Section 4: Class and policy

Possibilities for mobility

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bristol.ac.uk/pairedpeers
1. The National Framework

- New fees regime
- Marketization
- Privatization
- Funding cuts
Most students deplored the high fees
Saw it as necessary to have a degree whatever the cost
Did not feel they were getting value for money (classes too large, lack of personal contact, lectures cancelled, research put before teaching etc)
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If I was paying £27,000 I would expect it to be a more personal experience. I wouldn’t pay £27,000 for mass teaching out of a textbook, turning up to labs every day (Male engineering student).
Class and fees

- W/c more likely to say they might not have come
- Believed it would put off their schoolmates
- Would have chosen more vocational subjects
2. The university policy framework

- Cuts in staff
- Obsession with plant and ‘customer’ service
- Regimes of performance management which focus on REF, research
- Policies DO NOT give students what they want
## Priorities for spending

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>UoB (%) (n=34)</th>
<th>UWE (%) (n=19)</th>
<th>WC(%) (n=26)</th>
<th>MC (%) (n=27)</th>
<th>TOTAL (%) (n=53)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More teaching staff</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>38</td>
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<tr>
<td>Books and library</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>38</td>
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<tr>
<td>Computer provision</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Better labs and classrooms</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student unions &amp; leisure facilities</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
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</tbody>
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What students want

- More personal contact
- Better guidance
- Recruitment fairs that do not just focus on finance, engineering, law (interest in voluntary sector)
- Help in finding jobs (e.g., university sponsored placements)
- Cheaper accommodation options
  - More teaching staff. They’re the people that make your experience worthwhile. ..I mean if you sit at a grubby desk and do work it’s the same thing as a nice posh expensive desk, it doesn’t actually make us work any harder which is what we’re here to do (Anna, working-class, UoB)
3. Do universities promote social mobility?

- Initial hypothesis:
  - w/c students would feel more comfortable at UWE
  - But w/c students at UoB would have better outcomes
  - *I do aspire to live a higher class life than my parents did, I just see it as a natural progression, and I think Bristol has been a huge stepping stone in achieving that. It is a really good opportunity for social mobility from the cultural experiences you can gain.* (Marcus, w/c UoB)
Some w/c students do make it upwards. But the lack of capitals may limit some confining them to lower-status or non-graduate occupations. Could upward mobility be declining, in comparison to post-war decades? Does individual mobility change anything in an increasingly unequal society? Heightened aspirations and awareness of importance of HE.
The non-economic benefits of university

- Greater social awareness, including understanding of class dis/advantages
- Broadened horizons
- Desire to give something back (e.g., teaching disadvantaged children, working for development agencies and charities, ecological concerns)

- Education for a better future?