes a cluster of different concepts of power in the related literature on power. These views can be summarised as *power over*, *power with* and *power to*. *Power over* represents domination while *power with* refers to empowerment in joining a system or a group. The potential to act and bring about change, or to sustain a previous state, belongs to his category of *power to*. Sadan (2007) makes the concept of power a bit clearer. She maintains that “power is exercised and not held” (p. 63). That means it is not something to be genetically inherited. Sadan (2007) believes that power is acquired, so it is not a disposition. She is of the view that power is the basic component of any social activity, but it also contributes to human agency. She assumes that power is present in social interaction in

both macro and micro levels, so it can be both for structure as well as agents. However, she adds that there is an apparent inequality in the ways people have access to resources, which can lead to inequality in their ability to exercise their power. Similarly, Carspecken (1996) argues that all actions are mediated through some form of power. However, his typology of power appears to assume the same characteristics for both structure and agents. But, as I elaborate on the term, agency cannot be merely limited to normative, coercive, contractual, and charismatic powers that Carspecken (1996) depicts (see Section 5 of Chapter 3). Other prominent researchers like Foucault (1982) and Fairclough (2001) also talk about power and agency. While Foucault never explicitly uses the term agency for individuals, he considers their agency by referring to individual subjects in their active mode, however, he does not clearly mention what may actually make them active. Fairclough delves into the relationship between power and discourse as he believes that power mediates through language. The relationship between power and language is also represented in the structuration theory of Giddens (1984).

Giddens (1984) assumes that both structure and individuals have power. Power and agency make sense only relative to each other, in what he calls duality of structure. Individuals are not robots who are programmed to act in certain ways, but they have a degree of freedom to choose their own pathways although they are bound by societal rules. Therefore, structures and agents work together in an inter-related, action-reaction relationship. The outcome of the relationship explains how social norms are reproduced or transformed. In Giddens' social theory, power plays a key role in establishing, maintaining or changing social structures. However, he believes that social structures can be both constraining as well as enabling for human action. In other words, agents in a given society are able to reproduce social orders or change them using their power of agency.

There are three dimensions of power in structuration theory (Giddens, 1984). Firstly, there is signification, which means production of meaning through discourse and language. It leads to the second phase, which is legitimation, in which norms, conventions, and rules of the structure are justified and internalised through the subjects and actors. It means the legitimacy of any social act depends on the rules set out by the structure and followed by actors. The last dimension of structuration is domination, through which power is exercised via control of resources as the main consequence of the other two dimensions. Giddens (1984) argues that individual actors can behave either in a form of submission/acceptance or resistance through their agency. Agency means that they are not trapped in an inevitable loop of structural power relations, and they have a degree of freedom to choose their path. While the structure tries to produce meanings of its own through specific discourse, actors have the power to interpret the meanings.

In Giddens' view, agents constantly monitor their situation to understand what is going on around them in order to rationalise the best course of action to achieve their goals:

To be a human being is to be a purposive agent, who both has reasons for his or her activities and is able, if asked, to elaborate discursively upon those reasons (including lying about them). (Giddens, 1984, p. 3, emphasis in original)

Agents can choose to maintain their current circumstances or to change the system, or resist it, based on their rationalisation and goals. According to their actions, then, the social order will be reproduced or challenged and/or transformed. Nonetheless, Giddens (1984) believes that most of the actors' actions in society are governed by subconscious reasoning. It is like the case of language that is regulated through grammar, vocabulary and pragmatics, but no one really thinks consciously about the separate items when speaking.

Archer (1995) accepts Giddens' (1984) views on the interactive relationship between agency and structure. However, she argues that Giddens is too preoccupied with central conflation of agency and structure, where there is not much opportunity left to consider each item in separation. Similarly, Danermark and Ekström (2019) argue that one should methodologically "keep structure and agency apart in order not to reduce one to the other and study the links between them over time" (p. 93). Archer (1995) also strongly maintains that structure always precedes agency because human beings are all born into their surrounding social structures: "structure necessarily predates the actions which transform it and that structural elaboration necessarily post-dates those actions" (Archer, 1995, p. 90). Therefore, she argues that the temporal axis of social evolution must be noted in any research about the relationship between structure and agency. Archer (1995), in particular, believes both structure and agency have powers and emerging properties that can be used to study them further. Nevertheless, she rejects the ideas of supremacy of agency over structure or vice-versa, as she calls them upward or downward conflation of agency and structure:

Humanity is seen as the linchpin of agency in general and is therefore crucial to how one side of the "problem of structure and agency" is conceptualised. Too often we are presented with reductionist accounts, which either make all that we are the gift of society or, conversely, which claim that all society is can be derived from what we are. Instead, both humanity and society have their own *sui generis* properties and powers, which makes their interplay the central issue of social theory for all time. (Archer, 2000, p. 17; emphasis in original)

Archer (1995) views human agency as a crucial part of her morphogenetic social theory, where agents can change their social structures, albeit through the temporal axis:

"the "morpho" element is an acknowledgement that society has no pre-set form or preferred state: the "genetic" part is a recognition that it takes its shape from, and is formed by, agents, originating from the intended and unintended consequences of their activities" (Archer, 1995, p. 5; emphasis in original).

Archer (2015) considers that structures, too, can shift and condition human agency in specific ways through double morphogenesis, following their transformation by agents. In other words, any transformed society may require a different form of agency from agents, based on

its shifted structure. Nonetheless, she specially focuses on human agency and its potential transformational properties in her morphogenetic approach:

These are the powers which ultimately enable people to reflect upon their social context, and to act reflexively towards it, either individually or collectively. Only by virtue of such powers can human beings be the active shapers of their socio-cultural context, rather than the passive recipients of it. The very notion of morphogenesis is predicated upon such active agents, otherwise there is no legitimate source to which structural or cultural elaboration can be attributed. This means that human beings have the powers of critical reflection upon their social context and of creatively redesigning their social environment, its institutional or ideational configurations, or both. (Archer, 2000, p. 308)

Archer has contributed significantly to the literature about human agency, but similar to the issues around the definition of power, agency has seen a myriad of descriptions within social sciences:

The concept of agency has become a source of increasing strain and confusion in social thought. Variants of action theory, normative theory, and political-institutional analysis have defended, attacked, buried, and resuscitated the concept in often contradictory and overlapping ways. At the centre of the debate, the term agency itself has maintained an elusive, albeit resonant, vagueness; it has all too seldom inspired systematic analysis, despite the long list of terms with which it has been associated: selfhood, motivation, will, purposiveness, intentionality, choice, initiative, freedom, and creativity. (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 962)

Carspecken (1996) considers the same tensions in the 1970s and 1980s:

Culturalists advocated a theory of agency and volition. Mechanists implicitly reduced agency to the turning of cogs in a grand machine. Structuralists saw agency as constituted by structures and explicitly called for an end to humanism, to theories that put individual human choice and experience in primary position. (p. 180)

It appears that some scholars have put their emphasis on human agency over the structure while others focused on the constraining elements of society. For instance, Coleman (1986) argues that previous social research generally marginalised or ignored the causal powers of agency. He assumes that social structures are created by cumulative forces of human agency, so structures may be too dependent on human agency. However, his view on precedence of agency before structure appears to misse the span of time through social constructs. Human beings are always born into certain social orders, so it cannot be claimed that they themselves

made their surrounding structures (Archer, 1995). Coleman (1988) in his later work considers social relations as an enabling social factor for human agency:

Just as physical capital is created by changes in materials to form tools that facilitate production, human capital is created by changes in persons that bring about skills and capabilities that make them able to act in new ways. Social capital, however, comes about through the changes in social relations among persons that facilitate action. If physical capital is wholly tangible, being embodied in observable material form, and human capital is less tangible, social capital is less tangible yet, for it exists in the relations among persons. (pp. 100-101)

His idea of social capital seems to correspond roughly to the idea of *power with* from Haugaard (2012), which I discussed at the beginning of this section. Nonetheless, his over-reliance on human agency appears to neglect the constraining elements of social structures in their conditioning powers to push agency into certain pathways.

Other scholars have contributed to the debate on the interactive relationship between structure and agency. Kahn and Misiasek (2019), for instance, define agency as “to comprise a process by which individuals articulate concerns, pursue specific projects and establish practices in order to realise those concerns” (p. 590). Cairns and Sargsyan (2019) situate agency within the wider social contexts and state that agentic actors “have the capacity to act according to their own desires with a view to reaching certain goals, albeit within pre-existing societal structures that contain many risks, limitations and inequalities” (p. 15). Similarly, Elder (1997) argues that “individuals construct their own life course through the choices and actions they take within the constraints and opportunities of history and social circumstances” (p. 961). Sen (2000) persuasively argues that the success of any form of agency must be measured in light of the values and goals of any given agent. He describes agent as

someone who acts and brings about change, and whose achievements can be judged in terms of her own values and objectives, whether or not we assess them in terms of some external criteria as well. (Sen, 2000, p. 19)

The key to his idea of human agency is the concept of freedom. Sen (2000) argues that not only freedom is the primary end for human development, but it also accounts as the principal means to achieve it. He breaks down freedom into its building blocks of political freedoms, economic facilities, social opportunities, transparency guarantees, and protective security. In broader terms, he divides agentic freedoms into three main parts. Firstly, *control freedom* accounts for the freedom from external constraints, coercion, or threat. Secondly, *effective freedom* represents the capacity of individuals to act and to realise their goals, based on their available resources and social opportunities. Finally, *agency freedom* refers to the conscious and self-directed human will that chooses personal pathways of different life courses. He elaborates that governing institutions should increase the capabilities of individuals, rather than merely increasing their economic welfare, to let them enhance their lives in term they themselves value (Sen, 1985, 1992). Sen argues that economic welfare is an insufficient element to found agency freedom because it can encompass wider topics such as access to health system, social network of family and friends, education, dignity, creativity, and satisfying work. In a similar fashion, Bandura (2008), a prominent psychologist, focuses on the concept of freedom in developing the idea of human agency:

Freedom is not conceived just passively as the absence of constraints and coercion in choice of action, but proactively as the exercise of self-influence in the service of selected goals and desired outcomes... There is no absolute freedom. Paradoxically, to gain freedom individuals have to negotiate consensual rules of behaviour for certain activities that require some relinquishment of autonomy. Without traffic laws, for example, driving would be chaotic, perilous, unpredictable, and uncontrollable for everyone. (p. 98)

Bandura (2001, 2008), similar to Giddens (1984) and Archer (1995, 2000), considers social structures to be both constraining and enabling for human agency. Nevertheless, human agency also accounts for innovation and creativity:

Other species are heavily innately programmed as specialists for stereotypic survival in a particular habitat. In contrast, through agentic action, people devise ways of adapting flexibly to remarkably diverse geographic, climatic, and social environments. They devise ways to transcend their biological limitations. (Bandura, 2008, p. 102)

Marginson et al. (2010) argue that international students' freedom, similar to the concept of control freedom of Sen (2000), is often limited to the point that can impact their agency freedom negatively. For instance, they argue that international students are under continuous surveillance by immigration authorities while they sometimes have been wrongfully accused of immigration fraud and/or breaching their visa conditions, which resulted in their deportation in violent moves. The authors argue that procedures of the Western immigration system appear to be protracted while entrenched in a toxic culture of interrogation and deterrence as if international students are invaders who have not been invited. After all, international students can also be viewed as potential threats to national security as well as sources of crime, as Forbes-Mewett, McCulloch, and Nyland (2015) argue. But violence does not seem to be the best way to exert structural powers:

Power is indeed of the essence of all government, but violence is not. Violence is by nature instrumental; like all means, it always stands in need of guidance and justification through the end it pursues. And what needs justification by something else cannot be the essence of anything. (Arendt, 1970, p. 51)

Marginson (2014) argues instead that recognising international students' agency can help to improve the provisions of international education for everyone involved, including the experiences of international students who are self-forming agents. Marginson and Sawir (2011) view agency as a socially nested capability. They argue that

Agency means the sum of a person's capacity to act. Agency is the seat of self-will, the "centralising" part of the self through which we manage ourselves and our own continuing formation in education, work, and other zones of activity (p. 19; emphasis in original).

