Customers or learners? The impact of changes in the UK higher education sector on employee emotion management

Rachel Morgan*

Brunel University*

Abstract: Using an exploratory qualitative study based on semi-structured interviews with 12 academics and administrators, this paper explores the role of emotions in the context of academia. Results demonstrate that both academics and administrators are aware of displaying emotions and see emotional labour as a part of their job roles. Academics exhibit increased negative emotions due to associating recent changes in higher education (HE), for example increased bureaucracy, with lack of trust in their professional judgement. In addition, they also experience increased fragmentation and isolation in colleague relationships that result in, documented in previous studies, negative effects associated with emotional labour such as burnout. On the other hand, administrators welcome increased bureaucratic procedures, as it reduces their exposure to negative emotions associated with students' complaints and partially removes responsibility from an individual person for the outcome of interactions. For them it often results in improved colleague relations. Thus, the article proposes that personal commitment to work increases negative effects associated with emotional labour by exploring emotions exhibited by academics and administrators in a higher education setting. Furthermore, findings suggest that implementation of emotion management training, as well as procedures to improve employee relations are required to reduce negative effects of emotional labour such as burnout exhibited by employees within the sector.

Keywords*: emotional labour, emotions, UK, higher education, commitment.*

Introduction

Changes prevalent in higher education (HE) within the UK during the last 60 years, including mass numbers of students and an increase in tuition fees, have resulted in the idea of students becoming customers (Seidler, 2012). Therefore, growing similarities are seen between the service sector and higher education. The limited exploration of emotional labour in higher education focused on the notion of students becoming customers has resulted in increasing demands on academics for emotional labour (Siedler, 2012; Constanti and Gibbs, 2004; Ogbonna and Harris, 2004).

In response to previous scholars calling for further study of emotional labour in higher education (Ogbonna and Harris, 2004; Constanti and Gibbs, 2004; Koster, 2011), there is well documented anger felt by academics due to a lack of acknowledgement and support received regarding emotional labour exertion (Aragon, 2012). This paper draws on the uses and effects of emotional labour in order to explore emotional labour exhibited in HE. Brunel University provides an appropriate context for the research due to institutional changes

occurring within the last 10 years, including abandonment of the personal tutoring system, as well as the prestige associated with the organisation.

Using an interpretive – constructivist philosophy, this paper aims to explore emotions and emotional labour in the context of academia. Furthermore, it aims to explore challenges associated with emotional labour as a result of changes within higher education. Additionally, the paper investigates and provides recommendations regarding how academics and administrators can be better equipped to deal with emotions associated with the job. Empirical contribution in the form of provision of emotion management training for academics is suggested, as well as theoretical contribution regarding increased commitment and emotional labour effects. Thus, this article demonstrates how higher commitment to working roles increases one's experience of negative emotions by comparing emotions felt by academics and administrators in the HE sector.

Firstly, the paper reviews current research on emotional labour in the service sector as well as specific industries such as the media industry. Comparisons are drawn between occupations in the service sector and higher education such as increased bureaucracy and organisational control of emotions, framing the outset aims of the research. Secondly, the chosen methodology is outlined. Thereafter, research findings are discussed in themes such as: coping with exhibited emotions, changes in the higher education sector and prevalence of emotions in higher education, concluding with the empirical and theoretical contributions of the research.

Emotional Labour

Definition of emotional labour

Emotional labour has received widespread scholarly interest since the 1980s. Extensive focus on the concept has provided enriched understanding of effects stemming from emotional labour and how it is used in organisations, however, exploration of the concept remains to be seen in other occupations. Most studies on emotional labour are based in the service sector, for example, the nursing profession. Examples include: "Emotions in uniform: how nurses regulate emotions at work via emotional boundaries" (Hayward and Tuckey, 2011), Johanson and Woods' (2008) "Recognizing the Emotional Element in Service Excellence" and Westaby's (2012) "'feeling like a sponge': the emotional labour produced by solicitors in their interactions with clients seeking asylum".

A widely accepted definition of emotional labour is: the process of managing feelings to produce an outward emotion, perceived to be desired by others (Hochschild, 1983, p.7). Hochschild puts forward two aspects of the emotional labour process including: surface acting and deep acting. Surface acting involves changing outward emotion such as facial expressions in order to provoke certain feelings within the customer, whereas, deep acting refers to an employee changing their actual emotions, making the customer service experience more genuine (Grandey, 2003).

Previous research focuses on emotional labour promoting increased emotional stability (Westaby, 2012; Hayward and Tuckey, 2011; Biron and Veldhoven, 2012), bureaucracy aiding better management of emotions (Johanson and Woods, 2008), as well as emotional labour leading to negative effects such as emotional burnout (Wegge *et al.,* 2010).

Effects of emotional labour

Scholars have debated on whether exerting emotional labour has positive or negative effects for employees, for example Harrison and Simpson (2005) state production of quality work is linked to the emotional bonds employees have with their colleagues, and increased work performance strengthens a feeling of self-worth. Therefore, this may suggest that the use of emotional labour to form better relationships with colleagues would lead to increased work performance which would increase the employee's feeling of accomplishment and satisfaction. Hayward and Tuckey (2011) support this idea in their study of how nurses regulate emotions at work, demonstrating control of emotions helps to increase job performance. They also state that good management of your own emotions can assist in recovery from a working day. This may further suggest emotional labour, in terms of controlling your own emotions, might help reduce negative feelings resulting from work such as being drained, tired and feeling stressed.

