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Why is the business school system in perpetual crisis? Explaining the legitimacy paradox

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Abstract

This thesis explores the paradox of the one-hundred-year legitimacy crisis of the Business School. Although it dominates global higher education, the business school system has always struggled to establish legitimacy with multiple stakeholders across multiple dimensions. Given its ostensible success, evidence for this crisis is found primarily in influential published sources. However, crisis narratives are polarised between advocating solutions to specific problems or challenging the Business School's existence. Few authors explore the complexities of the problems or their structural origins.

In this thesis, I address this gap by asking why the Business School is negated by the wider academic community, how its internal academic community frames the problems over time and how equivalent academic entities maintain their legitimacy.

I answer the first two questions through rhetorical analyses of textual corpora drawn from scholarly literatures. I use a critical realist framework to identify causal mechanisms that may explain the persistence of a multi-faceted legitimacy crisis. I then combine these findings with a range of theoretical perspectives from different fields to create a model of *occupational higher education*. This model identifies a number of pathways that the business school system could follow to establish and sustain legitimacy.

However, I conclude that stakeholders of the contemporary business school system may not have the appetite for the necessary structural change, given the likely systemic and personal consequences. I also suggest that scapegoating the Business School serves the interests of the wider academic workforce and may prove an insurmountable obstacle to Business School legitimacy building.

(250 words)

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The business school is ‘a particularly futile endeavour for any public institution, in that it serves neither the intellectual advancement nor the material welfare of the community’ (Veblen, 1918, p. 209).

‘If an educated man, a Harvard graduate, really wishes to become a retail drug or hardware merchant or a wholesale grocery salesman, does not Harvard put a low valuation on its training and his capacity when it provides him with special graduate training for the career?’ (Flexner and Kerr, 1930, p. 169)

‘Back in those pre-hippie days of honesty and plain speaking, the successful executive made no bones about his belief that the only form of education that was worthwhile was a four-year curriculum in business administration.' (Chandler, 1972, p.123)

‘In the hunt for causes of the competitive problems challenging American industry, critics have arrived, by inductive leap, at the doorstep of the nation's leading business schools. American technology, materials, and labor can match the competition, they reason, so the problem must be inferior managers—educated by American business schools. Competitive performance of the economy declined as business school enrollments grew.’ (Cheit, 1985, p. 43).

‘Moreover, a great disaster has occurred. It is the establishment during the last decade or so of the MBA as the moral equivalent of the MD or law degree, meaning a way of insuring a lucrative living by a mere fact of a diploma that is not a mark of scholarly achievement….’ (Bloom, 1988, p. 371)

‘While there can be no objection to such [business] schools in their proper place, it is quite unclear why they should exist in universities, or why people working in them should enjoy the specific academic freedom which involves their having tenure. Those who live by the market should, if the occasion arises, be allowed to die by the market.’ (O’Hear, 1988, p. 14)

‘Instead, almost all business students spent a considerable amount of their day socializing and relaxing in the corporate-like ambience of the business building.' (Nespor, 1994, p. 119)

‘Business schools do not need to do a great deal more to help prevent future Enrons; they need only to stop doing a lot they currently do. They do not need to create new courses; they need to simply stop teaching some old ones. But, before doing any of this, we—as business school faculty—need to own up to our own role in creating Enrons. Our theories and ideas have done much to strengthen the management practices that we are all now so loudly condemning.’ (Ghoshal, 2005, p. 75)

”HBS,” he said, hoisting a ball of noodles to his mouth, “is a factory for unhappy people. We have so many choices, and yet so few people seem happy about that. It just makes them anxious. And more anxious. And then they make terrible decision about their lives. But,” he added, “these are mostly very good people. People from good families with good values. I can’t figure out what happens. I think they just get desperate.” (Delves Broughton, 2008, pp. 268–9)

‘it is relatively easy to imagine that the knowledge the business school sells and the way that it sells it somehow less vulgar and stupid than it really is’ (Parker, 2018b).

‘America's wokest degree! Wharton business school offers $118,000 per year course in Diversity, Equity and Inclusion’ (Farrell, 2022)

Chapter 1: Historical overview of the Business School legitimacy crisis

SUMMARY

In this chapter I provide an overview of the different legitimacy challenges faced by the business school system over the last century. Firstly, I outline the types of challenge that have arisen during the last hundred years, including existential challenges from the wider academic community, the problems raised by those working inside the system and claims about the relevance of the Business School to business stakeholders. Secondly, I highlight some distinctive structural characteristics of the business school system that may leave it vulnerable to these cyclical legitimacy crises. These characteristics include a set of powerful and competing stakeholders, rapid expansion of the system, disciplinary fragmentation and weak occupational governance.

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INTRODUCTION

The business school system has been subject to serious allegations about its legitimacy since the first part of the twentieth century. These allegations are persistent, emerge from a diverse set of interest groups and are made on a wide variety of grounds. They include whether the Business School has any place in the university system, the quality of its intellectual contribution, whether its has any practical relevance, its capacity for societal harm and the value of the qualifications it awards.

Although the École Supérieure de Commerce de Paris, a private school of commerce, existed in Paris from the early nineteenth century onwards, the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania became the world's first collegiate business school in 1881. The US collegiate system grew rapidly to a total of 25 university business schools in university settings by 1914 (Khurana, 2007, p. 96), many enabled by philanthropic donations. Meanwhile, the two first UK business schools were introduced in the Universities of London and Manchester in the mid-1960s, following a period of careful consultation and analysis involving government, business and academic stakeholders as well as interventions from US institutions with interests in broadening the reach of the American business school model. Chapter 3 and 4 of this thesis focus on this dominant form and I explore alternative structures in Chapter 5.

Based largely on this US model, the global system has since grown exponentially with at least 16,000 university business schools worldwide (AACSB, 2021). In terms of student numbers, business and management programmes dominate higher education systems on both sides of the Atlantic. In the US, almost 20% of the 1,981,000 bachelor's degrees conferred in 2017–18, were awarded in business (386,000) with the health professions and related programmes trailing directly behind at just 12% (245,000) (NCES, 2020). Similarly, UK undergraduate enrolments in 2019/20 were dominated by business and management (with 412,815 enrolments). Otherwise, the most popular UK programmes include subjects allied to medicine, such as pharmacy and nursing, (with 295,520 enrolments) and the social sciences in their entirety (with 260,490 enrolments) (HESA, 2022b). An obvious paradox of this legitimacy crisis is that the problems of the system sit alongside its extraordinary growth. The expansion of the business school system appears to have no precedent elsewhere in higher education:

> No parallel exists in academic history for a subject that grew in only four decades from small and random beginnings to one of the largest components of a university. It was unique, and it was by far the most significant development in American higher education in the twentieth century.' (Daniel, 1998, p. 16)

It is a distinctive feature of the business school system that this pattern of rapid growth and dominance is accompanied by consistent legitimacy challenges from multiple stakeholder groups. Many of these challenges are issued repeatedly, some appear to contradict each other, and almost none have ever been effectively resolved. This lack of resolution persists despite internal stakeholders taking many of the challenges seriously and multiple formal interventions in the system by powerful interest groups (with some involving multi-million-dollar investments).

While the claims are evident in the hundreds of publications that either propagate or refute them, only a minority of sources treat this continual cycle of allegation and crisis claim as an interesting phenomenon in its own right. The most notable of these is Rakesh Khurana's extensive intellectual history, *From Higher Aims to Hired Hands* (2007), which advocates the' professional school' model as the solution to the problems. Other contributions include Starkey and Tiratsoo's account of the marketisation of the system, *Business Schools and the Bottom Line* (2007) and a handful of influential management journal articles that acknowledge the persistency of the problems and try to address them (e.g. Simon, 1967; Whitley, 1984b; Cheit, 1985; Engwall and Danell, 2011; Thomas and Wilson, 2011).

However, most of these accounts culminate in solutions to specific problems rather than explanations for the diversity, persistence or periodic recurrence of legitimacy challenges. Very few studies look closely at the relationship between the business school and higher education systems or investigate why interest groups invested in the success of the Business School have failed to implement effective and sustainable reforms.

For example, Khurana (2007) ignores most of the scholarly debate beyond the business school system itself, which takes a distinctive normative direction and denies the right of the Business School to exist. He also structures his arguments around the monolithic assertion that the business school system should (re)claim <professional school> status, without considering whether this is a possibility. Similarly, Starkey and Tiratsoo (2007) conclude their analysis by proposing a multi-disciplinary form of knowledge production, which they term the *agora*, as the solution to a heavily marketised system. Although these two publications discuss the legitimacy problems in detail, and I cite them both extensively throughout this thesis, neither entertain the idea that the solutions may be structural and lie beyond the reach of committed individuals who work within the system.

In this thesis, I seek to understand this ongoing and multi-faceted legitimacy crisis. I consider what the various legitimacy allegations tell us about the normative viability of the business school system as it stands and what shifts may be needed to maintain and balance its legitimacy with academic and occupational interest groups. In the rest of this introductory chapter, I provide an overview of the legitimacy allegations levelled at the Business School and outline some distinctive features of the business school system that may have some bearing on the variety and persistence of the claims against it.

1. CATEGORISING THE LEGITIMACY CHALLENGES

Claims about the problems of university business education start to emerge in the US towards the start of the twentieth century. As early as 1920, the Business School was described as 'a very ill-defined institution' (Hotchkiss, 1920, p. 92) and throughout the following decade, the business school system faced 'taunts' from other academic disciplines while business school leaders themselves raised concerns relating to the 'opportunism or expedience' of the developing system (Khurana, 2007, p. 141).

Over the following century, two distinct scholarly strands of challenge regarding the legitimacy of the Business School emerged. In summary, these comprise the following:

- **Existential** legitimacy challenges authored by those concerned with the normative aspects of higher education and the disciplinary guardianship of the University, generally published in monograph form by prestigious imprints.
- Challenges to the **intellectual, practical** or **societal** relevance of the Business School and **how to resolve** the problems, published in peer reviewed management journals.

The reverberations of the crisis beyond academia are evidenced in a miscellaneous collection of highly critical publications comprising media articles, popular management texts and policy reports. To some extent, these non-academic sources have a circular relationship with the management literature and act as the catalyst for peer-reviewed narratives as well as drawing on scholarly sources as the basis for their own claims.

In the first section of this chapter, I provide an overview of these two literatures, as well as the non-academic sources, and consider what they tell us about the problems of the business school system.

1.1 Existential legitimacy challenges

Some of the most sustained and vitriolic attacks on the Business School come from those who take an interest in the normative purpose of University. This is the most enduring strand of critique and dates to the earliest days of the business school system in the US (e.g. Veblen, 1918; Flexner and Kerr, 1930). Allegations of this type emerge primarily from the 'idea of the university' canon, a debate that started with the eponymous *The Idea of a University* (Newman, 1852) and continues to the present day with contributions typically authored by public intellectuals or academics working in the humanities or social sciences.

The 'ideas of the university' literature generally challenges the notion that universities should provide direct career preparation or serve occupational interests. However, the Business School is consistently singled out for particularly intense criticism in this literature. It is consistently presented as a threat to other disciplines and to the integrity of the University itself. For example, in *The Higher Learning in America: A Memorandum on the Conduct of Universities by Business Men,* Thorstein Veblen, an eminent economist and sociologist, described the Business School as 'a particularly futile endeavour for any public institution, in that it serves neither the intellectual advancement nor the material welfare of the community' (Veblen, 1918, p. 209).

Twelve years later, in *Universities: American, English, German*, Abraham Flexner, an educator and higher education reformer, demonstrated a deep-seated aversion to management education as a legitimate component of the higher education system:

> 'If an educated man, a Harvard graduate, really wishes to become a retail drug or hardware merchant or a wholesale grocery salesman, does not Harvard put a low valuation on its training and his capacity when it provides him with special graduate training for the career?' (Flexner and Kerr, 1930, p. 169)

Viewed in isolation, some of these earlier critiques might be dismissed as simply representing the intellectual prejudices of their time. However, near identical points are raised by contemporary commentators, such as Stefan Collini in his influential polemic, *What are Universities for?*. Collini asserts that, in addition to posing an existential threat to other academic disciplines, business and management is less 'intrinsically interesting and challenging' than traditional subjects such as English or history (Collini, 2012, p. 142).

Unsurprisingly, existential allegations have kept pace with the growth of the business school system as it achieved dominance across higher education globally. Even a century after the first US business school was established, hostility towards the system remained intense. In his bestselling *The Closing of the American Mind*, philosopher and critic of higher education Allan Bloom described the MBA as 'a great disaster' for the University and 'a way of insuring a lucrative living by a mere fact of a diploma that is not a mark of scholarly achievement.' (Bloom, 1988, p. 371).

Although the sentiment is no less powerfully expressed, this does represent a shift in emphasis in comparison with the anti-Business School discourse from the start of the twentieth century. While Veblen and Flexner fight to keep the Business School out of the University, Bloom is part of a drive to deny the business school system any academic legitimacy despite its entrenched position across higher education. Bloom is not an isolated example of this; philosopher Anthony O'Hear also negates the right of the Business School to enjoy the academic privileges of other disciplines:

> 'While there can be no objection to such (business) schools in their proper place, it is quite unclear why they should exist in universities, or why people working in them should enjoy the specific academic freedom which involves their having tenure. Those who live by the market should, if the occasion arises, be allowed to die by the market.' (O'Hear, 1988, p. 14)

This stance cannot be attributed solely to the stated conservatism of these two authors as it is also evident at the other end of the ideological spectrum. In *Leasing the Ivory Tower: the Corporate Takeover of Academia,* a work well-received by student activist communities when published, professor of journalism Lawrence C. Soley made a similar, strongly worded attack on the legitimacy and integrity of business school academic workers:

> 'Long before academicians in the sciences became entrepreneurs, professors in business departments had given up teaching for more lucrative pursuits – while still collecting their university salaries.' (Soley, 1995, p. 57)

By the turn of the twenty-first century, it became received wisdom in these normative critiques, which originate from academic sources outside the business school system, that the Business School is an *agent* of commercialisation and marketisation while other academic entities are its victim. For example:

> There is a persistent danger that business and management studies set the model for the entire university rather than classics, philosophy, physics or biology,

> especially when departments are forced to show how they are profitable or how they can attract corporate sponsors and outside grant money…One must wonder about the future of pure mathematics, symbolic logic, cosmology or Latin in a world in which business wins the day.' (McHenry, 2008, p. 37)

In contrast, some commentators from inside the system (e.g. Starkey and Tiratsoo, 2007) maintain that the Business School should also be seen as a victim of this same process, since the pressure to deal with high student numbers and provide financial support for other parts of the host institution takes its toll on academic quality and integrity.

Although these existential allegations are serious and sustained, they are largely ignored by business school system insiders who contribute to the management literature. This is curious as these normative accounts are influential and their crude characterisation of the business school system is often unsubstantiated and relatively easy to refute. I suggest that their complete negation of the Business School, and the consistency of their allegations across the entire history of the system, makes them a significant piece of the legitimacy puzzle. To this end, I provide a detailed rhetorical analysis and discussion of this category of critique in Chapter 3 to understand the implications and reach of existential challenges.

1.2 Insider critiques

Hundreds of management journal articles, edited collections and scholarly monographs document the problems of the Business School from the early twentieth century through to the present day. These accounts are all authored by academics who work inside the business school system and who are committed to its success. On this basis, this literature never denies the *potential* for practical and societal contributions or denies the right of the Business School to exist in a university setting. However, the sheer volume of output demonstrates the depth of concern amongst a prominent section of the academic workforce and makes this literature a particularly valuable resource in charting and understanding the nuances of this complex legitimacy crisis.

Across the last century, insiders have repeatedly raised problems relating to the practical relevance, academic quality and societal value of the business school system and provided a wide range of solutions and recommendations for reform. Although some solutions, such as the 'professional school' ideal, have been proposed repeatedly, no solution has ever gained appreciable traction and similar crisis claims often appear on a cyclical basis.

Viewed in aggregate, this literature suggests that the problems may be more intractable than the individual contributions, with their focused claims and specific solutions, may suggest. For example, the titles of these publications demonstrate how the intensity and range of problem claims have been sustained over time. For example:

- Can business be taught?, *The Journal of Business of the University of Chicago* (Heilman, 1932)
- Are business schools really necessary? *California Management Review* (Frederick, 1963)
- Are business schools doing their job? *Harvard Business Review* (Behrman and Levin, 1984)
- The current MBA: why are we failing? *Organizational Behavior Teaching Review* (Finney and Siehl, 1986)

- Irrelevance, Intransigence and business school professors, *Academy of Management Perspectives* (Oviatt and Miller, 1989)
- Business school ostrich syndrome, *Journal of Organizational Change Management* (Hasan, 1993)
- Corporate scandals: it's time for reflection in business schools, *Academy of Management Perspectives* (Adler, 2002)
- Bad management theories are destroying good management practice, *Academy of Management Learning and Education* (Ghoshal, 2005)
- How business schools have lost their way, *Harvard Business Review* (Bennis and O'Toole, 2005)
- Are business school deans doomed? *Journal of Management Development* (Davies, 2016)

As contributors raise specific issues in response to the historical events and conditions at the time of publication, this literature also helps chart the fluctuations in categories of crisis claim chronologically and connects them to specific historical events. For example, Donham (1933) partly attributes the Great Depression to the activities of the business school system while the Enron scandal of 2001 acted as a catalyst for a long series of critiques about the role of the business school system during this economic disaster (e.g. Mitroff, 2004; Ghoshal, 2005; Tourish, Craig and Amernic, 2010; Mingers, Watson and Scaparra, 2012).

However, the extent of this literature is rarely understood or acknowledged by its own contributors and the lack of empirical contributions or cross-citation means it has never been systematically scoped or reviewed. As a result, its potential as a resource for understanding the Business School legitimacy crisis phenomenon has not yet been exploited. On this basis, I take this literature as a primary data source and conduct a thematic rhetorical analysis of these sources (in Chapter 4). The aim of this analysis is to identify patterns across these disconnected papers and understand why the legitimacy crisis has persisted.

1.3 Non-academic accounts of the crisis

Most accounts of this legitimacy crisis remain within or closely aligned to academic literature, and these narratives are the focus of my two rhetorical analyses in Chapters 3 and 4. However, there is also a popular appetite for the problems of the Business School and these accounts generally highlight the problematic relationship with occupational stakeholders and the sense that the Business School has little relevance in the labour market. I provide an overview of these sources in this chapter on the basis that they shape the management literature that is my focus in Chapter 4.

The media and popular accounts of the problems do not sit within the same genre in terms of structure, style or publication context and do not lend themselves to structured, comparative rhetorical analyses in the same way as the two scholarly literatures. However, these narratives are connected by their shared focus on the inadequate impact of the business school system on the business community and, to some extent, on society in general. This type of Business School critique emerged in the mid-1990s and plays out across international and business media articles, as well as within a sub-genre of general management books. The following selection of media headlines demonstrates the tone of these critiques:

B-schools under fire (*Chief Executive*, 1993)
Business schools share the blame for Enron in the *Financial Times* (Ghoshal, 2003)
Bad for business? (*The Economist*, 2005)
Why business ignores business schools in the *Financial Times* (Skapinker, 2008)
Is it time to retrain B-schools? In the *New York Times* (Holland, 2009)
How business schools have failed business in the *Wall Street Journal* (Jacobs, 2009)
Why business still ignores business schools in the *Financial Times* (Skapinker, 2011)
Why we should bulldoze the business school in *The Guardian* (Parker, 2018b)

Meanwhile, the popular management books feature equally attention-grabbing front covers and titles (See *Fig 1*. for examples) and purport to expose the darker side of a business school education. For example, this quotation from *What They Teach You at Harvard Business School* provides a nihilistic student perspective on the MBA experience:

> ”HBS,” he said, hoisting a ball of noodles to his mouth, “is a factory for unhappy people. We have so many choices, and yet so few people seem happy about that. It just makes them anxious. And more anxious. And then they make terrible decision about their lives. But,” he added, “these are mostly very good people. People from good families with good values. I can’t figure out what happens. I think they just get desperate.” (Delves Broughton, 2008, p. p.268-9)

Snapshots from Hell, an experiential account of an MBA programme at Stanford Business School, takes an equally dystopian stance:

> ‘Uninspired though he was, however, Rogerson of Macro proved a sprightly and engaging instructor compared to Harold Morris of Strategic Management. Morris was so boring and so ineffectual that you loathed him. Yes, at the same time he was so pathetic, so clearly a well-intentioned, fundamentally decent person who had somehow or other ended up in a job that he just could not so, that you loathed yourself for loathing him. This, of course, made you loathe him more.’ (Robinson, 1995, p. 196)

Fig 1: general interest titles from top left to right: Robinson (1995); Crainer and Dearlove (2000); Mintzberg (2004); Delves Broughton (2008); Parker (2018a); Locke and Spender (2011); McDonald (2017)

Interestingly, these sensationalist accounts prove surprisingly influential within the management literature. For example, *Gravy Training: Inside the Business of Business Schools* (Crainer and Dearlove, 2000) is cited by multiple influential management journal critiques, including Tiratsoo (2004), Clinebell and Clinebell (2008), Pfeffer and Fong (2002, 2004) (2004; 2008), Navarro (2008) and Thomas and Wilson (Thomas and Wilson, 2011). Delves Broughton's equally journalistic expose of Harvard Business School (2008) is cited in both the Harvard Business Review (Podolny, 2009) and the Academy of Management Review (Starkey, 2015). On this basis, the management literature often references popular critiques and provides a more measured discussion of the allegations.

The high profile and wide readership of this type of critique may partly explain the level of alarm they cause amongst business school system insiders. As an example, *What They Teach You at Harvard Business School* (2008) was reviewed by the Financial Times, Economist, Literary Review, Sunday Times and Wall Street Journal as well as making the long list for the 2008 Financial Times Best Business Book award and the New York Times Bestseller list. Some of these publications are also used as the basis of hard-hitting think pieces, as a Guardian article by the author of *Shut Down the Business School* exemplifies:

> 'it is relatively easy to imagine that the knowledge the business school sells and the way that it sells it somehow less vulgar and stupid than it really is' (Parker, 2018b).

The overlap between management literature and media or popular critiques is such that some of the media critiques (e.g., *Financial Times* 2003, *The Guardian* 2018) are authored by business school system academics rather than staff writers. Similarly, popular management books are authored by a mix of investigative journalists (e.g., Crainer and Dearlove, 2000), professional writers (e.g., Robinson, 1995) and management scholars (e.g. Parker, 2018a). The following comment by Michael Skapinker, a Financial Times journalist who wrote periodically on the Business School crisis over several years, demonstrates how popular critiques are often inspired by academic disquiet while acting, in turn, as a catalyst for further scholarly crisis claims:

> 'My column was based on an anguished series of articles – in the Academy of Management journal, as it happened – from business school professors admitting that few people paid attention to their research. My column prompted a bigger response than anything I have written in 30 years of journalism. Almost all of it came from business school academics, and they overwhelmingly agreed that managers generally ignored them.' (Skapinker, 2011)

I suggest that these non-academic accounts have two features that may explain their influence on management self-critiques and why, unlike the existential critiques, they are so heavily referenced by this particular literature.

- Although they raise serious concerns about the legitimacy of the business school system, non-academic critiques call for extensive reform rather than asserting that the Business School should not exist. As such, these critiques are easier for management scholars to accommodate and refute.

- The reputational damage resulting from non-academic critiques could directly impact important operational aspects of the business school system, such as student recruitment, and need to be addressed urgently. Given that the Business School has always occupied a marginal normative status within the academy, existential allegations may be simply of less immediate salience to management scholars.

For this reason, in addition to the heterogenous nature of non-academic critiques, I do not use them as the basis for a discrete textual analysis. However, the non-academic accounts are also significant in their own right, as well as playing an important role in driving the management literature critiques. In brief, they bring the problematic relationship between the business school system and its occupational stakeholders into sharp relief. This is a perspective that is ignored in the existential critiques that originate with academic stakeholders from beyond the business school system and which tends to get subsumed into 'rigour-relevance' debates within the management critiques. Given that preparing individuals for careers in management is central to the logic of the Business School, this thesis uses the non-academic literature rather differently. While I subject the two scholarly literatures to extensive textual analysis, the non-academic literature is indirectly represented through the management self-critiques (Chapter 4) and acts as a starting point for the hybrid theorical model proposed in Chapter 5.

2. POTENTIAL STRUCTURAL VULNERABILITIES

These three sets of critique suggest that the business school system faces a complex web of legitimacy challenges that are cyclical and contradictory. The intractability of the problems in the face of concerted attempts to solve some of them also suggests that the issues may be structural rather than the result of short-term errors in strategic direction, sour grapes or sensationalism.

In the second part of this chapter, I identify some distinctive historical features of the business school system that may indicate a structural cause of the crisis. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to provide a detailed history of the system (see Khurana 2007 for this) but I focus on four factors that have resulted in a higher educational system that is particularly vulnerable to a compromised legitimacy:

- The involvement of multiple external stakeholders and powerful interest groups - potentially at the expense of disciplinary and occupational stakeholders
- Rapid growth of the system due to policy interventions and high student demand – making it hard to sustain academic quality or organic development
- Lack of cohesive disciplinary identity across a large and diverse academic community – resulting in a lack of consensus on norms and mission
- Lack of direct occupational governance – resulting in governance structures with a managerial orientation

In the rest of this chapter, I discuss these four factors in more detail.

2.1 Diversity of stakeholders and interest groups

A distinctive feature of the business school system is the significance of interventions by policy, charitable or interest groups that do not directly represent either disciplinary or occupational stakeholders. These initiatives, which have taken place over many decades and across different national contexts, suggest that the business school system has needed extensive external support to gain its initial foothold in higher education and, later, to maintain its legitimacy.

Although these interventions were designed to promote the system or resolve specific problems, they do not have a uniformly positive legacy. Some interventions, such as the Ford Foundation investments (Gordon and Howell, 1959), also remain widely cited in recent management literatures as evidence of a deep-seated crisis of legitimacy (e.g., Pfeffer and Fong, 2002; Ghoshal, 2005; Latusek and Hensel, 2022). I suggest that these external interventions have shaped the system in a way that may be unique to the Business School context (Khurana, 2007, p. 235) and that it is useful to examine them as a phenomenon in their own right. In this section, I provide an overview of some of the principal interventions of this type. In Chapter 5, I give detailed consideration to how an imbalance in stakeholder power can compromise legitimacy with key disciplinary and occupational stakeholders.

2.1.1 Philanthropic and charitable interventions

Philanthropic and charitable investments are a defining feature of the business school system and have been instrumental in the foundation of individual schools, the growth of the overall system, and for some of its strategic changes in direction. For example, the Wharton School opened at the University of Pennsylvania in 1881, following a $100,000 donation from industrialist Joseph Wharton. Other examples of early investments that helped the Business School concept take off included the foundation of the Tuck School of Business in 1900, thanks to donations by financier Edward Tuck (Tuck, 2022), while the construction of the Harvard Business School campus was facilitated a $5,000,000 donation from George F. Baker during the 1920s. Philanthropic donations remain a distinctive, and sometimes controversial, feature of the system to the present day. For example, Judge Business School in Cambridge, Said Business School in Oxford, and Tanaka Business School at Imperial College (since renamed to avoid reputational damage) have all been founded since the 1990s.

In addition, a number of major US charitable foundations took an interest in the business school system (e.g. Carnegie, Rockefeller) during the post-War period, with the Ford Foundation providing the most outstanding and comprehensive example of investments that altered the course of the Business School project. During the 1950s, the Ford Foundation made multi-million-dollar donations to selected US business schools with the aim of improving their research orientation through doctoral programmes, quantitative methods and behavioural science (Khurana, 2007, p. 247). This initiative was designed in response to perceptions that 'universities were not doing enough to prepare people for the new industrial economy' (Khurana, 2007, p. 47).

However, this was not the only motive for this enormous intervention. The Ford Foundation's interest in the Business School was also a product of the Cold War requirement to 'strengthen democracy in the face of the communist threat [which] was seen as inextricably linked to support for corporations and management' (Khurana, 2007, p. 239). The perceived importance of business education to western democracy also became a feature of US foreign policy. This included funded academic exchanges and other investments that were intended to promote the embryonic UK business school system after the Second World War via both US government agencies and the Ford Foundation (Starkey and Tiratsoo, 2007, p. 17). I do not suggest that there is anything intrinsically 'wrong' with external investments of this type, however, they may exacerbate problems that originate from inadequate disciplinary or occupational governance by further weakening the role of core stakeholders.

2.1.2 Policy interventions

The first two UK business schools opened their doors in the mid-1960s, following reports by the National Economic Development Council (1963) and Robbins Committee on Higher Education (1963), and in response to the direct recommendations of *British Business Schools: a report by Lord Franks* (Franks, 1964). Lord Franks specifically suggested that the Universities of London and Manchester set up business schools, and this took place within two years. Even before the two proposed business schools launched, the Franks report raised concerns about legitimacy:

> 'Much the most important and difficult factor in the success of a Business School lies in recruiting and keeping a staff of sufficient quality. It will not be possible to do this unless the School is academically respectable. Its staff must consist of people, most of whom might otherwise be members of a university faculty or department, just as some of them will be able to command high positions in business and in fact are likely to have been seconded to the School from such positions.' (Franks, 1964, p. 5)

As with the charitable interventions described above, this raises questions about the intellectual evolution of management as an academic discipline, and whether the lack of scholarly engagement in the early development of the system has had some problematic consequences. As a comparison, economics also emerged as an academic discipline in the early twentieth century. Unlike business and management, economics followed a gradual process of disciplinary evolution from what was then called 'political economy' as a range of specialisms synthesised to create a new discipline. Meanwhile, the 'professional schools' that emerged during the same period served strongly defined occupations (such as dentistry, pharmacy or veterinary science) and this development in career preparation was driven by national professional associations that oversaw its formal integration into the university system and maintained some level of control.

In contrast, the occupation of management was an amorphous and emerging occupational activity during the early twentieth century, while 'the decision to found a new business school was often made under the impulse of opportunism or expedience and in the face of opposition from other academic faculties' (Khurana, 2007, p. 141)

Several decades later, the introduction of the Business School to UK universities was also opposed by influential academic stakeholders. For example, a 62-page report by a *Committee on Special Enquiry into University Education as a Preparation for Business at Cambridge University* involved an exhaustive analysis of Cambridge graduate destinations and a survey of 300 graduate employers and a representative sample of 1700 Cambridge graduates who had gone on to work in business. A carefully worded set of conclusions advised against any dedicated business programme. It is a curious feature of this report that it only includes one short mention of the well-established US business school system as a possible frame of reference or model:

> 'Eighteen graduates express strongly their disapproval of a special business course at Cambridge. In only one instance is this disapproval qualified, the writer regretting that the 'new science of management' can only be studied in the United States.' (University of Cambridge, 1945, p. 61)

The combination of external drivers of expansion in the face of opposition by broader academic stakeholders may have had consequences for the academic reputation of the business school system. In Section 2.3 of this Chapter I explore the impact of this tension on the identity of the business and management academic community and, in Chapter 3, I expand this with detailed analysis of the problematic place of the Business School in normative narratives of the University.

2.1.3 Internal Governance and Legitimisation

Over time, the business school system has been subject to a number of mechanisms intended to promote its legitimacy, which have been sponsored by managerial interests from within the academic community rather than purely disciplinary representatives. Some of these mechanisms have been incorporated into the structures of the system (although not without controversy) and others have left no trace, despite considerable investment and effort. These formal attempts at improving research and education in the business school system span the quality of programmes, the quality of research and contribution to corporate social responsibility. I provide three illustrative examples of these initiatives below.

In terms of legitimacy-building through programme enhancement, the **American Association of Collegiate Schools of Business** (now known as AACSB International) has evolved as a unique form of accreditation agency that operates from within the business school system itself and whose stamp of approval mimics the credentials provided by professional associations, such as the Law Society, Institution of Civil Engineers, or General Pharmaceutical Council. The AACSB started life in 1927 and originally served as a trade body for the 'fledgling business school movement' (Khurana, 2007, p. 119). However, in the wake of the Korean GI Bill (1952), the organisation pivoted to provide the accreditations for programmes serving a new influx of students entitled to university funding (Khurana, 2007, p. 229) and has since become an accepted route to enhanced legitimacy within the system (Thomas and Wilson, 2011).

This logic of 'within-system' accreditation gained momentum and came to serve rather different purposes. By the 1990s, the AACSB was just one of three international bodies that operated on this basis and invited individual business schools to publicly demonstrate their quality by pursuing their accreditation. The two other accreditation agencies that emerged in this way included the European Quality Improvement System (EQUIS), operated by the European Foundation for Management Development (EFMD), and the Association of MBAs (AMBA). By the end of the century the three organisations were 'pitched into what became an increasingly naked battle for market share' against each other for the provision of accreditation services (Starkey and Tiratsoo, 2007, p. 37).

All three agencies are membership organisations that require financial investment by those who engage with their services, and each has long and complex lists of members or partners. Suffice to say, individual business schools pay substantial sums to participate in the accreditation process and maintain their accredited status. Achieving initial accreditation with the AACSB costs around $30,000 (AACSB, 2022) while EQUIS accreditation costs €55,000 (EQUIS, 2019) and AMBA accreditation costs £22,000 plus expenses (AMBA, 2020). Many institutions aim for 'triple accreditation' as the ultimate badge of quality.

These mechanisms are an example of a legitimisation process that does not provide access to a sheltered labour market (as professional association accreditation does) but that secures an advantage in a hyper-competitive market for business education. As with so many other interventions in the business school system, 'accreditation' proved a double-edged sword in terms of legitimacy and sparked its own set of controversies (e.g., Kilpatrick, Dean and Kilpatrick, 2008; Lowrie and Willmott, 2009).

In terms of legitimacy building through the enhancing of the academic quality of management research, my second example has some parallels with the charitable and policy investments and interventions described earlier in this chapter. As with the Ford Foundation, this investment was made in recognition that the business school system is an important higher education resource that is failing to flourish on academic terms.

To this end, the UK's **Advanced Institute of Management Research (AIM)** was a £21.8 million initiative by the Economic and Social Science Research Council (ESRC) and Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) that ran between 2002 and 2012. AIM involved the appointment of 150 Fellows and Scholars tasked with raising quality and expanding the capacity of the UK management research base, as well as leading research projects that enhanced the UK's international competitiveness.

This initiative originated with the ESRC's Commission on Management Research in 1994 and followed discussion with the now defunct Council for Excellence in Management and Leadership in 2001 (Macdonald, Steen and Shazi, 2016). As with so many Business School legitimisation initiatives, AIM proved controversial and attracted criticism in its own right (Macdonald, Steen and Shazi, 2016; Wensley and Neely, 2016). Critics viewed it as a cynical and self-serving exercise in legitimacy building:

> 'UK business schools saw the AIM as academic certification and universities were delighted to present their cash cows as pedigree stock' (Macdonald, Steen and Shazi, 2016, p. 451).