While they emphasise on the role of agency for the direction of human life course, they do not take agentic powers as deterministic. Marginson (2014) clarifies his points further:

Each student deals with many challenges and problems. None is altogether master of her or his individual fate. None of us are. But in the self-formation perspective the conscious agency of the student is irreducible and ever-present. (Marginson, 2014, p. 18)

Similarly, Gecas (2003) argues:

To say that we are architects of our lives is not to say that our lives turn out as we intended. The self as a reflexive phenomenon and a motivated system is a multidimensional source of human agency...A major aspect of self-agency affecting life course construction is our sense of self-efficacy, that is our belief in our efficacy and personal control. (Gecas, 2003, p. 384)

Gecas' idea of self-efficacy belief system and its impact on human agency is rooted in the seminal work of Albert Bandura who argues:

The capacity to exercise control over the nature and quality of one's life is the essence of humanness. Human agency is characterised by a number of core features that operate through phenomenal and functional consciousness. These include the temporal extension of agency through intentionality and forethought, self-regulation by self-reactive influence, and self-reflectiveness about one's capabilities, quality of functioning, and the meaning and purpose of one's life pursuits. Personal agency operates within a broad network of sociostructural influences. In these agentic transactions, people are producers as well as products of social systems. Social cognitive theory distinguishes among three modes of agency: direct personal agency, proxy agency that relies on others to act on one's behest to secure desired outcomes, and collective agency exercised through socially coordinative and interdependent effort. (Bandura, 2001, p. 1)

A key factor of human agency for Bandura (2001) is the belief system of individuals, or their can-do attitude, to use their capabilities in order to achieve their desired outcomes. He argues that self-efficacy ideas can impact human actions through inspirational, affective and cognitive functions. He also recognises the influence of fortuitous events on the life course of agents but argues that agents can exert some control over the chances they encounter by developing their competencies, self-regulatory skills and self-efficacy beliefs. He distinguishes three modes of human agency. When agents act individually, they do so through their direct personal agency. Archer (1995) recognises this form as *primary agency*. However, agents often do not have direct control over the course of events in their life course due to many reasons, like time constraints or a lack of knowledge and expertise in specific fields, so they may act through a proxy (Bandura, 2011). For instance, lawyers can act on behalf of their clients. When a number of agents share a common goal and a similar value system, they may work together to act stronger (Bandura, 2011). This dimension again aligns

with the concept of *power with* from Haugaard (2012). Archer (1995) refers to this aspect as *corporate agency*. For example, the New Zealand International Students Association assumes the capacity to amplify international students' voice through their collective actions.

Bandura (2008) specifies four characteristics for any form of human agency:

There are four core properties of human agency. One such property is *intentionality*. People form intentions that include action plans and strategies for realising them...The second feature involves the temporal extension of agency through *forethought*. This includes more than future-directed plans. People set themselves goals and anticipate likely outcomes of prospective actions to guide and motivate their efforts anticipatorily. A future state has no material existence, so it cannot be a cause of current behaviour acting purposefully for its own realisation. But through cognitive representation, visualised futures are brought into the present as current guides and motivators of behaviour...The third agentic property is *self-reactiveness*...Having adopted an intention and action plan, one cannot simply sit back and wait for the appropriate performances to appear...Agency thus involves not only the deliberative ability to make choices and action plans, but the ability to construct appropriate courses of action and to motivate and regulate their execution...The fourth agentic property is *self-reflectiveness*. People are not only agents of action. They are self-examiners of their own functioning. Through functional self-awareness, they reflect on their personal efficacy, the soundness of their thoughts and actions, and the meaning of their pursuits, and they make corrective adjustments if necessary. (Bandura, 2008, pp. 88-89; emphasis in original)

Emirbayer and Mische (1998), from yet a different perspective, delve further into the topic of human agency to better understand its mechanics of action. They consider agency to be the

temporally constructed engagement by actors of different structural environments – the temporal-relational contexts of action – which, through the interplay of habit, imagination, and judgment, both reproduces and transforms those structures in interactive response to the problems posed by changing historical situations. (p. 970)

In their view, “agency entails different ways of experiencing the world, by means of which actors enter into relationship with surrounding people, places, meanings, and events” (p.

973). They argue that agency is composed of three interrelated dimensions. Firstly, the *iterational dimension* entails that agency is influenced by past experiences, thought patterns and habits. Secondly, agency is oriented towards the future by the vision of alternative possibilities through imagination in the dimension of *projective element*. And thirdly, the

practical-evaluative dimension is informed by the judgements agents make about their present situation by monitoring the outcome of previous action as well as the available resources and possibilities at hand. In other words, agency is temporally embedded in the past, modified and analysed at present and positioned into the future trajectories of action by formulating alternative pathways to achieve goals. Therefore, human agency is

composed of variable and changing orientations within the flow of time. Only then will it be clear how the structural environments of action are both dynamically sustained by and also altered through human agency. (Emirbayer & Mische 1998, p. 964)

Drawing on the work of Emirbayer and Mische (1998) and Bandura (2001) on human agency, Klemenčič (2015) provides a clear definition for the concept of student agency that may also be applicable to international students for the purposes of this study:

Student agency refers to the quality of students' self-reflective and intentional action and interaction with their environment. It encompasses variable notions of agentic possibility ("power") and agentic orientation ("will"). The notions of agentic possibility and orientation are temporally embedded, implying that they are shaped through considerations of past habits of mind and action, present judgments of alternatives for action and projections of the future. They are also intrinsically relational and social, and situated in structural, cultural and socio-economic-political contexts of action. (p. 11, emphasis in original)

It appears that arguments of Giddens (1984), Emirbayer and Mische (1998), Archer (1995, 2000, 2003, 2007), and Bandura (2001, 2008) share commonalities in capturing what constitutes human agency. They all view it as a temporal element situated within the wider possibilities and limitations of surrounding societies to realise one's goals. Meanwhile, they may have used different terms to refer to the same concept. What Giddens (1984) considers as a human capability to monitor the circumstances and rationalise a course of action is reflected through Bandura's (2008) four elements of *intentionality*, *forethought*, *self-reactiveness* and *self-reflectiveness*, and it overlaps with the concepts of *iterational*, *projective*, and *practical-evaluative* dimensions of human agency by Emirbayer and Mische (1998). They seem to talk about a key human element that negotiates between the structural

powers, as enabling and constraining factors, and human agency that aims to achieve one's goals on the basis of their experiences, concerns, values, and resources. Archer (2000, 2003, 2007) argues that the link between the structure and agency is reflexivity. For international students, reflexivity is crucially important because through it they understand their new environment, reflect on their past habits and actions, think about their future aspirations, and reflexively deliberate on the best course of action to help them navigate through the maze of their new structure. As discussed earlier in this chapter, Archer (2015) assumes that a change in structure, morphogenesis, may result in a shift in the human agency as well.

Morphogenesis for international students occurs through relocating to new, and often unknown, structures of the host nations that may require a different course of action from them. They may understand that what used to work for them may no longer be effective in their new circumstances (Matthews, 2017). Therefore, they need to engage in reflexive deliberations to make their way through their new worlds. Accordingly, I discuss the concept of human reflexivity further in the next section.

6.2. Reflexivity as the Founding Element of Agency

Caetano (2015) and Murphy (2021) argue that Margaret Archer's concept of reflexivity is the mediator between powers of social structures and agency of individuals. Archer (2007) argues that human beings are not passive forces to be shaped and manipulated by social forces, but they are able to be agents of change and transformation as well. She confirms the notion of Giddens (1984) with regard to structural social forces to be enabling or constraining for social actors and individuals by noting that the efficiency of such forces depends ultimately on their mediation through agents. In doing so, she focuses on reflexivity as the key theme of human agency. Giddens (1984) regards different stages, only one of which is reflexivity, for agents to act. In his view reflexivity should be alongside monitoring and

rationalisation to result in action. However, in Archer's view those stages are not beyond reflexivity but different processes within the realm of reflexivity itself. Her position on reflexivity and agency stems from her wider consideration of social reality.

Archer (1995), elaborating on the work of Bhaskar (1989, 1993), describes core elements of the realist social ontology as intransitivity and stratification of reality. Intransitivity, in crude terms, concerns with the independence of reality from observation and empiricism. In other words, knowledge is transitive as it can be extended, modified or rejected, but objective reality remains intransitive. Stratification of reality, on the other hand, corresponds with various layers of reality, namely the real, the actual and the empirical strata. The real stratum corresponds with the objective reality and its potential powers that may be beyond one's understanding via observation. The actual layer refers to the events that are always present but may remain unknown to agents unless they have some causal effect on them. The empirical level deals with experiences, feelings and observations of what is known to be real. Stratification, against the positivist modes of inquiry, attempts to show what one sees may not necessarily be the reality. It also helps to better understand that there may be hidden mechanisms behind the observable data. Therefore, researchers within the critical-realist framework attempt to "investigate and identify relationships and non-relationships, respectively, between what we experience, what actually happens, and the underlying mechanisms that produce the events in the world" (Danermark et al., 2002, p. 21). Simply put, critical realism discusses the interplay of causality, agency, and structure within their specific context of visible and invisible relations (Archer, 1995; Bhaskar, 1989). Hence, different researchers might come up with different arguments and findings about the same reality through different methods of inquiry and on the basis of their focus, as Stutchbury (2021) argues. Reflexivity sits at the core of human agency in Archer's (1995, 2000, 2003,

2007) morphogenetic approach, where agents can produce, maintain or transform social structures. Archer (2007) defines reflexivity as the routine practice of mental capability by all agents to understand and monitor their positioning within their society while they evaluate the resonance of societal forces with their own desires and concerns.

According to Archer (2007), reflexivity starts with an internal conversation, which commences at an early age for everyone. This conversation simply ranges from abstract daydreaming and fantasising to sophisticated decision-making processes. Archer (2003, 2007) divides reflexive types into four different modes. She argues that humans may exercise all four modes in their lives; however, one of these modes is the dominant one. The first mode is communicative reflexivity as Archer (2007) puts forth. People who belong to this group are a bit reserved to the whole society around them and they only communicate with people who are familiar or similar. They usually do not have long-term plans and go with the flow of everyday life. There is contextual continuity in their lives which translates into stability and can be seen in their career pathways. They show little interest for politics and the most important thing to them is relationships. Hence, they seek consensus when deciding on their next steps by following what they discuss in conversation with their peers, friends or family members. The second group is made up of autonomous reflexives whose mark could be found in the contextual discontinuity of their lives. While they assess the ways to reach success, their aims are not usually measured in terms of ethical values. They are exclusively outcome oriented, so they may use any means necessary to achieve their goals. In their planning phase of action, they usually make decisions with little communication, or no communication at all, with others. They usually tend to be self-employed and manage their own businesses while taking part in political movements only if those serve their interests. Similar to autonomous reflexives, meta-reflexives engage in constant reflexive deliberations,

but they are highly value driven. They may volunteer for political movements to change societies because they are social critics. Rather than contextual continuity or discontinuity, there is some form of contextual incongruity with this group. They tend to be critical of both social structures as well as their own reflexivity. Finally, there are fractured reflexives. They usually cannot find the right responses to their questions of internal conversations, so a proper course of action may not take place at the end. Their internal conversation usually contributes to their anxiety because they may feel lost as a result of their fragmented reflexivity.

International students inevitably engage in reflexive deliberations to make their way through their new environment of international journey (Matthews, 2017). What has routinely worked for them in the past within their home country may not be practical in the host nation, so they may need to think about alternative ways of doing things. As Matthews (2018) argues:

For international students, contextual discontinuity is obvious, though it is often conceptualised as shock. What Archer offers for explanations of cultural transition is that disruption or interruption to habitual action compels individuals into reflexive deliberation (the reflexive imperative). As individuals find themselves in a new set of structural constraints, selection is narrowed and subjects must engage in reflexive deliberation to find an effective course of action from the opportunities available. (p. 335; emphasis in original)

However, a more suitable phrase for *narrowed selection* for agents (or subjects as referred by Matthews) might be *different options* because contextual discontinuity usually imposes differences in the surrounding structures, which does not necessarily entail limited opportunities. For instance, international students may encounter differences in their access to health system, financial system, tenancy regulations and employment rights (Marginson, 2010). Nonetheless, their agency shows itself in a variety of ways all the way through their international sojourn (Marginson, 2014). An important aspect of the congruity of

international students within their new context might be their engagement with their new system, which I discuss further in the next section.