Other scholars, however, have shown that emotional labour has both positive and negative effects on employees, for example Biron and Veldhoven (2012) state that exerting emotional labour can have positive effects on performance. On the other hand, emotional labour can also have negative effects on performance as a consequence of exhibiting emotional dissonance or deep acting. Emotional dissonance describes negative emotions a person can experience due to differences between performed and felt emotions, leading to symptoms of burnout (Wegge *et al.,* 2010). Furthermore, Westaby's (2012) study on emotional labour exhibited by solicitors outlines both positive and negative consequences of emotional labour, including: increased performance or the ability to keep a professional balance intact. Therefore, emotional labour can be seen to improve performance and may help prevent employees from becoming emotionally attached; however, it can also lead to burnout symptoms such as emotional dissonance, which can harm an employee's wellbeing. Consequently, emotional labour may be subjective and dependent on the individual. Westaby (2012) also states that jobs requiring emotional labour increase employee fulfilment compared to alternatives. This suggests that the problem solving nature of customer interaction, such as keeping customers happy and solving their disputes, increases positive emotional labour and may lead to a feeling of self-worth.

Many studies demonstrate emotional dissonance to be a negative consequence of managing emotions (Hayward and Tuckey, 2011; Westaby, 2012). Westaby (2012) further states decreased job efficiency is a negative consequence of emotional labour. Additionally, Biron and Veldhoven (2012) show that engaging in surface acting drains an employee's energy and causes deflation in job performance, which may suggest emotional labour is damaging to both the employee and employer. Emotional labour is shown to impact on employee's well-being, which could lead to illness and/or dissatisfaction. Employers may be damaged by emotional labour as employee dissatisfaction can lead to decreased job efficiency, which may affect organisational systems and staff morale.

Emotional labour and control

Academics have stated that emotional labour is a form of management control over employees. For example, Broadbridge and Simpson's (2011) study on progression of gender within management research refers to the 'remasculisation' of emotional labour skills, based on the idea that emotional labour involves workers being controlled by management through scripted interaction with customers, as seen, for example, within a call centre environment (Koskina and Keithley, 2010; Wegge *et al.,* 2010). This suggestion may be made on the basis that the organisation is stereotypically classed as male (Whitehead, 2001). A female associated attribute such as emotion promotes unpredictability within organisations, however

if emotion is used as a form of control, it could add value to the organisation in a rational form, supporting the argument of 'remasculisation'.

Some scholars have demonstrated that emotional labour enables employees to gain control of emotions experienced in their job roles, for example solicitors use emotional labour to gain trust from their clients which increases quality when building a case. They also use emotional labour to provide a shield or barrier between them and the client, enabling an image of professionalism (Westaby, 2012). Furthermore, Hayward and Tuckey (2011) formed the concept of strategic boundary management which draws on emotional distancing and emotional connecting. They define emotional distancing, with reference to a nurse, as choosing to interact with a patient on a cognitive level without an emotional dimension, enabling distance and professionalism while treating patients. However, emotional connection is defined as interacting on an emotional and cognitive level by choice, helping to form an emotional bond, improving treatment for patients. Hayward and Tuckey (2011) further state two reasons why employees change emotions whilst at work, firstly: to protect themselves from exhibiting negative emotions, and secondly, to derive self-confidence and self-esteem from making an impact on someone's life. Thus, emotional labour is needed in organisations, not just as a form of control to increase performance and achieve management goals, but also for the employee's wellbeing.

Within the hotel industry display rules are seen to help employees demonstrate acceptable behaviour when dealing with troublesome customers, reducing emotional dissonance (Johanson and Woods, 2008). Johanson and Woods (2008) further state that scripts and display rules help to empower employees, enabling them to handle difficult situations on their own. Therefore, control and management of emotions can help to reduce negative effects of emotion management as well as empower employees.

Emotional labour in specific industries

Within the Media Industry, similarities are seen with previous occupations through management control leading to conflicting emotions, as well as an obvious exertion of emotional labour when having to deal with calls from unsuccessful contestants, based on the example of a talent show (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2008). However, due to the competitive environment associated with this industry, connections with people are vital for career progression, as a result, emotional labour is seen to be exhibited with regards to employee relations. Employees feel they have to restrain feelings of frustration or anguish in order to protect and enhance their chances of progression (Hesmondhaigh and Baker, 2008), causing further conflict with inner and outer emotions.

Since its formation, emotional labour has been highly explored, however most studies are based in the service sector (Gray, 2009; McClure and Murphy, 2007; Nixon, 2009). Understandably, this may be due to customer interactions associated with the sector, as well as the emotional situations that arise in such professions. Consequently, emotional labour needs to be explored in different occupations to further enrich understanding of the concept.

Changes in UK higher education

The higher education sector in the UK has seen a change from a teaching style consisting of strong relationships between academics and students, towards a teaching style promoting mass production and efficiency over the past 60 years (Seidler, 2012). Seidler further reports that increased tuition fees have resulted in a competitive, market orientated HE sector, forcing universities to improve facilities and teaching standards in order to attract students. Furthermore, in spite of the increase in tuition fees, Seidler suggests that students deciding to attend university may have high expectations, due to the notion of students becoming

customers as a result of changes within the sector. Thus, greater comparisons are seen between the service sector and HE within the UK.

Based on previous research such as Seidler (2012) an argument may be formed that lecturers may start to feel like a customer services employee, rather than a teacher, as a reaction to increasing demands from students. Furthermore, academics can be seen to exhibit a customer-facing role through delivery of lectures, which might suggest that they perform certain emotions for a desired response from students, behaviours that are suited to the definition of emotional labour. The perceived change in relationship between lecturer and student, as well as the customer facing role lecturers demonstrate in the job role everyday, provide justification to explore emotional labour within a HE context.

