Higher Education as a Market

Core Stakeholders' Perceptions on Marketization at Lund University

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Abstract

Title: Higher Education as a Market – Core Stakeholders' Perceptions on Marketization at Lund University

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Keywords: Marketization of Higher Education, Sweden, Lund University, Stakeholders' Perceptions, Market Discourses, Qualitative Research, Interpretivism.

Thesis Purpose: Our research will contribute with a more contextually sensitive view on the marketization of higher education by identifying Lund University, School of Economics and Management (LUSEM) stakeholders' (students, lecturers and administrators) perceptions towards HE as a market.

Methodology: The case study is built on an interpretative perspective, by adopting a qualitative research technique, namely semi-structured interviews, and analyzing the data by hermeneutic reading.

Theoretical Perspective: We examine the literature in the field of the economic market theory, organizational studies and theories of language and discourse in order to understand how the marketization of higher education was addressed in the past. As most of the existing literature concerns the UK and the US context, we extend the existing theory by closing the gap in literature in terms of individual perceptions on the market discourses in the Swedish higher education context.

Research Question: How do stakeholders of LUSEM such as students, lecturers and administrators perceive higher education as a market?

Basic Findings: We identify three major findings on how LUSEM's stakeholders perceive HE as a market in a Swedish setting. Firstly, the closer the stakeholder group is to the market, the more they perceive higher education as a market, thus it strongly depends on their role in education. Secondly, LUSEM's stakeholders do not support viewing higher education as a market, thus context matters. Thirdly, payment is a key indicator of whether higher education can be seen as a market or not.

Conclusion: The discussions around the marketization of HE tend to be framed in one context, which is always similar (for example, a context where students pay tuition fees), thus the literature stems mainly in the context of the UK and the US. We contributed to the scholarship by taking a more contextually sensitive view towards the marketization of HE, where we indicated the importance of contextual factors.

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1. Introduction

The introductory chapter presents the research problem followed by rationales that indicate the relevance of this study. Following the overall purpose of the study, theoretical concepts and the research context are presented. The chapter closes by outlining the research question.

This thesis is a project, exploring the dynamics of the marketization in higher education (HE). We will conduct the study through the review of literature in this area and then provide the specific context at Lund University in the Swedish system.

As we are students who are about to graduate from a university, we wondered what it would be like to start working in a company after the graduation. While having these considerations, we realized that the university life is probably not that far from a company life. Lecturers and administrators could be seen as employees of a university who need to get the 'company' running and we could be seen as 'customers' of the whole service. Seeing higher education (HE) from this perspective, we were intrigued if our classmates and other people from Lund University have recognized these discourses as well, which was the turning and starting point for this research.

When we started to dig into the literature, we found out that this perspective on HE was nothing new and has already been explored as the marketization of HE, mostly in the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States (US) contexts (Bragg, 2007; Yokoyama, 2008). This perspective describes HE as a market and portrays the university as a business, education as a commodity and students as customers, which are metaphors that illustrate market discourses. Even though the marketization of HE has already been explored and discussed in the field of organizational studies, we acknowledged that there is still a lack of knowledge about the impact that the aforementioned market discourses have on the perceptions of the main stakeholders of a HE institution such as students, lecturers and administrators. From our own experience of studying in Sweden, we encountered that Sweden is a strong proponent that public institutions should remain outside of the market; however, the HE is a 'marketizing' system, which means that some market mechanisms have already been adapted (Brown, 2011a, p. 16). We believe that more market efforts could be needed in the future, thus it might be reasonable to listen to the opinions of various stakeholders of a HE institution as it is crucial that everyone sees the necessity and is supportive towards using market mechanisms in HE.

Given the promises of continued research in the marketization of HE, we seek to address the following research problem:

The discussions around marketization of HE tend to frame it in one context, which is always similar (for example, where students pay fees), thus it lacks contextually sensitive view.

1.1 The rationales

In the next paragraphs we will outline the overall purpose of our study and provide practical as well as societal rationales behind the research. As there is already a significant amount of existing literature directly related to this topic, we will emphasize the gaps in literature and point out the contribution and advancements that our research will convey.

On a macro level, the purpose of our study is to investigate how the core stakeholders of a university perceive HE as a market in the Swedish context by seeing how they perceive the metaphors of university as a business, education as a commodity and students as customers. On a micro level, we aim to identify the discrepancies between a HE institution's stakeholders (namely, students, lecturers and administrators) opinions' on different discourses. In terms of the study purpose, we have been motivated by both practical and societal challenges that the marketization of HE stimulates, which are outlined below.

As far as practical problems are concerned, they can be organized around the two following challenges. Firstly, HE is seen as a catalyst for national economic success (Stephens, 2009). In fact, Naidoo et al.'s (2011) study *The consumerist turn in higher education: Policy aspirations and outcomes* identified that economic forces pressure universities more powerfully and directly than in previous decades. As a result, governments have become highly motivated to expand the educational sector. Building on this idea, it could be assumed that HE has become more open to forces for commodification, while education has developed into a product, particularly for its 'exchange' rather than for its intrinsic 'use' value (Naidoo et al., 2011). Our study will contribute with new knowledge by outlining the perceptions of core stakeholders of a HE institution on how these discourses operate in the socialized context of Swedish HE. Secondly, tuition fees could be identified as another force for commodification of HE (Naidoo and Jamieson, 2005). Recently, the Swedish parliament passed a law outlining tuition fees for students outside the EU/EEA area and Switzerland (Vaskovich, 2012); however, fee-paying students are still a minority in Swedish universities (Högskoleverket, 2012). The prevailing literature on the marketization of HE mainly focuses on the UK and the US contexts, thus it does not take multiple contexts into account. As a consequence, our study aims to take a more contextually sensitive view and seeks to explore how tuition fees change HE and how this change shapes the stakeholders' perspectives towards the marketization of HE in Sweden.

Building on the aforementioned practical challenges, we would like to outline the societal rationales, which are organized around three consequences of marketization. Firstly, the market discourses challenge the long-term autonomy and health of HE by fostering commercialization (Brown, 2011a). On the one hand, Kotler (1982) suggests that every type of organization should apply some business principles in order to function efficiently; yet on the other hand, Driscoll and Wicks (1999) claim that universities have a different set of goals than commercial organizations. Our study will contribute to the existing knowledge by outlining the perceptions of core stakeholders of the Swedish HE institution. Furthermore, it investigates how the market discourses fit to the socialized context of HE or, on the contrary, contravene the overall mission of HE. Secondly, the university is a public institution and, in accordance with Barnett (2011), "the ideas of marketization are corrupting the university as an embodiment of public goods" (p. 39). It is debated if the values and promises of public institutions are being fulfilled after adapting the market discourses (Walker et al., 2011). We will contribute by questioning what the core stakeholders of a HE institution think of exploiting the institution in a way that is designed for business, in a setting where public institutions tend to remain outside of the market. This is important as HE is transformative in its nature so there might be a necessity to make adjustments in the processes of marketization of HE where the perceptions of core stakeholders could be the source of how to address the issue. Thirdly, there is a concern in terms of the effect of the market discourses on the pedagogical relationship as students become perceived as customers, teachers as sellers and education as a commodity (Barnett, 2011). It is relevant to be aware of it as the changes in pedagogical relationship could lead to a reversal of roles. As a result, by conducting interviews with different stakeholders of a HE institution, we will be able to get a broader perspective on the impact of the market discourses on the relationship between different stakeholder groups.

1.2 Research context

Even though there is a significant amount of information on the worldwide emergence of marketization (mostly in the UK or the US context), it is already too generalized. Therefore, we aim to contribute with a more contextually sensitive view on the marketization of HE. In order to study the marketization of HE in a different setting, we have chosen Lund University in Sweden as our main case. The university has recently introduced tuition fees for non-European students (Högskoleverket, 2012), which could be the first step towards the marketization of HE; however, Sweden is still a strong proponent that public institutions remain outside of the market (Brown, 2011a). In the following paragraphs, we will briefly describe the research context and the participants.

Lund University was founded in 1666 and has a long and vibrant history covering almost 350 years of teaching. In 1900 there were only 1000 students in Lund, a small elite group, which was educated as priests, teachers, doctors and lawyers. Lund University grew strongly throughout the 20th century and is today Sweden's largest institution of HE covering disciplines from traditional academic subjects to performing arts (Lund University, 2012). The university has a relatively flat hierarchy and is organized into eight faculties, many institutes and research centers. Due to the complexity of the university, we will focus only on the School of Economics and Management (LUSEM). It is worth noting that LUSEM itself consists of six different departments. As we are students of this faculty ourselves, we have recognized that people within the business disciplines have more of the business mentality and therefore we assume that they can more easily relate to our topic.

The participants of the study were students, lecturers and administrators as they all play a significant role into the dynamic of whether HE could be perceived as a market or not. In order to represent the scene as accurately as possible, we interviewed lecturers from different departments of LUSEM, students taking different Master programs at LUSEM and administrators who have various responsibilities within the faculty. By conducting qualitative interviews and gathering data by hermeneutical reading, we will collect information about the perceptions of LUSEM's stakeholders towards HE as a market, thus contextually specific data. We will draw on an interpretative framework in order to engage to the following research question: How do stakeholders of LUSEM such as students, lecturers and administrators perceive HE as a market?

1.3 Theoretical and research concepts

The overall research will be based on the existing literature from organizational studies (OS), the economic market theory and theories of language and discourse. However, before tapping into different theoretical concepts that were used in the study, we would like to briefly explain why we have not entirely focused on marketing literature, although we studied marketization. Basically, we wanted to draw from organization theories as our aim was to gather individual perceptions and reveal a more contextual view on marketization. Additionally, even though the theories we used did not stem from marketing, they still addressed the marketing area.

As far as OS is concerned, the field investigates how people construct organizational structures, processes, and practices, and how these, in sequence, shape social relations and create institutions which eventually impact on individuals (Clegg & Bailey, 2008). That is to say, people's perceptions shape and construct the organization which eventually influence people themselves. Our study will contribute to the OS field, especially to the fields of organizational change and organizational culture. Contemporary ideas of change accentuate the importance of adapting to planned changes as well as being responsive to changes in the environment (Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2008). In our study, we address possible changes that might evolve due to the marketization in the context of HE. We conduct our research in the socialized context of HE where people interaction is relatively high. Consequently, it is of great importance to involve the concept of organizational culture, which is claimed to be a pivotal element in organizational change as it determines whether the change is possible or not (Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2008).

Furthermore, the economic market theory reflects on the market system where consumers and producers determine answers to the basic economic problems of production through their interaction in the market (Brown, 2011a). As far as the definition of market is concerned, it acts as an intermediary between consumers who demand particular goods or services and producers who supply according to these demands (Brown, 2011a). This field is of high relevance as the purpose of our study is to investigate how stakeholders such as students, lecturers and administrators, perceive a HE institution as a market and outline the consequences that the market discourses have on the perceptions towards HE institution. The economic market theory provides us with fundamental knowledge about markets, its drivers and creates a solid foundation for identifying the market discourses in the context of Swedish HE.

Lastly, theories of language and discourse are considered relevant as we will use metaphors of university as a business, education as a commodity and students as customers as our starting points in the conversation with our interviewees. As these metaphors accurately generalize the market discourses, we expect to gather stakeholders' perceptions on the marketization of HE as accurately as possible. Due to the subjectivity of the world, the theories of language and discourse enable us to better interpret individual perceptions (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2005).