6.3. International Student Engagement and Agency

International students' engagement has sometimes been depicted through similar terms like integration through the relevant literature. Spencer-Oatey and Dauber (2019) argue that "integration is a concept that is referred to very widely in relation to internationalisation, yet its meaning is rarely explored and its benefits are often assumed" (p. 515). Page and Chahboun (2019) emphasise that integration is an umbrella term that includes social integration and contact with locals for international students, but it is not limited to those topics. A holistic integration is beyond psychological aspects of international education (Ramia et al., 2013). Marginson et al. (2010) argue that integration should encompass other areas such as housing, employment, immigration and social aspects to conceptualise a system of international student security, which provides an environment for international students to expand their agency freedom. Green (2019) looks at the relevant literature about student engagement in higher education and concludes that the term refers to both the sense of belonging students may have within their institution as well as the level of commitment and strength students show to absorb academic contents. She continues to say that disengagement has been considered to lack thereof, which can result in poor academic performance and feelings of alienation.

Spencer-Oatey and Dauber (2019) argue that it is time to revisit expectations from international students and redefine student engagement. In an attempt to review the relevant literature about higher education views about international students, Kettle (2017) observes

the historical attitudes about international students in the Western academia and she categorises them into three sections. The first representation of international students has been that of deficit modelling. It illustrates international students, whose English is not proficient enough for academia, as deficient in terms of their learning strategies and cultural background. In some instances, linguistic issues have been equated with intellectual incompetency. The second wave came to show international students as distinct to local students while acknowledging their academic potential. This approach has focused on adaptation and adjustment of international students into the campus life. The third wave started in the 2000s and tried to take a comprehensive approach towards international students by a new trend of research, encompassing “power, discourse, identity, and agency” (p. 29). Kettle’s (2017) observations of the third wave are in line with those of Green (2019) to see “students as active, critical, and agentic contributors to all aspects of university life” (p. 3). Kettle (2017) concludes that “reconceptualising international student engagement as social practice necessitates drawing on behavioural, cognitive and socio-political understandings that were dominant in previous waves of literature” (p. 31). In a similar vein, Kahu (2013) argues that student engagement has been vaguely defined throughout the literature. She maintains that attempts to capture the students’ satisfaction, academic progress, and their understanding of educational systems through the means of surveys have been problematic because such methods cannot provide the full picture. Correspondingly, Klemenčič (2015) is critical of quantitative methods of surveys in capturing the experiences of students and analysing their engagement with their respective educational institutions:

The underlying assumption lies in positivist thinking that observable phenomena – student engagement and experience – can be measured and validated through quantitative survey questionnaires, and that causal relations (correlation) and time priority exist between specific independent and dependent variables. While student surveys can be helpful in providing data for overall assessment of institutional functions with regard to student experience, and scan for immediate student satisfaction or dissatisfaction with particular student services, this approach has a number of widely acknowledged limitations...A methodological flaw that critics most

frequently point out is that such surveys provide a “snapshot” view of student experience that does not do justice to its inherently dynamic and contextual, and developmental and self-developmental nature. Survey questionnaires are based on preconceived categories as to what the institutional researchers expect the correlations to be between educational provisions and university circumstances (the independent variables) and student experience and engagement (the dependent variables). These expectations may not always be accurate given the interdependent and multifaceted factors and interactions that underlie student interactions and thus their experience. Yet another weakness of this approach is its inability to capture student engagement as multidimensional, dynamic and developmental, and the effect of working under the assumption that students exercise rational choice from shared starting points and in undifferentiated circumstances...The institutionalist and behaviouralist literature stemming from survey-based research tends to oversimplify what is a highly dynamic process of student choices of engagement simultaneously influenced by a multiplicity of different factors. (p. 21; emphasis in original)

Kahn (2014) and Kahn et al. (2017) believe that student engagement is a way in which students exercise their agency. By the same token, I would argue that engagement of tertiary international students might be ultimately achieved through their active participation in the policy-making decisions of their respective higher education institutions. I have already discussed, for instance, that the New Zealand International Students Association (NZISA, 2019) asks the higher education policy makers to actively involve international students in their decision-making processes. They seem to seek scrupulous attention from the policy makers to address their concerns. In this regard, Dunne and Zandstra (2011) distinguish the difference between merely listening to students and actively involving them into the management processes of higher education:

There is a subtle, but extremely important, difference between an institution that “listens” to students and responds accordingly, and an institution that gives students the opportunity to explore areas that they believe to be significant, to recommend solutions and to bring about the required changes. The concept of “listening to the student voice”—implicitly if not deliberately—supports the perspective of student as “consumer,” whereas “students as change agents” explicitly supports a view of the student as “active collaborator” and “co-producer,” with the potential for transformation. (p. 4; emphasis in original)

I discuss some examples to represent the agency of participants, international students, of this study in the next section.

6.4. International Students' Agency in this Study

International students in this study have typically presented a great deal of agency in different forms. In particular, their agency appeared to be significant in their mobility decisions at the outset of their international education journey. Some of them were more experienced at it, while for some it was their first international travel experience. For instance, Eloney mentioned that there was technically no university in her home country, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, so she decided to go to Cuba for her undergraduate studies and then moved to the UK before embarking on her master's programme in Aotearoa/New Zealand due to both the scholarship she had secured and the expertise that the University could offer in her specific field of study. Similarly, while Laura did her bachelor's degree in Lebanon, she moved to Scotland for her master's. She mentioned that she came to Aotearoa/New Zealand to pursue her PhD "by accident." I discussed previously that Bandura (2001) considers *chance* to be an element of human agency, but he stresses on the importance of preparedness to exploit such fortuitous opportunities:

It was kind of by accident, so I initially was going to do my PhD in Switzerland, I got accepted to do my PhD there, but I didn't like any of the projects that they offered, so I met one of the researchers, doctors, there, and then he got offered a professorship here, in Auckland, and he kind of offered me a position here to try to develop a project together, so that's why I moved here basically.

She mentioned that the scholarship stipend that the Swiss higher education institution could offer her was about three times higher than the financial support that she has got at the University in Auckland, but after careful consideration of options before her, she eventually made the decision to move to Aotearoa/New Zealand. It reflects the points of Emirbayer and Mische (1998) with regard to evaluative dimension of agency where agents can exercise their "capacity to contextualise past habits and future projects within the contingencies of the moment" (p. 962). And it resonates with the *monitoring* aspect of Giddens' (1984) view of human agency as well as Bandura's (2008) concept of *self-evaluation*. Considering the

freedom concepts from the arguments of Sen (2000), she enjoyed control freedom as well as effective freedom to consider her future study options, but it was ultimately her agency freedom that went with the New Zealand opportunity that was available to her. Similarly, James has already had an international education experience prior to his travel to Aotearoa/New Zealand:

My background is in chemical engineering. I studied my bachelor's in chemical engineering in Kenya. I then did my master's in chemical engineering in Manchester in England. I have been working in Kenya in the process industry, started my own company in renewable energy projects at some point and started working with some consultants who I really don't understand because they are doing consultancy in geothermal energy, so I did a lot of computations for them, but it was for the surface equipment; I did not understand anything that happens below ground and most of the reports never made sense to me because they had a lot of information about under the ground, rock types and so on, so I sat down with myself and said I need to understand what this report means, so I decided to study geothermal energy to at least get a background on what happens below ground. I'm pretty good with everything that happens above ground or the surface; below ground – I had no idea.

He mentioned that Italy, New Zealand and Japan could provide the expertise he required in his field, geothermal energy, but he finally chose Aotearoa/New Zealand due to the scholarship he had received:

So, when I decided to study geothermal energy, I flicked through scholarships, found the New Zealand Development Scholarship, and I applied. They interviewed me like six or maybe seven times [laughs]. It was pretty rigorous.

However, he did not find out about the New Zealand scholarship on his own. He, in fact, practised some level of *communicative reflexivity* in this regard:

New Zealand is, maybe, um, a pioneer, after Italy. New Zealand is a leader in geothermal energy, especially in the training, they are the second oldest geothermal plant, well, that is after Italy, so they started teaching geothermal courses way before anybody else started, it was wise to teach geothermal energy, yea, and most of my friends in geothermal industry studied in New Zealand, here, so when I spoke to most of my friends in Kenya, they were like “oh, you should go to the University in Auckland” and then the choices were two, actually three, go to New Zealand, go to Italy, or go to Japan. Going to Italy or Japan would give me the problem of the language, and anyway, I had already been to Europe, erm, so I was thinking I had studied in the Northern Hemisphere, why not go to the school in the Southern Hemisphere this time? So, it made sense for me to come here.

The *iterative*, *projective* and *practical-evaluative* dimensions of agency are present in his above comments. He was happy with the decisions he had made, albeit he experienced some

challenges in his pathway. Most importantly, his evaluation was that his hard work has paid off. I asked him about his overall educational experience, and he replied:

It's been hectic because everything is compressed in one semester. I've done 3 exams, more than 10 assignments, two field-trip reports and I'm on my short project which is a lot of data from the industry that I'm supposed to analyse, make sense of, but erm, um, it has really opened my eyes: I spent the last two days, reading my, my, the reports from my consultants, finally the reports make sense. Now I understand what the report says.

However, not every participant has previously experienced international education before getting to Aotearoa/New Zealand. Ju, for instance, came to Aotearoa/New Zealand simply because her mother brought her. Nevertheless, this move was not against her will as she was curious to know about other possibilities of life abroad. She reflected on her past routines and habits and compared them with the way things work in their New Zealand context through her own evaluative lens:

So, university in China is very hard to get in, you have to pass, not just pass, to get really good grades in your final exams of your final year of high school. That's why the whole high school year is very intense. Let me tell you about my high school in China. I have to wake up at 6 [sighs and frowns], and I have to go to the class at 7 and then we have to read for 30 minutes and at 7:30 we go to the morning exercise. Then we come back to our classroom at 8 o'clock. Then we started our lectures and then we have an hour of break for the lunch and in the afternoon, we continue again until 5:30 that we finish it. We go take a shower, then we have dinner time and then we go back to our classes at 7:30 to do our homework and then we finish at 9:30. Then we go back home and the light is turned off at 10:30. But a lot of us didn't finish our homework by the time, but there's no light, so we have to use our toilet to use the light in order to finish our homework, and sometimes you can't even finish it cause it's very hard, just involves a lot of understanding and thinking...But it's not just in China though, I know it's the same in Korea, in Japan and Singapore as well, among Asian countries, it's just, there are too many people and they're competitive...And yea, if you go to a key university, a well-known one, then you are more likely to get a better job, that's the notion there, people have this ideology in their mind...And a lot of Chinese students may not get to a university, so they go abroad because it's easier for them to have a university abroad...I think I am more open to different values, to innovation, independent thinking, critical thinking, I have a feeling I won't get that much in China or it would take me longer to realise that, and also in my degree, I find it very interesting, in my first semester, I'm studying pharmacy, but in my first semester all we learned was nothing related to drugs or medicine, what we learnt was how to communicate with people, how to be culturally sensitive, basically how to become a better person, when I studied that I feel like that's common sense, why do you need to teach me that? I don't need to know that, I feel like, you know, I feel that as you grow you know how to communicate with people, you know how to deal with people, you know, but in China they won't teach you that, in China they teach you science. It's very interesting, I feel like, OK, how can you exam that? So, in exam they ask you

questions like list five ways leading to a good communication, or they give you scenarios, a lady comes in today, she looks concerned, what kind of questions should you ask? It's all humane, you know, human interaction questions, very interesting, in my country, we won't teach you that, we teach you chemistry, physics, you know, the science material, so that's very different between the Western countries' education and the Chinese, Asian, my country education. I think here they really focus on real stuff, practical stuff, stuff you use in real life and it's really relatable to the real world, to job, now I have a part-time job, and you feel like everything they told us about how to communicate with people is really important. I realise how important it is for some people, you think, oh, it's common sense, it's logical, it makes sense, but for some people it's actually very hard to do that, that's why you need lots of practice. But in my country, they will never teach you that. They don't teach you how to become a better person.