Emotional labour and higher education

Of studies conducted in this field, scholars agree that universities are now efficiency focused. Researchers have deemed changes in the system as the 'Mcdonaldisation' of higher education (Ogbonna and Harris, 2004; Constanti and Gibbs, 2004). Mcdonaldisation refers to the 'Mcdonaldisation of society thesis' founded by Ritzer, showing deskilled processes found in the labour force of fast food establishments, categorised into four key principles including: efficiency, calculability, predictability and control, are now prevalent in different industries across the world (Nichols, 1994). Therefore, this shows the HE sector is becoming more bureaucratic, with the key focus now concerning the mass production of students with degrees, as well as increased control on university operations. The new perception of an increasingly bureaucratic higher education system may lead to increased emotional labour being exhibited by employees due to an unsettled work environment, as a result of increasing demands.

Constanti and Gibbs (2004) state academics are now a service provider, while students have become customers, meaning the teacher–learner relationship has changed and student expectations may increase, further increasing demands placed on employees. On the other hand, Ogbonna and Harris's (2004) study on emotional labour and UK university lecturers demonstrates changes in the job role have affected relationships with colleagues through the perception of increased pressure being placed on academics to compete against each other, which has led to feelings of isolation, resulting in an increase in emotional labour exhibited by academics as well as negative effects stemming from it. Therefore, proposing the question whether changes in the higher education system have changed emotional exchanges within different aspects of the job role, including student interaction and colleague relations?

In contrast to the ideology previously mentioned regarding emotional labour aiding control of individual emotions, Ogbonna and Harris (2004) state changes prevalent in HE have led to academics receiving extra demands from managers and other shareholders (Ogbonna and Harris, 2004), therefore demonstrating more control is being placed on academics from management, increasing exhibition of emotional labour.

Surface and deep acting have both been shown to be exhibited within the job role of an academic; for example, academics are seen to perform surface acting through delivering lectures as a show, according to one participant's response to an interview conducted by Ogbonna and Harris (2004). Within the same interview study, one academic stated that when dissatisfied with student behaviour, they keep control by remembering that students pay their wages, showing signs of deep acting. Furthermore, the same study demonstrated deep acting is used as a coping mechanism and enables implementation of self-control (Ogbonna and Harris, 2004). Constanti and Gibbs (2004) support this idea stating emotional labour is used as a coping strategy to hide real feelings exhibited by academics. Therefore, as previously

stated, it may be suggested emotional labour aids control of individual emotions, reducing exhibition of negative emotions.

Researchers have stated there is a lack of studies investigating emotional labour exhibited by academics in HE (Ogbonna and Harris, 2004; Constanti and Gibbs, 2004 and Koster, 2011). Furthermore, there are more similarities forming between the service sector and higher education (Seidler, 2012). Consequently, increasing similarities between the HE sector and the service sector, as well as lack of research in the field, provides justification to explore the concept further within this domain. Furthermore, one of the limited scholarly published articles exploring emotional labour in HE was completed within the UK (Ogbonna and Harris, 2004). Consequently, due to the lack of research within the UK and the changes prevalent within the UK system, this research paper will explore the concept of emotional labour within a UK university. Also, previous research has focused on emotional labour exhibited by academics, however, administrators are placed in a customer facing role, dealing with student complaints meaning they may also be likely to exhibit emotional labour. Hence, understanding emotions and emotional labour exhibited by administrators may assist in addressing the outset aims.

Research Methodology

Twelve semi-structured interviews were conducted involving six academics and six administrators in order to explore and compare experience of emotions in HE. Best efforts were made to be representative of gender; however, the sample consisted of five males and seven females due to gender dominated occupations. Participants were from Brunel University Business School, due to the prestige associated with the university, as well as the changes they have faced over the last decade including abolishment of the personal tutor system. All participants had been working within the UK HE sector for five – thirty five years to account for changes and explore the ideology that students are now becoming customers. Both academics and administrators were used to further explore the concept in contrast with previous studies which have only included academics (Ogbonna and Harris, 2004; Constanti and Gibbs, 2004 and Koster, 2011).

Participants were contacted via e-mail and referral contact. All participants that agreed to take part in the project were interviewed. The sampling technique used was typical case sampling. Participants were contacted based on ability to express emotions in relation to changes that have occurred at Brunel University over the past 10 years, thus providing a representative case to address the research question (Saunders *et al.,* 2009). However, this form of sampling technique reduces external validity (Sedgwick, 2010) and therefore, emotional labour exertion may differ in other universities across the UK.

Participants worked in different positions within Brunel University Business School including professors, managers, lecturers and general administrators. Duration of the semi-structured interviews was between twenty – fifty five minutes. Each interview began with an introduction concerning the participant's rights and the research overview. Interviews took place on university premises. All participants consented to being recorded. Typical themes discussed in interviews included emotions felt in the job and changes occurring in HE such as increased tuition fees.

Data analysis began whilst collecting data, allowing recurring themes to be sighted, for example increased bureaucracy in HE. This endorsed further questioning of other participants on these themes. Grounded theory approach was used to analyse the data (Maylor and Blackmon, 2005), allowing enhanced understanding of context appropriate for the interpretation of emotions. First stage of analysis involved transcribing recorded data, which

was completed independently. After transcription of each interview, interesting themes were noted to enable similarities and differences to be discovered easily, as well as providing themes to probe participants further. Interviews were transcribed as soon as possible to enhance analysis. Secondly, a table was formed to enable coding of data, using initial interview topics and similarities and differences previously found in the transcription phase, allowing data to be segmented. Common findings were then categorised into three themes including: prevalence of emotions, changes in the higher education sector and coping with emotions exhibited. Different codes, such as "bureaucracy", "personal tutoring to pastoral care" and "student demands" were seen to correspond with changes in the HE sector; therefore they became part of this main theme. Commonalities and differences with regards to perceptions and emotions felt by academics and administrators were then noted, analysed and compared. The data analysis approach has also been used in a similar study regarding emotional labour exhibited in HE (Ogbonna and Harris, 2004).