The compilation of these theoretical concepts is our theoretical framework, which basically means that we will approach our study through these 'lenses'. We are aware that if adapting different perspectives, the findings would be different; however, as this approach is directly related to our research problem, we see these particular theoretical concepts as relevant.

2. Literature Review

In this study we seek to contribute to the lack of knowledge of how stakeholders such as students, lecturers and administrators perceive higher education (HE) as a market in a Swedish context. We will look to the economic market theory, organizational studies and theories of language and discourse in order to understand how this phenomenon was addressed in the past. Even though there is already a solid amount of information on the link between education and marketization, there is still a lack of knowledge about the consequences that the market discourses have on the perceptions of the stakeholders of a HE institution in Sweden. The following literature review is structured as follows: firstly, we will define the marketization of HE and continue with examining the marketization of HE in the Swedish context. Afterwards, we will reflect upon the polarized views towards this phenomenon, followed by the main drivers of the marketization of HE. After having the solid background information about the marketization of HE, we will proceed by tapping into the metaphors of market discourses.

2.1 Marketization of higher education

We are often confronted with a notion that we are living in the age of the 'market', meaning that profit and money control the world and even HE institutions become a part of it (Elton, 2011). Barnett (2011) supports this assumption by adding that universities not only operate in the public sector but they are also placed in markets that contribute to the success of the whole country. Market theory, therefore, appears directly relevant in understanding how HE can become a market where consumers and producers determine answers to the basic economic problems through their interaction (Brown, 2011a).

The economic market theory defines a market as "a means of social coordination whereby the supply and demand for a good or services are balanced through the price mechanism" (Brown, 2011a, p.11). In other words, the idea behind the market orientation is basically to expand customers' choice and to enhance the economic effectiveness. Kähkönen (2010) argues that it is not particularly accurate to claim that HE operates in the market, thus the concept of 'quasi-markets' is established, which differentiates them from conventional markets. Even though the meaning of 'quasi-market' is relatively ambiguous, it has generally been determined to define "the organization of the supply of services on market lines where very little or no private capital is involved" (Brown, 2011a, p.12-13). Therefore, the marketization of HE could be defined as "the application of the economic theory of the market to the provision of higher education" (Brown, 2011b, p. 1). This generally means that market mechanisms are applied to a public HE institution in order to provide the public service more efficiently. Furthermore, the market of HE is identified as "multiple, fuzzy and reflective of different interests and values" (Barnett, 2011, p. 40). This indicates that there is a need to recognize the demands of the private and the public sector, as well as to simultaneously respond to competitiveness and universality. These incoherent needs require the HE market to be highly transformative in its nature (Bauman, 2000).

2.2 Marketization in the Swedish HE context

Even though the market presence in HE is more remarkable in the UK or the US, Brown (2011a) claims that the Nordic countries, proponents for a non-market system in public institutions, are beginning to introduce market features as well. Swedish HE is strongly supported by its public and perceived as fundamentally good public service, thus the move towards the market has been more limited. However, in order to manifest that the marketization in HE is already observable, in the following paragraphs we will reflect upon these aspects: the emergence of tuition fees for non-European students, the increased demands of students and the rising competition between HE institutions.

For a long time, Sweden was one of the few countries in Europe where HE was completely free of charge for both domestic and international students. The right of HE institutions to charge fees has recently been introduced in Sweden for students from outside the European Economic Area (Brown, 2011a). This decision was made by the Swedish government as they wanted the Swedish universities to be able to compete with the vast majority of the European Union's member countries on equal terms (Brown, 2011a). This could be perceived as an indicator of a move towards a market view that re-conceptualizes education as a commercial transaction, the lecturer as the 'commodity producer' and the student as the 'consumer' (Chapleo, 2010).

Furthermore, Clayson and Haley (2005) recognize a shift of students into being more demanding and more assertive, thus becoming more customer-like. This requires HE institutions to be able to manage student expectations and demands as it has enormous impact on the institution (Jones, 2010). The problem is that if an institution cannot fulfill student's expectations, the student will most likely find a new institution - a new 'supplier', thus, making the educational quasi-market rather competitive (Molesworth et al., 2009). Expectation management is, therefore, critical (Eagle and Brennan, 2007). Interestingly, giving students voice by offering to fill out evaluation forms is very popular in Sweden (Uhlin, 2013). Williams (2011) claims that universities actually encourage students to behave like consumers when asking to outline their opinion in feedback forms.

In terms of the aforementioned changes in the local and global educational quasi-markets, it could be assumed that Swedish HE is not yet ‘marketized’ but is a ‘marketizing system’ which has already adopted some market-oriented characteristics (Brown, 2011a, p. 16). However, even though the Swedish HE market has to adjust to the transformative nature of global education market, Swedish “government approval is [still] needed for the introduction of new courses or programs, reflecting the important role of central forecasts of labor market needs that provide the context for individually negotiated performance agreements between institutions and the government” (Brown, 2011a, p. 19). Thus, it could be said that as the Swedish HE system is strongly dependent on the government, the market mentality is resisted. However, the fact that Sweden operates in the ‘quasi-market’ on local and global scale cannot be neglected either.

By drawing upon the economic market theory, we intend to define the quasi-market and argue that HE could be identified as operating in it. However, contradictory opinions exist whether this market-driven approach is necessary within HE sector, which we will further elaborate on.

2.3 Polarization of views – pro-marketers and anti-marketers

Due to the fact that marketization has stimulated much debate within the HE sector (Durkin et al., 2012), we will further outline two ‘camps’ that appear in the context of the marketization of HE. The intention here is not to indicate which approach is correct but rather to increase the awareness about various perceptions and opinions that stem from organizational studies.

On the one hand, there are those who strongly criticize the ideas of markets in the context of HE and belong to a group called ‘anti-marketers’. They hold to the idea of universities as sites of public and personal goods, independent of market constraints (Barnett, 2011). There is often a lack of clarity regarding to what extent, if any, a business-oriented approach, which identifies students as customers and places them at the center of all activity, is suitable within the HE proposition (Snare, 1997). Barrett (1996) strongly emphasizes on his negative position towards the marketization in HE as he proposes that it is “regrettable and ominous that the marketing focus, explicitly borrowed from business, should be accepted and even welcomed” (p. 70) in the educational context. A consumer mindset is, therefore, infiltrated in education (Levin, 2005). This could lead to an assumption that consumerism fosters the need to simply ‘have’ the diploma in order to feel secure which is the main idea outlined by Fromm (1976) in his book *To Have or to Be*. Even though the author further claims that the market, or the ‘having’ discourse, promotes ‘a mode of existence’ where students are more focused on ‘having a degree’ rather than ‘being learners’, we argue that empirical work is needed to explore how HE institutions relate to consumerism. Even though Fromm’s (1976) ideas were outlined more than 30 years ago, Molesworth et al. (2009) admit that concerns of excess consumerism are still existent in HE. Nowadays, getting a degree from a 'right' institution is what matters (Alvesson, 2013). This is assumed because students' focus on outcomes has increased, which could possibly "represent a broader change in generational attitudes beyond the commodification of HE" (Molesworth et al., 2011, p. 175). Furthermore, another prominent idea of anti-marketers is that marketization reinforces a market tendency of using resources to improve HE institutions’ attractiveness instead of using them to improve the quality (Molesworth et al., 2011). This shift towards a ‘marketized’ university could have a deleterious impact on the university since, by simply adjusting courses or programs to satisfy students’ demands, universities may possibly erode the quality to which students were initially attracted (Fiske, 1979; Rolfe, 2002). Next to that, when following traditional business activities, HE institutions might unintentionally replace worthy education and devaluate not only the promises of the public sector but also the values of HE (Barett, 1996).

On the other hand, there are the ‘pro-marketers’, the apologists for the so-called ‘neo-liberal’ repositioning of universities and endorsers of ‘academic capitalism’ who believe that marketization will bring benefit to the society not only on local but also on global level (Slaughter and Leslie, 1997). This idea, in fact, stems from a new managerial ideology ‘New Public Management’ (NPM) which represents an attempt to make the public sector more business-like. The term NPM was coined by Hood and Jackson (1991), and has been widely debated in the field of public administration. More specifically, it means that the policies, practices and priorities of private business can be adapted to the public sector in order to successfully minister public needs (Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka, 2006). Walker et al. (2011) further state that if HE institutions apply NPM mechanisms, the performance of the institution could be improved. Additionally, pro-marketers claim that the success of a university is nowadays based not only on the amount of enrolled students but also on the university's ability to guarantee a well-paid job after the graduation. These aspects will, in turn, affect the ratings and league tables which assist in further customer choices (Naidoo & Jamieson, 2005). Thus, the value of HE institutions becomes increasingly measured by its contribution to the economy (Molesworth et al., 2009).

Interestingly, in the book *The Marketisation of Higher Education and the Student as Consumer,* Molesworth et al. (2011) acknowledge that one of the university's fundamental roles is to investigate various phenomena for broadening the understanding of them, as well as that universities are valuable to society because they may independently reflect on things. Consequently, it could be assumed that the aforementioned criticism of marketized HE comes from within the academia as it is unrealistic to expect that the government would criticize its own policy direction as well as to presume that the industry or students could systematically reflect on this topic (Molesworth et al., 2011).

Both 'camps' have strong supporting arguments for and against marketization in the context of HE; however, one aspect that cannot be neglected is that various forces and changes constantly transform the sector. Thus, we will further identify the main drivers of marketization in HE.

2.4 Main drivers of marketization in HE

The process of globalization, the growth of global trade and international interconnectedness has made HE highly significant in the market (Deem, 2001). In order to illustrate the importance of HE, it could be mentioned that, as a large globally traded service, it has a worth of $200 billion per annum (Bretton, 2003 cited in Molesworth et al., 2011). HE institutions have shifted into being a part of global business as the demand for international education provision has risen, and there was a need of education that equips students with knowledge and turns them into, as Bretton (2003, cited in Molesworth et al., 2011) identifies, 'global citizens' (p.34).

Due to the desire of modernizing the European HE system and maximizing HE contribution to the development of the society, the Bologna process took place. The Bologna Process launched the European Higher Education Area in 2010 where students could choose from a variety of high quality courses and benefit from aligned procedures. As far as the Bologna Declaration is concerned, it puts in motion a series of reforms needed to make the European HE more compatible, competitive and attractive for students and scholars (European Commission, 2013). The development of a common European Higher Education Area and the Bologna Declaration, could be seen as an attempt to increase Europe's overall market share of HE (Robertson, 2009), thus, simultaneously as a driver of marketization.

In addition to this, HE institutions encounter a fierce rivalry and different market forces, driven by the quasi-market not only on local, but also on regional and national level (Bretton, 2003 cited in Molesworth et al., 2011). Next to that, universities have to compete with alternative options such as direct employment (Bretton, 2003 cited in Molesworth et al., 2011). This could impose a necessity of having a strong reputation and a distinct competitive advantage in order to attract people to choose one university over another. When seeing from this perspective, market logic and mechanisms become directly relevant in the context of HE.

Furthermore, the influence of various rankings, league tables and the way in which these reinforce the pressure for the pursuit of prestige within HE institutions could be another driver of marketization (Brown, 2011a). Molesworth et al. (2011) claim that the global and local rankings reinforce the tendency to see HE as a product to be consumed rather than an opportunity to be experienced, as the university's brand and reputation become more of an interest for students than the education itself, which again reflects on Fromm's (1976) ideas of 'having vs. being'.