One might think that Ju has become Westernised because she appears to be too critical of her Chinese system of education. However, she considered herself to have been always Chinese and proud of her background, culture, ethnicity, identity and nation. As I discussed earlier in Chapter Four, she advised me that she would never apply for a New Zealand citizenship and passport although this option was available to her. This was neither due to a limitation in her control freedom, or any constraint from the New Zealand or Chinese governments, nor effective freedom of the possibilities before her. But it was mainly, if not fully, due to her value orientation and *meta-reflexivity* that has shaped her agency freedom. Nonetheless, she considered herself to be more open to a different set of values like innovation and critical thinking due to her international experience in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Bond (2019) argues that international students' identity may change in their international sojourn due to the complex relations between them and the new language and culture as well as their lived experience. Marginson (2014) also argues that international students go through multiple identities of who they were, who they are becoming and who they eventually become at the end of their international sojourn.

Huan, also came to Aotearoa/New Zealand due to the advice he had received from her parents in what can be seen as a form of communicative reflexivity. However, he told me that

he wanted to study in an English-speaking country all along, but he was not sure where exactly. As Cairns and Sargsyan (2019) argue, deliberations about the mobility of international students can never be fully deprived of human agency. Huan reflected on his experience in Aotearoa/New Zealand and observed the shift in himself:

Before I seldomly used English, now I usually speak English. I think English is very important for job and for further development, especially if I want to further develop at some English-speaking country.

He also looked at the context of Aotearoa/New Zealand and examined how it can serve his interests:

I think New Zealand is quite famous for its multiculturalism. I think people like me who [for the] first [time] study in a foreign country, I think, New Zealand is easier for me to get used to the culture than many other countries.

He presumed that the low population of New Zealand might make it more welcoming for international students and considered Aotearoa/New Zealand safer than other English-speaking destinations. Eloney reflected on her volunteer work and combined it with her evaluation of the internationalisation context in Aotearoa/New Zealand to project a future possibility where policy makers would expand their views about international students to increase the quality of higher education:

I had the chance to interact on a different level with [sighs] persons, children here, school children, private school children, from my volunteer work with the Red Cross because I volunteered with the Red Cross here and we do outreach programmes every so often and children love to learn. They don't have any bias. If they have a question, or if they are ignorant of something, and they are presented with the opportunity to learn about something, they learn. I think if we can get that [sighs] love [laughs] of learning about other people, it would be international students, yes, there's a category, international students, but everything that internationalisation is striving for so much, they would be able to understand the context and what it signifies and in so doing they would be better able to tailor their strategies to just not compete on that level in terms of quantity but they would have the quality of education that they are struggling for.

Eloney's concerns about the unrestrained competition in internationalisation may be reflected on the arguments of Knight and de Wit (2018) as well:

Who could have forecasted that internationalisation would transform from what has been traditionally considered a process based on values of cooperation, partnership, exchange, mutual benefits, and capacity building to one that is increasingly

characterised by competition, commercialisation, self-interest, and status building? (p. 4)

Mike has been dissatisfied with the quality of the supervision he had received, so he changed his doctoral supervisors twice, albeit through a difficult bureaucratic process. He was engaged in a support group for international students, through what seems to be his meta-reflexivity, but he eventually gave it up as it appears that his reflexivity has later become more autonomous oriented:

...in 2012, 2013, we, ah, the associate dean for international students said that the Faculty of Arts introduced the idea of international PhD students' group, and I did a part in coordinating that; we got together a lot of international students, PhD students, and we made friendships across disciplinary backgrounds. This was something that, you know, we were able to talk about issues relating to, issues and concerns specific to international students and, um, advocacy for equal opportunities and stuff like that we need. This was a channel for us to basically be able to speak to the administration but also solve problems amongst ourselves whether it was PhD divorces or, in general, scholarship applications or something like that and just socialising and cultural activities, that sort of thing, so I played a part in that, so that was one of the things I did for about a year, but I did it for a year, after that I kind of got burnt out and had to focus on, um, end of my provisional year, you know how that goes.

In our informal conversation, he emphasised that he did not observe any tangible outcome in policies of the University with regard to international students and it has been an important factor for him to let go of the support group. Cairns and Sargsyan (2019) state that “during the mobility experience, perceptions of success and failure will feed into deliberations about how long to prolong a stay” (p. 15). Similarly, Tran and Vu (2018) argue: “whether agency succeeds or fails depends on not only students' individual efforts, but it is also contingent on the availability of resources, institutional and structural factors influencing the students' lived realities” (p. 171). Parallel to Mike's experiences, Siti has been engaged with a support group for international students. Like Mike, she gave it up after a while as she thought it was taking a toll on her mental health and she could not cope with the demands. However, she thought such initiatives for international students may have an impact on policy-making processes at the end:

The New Zealand Government used to ignore international students, but recently Immigration New Zealand consulted New Zealand International Student Association for the future immigration changes, so things are changing although very slow.

While I cannot simply conclude what type of reflexivity participants have exercised, based on the limited data of their interviews with me, I would cautiously point out that Mike and Siti had shown tenets of meta-reflexivity to engage with the international student support groups and gradually became more oriented towards autonomous reflexivity when they left such groups. Their engagement seemed to be more value-driven, based on their appreciation of friendship, cooperation, collaboration, solidarity and altruistic purposes while they may have finally disengaged, based on their more self-interested goals of academic success. It is interesting how they have monitored their surrounding situation and rationalised their actions through their reflexive deliberations. Exploring the reflexivity of international students may shed light on the ways in which they can exercise their agency and manage their dealings with the wider sociocultural structure of their host institutions and broader community.

As discussed through the scholarly arguments of Archer (1995, 2015), a shift within the surrounding structure of agents may cause a change in their agency in return. Similarly, Marginson (2014) and Matthews (2017) argue that international students' prior social experiences and structuring may not match the new situation, so this gap calls up the need for agential resources, including a more vigorous reflexivity and self-transformation. In other words, international students may undergo an agential turn and a shift in their reflexivity. International students do not change their immediate surrounding structure of home countries, but they experience a, rather drastic, change within their new structure through their mobility. Thus, they face contextual discontinuity where their previous understandings and habits might not help them to make their way through their new environment. Therefore, they must engage in reflexive deliberations as to what it is that matters most to them in their new

environment and how they should pursue their goals on the basis of their values, priorities and available resources. For the same reason, their agency might change. While I could not thoroughly study this shift within the participants of the study due to the limited interview data to compare their past and present habits, I could see the significant change in myself. I come from a country that systematically limits control, effective, and agency freedom of its citizens under its current theocratic state of governance (Rehman, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022). Unfortunately, the current regime in Iran has made a dark history of systemic violation of human rights through its continuous abuse of structural powers. I quote from the latest report of Javaid Rehman, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations:

Institutional impunity and the absence of a system for accountability for violations of human rights permeate the political and legal system of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The absence of accountability derives from various deficiencies within State structures, including negation of the principles of rule of law and separation of powers...The ideology of the State features as a precondition for any form of political participation, is foundational for the policies of the State and its various bodies, and is further used for the interpretation of individual rights. It is clear that this system of governance establishes a particular relationship between individuals and the State, where the maintenance of the system of governance and the political ideology takes precedence over protecting and respecting the rights of individuals. Within this configuration, there is no meaningful way by which the population can freely participate in decision-making mechanisms, including legislative processes, or hold decision makers accountable. (Rehman, 2022, pp. 14-15)

When I was in Iran, I had to act conservatively within the tyrannic and dictatorial structure of my home country. As the official reports of the United Nations on the situation of human rights in Iran illustrate (Rehman, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022), the current system in Iran does not appear to tolerate any form of political criticism at any level, however, critical stance seems to be feasible through different avenues within the relatively enabling structure of Aotearoa/New Zealand where the rule of law governs the relationships to balance the power between agents and structures. Therefore, my reflexivity and agency appear to have shifted on the basis of my value orientation and in light of my available resources and societal enablers in Aotearoa/New Zealand. My topic of thesis itself can be a testament in this regard.

Of course, not every international student come from a country with similar specifications as to mine. But they do experience contextual disequilibrium to a degree, nonetheless (Marginson, 2014, Matthews, 2017). Even international students who come from English-speaking countries appear to be cognisant of systemic differences in their new environment of Aotearoa/New Zealand. Mike, for instance, showed an agential turn in his enthusiasm to support international students in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Ju similarly demonstrated a shift in her reflexivity and value orientation. And Siti was obviously engaged with international students to support their causes, which was not the case for her back in Malaysia. As Giddens (1984), Emirbayer and Mische (1998), and Archer (1995, 2000, 2003, 2007) argue, there is an important temporal element in human agency. This fact must be noted when international students' agency is discussed. International students continuously monitor their surrounding context as well as the outcomes of their previous and current actions to rationalise and/or adjust their future pathways in line with their available resources, values, and intentions.

The participants' evaluative scrutiny to monitor the context of internationalisation and to provide their unique definitions and perspectives were particularly interesting. I end this section with some of the responses to my query: *What does internationalisation of higher education mean to you?*

For me, its' erm, um, it means that university is, um, is, erm, should I say becoming? Or it's a process by which university joins the international stage almost to, erm, to produce a certain, um, standard that has been determined by our communities so that there is like, erm, a bare minimum standard so everyone who is going to university will have, erm, will be able to meet a particular criteria, at least, in different subject areas, and that would be my guess. I have no clue. That's my honest answer but if I have to guess that's what I would think. (Anna)

I bet a whole lot of words [laughs out loud]...I think it has to be with trying to fit, erm, or trying to take more resources here to compete on a global level to make it fit to the other, erm, what the world at large sees or envisions for, um, higher education – not sure if it makes sense [laughs] and as in you take whatever you have here and you try

to make it compatible with what is offered on the international swing: compatible and competitive. (Eloney)

Hmmm...I would think online studying, erm, so that different people from different countries can be introduced without having to be physically here, but that's one thing. Another thing would be different, um, different cultures or different ethnicities within the same work environment, erm, and, um, what else? Um, international, ah, collaborations, research collaborations, um, between, erm, research groups, erm, exchange students as well, so between countries and for PhDs as well. (Laura)

Oh, I think that's what education is meant to be. Internationalisation is education itself because you are educating yourself to know something and by just sitting in one place for like 30 years and 50 years and reading all the books that you have will give you some knowledge but maybe you may not be acting wisely and only become wise when you get into the other countries. Um, when you, erm, actually go out to places and see differences that is also when you understand your capabilities. Um, I thought I was OK when I was doing my undergraduate engineering, but when I was doing my master's, I thought oh I was nothing, when I came here, I still feel very low in terms of my intellectual capabilities, almost zero, um, I think that's what knowledge is – knowing or finding what your capabilities are is itself knowledge. If international education is giving that to you, then it is perfect. (Manpreet)

I think it is, um, a trend in current, it is a popular trend in the 21st century because as you know today is the globalised world and people from diversity, diversified cultures, get together and I think it improves the productivity, I think people can take advantages from meeting other cultures and I think the internationalisation in university is a good thing, I think because it is, erm, it provides, um, the situation to simulate our future experience in our work, I think, so I think, I mean it is a good practice for future. (Huan)

The participants' responses were immediately striking to show how sophisticated they could be in their evaluation of the internationalisation of higher education. One must note that they did not know that I might have asked them for their definition of the term in the interview, so they had to think on their feet and come up with quick responses. I was amazed to note how closely their answers could match a range of scholarly definitions that I had already discussed through the literature review. It can demonstrate how strong international students may be in evaluating their surrounding contexts, which is a reflexive requirement for their agency, according to the previous discussions in this chapter (see Archer, 2000, 2003, 2007; Bandura, 2001, 2008; Emirbayer & Mische, 1998; Giddens, 1984).