Research and Findings
Prevalence of Emotions in Higher Education

Student Interaction:

The majority of participants acknowledged emotions are a prevalent part of their job role. Academics confirmed both positive and negative emotions in relation to different aspects of their job.

Positive emotions were linked with student interaction as a result of helping students and facilitating their learning.

> *"Yes if I come in feeling miserable, within 10 minutes of being in a class I'm feeling cheerful… its healthy, for emotions I think really, I mean there's nerve racking times…but it's always rewarding" (Male Academic, 1). "… You do get a nice feeling when someone feels you have been helpful…" (Female Administrator, 2)*

Student interaction entices positive emotions for both sets of participants bringing most satisfaction. This links with previous studies that suggest emotional labour is used as a means of experiencing self-worth (Westaby, 2012; Hayward and Tuckey, 2011 and Biron and Veldhoven, 2012) and emotional rewards.

Student interaction also entices negative emotions for academics such as nervousness. The majority of Academics stated that nervousness and anxiety was felt through the need to gain control in big classes.

> *"…but I think if you have a lot of them altogether like in a lecture then it can be problematic, because then the power dimension isn't tilted in your favour…the audience kind of are more powerful than you …they can do anything… it's really down to you to try and prevent that from happening and sometimes that can be a bit of a struggle…" (Female Academic, 4)*

> *"…bit hard to describe really, when you've got 200 - 300 maybe students out there and you are a small person at the front, how do you capture their attention really…" (Male Academic, 6)*

Academics demonstrate feelings of powerlessness and angst with regards to lecturing large audiences. It demonstrates the importance of management of emotions that may enable academics to gain control and reduce negative emotions experienced in this situation as

shown by Hayward and Tuckey (2011). However, efforts to gain control might also lead to increasing self-doubt revealed through reference of a struggle to gain power.

The majority of administrators did not demonstrate feeling negative emotions in relation to student interaction due to wanting to help students, which may be due to processes and regulations associated with the job, linking with the previous exploration within the hotel industry that suggests increased regulation decreases the negative emotions exhibited (Johanson and Woods, 2008). Participants went on to express specific positive and negative emotions they exhibit within different aspects of their job roles such as colleague relationships and research.

Colleague relationships:

The majority of participants expressed feelings of friendship, sociability and sharing with regards to colleague relations.

> *"…it's a social thing, it's errm, a collegiality thing, that as academics you hope you can share ideas, you hope you can argue about ideas, hopefully you can interact over new ideas…" (Male Academic, 6)*

> *"…part of the reason I'm still at Brunel, is probably people I work with, it's nice to be in the environment when you have a laugh, we do our work, we bounce ideas off each other, no one is isolated in their work…" (Female Administrator, 6)*

Positive colleague relations have great importance in the job role and increase job performance, as previous studies have shown (Harrison and Simpson, 2005; Hayward and Tuckey, 2011). This might be due to positive working relationships facilitating sharing of negative emotions, therefore decreasing negative effects such as burnout.

Participants also expressed negative emotions associated with colleague relationships. The majority of administrators expressed feelings of a divide between administrators and academics.

> *"…what I don't like about working in academia, it would be divides, I don't like divides…I don't like divides within one school where academics have an impression that's administrators, are, would be different in anyway…" (Female Administrator Manager)*

> *"…you know sometimes we have problems with some academics which can be a bit frustrating, but yeah otherwise, get on alright with them; I don't know if they look down on me at all…" (Male Administrator, 1)*

Administrators feel anger and low self-esteem due to perceived hierarchical divide. Therefore, hierarchy in organisations might force the need for effective management of emotions to prevent feelings of low self-esteem. Academics also reported on a divide between themselves caused by some being focused on research and others on teaching.

> *"…you see a divide between lecturers, between those sorts of attitudes…it does get quite depressing sometimes because you are surrounded by a lot of people who don't see the world the same way that you do" (Female Academic, 2)*

Divide between academics entices feelings of depression and loneliness due to lack of communal interests with colleagues, meaning academics may exhibit more emotional labour as a result of not being able to vent negative emotions.

Research:

Most academics expressed feelings of interest, stimulation and excitement when referring to researching.

> *"…the intellectual stimulation, hey this is really interesting, delving into new ideas or generating new ideas…" (Male Academic, 6)*

> *"…that's very exciting, yes…hugely fascinating…" (Female Academic, 4)*

Academics express positive emotions in relation to research, which may be due to the research focus associated with this university, therefore amplifying feelings of self-worth.

Academics confirmed exhibition of negative emotions including de-motivation through high failure rate and frustration through not being able to research due to time pressure.

> *"…getting rejected by journals, being told your work is rubbish… yes it does knock you for quite a while… that kind of sticks in your head for a bit, you just have to pick up and try again yeah…it's still difficult you know, you do a paper, put it in, then it gets rejected, the reasons for rejecting it are always not very nice reasons…"(Female Academic, 4)*

> *"…I don't have any time really at all to carry out my own research, although I do have lots of very good ideas… I would love to do research, but I don't have any time" (Male Academic, 3)*

Rejection from journals provokes self-doubt in academics possibly affecting other aspects of the job, which may be due to personal commitment prohibiting effective management of emotions. Feelings of suppression and frustration are also related to research as a result of time pressure through increasing demands. This may be explained by the research focus of the university leading academics to feel inadequate, therefore, decreasing self-confidence.