A commentary in the *Financial Times* published after completion of the initiative summed up AIM's (lack of) legacy:

> 'The Advanced Institute of Management Research (Aim) was launched in 2002 to raise the standard of management research in the UK. It was wound up last year, leaving the government and research councils nearly £30m poorer. How well did Aim do? It is hard to tell. Those most involved in the venture are reluctant to talk and its evaluation by the Economic and Social Research Council remains confidential' (Macdonald, 2016)

My third example represents an attempt to build legitimacy in terms of positive societal impact. The **Principles for Responsible Management Education** (PRME) is an international initiative, which was developed in 2007, under the auspices of the UN Global Compact, by a large team of business school deans and university presidents. Organisationally, PRME is a network of other entities and describes itself as 'a global learning community of thought leaders, academics, businesses, students, and leadership experts (who) engage with a variety of platforms and projects that will allow them to scale up their commitment to transforming business and management education and advancing the Sustainable Development Goals' (PRME, 2022b). The following organisations were all involved in drafting and approving the final version of PRME (PRME, 2022a):

- AACSB International
- European Foundation for Management Development (EFMD)
- Aspen Institute Business and Society Program
- Academy of Business in Society (ABIS)
- Globally Responsible Leadership Initiative (GRLI)

It is worth pointing out that many of these entities are themselves network-based organisations with their own legitimisation mission and that several of the PRME stakeholders are also members of each other's networks. It is another distinctive characteristic of the business school system that these network organisations, which play such a large part in its normative governance, are primarily managerial rather than scholarly in intent even if individual members are also members of the academic workforce.

Learned societies, such as the Academy of Management, which describes itself as a 'professional association for management and organization scholars' (AOM, 2022), and the British Academy of Management, which describes itself as a 'community of scholars' (BAM, 2022) do not appear to take a formal role within these managerial networks. The weak representation of scholarly interest groups in legitimacy building initiatives is a topic I return to in Chapter 5.

2.2 Rapid growth and expansion

While some of the allegations levelled at the Business School might be dismissed as 'sour grapes' in the face of this success, I suggest that the capacity to grow so quickly may have compromised the capacity to build legitimacy across multiple dimensions with both academic and occupational stakeholders.

A key point here is that factors such as student demand and policy support may have unwittingly promoted lower quality provision. For example, the rapid proliferation and growth of the business school system has also resulted in an international academic labour shortage. As a result of this, lower ranking and less financially stable schools found it hard to appoint suitably qualified staff (Starkey and Tiratsoo, 2007, p. 51). This is an obvious side effect of rapid growth although, as I discuss in Chapter 3, the management literature self-critiques tend to ignore the impact of labour supply problems across the wider system in favour of the problems faced by elite business schools. The popularity of Business School programmes with students and the relatively low cost of programme delivery (given lack of laboratories, specialist equipment or the requirements on staff: student ratios imposed by some professional associations) have also resulted in a problematic 'cash cow' status (Pettigrew and Starkey, 2016).

As the business school system developed, competition between individual schools for the staff and students intensified, especially given the inevitable fluctuations in student demand. Under these conditions, academic 'high-mindedness' gave way to the internalisation of a market logic within the academic community (Starkey and Tiratsoo, 2007, pp. 32–33). I suggest that the role of marketisation in shaping an academic workforce raises important questions about how the individual academic worker achieves legitimacy. This is a topic that I return to in Chapter 3 and that is salient beyond the business school system.

2.3 Fragmented disciplinary identity

As an academic discipline, management emerged around the same time as 'professional' subjects such as dentistry, pharmacy and veterinary science (Khurana, 2007, p. 67). Meanwhile, economics also evolved into a standalone discipline during the first half of the twentieth century. On this basis, there is no reason why the discipline of management should not have achieved academic respectability during the course of the last century,

However, there are structural reasons why management appears to represent a unique failure in this arena. The rapid early growth of the business school system in the US led to 'chaotic' curriculum formation and 'uneven' faculty composition with many instructors lacking PhDs or directly relevant first degrees (Khurana, 2007, pp. 155–6). Several decades later, the publication of the Carnegie Corporation (Pierson, 1959) and Ford Foundation (Gordon and Howell, 1959) reports highlighted how faculty training and research quality, 'failed to meet even rudimentary standards' (Khurana, 2007, p. 267).

As a result of the Ford Foundation investments, greater emphasis was placed on research training in quantitative and behavioural methods for Business School faculty members. An unfortunate and unintended consequence of this strategic initiative was the creation of 'warring' disciplinary factions within the business school system (Khurana, 2007, p. 283). It seems that these tensions have never been resolved. Indeed, the management literature on the legitimacy crisis demonstrates a bewildering diversity of contrasting positions about the place of the Business School. These range from unthinking acceptance of market ideology (e.g., Knights and Clarke, 2013) through to autonomist Marxist positions from a self-styled 'collection of working-class drifters, sociology graduates, and ex-leftist politicos who, nonetheless, find themselves working as academics in business school contexts' (Rowlinson and Hassard, 2011, p. 673). In Chapter 4, I explore how this diversity results in a range of directly contradictory normative positions and solutions that preclude any consensus over the future of the system.

The normative diversity within the business school system is not acknowledged elsewhere in academia, with normative debates on higher education either ignoring business school academic workers or scapegoating them. The 'ideas of the university' literature (see 1.1 of this Chapter) frequently negates the Business School, a process that I analyse in more detail in Chapter 3. In Chapter 5, I explore the impact of weak normative academic guardianship on the legitimacy of the system.

2.4 Weak occupational governance

As discussed in the previous section, a number of defined occupations (such as pharmacy and dentistry) transferred their career preparation processes across to the higher education system around the start of the twentieth century. The Business School was not an outlier in this professionalisation project. However, there are three key structural differences between the business school system and the 'professional schools' that emerged at the same time:

- Unlike pharmacy or dentistry, 'management' was not a fully defined occupation, let alone a profession, when the first US business schools launched. This 'amorphous' status meant that individual business schools emerged in a 'haphazard' way (Khurana, 2007, p. 141) and fierce debates have continued across last century about how to constitute a knowledge base that both academic and occupational stakeholders recognise.

- There is no consensus that a Business School education is the most advantageous route to a career in management (compared to other academic disciplines) or even that an effective manager requires higher education at all (Starkey and Tiratsoo, 2007, p. 29).

- 'Management' remains a diffuse category of occupation or skillset that is not equivalent to any defined profession or aspiring profession. It is not governed by a national professional association that has the power to issue credentials and this is unlikely to become an option, given that management is not a sheltered occupation.

The 'professional school' model has regularly been put forward as a solution to the legitimacy crisis in management literature debates including by Wooster (1919), Stockton (1930), Calkins (1946), Carroll (1959), LaForce and Novelli (1985), Pfeffer and Fong (2004), and Rousseau (2012). However, this strand gives very little consideration to the structural requirements of 'professional school' status or why the professional school has proved to be an impossible ideal to realise in this context. On this basis, I focus on these issues in Chapter 5 in order to explore the different ways that forms of *occupational higher education* can achieve legitimacy and what the business school system could learn from these alternatives.

3. CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I argue that a number of historical features and structural characteristics may make the business school system vulnerable to legitimacy challenges. This is especially the case if we accept that academic guardianship and appropriate control by occupational stakeholders are equally important factors in establishing and maintaining legitimacy.

Although the legitimacy crisis is discussed extensively in the management literature and further evidenced in both higher education and non-academic critiques, both scholarly sources tend towards the polemical. Neither offers much empirical or theoretically grounded analysis of why so much has gone wrong for one of the most successful higher education entities, the mechanisms through which the business school system causes the alleged harms, why none of the many proposed solutions or interventions have taken root, or what evidence-based options exist for a sustainable legitimacy.

On this basis, I have chosen to treat the two scholarly literatures as primary sources, which each illustrate different aspects of the crisis rather than as a series of studies that present evidence *about* the crisis. In Chapters 3 and 4 I conduct thematic and rhetorical analyses of some important and representative texts in the higher education and management literatures. I take the findings from these two analyses, as well as non-academic critiques, as the starting point for the hybrid theoretical model that I develop and propose in Chapter 5. The following chapter provides an overview of my methods and analyses.

Chapter 2: Methodology

In this chapter, I introduce my research questions and outline my methodology. In brief, this thesis explores why the business school system has struggled to build and maintain its legitimacy as an academic entity, despite its manifest success in dominating global higher education. I approach this question through three phases of research: two rhetorical analyses of two textual corpora taken from scholarly literatures and a hybrid theoretical model of *occupational higher education*. All three phases use a critical realist framework to identify causal mechanisms that may explain the persistence of a multi-faceted legitimacy crisis. My analysis of higher education narratives explores how and why higher education literatures single out the Business School for existential challenge. My analysis of management literature self-critiques maps how they frame the complex legitimacy crisis and suggests reasons for the lack of effective resolution. I use the findings from these two rhetorical analyses, together with insights from popular critiques, as the basis for a hybrid theoretical model that demonstrates how other forms of *occupational higher education* balance academic and occupational legitimacies, and apply this to the case of the Business School.

1. INTRODUCTION

The business school system suffers from a distinctive normative crisis that leaves few traces beyond the varied allegations raised by multiple interest groups over an extended period. The crisis is evident in the existential challenges that negate the Business School and the complex web of critiques from within the business school system, as well as in a range of popular critiques. However, even the scholarly sources tend to evidence the problems rather than explain why they have occurred and why they persist. Relevant academic literatures tend towards the polemic or experiential and even the most wide-ranging investigations of Business School legitimacy take only a partial view of the phenomenon. Both existential critiques and the management literature show little recognition of each other's existence and there is minimal co-citation within either of the two literatures. This leaves them as an under-explored resource but one which may have explanatory potential in understanding why the Business School appears uniquely vulnerable to legitimacy challenges. Understanding the reasons for this ongoing vulnerability is the first aim of this thesis.

The reputational vulnerability of the business school system that emerges from this range of textual sources stands in contrast to other forms of higher education that are similarly predicated on career preparation for expert occupations. In brief, the business school system appears to attract more controversy than its equivalents and this cannot be explained purely by its relative success and dominance. For one thing, this opposition dates back to before the system was even properly established in national contexts (e.g. Veblen, 1918; University of Cambridge, 1945). Early manifestations of anti-Business School sentiment show that there was always a problematic aspect to the idea of the Business School in a university context. Understanding why the Business School should have this inherent legitimacy 'disadvantage' is the second aim of this thesis.

Academic literatures are necessarily supported by a consistent editorial framework and are subject to rigorous expert review. On this basis, I take scholarly sources as representing a level of consensus about some aspect of Business School legitimacy, even in the case of the polemics. The presence of both existential critiques from outside the system and the multi-faceted and unresolved legitimacy claims from insiders, especially given the reach of both literatures within their separate spheres of influence, seems to demonstrate the seriousness and intractability of the crisis.

However the content of these largely experiential and polemical texts does not lend itself to conventional evidence synthesis or meta-analysis, making it easy to ignore a rich evidence base. Unlike empirical or theoretical literatures, which are generally rooted in previous contributions to a debate, contributions to these two literatures are sometimes only connected by a seemingly coincidental similarity of theme, argument or terminology. On this basis, I subject these two scholarly literatures to rhetorical analyses that identify their persuasive techniques and the implicit logic of their arguments, rather than attempting to synthesise the slight and patchy instances of empirical data.

I then take my findings from the two analyses (along with the popular critiques) as the starting point for a hybrid theoretical model. The model explores the available pathways to legitimacy for different forms of *occupational higher education*. I then apply this model to the case of the Business School to identify structural solutions that might prove durable. This is the third aim of this thesis.

2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

I meet the three aims described above by answering the following questions:

RQ1 How and why is the Business School negated by the wider academic community in normative narratives of higher education? Does this confer an intractable legitimacy 'disadvantage' on the business school system?

RQ2 How do internal academic stakeholders of the business school system frame its legitimacy problems? Why do these stakeholders ignore existential challenges and avoid structural explanations?

RQ3 How do other academic entities that provide career preparation for expert occupations maintain their legitimacy with academic and occupational stakeholders? Are any of these pathways appropriate for the business school system?

This thesis addresses these issues through three different analyses, which each have their own method and theoretical framework. I provide an overview of my approach here and then describe the methodology of each analysis in more detail within the relevant chapter.

3. OVERVIEW OF THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODS

Analysing my two textual corpora to understand why the Business School is the subject of such an intractable and multi-faceted legitimacy crisis presents a series of theoretical and methodological challenges. I resolve these by conducting rhetorical analyses within a critical realist ontological framework. I explain each of these choices below.

3.1 Critical Realism

All three investigations that make up this thesis use a critical realist framework (Bhaskar, 1978, 2010; Archer and Bhaskar, 1998; Mingers, 2000; Danermark, 2002; O'Mahoney, Vincent and Edwards, 2014) to identify the causal mechanisms that may explain the persistence of a multi-faceted legitimacy crisis. Critical realism is a meta-theoretical position, based on a realist ontology, which is concerned with identifying causal mechanisms. In order to understand the mechanisms behind the Business School legitimacy crisis, I needed to address certain features of the business school system and the way it is framed in my textual sources. I rely on a series of key concepts from critical realism, as well as drawing on methodologies derived from this approach, to achieve this.

My two textual corpora lay out the way that their authors *experience* and identify the *events* that they consider important in determining the legitimacy of the Business School. My aim is to explain why these events should lead to delegitimisation and why the system has failed to resolve or respond effectively to these events. *Events*, *experiences* and *causal mechanisms* are key concepts in critical realism (Bhaskar, 1978, 2008) and have been recently applied to critical realist thematic analysis as a method of textual analysis (Fryer, 2022). Although my rhetorical analysis of management self-critiques in Chapter 4 does not correspond completely with thematic analysis (in that I set my five categories of interest in advance rather than allowing them to emerge from the analytic process), some key principles of this method helped guide my investigation. In brief, the authors' *claim* (or the way they experience the problems) and the *catalyst* (or event that prompts them to engage with the issues) inform two of the five categories of this rhetorical analysis.

A striking feature of my two corpora is their conceptually vague accounts of the higher education system, business school system, component parts of these systems and the forces that act upon them. This is evident in the imprecise and inconsistent labelling as well as reliance on ideographic concepts across both corpora. I resolve this problem using the critical realist concept of 'entities'. According to critical realism, social and physical entities (each with their own 'emergent' or causal properties or powers) all have their place in an open and 'laminated' system (Collier, 1989; Bhaskar, 2008; Elder-Vass, 2010). Anything we identify as 'causally efficacious' (Bhaskar, 2014, p. vi) counts as an entity including 'generative mechanisms or structures (that) may be non-material, for example social structures, organizations, ideas, motivations and so on' (Mingers and Standing, 2017, p. 172). In Chapter 4, another of my five pre-set analytic categories (*targets*) is derived from the concept of entities.

As the concept of 'entities' also allows for the interplay of facts and values (Gorski, 2013), this helped me differentiate between the 'normative' and 'utilitarian' (Albert and Whetten, 1985) elements of the relevant systems. In Chapter 3, I use the concept of entities to distinguish between ideas (such as the <scholar> or the University) and more tangible parts of the system (such as the academic worker or higher education institution). In critical realism, absence is also a 'highly valuable diagnostic category' (Bhaskar, 2014, p. xii). My two corpora have potentially significant absences in the issues they address, as well as a curious failure to acknowledge other contributions, debates or perspectives of interest. I take these absences as having explanatory potential and highlight them throughout this thesis.

In order to understand why the Business School legitimacy crisis is so intractable, I also need to understand the role of 'legitimacy' in higher education. The critical realist distinctions between 'emergent property' and 'emergent power' proved helpful in this context. According to this framework, 'legitimacy' can be framed as either a set of characteristics that an entity can embody or as a force that can be exerted to achieve certain ends. Although *property* and *power* are often used interchangeably by critical realists, the distinctions between them are important for this analysis. For example, a key question of this thesis is whether *academic legitimacy* is best understood as a *property* or a *power* (Mingers and Standing, 2017, p. 178). This perspective helps me understand whether legitimisation is a *power* that allows particular academic entities to establish their normative dominance of the higher education (as in Chapter 3) or whether the business school system has certain *properties* (e.g. concern with shareholder value rather than societal benefit) that compromise its legitimacy (as in Chapter 4).

As well as being conceptually vague, the texts I analyse take a largely theoretical and non-empirical approach to the problems of the business school system, despite the existence of multiple theoretical frameworks from other disciplines that might hold explanatory power (especially in relation to legitimacy). The management self-critiques also emanate from a diverse range of Business School sub-disciplines and appear across a disconnected range of management journals with different perspectives as well as different positions in the official journal rankings that characterise the system. There is also very little that connects my two textual corpora in terms of co-citation, ideology or the nature of their claims. In Chapter 4, I draw on elements of a form of critical realist evidence synthesis that was designed for management and organisation studies and accommodates 'fragmented and methodologically diverse fields, where little consensus exists regarding what constitutes quality research.' (Rousseau, Manning and Denyer, 2008, p. 499). My analysis in Chapter 4 is not an evidence synthesis but does follow Rousseau's specified pluralist approach to its textual evidence base, which accepts the range of epistemological (and normative) positions within source texts and acknowledges their individual limits. As with this approach, I navigate this pluralism by emphasising the triangulation of my findings (Rousseau, Manning and Denyer, 2008, p. 505) within my analyses and across my corpora, which come together in the hybrid theoretical model I propose in Chapter 5.

I also structure my overall investigation according to the DREIC model of critical realist research (Bhaskar, 2014) although each stage does not progress entirely sequentially across this thesis:

	Stage of critical realist analysis	**Component of this study**
D	Describe the events in a theoretically meaningful way	How the business school system has failed to achieve *academic legitimacy* despite its 'utilitarian' success and appearing to meet relevant conditions of legitimacy (see Chapters 1, 3, and 4 for discussion of the events that characterise the crisis)
R	Retroduce hypothetical generative mechanisms	Propose possible explanations drawn from a range of social science theories about how legitimisation processes may result in a chronic legitimacy crisis (see Section 1.1 of Chapter 3 and Section 5 of Chapter 5) .
E	Eliminate alternative competing hypotheses	Use the case of the Business School to explore whether *academic legitimacy* operates a set of properties that any academic entity can attain by meeting these criteria (see Chapter 4 for attempts to attain legitimacy as a property.
I	Identify the correct mechanism(s)	Identify how *academic legitimacy* operates as a *power* across higher education to establish the dominance of particular entities (see Chapter 3)
C	Correct scientific knowledge in the light of the (provisional) findings	Develop a model of *occupational higher education* that proposes pathways to legitimacy (see Chapters 5 and 6)

Table 3: DREIC research process, adapted from Mingers and Standing (2017, p. 176)

3.2 Rhetorical Analysis

While Chapters 3 and 4 are based on analyses of two separate scholarly literatures, neither can be classed as literature reviews because I do not draw primarily on their empirical or theoretical content (such as it is). Instead, I treat each of them as textual corpora of experiential narratives, which form a rich language resource for rhetorical analysis.

Rhetorical analysis is used to understand how a text achieves its persuasive goals and has recently emerged as an area of interest in organisational studies and applied to the persuasive communications that inform legitimacy judgements (Hoefer and Green, 2016). However, rhetorical analysis needs some explanation as a methodological approach within higher education research as the term is often used pejoratively rather than in its technical sense. For example, rhetoric is frequently presented as the problematic antithesis of ‘reality’ (e.g. O’Loughlin, MacPhail and Msetfi, 2015; Tight, 2017) or used as shorthand for any deliberately deceptive or manipulative mode of communication (e.g. Knights, 2008; Santiago and Carvalho, 2012).

As a formal approach to the analysis of text or speech, rhetoric does not have pejorative overtones and is simply ‘the study of producing discourses and interpreting how, when and why discourses are persuasive’ (Keith and Lundberg, 2008, p. 4). In its capacity as a discursive practice and a branch of scholarship, formal rhetoric has a history that stretches back millennia with many different traditions and forms. Subjecting a set of texts to rhetorical scrutiny is not to question the integrity of the authors or to mount an inherent challenge to the value of their arguments. Put simply, rhetorical analysis is an approach that can be applied to any text with a persuasive function.

My two corpora have a dual capacity as persuasive texts and scholarly literatures. Firstly, each account has its ostensible function, which corresponds to standard conventions of scholarly discourse. This includes a declared aim, which is laid out clearly and consciously by the authors. For example, this stated aim may be to explore a particular legitimacy challenge within the business school system. Secondly, each account also positions the author normatively in relation to the identified problem and this is a central concern of this thesis. For example, my rhetorical analyses show how authors use these texts to achieve normative dominance within a system, negate problematic elements of a system, maintain a convenient normative status quo, or distance themselves from a problem.

I argue that this process of normative positioning provides important insights into the legitimacy problems of the business school system. On this basis, I take this second order of thinking as the focus of my analyses in Chapters 3 and 4. However, this aspect of these texts often remains implicit and is only detectable by focussing on ‘ephemeral’ features of the narratives, such as authorial assumptions, persuasive techniques, use of ideographs or puzzling absences. Their full explanatory potential only becomes apparent when identified as a pattern across the relevant corpus.

On occasion, texts do also provide an empirical or theoretical perspective. As such, these accounts may also help explain some aspect of the legitimacy problems in their own right. When this is the case, I use the evidence base in these individual texts accordingly (see Chapter 4 Section 2.2 for further discussion).

Although each corpus requires a distinct form of rhetorical analysis (which I outline in the relevant chapters), both highlight how academic workers use scholarly literatures to position themselves normatively with part of the higher education system. In each case, I am interested in my academic authors as actors *within* a curious phenomenon of a higher education rather than as scholarly commentators *on* the same phenomenon. As such my priority is to show how academic workers promote particular normative visions of higher education and use scholarly discourse to gain consensus for their vision. This is the crucial distinction between the analyses in the next two chapters and the techniques of conventional literature review.

However, the significant features of these texts only come into focus when narratives are analysed comparatively and the repetition of features or tropes across individual accounts is highlighted. On this basis, I use some of the approaches and structures of literature review methodologies to scope the source literatures and select the most appropriate publications for inclusion, as well as to establish the theoretical context of my arguments . Again, the specific way I achieve this is described in the relevant chapter.

3.3 Theory Building

In Chapter 5, I take my findings from the two rhetorical analyses and use them to develop a hybrid theoretical model that helps explain the structural origins of the Business School legitimacy crisis. As my source literatures are both predominately experiential and polemical, I take understandings of key concepts (such as 'legitimacy' and 'profession') from literatures that do provide a robust theoretical account of these phenomenon and apply them to the case of expert occupations that engage with higher education.

The findings from Chapters 3 and 4 combine to suggest that the business school system struggles with a set of normative challenges that are unique within higher education. However, there are many comparable entities that successfully navigate the provision of career preparation for specific, expert occupations without seriously compromising their legitimacy with academic and occupational stakeholders. These range from medical schools, law schools, teacher training programmes, theological colleges and agricultural colleges to art schools and conservatoires.

Many of these entities share certain features with the business school system but manage to maintain legitimacy. To this end, I introduce the concept of *occupational higher education* in Chapter 5 and propose a theoretical model that explores the structures that these entities adopt to achieve and balance legitimacy. In building this model, I explore:

- How to balance *academic legitimacy* with legitimate career preparation and the factors that upset this balance
- The possibilities and limitations of the 'professional school' model as a route to legitimacy
- The legitimising structures adopted by forms of *occupational higher education* that do not qualify as 'professional schools'

In building this model, I bring together literatures on the sociology of the professions, professional education, knowledge production, academic drift and entrepreneurial university. The perspectives I draw on in this chapter do not necessarily mention the Business School or may only do so tangentially. Given the findings of Chapter 3, I do not expect any higher education literature to refer to the business school system as a positive exemplar. However, all of my sources provide insights into the legitimisation of higher education entities or how academic and economic stakeholders might engage with each other productively. The outcome of this chapter is a taxonomy of *occupational higher education*, which I then apply to the Business School in order to highlight structural flaws and identify ways that the system could build and maintain its legitimacy.

4. CONCEPTUAL CHALLENGES

In conducting my analyses, I encounter a series of conceptual challenges that are common to all three chapters. In brief, all the literatures I deal with are characterised by vague terminology (that is often used in a quasi-technical sense), contested terms or ideographs. At one level, the elusiveness of the concepts I work with is central to my analyses. Understanding how a key term or concept is deployed in a particular environment, and what entity the author refers to, is key to my investigation. However, I do need to bring clarity and consistency to my own arguments by signalling to readers the basis on which I use a problematic term.

4.1 Vague terms

The disparate literatures that I engage with in this thesis tend to use vague terms to signify distinct entities or constructs. For example, ‘university’ or ‘business school’ may be used to signify either an organisation or an idea, depending on context. Even when clearly used in the organisational sense, it may not be obvious whether the authors refer to all the entities that use a particular label or just a sub-group that has its own emergent properties and that merits being treated as distinct.

For example, the ‘university business school system’ comprises a large range of academic entities from business schools in elite institutions with prestigious and expensive graduate programmes to community colleges offering undergraduate programmes for students with modest academic credentials. I frequently highlight how one class of entity is implicitly privileged over others in particular literatures and left to stand for the wider category, leaving others invisible. Understanding why particular entities might be left invisible by the use of a nebulous collective term is a recurring question across this thesis.

In Chapter 3 (1.1), I provide an overview of the principal entities that comprise the business school system and in Chapter 5 (2.3), I highlight the diversity of business schools as organisations or academic departments and discuss this in the context of an apparently systemic legitimacy crisis.

4.2 Contested terms

In some of the literatures I deal with, a particular term may be contested actively and subject to multiple, competing definitions. ‘Profession’ is a good example of a term that is variously deployed ideographically, according to a precise conceptualisation or as a contested term, according to context. For example, many higher education and management literatures use <profession> ideographically, in order to demonstrate that an occupation has the ethical and intellectual status to merit a legitimate place within the higher education system. In contrast, a long-established debate within the sociology of the professions disputes whether ‘profession’ can be used to designate a particular type of occupation or is even a meaningful concept.

In Chapter 5 (2.1), I discuss the multiple usages and conceptualisation of 'profession' and select one of these, the *ideal typical profession*, which I take from Freidson (2001), as the basis for my comparative analysis of how different expert occupations engage successfully with higher education.

4.3 Ideographs

Across my analyses, I regularly encounter terms that function as ideographs. When terms are used ideographically, they have a shared normative function that is not made explicit but is assumed as taken for granted by all readers of a text (McGee, 1980). Challenging this usage is rendered unthinkable. This is particularly apparent in many higher education literatures, including the 'ideas of the University' genre, which is the focus of Chapter 4. Phrases such as <scholar> or <academic legitimacy> are often used in a non-specific but powerfully normative way. In the case of <academic legitimacy>, the term assumes a quasi-technical status by featuring prominently in the title, abstract and keyword of many academic papers although it is rarely interrogated or unpacked.

4.3.1 Academic legitimacy

In Chapter 4 (2.2), I provide an extended discussion on the various ways that <academic legitimacy> is used in higher education literatures. Given the lack of formal definition in these contexts, I apply some theoretical perspectives on legitimacy to the higher education context and discuss the role of legitimisation in the exertion of normative control.   In Chapter 5 (2.5), I provide a pragmatic working definition of 'legitimacy' itself in the context of *occupational higher education.*

4.3.2 Management

In Chapter 5 (2.2), I provide a brief overview of the historical development of 'manager' and 'management' as concepts and highlight the way these terms are used ideographically, as well as to classify a type of expert occupation.

4.3.3 Scholar

Across Chapter 4 (and especially in section 4.4) I discuss the use of <scholar> to designate normative guardians of the higher education system. The <scholar's> utilitarian counterpart is the *academic worker*, an individual with an academic contract of employment who must then earn their place as a <scholar> through acts of resistance.

4.3.4 Vocation

In Chapter 5 (section 5.4.1), I introduce the idea of the 'vocation' as a legitimising force in higher education.

5. PROTOCOLS

Given the different forms that the terminology I use across this thesis can take, I adopt the following protocols to provide clarity on the class of entity that a particular term or phrase denotes at different stages in my argument:

- Where a term remains undefined or disputed and is used on that basis, I place it in inverted commas i.e. 'profession'.
- I qualify imprecise terms e.g. 'elite business school', 'university business school' or 'business school system' to identify the entity under discussion.
- When referring to a term as an ideograph, I place it in angle brackets e.g. <profession>.
- Where a term can be used in either a normative or utilitarian sense, I capitalise the normative usage i.e. University (as an idea) vs. university as an organisation.
- When I adopt a phrase and use it in a highly specific sense (which I have previously explained and justified), I italicise it from that point onwards in my text e.g. *ideal typical profession*.
- When I coin a phrase to label an entity that has not been previously defined in the academic literature or where the usual label is too strongly ideographic, I italicise it. For example, I use *occupational higher education* (instead of 'professional education' or 'professional school'), *ideal essential* (in place of 'ideas of the University') and *academic worker* (as an alternative to 'academic' and counterpoint to <scholar>)
- Where a crucial term, such as '<academic legitimacy>', is widely used in the relevant literatures but not adequately theorised in that context, I interrogate it using a range of alternative theoretical perspectives and provide a working definition.

6. POSITIONALITY STATEMENT

Before I present my findings, I wish to acknowledge my position in relation to the business school system, higher education system and their academic workforces. How my own occupational identity intersects with these three entities is of particular relevance to this investigation.

This thesis has been shaped by my experience as a higher education research officer. This very rewarding role has allowed me to work closely with academic colleagues in a variety of disciplinary and institutional settings, including the UK business school system. During my career supporting research funding bids (Aldridge and Derrington, 2012) and helping develop thriving research cultures, I observed that Business School is often despised by other academic interest groups. I also observed that the business school system has its own distinctive subculture, which appeared to insulate its own academic workforce from an awareness of this challenge. On a more general level, I became aware of the relative legitimacies of academic disciplines and institutions. Academic workers at the margins of this hierarchy were understandably keen to prove their <scholarly> credentials and claim the same privileges of those holding higher status. Meanwhile, some academics (often practice-based academic in arts discipline) did not adopt any mainstream academic identity. This type of academic worker maintained a strong occupational orientation, with their academic work remaining something of a 'side line'.

I was already curious about these (apparently separate) phenomena as they manifested in my different places of work when Prof. John Saunders (who was then Director of Research, at Kent Business School while I worked as the School's Research Manager) offered to sponsor a PhD under his supervision as long as it was a strictly quantitative study about 'what makes a successful business school'. I accepted this suggestion, but Prof. Saunders left the University of Kent as soon as I started scoping a potential project and drafting the initial proposal.

My preliminary and exploratory literature search on the business school system returned a large number of publications that were devoted to discussion of the system's deep-seated and serious legitimacy problems rather than its 'success', as understood by Prof. Saunders and his collaborators (Saunders and Wong, 2011; Saunders, Wong and Saunders, 2011). I was drawn to certain troubling features of these literatures, which guided the questions I asked and the direction of my investigation. On this basis, the focus of my thesis swung round towards a qualitative, textually grounded investigation of the Business School legitimacy crisis.

My position as an administrator who engages closely with academic knowledge production leaves me with a deep respect for academic work and commitment to higher education. However, even in submitting this thesis, do not seek an academic identity or career for myself. This means that I have no personal dependence on the mythologies and ideographs that I critique. It also means that this investigation is not informed by any lived experience of an academic identity. This position is unusual in higher education research on this topic and may partly account for the nature of the findings I report in the following chapters.

Chapter 3: Why the wider academic community negates the Business School

SUMMARY

In this chapter, I address the first part of RQ1 and explore how and why elements of the wider academic community negate the Business School. I take a rhetorical analysis of influential post-war *ideas of the University* narratives as my starting point, on the basis that this influential literature has an iconic status in academic mythmaking. Texts in this genre are also the source of a powerful anti-commercial rhetoric and authors regularly call on the academic workforce to resist commercial infiltration, with the Business School emerging as the prime example of this damaging force. I also identify a wider normative marginalisation of the Business School in higher education discourses (even those that accommodate commercial engagement) and suggest that this has its origins in the normative hierarchy of the *ideas of the University* literature. The importance of this literature to academic mythmaking means that it is rarely interrogated critically and that its troubling implications for the wider academic workforce remain implicit. These findings inform the hybrid theoretical model I propose in Chapter 5.

1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on normative accounts of higher education, particularly post-war *ideas of the University*, and their negation of the Business School. As the wider academic community plays a crucial role in determining <academic legitimacy>, this analysis focuses on a literature that is influential in academic discourse about the purpose of higher education, and which frames the Business School as inherently antithetical to the University. These challenges are strongly voiced, as the following examples illustrate:

> ‘Moreover, a great disaster has occurred. It is the establishment during the last decade or so of the MBA as the moral equivalent of the MD or law degree, meaning a way of insuring a lucrative living by a mere fact of a diploma that is not a mark of scholarly achievement….’ (Bloom, 1988, p. 371)
>
> ‘Long before academicians in the sciences became entrepreneurs, professors in business departments had given up teaching for more lucrative pursuits – while still collecting their university salaries.’ (Soley, 1995, p. 57)

These two extracts make direct claims about the Business School as a damaging influence with no rightful place in the University. These are amplified by a large volume of claims about the commercial takeover of higher education. For example:

> ‘Miraculously, wherever ‘industry’ was mentioned the governmental or quasi-governmental agencies came up with support; wherever, in the Arts or Social Sciences, the academic staff attempted to press forward along their own natural lines of growth, nothing gave way.’ (Thompson, 1970, p. 76)
>
> ‘As the centre of gravity shifts away from the humanities and the notion of the university as a public good, university presidents ignore public values while refusing

to address major social issues and problems. Instead, such administrators now display corporate affiliations like a badge of honour, sit on corporate boards and pull in huge salaries.' (Giroux, 2011, p. 149)

Given these two features of this literature, normative writing on higher education would appear to have some explanatory power in explaining the Business School legitimacy crisis. On this basis, I undertake a rhetorical analysis of the canonical *ideas of the University* literature and its role in determining 'academic legitimacy', to investigate how and why the Business School has an inherent legitimacy disadvantage. In Chapter 4 (Section 3.5), I explore the lack of normative cohesion within the business school system and the range of normative positions evident in the management literature on Business School legitimacy. I use the findings of the present chapter to understand whether there are fundamental disconnects between the normative positions evident within the business school system and those evident in the sources I analyse here.

1.1 Conceptualising academic legitimacy

As with many of the concepts I use in this thesis, 'academic legitimacy' is a term that is widely used but poorly defined. There is no dedicated literature that specifically addresses the concept in any depth or with any consistency, despite over 8000 references on Google Scholar. Much of the higher education literature that uses the term simply assumes that its meaning is understood and shared by readers. If we do not know what constitutes 'academic legitimacy', we cannot expect to understand why the business school system struggles with this important quality.