6.5. Conclusion

International students often enter a relatively unknown environment which requires them to engage in reflexive deliberations to find the best course of action on the basis of their monitoring of the context as well as rationalising their course of action. It appears from this study that non-action may itself be a form of action and it should not be confused with passivity. I discussed that Huan, for instance, was reluctant to engage in conversations with locals in Chapter Four. His (in)action was based on his understanding of the context, considering his options and rationalising the best direction of action that he could take. He most probably would change his course when he moves further on the temporal axis of his international journey. He may gather more resources in terms of his social capital and/or English language skills while he would also gain a deeper understanding of the New Zealand social structure.

The participants of this study showed different dimensions as well as various modes of reflexivity. Some appeared to be meta-reflexive and thought about social impact of their actions while others seemed to be thinking more about their own interests in terms of their future employment or academic positions. Some of the participants appeared to be future-oriented while others focused on recreating their past habits. For instance, Lura, who presented some elements of communicative reflexivity, said that she was always a very sociable person, and she continued to exercise her agency to reproduce her social network in Aotearoa/New Zealand. In fact, she regarded one of the benefits of international education to be preventing boredom because she could meet new people and places. Similarly, I could trace communicative reflexivity in some of James' statements. Ju was amazed at what she has learned about other cultures as well as the transformation that her studies in Aotearoa/New Zealand has caused for her general attitude as well as her professional career. While she was

critical of some aspects of her Chinese background, she always identified herself to be Chinese. She manifested some traits of meta-reflexivity. John aimed to get a degree with reasonable tuition fees compared to what he had to pay back in the US while he expanded his social network and cultural understanding in Aotearoa/New Zealand. He appeared to be an autonomous-reflexive type of person. Cam and Juan were extremely goal-oriented, and they knew exactly what they wanted to do after their graduation. Their reflexivity may be in line with autonomous characteristics, especially for their focus on well-paid jobs and prestige, alongside the scholarships that they had secured, as their rationales for studying in Aotearoa/New Zealand. James was resolute to understand the professional data that he had previously struggled to digest. He was determined to develop his company back in Kenya. He realised that political turmoil was present in every nation to some extent. He appeared extremely enthusiastic about excavation strategies and techniques, geothermal energy and their relationships with climate change as the locus of his business. He showed both autonomous as well as communicative modes of reflexivity. Almost all students have hinted at events where they experienced fractured reflexivity, when they were bewildered and did not know with certainty what course of action to take. But they all seemed to have recovered from their challenging experiences. I can safely say that they were informed by their past experiences, were analysing their current status of affairs in order to think about future possibilities on the basis of their values and interests. As Manpreet suggested, international education might ultimately be the opportunity to understand oneself better. International students, like the ones in this study, appear to be agents who can bring about change for themselves and their wider community. They should not be treated as cash-cow robots who would work by the input of market agendas that may require them to autonomously adjust to the desired programming of neoliberalism. What international students say matters: Their

agency appears to be so strong that it cannot be ignored, especially in the policy-making processes of the internationalisation of higher education for a fairer future.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

All international students cross the border to become different, whether through learning, through graduating with a degree, through immersion in the linguistic setting, or simply through growing up. Often there is a kind of person they want to become, though none can fully imagine that person before the transformation. Some respond to change only when they must. Many let it happen. Others run to meet it. This experience of self-directed agency during the foreign sojourn—of the joys and terrors of making a self amid a range of often novel choices—is under recognised in research on international education, yet widely felt. (Marginson, 2014, p. 7)

In this concluding chapter, I begin to review what I set out to do in this thesis and what I have found in light of my research questions. I also discuss the original contributions of my research to the academic body of knowledge about the internationalisation of higher education. Next, I write about the credibility and trustworthiness my research. I then elaborate further on the limitations of this study and recommend some directions for future research into the interplay of internationalisation of higher education and lived experiences of international students.

7.1. Answering the Research Questions

My motivation to embark on this journey to explore the experiences of international students has rooted in my personal identity as an international student myself. I initially found out that my rather negative experiences within the broader structure of the New Zealand higher education system might not simply be a matter of isolated instances because I continued to hear more and more experiences of similar nature through my network of friends and acquaintances in Aotearoa/New Zealand. It was then that my personal motivation has gradually turned into a political agenda to raise awareness about, and advocate for, international students through the enabling framework of critical ethnography. While I did not have a priori in mind about what the participant might say with regard to their experiences, I was curious to know whether their experiences would resonate with I have

heard and experienced or not. Therefore, I attempted to find answers to three questions of my study through a systematic method of social and educational inquiry:

1. How do international tertiary students describe their study experience in Aotearoa/New Zealand?
2. How do international tertiary students describe the power relations at work in the internationalisation of higher education in universities in Aotearoa/New Zealand?
3. How can higher education institutions in Aotearoa/New Zealand pay closer attention to international students' agency?

Firstly, I discovered that all international students were, more or less, content with their decision to come to Aotearoa/New Zealand for their studies. Nonetheless, they have been through a number of different challenges. There were negative experiences in terms of intercultural communication, bureaucracy, and available support systems in place. Some of the participants who were often at the beginning of their studies felt that they belonged to the University and Aotearoa/New Zealand, while others who were closer to graduation appeared to experience a sense of detachment and exclusion. Students who have been in Aotearoa/New Zealand for longer periods of time seemed to be particularly more critical of both the University and their circumstances within the wider sociocultural context of the country. Nonetheless, all of them appeared to be proud of their achievements in the foreign nation and seemed to exert enough control over the context of their livelihood and life courses, irrespective of some adversity. All of them shared common goals – to use the opportunity for international education to improve their lives, to develop their careers and to change themselves and/or their wider social contexts. Their experiences were explicitly reflected through Chapters Four to Six of this study. In Chapter Four, for instance, I discussed a number of views about intercultural communication. While the quality of bidirectional relationship between international students and their local community did not seem to be

ideal, their multilateral engagement with other international students appeared to be more promising.

Secondly, the power structure of internationalisation of higher education appears to be skewed against international students within the higher education system of Aotearoa/New Zealand. In particular, power relations between the University and international students do not seem to be balanced, and the direction looks to be top-down. However, international students can amplify their voices through collective efforts via organisations like the New Zealand International Students Association. Nevertheless, the majority of participants saw these unbalanced power relations to operate largely through a rigid bureaucratic apparatus which they saw as both constraining and malfunctioning. Meanwhile, they either did not know how to raise the issues through the labyrinth of bureaucratic channels or were just frustrated with the processes. For instance, Siti mentioned that

It's just annoying to fill a long survey, trying to tell how the University is being bad. You have to have a certain amount of, like, you have to care to fill that survey...and the other thing that I have noticed is that the University staff, erm, some of them, are not really student friendly. So, I can tolerate, I know I can tolerate, I can connect with a lot of people from different generations, I can connect, but a lot of other students, they rather have someone that is more like them, you know, that can relate to them, that is just very approachable and all that...but, like, International Office, and the ones at Student Centres, they're not very student friendly.

Consequently, the bureaucracy of neoliberal higher education systems at times appears to impact the control freedom as well as effective freedom of international students negatively. Even for students like Mike, who thought that there were still some staff members at the University who cared about international students and genuinely wanted to improve their experiences, the overall experiences informed me of a lack of trust in the administrative systems of the University. The participants' concerns in this regard were extensively discussed in Chapter Five.

Thirdly, international students in this study proved to be significantly agentic. They would welcome the inclusion of their agency in the relevant policies and decision-making processes.

Feeling empowered, for example, Siti joyfully stated:

The New Zealand Government used to ignore international students, but recently Immigration New Zealand consulted New Zealand International Student Association for the future immigration changes, so things are changing although very slow.

Furthermore, international students in this study specifically asked for mechanisms or events to facilitate intercultural communication. However, they did not know how to engage in discussions with the University or the broader New Zealand context for this purpose. Their participation needs to be meaningful in any case, beyond the tick-boxing approach of the neoliberal marketing schemes. It seems that a democratic and inclusive higher education system should engage in meaningful conversations with international students through formal and informal channels to understand their needs, concerns, and aspirations in order to ultimately act upon them through available resources so that the overall structure can be improved for all members. When decisions about international students are being made, consultation with them as the main stakeholders of international education appears to be ethically essential.

7.2. Original Contributions

My research builds on the idea of Marginson (2014) to see higher education as a process of self-formation. He observes that neoliberal higher education systems would promise to put students at the centre of their education, however, those systems may actually fail to do so in practice when they view international students as vessels to be filled with the requirements of the market, as if international students are devoid of reflexivity and agency to decide for their own pathways. Self-formation rests at the centre of the irreducible fact that although learning is conditioned by a number of cognitive and sociocultural factors, only the learner does the

learning. My study thereby maintains that the internationalisation of higher education in Aotearoa/New Zealand can be significantly better than what it currently is if the experiences of international students receive enough attention from policy makers and administrators. My thesis argues that the mechanisms to address students' concerns should not be limited to available complaint procedures, but they may need to extend to proactive measurements to understand the issues and upgrade the relevant systems. My critical stance about the situation of tertiary international students within the higher education system of Aotearoa/New Zealand is not based on resentment, disenfranchisement or aversion. Quite the contrary, I believe that studying at the University in Aotearoa/New Zealand has made me a stronger person intellectually and academically. I have just been passionate about practical changes in practices of the internationalisation in Aotearoa/New Zealand so that everyone involved can benefit from this process more equally.

My research extends the current knowledge about the lives of international students within the New Zealand higher education system. It is an addition to the relatively new trend of research on the agency of international students and its mechanisms. It is unfortunate that a decade after the publication the major work of Marginson and his colleagues (2010) on the issues around the lives of international students, similar findings were discovered through my research in Aotearoa/New Zealand. My thesis, therefore, reiterates the need to invest in strengthening the support systems for the pastoral care of international students; re-establishes the requirement to improve the administrative bureaucracy by including the student agency in relevant policies and practices about them; and reinforces the idea of intercultural communication as a two-way road between international students and their local community. Of course, intercultural communication is multilateral and multidirectional, especially in a multicultural setting of the higher education system in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

However, my focus has been mostly on its bidirectional relationship between international students and their local community for the reasons I explained in Chapter Four.

The combination of critical ethnography and autoethnography to study experiences of international students, and to explore their agency in the context of the New Zealand higher education system, can be a methodological contribution of my research as it provides some detailed information about the lived experiences of international students that are not usually found in similar studies within the New Zealand context. It can also inspire further research to explore the experiences of international students, focusing on their agency, in the New Zealand higher education system, at the same or different universities, institutes of technology and polytechnics, private training establishments, and English language schools.

7.3. Credibility and Trustworthiness of this Research

Guba and Lincoln (1998) discuss the terms *credibility* and *dependability* for authentic qualitative research instead of the traditional validity and reliability concepts of the quantitative modes of inquiry. They recommend ways to enhance the authenticity of qualitative research but advise that their recommendations are simply a set of guidelines to follow, not another orthodoxy in research methods. Other researchers, like Marshall and Rossman (2011), prefer the term *trustworthiness*. With regard to the credibility of this thesis, I have presented the demonstrable data before me to support my arguments. The experiences of international students under this study are foregrounded in their own voice. I have triangulated such data with the reflections around the relevant literature as well as the broader information within their specific sociocultural context to strengthen my interpretations. I also aimed to illustrate typical challenges that international students might encounter through my

lived experiences as an international student in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Further, I have employed an ongoing external member check system via my supervisors to check my data collection and analysis. Another process of internal member check was also implemented via my informal conversations with the participants of this study to clarify my understanding of what they had already presented through their formal interviews with me. In terms of reliability/dependability, the findings of this study might not be fully replicable due to both the unique context of this study in time and space alongside my positionality as both the researcher and the participant of this inquiry. After all, as Merriam (1995) puts forth:

In the social sciences the whole notion of reliability in and of itself is problematic. That is, studying people and human behaviour is not the same as studying inanimate matter. Human behaviour is never static. Classroom interaction is not the same, day after day, for example, nor are people's understanding of the world around them. (p. 55)

I also acknowledge that the findings may not be much generalisable due to the limited number of participants at a specific university within the higher education system of Aotearoa/New Zealand. However, this research can still provide some indicators and directions for future research in terms of intercultural communication, supporting international students and their agency within the higher education system of Aotearoa/New Zealand.