Changes in the HE sector

Bureaucracy:

The majority of academics stated increased bureaucracy is a key change within the higher education sector, as demonstrated in previous studies (Ogbonna and Harris, 2004; Seidler, 2012; Constanti and Gibbs, 2004); resulting in academics feeling as though they have lost an element of control and their professional judgement is no longer trusted, as illustrated by Ogbonna and Harris (2004).

> *"…it makes me feel quite offended because generally these processes are to capture people who fail to do their job one way or another and most of these are directed at the teaching process which is the side I'm dedicating too …so it's quite frustrating that I have to tick boxes to show I'm good enough at my job…so it's tricky its tricky" (Female Academic, 2)*

Increased tick boxes promote feelings of frustration amongst academics, which could be due to an underlying perception that they may be replaced by bureaucratic processes, therefore decreasing self–confidence. This might result in increased emotional labour for academics, linking with Ogbonna and Harris (2004).

Administrators exhibit positive emotions in relation to increased bureaucracy.

> *"I definitely think it's getting better, it's more clearer… something we can point to let students know this is how things are done… just having*

set guidelines and policies does actually make things a lot easier "
(Female Administrator, 6)

Administrators celebrate increasing bureaucracy, exhibiting positive emotions in relation to this change. This may be due to procedures and processes providing a way to shift accountability and responsibility in certain situations, as previous studies have suggested (Hayward and Tuckey, 2011; Biron and Veldhoven, 2012; Westaby, 2012).

Personal Tutoring to Pastoral Care:

One third of academics confirmed feelings of sadness due to loss of personal contact with students as a result of changes from the personal tutoring system to pastoral care/student support.

> *"…we've moved, you wouldn't of used that language 20 years ago because you would have done it without thinking you were doing it…as numbers have increased… you lose that sort of contact as we move from a much more craft based activity, to a more production based system, you lose…that individual one to one, so then you have to replace what would have been unconscious pastoral care with some sort of institutionalised pastoral care of which requires again some form of bureaucratic process…" (Male Academic, 6)*

> *"…pastoral care was that you knew your students individually (laughs) you just don't get that sort of thing these days …" (Male Academic, 3)*

Academics state delivery of student support has become more bureaucratised, leading to a loss in close relationships between academics and students, previously suggested by Seidler (2012). It may be argued they associate this loss with lack of trust in their professional judgement, reducing self-confidence. Elements of frustration are seen with this change, shown by the second academic laughing at the idea of knowing students on a personal level. Administrators are seen to share this frustration.

> *"…now far more than ever, everything we do, we have to be so careful, you have to be careful about touching people, you have to be careful about how you word things, because of all the legalities (slows down speech as if fed up, monotonous) around everything now, so yeah I do find it harder than ever…" (Female Administrator Manager)*

The administration manager in charge of dealing with emotional students as they approach the front desk further confirmed feelings of frustration due to increased bureaucracy within this process.

Increased tuition fees and Student Demands:

The majority of administrators support the notion that students are becoming customers, as previously suggested by Seidler (2012), through predicting student demands will increase with increased tuition fees.

> *"Yeah, I think they do, they want value for money and we are aware of that and certainly my line manager and the senior academics are aware of that, that students are paying a lot of money, I mean we've always felt they should get a good service but I think it's more crucial than ever, that we are seen to provide it yeah" (Female Administrator, 2)*

When administrators were asked whether increased student demands would increase pressure, general consensus was that it would not, as students have the right to expect value

for money and they always try their best to help students. This may be due to feelings of self-worth and satisfaction associated with helping students. Half of academics agreed with this perception.

One half of academics confirmed feeling frustration at the idea of students becoming customers.

> *"The model that students are customers has, is growing and some students have that view and some academics have that view, not many, the problem with it that the obligation of a customer is trivial compared to the obligation you owe to a student or learner… I think it's a changing model which government have been quote happy to provide because they think that they link the customer concept with competition and the notion of choice and they think competition will strengthen UK universities and make life better for students…"(Male Academic, 1)*

Frustration is demonstrated through perception of increased bureaucracy being forced into the HE sector. This participant sees the model as a way for the government to impose bureaucracy and deskilling to both academics and students, as suggested in previous studies (Ogbonna and Harris, 2004; Constanti and Gibbs, 2004). He feels the student – learner relationship is much more complex than the service provider – customer exchange, opposing previous research completed by Seidler (2012). This frustration may be explained by commitment to providing students with a quality university experience, as well as internal feelings of self – doubt or belittlement due to the perceived deskilling of his job.

Coping with exhibited emotions

Surface and Deep Acting:

The majority of participants experienced surface acting by showing an emotion expected of them to handle a situation while feeling a different emotion, such as frustration or discomfort.

> *"erm sometimes we have had to deal with students that have been a bit angry or aggressive and obviously that can have a bit of a negative effect, just obviously in a calm way, and obviously try to reassure the student that we are trying to do everything we can to try and help them and calm them down" (Female Administrator, 4)*

The administrator explains a situation she faced when dealing with an aggressive student. She feels discomfort while displaying a calm exterior to diffuse the situation. This process may increase the administrator's feelings of self–worth, as she would have managed her own emotions to control the situation and achieve a successful outcome, as shown in previous studies (Westaby, 2012, Hayward and Tuckey, 2011; Biron and Veldhoven, 2012). Academics mainly exhibit surface acting during lectures, as previously suggested by Ogbonna and Harris (2004).