As a concept, *academic legitimacy* first emerged in the higher education literature in the late 1960s in response to student unrest (e.g. Metzger, 1970) and the introduction of new fields of study (e.g. Dovre, 1969; Sunderland, 1970). Despite frequent use ever since across higher education and management research, there has always been considerable conceptual variation and reliance on ideographic usage. The following table illustrates some of the various ways that *academic legitimacy* has been deployed :

Dimension	Example
Truth	'What about "scientific" creationists or climate change denialists? It is fair game to argue that a well-functioning university community would not view any or all of these persons as academically legitimate.' (Schraub, 2013, p. 71)
Method	We construct a broader concept of academic legitimacy around three drivers: the salience of the issues studied, the production of strong results, and the maintenance of disciplinary plasticity' (Lyytinen and King, 2004, p. 220)
Morality	The police turned out to be even greater jeopardisers of academic legitimacy than the students. By inflicting punishments brutally and indiscriminately, they kindled…outrage' (Metzger, 1970, p. 596)
Societal	This drift toward privileging theory development further undermined the legitimacy that business schools had previously derived from their practical relevance, which provided some degree of social value (Currie and Davies, 2016, p. 744)

Table 1: Criteria of academic legitimacy

In rhetorical terms, this vagueness and diversity qualifies *academic legitimacy* as an ideograph or 'collective commitment to a particular but equivocal and ill-defined normative goal' (McGee, 1980, p. 15). In order to gain more specific insights into its status and function, I draw on more developed theories of legitimacy from elsewhere across the social sciences, including organisational theory and social psychology. These sources yield a set of complementary theoretical frameworks, which can all be applied to the academic context and help inform this study, as follows:

- Legitimacy as a form of normative control in dual identity organisations (Albert and Whetten, 1985)
- Legitimising ideologies as a route to dominance within and between groups (Tyler, 2006)
- The role of legitimising tradition and mythology in ensuring defence to dominant groups (Major, 1994; Sidanius and Pratto, 2001)

In addition, I draw on the dedicated literature on *academic identity*, as a related, and more extensively theorised, concept. Discussions of *academic identity* emerged during the 1990s (Macfarlane, 2016) in response to a rapidly changing higher education landscape and the normative challenges associated with these developments (e.g. Kogan, 2000; Henkel, 2005; Winter, 2009; Degn, 2018). Debates on *academic identity* also evidence a strong concern for the role of the academic worker as guardian of the system's legitimacy, and this also informs my analysis. I introduce each of these perspectives below, along with some preliminary examples of how they may help explain legitimisation processes within higher education.

1.1.1 Power structures in dual identity organisations

Albert and Whetten's classic paper on organisational identity illustrates how legitimacy operates in organisations that have dual *utilitarian* and *normative* identities, and uses higher education institutions as an example (Albert and Whetten, 1985, p. 281).

This dualist perspective corresponds well with similar structures proposed in accounts of *academic identity*, such as the 'us /them categorizations' (Degn, 2018, p. 305), which mark the boundaries between the conflicting priorities and values of university managers and academic staff. Henkel frames higher education institutions in a similar way, as 'targets for opposition and means by which academics consolidated their sense of professional identity through differentiation from the management of the institution.' (Henkel, 2004b, p. 27). In contrast to business firms or service organisations, where external stakeholders may determine legitimacy (Gioia and et al, 2013), the dualism of the University as an organisation means that processes of *academic legitimacy* become a form of internal 'normative power', which allows academic workers to exert control within the system (Albert and Whetten, 1985, p. 281).

According to this view, accepting that *academic legitimacy* is a function of the *normative* system means that many of the acknowledged achievements of the business school system, such as contribution to university leadership functions, high student demand, income, graduate employment and growth (Stensaker, 2015) become simply *utilitarian* and entirely irrelevant to its normative status. In the management literature debates on cash cow status, the impact of being forced into a *utilitarian* corner are widely discussed (e.g. Starkey, Hatchuel and Tempest, 2004; Ivory, 2006; Reed, 2009). However, as my analysis in this chapter demonstrates, higher education literatures are more likely to position the business school system as an agent of marketisation rather than its victim. The impact of this discourse is a point I return to in Section 5.3.1 of Chapter 5.

1.1.2 Conflict and dominance within the academy

As described above, normative writing on academia generally assumes that the academic workforce is the core and defining entity of the University. However, it would be incorrect to assume that every member of the academic workforce is awarded equal status in these narratives. Although the terminology of 'community of scholars' (Goodman, 1962; L Morgan, 2007; Collini, 2012) or 'community of peers' (Henkel, 2004a, p. 13) suggests equity, this is not the case. As I demonstrate throughout this chapter, the academic workforce is subject to normative hierarchies, rifts and exclusions. These points of difference appear to be a permanent feature of the higher education system and have been well documented over hundreds of years (Kant, 1798; Edgeworth, 1810; Truscott, 1943; Snow, 1959; Bloom, 1988).

Social psychological theories of legitimacy suggest that certain groups use legitimacy 'to gain dominance over others, with the result that institutional arrangements and legitimizing ideologies favoring one group are often not beneficial to those within other groups' (Tyler, 2006, p. 291). According to this perspective, power struggles between members of the academic workforce are integral to the processes of academic legitimisation. This suggests that advocates of a specific legitimising ideology will inevitably exclude or devalue other groups. Throughout this chapter, I consider whether the business school system has characteristics that make it vulnerable to exclusion or devaluation in the service of the self-legitimisation of other academic entities. I expand on these theoretical perspectives in Chapter 5.

1.1.3 Mythology

According to psychological approaches, any legitimacy framework is likely to have roots in 'legitimizing myths' (Major, 1994; Sidanius and Pratto, 2001). These myths favour dominant groups and promote a 'false consciousness' amongst the subordinates who adopt them (Tyler 2006, p.392). There is plenty of evidence across higher education literatures to suggest that these processes also apply to the case of *academic legitimacy*. For example, the development of *academic identity* is described as a process dependent on disciplinary communities introducing their members 'to the myths through which the deeply held values and beliefs of the community are held' (Henkel, 2005, p. 157). In a study of academic nostalgia, Ylijoki also suggests that romanticising the academic past is a way to describe 'the problems and tensions of the present' (Ylijoki, 2005, p. 555).

A prominent and widespread myth within higher education literatures is the idea of the 'golden age', which denotes a lost period when the University flourished. According to Google Scholar, 'golden age' and 'academia' coincide in over 30,000 returns. This golden age is generally depicted as 'an era characterised by institutional autonomy and intellectual freedom, underwritten by unconditional funding and arm's length governance' (Holden, 2015, p. 3). The period most frequently identified as the golden age of the University runs from the end of the Second World War through to some point during the 1970s (Kerr, 1978; Annan, 1990, p. 337), even if the uncertain historical basis is frequently acknowledged (Tight, 2010).

The destruction of this golden age is what makes this myth particularly pertinent to questions of *academic legitimacy*. In the case of its post-war iteration, the ending of a golden age is attributed to 'the increasing submergence of higher education under external social controls' (Kerr, 1978, p. 261), 'rampant commercialization' (Geiger, 2004, p. 66) or 'commercial corruption' (Moriarty, 2008, p. 60). If commercial influence proved disastrous to the University, this has implications for the legitimacy of the Business School. In this chapter, I explore how commerce is perceived as a damaging force in normative narratives of the University and how the Business School is marked out as an agent of this force.

1.1.4 Tradition

Appeals to 'tradition' are another key component of the legitimisation process (Weber 1968, see Tyler 2006) and also tend to favour dominant groups (Tyler, 2006, p. 392). Research that highlights problematic changes to the higher education landscape, such as marketisation, frequently uses the concept of 'traditional academic values' in the same way that it turns to the myth of the golden age. A Google Scholar search on the exact phrase 'traditional academic values' returns over 2,700 results (16/10/22). However, as in the case of *academic legitimacy*, the relevant studies tend to use the phrase in an ideographic manner and are rarely specific about the nature of these values.

Where authors do label specific values as 'traditional', academic 'autonomy' and 'collegiality' are frequent candidates and are jointly referred to in over a quarter of the publications returned in this search (e.g. Eaton, 2000; Harris, 2005; Scott, 2006; Winter, 2009; Ylijoki and Ursin, 2013; Harley, 2017). Similarly, 'academic freedom' appears in conjunction with 'traditional academic values' in over one third of returned publications (e.g. Altbach, 2001; Mendoza, 2007). While this provides some indication of what might count as a 'traditional' value, readers are more often left to make their own assumptions. As with the 'golden age', 'traditional academic values' come into sharpest focus in relation to the forces that threaten them. These threats are frequently more clearly articulated than the values themselves and have parallels with the forces that are understood to have destroyed the post-war 'golden age'. According to my search, they include managerialism (1,690), neoliberalism (370) and assorted 'commercial' factors (937).

As with the historical basis of the 'golden age', the origin of these 'traditional academic values' proves elusive. However, works from the canonical *idea of the University* literature are consistently cited as their source. This genre of scholarly writing on higher education originated from thinkers on the University from previous centuries and is frequently taken as the source of the value system. These include Wilhelm von Humboldt (129 citations) and Cardinal John Newman (201 citations), although many contributors simply refer to the overall *idea of the university* genre as their source (134 mentions).

As such, this literature forms an important and continuing point of reference for higher education norms. Eminent commentators on the genre have described *ideas of the University* as aiming to 'institutionally embody, and at the same time motivationally anchor, a life form which is inter-subjectively shared by its members, and which even bears an exemplary character' (Habermas and Blazek, 1987, p. 3) or, more succinctly, as the pursuit of a 'feasible utopia' (Barnett, 2011, p. 88). In this chapter, I use an analysis of post-war *ideas of the University* texts to understand how dominant normative frameworks of higher education may vary from those of the business school system and how the business school system fits or conflicts with these powerfully articulated norms.

1.2 Normative narratives of the University

The theoretical perspectives discussed above all point to the possibility that the Business School may be disadvantaged in normative narratives of higher education. I test this hypothesis with a rhetorical analysis of the *ideas of the University* texts, on the basis that they act as a primary and influential source for widely supported normative frameworks.

'The Idea of a University' is the title that Cardinal John Newman gave to a series of essays first published in 1854 but the phrase is also commonly used to describe a wider genre of normative writing on higher education that originated even earlier than this, thanks to thinkers such as Alexander von Humboldt or Immanuel Kant. Recent citation rates show how important this genre remains within contemporary discussions on higher education. For example, according to Google Scholar, Newman's *Idea of a University* alone has received 2,310 citations since 2000.

As a phrase, *idea of the university* also has enduring appeal. Contributors from the mid-twentieth century onwards (e.g. Winch, 1958; Oakeshott, 1989; Barnett, 1990; Pelikan, 1992; Graham, 2002; Maskell and Robinson, 2012; Newfield, 2018) all use a version of this phrase as titles of their own publications. The continuing salience of the genre, in both its historical and contemporary forms, is evidenced by the recent publication of a dedicated, two volume reader on the topic (Peters and Barnett, 2018). The rationale given for this edited collection is that the genre still retains 'the power to transform ideals even within the contemporary policy environment when the options seem to be effectively closed off' (p.xiv).

However, *ideas of the University* is not a precise scholarly classification as it does not signify either a cohesive set of arguments (Scott, 2006, p. 3) or a particular set of publications beyond those that actually use the phrase. Peters and Barnett (2018) even include a strand of 'pragmatist' accounts that take a managerial perspective (e.g. Kerr, 1963) in their overview of the genre, which seems to ignore its distinctively normative character. Meanwhile, narratives that are clearly part of the *ideas of the University* mainstream do not necessarily always propose entirely complementary ideas (e.g. Readings, 1996, p. 55; Aronowitz, 2000, p. 37; Sarles, 2001, p. 410).

Although the *idea of the University* genre appears to offer a promising route to understand why the business school system struggles with its 'academic legitimacy', the phrase itself is not always helpful as a search term, unless authors use a version as their title. This made my task of selecting the most appropriate examples of the genre for my analysis more complex. I resolved this issue by suggesting an initial taxonomy, which categorised the broader range of academic literature on the purpose of higher education. This taxonomy was organised around the underlying orientation of a publication rather than its specific topic or title.

As an overview, I propose that academic research and writing on higher education sits across four porous thematic categories, two of them normative, and each with their own distinctive aims and approaches. While canonical *ideas of the University* texts fall principally into the first category, there can be significant overlap and cross-fertilisation with other types of narrative.

Category	Orientation	Aim	Examples
Ideal-essential	Normative, Utopian, Experiential, Exclusionary, Persuasive	to propose normative models for the University or identify its essence	*The Conflict of the Faculties* (Kant 1792) , *The Idea of a University* (Newman, 1852), *The Community of Scholars* (Goodman, 1962) *The Idea of the University* (Pelikan, 1992)
Critical	Normative, Dystopian, Experiential, Exclusionary, Persuasive	to highlight problems in the actual higher education system and to suggest ways of addressing them.	*Redbrick University* (Truscott, 1943), *Warwick University Ltd* (Thompson, 1970), *The Assault on Universities* (Freedman and Bailey, 2011)
Explanatory	Actual, Objective Empirical, Inclusive. Informative	to understand specific phenomena across higher education through theoretical or empirical means	*Academic Man* (Wilson, 1942), *Capitalising Knowledge* (Etzkowitz, Webster and Healey, 1998), *Academic Tribes and Territories* (Becher and Trowler, 2001)
Pragmatic	Utilitarian, Objective Pragmatic, Inclusive,	improve practice across some aspect of higher education management or governance	*The Uses of the University* (Kerr, 1963), *The University: an Owner's Manual* (Rosovsky, 1991), *The Responsive University* (Tierney, 1998), *Managing Successful Universities* (Shattock, 2003)

Table 2a: Categories of writing and research on higher education

	Orientation	Perspective	Approach	Scope	Output
Ideal-essential	Normative	Utopian	Experiential	Exclusionary	Persuasive
Critical	Normative	Dystopian	Experiential	Exclusionary	Persuasive
Explanatory	Actual	Objective	Empirical	Inclusive	Evidence
Pragmatic	Utilitarian	Objective	Pragmatic	Inclusive	(Management) Skills

Table 2b: Links between categories of higher education literatures

I use the term *ideal-essential* for the first category because the concepts of the *ideal* and the *essential* both feature prominently in those accounts, which all propose what Barnett calls a ‘feasible utopia’ (2017). According to this taxonomy, recent contributions to the *ideas of the University* genre tend to combine the *ideal-essential* characteristics with some *critical* or *explanatory* elements. Indeed, it is rhetorically challenging for normative accounts to avoid any *critical* content and most begin by framing a critique of the system. Equally, *critical* accounts are generally rooted in a strong normative framework. However, *ideal-*

essential narratives are less likely to include *pragmatic* elements, although there are some *ideal-essential* examples where authors actively demonstrate the feasibility of their proposed utopia (Goodman, 1962) or show some sympathy for the challenges of higher education management (e.g. Pelikan, 1992).

Although predominately *critical* narratives are also normative, I do not make these the preliminary focus of my analysis, even though they address the problems of the actual system more directly and sometimes include intense critiques of the Business School. This is because I want to understand the norms that make the *academic legitimacy* of the business school system so problematic. However, I return to the *critical* category later in this chapter as part of a discussion on how normative frameworks affect the other categories of writing on higher education.

In the rest of this chapter, I use a rhetorical analysis of narratives with a primarily *ideal-essential* orientation to explore how they dictate the contemporary conditions of *academic legitimacy* in a changing higher education landscape and the implications this holds for the business school system. As well as using this analysis to explain aspects of the Business School legitimacy crisis, I also raise some broader implications for the legitimisation of the wider academic workforce.

2. METHODOLOGY

Both this chapter and the one that follows present similar challenges in that I analyse a non-empirical scholarly literature to explain aspects of the Business School legitimacy crisis. In this chapter, my aim is to understand how and why influential normative narratives negate the Business School. To this end, I conduct a rhetorical analysis of selected *ideal-essential* narratives within the critical realist framework that is also a feature of my other two analyses.

2.1 Rhetorical Analysis

Rhetorical analysis is used to understand how a text achieves its persuasive goals. In this case this means how particular normative frameworks of the University are established and gain dominance in a way that negates the Business School. Rhetoric has recently emerged as an area of interest in organisational studies and applied to the persuasive communications that inform legitimacy judgements (Hoefer and Green, 2016). However, rhetorical analysis needs some explanation as a methodological approach within higher education research as the term is often used pejoratively rather than in its technical sense. For example, rhetoric is frequently presented as the problematic antithesis of ‘reality’ (O’Loughlin, MacPhail and Msetfi, 2015; Tight, 2017) or used as shorthand for any deliberately deceptive or manipulative mode of communication (Knights, 2008; Santiago and Carvalho, 2012).

As a formal approach to the analysis of text or speech, rhetoric does not have pejorative overtones and is simply ‘the study of producing discourses and interpreting how, when and why discourses are persuasive’ (Keith and Lundberg, 2008, p. 4). In its capacity as a discursive practice and a branch of scholarship, formal rhetoric has a history that stretches back millennia with many different traditions and forms. Subjecting a set of texts to rhetorical scrutiny is not to question the integrity of its authors or to mount an inherent challenge to the value of their arguments. Put simply, rhetorical analysis is an approach that can be applied to any text with a persuasive function. The aim of this analysis is to examine how texts in my sample attempt to assert normative control within the academic community, and the implications of these strategies for the *academic legitimacy* of the Business School.

Traditional approaches to rhetoric focus on identifying distinctive persuasive techniques within texts or types of discourse that can be labelled as specifically rhetorical. These features are analysed accordingly, and assorted figures or tropes are highlighted. From the mid-twentieth century onwards, an influential new generation of rhetoricians redefined and broadened the scope of rhetorical analysis (Burke, 1945, 1950). This means that contemporary rhetorical studies is a diverse and complex field that addresses the practicalities of persuasion through the use of stylistic devices or figures, and that can be applied to any form of public discourse (Jasinski, 2001, p. xviii). I use the principles of contemporary rhetoric to guide this analysis by taking the *rhetorical situation* (Bitzer, 1968; Grant-Davie, 1997) as my organising framework. This is a systemic approach that is suitable for the analysis of a historically and culturally diverse literature.

As rhetorical analysis focuses on the way arguments are presented and made persuasive, I focus on the techniques used to make arguments persuasive rather than evaluating the content of the arguments themselves and themes that emerge. While this may involve highlighting contradictions or flaws in the logic of a narrative, I do not offer judgements on whether the models of legitimacy that emerge from these texts are desirable, practicable or ethical.

I also focus on the *ideal-essential* elements of my corpus rather than analysing each text in its entirety. However, I provide a close reading of the chosen elements and highlight characteristics that would not be evident from a casual reading of an individual text in isolation. Indeed, I argue that these texts rely on a compliant and predisposed readership. As such, they do not always withstand a sustained and comparative critical interrogation. As my sample ranges across 70 years in terms of (original) publication date and five national higher education contexts, I take the rhetorical consistencies I identify in this corpus as illustrative of a deeply entrenched normative framework.

Inevitably, I use a large number of quotations to illustrate my arguments. This has limitations in the context of complex, sophisticated narratives and selecting a particular extract does not mean that this is the only point the author makes on the topic in question. However, it is particularly significant when several authors across this diverse sample make near identical points.

I structure this analysis across the following dimensions:

2.1.1 Rhetorical Situation

The rhetorical situation can be summarised as:

‘a complex of persons, events, objects, and relations presenting an actual or potential exigence which can be completely or partially removed if discourse, introduced into the situation, can so constrain human decision or action as to bring about the significant modification of the exigence" (Bitzer 1968, p. 386)

The *rhetorical situation* has three primary analytic components:

- *Exigence* or pressing problem that motivates a discourse.
- C*onstraints* that prevent the author from offering a simple solution to the problem and that the discourse must find a way to modify.
- *Personae* evident in the text, including
    - First persona: the authorial voice
    - Second persona: the implied audience (Black, 1970)
    - Third persona: negated or invisible entities

I adopt this particular analytic framework for two reasons. Firstly, to understand how the values, myths and traditions of higher education are framed in response to the post-war problems (i.e. *exigence*) of higher education. Secondly, to identify how different academic interest groups (i.e. *personae*) are either supported, marginalised or ignored in the strategies used to *constrain* this exigence.

The tension between the second and third persona is particularly important in the context of this analysis as both are represented *within* the academic work force and includes those invited to support the discourse and as those negated by it (such as the Business School). In particular, the third persona represents those 'characteristics, roles, actions, or ways of seeing things to be avoided' (Wander, 1984, p. 209; McKerrow, 1989, p. 107). The concept of the third persona also fits well with the critical realist acknowledgement of absence as a 'highly valuable diagnostic category' (Bhaskar, 2014, p. xii).

2.1.2 Jeremiad

In order to understand how the *first personae* of these narratives argue their case so persuasively and exert normative control, I also draw on the political and secular *jeremiad* (Bercovitch, 1978), which takes its name from the lamentations of the Old Testament prophet Jeremiah. The jeremiad form has a long history, particularly in the US, as 'a form of public lamentation or a way of expressing sorrow or regret' (Jasinski, 2001, p. 335). It is intended to reaffirm the status of its audience as a chosen people who must reject the evil amongst them and recommit themselves to their covenant with higher order principles. The ultimate goal of the jeremiad is to promote a sense of anxiety amongst community members and generate action from those who hear its message. As such, it is a rhetorical form that lends itself easily to the academic community and to the post-war normative threats it faced as the supposed 'golden age' declined.

2.1.3 Ideographs

In their capacity as jeremiads[1], a 'chosen people' necessarily emerges in my sample and, in this case, are those who represent and safeguard the essential qualities of the University. This interest group sets the 'higher order principles' that govern the processes of *academic legitimacy* and that requires the 'voluntary defence' (Tyler, 2006, p. 394) of its audience. I explore this rhetorical feature of my sample through an analysis of its *ideographic* content.

[1] Both Collini and Readings explicitly distance themselves from the jeremiad form

Identifying the key *ideographs* (McGee, 1980) of *ideal essential* narratives helps unpack the taken-for-granted terminology of these narratives, which sums up the ideological positions of their first personae. Although ideographs are often ostensibly positive terms such as <liberty>, <property>, <freedom> or <tradition>, they can also have more negative resonance, as illustrated by a variant and precursor to McGee's ideograph, the 'devil term' (Weaver, 1995). Ideographs are generally analysed situationally within a specific discursive practice and in terms of their *diachronic* usage across a set of discourses from different periods. As such, the ideograph is a useful way of investigating changing patterns and emphases across a genre of literature over time. In the context of this study, the ideographs I explore include the negative <commerce> and the positive <scholar>.

2.2 Critical Realism

This chapter fits within my overall investigation, as described in Chapter 2 (Section 3.1). In terms of the DREIC model of critical realist research, the particular contribution of this chapter can be summarised as follows:

- To describe the existential challenges to the Business School in the context of theories of legitimacy and academic identity.
- To retroduce hypothetical generative mechanisms that point to legitimisation as a power that can be used to ensure normative dominance at the expense of the Business School.
- To identify how *academic legitimacy* operates as a *power* across higher education to establish the dominance of particular entities.

I also use this chapter to highlight subtle differences between normative and utilitarian entities, according to their different causal effects. For example, I contrast the academic worker (an individual employed within higher education on an academic contract of employment who may seek legitimacy) with the <scholar> (an academic worker who has earned the right to exercise normative guardianship over the higher education system according to certain interest groups). I also use absence as an important diagnostic criterion. For example, the absence of the Business School from certain higher education literatures appears indicative of negation or scapegoating (see Section 4.2).

The use of rhetorical analysis also helps with the important critical realist aim of questioning assumptions that appear in this literature as unquestionable truths about the University and its function.

2.3 Selection and Inclusion

To qualify for inclusion in the sample that makes up my corpus, texts needed to meet all of the following criteria:

- Works first published (or first published in English) after the end of the Second World War, which address conditions of massification or marketization that emerge in this period and coincide with the ending of the supposed 'golden age' of the University.
- Strong elements of *ideal essential* content that point to a 'feasible utopia' (even if in jeopardy) for the higher education system.

- Authors who define themselves as <scholars> and position themselves as insiders of the higher education system.
- Works that are cited as sources in later academic sources in relation to the *idea of the University.*

The most prominent works in the *idea of the university* genre are monographs and other book length studies published over a 70-year period. Consequently, I could not rely on online databases to identify relevant material and used library and publisher searches as well as reference tracking.

An initial search identified over 100 post-war book-length treatments in English that sit across the two normative categories (*ideal-essential* and *critical)* I identified earlier and that are cited as sources in later academic literatures that make normative claims. As analysing this quantity of texts is beyond the scope of a fine-grained rhetorical analysis, I relied on a selection of some of the most influential and representative publications from across the period of interest. I also used Google Scholar as the source of citation data because most of these texts are not represented in the more reliable online databases.

However, several of the prominent texts with *ideal-essentialist* content all originate from the US and were published within a few years of each other (e.g. Baldridge, 1968; Barzun, 1969; Parsons and Platt, 1973). In addition, some texts in French or German have not been translated (e.g. Dreze and Debelle, 1968) and this puts them beyond the scope of this analysis, which inevitably skews my sample further towards the model of the Business School developed in the US and adopted worldwide through mimetic strategies driven by world rankings (Lejeune *et al.*, 2019). Finally, very few women have published within this genre. In terms of this analysis, this is not necessarily problematic as my aim was to identify and critique the dominant discourse in this area.

That said, my aim was to identify rhetorical consistencies in this debate and I considered that my findings would be more robust if I maximised the diversity of my restricted sample rather than simply selecting the most highly cited publications. As a result, I selected the following publications:

Title	Author	Country	Pub. Date (English)	Pub. Date (original)	Citations
Mission of the University	Jose Ortega y Gasset	Spain	1946	1930	171
The Idea of the University	Karl Jaspers	Germany	1946	1923	722
The Community of Scholars	Goodman	US	1962		387
The Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today's Students	Allan Bloom	US	1987		10606
The Idea of the University: A Re-examination	Jaroslav Pelikan	US	1992		912
The University in Ruins	Bill Readings	Canada	1996		6001
What are Universities for?	Stefan Collini	UK	2012		2172

Table 4: Selected ideal essential texts

This sample has a combined citation count of over 20,000 and covers a period of over 80 years (when the original publication dates of translated works are taken into account) across five countries. The publication history and reception of individual works demonstrates the cultural status of the genre, continuing salience of publications and an ongoing appetite for the *idea of the university* genre. To illustrate:

- *Mission of the University* (Ortega y Gasset, 1944) is still in print through Routledge.
- *The Idea of the Universit*y (Jaspers, 1959) was originally published in 1923, issued in English in 1960 to coincide with the Robbins Report (Wyatt, 2017) and is still in print through Hassell Street Press.
- *The Community of Scholars* (Goodman, 1962) was issued by Random House, one of the world's largest general interest publishers.
- *The Closing of the American Mind* (Bloom, 1988) was a New York Times bestseller with an original print run of 750,000.
- *The Idea of a University: a Re-Examination* (Pelikan, 1992), issued by Yale University Press, was designated a 'notable book' of 1992 by the *New York Times Book Review*.
- *The University in Ruins* (Readings, 1996) was issued by Harvard University Press.
- *What Are Universities for?* (Collini, 2012) was issued by one of the world's largest and most prestigious English language publishers of paperbacks, Penguin.

I also draw on other examples of the *ideal-essentialist* narratives in the discussion section as well as exploring the influence that these narratives have on *critical*, *explanatory* and *pragmatic* accounts of higher education.

3. RESULTS

In brief, my analysis suggests that post-war *ideal-essentialist* narratives impose a strict normative hierarchy on the academic workforce. This hierarchy is headed by representatives of the humanities from elite institutions and excludes those sections of the academic workforce that are apparently aligned to utilitarian and commercial priorities. This leaves the business school system particularly exposed and with little chance of achieving legitimacy on the terms set by these narratives. By relying on vague terminology and ideographs, these texts also conceal how much of the academic workforce is negated by the logic of their normative framework.

I present my analysis in three main sections:

1. A short overview of how the selected texts establish their claim to normative authority.
2. An analysis of the problems that prompt these authors to write (*exigence*) and how they navigate the obstacles to solving these problems (*constraints*).
3. An analysis of how these texts seek the deference of broader academic interest groups while simultaneously negating particular academic entities.

3.1 Normative authority

Most of the authors (or editors) of the texts in this sample make it clear that they participate in an important intellectual tradition that stretches back to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In doing this, they appropriate the historical *ideas of the University* canon to their particular vision of higher education. For example:

> ‘In spite of the fact that Professor Jaspers has been constrained to write his book by considerations very different from those that animated Newman, these two books have more in common that virtual identity of title’ (Zangwill, 1959, p. 14)
>
> ‘When in writing this book, I copy out the Enlightenment sentences of Kant ….I feel a thrill of pride, in him, and satisfaction that I too urge these sentences the best I can’ (Goodman, 1962, p. 165)
>
> ‘It is in a real sense the outcome of a scholarly and theological dialogue with John Henry Newman that has been going on for my entire lifetime. For one thing, I can claim to have shared the experience of also having participated for a few years, as did Newman (and at almost exactly the same age as he, in my early fifties), in the joys and frustrations of university governance…But in addition I do feel able to claim a deep-seated scholarly affinity with him on at least two other counts.’ (Pelikan, 1992, p. 8).
>
> ‘But poetry, oratory and liturgy can all have in common the power to stir us into recognition of something that we cannot quite name, and the remarkable longevity of Newman’s book, which exhibits features of all three genres, suggests it still retains

> some of this power. The twenty first century needs a literary voice of comparable power to articulate in the idiom of our own time the ideal of the untrammelled quest for understanding' (Collini, 2012, p. 60)

The authors' choice of titles also gives the impression that their arguments speak for the university system in its entirety. They include: *The Idea of the University, Mission of the University, The Community of Scholars, The Closing of the American Mind, The University in Ruins,* and *What are Universities for?* From the wide sweep of these titles, it is easy to assume that their arguments apply to the entire academic workforce and to the broadest range of higher education institutions.

3.2 Exigence

The *exigence* of my sample texts is the starting point of my analysis. This basic element of the rhetorical situation is 'a pressing problem in the world' (Jasinski, 2001, p. 514) that a text seeks to modify. In order to be rhetorically effective, the *exigence* must be an event or situation that the audience has the capacity to influence (Bitzer, 1968, pp. 6–7). My analysis suggests that post-war *ideal essential* narratives create their exigence in three stages:

<u>Stage 1</u>. By presenting the University as under threat from forces that are already well documented and that readers are pre-disposed to accept. The distinctive element of the exigence is the urgency of established problems.

<u>Stage 2</u>. By describing threats as they manifest within the academic workforce rather than as external to the system, authors stress the urgency of the problems while giving academic stakeholders the agency to effect change.

<u>Stage 3.</u> By framing resistance as a necessary condition of *academic legitimacy*, academic stakeholders are encouraged to oppose the threats that have infiltrated the system.

I discuss each of these stages in detail below.

3.2.1 Stage 1 - Threats

Given the historical and cultural range of my sample, the exact form of the threats that underpin each *exigence* varies between individual texts in this sample. However, they all have two features in common:

- The stated threats are framed as urgent and universal to the whole university system.
- The threats are assumed to be already well-understood and accepted by the audience.

As many of the narratives in this sample correspond closely to the *jeremiad* form, they articulate their *exigence* in particularly urgent and apocalyptic terms, which is useful given that the problems are not new ones. The following extracts illustrate how this sense of urgency is created:

> 'The root of Spain's trouble, whether in the state or the university, may be given the most various names; but if you seek the very tip of the root out of which all the rest arises and emerges you encounter a fact which only one word can adequately describe: slovenliness. It penetrates our whole national life from top to bottom, directing, inspiring its actions.' (Ortega y Gasset, 1944, pp. 31–32)

> ‘there is a storm breaking on the university again, and this time from north, south, east, and west’ (Pelikan, 1992, p. 11)

> ‘Universities across the world in the early-twenty-first century find themselves in a paradoxical position. Never before in human history have they been so numerous and important, yet never before have they suffered from such a disabling lack of confidence and loss of identity.’ (Collini, 2012, p. 3)

The outstanding example of the established and acknowledged threat is the impact of commercial influence on the University. In diachronic terms, the tension between the university and ‘business’, ‘trade’ or ‘commerce’ has a long history. <Commerce> is a consistently problematic trope across the *ideas of the University* canon and one that has proved adaptable to a variety of historical and cultural contexts. For example, Kant (1798, p. 41) uses the phrase ‘businessmen of the faculty’ to illustrate how the allegedly ‘higher’ faculties, who engage most closely with the world outside the university, have less intellectual autonomy than the allegedly ‘lower’ faculty of philosophy.

In a different vein, Newman’s proposals for a liberal (as in gentlemanly) model of higher education reject commercial associations:

> ‘on the other hand, what is merely professional, though highly intellectual, nay, though liberal in comparison of trade and manual labour, is not simply called liberal, and mercantile occupations are not liberal at all. Why this distinction? because that alone is liberal knowledge, which stands on its own pretensions, which is independent of sequel, expects no complement, refuses to be *informed* (as it is called) by any end, or absorbed into any art, in order duly to present itself to our contemplation.(Newman, 1852, pp. 108–9)

Early twentieth century American commentators such as Veblen(1918) and Flexner (1923) also make distinctions between the ‘workday life’ of business and the higher learning of the university. For example, Veblen’s vision of the university gives the ‘higher learning’ a very narrow aim:

> ‘The lower schools (including the professional schools) are, in the ideal scheme, designed to fit the incoming generation for civil life; they are therefore occupied with instilling such knowledge and habits as will make their pupils fit citizens of the world in whatever position in the fabric of workday life they may fall. The university on the other hand is specialized to fit men for a life of science and scholarship;’ (Veblen, 1918, p. 18)

For Newman and Veblen, the type of education that fits graduates for a career in business is not appropriate to institutions designed to produce, variously, either civilised gentlemen or scientists and scholars. This problematic relationship between commerce and the University is also a common theme within many post-war literatures on higher education, especially those of a *critical* bent (for examples see, Thompson 1970, Soley 1995, Giroux 2011).

When viewed in purely rhetorical terms, commerce and associated concepts attain both diachronic and synchronic resonance as a long standing and pervasive normative concern of the university system. As such, both <commerce> and <business> may be understood as ideographic ‘devil terms’ (McGee, 1980; Weaver, 1995) of higher education discourse, which signifies taken-for-granted terminology that is used to ‘characterise those who are different from ‘“us” (the other)’ (Jasinski, 2001, p. 309). According to this view, <commerce> and <business> are both fundamentally *other* to the University. This leaves the Business School in a uniquely problematic position as regards its *academic legitimacy*.

Across the later texts in my sample, it is taken for granted that the University is inherently ‘higher’ than <commerce> and that commercial influence on the University is dangerous or harmful. Bloom’s reflections on campus architecture (and use of ‘merely’) demonstrates the first point neatly:

> I had never before seen, or at least had not noticed, buildings that were evidently dedicated to a higher purpose, not to necessity or utility, not merely to shelter or manufacture or trade, but to something that might be an end in itself.’ (Bloom, 1988, p. 243).

Even Pelikan, whose experience of higher education management gives his account greater *pragmatic* sympathies, articulates the need for the higher education system to manage its utilitarian functions effectively, in order to avoid a disastrous loss of control over the ‘higher’ normative system (or ‘real business of the university’):

> ‘For it is a lesson in educational history in many lands, that if the higher education community, individually and collectively, declines to carry out this (fiscal) responsibility, there will be other agencies, both private and public, that will all too willingly assume it, and with it a significant share of authority over the *real* business of the university.’ (Pelikan, 1992, p. 73)

One of the ways that *ideal essential* narratives question the legitimacy of particular academic workers or entities is by situating ‘the other’ within the academic workforce itself and this is the case with commercial associations. Collini proposes an important divide between those members of the academic workforce who have utilitarian allegiance and those who do not:

> ‘Within universities, those in technological, medical, and professional disciplines are generally more confident that the future belongs to them than their colleagues in the humanities or even many branches of the ‘pure’ sciences. A professor of accounting and business studies in Singapore or a professor of metallurgy in Wuhan may understandably feel that universities have never been so popular or well-resourced. A professor of medieval history in Ohio or a professor of German literature in Sheffield may feel that their disciplines, and their careers, have never been so precarious or so little esteemed.’ (Collini, 2012, p. 4)

The apparent polarisation of utilitarian and normative interest groups *within* the academic workforce itself is also highlighted elsewhere across my sample. Both Goodman and Readings highlight the colonisation of the academy by harmful utilitarian interests:

> ‘The ultima ratio of administration is that a school is a teaching machine, to train the young by pre-digested programs in order to get pre-ordained marketable skills; and teaching machines have, of course made their appearance. Such training can, and must, dispense with the ancient communities, for they are not only inefficient but they keep erasing or even negating the lessons’ (Goodman, 1962, p. 173)

> 'After all one of the things that the student revolts of 1968 attacked was the complicity between sociology and marketing. Now universities offer majors in marketing.' (Readings, 1996, p. 138)

These two further examples illustrate how commercial infiltration is internalised into forms of pedagogy or particular programmes, which are then delegitimised by *ideal essential* narratives. By taking the uncontroversial threat of <commerce> as *exigence* and showing how it manifests within the academic workforce, I suggest that these narratives provide their audience with a blueprint for the resistance required to modify the 'pressing problems' they present.