Due to the aforementioned drivers, it could be assumed that the marketization of HE is "unstoppable" (Brown, 2011a, p. 86). Thus, it is worth investigating how the core stakeholders such as students, lecturers and administrators perceive this phenomenon as they are the ones who are directly related and most likely impacted by it. However, before proceeding with the answers to this question, it is worth identifying how the marketization of HE is characterized and talked about in the existing literature. We will further draw upon theories of language and discourse in order to outline how market discourses are discussed through metaphors.

2.5 Metaphors of market discourses

The emergence of marketization imposes market discourses in an educational setting, which portrays a university as a business, education as a commodity and students as customers. Even though there is already a significant amount of information on this phenomenon, there is still a lack of knowledge of how the core stakeholders of a university such as students, lecturers and administrators perceive HE as a market. Therefore, it is relevant to take into account where these discourses stem from.

A French philosopher Foucault (1988) triggered an idea that human thoughts are in principal obtained from the social interaction, structures and behaviors conformed through predominant discursive practices. It is undeniable that people are controlled by language. In the article *The Market Economy Discourse on Education: Interpretation, Impact, and Resistance*, Hyslop-Margison (2000) examines the impact of the market economy discourse on education by tracing its sources from micro to macro levels. The author outlines an interesting idea that people are "simultaneously enabled and constrained by the cultural artifacts it [language] carries" (p.203). This is due to the fact that individuals determine the world depending on how they understand different signs, symbols or even entire discourses that they themselves did not produce. We agree with Hyslop-Margison (2000) that when individuals follow the pre-existing discourses, they are also gaining the accompanying values, ideas and assumptions they embody. Thus, from our point of view, it is of high importance to remain critical of the discourses as they strongly shape ones view on the world. Even though multiple definitions appear in the literature, we have chosen to identify a discourse as "the process by which biological life becomes sociocultural life. It influences thoughts, constructs identities, binds and divides communities of action, and shapes world views" (Hyslop-Margison, 2000, p.203-204). This nicely summarizes the previously outlined ideas that through acquiring different discourses, an individual understanding of the world is formed.

As far as the market discourses in HE context are concerned, they could be identified as strong sources of persuasion because they "shape conceptions of reality by framing discussions of ideas, values, and actions associated with education within arbitrarily established boundaries of acceptability" (Hyslop-Margison, 2000, p.204). The author further elaborates that "even though thoughts and actions do not mirror reality in any absolute sense, it reflects linguistically established limits on the "appropriate" action of individual and community" (Hyslop-Margison, 2000, p.204). In fact, various market discourses appear in the existing literature. For example, Chapleo (2010) claims that market discourses are strongly associated with commercialization whereas Naidoo and Jamieson (2005) emphasize on the commodification of education. It is as well claimed that the market discourses play a pivotal role in the promotion of excessive buying (Kjellberg, 2008) or the establishment of 'consumer society' where "individuals are largely oriented towards spending and the accumulation of possessions" (Heath & Heath, 2008, p.1027).

Using metaphors is, in fact, one form of discourse. In regards to Coffey and Atkinson (1996) metaphors are "a figurative use of language, a ubiquitous feature of a culture's or an individual's thinking and discourse" (p.85). When using common vocabularies from the context of HE and comparing them with the market terminology, we are enabled to reveal common knowledge and what is taken for granted as shared understanding of a social group, namely students, lecturers and administrators (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). However, we have as well taken into account that metaphors may lead to partiality or oversimplification (Alvesson and Spicer, 2011).

Using metaphors as an illustration of market discourses is not new. In fact, there is a great variety of metaphors that have already been used to gather findings in terms of seeing HE as a market (Halbesleben et al., 2003). The metaphors vary from those that have been there for a long time such as education as an investment to more modern ones such as students as co-producers of knowledge (Kotze & du Plessis, 2003). Another scholar, Franz (1998) prefers treating students as partners as he believes that lecturers should fulfill the role of a coach and make students responsible for their own education. We emphasize on these different metaphors to increase the awareness of possible alternatives and illustrate that the image, which is chosen for the comparison depends on the angle of view and is thus subjectively conditioned (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2010).

2.6 Principal metaphors upholding market ideology

We have recognized several principal metaphors within the existing literature that uphold a market ideology. Thus, in the following paragraphs we will in detail discuss metaphors of university as a business, education as a commodity and students as customers. By using these metaphors, we will show how market discourses are characterized as well as how marketization is discussed through metaphors.

First of all, the metaphor of university as a business is popular both, in academia and practice. This analogy indicates a move towards a market view that re-conceptualizes education as a commercial transaction, the lecturer as the ‘commodity producer’ and the student as the ‘consumer’ (Chapleo, 2010). Due to tuition fees, it could be assumed that universities are increasingly seen as businesses. In addition to this, in the book *The Triumph of Emptiness: Consumption, Higher Education, and Work Organization,* Alvesson (2013) emphasizes that there should be a difference between the perceptions of paying and non-paying students towards the metaphor in a way that fee-paying students feel more entitled to get a good service. The author further claims that fee-paying students create pressure for universities to satisfy their needs. Building on this idea, in the article *We’re the Customer-We Pay the Tuition: Student Consumerism Among Undergraduate Sociology Majors*, Delucchi and Korgen (2002) emphasize on students’ opinions that paying tuition fees equates buying a degree, which leads to a failure of seeing the necessity of being active learners. One particularly interesting finding from the article was that the dominance of market economy in HE consequently leads to the increasing student disengagement.

Furthermore, the metaphor of education as a commodity has grown in relevance and, in accordance with Naidoo and Jamieson (2005), is “likely to lead to the erosion of academic capital and valorization of economic capital” (p.271). This ‘commodity’ discourse means that educational processes will be transformed into commodities that have an economic worth rather than an intrinsic value. Furthermore, in the article *Adapting consumer time and the marketing of higher education*, Gibbs (2001) states that this analogy actually contravenes the overall mission of HE and consequently imposes a failure in education’s fundamental role. Building on Gibbs (2001), Clayson and Haley’s (2005) article *Marketing Models in Education: Students as Customers, Products, or Partners* stated that fee-paying students more likely accommodate the discourse of education as commodity because they pay for their studies. The authors further emphasize that fee-paying students might expect better grades, regardless of the invested effort.

The last prominent metaphor that invokes a market ideology is students as customers. This analogy portrays individuals as mainly focused on the outcome of their studies and expecting more value for the money invested (Jones, 2010; Kaye et al., 2006). In the review *Are students customers? TMQ and Marketing Perspectives*, Eagle and Brennan (2007) argue that the analogy of students as customers or consumers will most likely be not in favor of the students' interests as they will be perceived as 'passive learners' who are mainly concerned about getting the diploma. When students internalize a form of consumer identity and the act of learning is seen as a commercial transaction, they see themselves as passively consuming education, which in turn changes students' focus from self-development to simply getting a degree (Williams, 2011). Furthermore, in the article *Whatever You Do, Don't Treat Your Students Like Customers!*, Franz (1998) states that treating students as customers is detrimental as they are not perceived as equal partners in the educational process. The author further outlines a concern that treating students as customers would turn lecturers' role into one of delighting and entertaining students.

All of these metaphors solidify our understanding of universities as being part of the market because metaphors are strong organizing tools. Thus, the more we use this language, the more likely we are to uphold these market discourses. It is as well worth noting that most of the literature about the metaphors is based on the findings in tuition-fee paying countries, mainly in the UK and the US. As Sweden is not yet a 'marketized' system (Brown, 2011a), the dilemma is how these discourses could be applied to the Swedish HE context. Nevertheless, this context is intriguing and the literature still builds a solid foundation for a further analysis.

As noted at the beginning of the introductory chapter, we set out to identify the existing literature on the marketization of HE on the global and Swedish contexts. Additionally, we identified that Swedish HE is a 'marketizing' system, which means that some market mechanisms have already been adapted and thus, it is intriguing how market discourses impact on the stakeholders of HE institution. As most of the existing literature concerns the UK and the US context, there is a gap in literature in terms of individual perceptions on the market discourses in the Swedish HE context. Therefore, our research will address these gaps by identifying LUSEM stakeholders' perceptions towards HE as a market. Before proceeding with the analysis, in the following chapter we will outline our methodology for conducting this study.

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3. Methodology

The aim of the methodology chapter is to outline the ontological and epistemological stance of the research approach. Thereafter, the collection of empirical material as well as the analysis process will be provided. We will close the chapter by outlining how we address reflexivity in the research.

3.1 Ontological and epistemological framework

The main question of our study is "How do stakeholders of LUSEM such as students, lecturers and administrators perceive higher education (HE) as a market?" It is necessary to consider the most appropriate methodological approach which could enable us to accurately find answers to this question.

In accordance to Abnor and Bjerke (1997), methodology is a set of "guiding principles for the creation of knowledge" (p.9) which is characterized in terms of ontological and epistemological considerations. Guba (1990) explains that ontology questions the nature of reality whereas epistemology deals with the nature of the relationship between the inquirer and the object. The answers given to these questions may be termed as the basic belief systems or paradigms that might be adopted in a research (Guba, 1990). Various paradigms exist; however, neither are right or wrong but rather simply represent different world views.

In our research we focused on the social constructionist approach, which is as well often referred to as an interpretative method. The fundamental idea behind this paradigm is that reality is subjective and the world is a social construction (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2005). Consequently, from an ontological perspective, the reality is constructed through individual perceptions and meanings rather than proven by facts (Easterby-Smith et al., 2002). Epistemologically, knowledge is socially constructed and interpreted by people. We believe that there are no objective facts, thus we will follow the interpretative approach in our research. According to Alvesson (2004), an interpretative approach is more sensitive to uncertainty, incoherence, multiple meaning, contradiction and confusion. Thus, instead of relying on structures, orders and systematic patterns, we assume that knowledge is highly ambiguous. By setting interpretation at the forefront of our overall research work, we are not aiming to find truth or facts but rather search for understanding and various meanings of the phenomenon.

In our study we did not intend to do empirical generalizations but rather to contribute with theoretical (analytical) generalizations. We chose a single case study because it provided us with an understanding of a local situation. Instead of having a broad view, we focused on individuals' insights, their understanding and their way of conceptualizing the marketization of HE. In order to get this in-depth understanding of our interviewees' perceptions regarding the market discourses, we used qualitative research methods for gathering our primary data, particularly semi-structured interviews. Additionally, we examined secondary data such as the strategic plan of Lund University (2012-2016) and the current Lund University brochure. Due to the fact that secondary sources do not reveal the perceptions or understanding of individuals, these data were mainly used as background information on Lund University. We did not consider the data as objective; therefore, we interpreted them by hermeneutical reading. The overall collected empirical material was analyzed by using the aforementioned interpretative paradigm. In the following section we will in detail outline the process of data collection and analysis.

3.2 Research process

3.2.1 Collection of empirical material

We did not aim to identify the real or objective reality but rather to capture different perceptions as seen from the individual perspective. Building on this idea, interviewing was a preferable method for gathering primary data in our research. Kvale (1996) identifies an interview as an "attempts to understand the world from the subject's point of view, to unfold the meaning of peoples' experiences, to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations" (p.1). Thus, by interviewing stakeholders we obtained their perceptions on the market discourses in the context of Swedish HE.