Academics engaged more in deep acting when dealing with student emotional issues.

> *"…sometimes it can take 3 or 4 days before you stop remembering something that you've read or something that you have heard from somebody and obviously this is a weakness that there is no support offered for that side of things…you have to know how to manage the students emotions and your emotions…" (Female Academic, 2)*

The academic describes how she struggles to detach work and home life, contrasting with the majority of administrators. She explains the difficulty of preventing herself from thinking

about serious student emotional issues and feels there is insufficient support to deal with this. Further explanation of this form of deep acting may stem from feelings of isolation and loneliness with regards to colleague relationships, contrasting the positive work environment administrators expressed, therefore reiterating previous suggestions that better working relations aid effective management of emotions to promote feelings of self-worth (Harrison and Simpson, 2005).

Emotional Burnout:

Academics frequently exhibit symptoms of emotional burnout at certain times of the year due to emotional drain.

> *"…a lot of lecturers have health effects from this, it's a draw on your adrenal system erm when you have finished a block of teaching, your immune system will crash and a lot of lecturers crash quite badly after blocks of teaching (laughs)… we end up being susceptible to viruses and things like that because it's such a drain on you…." (Female Academic, 2)*

The academic explains emotional drain from teaching leads to symptoms of emotional burnout, demonstrating negative effects of emotional labour (Wegge *et al.,* 2010).

Experience:

Most participants stated experience and age have helped with management of negative emotions during their time working within higher education.

> *"…if your younger it's more difficult…" (Female Academic, 4)*

> *"…Initially when I joined the university yes because I was dealing with undergraduates and wasn't as busy as the job I'm in now erm and I was young then as well…" (Female Administrator, 6)*

The academic explains that rejection from journals is harder to handle with lack of experience, whilst demonstrating that difficulties are still prevalent over time. Whereas, the administrator, speaking in relation to dealing with student emotional issues, states it has become easier due to experience and maturity, as well as having more tasks and responsibilities and a positive working environment, linking with Harrison and Simpson's (2005) study.

Training:

Administrators were more able to manage their emotions due to training programmes being available to them, as well as diffusion of responsibility with regards to certain tasks such as dealing with student emotional issues. Both factors helped to provide emotional boundaries for administrators, allowing them to be professional and distance themselves from exhibiting negative emotions associated with the job.

> *"Yeah, yeah, I think you do because I think you find it hard to erm, split it apart, errm, but I think…we do very well for training, so we are quite privileged… I can usually say that we've got all these staff development courses and I think this, this and this would help you, so we are very lucky to have those things…" (Female Administration Manger)*

The administrator describes difficulty of preventing exhibition of negative emotions from effecting home life. She states experience combined with training have assisted in ability to cope with the difficult emotions. Furthermore, other administrators shift responsibility,

helping to protect themselves against exhibiting negative emotions, for example when faced with a student crying, one administrator confirmed initial feelings of discomfort, followed by stating they were not trained to deal with that situation, therefore they may use training and the job description to displace negative feelings of discomfort.

Findings demonstrate the importance of emotions in the context of academia. Both positive and negative emotions are exhibited in different aspects of the job role including student interaction, colleague relationships and research. Changes in HE were found to have contrasting effects on emotions and emotional labour exhibited dependent on profession, for example increased bureaucracy was seen to induce negative emotions for academics. On the other hand, administrators felt positive emotions in relation to increased bureaucratic procedures. Furthermore, Experience was determined as a key factor to aid management of emotions exhibited by both professions; however training was also shown to be a coping mechanism on behalf of administrators.

Discussion

This paper aimed to explore how emotions are experienced and managed in the context of academia. The findings provide insights into the role of emotions in an area which has been neglected in previous studies (Ogbonna and Harris, 2004, Constanti and Gibbs, 2004, Koster, 2011).

Participants agreed on the importance of emotions within their job roles. Findings confirmed that student interaction can induce positive emotions such as a feeling of self-worth through helping students, conforming to previous studies stating exertion of emotional labour can increase self-esteem (Westaby, 2012; Hayward and Tuckey, 2011; Biron and Veldhoven, 2012). However, academics also highlighted negative aspects of interactions with students.

Findings demonstrated that some interactions might lead to feelings of powerlessness and anxiety in relation to gaining control of large audiences when delivering lectures. This complies with Hayward and Tuckey (2011) showing that controlling one's emotions reduces exhibition of negative feelings at work. On the contrary, administrators did not indicate involvement of negative emotions with regards to student interaction, which may be due to displacement of emotions, facilitated by regulations and processes, linking with previous research showing scripts and procedures increase positive emotions for employees in the hotel industry (Johanson and Woods, 2008). However, increased accountability or responsibility may increase negative emotions such as self-doubt.

The majority of participants further agreed positive colleague relations entice positive emotions within the job, complying with previous studies (Harrison and Simpson, 2005 and Hayward and Tuckey, 2011), demonstrating good relationships with colleagues increase job performance and feelings of self-worth, as well as improving well-being. Unsurprisingly, administrators felt less positive about perceived divides between themselves and academics. Therefore, hierarchy contributed to experience of negative emotions and exertion of emotional labour regarding colleague relationships. Academics also commented on frustration caused by perception of divides between themselves dependent on dedication to teaching or research. Therefore, increased focus on research within the sector may have increased breakdown in colleague relationships, increasing exhibition of negative emotions.