However, these narratives are less explicit on the position of the academic workers who are personally implicated with these commercialised initiatives. They do not specify whether those who also fulfil *utilitarian* ends within their working day should be considered victims or agents of the process. This is an important point because bifurcating the academic workforce means that academic entities become the target of this resistance and this creates some challenging rhetorical *constraints.* To succeed rhetorically, these texts must strike the right balance between gaining deference to a heartland that privileges a tiny elite and negating a significant proportion of the academic work force. The following section explains how this is achieved.

3.2.2 Resistance

The works in my sample all resolve their *exigence* through a doctrine of *resistance*. Each text argues that the capacity to resist harmful influence is a core academic duty and the authors are held up as exemplars of the capacity to resist. As the extract below illustrates starkly, the failure to resist also compromises the legitimacy of the academic worker:

> At an individual level, a characteristic that qualifies these authors to speak on behalf of the university system is their personal capacity for *resistance*. For example, Jose Ortega y Gasset was forced into exile in Buenos Aries at the start of the Spanish Civil War and did not return to Europe until 1942. Meanwhile, as his editor explains, Karl Jaspers 'witnessed the pitiful condition of the Universities under Hitler and was indeed one of the very few scholars in Germany who refused to compact with their suicide' (Zangwill, 1959, p. 13).

In a more modest way, Goodman, Collini and Bloom are also presented as oppositional figures. On the back flap of *The Community Scholars*, Goodman is described as taking 'the view that life and growth take place in opposition to the prevailing conventions' (1962), while the back cover of *What are Universities for?* describes Collini as 'one of the most important critical voices in debates about universities and their futures' (2012). The Foreword to *The Closing of the American Mind* by Saul Bellow states that 'it will be difficult for nettled colleagues to wave (Professor Bloom) away…for he is shrewd and mettlesome' (Bloom, 1988, p. 11).

Pelikan and Goodman both present *resistance* as a traditional academic virtue with long historical roots. Pelikan provides a quasi-historical account of the relationship between university members and external stakeholders, explicitly based on a commitment to resistance:

> The members of the university have traditionally resisted, as anti-intellectualism or know-nothingism, the demands for accountability, whether they have come (as they did in the Middle Ages, and even since) from ecclesiastical officials or (as they have in all periods of university history) from wealthy private patrons or (as they have under all political and economic systems) from government.' (Pelikan, 1992, p. 156)

Goodman takes a similar approach but also argues that this resistance has failed, leading to the colonisation of the academic workforce by utilitarian interests:

> 'Historically, the communities of scholars have perennially been invaded by administrators from the outside, by Visitors of king, bishop, despotic majority, or whatever is the power in society that wants to quarantine the virulence of youth, the dialogue of persons, the push of inquiry, the accusing testimony of scholarship. But today Administration and the administrative mentality are entrenched in the community of scholars itself; they fragment it and paralyze it.' (Goodman, 1962, p. 8)

Bloom offers his readers a cautionary tale about the failure to resist through an unflattering vignette of professors who capitulate to opposition:

> 'The professors, the repositories of our best traditions and highest intellectual aspirations, were fawning over what was nothing better than a rabble: publicly confessing their guilt and apologizing for not having understood the most important moral issues, the proper response to which they were learning from the mob; expressing their willingness to change the university's goals and the content of what they were taught' (Bloom, 1988, p. 339).

For both Goodman and Bloom, the failure of the academic workforce to defend academic 'traditions' and 'values' from external threat is as problematic as the specific threats themselves. If *resistance* is a core academic duty and the failure to resist is a key problem of the contemporary system, one of the core rhetorical tasks of these narratives is to persuade their readers to join in the *resistance*. I suggest that they achieve this by framing threats in a way that makes both the need for *resistance* urgent and the form of *resistance* achievable for individual academic workers.

3.3 Rhetorical Constraints: the essence of the University

The *constraints* of a rhetorical situation may be understood as 'persons, events, objects and relations which are parts or elements of the situation because they have the power to constrain decision and action needed to modify the exigence' (Jasinski, 2001, p. 515). In the case of *ideal essential* accounts, the rhetorical situation is constrained by academic entities (including disciplines and institutions) that flourish under utilitarian conditions that threaten the 'essence' of the University. These entities include some of the largest and most powerful (in *utilitarian* terms) sections of the academy, including the applied sciences and 'professional schools' with the Business School as a prime example of this.

To succeed rhetorically, these texts must persuade the wider academic workforce to defer to those who represent this 'essence'. This process involves defining what qualifies an academic entity to represent the values of the higher education system. Collini confronts this contradiction head on:

> 'Shouldn't we stop thinking in terms of the nineteenth century European ideal and focus instead on how it is the Asian incarnation of the Americanized version of the European model, with schools of technology, medicine, and management to the fore, which most powerfully instantiates the idea of the university in the twenty-first century?' (Collini, 2012, p. 13)

Collini answers his own rhetorical question by arguing that the 'essence' of the University does not lie within these 'twenty-first century' models of higher education. Using a rhetorical strategy common to the entire sample, he locates the 'ideal' of the university system in a previous era, using the trope of the 'golden age'. Using a distinctive variation on the golden age myth, all *ideal-essential* narratives in this sample negotiate the rhetorical constraints of a dominant heartland through an imagined version of the medieval university system. This allows authors to dismiss technology, business or science as *inessential* to the University and helps them negate the utilitarian constraints of the contemporary landscape.

Goodman provides the most completely realised example of this rhetorical strategy. He bases his entire argument on a contemporary reinvention of the *studium generale* of the Middle Ages and provides a fully costed proposal on how to achieve this (Goodman, 1962, pp. 333–334). The other authors in this sample, without exception, also invoke a romanticised version of the medieval University as embodying something 'proper', 'entire', 'unified', 'natural' and 'contemplative' :

> 'But the fact is that if we go back to the medieval epoch in which the university was created, we see clearly that the relic before us is the humble remains of what then constituted higher education, proper and entire' (Ortega y Gasset, 1944, p. 43)
>
> 'The reunification of the university….cannot simply mean restoring things to their medieval unity' (Jaspers, 1959, p. 101)
>
> 'With vicissitudes, this medieval community form has persisted for nearly a thousand years because it is, as I shall try to show, a natural organ for the education of youth into universal culture' (Goodman, 1962, p. 168)
>
> 'The longing for I knew not what suddenly found a response in the world outside. It was, surely, the fake Gothic buildings…This imitation of styles of faraway lands and ages…were a bow to the contemplative life' (Bloom, 1988, p. 243).
>
> Indeed most historians would look to the Catholic Middle Ages as, in Newman's phrase, "the very age of Universities" (II.viii.5). The medieval university was the foundation of the university as we know it, and many of the most eminent modern universities – Bologna, Oxford, and Prague, amongst others – can trace an unbroken, or almost unbroken, continuity to the Middle Ages' (Pelikan, 1992, p. 45)
>
> 'The medieval guild was a practical community among others (glassblowers, painters, victuallers); the medieval University as a society for the study of knowledge was a corporate community, in the medieval sense like a guild' (Readings, 1996, p. 181)
>
> 'Imagine, for example, the same kind of brochure setting out the 'mission statement' for a medieval monastery. There's be no doubt one bar graph showing the

> increasing numbers of souls prayed for per annum, and another showing the declining value of the tithe. Come to think of it there are *some* analogies that aren't so misleading after all.' (Collini, 2012, p. 141)

As with other 'golden age' comparisons, these claims are not supported by historical evidence about the actual mechanisms and processes of medieval higher education or why these structures were superior to their contemporary equivalents. However, as discussed in section 1.1.3 of this chapter, making a valid historical comparison is never really the point of any golden age claim (Ylijoki and Ursin, 2013).

What *ideal essential* narratives tell their readers is that a mythological version of the medieval University should be treated as the *essence* of the contemporary system, as represented by the heartland, and that its values must be preserved. According to this view, later developments in higher education (which include the sciences and recent incarnations of the 'professional school') should defer to the academic interest groups that are direct heirs to these medieval traditions. Any developments in the system that threaten to undermine this normative dominance of the heartland become legitimate targets of resistance. In the final section of this analysis, I examine how *ideal essential* narratives make the case for this legitimising process, despite the problematic implications for the broader academic workforce.

3.4 The three personae

As with any legitimisation process, the *ideal essential* normative framework requires 'voluntary deference' (Tyler, 2006, p. 394) from internal stakeholders. Using the rhetorical concept of the *three personae*, I discuss how texts in my sample appear to privilege a small elite and gain deference from other academic workers by negating or scapegoating certain academic entities with the Business School as the outstanding example of this. The *three personae* of these narratives can be summarised as follows:

- The *first persona* (or authorial voice) are those academic workers who represent the 'essence' of the University as heirs to its medieval origins and who lead the resistance against utilitarian or commercial influence.
- The *second persona* represents those academic workers and entities who identify with the interests of the *first personae*, defer to the heartland and are willing to join the resistance.
- The *third personae* of these narratives fall into two camps:
    - Those academic entities or workers that threaten the values of the *ideal essential* model and merit resistance.
    - Those entities that challenge the logic of *ideal essential* models and are left invisible.

3.4.1 First Persona

The *first persona* of the rhetorical situation is best understood as the 'authorial voice' (Jasinski, 2001, p. 429) or 'the-author-in-the-text' (Fiske, 1986) of a narrative. My analysis suggests that the *first personae* of my sample texts are surprisingly similar with two shared characteristics:

- The authors display their disciplinary affiliations with the humanities, especially philosophy, in elite institutions.
- The authors are personally dedicated to resistance and position themselves as normative guardians of the University.

I discuss both of these characteristics in turn and their implications for the legitimacy of vulnerable entities, such as the Business School.

<u>The elite humanities</u>

Across the texts in my corpus, the humanities (and especially Philosophy) are presented as the ultimate arbiters of *academic legitimacy*. This bid for normative dominance is an important part of the process that negates entities, such as the Business School, that have achieved dominance in terms of income or student numbers. The authors themselves identify as philosophers (Ortega y Gasset, Bloom, Jaspers), intellectual historians (Pelikan, Collini) or have a close affiliation with philosophy (Goodman, Readings). The role of philosophy as a disciplinary normative guardian is frequently justified on a historical basis, with Kant's *Conflict of the Faculties* (1798) proving particularly useful in establishing its provenance:

> 'When in writing this book, I copy out the Enlightenment sentences of Kant – that the faculty of philosophy is a watchdog….I feel a thrill of pride, in him, and satisfaction that I too urge these sentences the best I can' (Goodman, 1962, p. 165)
>
> The admonitions of Kant's essay of 1798 will be even more pertinent in 1998, and well beyond, not only to the philosophical faculty and the theological faculty, but to all the faculties of the university' (Pelikan, 1992, p. 61)
>
> 'On the other hand, reason has its own faculty, which Kant names "philosophy" but which we would now be more likely to simply call the "humanities".(Readings, 1996, p. 15)

Bloom describes the historical decline in the importance of philosophy as part of the *exigence* of his rhetorical situation:

> 'the learning was impressive, but it looked more and more to be the product of idle curiosity, rather than the quest of knowledge of what is most needful. Philosophy, no longer part of, or required by, natural science, was nudged over toward the humanities and even became just another historical subject. Its claim to be the ruler in the university no longer earned respect.' (Bloom, 1988, p. 302).

Readings makes a similar rhetorical move and explicitly links the decline in philosophy with the rise of utilitarian considerations:

> 'the sumptuary laws that made a University without a strong philosophy department unthinkable have been dropped in favour of market imperatives' (Readings, 1996, p. 173)

Across my corpus, philosophy and the humanities are awarded a privileged status that places them at the top of a normative hierarchy. *Ideal essential* narratives go beyond defending the humanities against external threat and advocating their value to make the case that the University should be governed by the humanities:

> 'Personally, I should make a Faculty of Culture the nucleus of the university and of the whole higher learning' (Ortega y Gasset, 1944, p. 68)

In a similar way, *ideal-essential* narratives privilege particular organisational entities within the system. For example, three of the later texts in this sample (all published from 1987 onwards) overtly privilege elite institutions in a system that has become subject to massification:

> 'A word about my 'sample' in this study. It consists of thousands of students of comparatively high intelligence, materially and spiritually free to do pretty much what they want with the few years of college they are privileged to have – in short, the kind of young persons who populate the twenty or thirty best universities'. (Bloom, 1988, p. 22).

> 'As the number of educational institutions in the world laying claim to the name "university" has increased steadily, sometimes it seems exponentially - with "universities" in some place or other devoted to the martial arts, to almost every job or vocation, and to every conceivable ideology and belief …Nevertheless, there remains a fundamental distinction between "the collegiate and university models of higher learning", and that distinction remains fundamental also to this re-examination of the business of a university' (Pelikan, 1992, pp. 76–77)

> In some parts of Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America, universities which are in effect wholly state-run technical colleges, specializing in economics and business studies, which depend largely on the fees from children of relatively wealthy families. In our larger meditations on the topic, we tend to speak freely of 'the university', as though all these various types of institution partook of some common informing ideal or essence, but it is not easy, faced with this bewildering array, to see what this might be. (Collini, 2012, p. 6)

Readings, who generally adopts a less exclusionary tone, also acknowledges that his contribution focuses on 'a certain Western notion of the University' with particular emphasis on the North American context (1996, p. 2).

The three earlier texts in my sample all relate to an earlier period where fewer institutions used the label 'university'. However, Goodman, still manages convey the impression of exclusivity. He does not make any fundamental distinction between types of institution but focuses on those establishments that offer liberal education for 'the sons of the free' (1962, p. 164). Meanwhile, the two earliest works in this sample (Ortega y Gasset, 1944; Jaspers, 1959) were both originally written before the Second World War and pre-date the post-war massification of higher education. However, Jaspers also assumes that the university has an inherent 'aura of tradition' (1959, p. 52).

As Collini puts it, the assumption is that certain types of higher education institution (i.e. elite, traditional, Western) have 'distinctive and defining' features that make them 'essential'. This exclusivity of both discipline and institution awards legitimising *power* to a very small sub-section of the academic workforce and has implications for the overwhelming majority of academic workers who do not fit this profile.

Dedication and resistance

The other key characteristic of the *first personae* of these texts is the dedication that the authors make to the cause of the University and to resisting the forces that threaten it. This is of particular rhetorical importance as it is a characteristic that is not subject to structural restrictions of disciplinary or institutional affiliations. This means that dedication and resistance are legitimising qualities that readers can choose to embody and share.

It is not necessary to read these texts closely to extract a message about the importance of *dedication*. In their capacity as *jeremiads*, these texts all rely on an emotionally charged style that evidences a close personal engagement with the topic and provide a call to action. For example:

> 'it is in some ways a personal essay about how I define my vocation as well as a book about how I define the university' (Pelikan, 1992, p. ix)

> 'I am not moralizing; I no more want to be Jeremiah than Pollyanna. More than anything else, this book is to be taken as a report from the front. The reader can judge for himself the gravity of our situation.' (Bloom, 1988, p. 22)

Crucially, every narrative in my sample appears to invite its readers to dedicate themselves to this common cause, often switching to the first-person plural as it does so:

> 'In the thick of life's urgencies and its passions, the university must assert itself as a major "spiritual power", higher than the press, standing for serenity in the midst of frenzy, for seriousness and the grasp of intellect in the face of frivolity and unashamed stupidity' (Ortega y Gasset, 1944, p. 78)

> 'We are deeply committed to this ideal which has given meaning to our life; yet we lack the necessary strength to speak of it with the enthusiasm it deserves. We know that truth, striving all around us to be seen and recognized, will live or perish with our ability to realize the ideal of the university in its ever-changing forms' (Jaspers, 1959, p. 146)

> 'The *studium generale* is, finally, what we mean by the Western World. It *is* complicated, let's face it – but it is not necessarily absurd, it can be viable. Anyway, it is the way we have chosen, and we are committed to it!' (Goodman, 1962, p. 337)

> 'Just as in politics the responsibility for the fate of freedom in the world has devolved upon our regime, so the fate of philosophy in the world has devolved upon our universities. The gravity of our given task is great, and it is very much in doubt how the future will judge our stewardship' (Bloom, 1988, p. 382)

> 'That a major shift in the role or function of the intellectual is occurring is clear. What it will come to have meant is an issue upon which those in the University should attempt to have an impact. An attention to this problematic is necessary. How we pay attention to it is not determined. Therein lies both the freedom and the enormous responsibility of Thought at the end of the twentieth century, which is also the end of what has been the epoch of the nation-state.' (Readings, 1996, p. 192)

> 'Attending to these (non-economic) values may help us remember, amid difficult and distracting circumstances, that we are merely custodians for the present generation of a complex intellectual inheritance that we did not create – and which is not ours to destroy' (Collini, 2012, p. 119)

This use of 'we' in sole-authored texts brings the reader (or *second persona*) in step with the authorial voice (or *first persona*). Taken out of context, these calls to action read as inspiring and uncontroversial statements that any academic worker should endorse. However, as I discuss in in relation to the *second* and *third persona*, they are somewhat disingenuous as the vague terminology and ideographic language masks the exact form that this dedication should take. As I discuss in Chapter 4 (Section 3.2.3), even members of the negated business school system academic workforce attempt to align with the qualities of resistance and dedication.

I expand upon this point in my discussion of the *second* and *third personae*. Given that representatives of the elite humanities form a tiny proportion of the academic workforce, *essentialist* models rely on other academic workers deferring to their normative guardianship. As I discuss in the next two sections, this is achieved through a rhetoric of flattery and ambiguity (in relation to the *second persona*) and intimidation (in relation to the *third persona*).

3.4.2 Second Persona

The *second persona* is the audience implied by a text, which is accommodated through its claims and 'stylistic tokens' (Black, 1970, p. 112). In order to qualify as a rhetorical audience, the *second persona* must be open to influence and have the capacity to help resolve the problem (or *exigence*) that the discourse sets up (Bitzer, 1968, p. 8). I suggest that the texts in my sample all invite the *second personae* to solve the problem of utilitarian and commercial intrusion by following three mechanisms:

- Readers are addressed flatteringly as fellow intellectuals who are assumed to share the concerns and priorities of the first persona and are part of the same interest group.
- The exclusivity of the *ideal essential* framework is masked by ambiguous, ideographic terminology that appears to encompass the entire academic workforce and masks the normative hierarchy that these narratives set up.

I discuss each of these in turn and how they facilitate existential challenges against the Business School as well as what happens when these rhetorical strategies do not work and the *second persona* goes 'rogue'.

Fellow Intellectuals

The dedications and acknowledgements sections of my sample texts help characterise their target audience and signal their intended readership. Bloom and Ortega y Gasset dedicate their works to their students collectively while Collini favours 'colleagues and students', and Pelikan honours an individual institution (the University of Chicago). Jaspers chooses a colleague and Goodman picks a sociologist and cultural critic as 'two men of intellect, my friends'. This indicates a literature that is firmly aimed at those who are personally invested in the higher education system.

However, the *second personae* are also required to help spread the message of these narratives beyond the University. Authors make the flattering assumption that their readers have the social and intellectual capital to exercise influence in the public sphere:

> 'It is no longer clear what the place of the University is within society nor what the exact nature of that society is, and the changing institutional form of the University is something that intellectuals cannot afford to ignore.' (Readings, 1996, p. 2)

> 'I hope that all kinds of readers will find this book informative as well as persuasive, but above all I hope readers will *recognize* in these pages a case that speaks to their half-buried intuitions about what universities are for, and that it thereby encourages and assists those readers to make this case tell in the public domain'(Collini, 2012, p. xiii)

As discussed in relation to the *first persona*, the texts in this sample use stylistic and grammatical features that bring the reader into community with the normative heartland. As mentioned in the previous section, direct address to readers and the use of 'we' reinforces this sense of community (Jasinski, 2001, p. 69):

> 'Such an abandonment will occur gradually without us, if we ignore it.' (Readings, 1996, p. 192)

> 'am I not right, young people?' (Ortega y Gasset, 1944, p. 53)

> 'This seems to me to be our educational challenge' (Bloom, 1988, p. 43)

In these ways, the reader is flattered into endorsing *ideal essential* models and deferring to the interests of the elite humanities through a strong identification with the authors' position. To disagree with the arguments put forward in these texts is to deny one's own claim to intellectualism. In Chapter 4 (Section 3.2.3), I provide examples from the management literature where business and management academics also align themselves with *ideal essential* concerns, seemingly unaware that they are negated by these narratives.

<u>The Ambiguous Academic</u>

Superficially, *ideal essential* narratives often seem to deal with challenges that are common to the entire academic workforce. As the two examples that follow show, these narratives imply that the concerns they address are of collective concern:

> 'It is not merely that the professoriat is being proletarianized as a body and the number of short-term or part-time contracts at major institutions increased' (Readings, 1996, p. 1)

> 'Academics are busier than ever simply carrying the burdens of increased teaching loads, unstoppably multiplying administrative procedures, and the assessment-driven obligation to yet more publication'(Collini, 2012, p. 115)

Although my analysis of this corpus suggests that *ideal essential* narratives privilege a particular type of academic worker and a particular type of institution, this information is never overtly signposted and frequently masked. It becomes evident in the context of the *third persona*, which consists of academic 'others' that are negated to various degrees.

The Business School is the most extreme example of this in that its right to exist in the University is challenged.

The ‘Rogue’ Second Persona

As jeremiads, the rhetorical approach of these texts is understandable as this type of text is designed to gain endorsement rather than to provoke debate. However, relying on flattery and ambiguity is also a high-risk strategy. As the scathing reviews attracted by some of my sample show, their arguments are easily undermined when exposed to a less sympathetic audience:

> ‘But Bloom’s real agenda is much darker – to launch a nasty, reactionary attack on the values of young people and everyone else under forty. His multi-count indictment is a laundry list of cheap slanders made to sound vaguely authoritative, because, after all, Bloom is a teacher who supposedly hangs out with students. In fact, Bloom sounds bewildered by young people – and strangely out of touch with them.’ *Rolling Stone* (Greider W, 1987)
>
> ‘Many pages pass before Collini, now cordoning off the suspect preposition inside quote marks by "asking what universities are 'for'", confesses that he isn't even sure what a university is….At least, unlike Bill Clinton extricating himself from charges of sexual hanky-panky by mobilising the skills he learned at Yale Law School, Collini refrains from asking "what the meaning of 'is' is". *The Guardian* (Conrad, 2012)

As I discuss in the next section, a major rhetorical challenge of these texts is how to prevent critical attacks from commentators who may accuse them of a reactionary agenda or lack of rigour. This includes silencing potentially critical voices as well as uniting the rest of the academic workforce against the entities targeted for resistance.

3.4.3 Third Persona

Within the rhetorical situation, the *third persona* is a set of implied characteristics or perspectives that must be avoided or negated. In the context of *ideal essential* narratives, there are two types of problem to navigate.

- Firstly, these narratives must avoid acknowledging potential rivals for normative dominance, especially if they challenge the logic of the elite humanities heartland.
- Secondly, they must propose suitable targets of normative resistance to unite other academic workers behind their cause.

To this end, I suggest that the *third personae* of my sample texts encompass two distinct entities, which are given rather different rhetorical treatment:

1. The *sciences*, which threaten the principle of an elite humanities heartland and operate according to a rival normative framework based on competence, skill and recognition (Carlone and Johnson, 2007). This negation of such a serious rival for dominance exposes the brutal exclusivity of *ideal essential* narrative.
2. Forms of higher education that serve occupational or economic ends, which may be framed as sitting outside the ‘real business of the university’ (Pelikan, 1992, p. 73) and become targets of existential challenge through *resistance*. The prime example of this category is the Business School.

Both iterations of the *third persona* have implications for the legitimacy of the Business School, either directly or indirectly. On this basis, I discuss each of these categories in turn.

Science

As far as they are discussed at all, the natural sciences are negated in *ideal essential* narratives as intellectually and morally limited, self-interested, and unconcerned with the ethical dimensions of scholarship. This presents an interesting parallel with the case of the Business School and raises questions about the logic of *ideal essential* negation. The ‘scientist’ is clearly a rival for normative dominance of the <scholar> (i.e. representatives of the elite humanities). Jaspers expresses the divide succinctly:

> ‘Scholar and scientist each tend to claim that their own discipline is the only true one’ (Jaspers, 1959, p. 48)

However, the texts in this sample do not present the science-humanities divide as a mere difference in intellectual interests or orientation, as in C.P. Snow’s *Two Cultures* (1959) . According to the *ideal essential* framework, scientists exhibit some inherently problematic tendencies, which might disqualify them from normative guardianship, even if their *academic legitimacy* is hard to question. Ortega y Gasset illustrates the distinction between science and ‘culture’ and details the limitations of the former:

> ‘Science is not something by which we live. If the physicist had to live by the ideas of his science, you may rest assured that he would not be so finicky as to wait for some other investigator to complete his research a century or so later. He would renounce the hope of a complete scientific solution, and fill in, with approximate or probable anticipations, what the rigorous corpus of physical doctrine lacks at present and, in part, will always lack.’ (Ortega y Gasset, 1944, p. 64)

Like Jaspers, Bloom addresses the possibility that natural scientists consider themselves superior to other disciplines. He also introduces the idea that they may be disqualified from a legitimising role by a lack of ‘burning’ personal commitment:

> ‘But it is not now conceivable that the physicist qua physicist could learn anything important, or anything at all, from a professor of comparative literature or of sociology. The natural scientist’s connection with the rest of humane learning is not familial but abstract, a little like our connection with humanity as a whole. There may be a formulaic invocation of rights applicable to all, but nothing that moves with the burning immediacy of shared convictions and interests.’ (Bloom, 1988, p. 349)

Pelikan introduces the idea that scientific knowledge is apocalyptically harmful by putting responsibility on the sciences for contemporary environmental and technological problems:

> “it would be specifically the elites in the basic and applied sciences at the university……who would provide much of the leadership of the “mechanical arts” and for the technology by which the ancient imperative to subdue the earth would be carried out with a thoroughness far surpassing anything projected in Genesis or Aristotle or the Apocalypse.’ (Pelikan, 1992, p. 20)

Elsewhere, ‘scientists’ simply remain shadowy figures at the periphery of these texts. Goodman (1962, p.180) quickly switches focus from scientist to <scholar>, dismissing scientists as ‘obsessional and a little nutty’ and moving swiftly on to the more rewarding territory of scholarship. Readings’ more nuanced account acknowledges that his book ‘will also tend to privilege the humanities’ and that it would be easy for readers to assume that he gives ‘the impression that the humanities are the essence of the university’ (1996, p. 4). At a later point, he also admits that he is not equipped to trace the parallel processes that may emerge in the natural sciences and social sciences (1996, p. 174). Nonetheless, as Readings and Goodman appear to speak to the condition of the University as a whole, rather than to the condition of the humanities, this exclusion is curious and worth noting.

Collini takes these arguments a step further and introduces a utilitarian dimension to the process of negating the sciences. He suggests that the importance of scientific disciplines to the current higher education system is largely instrumental and serves to undermine other, more *essential*, functions of the University:

> ‘National amour proper, ever a vain and giddy quality, comes to be invested in having universities that might give the big American powerhouses a good game. Once again, the results are principally measured in terms of research in the biological, physical, and medical sciences, and these results are largely determined by financial investment. Many of the ways in which an institution may be a good university and play an important part in the intellectual life of its host society are simply disregarded.’ (Collini, 2012, p. 18)

Each text in this sample implies that the future of the University is not safe in the hands of the ‘scientists’ and that it is the humanities that hold the unique capacity to resolve the problems of the University. This delegitimisation of STEM subjects may not be apparent from a casual reading of these texts as it is a topic that is not addressed at any length and perhaps for the good rhetorical reason that some readers would find the assertion preposterous. However, this marginalisation is evident from close reading across my corpus and further highlights the exclusionary tendency of *ideal essential* frameworks. If the ‘sciences’ are sacrificed to secure the dominance of the <scholar>, does the negation of the Business School tell us more about the exertion of legitimacy as a *power* rather than legitimacy as a set of verifiable *properties*?

Expert occupations and ‘professions’

As the case of the natural sciences demonstrates, the *ideal essential* framework restricts normative guardianship to a tiny proportion of the academic work force. However, given the intellectual status of the sciences, there is a limit to how far *ideal essential* narratives can take negation without losing credibility. This is not the case with those forms of higher education that serve expert occupations. The perception that these entities serve utilitarian ends and are not fully ‘academic’ gives them more potential as a target of *ideal essential* resistance. Given that the normative dominance of the elite humanities is not easy to sustain, the rhetorical decision to scapegoat other academic entities is a useful way of ensuring deference.

Across my corpus, academic entities that provide career preparation for expert occupations are, at best, presented as peripheral to the mission of the University and, at worst, destructive to it. Jaspers and Pelikan are generally the most measured in their treatment of all non-humanities entities and this may be accounted for by their *pragmatic* experience of university management. However, even these two authors strike a cautionary note about the place of 'professional schools' in the university system. For example, Jaspers uses a disparaging commercial analogy to emphasise that they are not essential to the University:

> 'Thus, from one point of view, the university resembles an aggregate of professional training schools isolated from one another, or an intellectual department store with an abundance of goods for every taste. But from another point of view, it is clear that this is mere appearance since, if true, the university would simply disintegrate.' (Jaspers, 1959, p. 93) .

At the other chronological end of my sample, Collini makes a very similar point and delegitimises these entities and the institutions that specialise in this type of programme as other to the University:

> 'it is too late in the day to be insistently purist about the usage of the term 'university': for better or worse it is now applied to a great variety of forms of post-secondary educational institution. These institutions serve several important social functions, from vocational training to technology transfer…Nothing I say in this book is intended to disparage those functions and those goals…But those are clearly not the distinctive or defining features of universities' (Collini, 2012, p. 4)

Despite his *pragmatic* sympathies, Pelikan assumes that the intellectual contribution of 'professional schools' is dependent on input from pure arts and sciences disciplines:

> 'At the same time it must be pointed out that when the professional schools of the university have carried out this (information management) assignment imaginatively and effectively, it has often been in close collaboration with colleagues from the faculty of arts and sciences' (Pelikan, 1992, p. 183)

Goodman queries whether academic workers employed by 'professional schools' can even be classed as academic:

> 'In the professional schools, whether of medicine, architecture, or business, veteran practitioners exist more officially on the faculties… But by and large these part-timers also regard themselves as outsiders performing a service to the profession, rather than as members of the community of scholars…They are not the faculty of a *studium generale'* (Goodman, 1962, pp. 301–2)

All of these examples place higher education entities with an occupational rationale at the intellectual margins of the University. However, *ideal essential* critique becomes even sharper when commercial engagement is added to the mix. Readings and Collini both make it clear that certain 'occupational' programmes are inherently problematic in their capacity as academic disciplines. Both single out marketing as an example of a business school system programme with overtly commercial affiliations. Readings uses 'majors in marketing' (1996, p. 138) to illustrate how far *utilitarian* concerns have degraded the University.   Meanwhile, Collini suggests that higher calibre students are drawn to the humanities rather than business and management sub-disciplines:

> A lot of bright 18-year-olds find courses in history or English more interesting than courses in marketing or manufacturing….spending three years in the company of

> other clever people studying something that is intrinsically interesting and challenging' (Collini, 2012, p. 142)

At the very far end of the spectrum of critique, Bloom places the flagship MBA programme in a normatively disastrous class of its own:

> 'Moreover, a great disaster has occurred. It is the establishment during the last decade or so of the MBA as the moral equivalent of the MD or law degree, meaning a way of insuring a lucrative living by a mere fact of a diploma that is not a mark of scholarly achievement….' (Bloom, 1988, p. 371)

Both Goodman and Bloom refer to <scholar> or <scholarship> as the antithesis of commercially relevant programmes, while Collini implies that 'marketing or manufacturing' programmes do not attract 'clever' students. According to the stringent normative hierarchy of *ideal essential* narratives, the Business School appears to have the lowest status within the already problematic 'professional school' category and appears singled out as a target for resistance.

3.5 Summary of findings

My analysis suggests that a consistent normative framework is identifiable across the *ideal essential* narratives of my corpus and that this framework presents insurmountable obstacles to the legitimacy of the Business School. In brief, this exclusionary framework has the following characteristics:

- Representatives of the 'elite humanities' act as an intellectual and ethical heartland for the University and exercise normative control over the system.
- This normative dominance is partly achieved by negating rival claims from the 'sciences'.
- Academic entities with occupational (and particularly commercial) associations are delegitimised and scapegoated as particularly harmful to the University. As such they are targets for *resistance*.
- The legitimacy of other academic workers is made dependent on their deference to this normative control and willingness to resist forces that threaten the interests of the elite humanities.
- The Business School suffers greatly in this normative framework.

The superficial inclusivity of the *ideal essential* narrative (with its ideographic terminology of the <university> and the <scholar>) masks a stark logic in which academic qualifications or contracts of employment do not confer any *academic legitimacy*. Instead, academic workers must earn their legitimacy by avoiding the moral failings of the 'scientists', resisting utilitarian infiltration (as exemplified by academic entities with an occupational or commercial rationale) and deferring to the interests of the elite humanities, as represented in these texts.

In this way, *ideal essential* frameworks do not conceive *academic legitimacy* as a set of intellectual or moral *properties* that any academic worker may adopt but as a *power* that secures the dominance of a particular interest group. In the next section, I consider the implications of this literature for the business school system and how far *ideal essential* frameworks influence other normative frameworks of higher education.

4. DISCUSSION

The aim of this chapter is not to determine objectively whether the business school system can claim or achieve *academic legitimacy*. Instead, I explore how legitimacy is deployed within one influential normative framework and consider its bearing on the legitimacy crisis.

4.1 Legitimacy theory

In section 1.1 of this chapter, I outlined three theoretical perspectives that might provide insight into how academic legitimacy might operate across the academic work force. Crucially, each of these theoretical perspectives presents legitimisation as a process of control and dominance rather than as a set of specific legitimacy criteria that entities can choose to adopt. This supports my argument that the business school system cannot establish its legitimacy in isolation and that the endorsement of other academic stakeholders is required.

The findings from my rhetorical analysis of seven post-war *ideas of the university* texts triangulate with these three perspectives. In summary, my analysis suggests that:

- Representatives of the elite humanities claim normative control as guardians of the University and in opposition to utilitarian pressures on managerial interests (c.f. Albert and Whetten, 1985).
- The legitimising ideology of resisting utilitarian infiltration helps the elite humanities ensure the deference of other academic workers, even though this acquiescence may not serve the interests of the wider workforce (c.f. Tyler, 2006).
- 'Golden age' tropes of the medieval university co-opt tradition and myth to promote deference to the interests of the elite humanities, as self-appointed heirs of these traditions (c.f. Major, 1994; Sidanius and Pratto, 2001).