The interviews were conducted by using an interview guide which was made around pre-established topics that were necessary in order to answer our research question. The main topics were marketization, commercialization and commodification of education, roles and expectations. The intention was to keep the questions open-ended since that allowed space for different interpretations and insights depending on every individual interviewee. After conducting the first interview, we spent some time discussing the interviewee's ability to answer and comprehend the questions. During our first pilot interview, we encountered that some of the questions were too specific or required more explanation, thus we modified the questions in order to be better prepared for our actual interviews.

The interview questions were semi-structured because on the one hand, this gave us flexibility to navigate the interview by following the essential points that the interviewee wanted to talk about, which we could correspondingly respond to. On the other hand, we still had a structure to follow as we identified the core themes that were essential to touch upon during the interview. Another benefit of conducting semi-structured interviews was that we were able to change the sequence of the questions or add new ones. Additionally, semi-structured interviews were helpful to guide the interview in a certain direction when a topic seemed to have influenced the interviewee's perceptions to a greater extent, and to discard some directions that did not seem important (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008).

We used three sheets of paper with different metaphors written on them as a starting point for the interview. The metaphors were: Lund University as a business, education as a commodity and students as customers. Without giving the interviewees any particular question, we asked them to outline their initial thoughts towards these metaphors. We further navigated the interview depending on the points that were touched upon by the interviewee. We did not require any prior knowledge on the topic from our interviewees; however sometimes they asked for explanation of some concepts (for example, marketization or commodification).

In total, we conducted 12 interviews with students, lecturers and administrators between the 14th of March, 2013 and 12th of April, 2013 at different locations in Lund (varying from the offices of the lecturers to the main Lund University's building). The interviews varied in length from minimum 45 to maximum 60 minutes. We conducted the interviews in English since we are not Swedish native speakers. We are aware that this could have constrained our Swedish speaking respondents by limiting their ability to express their answers properly (Bryman & Bell, 2007). However, we tried to manage this issue by choosing interviewees who assured to have sufficient English language skills. Additionally, in order to ensure confidentiality, we changed the original names of our participants.

Even though we used sampling for convenience, we considered some specific characteristics when choosing our interviewees (see Table A):

Interviewee group	Characteristics
Four students	• Sample: four Master students from LUSEM; one non-EU student, one Swedish student and two EU students (non-Swedish)
Four lecturers	• Sample: four lecturers from different departments of LUSEM
Four administrators	• Sample: four administrators fulfilling different functions in LUSEM

Table A: Specific characteristics of participants

When analyzing and interpreting the interviews, we were aware that all of our interviewees are of different origins, study backgrounds or working positions. This was relevant because different cultural backgrounds or different work positions might have influenced one's perceptions towards the topic in one way or another.

3.2.2 Analysis of empirical material

Since the overall study purpose was to identify students', lecturers' and administrators' perceptions towards HE as a market, we needed to focus on what the respondent said and how he/she expressed himself/herself during the interview. Thus, with the interviewees' permission, we audio-recorded the interviews. We benefited from the audio-records by being more flexible when following and responding to the interviewees' comments as there was no need to make notes while interviewing. We transcribed the interviews by using Express Scribe in order to have text documents ready for the coding process.

We employed hermeneutical reading for codifying our empirical data as we needed to gather individuals' perceptions which cannot be revealed in a quick coding process (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2010). Hermeneutical reading was applied as we considered our interviews within their actual context by iterating between the part and the whole. When analyzing the interviews, we were aware that the participants were placed not only in their particularities (their job, cultures or roles) but they were also subject to broader social discourses. It is worth emphasizing the implications of being 'social', which means that these discourses are always changing. This implies that if we conducted the interviews with the same participants in 10 years from now, they would most likely answer differently.

We began analyzing the data by reading the transcripts multiple times to obtain a general sense of the data. At first, we marked the parts where the respondents outlined their ideas towards marketization more directly. Then, after having a pile of unsorted data, we searched for similar, re-occurring ideas. This could be paralleled with the technique of 'cutting and sorting' (Ryan and Bernard, 2003) because we gathered the quotes in a Word document, sorted them according to similarities and gave names to the groups. After we read the transcripts multiple times and sorted out some ideas from the aforementioned process, we began coding the text more specifically. We looked for repetitions, comparisons, linguistic connectors and transitions in order to identify supporting arguments, interrelationships between ideas and evaluate if the aforementioned 'chunks' could be identified as themes. By following this process, we identified three main themes of our study: role dependency, the setting (context) as marketization rejection and payment as a marketization trigger.

Additionally, as our research question dealt with finding perceptions towards HE as a market from different stakeholder groups, we took the comparative research design (Bryman & Bell, 2007) into account. In our research we compared the individuals' perceptions with the aim to find similarities and differences between three core stakeholder groups from LUSEM, namely students, lecturers and administrators.

What is worth noting is that in the process of analyzing our empirical data, we encountered double hermeneutics because we, as researchers, interpreted the data which had already been interpreted by our interviewees, thus making our analysis an "interpretation of interpretation" (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2005, p.6). As our assumptions and notions in some sense determined the representation of the findings, we will reflect on our biases and pre-assumptions in the following section.

3.2.3 Reflexivity: Our biases and pre-assumptions

While conducting the interviews, analyzing the data as well as interpreting, writing and editing, we were continuously interacting within the research and became a part of it (Creswell, 2003). We were self-aware of the relationship between us and the research as it "cannot be meaningfully separated" (Hand, 2003, p.18). Thus, the findings are the creation of the process of interaction between the researcher and the object. We affected the outcome due to the fact that, from an interpretive perspective, who we are and how we understand various phenomena is a central part of how we understand ourselves, others and the world.

We encountered multiple biases in regards to different phases of the research such as data collection or planning, the research topic, its content and participants, which we will further elaborate on (Creswell, 2003). In fact, in accordance to Creswell (2003), by indicating our research biases we not only help ourselves, as researchers, but we also demonstrate honesty and openness of the research. This means that we allow the reader to critically and independently review our work.

We conducted the interviews with students, lecturers and administrators, thus they were all highly different groups of respondents. We assumed that students as interviewees would feel less comfortable in an interview situation than lecturers. Therefore, we believed that it would be easier to conduct interviews with lecturers as they were used to speaking and story-telling due to their profession. Additionally, we thought that they may be more familiar with interview situations. During the interviews, we indeed recognized that lecturers could build their arguments and outline examples more easily in comparison to students, who required additional explanations of some concepts. However, this did not negatively influence or hinder our research.

Moreover, as we were asking the students about their perceptions towards the metaphor of students as customers, we found it difficult to repress our own feelings and opinions as we are students of LUSEM ourselves. This bias was managed by posing semi-structured and open-ended questions so that the interviewee could have space for interpreting and seeing the subject from his/her own perspective.

Furthermore, we were aware of the response bias which means that the interviewees might have consciously or subconsciously given responses that they believed would satisfy us and therefore omitted their own opinion if it was different. We tried to manage this bias by pointing out that there were no right answers to our questions and that the interviewee’s opinion was what mattered to us. We assumed that our respondents were as honest with their answers as possible.

4. Analysis

In the following chapter we will present the analysis of our empirical data, namely of the interviews held with students, lecturers and administrators. The intention is to answer the research question: "How do stakeholders of LUSEM such as students, lecturers and administrators perceive HE as a market?"

In the analysis we identified three major themes that come from the three stakeholder groups with some minor exceptions. The themes are role dependency, the setting (context) as marketization rejection and payment as a marketization trigger. In the following section, we will elaborate on these themes, supported by quotes of our interviewees. The analysis chapter is structured as follows: the first two sections are structured around the perceptions of administrators, lecturers and students towards the metaphors of market discourses. The third section is organized differently, namely around stakeholder's perceptions towards payment.

4.1 Role dependency

The first theme that stems from our research is in terms of role dependency. We recognized that the closer the stakeholder group is to the market, the more they perceive higher education (HE) as a market. Therefore, administrators perceive HE as a market whereas students and lecturers do not support this market discourse. As a consequence, whether students, lecturers or administrators perceive HE as a market or not, depend on their role within HE. The findings are illustrated in the table B (where "x" stands for approval and "-" for rejection) and will be further elaborated on in the following section.

Role dependency			
	See university as a business	**See students as customers**	**See education as a product**
Administrators	x	x	x
Lecturers	-	-	-
Students	-	-	-

Table B: Role dependency

Administrators' role drives business mentality

The interviewed administrators perceive HE as a market because they are working within the market. For example, Ms. Johansson sees LU as a business, as she argued:

> Yes, in many ways I think we are a business because I often think of our courses as the product that we maybe not sell, but we offer it to our customers, which is the student [..] it's important to, think about our offered courses as a product because we must, you know, market it, we must serve it in a nice way and we attract students and researchers also. So, yea, then I, it's not a business like fast working, profitable thinking, it is not a business like that but in some ways, I regard Lund University as a business.

Ms. Johansson approved seeing LU as a business as this metaphor helps her portraying her job tasks more accurately. In this quote it is apparent that she unconsciously uses metaphors of students as customers or education as a commodity which could possibly mean that her perceptions have been affected by the market discourses. Another interviewee, Ms. Fielers, as well supports the market mentality within HE. However, she has difficulties seeing LU as a business although she indicates the importance of business mentality in a HE institution. She therefore argued:

> Two things, I mean LU, in my world, is for everyone and could never be like a business [...]. On the other hand, we need to have some business. So, that's strange. [...] No, it doesn't really fit but it has to somewhere fit.

Ms. Fielers gave an ambiguous answer how the business discourses could be applied to LU. On the one hand, she claimed that LU will never function as a business as it is a public institution. On the other hand, she confirms that some business efforts are needed in the university. She believes that this mismatch is 'strange' because even though she does not want to see LU as a business, there has to be 'some business' at LU. Ms. Fielers realizes the importance of business efforts, but overall she does not agree that there is a business mentality at LU. On the contrary to Ms. Fielers' ambiguous thoughts, Mr. Karolis has a clear perception that LU could be seen as a business. This could be illustrated by emphasizing the way he spoke about students:

> You can see them as products. And I guess also at the departments if we are going to have the money then they have to take their exam and in that sense you have a product input and then we need to, we would like you to finish at the time we say. We don't want you to take one or two extra years because it only cost us more money. So in that sense, yes, little bit, I guess, even if it is not a good way. I don't like to see you as products but I guess people do it sometimes.

Mr. Karolis defined students from an economic perspective, where students who do not finish their studies on time, costs more money for the university. Although he does not prefer seeing students as products, he confirms that "people do it sometimes". However, by saying this, it cannot be unambiguously accepted that Mr. Karolis excludes himself from this group of people. This could be assumed because various statements of Mr. Karolis often related to money-making, taxes or tuition fees.

In contrast to the majority of the interviewed administrators, Ms. Johansson steps away from seeing HE as a market, as she outlined:

> But I am more, I would like to see the courses, the education offered, more like, yes, a help and like a development project, maybe [...] the mission is to offer good education and to make the package, I mean the education within a package which is attractive [...] I don't think about it as selling, actually, more offering and taking care of."

Ms. Johansson prefers seeing the education as a "help" or "development project" rather than as a product which brings profit. By saying "I would like to see the courses, the education offered, more like, yes, a help and like a development project", she actually indicates that at the moment the business mentality could be taking over. This exceptional example shows that even though Ms. Johansson does not perceive HE as a market, she has to operate in the environment where a business mentality is of great relevance.