Academics agreed research induces positive emotions such as self-worth; however findings further showed exhibition of frustration and suppression due to time pressure preventing conduction of research, as well as self-doubt in association with rejection from journals. Consequently, the increased competitive nature of the sector, combined with the university's research focus may have led to feelings of decreasing self-worth through being unable to

devote sufficient time to research or to get published. Furthermore, long recovery from rejection of journals may be due to strong levels of commitment from academics, thus personal commitment entices negative emotions requiring enhanced emotional management.

Academics further agreed that increased bureaucracy was a key change in HE sector UK, increasing exhibition of negative emotions, comparing with previous studies (Constanti and Gibbs, 2004; Ogbonna and Harris, 2004; Seidler, 2012) showing increased bureaucracy increases emotional labour required in academia. Findings confirmed feelings of frustration towards tick boxes due to the perception that they were no longer trusted to complete their job to professional standards. However, administrators felt increased bureaucracy made the job easier, therefore, reiterating that administrators may use bureaucracy to shift personal accountability and responsibility, reducing exhibition of negative emotions, previously seen in studies whereby increased regulation and control was seen to provide empowerment for employees, enhancing self-confidence (Johanson and Woods, 2008; Hayward and Tuckey, 2011; Biron and Veldhoven, 2012; Westaby, 2012).

Academics agreed on a loss of close student relationships as a result of increased bureaucracy, as stated in Seidler's (2012) study, predicting a change in academic-student relationships. Findings further demonstrated most participants experienced frustration through increased bureaucracy with regards to dealing with student emotional issues, which may be due to perceptions of decreased trust in professional judgement, increasing feelings of self-doubt.

Although most participants agreed with the ideology of students becoming customers based on increasing tuition fees and 'massification' of HE sector, as previously suggested by Seidler (2012), half of academics confirmed feelings of frustration with this notion, stating relationships with students are complex in relation to customer service exchanges and they feel this to be another attempt to deskill academics and students. Administrators, however welcome the change, therefore increased regulation induces emotional detachment and implementation of a professional barrier, as previously shown by Westaby (2012), demonstrating emotional labour aids professionalism, increasing job performance, thereby reducing exhibition of negative emotions by administrators. Whereas, increased personal commitment of academics decreases effective management of emotions, therefore increasing negative effects of emotional labour.

Participants further agreed surface and deep acting were both exerted during student interaction when dealing with complaints and emotional issues. Findings indicated administrators used surface acting to resolve a situation, enticing feelings of self–worth, linking with previous research suggesting emotional labour is used by employees for empowerment, increasing feelings of self-esteem (Westaby, 2012; Hayward and Tuckey, 2011; Biron and Veldhoven, 2012). However, Academics confirmed exerting deep acting, reaffirming Ogbonna and Harris' (2004) study on emotional labour in Higher Education, which may be explained by fragmented colleague relationships in light of increased competition within the sector, reducing opportunities for displacement of negative emotions.

Findings showed negative physical effects such as immune systems crashing and viruses. Therefore, academics exhibit emotional dissonance as a result of exerting emotional labour, leading to emotional burnout as previously indicated by Wegge *et al*. (2010) who state that emotional labour induces emotional dissonance leading to emotional burnout. Therefore, academics are not equipped to deal with exhibition of emotional labour within the job role.

Participants further agreed experience and age reduce negative effects associated with emotional labour. Findings also showed busy workload reduced negative emotions exhibited by administrators when dealing with student emotional issues as they had less time to think.

Furthermore, colleague relations attributed to administrators exhibiting positive emotions, whereas academics demonstrated a struggle regarding dealing with negative emotions over time. Therefore, increased tasks and positive working relations, linking with Harrison and Simpson (2005), may aid displacement of emotions, reducing negative effects of emotional labour for administrators. However, academic's commitment to the job role as well as less forums for sharing due to the competitive nature of the sector can explain increasing exhibition of negative emotions.

Administrator's agreed that having training programmes available aided effective emotional management, reducing negative effects associated with emotional labour. Findings further demonstrated training provided a way to diffuse responsibility, reducing exhibition of negative emotions when dealing with difficult student situations. Therefore, training can enhance effective management of emotions, suggesting implementation of emotion management training for both academics and administrators would decrease negative effects of emotional labour, promoting positive well-being.

Academics experience increasing self-doubt through struggle to gain control, rejection from journals and perception of loss in professional judgement. Furthermore, they experience emotional burnout due to emotional strain they feel throughout the year. However, administrators reported experiencing more positive emotions within the job role, while stating increased bureaucracy has made the job easier. Therefore, administrators may be using bureaucracy to shift accountability and responsibility, reducing negative emotions exhibited. Thus proposing, strong commitment to the job role increases negative emotions and induces physical effects such as burnout.

This article demonstrates the importance of emotions for both academics and administrators. Analysis conforms to previous studies indicating colleague relationships are a key factor enabling reduction of negative effects associated with emotional labour. Further comparisons stem from confirmation of changes within the HE sector including increased bureaucracy, changes in student relationships and increased student demands, resulting in amplification of emotional labour exerted. The paper also supports previous research by demonstrating increased bureaucracy can reduce exhibition of negative emotions through empowerment and displacement, however, academics felt increased bureaucracy eroded trust in their professional judgement, increasing negative emotions exhibited at work. Academics also exhibit effects such as emotional drain and burnout, associated with emotional dissonance, a negative effect of emotional labour, contrasting with administrators. Thus, this paper demonstrates how personal commitment to aspects of a job role can increase exhibition of negative emotions by exploring and comparing the emotional experiences of academics and administrators in a HE institution. Additionally it suggests a requirement for effective emotional management within this sector.