My findings also suggest that academic legitimisation operates as a power rather than as a series of objective properties, as suggested in *Table 1* of this chapter (in Section 1.1). This makes legitimacy challenges hard to resolve as there is no standard that the negated entity can meet. While criterion-based approaches may show great variation in the properties they propose, they do not automatically negate any specific academic. In contrast the *ideal essential* logic requires the inherent delegitimization of specific entities, such as the Business School, and offers no possibility of redress.

4.2 Alternative normative frameworks

However, the existence of the unsympathetic *ideal essential* framework does not mean that it accounts for the problems that the business school system faces in achieving *academic legitimac*y. Any causal relationship will be dependent on how far this particular framework has been adopted or internalised by the wider academic workforce and whether there are competing normative frameworks that contradict it and even support the legitimacy of the Business School. However, there are a number of issues that make it hard to draw any firm conclusions on this point:

Firstly, the management literature that I analyse in the next chapter rarely references normative literatures on the University, whatever their levels of hostility towards the

Business School. This is in direct contrast to the wider range of other sources that it draws on, such as news media reports or popular exposés by former students. However, this absence does not (in itself) mean that the implications of the *ideal essential* framework are irrelevant to the Business School legitimacy crisis. As discussed in Chapter 2 (section 3.1), absence can be significant in its own right.

Secondly, the normative dominance of the elite humanities is deliberately left implicit in *ideal essential* narratives. This allows their authors to obscure how far the legitimacy of most academic workers is made conditional on deference to their own interests. The lack of cross citation within this genre may also mean that its authors are unaware of their rhetorical similarities (such as evoking the medieval university or calling on other academic workers to *resist*) or that they even use legitimacy as a way of achieving dominance. This means that the influence on other literatures may also be subtle.

Thirdly, the *ideal essential* model is not the only available normative framework of the University and may not even be the most prominent across the broader system. For example, the natural sciences have their own powerful models of legitimacy. The Ford Foundation reforms (Gordon and Howell, 1959) represent an unsuccessful attempt to co-opt these models for the business school system. It may be that *ideal essential* models are simply irrelevant to the legitimacy of the Business School.

As I demonstrate in the next chapter, there is plenty of evidence that different interest groups within the business school system have adopted a wide range of normative positions in their attempt to build legitimacy (see Section 3.5 in Chapter 4). However, this does not extend to much active alignment with formal theoretical perspectives, such as the civic university (Barnett, 2016), the entrepreneurial university (Clark, 1988) and the triple helix of innovation (Leydesdorff and Etzkowitz, 1996), as well as multiple theories of professionalism and professional education. This is another interesting absence that I discuss further in the rest of this chapter and return to in Chapter 5.

4.3 The reach of *ideal essential* frameworks

In this section I explore whether the normative assumptions of *ideal essential* narratives are shared by the other three categories of higher education literature, namely: *critique*, *explanatory* and *pragmatic* (see *Table 2a* in Section 2.1 for more details) and whether the Business School is negated in these three other contexts. If this is the case, it may help explain why this legitimacy crisis is so intractable. In order to examine this possibility, I now explore whether these three categories show evidence of the following themes:

- An academic ‘heartland’ or normative hierarchy of academic disciplines
- Calls to *resist* specific academic activities or entities
- Commercial interests and academia treated as antithetical
- The business school system treated as an agent of marketisation
- The Business School ignored within debates that might be expected to use it as an example

Any attempt at a complete overview of these three categories is way beyond the scope of this thesis. However, I provide a series of indicative examples from prominent texts that illustrate how *ideal essential* assumptions may also be evident in other categories, even those that are more sympathetic to commercial interests.

4.3.1 Critique: the negated Business School

As discussed earlier, there is an inevitable overlap between *ideal essential* and *critique* narratives. Both have a normative aim but with different rhetorical emphases. Although they share the same ultimate goal, the objective of *critiques* is to point out and address the flaws of the actual system rather than delineate an *ideal* system and its *essence*.

Publications that critique the state of higher education focus heavily on the problems of commercialisation. Derogatory commercial analogies even litter the titles of this literature. Examples include: 'Warwick University Ltd' (Thompson, 1970) 'University-industrial complex' (Kennedy, 1990), 'Leasing the Ivory Tower' (Soley, 1995), 'the Knowledge Factory' (Aronowitz, 2000), and 'Science for Sale' (Greenberg, 2008). Almost without exception, this category assumes commercial values are antithetical to those of higher education and are one of its core threats. The weight and force of this rhetoric makes it almost unthinkable for the reader to argue otherwise.

This is not to say that *critical* narratives overtly privilege the elite humanities, as this is not so. However, the doctrine of *resisting* commercial influence is a strong theme, as is the suggestion that commercial engagement constitutes an abuse of academic values and privilege. For example:

> 'While there can be no objection to such (business) schools in their proper place, it is quite unclear why they should exist in universities, or why people working in them should enjoy the specific academic freedom which involves their having tenure. Those who live by the market should, if the occasion arises, be allowed to die by the market.' (O'Hear, 1988, p. p.65)

It is particularly curious that the higher education *critical* literature receives so little attention in the management self-critiques as it is here that we find the most direct attacks on the legitimacy of the Business School. One explanation may be that the existential nature of these attacks makes them hard to acknowledge, let alone refute. On the contrary, management scholars sometimes take a similar tone to the *critical* narratives and view themselves as victims, rather than agents, of commercialisation:

> According to Collini (2012), higher education establishments in the UK have been colonized by a 'business analogy' in which research and teaching careers are increasingly indexed to the functional needs of business …But resisting such technocracy is no easy task as Parker (2014) emphasizes in his analysis of the restructuring of a European business school populated by a significant number of CMS scholars, who posed little resistance to a vastly unpopular, top-down and disempowering policy' (Fleming and Banerjee, 2016, p. 268)

It is not the aim of this chapter to determine whether the allegations of *critical* narratives literature are justifiable; I simply make the point that existential challenges may be easier to ignore than to address.

4.3.2 Explanatory: the peripheral Business School

Explanatory narratives all have a theoretical or empirical basis. In this category, authors use evidence to support their assertions and avoid the overt polemic that characterises both *ideal essential* and *critique* narratives. Given that the business school system is such a dominant force in higher education, represents the largest proportion of the academic workforce, and is so controversial, it is reasonable to assume that the Business School might act as a regular focus across higher education empirical research and theory building.

Curiously, this appears not to be the case. In practice, the Business School is often marginalised or ignored, as though it is a peripheral feature of academia. Across many decades, studies of academic disciplines group business-related disciplines with minority or fringe subjects, such as folk dancing (Wilson, 1942, p. 4) or fashion design (Becher and Trowler, 2001, p. 27).

A more recent analysis of the UK social sciences by Bastow, Dunleavy and Tinkler (2014) provides an extended and striking example of this. *The Impact of the Social Sciences* actively highlights the relative size of different disciplinary groupings but puzzlingly downplays the reach of the business school system. For example, Fig 1.5a (*Estimated number of social science academics doing research in UK universities*, 2010-11) suggests that 'Education', 'Sociology' and 'Economics' are, respectively, the three largest disciplinary groupings in the social sciences with 'Business Studies' taking fourth place on this list (with 2,500 UK-based academics). However, the closely related 'Management Studies' takes sixth place (with 1,500 academics), while other core business school sub-disciplines (namely Marketing, Accounting, Human Resource Management, Tourism, Finance and Operational Research) are reported separately from these two categories and add more than 3,000 to the number of UK academic workers affiliated to the business school system. The authors of *The Impact of the Social Sciences* do acknowledge the close relationship between business and management studies:

> 'If (the business-focussed sub-disciplines) were cumulated into a single 'business studies' heading they would be close to the top of the list with around 4,000 staff' (Bastow, Dunleavy and Tinkler, 2014, p. 9)

However, this statement is also incorrect and misleading, as the largest category on the list, education (which also has an occupational focus), only contains 3,500 staff. On this basis, combining the 'Business' and 'Management' categories would far outstrip any other disciplinary grouping in the social sciences. Furthermore, combining *all* business and management sub-disciplines would create a category that is double the size of 'Education' and dominate the chart. It seems that the authors have (perhaps sub-consciously) gone to some lengths to create a chart that is *not* dominated by the Business School.

This is not an isolated occurrence. In the seminal study of disciplinary culture, *Academic Tribes and Territories* (Becher and Trowler, 2001), 'Business Studies' and 'Business and Management' receive just four mentions between them across the entire publication, while 'Anthropology' receives 13 mentions and 'Social Work' receives five. The size of the business school system seems to bear no relation to the level of attention that it receives in the *explanatory* literature.

As very few *explanatory* texts pay much attention to the Business School, it is difficult to draw any conclusions regarding its position within disciplinary taxonomies, beyond a peripheral status. One classic study of disciplinary differences provides an exception to this: *Knowledge in Motion: Space, Time and Curriculum in Undergraduate Physics and Management* (Nespor, 1994). However, the choice of 'Management' as the far end of the disciplinary spectrum from ‘Physics’ only serves to reinforce the position of the Business School as academically peripheral:

> ‘Instead, almost all business students spent a considerable amount of their day socializing and relaxing in the corporate-like ambience of the business building' (Nespor, 1994, p. 119)

In brief, the explanatory literature does not treat the business school system as particularly interesting or salient, despite its size and ability to attract controversy. When the system and its allied disciplines do feature, they are presented as marginal entities. In addition, the *explanatory* literature seems to demonstrate little awareness of the volume or intensity of criticism that it faces. There is no attempt to explore this phenomenon empirically or to examine the contested place of the Business School within higher education, which leaves it largely invisible.

4.3.3 Pragmatic: the utilitarian Business School

We might expect that *pragmatic* literatures, which deal with the practicalities of managing and developing higher education institutions, would treat the business school system with greater respect and interest than the other two categories. As pragmatic texts, this literature often attempts to address both normative and utilitarian imperatives.

Clark, in his model of the entrepreneurial university, is not pejorative about the Business School but does position it outside the ‘academic heartland’ where ‘most academic work is done’ to the ‘expanded developmental periphery’ of the university along with other ‘non-traditional units’ (Clark, 1988, pp. 6–7). Although he envisions an important role for management in his model, Clark’s account assumes some of the hierarchical features of *ideal essential* legitimacy framework narratives. As such, he certainly does not negate the Business School. However, *The Entrepreneurial University* avoids challenging dominant normative frameworks by giving the Business School an overtly peripheral role.

Only in *pragmatic* accounts with a strongly managerial orientation, typically authored by those with university leadership experience do we find the Business School mentioned alongside other mainstream disciplines and given equivalent prominence. However, these discussions tend to be firmly rooted in the utilitarian and focus on instrumental aspects of the university system, such as tuition fees (Bok, 2009, pp. 108–9). There is no attempt to promote the intellectual contributions or societal impact of business and management studies.

5. CONCLUSION

This analysis of post-war *ideas of the university* and their influence across other academic writing on higher education suggests structural obstacles to the *academic legitimacy* of the Business School. According to the *ideal essential* legitimacy framework and the associated *critique* literature, the Business School is a normative aberration within the University, thanks to its commercial associations.

Targeting the business school system in this way may be usefully understood as a form of scapegoating, which is a long-established rhetorical process. In brief, scapegoating is a way of singling out one entity for alienation although its problematic characteristics may be shared across a wider range of entities. The scapegoating process allows these other entities to maintain their purity ‘in dialectical opposition to the sacrificial offering’ (Burke 1945, p.406). This gives the Business School a vital rhetorical role as a key target for the acts of *resistance* that support the legitimacy of other academic workers.

In fact, there are many academic entities that are similarly ‘tainted’ by commercialisation or marketisation, if we consider the full implications of this normative framework. Many academic entities that prepare workers for expert occupations, programmes that respond to high student demand or applied disciplines with strong commercial engagement also face the same problem. According to the logic of the *ideal essential* model, only the ‘elite humanities’ are fully immune and other academic entities must earn their legitimacy by demonstrating *resistance* to commercial infiltration. On this basis, I suggest that the Business School’s scapegoat status is essential to ensuring that other problematic entities can take their place in the normative hierarchy.

There appears to be nothing that the internal stakeholders of the business school system can do about this situation, beyond ignoring it and creating their own academic sub-culture. My analysis of the relevant management literature in Chapter 4 suggests that this may have been the case. This may further explain why much higher education literature that challenges the legitimacy of the Business School is simply ignored by management commentaries on the legitimacy crisis.

Chapter 4: How the Business School academic community frames its legitimacy crisis

SUMMARY

In this chapter I address the first part of RQ2 and explore the different ways that legitimacy problems are described and explained *within* the business school system, in the pages of management journals. These accounts contrast with the existential critiques that I analyse in Chapter 3 in that they assume the possibility of legitimacy and do not acknowledge the scapegoating by other academic interest groups. I achieve this through a rhetorical analysis of a corpus of 374 articles that were all published in peer-reviewed management journals between 1917 and 2022. Although the individual texts in this corpus tend to take a narrow focus on a specific problem or solution, analysing these texts in aggregate points to structural causes. For example, legitimacy problems appear to occur cyclically and in reaction to each other. Equally, authors assume a range of normative positions about the mission of the Business School, which sometimes conflict, and also exhibit significant internalisation of utilitarian aims. I also highlight how these texts focus on the elite system and rarely address issues that may affect lower ranking business schools. Despite presenting an enormous array of problems and solutions, these narratives tend to avoid structural solutions and tend to focus on tactical interventions that can be implemented at the level of the individual business school without the need for systemic change. Where systemic changes are proposed, authors avoid discussing the deep structural implications of the suggested reforms. These findings inform the hybrid theoretical model I propose in Chapter 5.

1. INTRODUCTION

An extensive set of papers, authored by business school system insiders, suggests that the system is, and has been for many years, in a state of crisis. However, this literature has evolved independently of the existential critiques analysed in the previous chapter and there are very few points of contact or similarity between the two debates. The first intimations of a legitimacy crisis from the perspective of internal stakeholders emerged in the management literature before the First World War (Jones, 1913) and publications on the topic continue to the present day (e.g. Brokerhof *et al.*, 2022). On this basis, I treat these two sets of narratives as separate phenomena, which provide contrasting insights into the legitimacy crisis and may even describe parallel crises.

The sustained and repetitive self-critique phenomenon within the management literature appears to have no equivalent across other disciplines. Many academic entities experience periodic legitimacy crises (Campos, 2012; Open Science Collaboration, 2015) but these generally relate to a specific set of conditions and have identifiable causes and solutions. In contrast, management literature self-critiques stretch back to the early twentieth century and are highly repetitive, suggesting that the problems of the business school system are deep-seated and intractable. Even recent contributions continue to raise a range of long unresolved legitimacy challenges, including the societal importance of management research (Nyberg and Wright, 2022), the academic quality of business and management programmes (Bunch, 2020) or the question of relevance to occupational stakeholders (Stoten, 2022).

Despite this, only a proportion of contributions recognize that problems that face the business school system are multi-faceted or that the issues raised date back several decades (e.g. Baden and Higgs, 2015; Abrahamson, 2016; Wood, Souza and Caldas, 2022). It is more common for contributors to frame the issues within a recent timescale (for an example, see Petriglieri and Petriglieri, 2015) or isolate the discussion to one particular aspect of the system and its problems (for an example, see Butler and Delaney, 2017).

However, the authors who contribute to this literature are deeply invested in the success and reputation of the business school system and include some of its best known and influential figures (e.g. Simon, 1967; Ghoshal, 2005; Khurana and Spender, 2012). At one level, the volume of this literature and provenance of the contributions points to an enduring crisis of self-confidence in the Business School project that is widely acknowledged within the system. At another level, it suggests that attempts to resolve the problems have been consistently unsuccessful.

This longevity of the crisis is particularly puzzling given that a wide range of problems have been acknowledged by key academic stakeholders, who have the will for reform and ostensible power to enact it. If we accept the 'discipline-based authority' of the research university (Clark and Boyer, 1987, p. 150), the authors of the management literature self-critiques should be able to deploy academic freedom (Oviatt and Miller, 1989, p. 304) (Oviatt and Miller, 1989 p.304) in the service of reform, especially as senior academics also form a powerful interest group within the business school system (Knights and Willmott, 1997, p. 21). That these influential stakeholders have failed to resolve the problems they repeatedly raise, already suggests that the problems may have structural origins and are beyond the control of one interest group.

In brief, this literature addresses the following broad themes:

- The earliest examples of insider critiques address concerns about the academic and intellectual standing of the first US business schools (Jones, 1913; Gay, 1927). This theme peaked with the Ford Foundation and Carnegie reports of 1959 (Carroll, 1959; Hutchins, 1960). This anxiety is still evident in recent critiques about the effect of rankings, journal lists and research assessment on the quality of management research (e.g. Mingers and Willmott, 2013; Rubin and Dierdorff, 2013; Harley and Fleming, 2021)

- From the 1930s (and the Great Depression) onwards, contributors express anxiety about the negative impact of the business school system on the economy and society (Heilman, 1932). The theme of societal impact periodically returns to prominence in reaction to external crises such as the corporate scandals of the 1970s (Culbert, 1977), 1980s (McCabe, Dukerich and Dutton, 1991), 2002 (Adler, 2002) and the financial crisis of 2008 (Ferlie, McGivern and De Moraes, 2010).

- Another consistently expressed concern, which also emerged during the 1930s, is the irrelevance of management research and education to business practice (Donham, 1933 onwards). This issue is still apparent in the ongoing rigour-relevance debate (for an overview, see Redgrave, Grinevich and Chao, 2022).

- The most recent category of critique deals with the strategic direction of university business schools as organisations, and emerges most strongly from the 1990s onwards (Elsbach and Kramer, 1996; Stremersch, Winer and Camacho, 2021), in response to international ranking mechanisms and increased global competition between individual business schools.

While the volume and pattern of claim-making suggests that this literature may have explanatory potential for understanding this legitimacy crisis, this potentially important set of sources has characteristics that make it hard to explore using conventional techniques of review or synthesis. Firstly, only sub-sections of the publications on this topic function as any sort of debate, and there is very little cross citation although individual papers address the same issues and often draw similar conclusions or reiterate the same solutions. Secondly, this set of publications is characterized by experiential and anecdotal accounts rather than empirical studies.

In this chapter I provide a unique rhetorical analysis of a large corpus of texts from this complex literature, and focus on understanding:

- Why near-identical legitimacy crisis claims are raised repeatedly and independently over many decades
- Whether different types of crisis claim might interact to perpetuate each other
- Why there have been no effective solutions to the legitimacy problems

My analysis suggests that the business school system demonstrates a striking detachment from *both* the wider academic value systems explored in Chapter 3 and the requirements of occupational interest groups, which I go on to explore in the next chapter.

This chapter fits within my overall investigation, as described in Chapter 2 (Section 3.1). In terms of the DREIC model of critical realist research, the particular contribution of this chapter can be summarised as follows:

- To describe the events that compromise the legitimacy of entities in the business school system in terms of the experiences of authors in the context of their own normative positions.
- To explore whether there is a specific set of properties that can build and maintain the legitimacy of the business school system and to see whether this hypothesis can be eliminated from my investigation.

1.1 The status of the Business School

Identifying the mission of the Business School has been a perennial concern for business and management academics across the entire period of my analysis (e.g. Marshall, 1917; Starkey, Tempest and Thomas, 2008; Friedland and Jain, 2022). As early as 1926, the Business School was specifically described as a ‘very ill-defined institution’ (Hotchkiss, 1920)(Hotchkiss, 1913) and this has remained an ongoing issue in this literature, as evidenced by Simon’s ‘problem in organization design’ (1967) to Khurana’s ‘unfulfilled promise of management as a profession’ (2007). The intensity of this normative concern remains consistent and runs in parallel to the business school system’s growth to global dominance.

This uncertainty may have been exacerbated by the rapid growth and diversity of the business school system, which has taken different trajectories in different settings, according to national policy imperatives and higher education systems. Innovations such as the MBA, research degree programmes and new sub-disciplines have further shaped the system over time. Wider forces that affect higher education more generally, such as massification and marketisation have also left their mark. All this means that the early twentieth century 'business school' was a very different entity to its contemporary counterpart, and that there is great diversity between the entities that currently use the label (Vaara and Faÿ, 2011). For example, an elite US MBA programme may have relatively little in common with a UK critical management school, a French Grande école or a modest community college that serves a local undergraduate population.

Despite this, the generic terms 'business school' or 'business education' are used freely and uncritically across the publications in my corpus, indicating the salience of the Business School to insiders as an umbrella concept that unifies organisations, programmes and knowledge. Addressing the complexities of normative uncertainty and systemic diversity within a powerful unitary idea guides the analysis of this chapter as does identifying which parts of the system are the focus of critiques and which parts are absent from these narratives.

2. ANALYSIS

The literature that forms the basis of my corpus consists of a loosely connected web of experiential accounts and a few empirical studies that generally take a narrow focus on one problem in one part of the system. Co-citation patterns are not consistent and only isolated pockets of the literature qualify as any sort of debate. Although some contributors highlight the existence of unresolved and repetitive claims (Behrman and Levin, 1984; Cheit, 1985; Spender, 2005; Knights, 2008; Rubin and Dierdorff, 2009; Herrington and Arnold, 2013; Carton and Mouricou, 2017; Spicer, Jaser and Wiertz, 2021), many authors seem unaware of the extent of this literature.

As many individual contributions are made in isolation and remain largely uncited, even identifying the full range of insider critiques presents a methodological challenge. To complicate matters further, individual papers in my sample often focus on discrete topics such as MBA design (e.g. Nohria, 2012), modes of knowledge production (e.g. Hitt and Greer, 2011) and the operational challenges of business school leadership teams (e.g. Ojala, 2019). However, the underlying concerns are often strikingly similar, as are the events that motivate individual publications and the types of solution proposed. Identifying and analysing these underlying patterns is a key aim of this analysis.

An initial obstacle is that these scholarly sources often have a close connection to non-academic accounts of the legitimacy of the business school system. As discussed in Chapter 1, popular management exposés and media articles often motivate scholarly accounts. Equally, management scholars also publish in the news media (e.g. Ghoshal, 2003), general management publications (e.g. Mintzberg, 2004) and author reports for policy or other interest groups (e.g. Starkey and Tempest, 2000). In order to maintain focus on the perspective of business school system insiders, this analysis focuses exclusively on scholarly critiques. There are three reasons for this:

- Texts in my corpus have all been subject to peer-review and can be taken as representative of shared academic concern about the legitimacy of the business school system.
- No text in my corpus is overtly sensationalised or the product of the scapegoating process I identify in Chapter 3. In terms of both editorial content and authorship, these critiques are all the product of academic workers from within the business school system.
- The formal and consistent structure of the academic paper provides a useful framework for a rhetorical analysis within a literature that is otherwise diverse and disconnected. On this basis, I also exclude scholarly books from my sample (e.g. Porter and McKibbin, 1988; Khurana, 2007; Starkey and Tiratsoo, 2007) although I draw on their insights in my broader discussions.

There is one partial exception to this in the form of publications for a wider audience that are published under the auspices of elite business schools, such as *Harvard Business Review* or *California Management Review*. Many key papers appear in these contexts and share the authorial profiles and advocacy mission of the purely scholarly literature. These publications are also recognised in relevant journal rankings.

Even within this defined analytic framework, the enormous range of management journals that have published self-critiques presents logistical challenges to scoping the extent of scholarly publications on this topic. To illustrate, at least 220 authors have written about the problems of the business school system in at least 50 management journals between 1913 and the date of completing this thesis (December 2022). However, the lack of useful search terms and patchy co-citation makes it difficult to map the full extent of the literature.

2.1 Inclusion and Selection

This fragmentation means that management scholarship on Business School legitimacy has no specific keywords or search terms that help identify contributions. However, the generic 'business school', 'management education' or 'business education' yield thousands of irrelevant results. Given this starting point, I conducted an exploratory bibliometric analysis using Citespace (Chen, 2006) and used the three generic search terms listed above to identify 1,500 management journal articles[2] available through the Web of Science.

Interestingly, my subsequent citation analysis of this very wide-ranging sample of publications *about* the Business School confirms that management scholarship on the topic is dominated by accounts of the sector's legitimacy problems with some very highly cited papers, such as Pfeffer and Fong (2002) with almost 2,600 citations, Ghoshal (2005) with almost 5,400 and Bennis and O'Toole (2005) with almost 3,300 citations. Despite the fragmentation of the wider literature on Business School legitimacy, the topic itself is clearly a key concern across the wider system.

Given the lack of useful keywords that point directly to publications on Business School legitimacy, I identified an initial tranche of journal articles through reference and citation tracking of the most-cited papers in my Citespace analysis. I then conducted systematic searches of high-profile general management journals, special issues and dedicated management education journals to identify overlooked and uncited contributions.

[2] Representing the content of more established business and management journals from 1970 onwards

Some highly specialist terms featured consistently in the initial set of articles, such as ‘Enron’, ‘rigo(u)r relevance’ and ‘Ford Foundation’, which pointed to further critiques when used as search terms in their own right. This search continued iteratively during my analysis as sub-topics in the literature emerged, providing additional search terms such as ‘rankings’ or ‘accreditation’.

My initial search identified over 500 articles that appeared to address the legitimacy problems of the business school system as a primary aim. At this point in the process, the number of articles identified is similar to the 444 articles identified in a review published shortly before submission of this thesis (Redgrave et al 2022) that bears some superficial similarities to this analysis (see below for further discussion of this). However, I only included those articles that address an identifiable claim about the legitimacy of some aspect of the system and that were authored by academics employed within the business school system.

I also excluded descriptive general introductions to special issues, contributions that were specific to one management sub-discipline and had no wider systemic relevance (e.g. specialist aspects of accountancy education) or studies that used the business school system as cases for other topics in management research. In some cases, only close reading revealed whether a critique met these inclusion criteria. While it is probable that not every relevant insider critique was captured through this process, the analysis reached a saturation point when incorporating new material failed to generate further insights and I decided to conclude the selection phase of the study.

This selection process left a total of 374 relevant critiques. In summary, my corpus spans 50 different journals with over 220 different first authors. This comprises 210 reflective or experiential papers, 92 empirical (or semi-empirical) studies, 32 theoretical or philosophical contributions, nine historical or archival studies, nine systematic reviews and miscellaneous others including allegories (Marshall, 1926; Rimler, 1976) and interviews (Fleming and Oswick, 2014; Gerhardt, Brown and Dysvik, 2014).

Category	Example	Title
Reflective/experiential	(Parker, 2014)	University Ltd: changing a business school
Empirical	(Miotto, Polo López and Rom Rodríguez, 2019)	Gender equality and UN sustainable development goals: Priorities and correlations in the top business schools’ communication and legitimation strategies
Theoretical	(Alakavuklar, Dickson and Stablein, 2017)	The alienation of scholarship in modern business schools: From Marxist material relations to the Lacanian subject
Historical or archival	(Miles, 2017)	Historical context and insights for criticisms of the 21st century business school
Systematic reviews	(Rubin and Dierdorff, 2013)	Running a better MBA: from a decade of critique to a decennium of creation
Others	(Gerhardt, Brown and Dysvik, 2014)	A bridge over troubled water: a former military officer, corporate executive, and business school dean discusses the research-practice divide

Table 1: Types of management literature self-critique

My selection process differs from other large-scale reviews on topics related to Business School legitimacy, as follows:

- Rubin and Dierdorff (2013) conducted a very focussed review of papers about the MBA as published in the Academy of Management Learning and Education between 2002 and 2012. The sampling strategy did not focus exclusively on critical papers and only addresses one entity within the wider system as well as replicating the editorial priorities of a highly-ranked US journal.
- Wood, Souza and Caldas (2022) performed a citation analysis of scholarly and scientific articles on the specific topic of 'management research relevance', rather the wider questions of Business School legitimacy. While this review uses a very large sample of 1,186 articles across 361 journals published between 1876 and 2018, it also includes publications in domains beyond the field of management and articles that predate the foundation of the earliest US business school. As such, it does not focus on the perspective of business school system insiders.
- Ojala (2019) conducted an analysis of 272 journal articles on the competitive strategies of business schools and higher education institutions, as published between 1994 and 2018. This review lacks the normative focus that is central to my analysis.
- Redgrave et al (2022) included 266 articles on the 'relevance and impact of business schools', as published between 1991 and 2021. As well as focussing on a relatively short timeframe and sub-topic of legitimacy debates, this review also excluded some reflective articles and lower-ranking publications. It also uses the vague 'business school' as a unit of analysis. The resulting thematic review focusses solely on the abstracts of sample articles while my analysis uses material that is only identifiable by reading the main text of each article. See Section 2.2.1 for further discussion.

As this overview shows, there are no previous analyses that focus on the full range of Business School legitimacy problems over the entire history of the system and do so from the perspective of internal stakeholders.

2.2 Analytic framework and categories

While the analysis in this chapter takes academic journal articles as its source material, it is not a literature review because I do not focus on the empirical or theoretical dimensions of my corpus. In brief, I use these texts to explore how their authors account for the complexities of this legitimacy crisis rather than evaluating their empirical or theoretical insights *about* the crisis. Where useful insights are identified during the course of my analysis, I bring them into the discussion of my findings. As such, these texts form a primary dataset rather than a secondary source.

The existential critiques that I discuss in Chapter 3 negate the Business School. In contrast (and unsurprisingly), the parallel management literature is characterised by widespread demands for reform rather than calls for complete annihilation. However, the management critiques address a bewildering range of specific problems and propose an equally large number of apparently achievable solutions with limited reference to each other. Interestingly, they make no reference to the existential critiques although they draw on a wide range of other publications or events that question the legitimacy of the Business School.

While the previous chapter focuses on how and why the Business School is negated by other academic interest groups, this analysis explores how its academic stakeholders perceive and attempt to solve their own problems. My aim is to identify meaningful patterns in the way that this large, diverse and disconnected corpus of texts describes and explains a complex legitimacy crisis over time. From these patterns I draw conclusions about the causal mechanisms that may lead to the same problems arising repeatedly and proving hard to resolve. To achieve this, I structured my analysis around five consistent features that are evident within each of these texts and which point to possible causal mechanisms. These five categories are derived from key concepts of critical realism and the argumentative building blocks of classical rhetoric.

In the previous chapter, I drew on the *rhetorical situation* to understand how influential higher education narratives disadvantage the Business School. However, the present analysis required a less complex rhetorical template, which could be applied to a large collection of shortform texts that follow a largely consistent argumentative structure. Accordingly, I created a set of thematic categories, which took key elements of Aristotle's 'classical argument' as its starting point. This helped me identify fundamental rhetorical features that are common to any argumentative text in any context. This level of consistency across my corpus facilitated straightforward points of comparison within the 374 texts analysed.

The key elements of the classical argument that I used to define some of my categories include:

- The introductory *exordium* that sets up an argument and gains the reader's interest (or *claim* that authors make about the legitimacy of the Business School)
- The contextual *narration* or background to the topic (comprising the explicit *catalyst* for a text and implicit *normative position* within the text that provokes the *claim*)
- The concluding *peroration* that calls for action (or *solution* that authors propose to resolve the problems)

As discussed in Chapter 2 (Section 3.1), this analysis also co-opts elements of critical realist evidence review or 'synthesis by explanation' (Rousseau, Manning and Denyer, 2008) as well as the emerging methodology of critical realist thematic analysis (Wiltshire and Ronkainen, 2021; Fryer, 2022). While Rousseau et al propose a way of synthesising the fragmented evidence base of Management and Organisation Studies (MOS) literatures, Fryer proposes an approach to the thematic analysis of textual data sets. Although my analytic process does not map directly onto either of these methods, both are relevant to my analysis. Firstly, my corpus comprises 'MOS' literatures and shares the same challenges of accommodating fragmentation and diversity. Secondly, I conduct a rhetorical analysis that has an explanatory aim and uses a coding system that bears some similarities to thematic analysis.

For example, Fryer's proposal for critical realist thematic analysis requires that research projects should 'contain at least one research question that seeks a causal explanation of a particular event or experience' (Fryer, 2022, p. 368). He structures his approach to thematic analysis around the two key critical realist concepts of *event* and *experience*, which he uses as the basis for his coding system (Fryer, 2022, p. 375). I take a similar approach in that two of my analytic categories *(catalysts* and *claims)* also correspond to *event* and *experience*. In order to identify causal mechanisms, we need to understand what *events* these mechanisms produce and, in turn, the *experiences* that these events generate. On this basis, I record the instances of these two categories across my corpus.

Meanwhile, Rousseau highlights how MOS researchers use a ‘non-standardized array of terminology to refer to the same underlying constructs’ (Rousseau, Manning and Denyer, 2008, p. 503). I faced an equivalent challenge in that identical terminology is also used to refer to a non-standardised array of constructs. As discussed in Chapter 2, (Section 4.1), the term ‘business school’ is used to label conceptually diverse entities within many of these texts. This makes it hard to identify the parts of the system that are most vulnerable to legitimacy allegations and any that seem to escape critique. As well as highlighting the types of ‘business school’ organisation that feature in my literature, I also needed to consider the role of non-organisational entities that have proved consistently problematic, such as the MBA or journal ranking mechanisms. On this basis, the *targets* of individual critiques form another of my five categories.

Critical realism also acknowledges absence as a ‘hugely valuable diagnostic category’ (Bhaskar, 2014, p. xii) and both methods place emphasis on this. Accordingly, my analysis of *targets* also paid attention to those entities and events in the business school system that do not feature in my texts (as well as the claims that are *not* made and the solutions that are *not* proposed). This attention to absence highlights parts of the system that may escape critique or that authors find difficult to acknowledge.

Most of the papers in my corpus are not, in themselves, explanatory. However, they offer an implicit form of explanation in the *solutions* they propose to their stated *claim* and in the *normative position* that they take regarding the purpose of the business school system. If, for example, a paper recommends more attention to business ethics in MBA programme design and the author assumes that the business school system exists to serve societal (rather than commercial) ends, this tells us something about the possible source of the problems (i.e. programme design that prioritises shareholder value). When papers in my corpus propose conflicting *solutions* and hold conflicting *normative positions*, I also needed to identify instances of this in order to consider ‘whether differences across research domains are substantive or semantic’ (Rousseau, Manning and Denyer, 2008, p. 490).

Rousseau also emphasises the need investigate the assumptions of authors and alternative interpretations and argues for the need to remain sensitive to the ‘prevailing political, cultural or historical trends’ that shape the literature in question (Rousseau, Manning and Denyer, 2008, p. 489). This requirement also informs the choice of *normative position* as a category. Although this information remains implicit in many individual texts, it is crucial to understanding why the author experiences the system in a particular way. I suggest that the *normative positions* identifiable across my corpus, their possible interactions and how they compare to the normative frameworks of *ideal essential* narratives are all crucial to understanding the causal mechanisms of the Business School legitimacy crisis.