7.4. Research Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

Because of the limited number of participants and the limited interview data, the generalisability of this research to its wider sociocultural sphere might be rightly questionable. However, my study has never been in favour of the numbers game, and it has been rooted in the idea that *one should not be considered as none*. Thus, this thesis can still provide some hints about the need for ways to improve higher education systems in terms of intercultural communication, bureaucracy, management, available support systems and the

agency of international students. While the use of autoethnography can be a strength of this study by providing a deeper insight into the lived experiences of international students, it may also give a sense of its anecdotal and subjective nature. However, I have made every effort to ensure that my autoethnography represented a wider sociocultural context around the experiences of international students by triangulating my data with different sources. Further, this study does not directly and explicitly provide the views of local students, or the wider local community, or the policymakers, managers, lecturers and professional teaching staff within the specific context of the internationalisation in Aotearoa/New Zealand. A comprehensive study might need to be conducted to consider and compare various viewpoints of different stakeholders in order to conclude a more inclusive report on the status of the term, internationalisation, in Aotearoa/New Zealand. I reiterate that I do not claim to present the only version of reality about the experiences of international students.

Nonetheless, this study presents the viewpoints of 14 tertiary international students who can be representatives of the wider population of international students within Aotearoa/New Zealand to some extent. While I do not know exactly how representative these 14 students can be of the wider community of international students, I maintain that their experiences cannot be some isolated examples amongst tens of thousands of other international students in Aotearoa/New Zealand because they all go through the same bureaucracy of neoliberal higher education and the same policies and practices apply to all of them. It is my hope that this study will be instrumental for future research and initiatives to make positive changes in the internationalisation of higher education in Aotearoa/New Zealand and elsewhere.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Participant Information Sheet



Centre for Learning and Research in Higher Education (CleaR)
18 Waterloo Quadrant, Auckland
(09) 923 8140 ext. 88140
The University of Auckland
Private Bag 92019
Auckland 1142
Aotearoa/New Zealand

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

(Interview)

The Internationalisation of Higher Education in Aotearoa/New Zealand

Researcher: Morteza Sharifi

My name is Morteza Sharifi, and I am currently studying for a PhD at the Faculty of Education and Social Work, University of Auckland. My supervisors are Drs. Sean Sturm and Barbara Kensington-Miller from the Centre for Learning and Research in Higher Education (CLeaR). My study will investigate the internationalisation of higher education in Aotearoa/New Zealand. I will be surveying the views of international academics and students on the internationalisation of higher education to gain a better understanding of their views about the internationalisation of higher education in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Thus, I would like to invite you to be part of my research by participating in an interview of no longer than 60 minutes.

Purpose of the research: This study aims to gain a better understanding of internationalisation of higher education by taking into account the views of international academics and students.

What you will be asked to do: You will be asked to undertake a 60-minute, confidential interview in English. The questions will be about your experience about internationalisation of higher education in Aotearoa/New Zealand. A consent form will be provided to you by email prior to the interview. The interview will be audio-recorded for the purposes of analysis (with your consent). You may request that the recorder be turned off at any time during the interview or refuse to answer any question. You will be offered the opportunity to have three weeks to edit the transcripts of the recordings after receiving them. Please be advised that some of the questions for the participating academics may elicit negative responses about their employer.

Participation: Your participation in this study is voluntary. You can withdraw your participation before or during the interview at any time by informing the researcher that you wish to stop the interview, without giving a reason, and you can withdraw your data at any time up to two months after this interview without giving a reason. If you choose to participate, please sign the consent form and email it to me at the following address.

Morteza Sharifi,

Faculty of Education and Social Work

University of Auckland

morteza.sharifi@auckland.ac.nz

Research data/confidentiality: While your data may be published in reports, journal articles, conference presentations, and a PhD thesis, no individual or institution will be identified. Institutions will be described only in general terms, e.g. “a public university in Aotearoa/New Zealand.” All data will be securely stored at the University of Auckland in locked cupboards and/or on password-protected computers, and will be destroyed after six years by erasing/shredding. All data will be treated in confidence. Although I will protect the participants’ information confidentiality, there is a possibility that a colleague at this or another university will be able to identify you based on your faculty, position or level in a subsequent publication.

Finding out about the project’s deliverables and outcomes: The data may be published in reports, journal articles, conference presentations, and a PhD thesis. A copy of any publications resulting from this study will be made available to you at the conclusion of the research, if requested.

Thank you very much for your time and any help you can give me to make this research possible.

Yours sincerely,

Morteza Sharifi

This research is under the supervision of:

Dr. Sean Sturm

Centre for Learning and Research

in Higher Education

Faculty of Education and Social Work

University of Auckland

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Director of CLear: Prof Helen Sword, CLear, The University of Auckland, Private Bag 92019, Auckland, Aotearoa/New Zealand. Email: h.sword@auckland.ac.nz DDI: (09) 923 6686

For any queries regarding ethical concerns you may contact the Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Research Office, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Telephone 09 373-7599 ext. 83711. Email: ro-ethics@auckland.ac.nz

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON for 3 years until 29/11/2019, Reference Number 017681.

Appendix B: Consent Form



Centre for Learning and Research in Higher Education (CleaR)
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Auckland 1142
Aotearoa/New Zealand

CONSENT FORM

(Interview)

THIS FORM WILL BE SECURELY STORED FOR A PERIOD OF 6 YEARS

Project Title: The Internationalisation of Higher Education in Aotearoa/New Zealand

Researcher: Morteza Sharifi

The study is under supervision of Drs. Sean Sturm and Barbara Kensington-Miller from the Centre for Learning and Research in Higher Education (CleaR). I have read the Participant Information Sheet, and have understood the nature of the research and why I have been invited to take part. I have been given the opportunity to ask any questions about the research and have them answered to my satisfaction.

I agree/do not agree (circle one) for my interview to be audio-recorded.

I understand that

- My participation is voluntary, and I can choose to withdraw my data up to two months after this interview.
- The interview will take approximately 60 minutes.
- If I have agreed for the interview will be audio-recorded for subsequent data analysis purposes, I can request that the recorder be turned off at any time during the interview or refuse to answer any question.
- I will be offered the opportunity to have three weeks from the receipt of the transcript to edit it.

- My data may be published in de-identified form in reports, journal articles and conference presentations.
- Neither my name nor my institution will be identified (institutions will be described only in general terms).
- There is a possibility that a colleague at this or another university will be able to identify a participant based on their faculty, position or level in a subsequent publication.
- All data will be kept in a locked cabinet at The University of Auckland and/or a password protected computer.
- All data will be destroyed and/or deleted after six years.
- I want/do not want (please circle one) to read the transcript of this interview when it is available.
- I want/do not want (please circle one) to receive a copy of publications that result from the research once it is completed.
- Please print your email address if you wish to receive a copy of any publications resulting from this study: _____

Name _____

Signature _____ Date _____

**APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON
29/11/2016 FOR (3) YEARS REFERENCE NUMBER 017681.**

Appendix C: Interview Schedule for Students

1. Could you please introduce yourself?
 2. How long have you been studying in Aotearoa/New Zealand?
 3. Why did you choose Aotearoa/New Zealand to continue your studies?
 4. If you couldn't have come to Aotearoa/New Zealand to study, where would you have studied?
 5. In what ways is the Aotearoa/New Zealand higher education system different from that of your country?
 6. Why didn't you continue your education at home?
 7. What are the positive points about studying in Aotearoa/New Zealand?
 8. What kind of educational issues have you faced in Aotearoa/New Zealand so far?
 9. What kind of personal issues have you encountered in living here?
 10. What are your plans after graduation?
 11. What is the meaning of international education to you?
 12. Do you think the university at which you study is an international one? Why?
- Please note that the above queries were used as the guiding questions only. They were neither asked in the same order, nor all of them were talked about in every interview, based on either the direction of interviews or the fact that the responses to some questions had already covered some other questions.

Appendix D: Advertisement through Email and/or Facebook



Centre for Learning and Research in Higher Education (CleaR)
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(09) 923 8140 ext. 88140
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Private Bag 92019
Auckland 1142
Aotearoa/New Zealand

Project: The Internationalisation of Higher Education in Aotearoa/New Zealand

Researcher: Morteza Sharifi

This project is part of a PhD thesis in Education and will examine internationalisation of higher education through the lens of international students and academics. You are kindly invited to take part in the interview as an international student. The interviews will be conducted to get a better understanding of what internationalisation means to you.

The interviews will take approximately an hour and your participation in this study is voluntary. If you wish to take part in the study, please contact the researcher, Morteza Sharifi at morteza.sharifi@auckland.ac.nz, who will send you a Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form and will arrange a suitable time to meet.

Approved by the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee on 29/11/2016 for three years, Reference Number 017681.

Appendix E: Sample Transcript

Mike – USA – PhD – Sociology – 6 years in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

**We had briefly talked about Mike's topic of research and that he was about to complete his doctoral studies and exchanged a few jokes about life in New Zealand prior to the interview. It was the first time we were talking to each other. And he seemed a bit drowsy.*

Alright, it's officially started now. How are you [smiling]?

Good, how are you doing?

I'm not OK. [laughing]

Alright. I'm barely awake. I just got those four cans of Redbull, so you know...

Yea, it's alright; it's all fine. So, could you please let me know more about your background? Why are you in New Zealand? What are you studying? And how long have you been here?

OK [sighs], so I did my undergraduate degree at Washington University in St. Luis, that's in the US, and also did a Master's degree there, but when I was applying for my PhD, I wanted to do a thesis-based PhD only, so I was looking at, you know, the commonwealth model, UK, Australia, New Zealand, that sort of thing, and what sold New Zealand for me was the scholarship that they were offering, so that's primarily what brought me here. I got acceptances in the UK but they weren't willing to offer funding so I thought I would rather take the one that's paying my rent for me. So that's how I ended up here, and your second part of the question was, I'm sorry...

Coding: participant's background; reasons to move to Aotearoa/New Zealand; funding/scholarship.

How long have you been here?

How long have I been here? I've been enrolled since 2012. I took some time off between 2015 and 2017 just to take a break, um, ...

So, you were studying part-time?

**International students cannot study part-time in Aotearoa/New Zealand.*

Essentially it ended up being part-time. You know, you're not allowed to, obviously, but in the transcript, it says part-time because when you are like not in for the entire year, it just says, for like 2017, I enrolled in August 2017, so it was four months out of the year, so they said part-time, so, but no, I'm full-time as an international student here.

Coding: enrolment bureaucracy.

Ok, alright.

I've just had a brief interruption, not brief, not too brief, but just an interruption between 2015 and 2017.

Hmm...Because my expectation is 3 years for a PhD, and it's been 6 years for you now.

Yea, I think you'd be like 3 to 4 years, what it takes, and I'm technically in my fourth year if you don't count the interruption.

OK, are you happy with it?

I will be happy to be done with it.

[Both Laughing]

Sorry. If I may elaborate a bit more on that...

Yea, sure.

I did have some supervision issues in the sense of supervision compatibilities and competence and stuff like that, so that early on, this was a problem, so finding the right fit for supervision was a challenge, but eventually the supervisors that I'm now working with are really excellent and, you know, they may not be perfectly expert in your topic but of course we are supposed to be, as a student, the expert in the topic anyway, but they are very competent and I couldn't be more satisfied, but my earlier experiences left a lot to be desired.

Coding: academic issues/supervision problems.

Hmm, so you changed your supervisors?

Yea [sighs], changed supervisors...

Coding: (re-)action/agency.

How many times?

Ah, twice. So, um, that was a bit of personality clash; the other one was that they weren't giving me much feedback and like I was getting proofreading, you know, like, umm, grammatical mistakes and stuff like that, but nothing substantive, so right now like you can actually go into a supervision scenario and have a substantive discussion of the content of your dissertation, your thesis, and ah, which is really good, as you come out of it, like feeling like they understood it, they took it seriously, they respect you and your work that you're doing. That was not something I experienced in the past, so I'm quite happy with that right now, in this final year.

Coding: academic issues; resolving academic issues.

What was the issue with the first one? You said personality?