Limitations and Future Research

The schedule of participants meant interviews were interrupted. Furthermore, using interviews to collect data may have provoked social desirability bias (Chung and Monroe, 2003), preventing full exploration of individual emotions and coping methods within higher education. Additionally, case study research lacks external validity (Sedgwick, 2012), due to lack of accountability of different variables which may occur in other universities, therefore providing difficulties with generalising emotional labour demands within the HE sector across the UK.

Future research may benefit from expanding the methodology through using multiple methods to conduct research such as interviews and ethnography and using multiple

researchers to invoke better insight into emotions felt by academics and administrators, as well as comparing different universities within the UK to enable findings to be generalised.

Conclusion

This paper has addressed the outset aims by demonstrating both emotions and emotional labour are prevalent parts of the job role within the context of academia. It has further indicated challenges of emotional labour in relation to recent changes in the HE sector such as increased bureaucracy escalating emotional labour exhibited by academics, due to perceptions of loss of trust in their professional judgement. Increased competition in the sector has initiated fragmentation and feelings of isolation with regards to colleague relations, also increasing negative emotions. Findings have also provided recommendations for emotion management training as well as procedures to improve colleague relations, to enable employees to feel better equipped when dealing with emotions and emotional labour exhibited in the job role. The article has provided a contribution by showing personal commitment to the job role increases exhibition of negative emotions, resulting in burnout, therefore providing a basis to further explore emotional labour within different HE institutions across the UK.

Bibliography

Aragon, A. (2012). We should be paying more attention to the emotional labour of teaching'. Available at: http://www.guardian.co.uk/higher-education-network/blog/2012/jun/13/emotional-labour-in-education , (Accessed: 29/10/2012).

Biron, M. and Veldhoven, M V. (2012). Emotional Labour in service work: Psychological flexibility and emotion regulation. *Human Relations*, 65(10) pp. 1259-1282. doi: 10.1177/0018726712447832.

Broadbridge, A. and Simpson, R. (2011). 25 years on: reflecting on the Past and Looking to the Future in Gender and Management Research. *British journal of management*, 22(3), pp. 470-483. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8551.2011.00758.

Chung, J. and Monroe, G. (2003). Exploring Social Desirability Bias. Journal of Business Ethics, 44(4), pp. 291-302.

Constanti, P. and Gibbs, P. (2004). "Higher education teachers and emotional labour". *International Journal of Educational Management*, 18(4), pp. 243-249.

Grandey, A. (2003). When "the show must go on": surface acting and deep acting as determinants of emotional exhaustion and peer rated service delivery. *Academy of Management Journal*, 46(1), pp. 86-96.

Gray, B. (2009). The emotional labour of nursing – defining and management emotions in nursing work. *Nurse Education Today*, 29(2), pp. 168-175.

Harrison, A T. and Simpson, R. (2005). Emotions in the organisation: the psychological contract of hotel and catering workers. *International journal of Work Organisation and Emotion*, 1(1), pp. 87-102.

Hayward, R M. and Tuckey, M R. (2011). Emotions in Uniform: How nurses regulate emotion at work via emotional boundaries. *Human Relations*, 64(11), pp. 1501-1523. doi: 10.1177/0018726711419539.

Hesmondhalgh, D. and Baker, S. (2008). Creative Work and Emotional Labour in the Television Industry. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 25(7-8), pp. 97-118. doi: 10.1177/0263276408097798.

Hochschild, A. (1983). *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Johanson, M. and Woods, R. (2008). Recognizing the Emotional Element in Service Excellence. *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly*, 49(3), pp. 310-316. doi: 1177/1938965508316267.

Koskina, A. and Keithley, D. (2010). Emotion in a call centre SME: a case study of positive emotion management. *European Management Journal*, 28, pp. 208-219.

Koster, S. (2011). The self – managed heart: teaching gender and doing emotional labour in higher education institution. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, 19(1), pp. 61-77. doi: 10.1080/14681366.2011.548988.

Maylor, H. and Blackmon, K. (2005). *Researching Business and Management*. Palgrave Macmillan.

McClure, R. and Murphy, C. (2007). "Contesting the dominance of emotional labour in professional nursing". *Journal of Health Organization and Management*, 21(2), pp. 101-120.

Nichols, T. (1994). The Mcdonaldization of society. *Sociology: the journal of the British Sociological Association*, 28, pp. 322-324. doi: 10.1177/0038038594028001029.

Nixon, D. (2009). 'I Can't Put a Smiley Face On: Working–Class Masculinity, Emotional Labour and Service Work in the 'New Economy'. *Gender, Work & Organisation*, 16(3), pp. 300-322.

Ogbonna, E. and Harris, L C. (2004). Work intensification and Emotional Labour among UK University Lecturers: An Exploratory Study. *Organization studies*, 25(7), pp. 1185-1203. doi: 10.1177/0170840604046315.

Saunders, M.; Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A. (2009). *Research Methods for Business Students*. 5th edn. Pearson Education UK.

Sedgwick, P. (2010). *Internal and External Validity*. BMJ, 340:C1705.

Seidler, V J. (2012). Higher Education, Markets, and Emotional Values. *Psychotherapy and Politics International*, 10(3), pp. 228-245.

Wegge, J.; Van Dick, R. and Bernstorff, C V. (2010). Emotional dissonance in call centre work. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 25(6), pp. 596-619.

Westaby, C. (2012). 'Feeling like a sponge': the emotional labour produced by solicitors in their interactions with clients seeking asylum. *International Journal of the legal profession*, 17(2), pp. 153-174. doi: 10.1080/09695958.2010.530882.

Whitehead, S. (2001). The invisible gendered subject: men in education management. *Journal of Gender Studies,* 10(1), pp. 67-82. doi: 10.1080/095892301300050591.