Administrators perceive students as customers

As administrators work directly with attracting and retaining students, they see students as customers. According to Mr. Roseman, students are customers but she believes that students do not perceive themselves as such due to their relationship and interaction with lecturers and the way students are subordinated to them:

> I think that's the way it is, students are customers. You have your say when it comes to education and you have, so I think you are very much treated as customers here [...] the difference is that I mean students might not see themselves as customers and think of themselves that way because we have I mean I think, ok, the relationship within the teachers and students can't be like customer based because the teachers have a power of you.

On the one hand, Ms. Roseman claims that students have a say in education and on the other hand, students are still subordinated by the lecturer, which is a contradiction in itself. She therefore sees students as customers but believes that students do not perceive themselves as such. Not only Ms. Roseman but also another administrator, Ms. Johansson, perceives students as customers, as she explained:

> Yes, as I said, I think that the students are important customers, coming here, applying and then they use our buildings, our teachers and they take part of our lectures and our education and from my point of view, I am very happy when they are very pleased with the product that we offer. And they are important, very important.

Ms. Johansson sees students as customers who come to university and use the services it provides. Additionally, the interviewee unconsciously portrays education as a product. Ms. Johansson further emphasizes on the importance of satisfied students, which could be linked to the business mentality, where satisfied customers bring more profit or positively impact company's reputation. Another interviewee, Mr. Karolis, stated that there are different ways of looking at students, such as co-workers or colleagues; however, he indicated that there is an increase in perceiving students as customers:

> Increasingly, I would say. Before we didn't do that because we didn't have to, we are state financed institution; you should have those students and provide for education. But nowadays I think that one of the driving forces is the non-European students because they are clearly customers. And in a way Swedish students are as well because it's only another transaction, it comes with tax money but it's still paid for.

Mr. Karolis states that the university did not perceive students as customers earlier. After the emergence of tuition fees for non-European students, this discourse increased. Thus, money plays a significant role in defining students. He further claims that fee-paying students are one of the driving forces for the university. Moreover, Mr. Karolis believes that seeing students as customers is appropriate and even advantageous, not only for the university but also for students, as the quality of education has continuously to be improved in order to satisfy students and fulfill their demands as he further explained:

> No it's good. I guess because then we have to perform better I mean we are not a good service institution I guess and we can do a lot more to provide good service for our students so in that sense it might be good to have that customer perspective I guess. And I think that one of the purposes that the government had when they formed this will that we should have tuition fees for non-EU students is that that will drive a change for the whole university. Ok, if we need to have better service, better courses, better products for those students, we also need to have that for our Swedish students as well [...] it's a quality driving force that should improve the whole quality.

Mr. Karolis emphasizes that the government wants universities to strive for continuous improvement in their services and products. The interviewee adds that this quality driving force could make an impact on all students, which will consequently be an improvement for the whole university and its stakeholders.

Another administrator, Ms. Johansson, sees students not only as customers but also as consumers of education. She does not have any negative associations when seeing students as consumers, which could be the reason why she stated the following:

> But many customers are consumers and they should be because they should consume the things that they buy or that they get. So, of course you also consume education. I mean consuming can be very delightful and a good thing. So yes why not? For me, consumers are not a bad word.

Ms. Johansson perceives consuming as delightful and therefore does not see anything negative in defining students as consumers. This could be termed as another indicator that administrators have more of a business mentality, where consumerism is not fundamentally negative. All in all, the administrators have a stronger business mentality as they are so close to the market. They perceive HE as a market and consequently see education as a product that they sell or advertise and students as customers who purchase this product.

Lecturers deny the commercialization of education

In contrast to administrators, lecturers do not perceive themselves as acting in a business setting as they are more distanced from the HE market. Lecturers' understanding of what education is and what it should serve, made an impact towards their perceptions of not seeing HE as a market. Lecturers prefer seeing education as serving for public good and not for making profit. Prof. Jackson claimed that learning and education does not go along with business but rather with the 'traditional' public service view, which portrays learning as "[…] sort of a pursuit and an end in itself and not some kind of instrumental means for commercial ends. Prof. Jackson claims that education cannot be used for commercialization. He prefers seeing it as "an end in itself" meaning that it should be important for students not only because it will help them to achieve something else, but also because they enjoy studying and think that it is meaningful. Even though the majority of the lecturers occasionally identified some possible associations between a university and a business, no direct link was established. This can be illustrated by a quote of Prof. Anderson, who stated:

> [...] We are a business because we are selling and we are depending upon selling for our revenues which is not the case now. We are not dependent on selling for our revenues because the revenues come from our state budget to 90 %.

From Prof. Anderson's perspective, the university is not dependent on profit or revenues as universities in Sweden are state funded and dependent on the government. Prof. Anderson uses this argument to say that LU cannot be perceived as a business because the greater part of the budget comes from the state. This argument was commonly used by the majority of the lecturers.

Lecturers' role contradicts business mentality

Lecturers had a tendency to emphasize on their role in education when talking about HE as a market. They denied being 'sellers' of education. In order to illustrate that lecturers' roles have a significant impact on when and how HE can be perceived as a market, Mr. Smith's quote can be used:

> I want to go out and provide a good lecture. [...] it doesn't mean that business cannot fit into the operations of the university but we have other missions: number one, to do research, number two is to provide education and number three is called the 'third mission', which means that we have a responsibility to interact with our community and the general public. [...] But those are the things that come to mind when I see such a thing, not primarily LU as a business.

This quote shows that for Mr. Smith, it is more important to provide students with good teaching, thus he does not accommodate the business mentality in the setting of HE. He believes that business mechanisms could generally fit into universities' operations; however, there are other, more important, missions to follow in LU, for example, contributing to research community or providing eligible education. Another lecturer, Prof. Anderson, defines his role within education as one of helping, facilitating and guiding, as he explained:

> At the master's level, it's, well, in a way, I think it is also to be a facilitator, to inspire perhaps, get the students we have, of course I need to show them that here is an area where there are some interesting things, tell them about this, give them some indication, so the kind of readings, where you can point, so in that sense, to guide people into an area. [...] The students are here to learn something and in various ways, we try to help them to do so.

Prof. Anderson states that depending on the study level, the lecturer should be a facilitator or even an inspiration for their students and outline interesting things in the field. This could be nicely summarized by Mr. Smith who claimed that lecturers have to move from "the encyclopedia way of teaching" and bring new perspectives. The lecturers did not support that business mentality is necessary in education but rather focused on the need to have an interesting approach towards education. However, one exception in defining lecturers' roles could be mentioned. In Prof. Jackson's statement, the discourse of students as products can be indicated:

> My role as a lecturer is probably to promote students with critical thinking, who are able to thrive and prosper in their careers not through accumulating knowledge unreflectively but through having developed capacities for critical thinking which enables them to stand out and differentiate themselves above others that they are competing with.

Prof. Jackson identifies his role as a promoter of critical thinking, which is in line with the educational mission. However, he further emphasizes that the capabilities that are developed through accumulation of knowledge can be used as a competitive advantage in the future when they will need to compete for a job. In this way it could be assumed that he is accommodating the discourse of students as products.

Lecturers reject the discourse of students as consumers

Due to the aforementioned roles of lecturers, they do not accommodate the view of students as consumers. From the lecturers' point of view, this discourse contravenes the overall idea of education. Prof. Clark supported this argument as she said that she could hardly imagine students as consumers as this analogy turns them into non-thinkers:

> But most students want a good job and they want something challenging to do after graduating so I don't see that just being a consumer of higher education. I think looking at students as consumers that is degrading the students as non-thinking individuals.

Prof. Clark stated that students' desire to be successful in their future jobs requires them to focus on education. From her perspective, by simply 'consuming' education, students will not reach their goals. Interestingly, Prof. Clark strengthens her argument by using the word "degrading", which has the connotations of treating or regarding someone with contempt or disrespect. Thus, according to Prof. Clark, viewing students as consumers is assumed to be disrespectful. Supporting the aforementioned idea, Mr. Smith claims that education should be more of "an intellectual journey than a consumption journey" as he argued:

> No, I don't wanna see it as consumption. Consumption is, I mean consumption is the point of our whole existence or at least with our whole economical system. So,

> consumption ties into waste I mean, if you consume, that's the kind of what we do, I'm not in the 'waste business', I don't see it that way. So in that sense, I don't see us as consumers. We are maybe, we co-produce on content or value but it's an intellectual, hopefully at best, it's an intellectual stimulating experience to go to the university.

Mr. Smith perceives consumption as a 'waste', which can be associated with things eliminated or discarded as no longer useful or required after the completion of a process. Due to this connotation of consuming as wasting, he could not link students to consumers as he believes that education stimulates thinking rather than goes to waste. One exception that could be pointed out when touching upon education as a consumption is Prof. Anderson's claim that students who come to study for their own pleasure, without having an intention to, for example, work in that particular field, can be viewed as consumers:

> I mean, there are some of those that are doing it for themselves. They are not investing in the sense that they believe that studying this will increase the human capital and give them a job. But they are doing this because they think the subject is really interesting. And that will increase their well-being to know more about it [...] and I guess they are, in a way, they are at least consumers.

The way Prof. Anderson defines a consumer differentiates from the perspectives of other interviewees. Prof. Anderson believes that a consumer only sees the benefit for himself, where a pure interest in the studies is the center of attention. Thus, Prof. Anderson outlines another way of seeing students and defining their role within education; still, he does not support the business mentality at LU. All in all, the majority of lecturers did not accommodate the discourse of seeing students as consumers or education as consumption.

Students do not see the business mentality in line with education

Similarly to lecturers, students do not perceive HE as a market as they are as well more distanced from the market compared to the administrators. As a consequence, they neither see themselves as customers or consumers nor the university as a business, as one student, Tina, outlined:

> A consumer to me is essentially a passive entity that just, takes some resources into himself for self. And with education in general it rarely works exactly that way and especially here, where it's very much about you providing your own input, you providing something useable for society at large. They are not so much consumers in my opinion [...].

Tina is comparing a consumer with a 'passive entity' which contradicts the students' role of playing an active part in the educational processes. Instead of seeing LU as a business, she further acknowledges that the focus is on learning, development and caring. Next to that, Alicia even has a concern that if the emphasis was on profit, education would 'suffer', as she claimed:

> If you only think about business and making money, the education and learning will suffer I think.

This shows Alicia's concern that if the university acted like a business, it would not be in line with the overall education's mission and role. As a consequence, she sees a mismatch and even danger of a 'suffering education' when turning the concentration to the business direction. Moreover, students do not perceive themselves as operating in a market but prefer seeing themselves as equally important contributors in the education processes. For example, Alicia sees herself as a co-producer of knowledge where she exchanges her knowledge with other students:

> Especially like group assignments, I feel that it has been very good doing that last year because I know something that the others don't know, they know what I don't so it is very good exchange there I think.

Alicia sees herself contributing to education instead of just getting the education 'served'. She illustrates this by an example of group assignments, where different students' input fosters knowledge. Students generally believe that when bringing different nationalities and different understandings together, an exchange is ensured, which enriches education. As students perceive education as serving for public good, they do not accommodate the idea of HE as a market.