The following table summarises the theoretical derivation of each of the five categories:

Category	Critical Realism	Classical Rhetoric
Catalyst	Events	Narration
Targets	Entities	-
Claims	Experience	Exordium
Solution	Competing hypotheses	Peroration
Normative position	Assumptions/experience	Exordium

Table 2: Derivation of analytic categories

2.2.1 Equivalent analyses

At the time that I started work on this chapter, there were no examples of equivalent studies that I could use as a template for the design of this analysis. However, there has been a more recent vogue for attempting to synthesise management research on aspects of Business School legitimacy (e.g. Ojala, 2019; Redgrave, Grinevich and Chao, 2022; Wood, Souza and Caldas, 2022). None of these take an explanatory approach and are all included in this analysis as each makes a specific claim about the system and has a set of normative assumptions that the authors leave implicit.

However, Redgrave et al (2022) was published in the final stages of writing up this thesis and shows some interesting parallels with my categorisation. The author also conducts a thematic analysis of a large sample of management journal articles on topics related to Business School legitimacy, although with a different aim and focus (see 2.1 for additional discussion). Their review analysis uses the following four thematic categories, which maps on to some of my categories:

1. 'Source' or 'business school environment', which equates to my *catalyst* category.
2. 'Problems' or 'criticisms of the core business school activities', which equates to my *claims* category.
3. 'Solutions' or 'proposals for enhancing relevance', which equates to my *solutions* category.
4. 'Outcomes' or 'fundamental elements of relevant knowledge', which has some overlap with my *normative position* category.

However, the authors only offer a superficial account of the entities that are the *targets* of the critiques they analyse. They use the term 'business school' throughout, which they define as a 'knowledge producing institution' (p.7) that is involved with both 'research' and 'education'. They offer no further distinctions beyond this. Similarly, the themes within their 'Outcomes' category are synthesised to develop an 'inclusive definition' of 'relevant and impactful knowledge' (p.10), rather than used as evidence of problematic conflicts that indicate structural problems.

The authors' findings are diametrically opposed to mine in that they conclude by proposing an inclusive and holistic process of 'value co-creation' that is in contradiction to my conclusions about intractable problems with a structural origin. However, the parallels between our sets of categories have acted as useful (if late stage) points of reference for justifying my own system for categorising a similar sample of texts.

2.2.2 Analytic Process

Once selected for inclusion, I entered each publication in my corpus into an Excel spreadsheet and identified and labelled the relevant content of each publication that corresponded to these five thematic categories. The three categories derived from the classical argument tended to be positioned consistently within individual texts. As expected, the *claim* and *catalyst* were both usually identifiable in the opening paragraphs of the main article and the *solution* was usually identifiable in the conclusion.

However, the other two categories derived from critical realism were harder to spot. The *normative position* was frequently only identifiable through some incidental statement by the authors, which might occur at any point in the text. Finally, the *target* was often left implicit in the non-empirical papers and needed to be extrapolated from a careful reading that demonstrated whether authors focussed on the entire system, the business school as an organisation, business and management academic disciplines or a particular programme of study (such as the MBA). I provide detailed examples of these in Section 3.

I then grouped the items within each category into specific entities that could be distinguished by an identifiable 'causal effect'. For example, within the *targets* category, critiques of the MBA, PhD, executive education or undergraduate programmes were all grouped together under the heading of 'education' as an entity with its own emergent properties. Once the categorisation process was complete, I then triangulated findings across the five categories by considering how patterns and conflicts recur in the different themes. For example, the concept of 'professionalism' emerges as a frequently proposed *solution* to the reputational problems of the business school system, as well as featuring amongst the *normative positions* on the purpose of the Business School. As a result, 'professionalism' is a concept that emerges as a major theme in the entire thesis and becomes an important point of discussion in Chapter 5. I also identified distinctive features of the business school system, such as an internalisation of marketisation amongst sections of the academic workforce, that provided an important point of contrast with the normative frameworks identified in the previous chapter. Again, I discuss these further in Chapters 5 and 6.

3. RESULTS

My thematic analysis of this large corpus suggests that the legitimacy problems of the business school system may be structural rather than the result of malpractice or sub-optimal decision making. In summary, I offer three main insights that help explain why the chronic legitimacy crisis has never been resolved:

- The various categories of legitimacy crisis *claim* serve to contradict each other. This means that resolving one problem exacerbates another and makes any permanent resolution unlikely.
- The business school system lacks a unifying *normative* idea and the academic work force, which would generally act as the guardian of this idea, is ideologically diverse and fragmented. This means that the development of shared norms that could guide a consensus-driven reform seems unlikely.
- Apart from a few instances (e.g. Vaara and Faÿ, 2011), authors are reluctant to entertain the possibility of structural problems. To this date, the publications in my

sample are generally characterised by the belief that managerial or strategic interventions across individual business schools will solve the problems.

There are also a set of curious absences within management literature self-critiques, which may provide further insights about its limited capacity to define and address the underlying problems. In particular:

- The focus is almost entirely on the minority of elite business schools and it is hard to draw any conclusions about the rest of the system, especially low-ranking business schools, from this literature.
- While this literature responds strongly to criticisms of the Business School from the business media, it largely ignores the negation and scapegoating that I highlight in the previous chapter.
- The papers in my corpus focus on proposing *solutions* rather than exploring why problems occur. This means that similar solutions are raised repeatedly and unproductively, most notably that the Business School should operate as a 'professional school'.

I explore these issues further in the following discussion of the five themes:

3.1 Catalysts: external pressures

Unlike most scholarly debates, the management self-critique literature does not coalesce into a debate linked by patterns of co-citation, beyond a few, highly cited papers (e.g. Pfeffer and Fong, 2002; Ghoshal, 2005). Relatively few of the articles in my corpus are grounded in a thorough review of wider literature on the topic and many seem to have been inspired by non-academic sources or events across the business school system or beyond.

This is an unusual feature and I suggest that what motivates self-critique authors to write about Business School legitimacy may help identify the stakeholders or external pressures that determine the conditions of legitimacy. To this end, I first identified the *catalyst* for each publication in my sample. My analysis suggests that many of these texts represent experiential reactions to circumstances that leave the authors uncomfortable (or sometimes defensive) about the state of the business school system. Although the specific *catalysts* vary across the long historical period of my analysis, they fall into six broad and overlapping categories of 'event', as follows:

- Reactions to previous contributions to the literature.
- Political and economic crises that affect the business community and, by association, the business school system.
- Directly experiential accounts of working as an academic within the business school system.
- Responses to reputational allegations about the Business School by policy reports, high profile media outlets, popular management texts or in academic literatures.
- Responses to specific aspects of the way the business school system is structured or governed.
- Responses to specific developments and initiatives within the higher education system.

This diverse set of *catalysts* provide an initial insight into the wide range of pressures that act negatively upon the business school system and may point to underlying structural problems. Curiously, the normative narratives of higher education discussed in the previous chapter are largely absent from the management self-critiques, despite their role in scapegoating and negating the legitimacy of the Business School. That these sources are ignored, raises some interesting questions that I return to in Chapter 6.

Table 3 illustrates the diversity of catalysts and provides illustrations of the non-research examples from my corpus.

Catalyst categories	Examples of specific catalysts	Example catalyst statements
Experiential	The experiences of: research active academics **(Parker, 2014**, p. 282), doctoral students (Prasad, 2013), mid-ranking faculty (Parker, 2014), elite faculty members (Mintzberg and Gosling, 2002) or Deans (Davies, 2016)	'What follows in this article is a reflection on management and resistance, a description of one Dean's strategy of 'an earth-shattering change programme essential for the sustained pre-eminence of our Business School.'' (Parker, 2014, p. 282)
Political and economic crises	Great Depression (Donham, 1933), international conflict (Rose, 1947), recession (Connolly, 2003), dotcom bubble (Arend, 2006), financial crisis (Barker, 2010; Rasche and Gilbert, 2015), corporate scandals (Culbert, 1977; Trevino and McCabe, 1994; Adler, 2002; Gioia, 2002; Giacalone, 2004; Brokerhof *et al.*, 2022)	'SM academics failed to meet their collective responsibility, as public servants, to expose the problems in the overvaluation of Internet-related firms during the bubble.' (Arend, 2006, p. 372)
External reputational allegations	US World & News Report (Gore, 1968), Financial Times (**Adler and Harzing, 2009**), BBC (Currie, Knights and Starkey, 2010), New York Times (Wilson and McKiernan, 2011)	'Many leaders both inside and outside academia fear... that university scholarship has gone astray. The Financial Times recently asked "why business ignores business schools" and concluded that business views business school research as irrelevant.' (Adler and Harzing, 2009, p. 73)
Business school system developments	Growth in sector (Henderson, 1927), Ford Foundation report (Carroll, 1959; Kniffin, 1966; House, 1973; La Force and Novelli, 1985; Hitt and Greer, 2011), journal rankings (Elsbach and Kramer, 1996; **Gioia and Corley, 2002**; Singh, Haddad and Chow, 2007; Noorda, 2011; Harley and Fleming, 2021)	'Perhaps the consequence of greatest concern, however, is that the dominating presence and perceived capriciousness and superficiality of the rankings has driven business schools toward a focus on image management, oftentimes at the expense of substantive program improvement.' (Gioia and Corley, 2002, p. 108)
Higher education developments	Student discontent (Mahmoud and Frampton, 1971), research assessment (Doyle and Arthurs, 1995), student fees (Thomas, Kong and Peters, 2012), managerialism (Clarke, Knights and Jarvis, 2012; Wiklund, Wright and Zahra, 2019)	'Today, the majority of faculty positions at U.S. universities and colleges has been moved off tenure track. Almost 70% of all faculty members are now non-tenure track. When it comes to new hires, the situation is even worse, with 75% being non-tenure track.' (Wiklund, Wright and Zahra, 2019, p. 419)

Table 3: Non-research catalyst topics

As *Table 3* shows, each of the five catalyst categories is a stable fixture in this literature and traceable over several decades. For example, publications in the *political and economic* category address the alleged implication of the business school system in events such as the Great Depression (Donham, 1933), the corporate scandals of the 1970s (Culbert, 1977), the 1980s culture of greed (McCabe, Dukerich and Dutton, 1991) and the dotcom bubble (Arend, 2006). It is curious that any higher education entity might be considered complicit in these cataclysmic political and economic events.

Spikes in the volume of publications about Business School legitimacy within my corpus show how strongly authors respond to these crises, as demonstrated in *Fig. 1* (below). Although the launch of new business and management journals has resulted in a growing volume of publications on any topic across time, the fluctuations in this particular literature do not correspond closely with the expansion of publication opportunities. Wood (2022, p. 415) reports a similar intensification in management journal interest in the 'rigour relevance' question from 2001 onwards.

I suggest that this large increase in management self-critiques between 2000 and 2010 is best explained by the corporate scandals of 2002 and financial crisis of 2008. More than 50 critiques in my sample invoke Enron alone (e.g. Mitroff, 2004; Ghoshal, 2005; Tourish, Craig and Amernic, 2010; Mingers, Watson and Scaparra, 2012; Bunch, 2020). The association of the Business School with problematic commercial interests is an important point of discussion throughout this thesis.

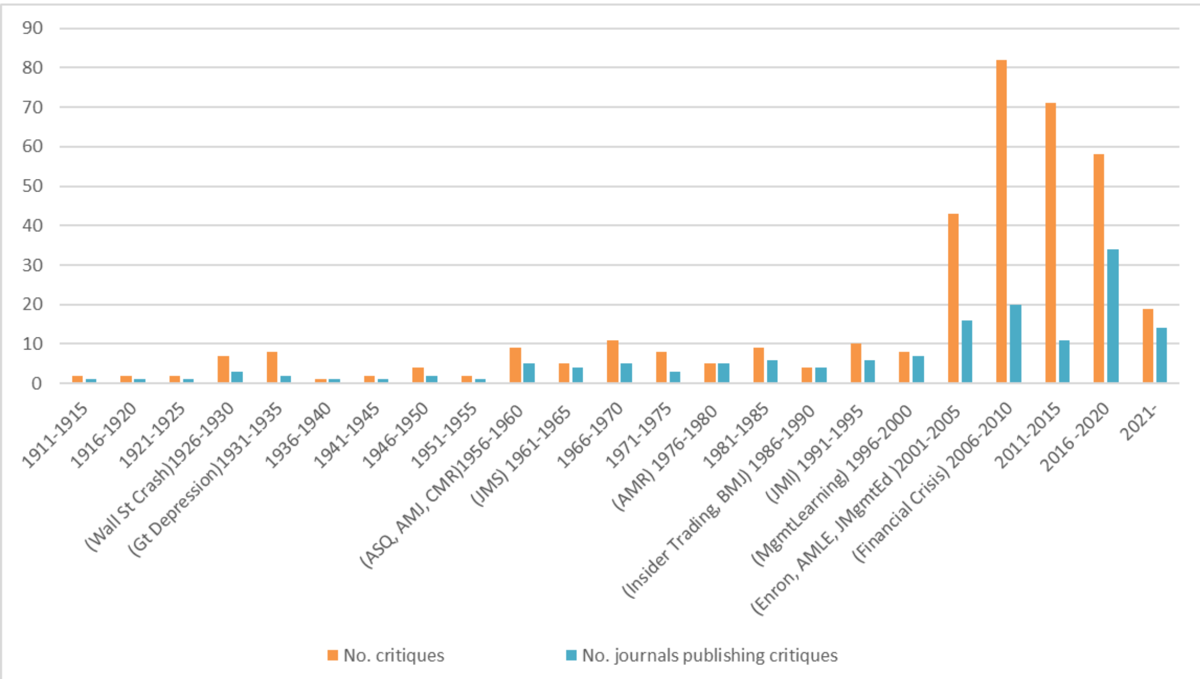

Fig. 1: Growth of self-critique literature: external events and journal launches

The related *reputational* category of catalyst reflects responses to the intense scrutiny that the business school system has received from policy organisations and other external stakeholders throughout its history. The American Management Association (Urwick, 1954), the British Institute of Management (Constable and McCormick, 1987), the Committee for Economic Development (1964), the Carnegie Foundation (Pierson, 1959) and the Ford Foundation (Gordon and Howell, 1959) are all amongst the external interest groups that have published reports on the problems of the system at various times. This public scrutiny is further exacerbated by damning allegations in international business media and popular management titles, with journalists amongst the system's fiercest critics since the late 1980s (see Chapter 1, Section 1.3 for examples).

An alternative *catalyst* for this literature is through *experiential* accounts of the problems by academic workers who, despite their insider status, find aspects of the system highly problematic. Given the findings of the previous chapter (Section 3.5), this might be taken as a further example of academic publication as an act of self-legitimisation, which serves to distance academic workers from situations that are normatively problematic. Although the management self-critiques make almost no reference to the normative higher education narratives that scapegoat or negate them, these directly experiential accounts may count as an act of resistance required of <scholars>.

A further set of catalysts respond to developments or particular structural features in the *business school* or *higher education* systems. Unlike the other three categories, these systemic critiques are more pragmatic in tone and address issues that may prevent the business school system performing its normative function, however defined. The issue of definition is important as this category highlights the exceptional normative diversity amongst internal stakeholders, which I discuss further in Section 3.5 of this chapter.

For example, one subset of critiques addresses the negative impact of marketisation and managerialism on academic quality and integrity (e.g. Pfeffer and Fong, 2004; Welsh and Dehler, 2007; Nicolai and Seidl, 2010; Zell, 2010; Clarke, Knights and Jarvis, 2012; Parker, 2014). To this end, multiple contributors take aim at media rankings (e.g. Singh, Haddad and Chow, 2007) and accreditation mechanisms (e.g. Julian and Ofori-Dankwa, 2006; Kilpatrick, Dean and Kilpatrick, 2008; Lowrie and Willmott, 2009) or journal rankings (e.g. Aguinis *et al.*, 2020; Tourish, 2020; Harley and Fleming, 2021) as factors that hamper the system from flourishing intellectually. As such, this literature has parallels with the anti-marketisation discourses of broader higher education literatures discussed in the previous chapter, although these debates are rarely referenced.

In contrast, another subset of this category accepts marketisation or managerial imperatives at face value and addresses operational challenges to achieving market success (e.g. Doyle and Arthurs, 1995; Antunes and Thomas, 2007; Lorange, 2012; Collet and Vives, 2013; Schlegelmilch, 2020; Epstein, TenBrink and Pore, 2021). As a detailed example, Saunders and Wong object to research assessment mechanisms in the UK on the grounds that they impeded the ability to compete in the international marketplace for business education (Saunders and Wong, 2011). This acceptance of *utilitarian* values (Albert and Whetten, 1985) is another distinctive feature of the management critiques and I discuss its implications further in Section 3.5

In summary, the *catalysts* of my corpus point to a series of important issues that require further exploration and that I return to both in this chapter and across the rest of this thesis:

- The high levels of interest and criticism from a wide range of external interest groups.
- The importance of experiential narratives in documenting the legitimacy crisis.
- The lack of shared norms within the academic community (even the sub-section that publishes on this topic) and some evidence that the logic of marketisation has been internalised within the academic workforce.

- Failure to address existential critiques of the Business School.

I explore these issues further across the rest of this chapter.

3.2 Targets: locating the problems

As discussed earlier in this chapter, the ‘business school’ is not a unitary concept. The label is used to describe a range of organisational types within the system. The critiques in my sample often use the generic ‘business school’ or ‘business education’ in their titles but, on closer inspection, do not address either the problems of business schools (as organisations) or broader systemic issues. Instead, they may focus on a very specific entity taken as emblematic of the system (such as the MBA) or on a particular type of business school (such as AACSB accredited schools) or a particular national context. The breadth and duration of the self-critique literature means that the actual targets may also be historically or geographically specific. This makes it hard to identify those parts of the system that struggle most with their legitimacy or whether the crisis is even fully systemic. Only one article in my entire corpus exclusively addresses the problems of the lower-ranking business school (Fornaciari and Arbaugh, 2017).

In this part of my analysis, I categorised the *target* of each publication in my corpus, according to the critical realist concept of emergent properties. This process generated three dominant categories (comprising at least 250 critiques) alongside a scattering of more idiosyncratic *targets*, such as students, faculty members or the wider system itself. These three main categories can be summarised as follows:

- *Organisations*: business schools as university departments, which have some organisational power (albeit constrained) in terms of programme design, hiring policy, strategic priorities etc
- *Discipline:* the knowledge production capacity or practices of the business and management academic community (or sub-groups)
- *Education*: programmes and qualifications available to students within the business school system

The following table provides examples of each:

Target category	Examples of specific problems identified within categories	Example of how targets are introduced and framed
Organisation	Ideal model of business school (Marshall, 1926); research agenda (Huff and Huff, 2001); relationship with higher education system **(Starkey, Hatchuel and Tempest, 2004)**; recommendations for reform (Bennis and O'Toole, 2005)	'In Europe, and in the UK in particular, the business school is the cash cow in a university system increasingly squeezed of cash from the public purse.' (Starkey, Hatchuel and Tempest, 2004, p. 1521)
Discipline	Operational research (**Ackoff**, **1979**); strategic management (Bettis, 1991); organization studies (Palmer, 2006); marketing (Kniffin, 1966)	'As a result OR came to be identified with the use of mathematical models and algorithms rather than the ability to formulate management problems, solve them, and implement and maintain their solutions in turbulent environments. (Ackoff, 1979, p. 94)
Education	MBA (Grubel, 1969; Leavitt, 1989; Gosling and Mintzberg, 2004), PhD (Mitchell, 2007), executive education (Harrison and Leitch, 2007), programme design (Pearce, 2007)	'I am the last person to argue against academic freedom, but when combined with the above pressures of experienced students who must, at all costs, be kept happy with their courses and the lack of institutionalized information about what should be taught in management classes, fractionized course content in management is the result.' (Pearce, 2007, p. 107)

Table 4: Principal target entities of management literature self-critiques

A feature that cuts across every category of *target* is the focus on elite contexts rather than lower-ranking parts of the system. The small collection of empirical contributions in my sample highlights the bias in this literature. Experiential accounts do not necessarily specify their *target*, although the authors tend to work in elite business schools and write from their own experience as academic workers within that part of the system.

Even with the necessary anonymization of participants, studies based on primary data collection specify the focus of their investigation more precisely. In brief, the 71 empirical studies in my sample relate mainly to AACSB accredited or high-ranking business schools. Fewer than 6% of the world's individual business schools hold full AACSB accreditation (i.e. 950 out of nearly 16,000 business schools (AACSB, 2021) and most media rankings feature no more than 20 to 100 individual schools. This means that empirical studies mainly tell us about the problems of an elite subset of the US model of the Business School (e.g. Mahmoud and Frampton, 1971; Elsbach and Kramer, 1996; Evans and Marcal, 2005; Evans, Trevino and Weaver, 2006; Navarro, 2008; Rubin and Dierdorff, 2009; Zell, 2010; Rutherford and Cavazos, 2012; Jarzabkowski *et al.*, 2013; Stoten, 2018; Miotto, Blanco-González and Díez-Martín, 2020). Given that the experiential accounts appear in equally prestigious journals, and their authors have similarly elite institutional affiliations, there is nothing to suggest that the empirical element is atypical in its focus.

These elite business schools operate under a unique set of conditions that distinguish them from the majority of the sector. They are subject to a set of external, media-driven rankings (e.g. Business Week, Financial Times, Forbes, The Economist, Business Insider) as well as distinctive accreditation mechanisms that are internal to the business school system rather than within the jurisdiction of occupational stakeholders. Elite research outputs are also measured by prescriptive journal rankings, such as those published by the University of Texas at Dallas, the Chartered Association of Business Schools in the UK and Harzing. This leads to a very specific set of legitimacy claims (as I go on to discuss in Section 3.3 of this chapter) that are simply not salient to lower ranking or teaching-focused schools.

It is hard to tell whether authors of these critiques actively consider their claims to be representative of the entire system, whether other parts of the system are considered irrelevant to the legitimacy crisis or whether authors are simply not interested with the problems of lower ranking business schools. In most cases, the distinction is not made and the situation in lower ranking schools is simply ignored. For exceptions, see Golder and Mitra (2008), Zell (2010) as well as Fornaciari (2017). However, the elite focus of management literature self-critiques also mirrors a wider reluctance to address the legitimacy of higher education within less prestigious settings, which I discuss further in both Chapters 3 and 5. As my analysis of the three main categories of *target* shows, this is a significant, if invisible absence, from the self-critique literature.

3.2.1 Organisations

Business schools, as organisational units, are the most regular targets of management self-critiques. Although they sit within higher education institutions, are interdependent with occupational stakeholders and are subject to intense marketisation, authors often frame their critiques in a way that suggests that business schools, as a group of individual organisations, have sufficient autonomy to resolve their own legitimacy problems. Two indicative examples follow that show how the legitimacy crisis is frequently conceived in terms of the actions and responses of individual schools rather than at a systemic level:

> Swiftly, and with remarkable energy, American business schools responded to these criticisms and recommendations.(Cheit, 1985, p. 46)

> At the very least, the CME analysis proposes that business schools should not purport to teach that there are, for example, models of motivation and techniques of job design which, if implemented adequately, will yield managerial control over employees (Grey, 2004, p. 182).

I suggest that this use of 'business schools' implies that legitimacy problems are neither structural nor intractable. Barriers to reform are acknowledged throughout this literature, as are the challenges that hamper collective action. However, even contributors that use institutional theory to explore the isomorphic tendencies of the business school system still assume that individual organisational units have some room for manoeuvre (e.g. Wilson and McKiernan, 2011; Rasche and Gilbert, 2015). To illustrate, a specific example of this follows:

> Further, we identified that sustainability expertise had an association with tight coupling, implying that if a business school genuinely intends to implement its sustainability commitment, investing in faculty with the required knowledge or encouraging sustainability as a research theme provides a stable basis from which substantive activities follow. These two strategic features are potentially more readily adjusted by business schools than the organizational characteristics described above, and thus, yield relevant managerial implications for business schools. (Snelson-Powell, Grosvold and Millington 2018, p.719-720.)

By individualising problems and their solutions, the crisis is cast as a challenge that can be ameliorated by effective strategic management – or even through individual acts of resistance against ineffective managers, as the following example illustrates:

> Given that this workplace was a university populated by responsibly autonomous professionals, and that a particular group of these people were invested in these critical traditions as well as being members of the relevant trade union, one might have assumed that this was a place in which resistance was more, not less, likely. Yet this does not seem to have been the case. A transformational leader, given carte blanche by his managers, dismantled the organizational structures and material technologies which would allow collective discussion. (Parker, 2014, p. 290)

I suggest that relying on the organisational unit of analysis limits the possibility of reframing the problems in the structural terms that the duration, breadth and longevity of crisis claims would suggest is likely.

3.2.2 Education

Unlike critiques with an organisational focus, those aimed at business and management programmes cut across the system and provide specific insights into how well it provides career preparation for a set of expert occupations. As with many of the non-academic critiques, this subset focuses overwhelmingly on the MBA. According to Rubin and Dierdoff (2013), the intensity of interest may be explained by the MBA's position as the business school system's 'flagship' qualification and 'raison d'etre'. As early as the mid-80s, the MBA had 'become a large, highly visible target' (Cheit, 1985, p. 49).

The range and diversity of MBA critiques across the long period of my analysis previews the complexity of the *claims* made against the system, which I return to in Section 3. The issues raised span low academic quality (Ficek, 1928; Rose, 1947), inadequate ethical standards (Hosmer, 1985; Gioia and Corley, 2002; Beatty, 2004; Hay and Samra-Fredericks, 2019) insufficient practical relevance (Grubel, 1969; Badawy, 1976; Connolly, 2003; Rubin and Dierdorff, 2011; Amblee and Ertl, 2022) and success in a competitive marketplace for business education (Epstein, TenBrink and Pore, 2021). Viewed in aggregate, MBA critiques demonstrate the problematic tension between academic and occupational expectations when delivering effective career preparation in a higher education context. This is an issue that I address in more detail in the following chapter.

The interaction of PhD and MBA programmes provides a specific example of these tensions. The business and management PhD was designed according to a traditional disciplinary model and was key to the system's attempt to increase its academic standing in the aftermath of the influential Ford and Carnegie Foundation reports of 1959 (Gordon Howell, 1959, Pierson, 1959). However, this move towards academic rigour prompted a new set of critiques that suggest the use of 'narrowly trained specialists' to teach MBA programmes compromises their practical relevance (Bennis and O'Toole, 2005, p. 100).

One factor that makes the MBA so problematic may also rest with the surprising variety of assumptions about the purpose of the MBA (and, by extension, the wider business school system) within its own academic workforce. In addition to the rigour-relevance tensions described above, many contributors express concern about the inappropriate value system of MBA graduates. I suggest that some 'insider' critiques of the MBA have parallels with the normative objections to the Business School that I discuss in the previous chapter. For example:

> The major educational questions here are frankly normative. How can we "teach" future managers, future leaders, a sense of duty and responsibility, well beyond immediate concerns about personal careers and starting salaries? (Leavitt, 1989, p. 46)

As highlighted in Section 3.1, another set of critiques uses success in the competitive marketplace for management education as markers of legitimacy. For example, my corpus includes an article with the title 'Does academic research help or hinder MBA programmes?' (Mitra and Golder, 2008), as though the value of knowledge production within higher education is a matter for debate. Although this study concludes that academic research does 'help' MBA programmes, the authors reach their answer through an analysis based on the volume of single-authored articles published by academic workers in particular business schools (rather than the nature of knowledge produced) compared with the starting salaries of MBA graduates (as proxy for programme quality).

Rubin and Dierdoff (2013) review 88 separate articles on the MBA, all published in *Academy of Management Learning and Education* between 2002 and 2012. The sheer volume of critiques in their sample demonstrates the importance of the MBA to the wider system and how much concern it generates. While the review does categorise articles thematically, it does so by different features of the MBA rather than the content of the legitimacy claims. Consequently, this review primarily generates a list of potential problem areas e.g. curriculum content, learning outcomes, student or faculty profiles and reputational markers. As a result, the authors conclude that the whole self-critique phenomenon is somewhat self-indulgent and call for greater focus on the more constructive process of redesigning the MBA curriculum:

> Given the numerous and poignant critiques of business schools in general and MBA programs in particular that have graced the pages of AMLE during the past decade, we are reminded of the conclusion reached by Khurana (2007: 383) that "when institutions lose their legitimacy or find it called into question, the times are ripe for their reinvention." The critical path to this reinvention requires us to not only criticize and describe, but also to craft and prescribe. Indeed, it is our hope that on the ensuing occasion of the 20th anniversary of AMLE, the authors of future retrospectives will be able to tout the significant strides we have undertaken to balance derision with designing anew. (Rubin and Dierdorff, 2013, pp. 136–7)

By dismissing some of their sample critiques as 'derision', the authors avoid questions about why the critiques are so varied and persistent. As the conclusion suggests, this review ignores the possibility of structural problems and assumes that change is within the reach of the academic community.

This is a curious position to maintain, as at least one paper within the sample explicitly raises the question of structural issues that may prove intractable (Vaara and Faÿ, 2011). However, Rubin and Dierdoff include this Bourdieusian analysis of the legitimacy of the MBA within their 'curriculum content' category. This is somewhat misleading as Vaara and Fay do not argue that the MBA curriculum is poorly conceived or designed but that the MBA faces 'complex impediments to change' (p.35). Exceptionally, Vaara and Fay offer a range of insights into the structural mechanisms that may impede change. However, there appears to be little enthusiasm for their approach across the rest of the management self-critique literature.

In summary, critiques with educational *targets* highlight two important aspects of the legitimacy crisis. Firstly, they illustrate the challenge in balancing academic and occupational interests, which is a question that I address in detail in Chapter 5. Secondly, they further highlight the tensions between academia and commerce, which was a key concern of my analysis in Chapter 3.

3.2.3 Discipline

The knowledge production processes of the business school system are also a major target of the management self-critique literature. Many of the discipline-focused critiques are rooted firmly in the authors' own sub-discipline, such as management science (Cardwell, 1968; Jackson Grayson, 1973), strategic management (Drnevich, Mahoney and Schendel, 2020), human resources management (Wilkerson, 1999), sustainability (Ramboarisata and Gendron, 2019) or business history (Warren and Tweedale, 2002). Despite these superficial differences, the questions that these critiques raise about the value and quality of research are surprisingly similar.

A primary concern is the occupational 'relevance' of management research and how this interacts with its academic quality or 'rigour' (e.g. Thomas and Tymon, 1982; Wilkerson, 1999; Hodgkinson, Herriot and Anderson, 2001; Nicolai and Seidl, 2010; Wiklund, Wright and Zahra, 2019). Such is the extent, duration and complexity of the literature on this topic that it is increasingly the subject of ambitious systematic reviews that attempt to chart and classify this particular strand of legitimacy claim (Carton and Mouricou, 2017; Redgrave, Grinevich and Chao, 2022; Wood, Souza and Caldas, 2022). McLaren (2019, p. 55) has also challenged the accuracy and assumptions of the rigour-relevance debates, especially in relation to the role of the Gordon Howell report (1959), and offers 'a counterhistory about the origins of scientific research rigor in U.S business schools'.

Whatever the complexities, it is clear that the pendulum has swung between the relative salience of 'rigour' and that of 'relevance' as a determinant of legitimacy over the period of this analysis. In the aftermath of the Ford Foundation report (Gordon Howell, 1959), the business school system responded with an increased focus on academic rigour. Over time, this led to an acute concern about the irrelevance of business and management research to business practice (e.g. Abrahamson, 2016; Hughes *et al.*, 2018; Joullié and Gould, 2022). The ongoing 'rigour-relevance' tensions remain unresolved and recent interventions include the controversial Advanced Management Institute in the UK, which was designed to raise the academic quality of management research (Wensley and Neely, 2016).

Thomas and Wilson (2011) provide one of this literature's few historical perspectives on the pressures that shape knowledge production priorities across the history of the business school system and that might explain the disconnect between 'rigour' and 'relevance'. As well as highlighting the rising influence of rankings, assessment and accreditation from the 1970s onwards, the authors also identify the declining role of occupational stakeholders in the early years of the twenty first century. By this, they mean large organisations with managerial workforces and institutionalized systems, such as accountancy (see *Table 2*, p.446). The authors go on to identify this absence of occupational governance, together with internal legitimisation structures, as a key aspect of the problems:

> 'The voice of practice is predominately an internally driven monologue within the academic community. The voice of practice is, in essence, lost. Often, benchmarks and metrics for engagement with practice are internally derived and we also rely on proxy measures such as media coverage to signal successful engagement with practitioners. In this scenario, management theory exists inside of business schools and management practice occurs out there in the world of business – two distinctly separate arenas.' (Thomas and Wilson, 2011, p. 449)

Framing internal legitimisation mechanisms as part of the problem chimes with Varra and Fay's concerns about 'the role of self- regulation in the form of accreditation and rankings as a potential impediment to development of MBA programs' (Vaara and Faÿ, 2011, p. 35). The is an interesting structural feature that is peculiar to the business school system and I further explore the implications of weak occupational control in Chapter 5.

Although many publications in my corpus identify the challenges of producing knowledge that is acceptable to both academic and occupational stakeholders, very few contributions provide specific suggestions of the topics that the researchers should address. An interesting exception questions why management researchers did not investigate the 2008 financial crisis within a critique of the mechanisms that determine 'publishable research topics' (Starkey, 2015, p. 662):

> 'The silence of management research on the subject [the financial crisis] suggests that our research seems to have almost entirely ignored probably the biggest economic and business event of our lives…But the gap in our research of both theoretical and empirical papers should surely concern us as a community of

> management scholars. If management is a discipline committed to promoting scholarship that engages with the world's most pressing management issues and with inspiring a better world through our scholarship, surely we should be addressing the big issues and seeking to understand and offer explanations of the crisis in terms of management and organization theory.'(Starkey, 2015, p. 657)

This paper raises a third problem of knowledge production, that of societally relevant knowledge. Very unusually for the management literature, Starkey uses the terms 'community of scholars' and 'guardians' (p. 662) in relation to his normative claims about the function of management scholarship. In using this terminology, he indirectly references that normative frameworks of the wider higher education system, which was a key focus of the previous chapter and which is curiously absent from the management self-critiques (for an additional exception, see Parker 2014).

In aggregate, 'disciplinary' critiques speak to the difficulty of creating a robust theoretical knowledge base that meets the needs of occupational stakeholders while maintaining academic standards and norms. They also raise the issue of broader societal relevance and point to knowledge production processes that constrain the questions that researchers can ask. This leaves a complex web of issues that indicate a profound structural failing in the organisation of business school system research. This is an issue that I return to in Chapter 5.

3.3 Claims: identifying legitimacy problems

Specific *claims* about the legitimacy problems of the Business School are the defining feature of management self-critiques. Although the component articles rarely coalesce into integrated debates, the claims themselves cluster easily into a small number of categories, which remain consistent across the period of this analysis. In brief, I identify three principal types of claim, which all relate to how authors experience the problems of the business school system in the context of their own normative position, namely *integrity*, *quality* and *utility*:

- *Integrity* claims relate to ethical shortcomings, from the societal impact of knowledge production through to student motivation and behaviours.
- *Quality* claims relate to the ways that Business School research and education falls short of wider academic norms and standards.
- *Utility* claims relate to how far Business School research and education offers effective career preparation and how far the knowledge produced is relevant to practitioner communities.

In addition, I identify a smaller set of critiques that focus on *market* failures in the governance of the system. This fourth category provides an additional layer of complexity as it illustrates the problems caused when the system is shaped by priorities of marketisation and has weak governance from both academic and occupational stakeholders. My analysis suggests that these structural characteristics of the business school system leave it with a range of conflicting legitimacy 'properties' (in the critical realist sense) to achieve and keep in balance.