Personality issue, um, I think that person was, sort of, more, he wanted to, he was the main supervisor but he wanted to have more of the responsibility left on the second supervisor and I didn't have much of a working relationship with that person, you know, so a personal relationship or any relationship of any kind so when it came time to the supervisor-student divorce, there wasn't much to, there weren't many bridges to burn because there wasn't much there, so it wasn't of any consequence. I mean yes, I'm sure he was upset afterwards, but I was relieved to get into a better situation, so that's how that one ended and, em, the second one was, just a, I had gone on, I'm sorry if I'm going on too much...

Coding: academic issues/supervision problems.

No, no, that's totally fine.

I, just to contextualise the second one, I had gone on a period of field research for about a year in Washington DC doing interviews, and stuff like that, and I had received no meaningful help, assistance of anything of the sort, ah, to help the mentorship and everything. What I got was found people at other universities in the DC area. So they were the ones who kind of took pity on me or sympathised and stuff like that, and so, when I came back I was quite dissatisfied with that, I also had received an offer for, I'm sorry if this is complicated in your narrative, but I had received an offer from an external supervisor, a potential external supervisor, at the Swedish Defence University, so she had been willing to, she had offered to help me get to, she was an expert in my topic area, so I

guess, in the adding her and there was also subtracting the other people, so that's how that ended up being so because of the paperwork delays and stuff like that, I took a break because I didn't want to lose six months while they were figuring out the paperwork. I don't know if you have ever gone to Doc 6 drama, ah...

[shaking my head to say no]

Oh yea, lucky you. So, you know, that's a document for changes in registration and it takes forever for changes to take place so, you know, you have to ask for permission for everything whether you want to go overseas, whether you want to, whether you have an illness or something like that, a suspension, an extension, or research absence like I said for going overseas you have to, basically, if I may crudely say if you want to wipe your ***, you need fill out a doc 6, so it's very infantilising, the procedure, so that's my take on it.

Coding: academic issues; registration bureaucracy/paperwork; academic support.

Hmm...it hasn't been an easy ride for you at all...

I'll try to be more positive; I'll try to be more positive...

Oh, you don't have to. I'm actually concerned with international students' issues, so this is very good. OK. So, other than the supervision side of things, what else has not been so positive for you during your experience?

Um, I think I, erm, I think one of the problems was that, perhaps this may be unique to someone like me, because I'm just coming from a different US background so like I'm used to a lot more things that are taken for granted, so you know, petty things like, you know, the library lending limit really, I can only checkout 50 books, I mean, you know, as an undergraduate I could checkout a 100 and as a graduate student I could checkout 300, and the norm here is they recall them immediately and you start, you know, they don't honour your original period, so there's stuff like that and, in general, also, just the geographic isolation that we're in, you know, we're in New Zealand, we're not in Europe, we're not connected to the rest of the world, so I guess there is a sense of limited intellectual life, so, erm, but, ah, I don't mean to keep bitching about it. I think those are some of the issues that come to mind, ah, in the process of, if I may, just one more point, in the process of restructuring that they've been doing, you may be aware of since you have been here for a little, not as long as I have, but they've been getting rid of a lot of staff and a lot of the staff used to be very competent and experienced so they have been given, you know, the golden handshakes or whatever the deal may be, and they've been replaced by more inexperienced people, so they were, I presume, willing to work for less, so they do-more-for-less situation of the University, I don't know whether that fits in within the whole internationalisation idea, of trimming the fat of the University, so, but there's a lot of dissatisfaction with services and competence and competencies of staff and services that leave a lot to be desired [frowning].

Coding: academic culture; (isolated) geographic location of Aotearoa/New Zealand; University's (poor) management; (poor) academic quality; (in-)adequacy of services; staff (in-)competencies.

Hmm...OK. If we talk about outside the University...What about the culture? What do you think about the New Zealand culture?

[silence for a few seconds] That's a tough one.

How is it, let's rephrase it, how is it different from the American culture that you're used to?

[silence for a few more seconds]

I don't know, where you born in the US?

Born and bred, yea. It's kind of thinking about that, ah, I suppose I don't have much, it's, it's not, it's not something that I feel any general complaints about, it's different but, I mean, it always feels good to be back home, ah, you know, but I don't feel it as, as, ah, I think where we differentiate, just to go back to the university thing, because of this dissatisfaction like, for example, the, I'm sorry I'm going back, but, when I came back here, these guys insisted that I come back because they were upset, sort of, that I had been away for two years and not enrolled and stuff like that, so resources, um, they didn't have a desk or office or space; I wasn't looking for an office or anything like that. The office I had before was a utility closet anyway, so, really, you know, this one has a window and it's a shared thing but they gave me a desk but it didn't have a computer and I had to, you know, be working at the Kate Edgar Commons, so there's a lot of, I associate a lot of stress in interacting with, eh, you know, whenever I need to get something done at the University whether it's Doc 6 form that I'm telling you about or whether it's getting something basic, the key to the door, they, you know, they did this to everybody in our room, they gave them the wrong key, so everybody had to wait three or four months until they could get the right key, so there's a lot of, so we joke about the fact that these guys just can't get anything right, so in general vis a vis New Zealand culture I don't find that same stress associated that I do with the institution, so there's that if I can say that as a positive. I think that sounds more like a backhanded compliment, but, um, what I mean is it's, it's, um, not too foreign, it is of course different, I mean, you know, I can feel the same difference when I go to Canada, it's different, but it's not a world apart, so I feel the same way about New Zealand culture outside.

Coding: cultural integration in Aotearoa/New Zealand; cross-cultural differences at the university; slow progress of matters at the university; bureaucracy; support and facilities for doctoral students or lack thereof.

OK.

Sorry, that was really long-winded.

Oh, that was great. Um, have you interacted with other international students during your studies?

Yea, this is what I mentioned to you earlier, um, in 2012, 2013, we, ah, the associate dean for international students said that the Faculty of Arts introduced the idea of international PhD students' group, and I did a part in coordinating that; we got together a lot of international students, PhD students, and we made friendships across disciplinary backgrounds. This was something that, you know, we were able to talk about issues relating to, issues and concerns specific to international students and, um, advocacy for equal opportunities and stuff like that we need. This was a channel for us to basically be able to speak to the administration but also solve problems amongst ourselves whether it was PhD divorces or, in general, scholarship applications or something like that and just socialising and cultural activities, that sort of thing, so I played a part in that, so that was one of the things I did for about a year, but I did it for a year, after that I kind of got burnt out and had to focus on, um, end of my provisional year, you know how that goes.

Coding: international students support groups, some great caring staff; coping mechanism; bringing issues to the attention of the university through support groups; socialising via support groups; facilitating dialogue for international students amongst themselves; personal priorities over altruistic goals.

What happened to that group? Are they still active?

I think, I mean, the Facebook group is still active, but I think that, ah, you need to have, eh, active commitment and leadership and stuff like that for that, so, that I think is, I think is, dormant at the moment.

Coding: the structure of support groups and their rise and fall

Hmm...OK. So, you mentioned about the issues that the international students mentioned in that group, the support group for international students that you took part in, can you mention some of them?

Um, [sighs], let's see, I think, employment prospects and stuff like that, supervision issues, not, you know, one of the things is that a lot of these students come from backgrounds where there, sort of, I think you may come across, I think it may not come as a surprise to you right now that I have a rather entitled attitude, so, um, other students are willing to accept a lot of things that, you know, and get pushed around, I feel in my opinion, so they will accept like, you know, what they get; they're happy with that and stuff like that, so, or they will privately express grievances and that was one of the things that was helpful with, I mean, I don't mean to make this about myself, but I think the question was the problems they face, so that is one of the things. The other thing was that during the time that we were working on the group, the scholarship policy changed. Before it used to be, used to be, able to apply on an unlimited basis for every scholarship round, now only get to do it, I think, I believe, like at the beginning or something like that, and they invented this concept of bursaries, this thing didn't exist before, you just did that, in my own case I was lucky to have the scholarship from the beginning but all students applied again and again and eventually succeeded but no longer remains an option, so the bursaries are a consolation prize but even then, you know, like the students who were promised that, these things were changed, once they were admitted, they weren't able to apply, so there's been issues of that nature, of that, people have talked about, ah, sorry, I can't think of anything particular at the moment, but, ah, funding issues, you know, teaching assistance work, um, that sort of thing, ah, and if I may bring another example of my own, one of the things when I mentioned, the supervision change, the first one, I was in the Politics Department, that would have been where my project was most suitable, but I didn't have adequate supervision and so on, so they had a policy, one year of just hiring, erm, domestic students, I just put it that way, they didn't explicitly call it white student or anything like that, so myself, I have a Master's in international relations, I have another colleague who has the same from the University of York as a Master's in international relations, we applied for tutoring for this thing, for this course called Introduction to International Relations; they told us we weren't qualified, we found out who the people were, they were basically recent graduates of the University of Auckland and so that was one of the other push things that made me want to, you know, made me really upset, so the second semester, before the second semester, I walked into the deputy HoD's office and I said "what's it going to take?" like what's going on here? So, he said, well, talk to me, you know, we'll do that next semester, and the same thing happened again. So, after a year of basically not being, I mean I have a scholarship going so they think, you know, you're good to go, but the thing is as PhD students, I believe, that you should also be getting experience in teaching and professional development and so this was one of my grievances and, um, this wasn't fulfilled so I switched to the Sociology Department, partly because of the supervision non-relationship, but also because of the attitude of that department. I don't know if things have changed, but you know, I'm sorry I feel like I'm going for long-winded...

Coding: employment matters; supervision issues; raising concerns by some international students; (most) international students choosing to keep the issues to themselves; dynamic structure of the university; funding; tutoring opportunities for doctoral students; lack of transparency in bureaucratic features, unwritten convention of (biased) support directed towards domestic students; agency of international students to change their circumstances.

It's alright, as long as you need to talk, this is for it. One interesting thing for me...

You did say it was like a 30-minute conversation and I'm going so on and on [smiling]

No, no, usually, people are not as talkative as you are and that's something delightful for me.

[Both laughing]

I hope you don't have to transcribe this ****

Not all of it. I just take some interesting points out of it like the one that you said, international students take their issues in private, and they accept it, that's a disaster...

Yes.

Because you should have somebody to talk to when you've got an issue, especially when you're in an environment which is unfamiliar to you...

Uhum.

So, you need to know how to seek help in those instances. Well, you did something great in that support group, but that was something voluntary, that was not systematic...

We did have a, back in the associate dean for international students, and that was good, of course, like you said it was voluntary, but, ah, it was nice of her to take a part in that, and encouraging that for us for a while, so I cannot say that it was completely, like something organically organised, it was, it was good to have that, I just wanted to say that in her defence, there are good people at this University [laughing], ... comic of that impression, but yea, the thing is the people do not want to be assertive because they don't want to be seen as problem students, and, ah, I, I am a little different though, so ...

Coding: some great (individual) caring staff taking initiatives for international students; reticent character of international students to avoid losing face or being seen as troublemakers.

Yea, they take the conservative path.

Yea, the path of the least resistance.

One of the things that's been very interesting for me is, aside from you that are using the scholarship, is this international students who are full-fee-paying students; they pay three times higher than the domestic students...

I see.

And the problem is that they accept it. They say nothing. OK, I'm an international, I have to pay three times higher...

Hmm...yea, I mean I have a cynical reading of, you know, this whole thing about, um, what I noticed in the Politics Department, especially the one that I used to belong to, was that they basically wanted to, what is the thing, the saying, you know, like seen but not heard, that sort of thing, so they would be admitting students, left and right, you know, so you basically be, you know, have a camel cart full of, full of international PhD students, because that means, you know, at the end of the day, I know I think you know what happens, like the more completions there are the more subsidies they get and so on and so forth. There are incentives for them in this regard, but they didn't seem to be, maybe things have changed, I'm talking about 2012, 2013, 2014, so, but at that time, eh, you know, like they were admitting anybody with a pulse. People who basically couldn't cut it, they were just getting admitted so long as their supervisors weren't so terribly interested. That was another thing that I noticed, students would tell me, they were just like my supervisors not interested, even domestic students said this, my supervisors are not really interested in my topic; I just get help from other professors at other universities, or amongst my peers, so this was another aspect of that.