Students do not feel being treated as customers

Another reason why students do not perceive themselves acting in a market is due to lecturers' behavior and the way they treat students. As most lecturers do not feel being within a market themselves, they do not project the business mentality to students. Still, John pointed out that there are two groups of lecturers, those who see students as customers and those who do not:

> I think some professors see you that way and some don't […] So, I guess it balanced itself out. […] we had a course, the first study period and 60 people took the exam, 31 failed. So, and the teacher said, well, he wasn't apologetic, he said, well, I am disappointed. You guys did not study enough. I thought I was quite clear and then

> he gave the second exam, the retake and it was just as difficult, people were crying. So, people were calling their parents, you know, people were just emotionally drained, physically drained, mentally drained. Those kind of professors don't see us as customers. But then I have had two other professors I can think of right now, that when they were handing out the exam, they almost, it's like, hey I'm sorry, it's the exam, if you have any questions, please email me, don't worry, don't worry it's gonna take you maximum three days working, that's it. You don't have to work more on it. So, they are really trying to keep you happy, like you are the customer.

John illustrated two cases where in one a lecturer was acting as a superior who accused the students for not being prepared for the exam, which resulted in low grades; and the other case where a lecturer acted as a customer service provider who took care that his ‘customers’, who were students, were as satisfied as possible. This could show that there are discrepancies on how lecturers treat their students. However, the majority of the students admit that lecturers are more facilitators and friends, particularly at LU. Thus, in the next section we proceed by focusing exhaustively on the setting of LU.

4.2 The setting as marketization rejection

The second core theme that emerged in our study was that the particular context where we conducted this research, namely LU, was the reason why most of the stakeholders did not perceive it as acting in a market. Lecturers and students of LUSEM withhold seeing HE as a market whereas administrators admitted that a HE market exist, yet they do not believe that LU cannot be viewed as a business as it does not intentionally act in the educational market. The findings are illustrated in the table C (where “x” stands for approval and “-” for rejection) and will be further elaborated on in the following section.

The setting as marketization rejection			
	See LU as a business	**See LU’s students as customers**	**See education in LU as a product**
Administrators	-	-	-
Lecturers	-	-	-
Students	x (Exception)	-	-

Table C: The setting as marketization rejection

Administrators do not perceive LU as operating in the existing HE market

As administrators are working close to the market, they admit that the educational market exists but they believe that LU is not a business that intentionally acts in the educational market. This can be illustrated by Ms. Roseman, who had difficulties seeing LU as a business:

> I have a hard time seeing it as a business. I think, well some parts of the university are run as a business [...] the fund raising part [...] or finances or stuff like that I mean different administrative things that are more, like it would be in any company I think [...] but since we are governed by the state and politicians, it's hard to be all business.

Ms. Roseman stated that it is hard for her to make a link between LU and a business because she strongly identifies with the fact that the university is state-governed. Still, she sees some parts of LU operating as a business, for example, in regards to various administrative affairs. The majority of administrators shared this idea and had difficulties in seeing LU functioning in a market, even though they admitted that it exists.

On the contrary, Mr. Karolis' arguments could be termed as exceptional since he believes that LU is actually turning into a business, which brings pain for this public institution but is nevertheless, necessary and unstoppable. He explained:

> We are closing in to the business sector and we are increasingly using that kind of language and theories, management theories and so on. And we are not only public. So I guess we are little bit both but we are going to that direction. And that is painful for this old public institution because you didn't need to think of that before. Money wasn't that an issue.

According to Mr. Karolis, LU is slowly shifting from being a purely public institution to an organization which already uses business language and applies some business mechanisms. He identifies this change as "painful" for LU, which could be an expression of a concern that the university will have to consider using more and more marketing activities in order to be more effective. In accordance to Mr. Karolis, the possible changes or forces will require an ever changing attitude from the university, which will in the end make the university stay competitive on a global market. In order to achieve this, he believes that everyone needs to contribute and work closely together, which will require a close co-operation from all university's stakeholders even though, for now, they might not be in favor with it, which is apparent in the next paragraphs.

Lecturers do not perceive LU as a business

Lecturers do not perceive HE as a market due to the fact that they do not see LU acting like a business. This could be illustrated by Prof. Anderson's idea:

> If Lund University is a business, it is a really bad business. So, we are not very business-like and I don't think we think much in terms of this as a business [...].

Prof. Anderson claims that the discourse of LU as a business does not reflect the situation. From his point of view, LU is “a really bad business”, which could possibly mean that the university does not bring profit, which is often the indicator of success for businesses. The interviewee further admits that there is no business mentality at LU, which could be due to his aforementioned argument that LU is state-funded. Not only Prof. Anderson but also Mr. Smith faces problems seeing LU as a business. He pointed out:

> Not primarily I don't see that. I don't agree with it. I think it's too, too bold to put it in a statement like that. Because we have, although you can, that doesn't mean that business cannot fit into what the operations of the university but we have other missions as well, that I don't think necessarily is driven, I mean, not driven by, but we have other missions that are other than business.

Mr. Smith emphasized that educational missions are the priority when thinking about LU. Even though he admitted that a business mentality could fit into the university’s operations, the focus should still be on academic missions.

Students perceive LU as a helping institution

This particular study context actively influences not only the lecturers but also students in their perceptions towards HE as a market. Even though some students could support the analogy of universities as businesses, they could not say the same about LU. One student, Eva, accommodates the discourse of universities as businesses due to her cultural background but she could not identify LU as a business. Eva stated:

> Because for me, this university helps students so much which is very different from where I studied [...]. [At my former university] you have to pay for everything. Like if you go ask for transcript or whichever kind of service that you are entitled for, you have to pay. Here, it has been a totally different story. I go ask for whatever I need and they do it right away. There you have to do, ask for 10 days in advance for what you need. So I don’t see the university as a business. But more like a helping institution for students.

For Eva, seeing LU as a business is contradictory, thus she prefers seeing it as “a helping institution” instead. This could possibly mean that a close interaction between various stakeholders makes the university an informal and friendly environment for students. Due to this behavior, students consequently do not see LU acting in a market. Another student, Tina, supports Eva's argument, as she defined LU's role as one of helping students:

> [...] here it's more about giving the students a broader perspective, giving them a critical perspective, giving them just more actionism out of themselves, not so much just consuming education.

Tina explains that LU encourages students to get a broader and more critical approach towards knowledge. She further says that students at LU are more stimulated to be active in their self-development rather than to be mainly concerned about receiving the diploma.

Furthermore, students did not feel as being perceived as customers of the service by lecturers or administrators at LU. For example, John defines a customer as someone who is always right and has certain entitlements. However, he could not find these criteria being fulfilled in LU, thus he does not feel as being a customer, as he stated:

> If students were customers, it would be that, everybody who applied could come to the university and also, as students here, we are on terms of the university. We have to play by the rules [...] we don't choose our grades here, what time of the day we wanna have class. It's not up to us. When you are the customer, the customer is always right [...] I don't see myself as a student, as a customer. I don't see it that way.

As stated, John does not see himself as a customer, which is due to the way LU is handling students. By disregarding the idea that 'the customer is always right', LU avoids being perceived as a business, correspondingly, students do not see LU acting in a market. However, students further add that they realize that it is not possible to satisfy everyone's needs, which are sometimes inadequate, also because LU has to stick to set rules and regulations.

Exception: Students' focus on acquiring a degree from LU

Even though the context of LU was distinguished as one that rejects marketization, we have identified an exception where LU could actually be seen as a part of the educational market. Even though students strongly defended their position of being active in their self-development, the majority unconsciously emphasized the desire to acquire a degree from this particular university. In this way students become as products that the university provides for the labor market.

The interviews with the students showed that they focus not only on eligible education that LU provides but also on the fact that LU is highly ranked and well perceived by employers. When asked about the initial thoughts when choosing LU, one student, Eva, explained:

> I think it is a good investment because I need a degree. That's what I need. And either way I'm paying really low amount of money compared to what I was going to pay […] I was going to pay that money and here I'm paying a little part of that and still I'm getting a good education and from a good university.[…] The quality I think or the name of the university [is important for me].

Eva believes that education from a university with a strong image makes a difference, as the reputation and brand strengthens the diploma for her future career. Interestingly, even though she initially mentioned quality as the core differentiator of LU, she, by surprise, changed it to "the name of the university". She further elaborated that the education from LU will help her to be more appealing for future employers. Additionally, one administrator recognized that students are increasingly focusing on the name of the university rather than on more important aspects such as programs or course content. This could be illustrated by Ms. Fielers' opinion on how students think:

> I'd rather have my education from here and I'd rather have my diploma from here, although I have studied all my courses somewhere else. If I take one course here, then they get their education from here.

The issue that Ms. Fielers emphasizes in this example is that many students come from other Swedish universities to LU just to do one course in order to get a diploma from LU. This means that students believe that LU has such a good reputation that it makes a difference for them to do at least one course in LU. Ms. Fielers further suggested that students should focus more on their development rather than be concerned about the image of a university.

4.3 Payment as a marketization trigger

The third main category that our study revealed was that payment (for example, paying tuition fees or paying taxes) triggers marketization and consequently determines how a person perceives the marketization of HE. We have indicated a segregation between the perceptions of fee-paying and non-paying students, where fee-paying students outline their higher expectation. Lecturers and administrators recognize the segregation; however, they have not made any response towards this issue. The findings are illustrated in the table D (where "x" stands for approval and "-" for rejection) and will be further elaborated on in the following section.

Payment as a marketization trigger			
	Recognize the segregation between paying and non-paying students	**Treat fee-paying and non-paying students differently (* Feel being treated differently)**	**See the need of treating fee-paying and non-paying students differently (*See the need of being treated differently)**
Administrators	x	-	-
Lecturers	x	-	x (Exception)
Students*	x	-	x (Exception)

Table D: Payment as a marketization trigger

Segregation between paying and non-paying students

We have identified that there are different perceptions towards HE as a market, which depend on whether a student pays for education or not. Throughout all of our four interviews, we recognized a direct link between the market discourse and money. Eva's quote is the best example in order to confirm this correlation:

> It's different because now we have to pay you know. I always fight with everybody here within my group, because I'm always saying: yeah, I'm the one who is paying and you are all getting it for free [...] if let's say today we go to the office of a teacher and the person is never there. And they say I have working hours from 8 to 2h and if he's not there so what, we are not getting what we are paying for.

From Eva's point of view, as tuition fees were introduced, students were unintentionally divided into paying and non-paying. Since Eva is paying for her studies, she 'fights' with everyone in order to convince everyone that fee-paying students deserve a proper service for their money. Eva's arguments are supported by a non-paying student, Tina, who as well assumes that paying students might have different perceptions, as she explained:

> I know that a lot of other students, that are in my course, that are actually paying, they see it as a business selling them something. [...] to me personally it wouldn't be a business as I am not paying for my education.

Tina recognized that her fee-paying classmates have accommodated the business discourse. However, as she does not pay for her studies, she does not see LU that way herself. One exception that should be mentioned is Alicia. Similarly as Tina, she is not directly paying for her studies; however, she still sees herself and her Swedish classmates as customers. This is because she relates being a customer with money. In this case her parents pay taxes, so she is entitled to get free education as a Swedish citizen. Alicia explained:

> I'm a customer because maybe I'm not paying directly but my parents and everyone else is paying and it's, I am a customer to this school […] I don't know if I could say that I feel like a customer […]I don't think about it.

Alicia stated that she sees herself as a customer because her parents are charged with taxes, which means that they are indirectly paying for her education. She further pointed out that she does not think about being a customer. This could be due to the fact that she does not feel like treated as one at LU.