Table 4 illustrates how the four different categories of claim manifest in individual critiques:

Claims	Example claims	Example papers	Example quotations
Integrity	Student or graduate motives and behaviour	Heilman (1932), McCabe et al (1991), **Briggs, Workman and York et al** (2013)	'Estimates of cheating among business school students are deemed to be some of the highest across disciplines' (Briggs, Workman and York, 2013, p. 4)
	Capacity for societal harm	Culbert (1977), Gioia (2002), **Ghoshal (2005)**, Vasquez Sampere (2015), Sadler-Smith (2021)	'we - as business school faculty - need to own up to our own role in creating Enrons' (Ghoshal, 2005, p. 75)
Quality	Low academic standards	Henderson(1927); Borneman (1961); Lindholm (1965); **Khurana and Spender (2012)**	'the intellectual stasis that now characterizes business education' (Khurana and Spender, 2012, p. 623)
	Poorly designed programmes	Wortman (1970), Doyle and Arthurs (1995), Gosling and Mintzberg (2004), **Gerstenberg** (**1921**)**,** Bunch (2021)	'The result is that our courses frequently are as crazily confused as the streets of Brooklyn' (Gerstenberg, 1921, p. 401)
Utility	Occupational relevance of career preparation	Donham (1933), Calkins (1946), Porter Chandler (1972) (2002), **Bennis and O'Toole (2005)**, Gerhardt et al (2014), Brink et al (2018) (2018), Amblee and Ertl (2022)	'During the past several decades, many leading B schools have quietly adopted an inappropriate - and ultimately self-defeating - model of academic excellence' (Bennis and O'Toole, 2005, p. 96)
	Use of management research in practice	Cardwell (1968), Ackoff (1979), **Oviatt and Miller (1989)**, Pettigrew (2001), Bridgman (2007), Knights (2008) Hitt and Greer (2011), Hughes (2018)	'If the rift between top managers and business professors is so wide, and if prominent critics have proposed ideas for solving the problem, why has so little change occurred?' (Oviatt and Miller, 1989, p. 304)
Market	Success in global management education market	**Saunders and Wong** (**2011**) Collet and Vives (2013), Epstein (2021)	'Many of the UK business schools…publish next to nothing in the "A-journals" which are recognized as world leading.' (Saunders and Wong, 2011, p. 487)

Table 5: Problem claim categories

My analysis suggests that most of the critiques in my corpus relate to a single normative dimension, although some do appear in combination (see below for further discussion). As with other aspects of this literature, authors often appear unaware that similar issues have been raised previously or that other contributors make opposing claims. *Fig. 3* illustrates the consistency and durability of the three normative dimensions over the last century and charts the emergence of more recent *market* claims.

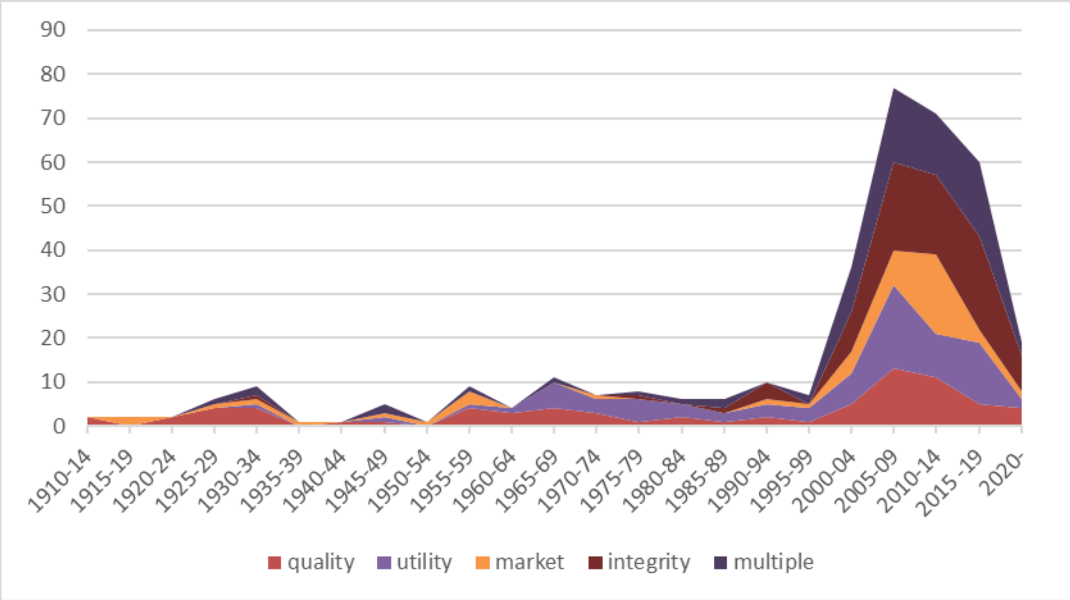

Fig.3: Evolution of legitimacy claims

As an illustration of how normative claims reappear in different contexts, *integrity* critiques proliferated after the corporate scandals of 2002 (e.g. Gioia, 2002; Mitroff, 2004; Starkey, Hatchuel and Tempest, 2004; Ghoshal, 2005; Adler, 2006) and the financial crisis of 2008 (e.g. Podolny, 2009; Starkey and Tempest, 2009; Henisz, 2011; Wang, Malhotra and Murnighan, 2011; Muff, 2013). However, near identical concerns are also evident much earlier in the period of my analysis. For example, Heilman (1932) addresses the careerist and financial motivation of business students, while Worthy (1955) highlights the essential emancipatory function of the university, which should encompass university-level business education. In addition, Wooster (1919), Culbert (1977) and Hosmer (1985) discuss ethical curriculum content well before the post-2002 debates. More recently, UN Sustainable Development Goals and the associated Principles of Responsible Management Education (PRME) initiative has given additional impetus to *integrity* claims (Miotto, Blanco-González and Díez-Martín, 2020; Moratis and Melissen, 2022). These are all discrete legitimacy claims but remain linked conceptually by their concern for the *integrity* of the business school system in terms of its societal impact.

While most claims address a single normative dimension, my analysis shows that trying to resolve one type of legitimacy claim may only exacerbate another. When considered in aggregate, across the long period of my analysis, these claims appear to interact negatively to create repetitive cycles. To expand, when prioritising one normative dimension compromises another, a cycle of problem claims arises.

This is most obvious in relation to *utility*/*quality* and *utility/integrity* dynamics. The Ford Foundation (Gordon and Howell, 1959) and Carnegie (Pierson, 1959) reports addressed low academic *quality* in a system that had previously adopted a practical ‘trade school’ model. As *Fig 3* shows, the subsequent *quality* reforms left the sector open to new claims about the *utility* of Business School education and research (e.g. Haire, 1964; Simon, 1967;

Chandler, 1972; Athanassiades, 1974; Badawy, 1976; Thomas and Tymon, 1982; Oviatt and Miller, 1989). Meanwhile, the post 2000 'rigour-relevance' debates demonstrate the ongoing problems with reconciling *quality* and *utility* (e.g. Starkey and Madan, 2001; Donaldson, 2002; Aram and Salipante, 2003; Baldridge, Floyd and Markóczy, 2004; Shapiro, Kirkman and Courtney, 2007; Tushman and O 'Reilly, 2007; Gulati, 2007; Knights, 2008; Syed, Mingers and Murray, 2009; Huxham, 2009; Kieser and Leiner, 2009; Peng and Dess, 2010; Nicolai and Seidl, 2010; Hughes *et al.*, 2011; Vermeulen and Miner, 2016; Zolkiewski, 2018; Chen and Hitt, 2021). Despite almost universal consensus that Business School knowledge production should exemplify both of these normative dimensions, the dilemma remains unresolved.

Similarly, the system's problematic relationship with both academic and occupational stakeholders sets up conflicts between the dimensions of both occupational *utility* and academic *integrity*. It has long been noted that the business school system is shaped by student rather than labour market demands (e.g. Donham, 1933; Worthy, 1955; Lindholm, 1965; Whitley, 1984a; Clegg and Ross-Smith, 2003). Students expect their investment in a management qualification to produce a personal financial return (e.g. Grubel, 1969; Connolly, 2003; Mitra and Golder, 2008), which is not a perfect proxy for providing appropriate career preparation for expert occupations. This may make it harder for any initiative that promotes the academic or 'professional' *integrity* of the system to succeed and may explain the ongoing difficulties with, for example, embedding content about business ethics in the curriculum (e.g. Hosmer, 1985; Rutherford and Cavazos, 2012; Marques, 2019; Ramboarisata and Gendron, 2019).

A minority of contributions across this period acknowledge that the business school system requires active engagement from both academic and occupational stakeholders. As far back as 1913, Willard E. Hotchkiss wrote:

> 'University instruction in business may find its justification either from a cultural or from a professional viewpoint. When its place in higher education is fully established, it will probably be found to qualify in both these ways...Inability to make such courses strictly professional in the sense of furnishing a recognized and indispensable training for business is sufficient reason why the courses have been slow to crystallize and to take their place alongside of legal, medical, and engineering study as an integral part of higher education.' (Hotchkiss, 1913, p. 197)

One hundred years later, Zell (2010) raises a number of questions about the structural challenges facing the business school system as it struggles to balance issues of quality, utility and integrity in a *market*-driven environment:

> 'First, the rankings have exacerbated the traditional tension between academic rigor and applied relevancy, threatening the historic pre-eminence of scholarship and suggesting the need for the redefinition of academic excellence. What is the optimal blend of theory and practice, and should inventive systems be redesigned to encourage a broader range of activities? More fundamentally, the rankings have brought into question the role of professors in a market-driven enterprise. That today's faculty have evolved far beyond our monastic predecessors in a capitalistic society is not surprising, but to what degree should we view students as customers and let knowledge become a mere commodity?' (Zell, 2010, p. 338)

I suggest that a dysfunctional interaction between academic and occupational stakeholders within a heavily marketised system may explain a significant part of the legitimacy crisis. In the previous chapter I examined the problematic position of the Business School in terms of the broader academic community. In Chapter 5, I explore how other forms of higher education that provide career preparation for expert occupations manage to maintain a constructive balance between the interests of stakeholder groups and what the business school system could learn from this.

3.4 Solutions: ways to fix the crisis

The main knowledge output of management literature self-critiques is assorted proposals to solve the problems of the business school system. As with the *claims*, the *solutions* are generally proposed individually and without reference to the suggestions put forward by other contributors. This makes it more challenging to identify patterns in the types of reforms proposed or draw conclusions about why these have proved ineffective in solving the crisis. In order to achieve this, I started by dividing the publications that contained specific recommendations into two preliminary categories: *tactical* and *normative*.

The *tactical* category is characterised by discrete interventions that do not involve wider systemic change. *Tactical* solutions are all goals that can be realised through actions that can be taken at the level of the individual organisation. The publications that argue for programme redesign (e.g. Hay and Samra-Fredericks, 2019; Brokerhof *et al.*, 2022) fall into this category. Equally, proposals to optimise 'utilitarian' (Albert and Whetten, 1985) outcomes, such as succeeding in international rankings (e.g. Saunders, Wong and Saunders, 2011; Lorange, 2012) or how to maximise graduate starting salaries (Collet and Vives, 2013) fall into the *tactical* category.

The second category proposes *normative* solutions that have structural implications and which are rooted in alternative models of the Business School. As *Table 6* shows, I identify three principal *normative* solutions. Each proposes a different way of resolving legitimacy issues by prioritising a particular set of values or attempting to balance *quality*, *integrity* and *utility* imperatives.

Model	Normative framework	Examples
Critical	Decouples the Business School from *market* concerns and de-prioritises *utility* in favour of *quality* and *integrity* by making management an object of critical academic study rather as career preparation.	Grey (2004); Ford, Harding and Learmonth (2010); Sadler-Smith (2021)
Liberal	Decouples the Business School from the *marketised* requirement to succeed in the US-led international market and emphasizes academic *quality,* aligning the Business School with the structures and processes of other academic disciplines (often drawing on the liberal arts).	Starkey, Tempest and Thomas (2008); Durand and Dameron (2011); Starkey, Tempest and Cinque (2019); Holt (2020);
Professional	Provides a career preparation framework that aligns *utility*, *quality* and *integrity.*	Wooster (1919); Phelps (1946); Badawy (1976); Clayborn, La Force and Novelli (1985); Pfeffer and Fong (2002); Rousseau (2012); Khurana and Spender (2012); Berglund(2018), Friedland (2022)

Table 6: Normative business school solutions

Critiques in the *normative* category tend to recognise that problems have not been readily solved by *tactical* means and that structural solutions are now required. For example:

> ‘Business schools have lost their way. Something needs to be done about it. Interestingly enough, many retiring business school deans who deliver their last speech as they leave tend to say something of that sort. Yet, their successor immediately keeps going as before. There seems to be a lock-in situation, rooted in the ranking system. As we believe that no single individual can unlock the system, we argue that raising awareness is needed, and from there collective strategies and action.’ (Durand and Dameron, 2011, p. 563)

> ‘While the theoretical components of an alternative paradigm are easy to identify, increasing their prominence, particularly in pedagogy, will require transforming curricula and dislodging incumbents and pushing back against the resistance of students, businesses, the media, journal editors and referees, tenure-promotion committees, and the professional association’ (Pfeffer, 2007; Trank & Rynes, 2003).

> ‘Currently, many of these topics are taught at the tail’ (Henisz, 2011, p. 312)

However, as with many other aspects of this literature, very little attention is paid to why particular models have not already gained traction and little consideration of the actual changes required in terms of the academic workforce, student profile or size of the reformed system.

The articles I analyse make very little acknowledgement that perspectives other than their own exist. This acknowledgement is generally confined to refuting competing visions in the context of polemics. For example:

> 'If his college courses developed in him a love for good reading, say, or for historical study, or for music, or for painting, would the executive be content to abandon these extra-business pursuits for the company grindstone? Would he be willing to work long hours during the week and sacrifice his weekends to the office and the golf course? Would he be willing to leave his friends and associations in Boston, and move to East Lockjaw, Texas, just to satisfy the whim of some superior? To put it in a nutshell, would he not demand to have a life apart from his business to which he would be free to devote a reasonable part of his time? Of course he would.' (Chandler, 1972, p. 129)

> 'Management educators need to resist the siren song of professionalism. Functional and technical knowledge is an important component of business school curricula, but it is not the essence of management or the substance of business leadership. Nor is it what makes a business school like Harvard or Stanford great. Business schools do not uniquely certify managers, enabling them to practice. Nor do they regulate the conduct of those managers according to a professional code of practice. What they do is provide learning environments that consolidate, share, and build business experience, that accelerate personal development and growth, and that help equip managers to deal with their diverse working environments. Business schools are not professional schools. They are incubators for business leadership.' (Barker, 2010, p. 60)

Equally, there is little acknowledgement that different models of Business School might co-exist in a diverse and complex system. Spicer, Jaser and Wiertz (2021) are an exception to this and identify five historical models of business education in the UK as a resource for future possibilities: the Colonial school, Workers' School, Civic School, Management Movement and Collegiate School. The authors also reference US models including elite, interdisciplinary and trade schools. Fornaciari (2017) also discusses the distinctive needs of 'non-elite' schools. However, as discussed in Section of 3.2 of this chapter, the focus of this literature tends to remain on the problems of the elite business school.

I suggest that this apparent refusal to interrogate competing *solutions* or consider the possibilities of diversity means that *solutions* remain both superficial and repetitive. This is a curious situation for a literature that specialises in questions of organisation, process and management. The way that authors use the 'professional school' model is particularly interesting in this regard. As the next section demonstrates, the 'professional school' ideal holds out the unique promise of balancing both academic and occupational stakeholder interests by integrating the values of *utility*, *quality* and *integrity*.

The power of this ideal may explain why it has permeated the management critique literature since the earliest days of the business school system (e.g. Wooster, 1919; Gay, 1927; Henderson, 1927; Mitchell, 1928; Stockton, 1930; LeRossignol, 1931) and why the failure of this core normative project remains a matter of widespread concern and continuing salience. Given the success of numerous other occupations in establishing legitimate career preparation programmes within higher education during the early twentieth century (e.g. pharmacy, dentistry, veterinary science) it is curious that the same trajectory has proved more problematic for the business school system.

I explore this issue further in Chapter 5, where I examine the different structures used to balance legitimacy with academic and occupational stakeholders and apply these findings to the case of the Business School. Given the superficiality of the management literature in relation to alternative models, I turn to other academic literatures on the professions to understand whether the professional ideal was ever a structurally achievable model in the Business School context and whether there might be viable alternatives.

3.5 Normative Positions

As this chapter has demonstrated, claims about the legitimacy of the Business School must be rooted in a set of norms about how the system should operate. To this end, a *normative position* about the legitimate purpose of the Business School underpins every problem *claim* in this literature, even if not explicitly labelled as such. As the individual problem *claims* and *solutions* vary widely, it is unsurprising that these *normative positions* show the same diversity.

However, given that the texts in my corpus focus on elite business schools, the actual extent of normative variation is striking. It is also remarkable that the normative positions of authors are often the product of assumptions rather than critical engagement and remain implicit in individual texts. As *Table 7* demonstrates, these positions may be inferred from the anxieties or ideals of the authors rather than from any explicit statement of conviction. For example, likely normative positions are signalled by phrases such as 'pervasive managerial ethos' (Learmonth and Humphreys, 2012, p. 106) or 'pre-hippie days of honesty and plain speaking' (Chandler, 1972, p. 123). Each of these statements signals normative biases that may be classified accordingly. From statements of this sort, I capture six different categories of norms that underpin the management self-critique literature:

- To generate knowledge as an academic discipline, within the context of wider *scholarly* disciplines, according to the same value system and with the same levels of rigour (107 critiques)
- To produce emancipatory knowledge that serves *society* (88 critiques).
- To serve the needs of the *business* community by producing commercially useful outcomes (59 critiques)
- To provide *professional* education with the ethical and moral requirements inherent to 'professional' status (36 critiques)
- To succeed in a *marketised* system of management education by competing with other university business schools in external rankings and assessments (24 critiques)
- To serve the *careerist* aspirations of students by delivering salary increases and a return on their financial investment in course fees (5 critiques)

I also identify a seventh category, which acknowledges the presence of conflicts in the business school system (41 critiques) with the remaining publications in my corpus having no identifiable position. I provide examples of each category below:

Position	Example papers	Example normative position
Scholarly	McClung(1931), Pettigrew (2001), McGrath (McGrath, 2007), Learmonth and Humphreys (2012), Mingers and Wilmott (2013), Petriglieri (2020)	'The anxiety was caused, not just because the business suits were a reminder of former selves, but it was also the pervasive managerial ethos of the event—in what purports to be an academic conference'(Learmonth and Humphreys, 2012, p.106)
Business	Marshall (1917), Bach (1958), Chandler (1972), Bennis and O'Toole (2005), Muff (2012), Barley (2016), D'Souza, Bement and Cory (2022)	'Back in those pre-hippie days of honesty and plain speaking, the successful executive made no bones about his belief that the only form of education that was worthwhile was a four-year curriculum in business administration' (Chandler, 1972, p.123)
Marketised	Doyle and Arthurs (1995), Wheeler (1967), Julian and Ofori-Dankwa (2006), Engwall and Danwell (2011) Reynolds and Dang (2017), Ojala (2019)	'British business schools have today gained a considerable position in the population of European business schools, accounting for one-third of the top 50 institutions. ' (Engwall and Danell, 2011, p.434)
Careerist	Grubel (1969), Connolly (2003), O'Brien, Drnvic and Cook (2010).	'The salaries and rates of return for recent business school graduates suggest that the MBA has not, in fact, outlived its usefulness.' (Connolly, 2003, p.365)
Professional	Wooster (1919), Stockton (1930), Carroll (1946), LaForce and Novelli (1985), Pfeffer and Fong (2004), Rousseau (2012), Romme (2017), Friedland (2022)	'…value proposition that primarily emphasizes the career-enhancing, salary-increasing aspects of business education as contrasted with the idea of organizational management as a profession to be pursued out of a sense of intrinsic interest or even service.' (Pfeffer and Fong, 2004, p. 1501)
Societal	Jones (1913), Worthy (1955), Hutchins (1960), Culbert (1977), Podolny (2009), Tourish, Craig and Amernic (2010), Nyberg and Wright (2022)	'Fact is, so deep and widespread are the problems afflicting management education that people have come to believe that business schools are harmful to society, fostering self-interested, unethical, and even illegal behavior by their graduates.'(Podolny, 2009, p. 63)
Conflict	Leavitt (1989), Grey (2001), Bridgman (2007), Thomas and Wilson (2011), Vaara and Fay (2011), Rasche and Gilbert (2015), Thomas and Ambrosini (2021)	'Business schools, more perhaps than any other part of universities, experience a curious dual insecurity.' (Grey, 2001, pS27)

Table 7: Normative positions

Some of the *normative positions* taken by authors are mutually exclusive or conflicting, while others overlap and complement each other. For example, the *Scholarly* and *Societal* positions overlap, as do *Professional* /*Societal* and *Professional*/*Business*. Meanwhile, the smaller *Marketised* and *Careerist* positions overlap with each other but remain largely detached from the other four categories.

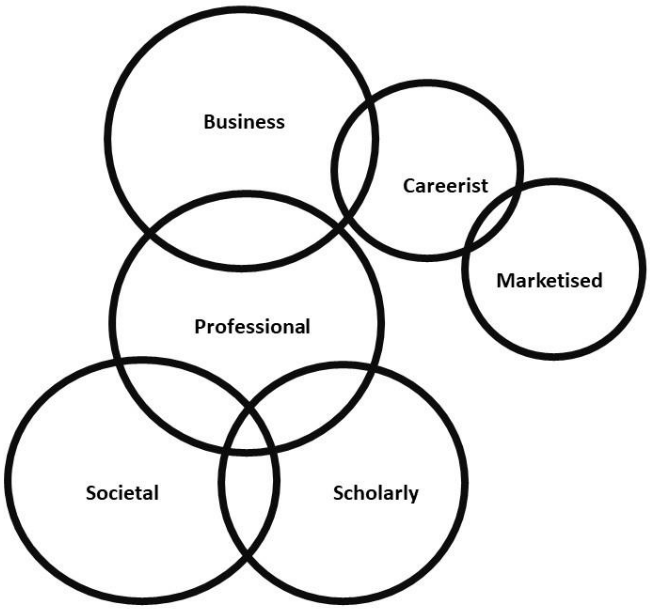

Fig 1: The relationship between normative positions

Although they are often left implicit, I suggest that these *normative positions* shape the critique literature. For example, most *quality* and *integrity* problem claims are rooted in *scholarly* or *societal* normative positions. This also applies to the smaller but substantial *business* normative position, which maps onto *utility* problem claims. Meanwhile, the *marketised* and *careerist* normative positions have their counterpart in the *marketised* category of claims. Finally, the *professional* position is concerned with multiple types of problem claim but has a direct counterpart in the *professional* solution category.

However, normative positions and problem claim types do not mirror each other completely. Although there is a tendency for critiques to fall into particular patterns, as described above, there are also examples of less intuitive combinations. For example, I identify a number of critiques that address *marketised* concerns through the lens of academic *quality* or *societal* contribution (e.g. Gay, 1927; Leavitt, 1957; Hambrick, 1994; Noorda, 2011).

A diversity of normative positions is not necessarily problematic if we also accept the diversity of the business school system. However, there are two puzzling aspects of my corpus as regards this issue. First, it is striking that academic commentators writing in the scholarly context of academic journals should adopt the *marketised* and *careerist* positions. As I discussed in the previous chapter, this is unheard of in wider normative debates in scholarly contexts about the purpose of higher education.

Secondly, there is only occasional recognition that the range of *normative positions* might be part of the problem. Only 41 critiques in my corpus specifically acknowledge conflicts in mission and tend to do so in isolation from other contributions, although this awareness of conflict is evident across the period of my analysis (e.g. Hotchkiss, 1913; Bossard, 1931; Epstein, 1932; Megginson, 1958; Simon, 1967) (e.g. Bossard, 1931, Epstein, 1932, Hotchkiss, 1913, Megginson, 1958, Simon, 1967). Those publications that acknowledge conflict also tend to have a theoretical or empirical basis with recent contributions drawing on institutional theory (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983) to explore the impact of competing institutional fields on the business school system (e.g. Evans, Trevino and Weaver, 2006; Adler and Harzing, 2009; Raelin, 2009; Thietart, 2009; Wilson and McKiernan, 2011; Almog-Bareket, 2012; Clarke, Knights and Jarvis, 2012; Thomas *et al.*, 2014).

Despite its size and lack of cohesion, this group of studies offers interesting insights about the problems that arise from normative conflicts in the system. These include:

- A polarisation of academic and occupational interests, which results in them being perceived as incompatible (Simon, 1967, p. 4)
- Managerial and structural factors that restrict the capacity to align to desired norms and make it difficult for the business school system to effect reforms (Leavitt, 1989; Rasche and Gilbert, 2015).

This set of publications also suggests that the problems of Business School legitimacy cannot be resolved through a collective commitment to one particular *solution*. This is a question that I address further in Chapter 5 in my exploration of potential pathways to legitimacy. In addition, the marketisation of the business school system may have structural consequences that make alignment with wider academic value systems impossible. Again, this is a question that I return to in Chapter 5.

4. CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I conducted a rhetorical analysis that charts how academic stakeholders framed the Business School legitimacy crisis between 1913 and 2022. My analysis of this large corpus of 374 management journal articles demonstrates the complexity of the problems and also highlights a curious pattern of assumptions, contradictions and absences. I draw three main conclusions about possible causal mechanisms, which I develop further in the next chapter.

4.1 Diverse entities within the business school system

My first conclusion is that the management literature on Business School legitimacy deals primarily with elite business schools and that this colours its portrayal of the crisis situation. My analysis suggests that elite business schools, and those entities associated with the elite system, are the main *targets* of the self-critique literature. Authors have little to say about legitimacy problems that may affect other types of business school organisation and rarely acknowledge that the system might contain diverse organisational entities that all use the label 'business school'. From this literature, it is not possible to conclude that the problems raised apply to the entire system, whether other parts of the system experience different problems or (and this seems unlikely) the legitimacy of lower-ranking business schools remains intact.

It seems reasonable to conclude that the ‘business school’ is unlikely to function as a unitary concept and that it may be more productive to consider the individual legitimacy challenges of different entities that use this label. This is an issue that I explore further in Chapter 5, as part of an investigation into the structures that other forms of *occupational higher education* adopt to maintain their legitimacy across multiple stakeholder groups.

4.2 Normative fragmentation and conflict

Secondly, my analysis demonstrates a remarkable range of *claims* and *normative positions* within my corpus, along with high potential for conflict between them. I suggest that conflict or contradiction at these fundamental levels may have a role in exacerbating the crisis. The interplay of *utility*, *quality* and *integrity* claims ensures an ongoing cycle of legitimacy problems and suggests that the system cannot keep the interests of key interest groups in balance. In particular, maintaining legitimacy with both academic and occupational interest groups appears problematic. In Chapter 5, I explore the different pathways to legitimacy that might be open to the business school system and which might help balance these two sets of demands.

While there may be no single *normative position* that can resolve the legitimacy crisis, it remains problematic that a minority of internal stakeholders appear to have replaced intellectual or societal norms with a stance that prioritises market success and careerist outcomes for graduates. This is not a perspective that can be accommodated in any part of the theoretical model I propose in Chapter 5. It also plays into the hands of the critiques analysed in Chapter 3. I addressed the issue of *academic legitimacy* in the previous chapter and concluded that the Business School is negated by other interest groups in order to exert normative dominance . On this basis, treating legitimacy as a *property* that is acquired by conforming successfully to the right norms is not sufficient to resolve the crisis, even if internal stakeholders were able to unite behind one position.

In addition, few contributors show awareness that other internal stakeholders take different *normative positions* and there is no sustained debate between proponents of conflicting frameworks. This may be attributable to the striking diversity and fragmentation of the field (as discussed in Section 2.2) and its multi-disciplinary origins. I discuss this possibility and the reasons for it in the next chapter. However, I suggest that resolving the crisis requires greater recognition of these fundamental differences by internal stakeholders.

4.3 The structural implications of reform

Thirdly, the main outputs of this literature are recommendations for reform rather than explanations for the legitimacy problems themselves. However, these proposals tend to be sketchy and assume that they can be implemented by individual business schools without reference to systemic factors. There is minimal consideration of the structural or operational impact of the proposed initiatives. In some cases, the individual narratives appear to function more as acts of normative *resistance* (as described in Chapter 3, Section 3.2.2) rather than as serious attempts to reform the system. I discuss the implications of this issue further in Chapter 6.

In the previous chapter, I demonstrate that influential normative debates on the purpose of higher education level existential challenges against the Business School based on a rejection of commercial engagement. However, the management self-critiques make no attempt to refute the allegations of higher education stakeholders. Along with the absence of non-elite business schools from the literature and lack of awareness of the normative diversity across the system, this reinforces my conclusion that the management literature only offers a partial and superficial account of the problems. I also highlight an over-reliance on talismanic concepts, such as the <professional school>, which is frequently proposed as a solution but rarely interrogated as a viable framework for the business school system.

In the next chapter, I explore the potential of a number of possible pathways to legitimacy, including the' professional school' model. In Chapter 6, I explore the likelihood of elements of the business school system adopting any of the available options.

Chapter 5: Pathways to Business School legitimacy: a theoretical model of *Occupational Higher Education*

SUMMARY

In this chapter, I address the first part of RQ3 and investigate how other academic entities that provide career preparation for expert occupations maintain their legitimacy within the higher education system. I then apply my findings to the case of the Business School. I address this question by introducing the concept of *occupational higher education* and proposing a hybrid theoretical model that identifies a range of legitimising structures and pathways. My model draws on a diverse set of theoretical perspectives that are rarely used in combination, or in the higher education context, and navigates the ideographic terminology and ill-defined concepts that characterise debates on 'academic legitimacy' or the 'professions'. I conclude that balancing the interests of occupational and academic stakeholders is key to legitimate *occupational higher education* and that there are a number of pathways that can achieve this. which I label as *credentialised*, *vocational*, *applied scientific* and *transversal*. While the business school system has the potential to access the *vocational* and *transversal* pathways, I conclude that its vulnerability to utilitarian imperatives leaves is more aligned to the problematic *marketised* pathway.

1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I investigate how other higher education entities that prepare students for careers in expert occupations maintain their legitimacy with both academic and occupational stakeholders. I achieve this by developing and proposing a hybrid theoretical model of *occupational higher education*. I then apply my findings to the case of the Business School to help explain the chronic legitimacy crisis and suggest some ways forward.

As I show in Chapter 1, it is not immediately obvious why the business school system has struggled to establish and maintain its legitimacy with both academic and occupational stakeholders. The Business School is a long established and mainstream feature of the international academic landscape with conventional academic structures, such as learned societies, journals and research training programmes. As the non-academic critiques demonstrate, the success of the business school system is also of wider occupational and policy importance (see Chapter 1, Section 1.3). The global dominance of the system does not indicate that it lacks legitimacy because it is peripheral to either academic or occupational contexts.

In developing a model that explains how these legitimacies can be balanced, I also address questions that emerge from my analyses in the previous two chapters:

- What are the properties or conditions of legitimate *occupational higher education?*
- How do other expert occupations navigate the challenge of commercial engagement and what normative frameworks they draw on?
- What legitimate alternatives exist to the 'professional school' model?
- How can we avoid the polarisation of academic and occupational interests and the impact that other stakeholders have on the balance of academic and occupational legitimacies?
- What impact do utilitarian pressures (e.g. student demand and low-cost delivery) have on the balance of academic and occupational legitimacies?

- Is there a 'one size fits all' solution for all entities in the business school system?
- Why might business school system stakeholders avoid aligning to one of the possible legitimacy pathways?

In this chapter, I explore how very different forms of *occupational higher education* develop structures that help resolve the legitimacy challenges faced by the business school system. In terms of the DREIC research process, this phase of my thesis fits into the following stages:

- Retroduction of hypothetical generative mechanism by proposing possible explanations drawn from a range of social science theories about how legitimisation processes may result in a chronic legitimacy crisis
- Correction of knowledge about Business School legitimacy by developing a model of occupational higher education that proposes pathways to legitimacy

2. BACKGROUND

In this chapter, my aim is to understand how different forms of *occupational higher education* successfully balance their legitimacy with both occupational and academic stakeholders. However, the available literature on how expert occupations engage with higher education does not directly address this question and has three main limitations.

Firstly, much research on the relationship between the higher education system and career preparation for expert occupations is largely presented through the lens of the <profession> in its ideographic sense. Studies are often limited by a failure to engage with wide-ranging sociological debates on professionalism and do not provide a robust definition of either 'professional school' or 'profession'. This makes it hard to understand the structural distinctions between expert occupations. For examples of this restricted and atheoretical approach, see Rhoades and Slaughter (1997), Beck and Young (2005), Sweitzer and Volkwein (2009), or Boyd and Smith (2016). The frame of reference in higher education literatures is further limited by a tendency to focus on a single type of 'professional school', such as the Law School (e.g. Sander, 2019) and Medical School (Steven *et al.*, 2016) or how emerging 'professions' like Education, Nursing and Pharmacy (Barnett, Becher and Cork, 1987) find a legitimate place within the system.

Secondly, other forms of career preparation for expert occupations are usually addressed in isolation, without reference to the broader higher education landscape. Higher education research of this sort tends to focus on one form of *occupational higher education*, such as the conservatoire (e.g. Gaunt *et al.*, 2012) or agricultural college (e.g. Yaghoubi, 2010) and to act as advocate rather than critic. Emerging literatures on the role of vocational qualifications and higher apprenticeships also treat their area of interest as a discrete category of higher education activity (e.g. Anderson, Bravenboer and Hemsworth, 2012; Hordern, 2015) rather than as part of a broader landscape of career preparation. Finally, research on *knowledge work* deals with the role of advanced knowledge in the workplace rather than the status of theoretically oriented occupations in relation to the University (Zuboff, 1988; Blackler, 1995; Goodyear and Zenios, 2007).

The fragmentation of research on this aspect of higher education, and reliance on <professions>, means that there is no overarching conceptual framework to draw on or consistent terminology that addresses the structural relationship between expert occupations and the University. The sociological literature does touch on 'non-professional' occupations but uses a variety of descriptors including *vocational* occupations (Winch, 2014), *expert* occupations (Sciulli, 2005, p. 937; Young and Muller, 2014, p. 3) or *technical* occupations (Winch, 2014, p. 50). Finally, the deeply held assumption that occupations need <professional> status to merit a legitimate place in higher education, may help explain the range of qualifiers amended to *profession*, such as 'status', 'occupational', 'semi', 'para' or 'minor' (Young and Muller, 2014, p. 3).

As a result, my analysis brings together a range of disconnected literatures, which each address part of my question or touch on the topic of *occupational higher education* in a tangential way. These literatures include the sociology of the professions, as well as a range of higher education, management and organisational research that addresses the relationship between expert occupations and higher education. Given that I draw on diverse sources, issues of terminology and definition arise throughout. This means that key concepts and terms, such as 'profession' and 'management', may be contested within one literature while used ideographically in another. As discussed in Chapter 2, these challenges mean that there is no firm nomenclatural, theoretical or conceptual starting point from which to build my model. I use the rest of this section to address and clarify some of these preliminary issues of definition around my key concepts.