Coding: negative attitude about the internationalisation's intentions; dynamic nature of the university through time; admitting students due to financial reasons and lowering the quality of education; supervision compatibility; academic support and its quality.

Hmm...going back to the main question: what does internationalisation mean to you?

What does internationalisation mean to me? Um, so, [sighs], my crude understanding of it is that, ah, they're trying to, eh, and of course this will be incorrect because I need you to correct me, but, ah, I look at like, ah, things like this whole U21 thing, which um, um, I mean I went to the US; nobody knew what the hell that was; nobody cares, you know, U21, whatever, this is probably, you know, even the member universities didn't care, I went to the University of Maryland and I said "hey, I'm from a U21 institution" and they said "yea!" [surprised tone] Or the University of Virginia, I was a visiting scholar. That didn't get my foot in the door. It was just my personal, you know, approach that helped, so [laughs], so I know that sort of thing is probably more important in the Asia-Pacific, you know, Australian universities have more collaboration and, you know, Hong Kong universities and so on and so forth. So, there is that and, um, otherwise, internationalisation in terms of, erm, I don't think it means internationalisation of staff, but I think internationalisation of student body perhaps, maybe that's one thing. Um, and of course, you know, international students are cash cows, so, um, so I'm sorry I have such a cynical reading on it. But I think I leave it at that because I can't really, I think I just end up making fool of myself by saying more.

Coding: internationalisation as international research collaborations and groups; some internationalisation initiative may not be recognised internationally; recruiting international students mainly due to revenue generating schemes / consumerist view; internationalisation to be more about students rather than staff (which is not true).

[Laughing] Alright; that was impressive anyway.

[Laughing] Thank you.

Um, how do you think the universities can support international students better?

I think one of the, sorry, I go back and forth with this whole thing, but the other thing, um, one thing that I noticed about, you know, the DELNA thing, this is not really, this is a low barrier to entry to the University, so this admits a lot of, this is what I was talking about students with a pulse getting in, so people, like you know, like this place is easier to get into than, say, I don't know how the admission system in Australia works, but in the UK you take the IELTS, in the US you take the TOEFL, so you are, you know, like, you are functionally, you know, literate in English, you're able to do that, whereas this is a bit of an issue over here. You just have a language screening and then they find out that you have deficiencies, and they try to help you and they have this English Enrichment Programme. I think that they should just have a standardised English exam, I know that would cut back on their revenue and that would be really bad, but that would enhance the quality of students. The other thing was, ah, sorry, erm, so that wasn't helping much in terms of actually helping international students that are here, that was just...

Coding: English language and the need for better screening of international students in that regard.

Can I just interrupt?

Sure.

Ah, the standardised tests like IELTS, or TOEFL, is mandatory here as well.

It is? [surprised]

Yes, and DELNA is just for everybody that comes to the University. Even domestic students should pass DELNA. I guess it's just for the Linguistics Department as they are researching on something.

Oh, thank you for correcting me.

Every international student needs to pass the IELTS, including myself.

*The University says that all first-year students and doctoral candidates are required to do Diagnostic English Language Needs Assessment (DELNA), and all new incoming students are strongly encouraged to do DELNA, too. It is a free test of academic English language, designed by the University. However, all international students are required to show their accepted level of proficiency in English before they can be officially enrolled.

OK, thank you for correcting me because I've been working as DELNA invigilator and as a graduate teaching assistant and I basically didn't see much [laughs], much evidence of that, maybe they had a friend who take their TOEFL or IELTS for them, so that's good to know, so I stand corrected, but in terms of what else they can do to improve circumstances, I think, it is more, um, I think, faculty being attuned to needs of international students in particular, there's that, um, it's about offering them equal opportunities rather than just, like, mentoring their preferred domestic students and then leaving out ... so that was the big situation that I have found. I'm sorry, I don't have a philosophical statement on that, I've been filling a lot of job applications in which I've been talking about my work, so a little bit of this is fresh, but I hadn't really thought about how, I've only been thinking about what's so screwed up about this place and not so much about, like, what they can do to improve because, erm, that is an uphill task that they will need to confront, but not treating international, but still the point remains about not treating international students as cash cows. Um, you know, having more stringent admission standards, I think, what I was going to say was that, I think in the 2017 Statute that they had, they did make a change in which, ah, you basically don't just get admitted, you also have a Skype session, or something like that, with your potential supervisor to see compatibility, and stuff like that, I mean, it's not a guarantee but it's to gauge some level of compatibility, so that is a good, that is a positive development, I think, those are things, and then also just a, yea, being a bit more transparent about scholarship opportunities, then also having just like they do for, you know, like undergraduates in the first year experience, or something like that, they might need to have something that's helpful during the transitional, the, what's it called, sorry, the provisional year, cause that's when everybody's learning the ups and downs of the University, so, um, more, um, more, I mean, as you know, we don't have a cohort system, everybody comes in every single month, or something like that, so that's a very isolating experience, so if there were something that, they kind of, a first year experience type of situation for PhD students during the provisional year would be something that would promote retention, and, you know, because that can be an issue, I don't know, the statistics of how many people drop out, based on what they feel, but, you know, a lot of people say that they feel like wanting to and I counselled a lot of people and talked them out of transferring to other universities because of the situations that they faced, so ...

Coding: for the university to pay more attention to the needs of international students; offering international students equal opportunities; treating international students as cash cows; more robust system for admission of international students; admission systems have already started to improve; no cohort system for doctoral students, which may make PhD programmes to be even more isolating for candidates; some students may have thought about transferring to other universities due to the issues they had encountered at the university.

Other universities in New Zealand, or ...?

Yea, yea, some people were like secretly applying to the University of Otago or ...

Why?

Just supervision issues, scholarship issues, you know, getting better financial delas, stuff like that, um, one, I think for a while, I think I had a, I was friends with some Iranian students and I think one of, back in 2012, 2013, and the sanctions were having a great effect, so the University, basically, I didn't, have, read a copy of the email, but the Vice-Chancellor basically said "F*** you!" "It doesn't matter that you guys are having financial troubles, you guys are still expected to pay the fees." I'm roughly paraphrasing whatever he said, but I'm sure it's in the spirit of what he said [laughs]. It was

basically indifferent to the plight of this specific demographic, which is substantial here at this University, so that was very disappointing, so one of my friends ended up in going to the University of Melbourne where he was able to get a full scholarship, and, you know, moved on to a better school, and stuff like that, others, I think, may have temporarily, you know, withdrawn and returned at a later point when they were able to afford, you know, the situation, so there are things that kind of gives you the sense, a little bit of how they deal with international students. Um, so I think, that, yea, just a bit more attentive to that and, I'm sorry, I've gone on long enough, so I think I will leave it at that.

Coding: supporting international students: the university may not consider international students' specific circumstances; students find ways to deal with the issues, nonetheless (agency).

These are my final questions; how do you think internationalisation has affected you?

[sighs] Affected me ... you haven't told me what internationalisation means so I should've done my research before.

Within your own definition...

In terms of mobility, OK, ah, like going to other universities, perhaps, I could speak to that, um, I don't think it affected me because, you know, we suffer from, like, it's not, it's not, entirely the Universities, fault that, you know, when you say you're from the University of Auckland, Americans will say: "oh, wow, I always wanted to go to Australia." So, there's that and they don't know what New Zealand is, and I think I would have, I think, I would've had better luck if I said I came from the University of Narnia. That would've probably got me a better name recognition, so...

Coding: unaware of the impact of internationalisation on him; (un-)recognition of the university in the global stage.

I don't know Narnia.

No, it's just, sort of ...

Is it in the US?

No, no, it's just a movie, Chronicles of Narnia, so a mystical magical place, so, ah...

[both laughing]

I think it would've probably gone off better. But, ah, in terms of my interviews and stuff, the strategy that I had to do in DC was to get local affiliations that had name recognition, so I was a visiting scholar at the University of Virginia, Johns Hopkins, these are places people know, so when I wrote to people and said hey, I'm a visiting researcher at such and such university, and I didn't misrepresent that I was from the University of Auckland, but I said "and a PhD candidate from the University of Auckland." And so, I kind of put that front and that back, so they knew it was the University of Auckland, so by that time they already agreed to the interview so that was OK. But, yea, so name recognition is something that, I don't think that they have a long way to go in terms of that; they brag about the rankings and all this sort of thing, but, um, yea, the real world is still not, unfortunately, not appreciative of all that yet. So, they have their ways to go.

Coding: personal branding, international rankings and their recognition.

Uhummm, OK, and the final question would be: do you think international students are isolated? Or you think they are integrated into the society that they live in?

Um, it depends, doesn't it? Now like, undergraduates, sometimes, this happens in the US as well, you know, just take the example of, I'm just taking an example of, um, it could happen with African American students that are native to the US, they self-segregate, Chinese students self-segregate,

I'm talking about undergraduate, some graduate students, um, my old university, one of the funny situations was that in the engineering school, because most of the student body was Chinese and the instructor was Chinese, so lectures were in Chinese [laughing] for the engineering class, but back to Auckland though, I think that, I think I see a fair deal of integration amongst undergraduates, but postgraduates, it is an isolating experience, this whole thing, and ah, better integration would be a benefit, having more of that, that's part of what we were trying to do in 2012, 2013. And I'm not aware of what current affairs there are right now to do this, but it would be something that, you know, like I said we don't have a cohort model, we just have people coming in and going, and stuff like that, so having a buddy that, at least, first year experience kind of thing, because that can then serve as a, you know, embryonic cohort where people know each other and, you know, like I mean, go through the years together and form informal support groups and friendships, and stuff like that, across disciplinary boundaries, as was the case with myself and, you know, with my own experience with friends that I made because they weren't all in one department or anything like that, they were all across the faculty wards.

Coding: the importance of support networks and groups; undergraduate students appear to be integrated well; reiterating that postgraduate studies can be a solitary experience.

Is there something as Doctoral Morning Teas? I'm not sure if you have heard about it.

I have, I have, those, generally, ah, yea, I wonder, I'd be more interested to know what that does, I think my experience of those is that students are generally shy and [laughing] sort of keep, that was the other thing that, sorry, back to that thing, the group thing, these guys are generally shy and reserved, so getting them to talk to each other is, PhD students, their social skills are not their forte, so getting them to be able to mingle and stuff like that is another thing, you know, they are sort of, I don't mean to generalise, but a lot of them are introverted by nature, so getting them to, you know, feel free to talk to each other to do that, that was kind of a challenge, um, so I think that Doctoral Teas, I haven't been to any recently, but I feel like people are shy and deferential and just wanting to listen to the speaker and then, you know, disperse. I don't know if your experiences have been different...

Oh, it's the same. I've taken part like three or four times. You just say hello, how are you, finish. After the session is done, then you're done.

I see.

OK, that's it. Thank you.

**We continued to talk further about my research and my findings thus far. Mike went on to reiterate his view about the commercialisation and commodification of higher education in New Zealand and asserted that the trend seemed to be even stronger than in the US. I could not agree with him because the previous research findings did not prove this specific point. He continued that the University is not as unknown in the world as he had stated in the recorded interview and there are still places that recognise the University degrees internationally.*

He gave a couple of examples of international students who dropped out of the University because they could not manage their finances and/or found jobs that required their full-time attention. He still believed a lot of international students do not appear to be competent in their use of the English language, with which I agreed based on what the literature suggests as well as my personal experiences. He viewed internationalisation as a "big business." He was, nonetheless, troubled by this approach because he thought higher education should be something beyond mere business, according to its higher goals of educating minds to transform societies in which they operate.

And he let me know about the death of two students, one of whom he said was international, who committed suicide at the University's Business School in 2012 and 2014. I could not find any reliable information to support the international status of one of those students as the data around the news was very limited, but they were shocking incidents, nevertheless. They both jumped off higher levels of the high-rise building of the Business School and only following the second tragedy, the University fenced around the stairs, and other open areas, to avoid similar cases. I was not aware of these matters prior to my conversation with Mike.

Higher Coding (themes shared with other interviews' coding): Academic Issues; Issues of Welfare and Support Systems; Commercialisation of Higher Education; Bureaucracy and Paperwork; International Students' Support Groups; Actions to Achieve Goals / Resolve Issues / Taking Initiatives – Agency