Higher expectations of fee-paying students

Furthermore, Eva points out that most of the students who are not paying tuition fees, care less and have less demands than the ones who are paying tuition fees. Due to the fact that education is not free for her, Eva feels she deserves more assistance, as she claimed:

> I think if you are paying for something, you need to get what you are paying for, well the kind of standard what you need to receive. But the others that don't pay, they like, yeah I don't care.

From Eva's perspective, students who pay tuition fees deserve a certain level of service. She further claimed that fee-paying students care more about the quality of the service than the non-paying students. Additionally, the interviews showed that not only the demands increase but also the expectations become higher when one pays for studying. This can be illustrated by Alicia's statement:

> Because students that I study with here now, some of them are paying fees for the education, and I think they have more expectations about this. More than I have […] they are complaining on some things where I am like its ok. I have more laid back role to that. They are very aimed to have their high quality.

Alicia believes that fee-paying students might have increased expectations towards their studies as they are directly paying for their education. She further outlines her appreciation of fee-paying students' concerns, as she takes advantage of that herself. This again, supports the aforementioned idea of Tina that non-paying students care less about the quality of education.

Even though higher demands and expectations of fee-paying students were emphasized, non-paying students said that everyone should be treated the same. Interestingly, one exception could be mentioned when Tina claimed that fee-paying students should get additional service; however, she does not believe they ever will, as she explained:

> I guess, ideally, looking at it from a market perspective, those that are paying should be those that have more influence or that have more opportunity to get what they've paid for [...] factually I don't think it's that way. Everyone is treated very much the same [...].

Tina stated that from a more economic perspective, it would be reasonable to treat fee-paying students differently. However, she further emphasized that, so far, every student at LU is still treated in the same way.

No reaction from lecturers to the segregation of students

Even though lecturers have already identified the segregation, they do not act differently towards the paying and non-paying students, and see none of them as customers. For example, Prof. Anderson pointed out that seeing students as customers is overstated:

> But, no, I mean, all of these things are exaggerations. I think there might be some of this going on out there. But it's nothing that is big in my world. I don't view my paying students as customers. I see them as investors too. They are here to learn something that they will hopefully find helpful in the end.

In his statement, Prof. Anderson explained that he does not differentiate between students because he sees them as individuals, investing different resources, such as money or time in order to accumulate knowledge. Even though the interviewees did not accept that students are customers, the analogy imposed an assumption that the expectations and demands of fee-paying students might be higher, which could lead to dissatisfaction or student disengagement. This can be illustrated by Prof. Clark's assumptions:

> Students, when considered as customers who have paid, will probably have more demands in regard to grades that they receive and so on. They don't see that there needs to be some kind of foundation for the grades that they receive, they just want high grades just because they have paid. That's a problem we discussed, if that's a real problem, I don't know.

Prof. Clark stated that students who pay could have higher demands and expectations, which could reduce the requirements of the studies. However, she believes that this is "more talk than reality". Furthermore, when asked if paying and non-paying students should be treated differently, it was commonly noted that there should not be a separation between them, as everyone should get the same service. Interestingly, Prof. Anderson is an exception, as he does not have the same opinion as the majority of the interviewed lecturers. He claimed that students, who pay, are entitled to get more service than the ones who do not pay:

> Yes, it's a tricky question what to do about it. [...] there might be requests that we come here and we pay 110.000 SEK and I would like some more supervision, for example, which I think is reasonable because the other people, they don't pay for it.

Prof. Andersons believes that it is reasonable to make a distinction between paying and non-paying students. However, afterwards, he questioned its feasibility and practicability. The majority of the interviewees said that even though they take students' opinion into consideration, they do not necessarily act upon all demands as this would lead to a problem of representativeness.

Administrators are against segregating paying and non-paying students

Administrators do not support the idea of differentiating between paying and non-paying students. The following statement, made by Ms. Johansson, reflects the overall interviewees' opinion:

> I think it's wrong if you treat them [students] differently just because they pay and they don't pay. I don't know what the students think themselves. If you are a paying master student maybe you think that, I want this and this and this because I pay a lot of money and the rest, they maybe have another opinion about that. I don't know but we, who offer the education, should treat everybody very good so it doesn't matter if you pay or not.

Ms. Johansson claimed that it is inappropriate to make a distinction between paying and non-paying students. She does not see the relevance of this segregation, as she argues that everyone is entitled to receive 'good' education. However, it is apparent that she was not aware of students' perceptions towards the issue as she indicated: "I don't know what the students think themselves". Interestingly, another administrator, Ms. Fielers, in fact indicated that a conflict could arise between the paying and non-paying students, due to their diverse expectations and demands. Ms. Fielers claimed:

> The problem could be, if we think that the paying students need to have extra service compared to the ones who don't pay. Cause then, those who don't pay, I would be upset, if I were one of them because they pay in another way which isn't that visible. They take student loans to finance, to pay their rent, food and things. I'm in debt for my studies, quite a lot of debt which I pay every year, but I haven't paid for my education in that way. So, it's same, same but different. They have to pay for their seat here and for the teachers and things, which is very visible.

Ms. Fielers argued that if the university implemented additional services for fee-paying students, the ones who are not paying would become upset and abandoned. From Ms. Fielers point of view, every student pays for the education even though some of them do not contribute directly through tuition fees. Thus, she concluded that everyone deserves the same level of service. The administrators agreed that all students, whether paying or not, should get the same education and service, which means no distinction, based on tuition fees, should be made.

5. Discussion

We reviewed the existing literature and conducted our study by interviewing different stakeholders, namely students, lectures and administrators from Lund University, School of Economics and Management (LUSEM) in order to examine how they perceive HE as a market. In this chapter we will discuss possible answers to our research question: How do stakeholders of LUSEM perceive higher education as a market? We will indicate three major findings we discovered and point out what our original contribution accomplishes in a wider academic community.

5.1 Role dependency

In our study we discovered that the closer the role of the stakeholder group is to the market, the more they perceive higher education (HE) as a market. As a result, we discovered that administrators from LUSEM accommodated various market discourses such as university as a business or students as customers. We believe that they cannot avoid these market discourses because they are so close to the process of 'selling' education. They need a broader- macro perspective on the educational market in order to be aware of its potential risks and keep the university competitive. By abandoning this perspective, they might lose funding or will not be able to attract new lecturers or students to the university anymore. Additionally, from the branding point of view, not monitoring the market threatens the overall reputation of the university. Thus, scholars could use this finding as a starting point in studying the impact of core stakeholders' perceptions towards the reputation of HE institutions. Yet, by stimulating the market discourses in educational setting, a thin line between improving the performance, on the one side, and devaluating the values of a public institution, on the other, side is drawn.

On the contrary, lecturers denied these discourses and defined their roles as less market dependent in comparison to administrators. Lecturers argued that HE as a market is an exaggeration, which contradicts their role in and understanding of education. One possible explanation of lecturers' denial of seeing HE as a market could be that they do not identify themselves as 'sellers' or 'providers' of the service but rather as facilitators who help and guide students in the process of self-development. The identification with the role of a 'seller' could be a future field of study. Students and lecturers act in a highly socialized context where people interaction is present. However, as lecturers do not accommodate business mentality in the HE setting, they do not project this on students. This, in turn, affects students' perceptions as they do not feel being treated as customers. These detected perceptions of lecturers, in fact, replicated the existing assumption outlined by Alvesson (2013) that education is often perceived as being fundamentally good. Lecturers believe that education cannot be commercialized as it should not be designed for making profit. Thus, we claim that educational fundamentalism is strongly ingrained in the minds of lecturers who, in turn, project that on to students. This finding could be used for further studies to identify how educational fundamentalism makes an impact on perceptions towards the marketization of HE.

Similarly to lecturers, students claimed that market discourses cannot be applied in the context of a university as they are not in line with the core mission of education. This statement depicts the concern outlined by Walker et al. (2011) who questioned whether the overall mission and fundamental role of HE is still being fulfilled after adapting the market discourses. In our study, one interviewed student indicated a concern that education might "suffer" if turning into business. This assumption could be due to her belief that worthy education could be replaced when following traditional business activities. Another possible explanation of the 'suffering education' is that the market discourses in HE might reinforce a market tendency where resources are used to improve a university's attractiveness instead of the quality (Molesworth et al., 2011). Consequently, this affects the university as it would not only lose students but also researchers or funding if the focus of quality is omitted. Even though this is only an 'imaginary scenario' and not the case at LU now, we would advise that practitioners give their attention to the aforementioned perception by maintaining sufficient quality of education.

Administrators', students' and lecturers' roles in education are completely different as well as they have different perceptions towards marketization. Still, it is of great importance to indicate them as they constitute the organizational culture of an institution. This is essential as the organizational culture of the institution might suffer due to the confrontation of persistent behavior which, in turn, prevents the institution from higher performance. We recommend that future researchers consider how the market discourses might have an impact on the future of universities as various factors of the increasing marketization of HE are already observable in Sweden. Thus, it might be reasonable to get all stakeholders' acceptance towards the usage of market efforts in HE.

5.2 The setting as marketization rejection

The second core finding that emerged in our study was that the particular context where we conducted this research, namely Lund University, was a reason why most of the stakeholders do not see HE as a market.

Our study supports the assumption outlined by Brown (2011a) that Sweden is a strong proponent for a non-market system in public organizations. The majority of respondents from all stakeholders negated that LU is acting in a market. In fact, most of them never thought about that until we asked them to do so. One Swedish student, for example, claimed that she had never thought of the discourse of students as customers due to the fact that in Sweden everyone is entitled to get education for free. However, one administrator who operates close to the market and has knowledge about the issue indicated that LU is slowly transforming from being a purely public institution to obtaining some private business characteristics. The idea of this interviewee has already been indicated by Bauman (2000) who emphasized on the transformative nature of the educational market. These changes can lead to significant problems as the processes of transformation can easily fail. In order to avoid this, a change program needs a sophisticated planning, implementation, institutionalization and control. Even though Sweden is still a 'marketizing system' which has already applied some market mechanisms but is not yet 'marketized', the practitioners have to be aware that there might be significant changes coming in the sector; which is why the educational market needs to be monitored.

Furthermore, in this study we have noted one exception where LU could be, in fact, seen as a business operating in the market. We have recognized an increased students' focus on getting the diploma from LU in our study. This means that students see themselves as products in terms of their future employment. The good reputation of LU in Sweden is assumed to ensure better possibilities in future employment. This replicates Alvesson's (2013) idea that having a diploma from a 'certain' institution is what matters nowadays, thus a discourse of student as a product emerges. The discourse of students as products could be a field of study for future researches as it is intriguing how students as well as employers perceive this discourse. Moreover, another possible explanation is that HE becomes a product to be consumed instead of an opportunity to be experienced. This idea reflects Fromm's (1976) discussion on 'Having vs. Being' where a concern of students turning into passive learners instead of co-producers of knowledge is expressed. Although students are concerned about having a degree, which was stated by all interviewees, students still care more about their self-development. Even though students see the relevance of experiencing education, this could still mean that market discourses could influence students' way of thinking about it. From an educational point of view, it is important to consider how students' perceptions might change when more market mechanisms will be present.

5.3 Payment as a marketization trigger

The third main finding that our study revealed was that payment triggers marketization and consequently influences how a person perceives marketization of HE. We noted a segregation between the perceptions of fee-paying and non-paying students. This could symbolize a broader generational change, where the mentality of students is strongly affected by the importance of brands and consumption.

Furthermore, we identified that a fee-paying student had higher expectations and demands in comparison to non-paying students. This replicates the assumption outlined by Clayson and Haley (2005) that fee-paying students shift into being more demanding and more assertive, thus becoming more customers-like. This finding was not only indicated by the fee-paying student but also supported by non-paying students who interact with them during the lectures. This shift could be challenging for practitioners as this could increase dissatisfaction of fee-paying students if they realize that the university does not fulfill a certain level of expectations. Another possible threat is that students will most likely find a new institution if their needs will not be fulfilled. Students have an enormous impact on the institution; however, their demands and expectations should be handled with caution. As students are of great importance for the university, there could be a shift in authority or power to the them. In order to satisfy students, the university will have to increasingly follow the demands and expectations and might lose sight of more important aspects such as quality of the courses. We recommend that further researchers exhaustively focus on investigating the mentality of students who pay for their studies in comparison to those who do not in order to be better equipped when handling different expectations.

Interestingly, even though fee-paying students have higher demands and expectations, Clayson and Haley's (2005) assumption that fee-paying students might expect better grades, regardless of the invested effort, was not replicated in our study. One fee-paying student could not see any correlation between paying tuition fees and receiving a better grade. She indicated that she would blame herself for her personal failure. Certainly, differences in defining paying and non-paying students could contribute to the difference between the findings in our study and that of Clayson and Haley (2005). From a university's point of view, it is necessary to be aware of a possible shift in students' perceptions as they might believe that they deserve a good grade as an exchange for money they contribute to the education.

On the contrary to students, lecturers and administrators recognized the segregation; however, they have not made any response towards this issue. They believe it is inappropriate to make a distinction between paying and non-paying students as everyone is entitled to receive eligible education. If the university selected only fee-paying students due to business purposes, an ethical dilemma could emerge. The university's focus on profit would end up prioritizing the fee-paying over non-paying students. This, in turn, could lead not only to a conflict between two groups of students but also to a dispute with the public as everyone should be entitled to receive eligible education. Even though it is not the case now, we noted that lecturers and administrators were not aware of students' perceptions towards this issue, which makes our study an eye-opener that students.

6. Conclusion

In this section, we summarize our overall research process as well as core findings and discuss the scholarly as well as practical contribution of our research. Thereafter, we reflect on the limitations of our research and suggestions for how future studies can build upon our research by addressing the limitations.

6.1 What we studied

As recalled, we started this project with the aim to contribute to the lack of contextually sensitive view on the marketization of higher education (HE) as the discussions around the phenomenon had a tendency to frame it in one similar context, for example in a context where all students pay tuition fees. We addressed this issue by focusing on the Swedish HE context where both, tuition fee-paying and non-paying students operate. By taking a more contextually sensitive view on the marketization, we referred to the following research question:

How do stakeholders of LUSEM such as students, lecturers and administrators perceive HE as a market?

We conducted our study at Lund University, School of Business and Economics (LUSEM) in Sweden where tuition fees for students outside the EU/EEA area and Switzerland have recently been introduced; however, the majority of students is still not paying for their studies. Furthermore, the participants of the study were students, lecturers and administrators as they all play a significant role into the dynamic of whether HE could be perceived as a market or not.

6.2 Why we studied this

On a macro level, the purpose of our study was to investigate how the core stakeholders of a university perceive HE as a market by seeing how they react to the metaphors of market discourses such as university as a business, education as a commodity and students as customers. On a micro level, we tried to identify the similarities and differences between LUSEM's stakeholders' (namely, students, lecturers and administrators) perceptions on different discourses. In terms of the study purpose, we have been motivated by both practical and societal challenges.

As far as the practical problems are concerned, they were organized around the two following challenges. Firstly, Stephens (2009) claimed that HE is seen as a catalyst for national economic success, thus governments become highly motivated to commercialize the educational sector. Secondly, as tuition fees were recently introduced in Sweden for students outside the EU/EEA area and Switzerland (Vaskovich, 2012), it was assumed that HE has become more open to forces for commodification and commercialization (Naidoo et al., 2011).

Building on the practical challenges, we organized societal challenges around three consequences of marketization. Firstly, the market discourses were identified as challenging the long-term autonomy and health of HE by fostering commercialization (Brown, 2011a). Two camps appeared, where one was for and the other- against marketization in HE. Secondly, the debate was outlined whether the values and promises of public institutions are being fulfilled after adapting the market discourses (Walker et al., 2011). Thirdly, a concern was indicated in terms of the effect of the market discourses on the pedagogical relationship as students become perceived as customers, teachers as sellers and education as a commodity (Barnett, 2011).

Reflecting upon these rationales, we noted that the knowledge of marketization of HE is already too generalized, thus the aim of our study was to contribute with a more contextually sensitive view on marketization of HE.

6.3 How we studied this

As the research question of our study was "How do stakeholders of LUSEM such as students, lecturers and administrators perceive HE as a market?", we focused on the social constructionist approach, which is as well often referred to as an interpretative method. By setting interpretation at the forefront of our overall research work, our intention was not to find truth or facts but rather to reflect on individuals' perceptions of the phenomenon.

We adopted qualitative research techniques, such as semi-structured interviews, to collect the empirical data. In total we collected 12 interviews, four with students, four with lecturers and four with administrators from LUSEM. As a starting point for the interviews, we used three different sheets of paper with different metaphors written on them: Lund University as a business, education as a commodity and students as customers. Without giving the interviewees any particular question, we asked them to outline their initial thoughts towards these metaphors. We further navigated the interview depending on the points that were touched upon by the interviewee.

Furthermore, we employed hermeneutical reading for codifying our empirical data as we needed to gather individuals' perceptions which could not be revealed in a quick coding process (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2010). We started the analysis process by taking interviews one-by-one and analyzing them individually. After each interview was analyzed separately, we compared them in relation to other interviews from the same stakeholder group, namely students, lecturers or administrators. The same process was correspondingly used for all groups. By following this process, we gathered three main themes which are identified in the next section.

6.4 What we found out

Our analysis chapter is organized around the three following findings:

1. The closer the stakeholder group is to the market, the more they perceive HE as a market.

Our study shows that the closer the stakeholder group is to the market, the more they perceive higher education (HE) as a market. This means that administrators from LUSEM accommodated the discourses of university as a business or students as customers. On the other hand, lecturers define their roles less market dependent in comparison to administrators. Lecturers argued that HE as a market is an exaggeration, which contradicts their roles in and understanding of education. Similarly to lecturers, students claimed that market discourses cannot be applied in the context of a university as they are not in line with the core mission of education. Moreover, as lecturers do not accommodate the business mentality in the HE setting, they do not project this on students. This, in turn, affects students' perceptions as they do not feel being treated as customers.

2. LUSEM's stakeholders did not support viewing LU acting in the educational market, thus context matters.

The second core finding that emerged in our study is that the particular context where we conducted this research, namely Lund University, is a reason why most of the stakeholders do not see HE as a market. Lecturers and students of LUSEM withhold seeing HE as a market whereas administrators admitted that the HE market exists but they believe that LU is not a business that intentionally acts in the educational market. We have noted one exception where LU could be seen as a business operating in the market. This is in terms of the students' focus on acquiring a degree particularly from LU.

<u>3. Payment is a key indicator of whether a university is a business or not simultaneously if HE can be seen as a market or not.</u>

The third main category that our study revealed was that the contribution with money triggers marketization and consequently determines how a person perceives marketization of HE. We have determined a segregation between the perceptions of fee-paying and non-paying students, where fee-paying students outline their higher expectations. Lecturers and administrators recognized the segregation; however, they have not made any response towards this issue.

6.5 Scholarly contributions

The discussions around marketization of HE tend to be framed in one context, which is always similar (for example, a context where students pay tuition fees), thus the literature mainly stemmed in the context of the UK and the US. We contributed to the scholarship by taking a more contextually sensitive view towards marketization of HE. In the following paragraphs we will indicate the scholarly contributions of our study.

We found out that certain contextual factors determine the marketization of HE. For example, the pay was identified as one of contextual factors. Our study shows that if students pay for their education- either directly or through taxes, they see themselves more as customers. Correspondingly, if they do not pay, they do not see themselves as such. Then, they are more inclined to term education as an investment related to self-development rather than as a commercial transaction. Our study illustrates that scholars and the larger public should not be overly convinced that Sweden has not been impacted by marketization. There are a lot of fractions and fluidity in different contexts, thus further research on the marketization of HE should take the contextualized view into account.

We benefited by this particular context as we recognized that not all stakeholders experience the marketization in the same manner. Other scholars could advantage from the contextual view by studying certain contextual factors, for example, how students on scholarships perceive marketization of HE? As this contextual view shows, the perceptions towards marketization strongly depend on various contextual aspects, thus future scholars could as well aim at identifying other contexts that mitigate or, on the contrary, aggravate the marketization of HE.

6.6 Practical recommendations

Building on the scholarly contributions, we will outline practical implications of our study. In our early rationales, we acknowledged that governments became highly motivated to expand the educational sector as it is a catalyst for national economic success (Stephens, 2009). In our study we found out that students and lecturers of LU did not agree that the university can be seen as a business due to the socialized context of Swedish HE. They did not perceive themselves as respectively customers or sellers, however, some exceptions appeared where teachers were trying to satisfy students by giving them better grades. On the contrary, administrators, in fact, accommodate the discourse of HE as a market as they are directly working within the market. This discrepancy should be taken into account because the mismatch between core stakeholders might lead to an arising differentiation in terms of, for example, the handling of paying and non-paying students.

Building on this idea, it was assumed that the emergence of tuition fees could impose a discourse of seeing education as a product and process particularly for its 'exchange' rather than for its intrinsic 'use' value (Naidoo et al., 2011). In our study we have recognized that students who pay for their studies emphasized that having the actual diploma is relevant; however, self-development is still of high importance as well. As there are now two groups of students in LU, paying and non-paying, we recommend that the university considers their different expectations and demands. Students who paid for their studies have higher expectations towards education, thus they act similarly to customers. However, the ethical part of this segregation should be considered, which could be a field for further studies.

6.7 Limitations and future research

In the following section we will outline the limitations of our research and suggestions for how future researchers can build upon our study by addressing the limitations.

During our research, we tried to be as impartial as possible by outlining our biases and pre-assumptions in the methodology chapter; however, due to the fact that the scene was so familiar to us (as we were both students in Lund University ourselves), it might have made an impact on the objectivity of the findings, especially concerning students' perceptions.

Context and duration could be seen as another limitation. Due to time constraints, we could only interview a certain population, namely stakeholders from LUSEM. Future studies might consider broadening the population and conducting an interdisciplinary research between various faculties of Lund University. We assume that stakeholders working in other faculties might have different perspectives on the market discourses.

As far as the overall scope of the research is concerned, we recommend that future scholars take a closer look at one stakeholder group exhaustively rather than focusing on three different ones in order to gain better insights on a particular group. For example, future scholars could focus only on students and conduct an analysis of differences between paying and non-paying students, which could be intriguing as the fees have recently been introduced in Sweden.

Lastly, our background literature could be seen as another limitation as it concerned mainly HE in the UK and the US contexts, thus fee-paying countries. We are aware that the literature might not reflect the Swedish situation accurately; however, we believe it has built a solid foundation for our study.

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