2.1 Profession

'Profession' is a highly variable term depending on context. On one hand, there is a whole branch of sociology devoted to the phenomenon, which dates back to the early twentieth century (e.g. Parsons, 1939) or Flexner's 1915 address on the status of social work (Flexner, 2001). The field enjoyed a particular 'heyday' from the 1960s to 1980s (Liu, 1983, p. iii). On the other, <profession> is often used casually or ideographically in higher education or management literatures to refer to the white-collar labour market more generally. To complicate matters, the sociological literature is partly rooted in contesting the term (Eraut, 1994, p. 1) or even in arguing whether 'profession' is a useful category in the first place (Eyal, 2013, p. 869). Over time, the sociology of the professions has shifted its emphasis from questions of structure to questions of process without resolving issues of definition (Freidson, 1983, p. 14).

This lack of precision may leave 'folk' concepts to dominate wider debates (Freidson, 1983, p. 22) and I suggest that higher education literatures illustrate this tendency. Research on the 'professions' or 'professional schools' frequently makes no attempt to define key concepts (e.g. Rhoades and Slaughter ,1997; Beck and Young, 2005; Sweitzer and Volkwein, 2009; Boyd and Smith 2016). In each of these examples, <profession> is used in a taken-for-granted, ideographic way to describe high status, expert occupations that merit autonomy. In the most extreme cases, 'professional' is simply used as the opposite of amateur (e.g. Gaunt *et al.*, 2012).

Management literatures take a more nuanced approach to the concept, but the definitions often remain shallow, in contrast to the sociological debates. The self-critiques analysed in Chapter 3 tend to assume that 'profession' is an uncontroversial term denoting scientifically grounded occupations that require high ideals and integrity from their workforce. For example, Georges et al (2015, p. 545) rely on a 1927 definition by Mary Parker Follett of a 'foundation of science and a motive of service'. Similarly, Rousseau draws on Simon (1967) and Khurana (2007) to establish a working definition that involves 'applying general laws or principles to particular sets of facts and to conduct business in adherence to an ethical code with aims that contribute to society and transcend mere profit making' (2012, p.601).

Khurana's seminal work on the failure of management as a profession (2007) is one of the few to engage actively with key contributions from the sociology of the professions (including

Parsons, 1939; Bledstein, 1976; Freidson, 1983; Abbott, 1988) and draws particularly on Magali Larson's *The Rise of Professionalism* (1977). However, he does not engage deeply with the contradictions of this complex field and takes the reasonably straightforward position that the Business School, as a 'professional school', requires a commitment to norms and 'values beyond the technical requirements of the job' (2007, p.16) and should help to establish 'jurisdictional authority' over a particular knowledge base (p.17). It is interesting to note that, across the management literature, the ethical implications of 'professional' status are most frequently brought to the fore rather than the technicalities of servicing a sheltered labour market.

This inconsistency makes it difficult to use 'profession' in a way that is likely to be acceptable in rigorous sociological terms while remaining relevant to the questions and concerns raised by management or higher education researchers when they use the same term. Accordingly, I define 'profession' in a way that is broadly acceptable and practicable in all three contexts rather than choosing the most sophisticated approach. In Section 3 of this chapter, I develop a working definition that draws primarily on Eliot Freidson's work, particularly *Professionalism: The Third Logic* (2001). None of the literatures that inform my analysis is incompatible with his perspective, which centres on 'the role of the title (of profession) in the aspirations and fortunes of those occupations claiming it, and not with some quality or trait that all occupations claiming the title may share.' (Freidson, 1983, p. 24).

As I argue that the *professional school* (as defined by Freidson) is not the appropriate structure for the business school system or the only available route to legitimacy I avoid using it as far as possible. Consequently, I use the phrase *occupational higher education* throughout this chapter and avoid using 'profession' in my theoretical model. I also use *expert occupation* in all contexts, rather than <profession> as this risks straying onto ideographic territory.

2.2 Management

'Management' is also an imprecise concept that has evolved over time and now applies to a diverse range of occupations and processes. As an occupational category, 'manager' rapidly emerged in the US during the late nineteenth century to describe employees who ran enterprises owned by other people (Khurana 2007, p. 23-5). These earliest 'managers' needed to assert their legitimacy in the workforce by claiming an equivalent status to established 'professions'. This was a key function of the first US business schools, which operated under the umbrella of prestigious universities and educated elite students to 'run corporations in a way consistent with the broader interests of the country' (Khurana 2007, p. 46).

The expansion in university-level business education in recent decades means that only a few graduates can expect to attain the corporate leadership roles that typified the occupation of 'manager' in the early twentieth century. In the contemporary occupational context, 'management' and 'manager' now indicate either an occupational process or generic level of mid-ranking seniority rather than a discrete occupation its own right. For example, the UK's Standard Occupational Classification 2010 (HESA, 2022a) uses 'manager' as a qualifier alongside terms such as 'proprietor', 'director' or 'operative'. On this basis, it may not be helpful to equate the entity of 'management' (as an occupational function) with any specific occupational entity, such as lawyer, nurse or engineer. This distinction is reflected in the professional education literature, which sometimes specifies management education as an activity that is other or complementary to preparation for a specific ‘profession’ (Schein and Kommers, 1972, p. 129).

It is also important to note that the management literature uses <management> in a way that is ideographic and sometimes grandiose. A classic example of management-as-idea follows:

> ‘Management also expresses basic beliefs of modern Western society. It expresses the belief in the possibility of controlling man’s livelihood through systematic organization of economic resources. It expresses the belief that economic change can be made into the most powerful engine for human betterment and social justice’ (Drucker, 1954, p. 3)

According to this view, <management> is an expression of broader ideological forces rather than a type of job that some people do. According to this view, the Business School might have some surprising similarities to theological colleges or art schools, in that they all socialise members into particular value systems. If this is the case, the question is whether the <management> and academic value systems are compatible.

2.3 Business School

As discussed previously, the term ‘business school’ is used to describe a wide variety of higher education entities across different institutional types and national systems. The student intake of individual schools may range from undergraduates on widening participation programmes to established business leaders on exclusive executive programmes. Equally, qualifications awarded range from foundation degrees to executive education, MBAs, as well as specific gateway qualifications (such as accountancy). The employment options available to graduates are also exceptionally variable when compared to the specific career outcomes of ‘professional school’ programmes that serve a sheltered labour market.

This diversity reflects the varied origins of different parts of the business school system, which have their roots in distinctive occupational, policy or institutional interventions depending on when and where an individual business school was founded or the type of higher education institution it sits within. As an example, the UK’s Robbins Report (1963) recommended that the UK set up US-style post-graduate business schools, which the report specifically compares to art schools in that they ‘gain by the employment of those who have been successful in their professional careers’ (412, p.136). While this was the premise for the foundation of London and Manchester Business Schools, it does not accurately describe either entity’s current structure or reflect the characteristics of the other UK business schools funded over succeeding decades. On a global basis, the system has also responded to varied demographic, economic and institutional pressures, such as the post-war expansion in higher education and the emergence of new economies. Given this rich history, it is not surprising that the international AACSB accreditation process is highly flexible and based on individual school missions (AACSB, 2016), which accommodate the business school system’s diversity of provision and outcome.

To add a further layer of complexity, the term ‘business school’ is not the only label used to describe higher education entities delivering business education and may be used interchangeably with ‘school of management’. In the UK, for example, the Universities of Bath, Bristol, Sheffield and York as well as Cranfield, have all describe themselves as ‘schools of management’ at various points while also use ‘business school’ as a descriptor. Although I include schools of management within the concept of the Business School, the distinctive ideological and intellectual mission of the former is a distinctive feature of the wider system.

As discussed in Chapter 4, the management self-critique literature tends to focus on elite business schools in anglophone contexts and it may be that these critiques do not apply to other settings. It may also be the case that different types of business school organisation fit different categories in the model of *occupational higher education* that I propose in this chapter.

2.4 Occupational Higher Education

Throughout this chapter, I use *occupational higher education* to describe academic entities that prepare students for specific expert occupations that might attract renumeration and form the basis of a career. These entities are not straightforward to isolate as the higher education system prepares students for future careers in many ways. For example, even the most entrenched proponents of the *ideal essential* framework (see Chapter 3) use a career preparation rationale to argue for the merits of purely academic, humanities-based programmes:

> 'A lot of bright 19-year olds find courses in history or English more interesting than courses in marketing or manufacturing, and employers know that spending three years in the company of other clever people studying something that is intrinsically interesting and challenging certainly doesn't reduce those students' native intelligence…Those employers also know that such graduates are likely to be able to see issues in a very broad perspective, and that in the long run that will be more valuable for the progress of their business than any number of specialist skills.' (Collini 2012, p. 143)

In addition, disciplinary degrees from prestigious institutions may provide more impressive employability outcomes than low-ranking courses that claim to prepare students for specific occupations. Forensic science is an example of this, with some occupational stakeholders explicitly stating that a dedicated forensic science degree programme is not the optimum entry route to this career (DoJ, 2022).

In terms of knowledge base, there is also a porous border between occupational and non-occupational higher education. Examples include applied sciences that are a necessary grounding for certain career paths (e.g. psychology or engineering) and are chartered or accredited by bodies that represent organisational stakeholders as well as academic interests. However, these degrees do not (in themselves) represent a qualification to practise in a sheltered labour market and may also be pursued as a general academic degree. In the context of 'knowledge work', a large range of higher education programmes with a purely disciplinary focus also have direct occupational relevance (e.g. Blackler, 1995).

There are also forms of career preparation that are well established in the higher education system but that never aspire to 'professional school' status. Examples include conservatoires that offer training in forms of advanced artistic practice with the intention that a proportion of the most talented graduates will achieve a career in theatre, dance or music. A related category is the specialist higher education institution that trains and socialises students into occupations that require commitment to a particular lifestyle or value system, such as agriculture or theology. Over the years, the management literature has drawn limited parallels with some of these alternative models (e.g. Spender, 2005) to identify solutions to the Business School legitimacy crisis.

Given the wide range of provision and fuzzy boundary between categories, I propose that *occupational higher education* extends beyond the traditional idea of the 'professional school' but does not encompass every single higher education programme that results in strong employment outcomes.

On this basis, my working definition of *occupational higher education* is any higher education entity (usually a school, department, programme or specialist college) that can substantiate the two following claims:

- The entity prepares students for a specific category of expert occupation
- The entity provides educational content that is essential or uniquely advantageous for a career in the relevant expert occupation

By including programmes as well as organisational entities in my definition, I incorporate specialist postgraduate provision (such as clinical pathways) within entities that have a more purely disciplinary focus. In brief, any entity that can substantiate both of these claims is eligible for inclusion in my model. As a test of my model, I also discuss entities that make these two claims but cannot substantiate them.

As well as the Business School, my model encompasses traditional 'professional schools', conservatoires, postgraduate programmes linked to specific occupations, applied STEM disciplines, and specialist higher education institutions with a specific occupational mission.

2.5 Legitimacy

As discussed in Chapter 4 (see Section 1.1), legitimacy is a variable concept across writing on higher education and is often used ideographically. In the present context, I simply take 'legitimate' to mean that a form of *occupational higher education* is accepted as legitimate by its two main stakeholders, as follows:

- The occupation in question treats it as an essential or uniquely advantageous form of career preparation.
- Other sections of the academic community accept its place in the higher education system.

3. THE 'PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL' MODEL

A large proportion of research relevant to *occupational higher education* focuses on the 'professional school' (however defined). However, these literatures also yield insights that might apply to other forms of higher education that provide career preparation for expert occupations. As such, research on the 'professions' is the obvious starting point for my model and I use these debates to identify a series of dimensions of legitimacy that may apply across *occupational higher education* more generally.

In *Professionalism: The Third Logic,* Freidson provides a detailed characterisation of the university 'professional school' *(*2001 p. 84) in the context of the *ideal typical profession*. This includes seven specific elements:

1. A specialised, relatively exclusive school in a university
2. Credential providing
3. Formalises professional knowledge and skill
4. Provides an intellectual basis for profession
5. Produces new knowledge and skill (i.e. tests and approves it)

6. Acts as a primary source of status for the occupation and its members
7. Provides commitment, identity and community amongst members

In addition, Freidson also suggests that professional education should be 'directly or indirectly conducted by members of an occupational group and enforced by law or strong custom' (2001, p.78) and summarises it as form of formal career preparation that sits outside the labour market but where occupational control is maintained (2001, p.127).

Freidson's broader model of the *ideal typical* profession emphasises the additional importance of theoretical knowledge with special status in a sheltered labour market and an ideological commitment to ethical outcomes and higher quality work (2001, p.27). Interestingly, only the provision of credentials and the sheltered labour market are necessarily exclusive to expert occupations with claims to <professional> status. I suggest that all of these elements may be applied to other forms of *occupational higher education* as determinants of legitimacy.

Other insights from the literature on professional education also have a wider applicability beyond the *ideal typical* profession. For example, Winch suggests that the 'professional school' curriculum needs to reflect the following components of occupational knowledge (2014, p. 52).

1. Technique, which is insufficient on its own
2. Skills, which are all contextually relevant to the occupation
3. Transversal skills (e.g. planning or communication), which are essential to 'professional' autonomy
4. Project management

In addition, Winch frames 'professional education' as developing the two dimensions of 'occupational capacity' that span both 'systematic underlying knowledge' and 'the ways in which the aims of the occupation relate to sectoral and ultimately social, civic and political aims' (p. 56-7). Again, I suggest there is no reason why these criteria cannot be applied to other expert occupations that use higher education to provide career preparation.

The same applies to disciplinary taxonomies, which often use 'profession' as a default term for expert occupations rather than to denote a specific category of expert occupation. These taxonomies also illustrate the diversity of expert occupations that engage with higher education and their varying disciplinary origins. For example, Biglan's and Kolb's complementary classifications of academic disciplines both divide the 'professions' (which is never a term that either defines) into two groups: the science-based and those rooted in the social sciences or humanities (Becher and Trowler 2001, p.35). Becher and Trowler's own four-dimensional classification of hard/soft, pure/applied, convergent/divergent and urban/rural disciplines also places the three 'professional' disciplines included in their study (namely, engineering, pharmacy and law) into different configurations of these three dimensions (2001, p. 186). This suggests that there is plenty of flexibility in the way occupational and higher structures may interact to maintain the legitimacy of an entity.

Similarly, a study from the 1980s demonstrates how three newer 'professions' (namely pharmacy, nursing and teacher education) faced a diverse set of legitimacy challenges (Barnett, Becher and Cork, 1987). In the UK, nursing needed to prove itself as a credible discipline and with research capabilities while schools of pharmacy tend to be staffed by career academics with minimal occupational experience. Meanwhile, teacher education needed to navigate a complex and multi-agency occupational control structure. Even within this small sample, the 'professional schools' linked to each expert occupational had a highly variable role in achieving the ultimate credential that provides access to a sheltered labour market.

A common property assigned to 'professions' is their lack of commercial engagement, which is a challenge to Business School legitimacy that I address in Chapter 4. However, in *From Higher Aims to Hired Hands*, Khurana (2007) advocates strongly that the business school system should align to the 'professional school' model and that the legitimacy crisis stems from a failure to do so. He argues that 'the university-based business school in its formative phase was replaced first by a managerialist logic that emphasised professional knowledge rather than professional ideals, and ultimately by a market logic that, taken to its conclusion, subverts the logic of professionalism altogether' (2007, p.7). The assumption that 'management' is capable of 'professional' status underpins his entire argument.

In contrast, the sociological literature suggests that managerialism and the market are inherently other to the 'professions'. The fullest exposition of this comes in Freidson's *Professionalism: The Third Logic* (2001), which characterises *professions* as a way of organising labour that is other to *bureaucracy* (control by managers) and the *market* (control by consumers). By placing the 'professional' occupations in this broader institutional context, Freidson suggests that classing the occupation of 'management' as a 'profession' is a structural impossibility. Freidson's perspective is not unique within sociological literatures, which frequently position 'management' as a type of occupational endeavour that is inherently incompatible to the 'professions'. This 'conflict thesis', in which the *professions* and *bureaucracies* are presented as opposing organisational forms, has a long history in this literature (e.g. Scott, 1966).

In a similar way, the 'professional education' literature suggests an inherently problematic relationship between the University and commerce (as do many of the higher education literatures that I analyse in Chapter 3). For example, Winch places emphasis on the societal mission of a 'profession'. As well as its specialist and technical aims, he argues that the 'occupation's civic dimension' should also be a concern for 'professional' education. He goes on to cite Banking as an example of an occupation where the lack of attention to civic responsibilities caused great societal harm during financial crises (Winch, 2014, p. 57).

In summary, it appears that 'profession' is a term that is used loosely and ideographically across both higher education or management literatures to label expert occupations with a theoretical basis and an ethical dimension. According to this view, a wide range of expert occupations can claim 'professional' status. However, the claims of 'management' in this regard are more problematic, as 'management' is frequently presented as an inherently incompatible occupational category to the 'professions'. This presents a serious challenge to any attempt to use the 'professional school' model to build the legitimacy of the Business School.

4. THE CASE OF THE BUSINESS SCHOOL: CORE DIMENSIONS OF THE MODEL

As I discussed in Chapter 1, the business school system appears to be unique in the intensity and duration of its legitimacy crisis. This raises questions about how forms of *occupational higher education* balance their academic and occupational interests to maintain legitimacy with both stakeholder groups.

In this section, I use findings from Chapters 3 and 4 to identify four potential properties or conditions of legitimate *occupational higher education*. These are all structural dimensions that appear to be problematic or absent in relation to the business school system entities addressed in the management self-critiques. Whether they are completely absent across the entire system is an issue I return to in Chapter 6.

I go on to explore how other forms of *occupational higher education* navigate each of these four conditions to create successful structures that help maintain legitimacy. I then consider whether the business school system (or entities within the system) could also adopt similar structures.

4.1 The knowledge domain

As described in Chapter 4, one of the enduring legitimacy challenges facing the business school system is how to balance the occupational relevance of its knowledge base with a strong theoretical core.

In terms of occupational credibility, there is a lack of consensus on the existence of any 'coherent, systematic, clearly bounded body of knowledge...that is firmly connected with management practice' (Khurana 2007, p. 91). From the perspective of employers, the issues even extend to whether business skills are teachable in the first place (Khurana 2007, p. 97).

In terms of academic credibility, the business school system faces continual challenges to the legitimacy of the management knowledge base. These concerns are also pervasive and reach back to the Ford Foundation report (Gordon Howell, 1959), which queried the academic standards of business and management research and recommended specific reforms for the US business school system. The limited success of the Advanced Institute of Management initiative to improve the quality of management research in the UK between 2002 and 2015 shows how this problem has recurred across different time periods and geographical contexts.

The tension between academic standards and occupational relevance is also widely acknowledged and played out prominently within the management literature in the *rigour-relevance* debates (as discussed in Chapter 4). As I discuss later, the difficulty of balancing occupational and academic interests is not a phenomenon unique to the Business School context. The higher education literature on *academic drift* (e.g. Harwood, 2010) shows how similar challenges occurs across a variety of higher education settings and provides a theoretical perspective on this.

On this basis, I take the requirement for a knowledge domain that is credible to both occupational and academic stakeholders as the property that dictates my first legitimacy criterion for *occupational higher education*.

4.2 Occupational controls

Central to the rationale of *occupational higher education*, is that important elements of career preparation are best devolved to the higher education system. While the interaction of the two stakeholders may become a source of tension for both parties, a lack of occupational oversight may also prove equally problematic. This appears to be the case with the business school system.

In the context of the *ideal typical professional school*, occupational control is formalised through the mandatory accreditation and credentials that provide access to a sheltered occupation. However, this structural solution is not open to every expert occupation and the case of the Business School illustrates this well. In brief, 'management' is a diffuse occupational category that does not operate in a sheltered labour market.

Another factor is the role of occupational stakeholders in initiating and mandating the initiation of career preparation within the higher education system. As discussed in Chapter 1, the evolution of the business school system has a more complex history, characterised by third party interventions, such as philanthropic foundations in the US (e.g. the Ford and Carnegie Foundation reports of 1959) or policy initiatives in the UK (e.g. Robbins, 1963; Franks, 1964).

As I discuss in Chapter 4, institutional demand for cash cow programmes that recruit strongly and generate income, has also promoted the growth of the business school system. According to this perspective, the need to cross-subsidise other disciplines leaves the business school system as a cash cow, to its intellectual and societal detriment (e.g. Starkey and Tiratsoo, 2007). This also means that parent institutions may maintain pressure to fulfil utilitarian ends, at the expense of occupational or academic aims. In the absence of occupational controls, this pressure may prove hard to resist even by a committed academic workforce.

The Business School is not the only form *of occupational higher education* that serves a loosely organised expert education, is vulnerable to utilitarian pressures and has a number of stakeholders beyond the academic and occupational. On this basis, how occupational interest groups establish appropriate control over the relevant higher education entity, and the way they interact with academic interest groups is the condition that forms the basis of my second legitimacy criterion for *occupational higher education*.

4.3 Career preparation claims

All forms of *occupational higher education* make specific claims regarding the career outcomes of their graduates. Where a sheltered labour market exists, these claims are relatively straightforward although there may be periodic imbalances between labour supply and demand. However, general business or management qualifications do not lead to a single occupational outcome for their graduates, especially if we consider the full range of business school system provision from elite institution to community college.

For example, the Prospect website alone lists business school graduate career options as wide-ranging as corporate investment banker, supply chain manager, mortgage advisor and retail manager (Prospects, 2022). By the same token, a general business and management undergraduate qualification is not mandatory for any single occupation. While an MBA may 'increase your chances of securing a more senior position' (e.g. for a stockbroker), many welcome 'graduates from all disciplines' (e.g. investment banking). In addition, many career paths (including those that conform to Freidson's *ideal typical profession*) may require workers to develop general management capabilities at a certain career stage and this may be facilitated by an executive education programme delivered through the business school system.

This leaves the business school system (and individual programmes in individual institutions) with the problem of making accurate claims about their distinctive contribution relative to other programmes. In his classic 1967 paper, *The Business School: a problem in organisational design*, Herbert Simon described the Business School as an 'ill-defined institution' and these problems of definition seem only to have proliferated with the global growth of the system.

However, a range of graduate outcomes from different entities within the wider system does not, in itself, compromise the legitimacy of the business school system. If the claims made by individual entities are accurate and each offers a uniquely advantageous route to an identifiable expert occupation, they should remain legitimate. I suggest that a myopic focus on the 'professional school' model has prevented business school system insiders from exploring these alternative options.

On this basis, the accuracy and strength of higher education claims about career preparation outcomes is the property that dictates my third legitimacy criterion of *occupational higher education*.

4.4 Value system alignment

As both Chapters 3 and 4 demonstrate, one of the most persistent and problematic charges raised against the Business School is its apparent lack of moral compass. There is a clear problem when the activities of the business school system are perceived as harmful by stakeholders within the system (as described in Chapter 4) as well as by the wider academic community (as discussed in Chapter 3). Although the issues raised by these two academic stakeholder groups are distinct, they both relate to the way that the system links to commercial interests.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the anti-commercial rhetoric of influential normative frameworks of higher education mean that the Business School may always be negated by some academic interest groups. This may also help explain why the business school system has turned to the <professional school> ideal as a way of resolving its legitimacy problems. An 'ideological commitment to ethical outcomes and higher quality work' (Freidson, 2001, p. 27) is inherent to concepts of the *ideal typical* profession. By claiming 'professional' status, an expert occupation signals its alignment with the values and traditions of academia and justifies its presence in the higher education system. However, as I go on to discuss, some expert occupations also achieve this goal through alternative structures. On this basis, how the values of an occupation and higher education may be effectively aligned is the condition that constitutes the fourth and final legitimacy criterion for *occupational higher education*.

5. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE MODEL

The aim of my model is to understand how different forms of *occupational higher education* maintain and balance their legitimacy with academic and occupational interest groups, and to identify the factors that compromise this legitimacy.

As discussed earlier, *occupational higher education* is not a concept used within either higher education or management literatures. Only a few contributions to relevant debates take the rationale of career preparation for specific expert occupations as a way of categorising academic disciplines or higher education programmes (for exceptions see Clark and Boyer, 1987, p. 94; Muller, 2009; Brante, 2011). This leaves research on the 'professions' to provide the fullest available account of the phenomenon. To this end, I draw on the sociology of the professions, as well as literature on professional education, to generate some important and broadly applicable insights. Given the tension between the University and commercial engagement, I also draw on a wide range of higher education research that deals with how the University (in its normative sense) might relate to economic and labour market interest groups. This includes research on academic identity, knowledge work, academic drift, the triple helix of university-industry-government relations, Mode 2 research and the entrepreneurial university. I integrate these debates to create a hybrid model that exploits the theoretical intersections and interactions between literatures.

As my model incorporates several wide-ranging literatures that each offer a partial insight to my questions, I am necessarily selective and exclude elements that are irrelevant to my aims. For example, the sociology of the professions is a very large field which, over time, has been variously dominated by taxonomies (e.g. Parsons, 1939) or critiques of the concept (e.g. Johnson, 1972). Neither of these strands is particularly relevant to my proposed model, which is not preoccupied by the idea of the 'profession'. However, the 'conflict thesis' on how the 'professions' interact with other expert occupations as well as contextual accounts, (e.g. Friedson, 2001) are very useful to my analysis.

The table below summarises my selection and explains how each strand contributes to this chapter:

Perspectives	Key sources	Contribution
Sociology of the professions (sociology)	Freidson, (2001); Brante, (2011)	• Structure of the *ideal typical professional school* • Processes of governance and control in the 'professional school' context • Expert occupational logics that are *other* to the 'professions'– particularly tension with commercial interests
Academic drift, epistemic drift, institutional theory (higher education, organisational behaviour)	Pratt (1972), Elzinga (1997), Harwood (2010), Tight (2015), DiMaggio and Powell (1991)	• Tensions between expert occupations and academic interest groups • The mechanisms of academic and occupational control in higher education • How external pressures impact higher education entities
Entrepreneurial/civic university, knowledge work (higher education, management)	Etzkowitz and Dziah (2015), Drucker (1954), Blackler (1995), Clark (1988), Gorman and Sandefur (2011)	• Normative frameworks for higher education that incorporate economic and labour market interests. • How academic knowledge translates to expert occupational settings
Professional education, disciplinary taxonomies (higher education)	e.g. Bernstein (2000), Biglan (1973), Becher and Trowler (2001)	• How career preparation operates within higher education • How *occupational higher education* interacts with 'pure' academic disciplines • Taxonomies of higher education and how they accommodate career preparation

Table 1: Literatures that inform the model

In the rest of this section, I apply these literatures to the four structural conditions that I previously identify as key to the legitimacy of *occupational higher education* and develop a set of specific criteria:

Legitimacy criterion 1 – The balanced knowledge domain
Legitimacy criterion 2 – Effective occupational controls
Legitimacy criterion 3 – Accurate graduate outcome claims
Legitimacy criterion 4 – Academic and occupational value alignment

These form the foundations of my model. I also develop four potential pathways to legitimacy that different forms of *occupational higher education* may adopt to meet these criteria and identify a range of 'stressors' that make maintaining legitimacy problematic.

5.1 The balanced knowledge domain

The factors that make a particular knowledge domain appropriate for academic enquiry and how a new field earns a place amongst established disciplines is a major preoccupation of higher education research and has resulted in multiple taxonomies (e.g. Biglan, 1973; Bernstein, 2000; Becher and Trowler, 2001) These all address the role of higher education in career preparation, albeit through the lens of the 'professional school'.

There are also multiple normative frameworks that try to make sense of the relationship between commercial interest groups and higher education, either positively or negatively. For example, the *ideal-essential* legitimacy framework identified in Chapter 3 categorically rejects commercial influences as harmful. Meanwhile, literatures on the entrepreneurial university (Clark, 1988), Mode 2 research (Gibbons *et al.*, 1994) and the Triple Helix of university-government-industry relations (Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff, 2000), provide alternative normative narratives. These three perspectives celebrate economic, labour market and commercial engagement as evidence that the higher education system is both sustainable and societally relevant. Crucially, they all assume that making a strong economic contribution is a form of societal benefit.

In brief, there is a wide range of respected normative positions that support or challenge any argument about the place of occupationally relevant knowledge (including commercially relevant knowledge) within academia. On this basis, I focus on perspectives that cast light on what makes occupational knowledge legitimate in academic terms, as well as how academic and occupational requirements are balanced within a knowledge domain. I then highlight two particular types of occupational knowledge that have a place in higher education but that do not fit the template of Freidson's *ideal typical* profession: advanced transversal skills and applied sciences with an occupational orientation.

5.1.1 Categories of occupational knowledge

Disciplinary taxonomies and literature on knowledge production both point to the simple conclusion that career preparation in higher education contexts is not synonymous with 'professional' education. As discussed earlier in this chapter, higher education literatures often take 'profession' as broadly meaning any expert occupation that uses higher education to develop its knowledge base and prepare its workers. Given this, I suggest that the available disciplinary taxonomies are all applicable to a range of occupations, even where they adopt 'profession' as a label. For example, Bernstein (2000) proposes the concepts of *regions* or areas of academic knowledge with a 'professional' focus, with each drawing on a number of disciplinary *singulars.* This framework has been further developed to account for *regions* that lack legitimacy, not because of occupational irrelevance but because they lack strong 'disciplinary foundations' in relation to *singular* roots. Tourism, business studies and information science are cited as examples of 'fourth generation professions' that exhibit this disciplinary vulnerability or immaturity (Muller, 2009, p. 214).

In his influential and enduring taxonomy of academic disciplines, Biglan (1973) also distinguishes between *hard/soft*, and *pure/applied* disciplines, which map onto two categories of occupational knowledge, the *hard/applied* (rooted in the sciences) or *soft/applied* (rooted in the social sciences and humanities). Becher and Trowler's extension of this taxonomy refers explicitly to these two categories as the *social professions* and *science-based professions* (2001, p. 53). As with Berstein, these taxonomies do not incorporate any characteristic specific to Freidson's *ideal typical* professional school (2001) despite using 'professional' as both a category and label.

Even within the constraints of Freidson's *ideal typical* model, it has long been acknowledged that even expert occupations serving sheltered labour markets do not easily develop a stable knowledge domain. The specific practitioner-academic interface, the relationship to foundational disciplines and the career trajectories of academic workers all have a bearing on how an occupational *region* of knowledge is structured (Barnett, Becher and Cork, 1987).

Becher and Trowler's expanded disciplinary taxonomy introduces two further dimensions, both relating to the social organisation of academic disciplines, as follows:

- *divergent/convergent*, referring to how far the discipline has a tight research focus (2001, p. 184)
- *rural/urban,* referring to the levels of overlap with other disciplines (2001, p. 106)

I suggest that these two dimensions may also have a bearing on the legitimacy of an occupational knowledge domain, especially from the perspective of its occupational stakeholders. The lack of research focus within *divergent* disciplines may make it difficult to identify whether researchers address those questions and topics that are important to occupational stakeholders. Meanwhile, *rural* disciplines feature a community of researchers that is loosely organised and more disconnected than *urban* counterparts and cannot lay claim to an exclusive intellectual territory. Again, this might raise questions about the contribution of an occupational *region* of knowledge domain in contrast to alternative *regions* or disciplinary *singulars*.

Business and management studies is an example of a domain that exhibits *divergent/rural* properties and has well-documented problems in meeting the knowledge needs of occupational stakeholders. It may be that these disciplinary structures account for some of the system's legitimacy problems. According to this view, a *region* of knowledge with *divergent/rural* properties may struggle to convince occupational stakeholders that it has ownership over a discrete territory of knowledge and that its research community is unified in the pursuit of occupationally relevant knowledge. However, I suggest that this situation should also apply to many of the *social professions* that share taxonomical features with business and management studies, such as teaching or social work.

Another implicit feature of disciplinary taxonomies is their disinterest in the compatibility of occupational and academic value systems. This provides a marked contrast with *ideal essential* and *critique* literatures discussed in Chapter 3, which are highly critical of occupational or commercial infiltration. This lack of interest in value alignment is also evident in recent sociological literature on the 'professions', with the proposal that they might be re-conceptualised as 'science-based occupations' (Brante, 2011). On this basis, the scientific validity of the knowledge base is taken as the key criterion of academic legitimacy. According to Brante's perspective, occupations that lack a robust academic knowledge domain 'cannot be defined as professionals, even though their interventions might work. Everyone from healers and quacks to astrologists are not professionals, according to this categorization.' (2011, p. 13). In each case, the rigour of the knowledge domain becomes the over-riding condition of legitimacy. This triangulates with Muller's conclusions about the importance of strong disciplinary *singular* support for an academically robust *region* of occupational knowledge (Muller, 2009, p. 214).

The knowledge work literature is also relevant here and even claims to supersede debates on the 'professions' (Gorman and Sandefur, 2011). Although there is some broader acceptance that 'not all learned occupations become professions' (Saks, 2012, p. 5), the knowledge work literature is more trenchant on this point and contends that 'the important line of demarcation increasingly lies between jobs and occupations that require expert knowledge – in the form of specialized higher education – and those that do not' (Gorman and Sandefur, 2011, p. 277). For example, Starbuck's study of 'knowledge intensive firms' gives equal credence to managers at McDonalds and the legal profession (1992, p. 719).

These insights all confirm the obvious conclusion that a range of broader academic stakeholders would accept the occupational knowledge base as sufficiently advanced. It is puzzling that this should be problematic for an established academic entity like the Business School.

5.1.2 Balancing academic and occupational relevance

The conflicting pressures of academic and occupational interest groups are also a preoccupation within higher education research. Understanding these conflicts, and how we might resolve them, is of particular relevance to *occupational higher education*.

Long-running debates on *academic drift* provide a full account of this conflict. For the earliest mention of this concept, see Pratt (1972) and for a more recent summary of the field, see Tight (2015). The underpinning assumption of the *academic drift* literature is that the act of embedding applicable knowledge production and career preparation within the higher education system creates an inherent instability. Once situated within the University, academic imperatives create a 'drift' away from occupational relevance, which needs to be rectified. The *academic drift* debates make it clear that this is a structural tension within *occupational higher education* and not an exceptional circumstance faced by entities such as the business school system. Meanwhile *epistemic drift* (Elzinga, 1997) addresses the opposite phenomenon to *academic drift* and provides an account of how *pure* disciplines may evolve into more *applied* forms, losing some *academic legitimacy* along the way. I expand on the latter point in the Section 5.1.3, as part of my discussion on occupational controls.

Multiple studies deal with how *academic drift* affects varied forms of *occupational higher education* including agriculture (Harwood, 2005, 2010), education (Baker, Orr and Young, 2007), engineering (Christensen and Erno-Kjolhede, 2011), information science (De Wit and Verhoeven, 2003) nursing (Laiho, 2010), and the 'professions' in general (Smeby, 2006). A typical *academic drift* narrative details how an occupation that is new to the higher education context seeks academic respectability by creating a research culture and structures that mimic more established disciplines. This process is inevitably to the detriment of its occupational relevance. I suggest that this may be viewed as analogous to the attempt to establish links with disciplinary *singulars*, (Muller, 2009, p. 214). The concept of *academic drift* also illustrates why appropriate mechanisms of occupational control are important to maintaining a healthy balance between these two key interest groups.

Interestingly, the rigour-relevance debates of the management literature describe the processes of *academic drift* without drawing on the theory itself. This is an additional instance of the management literature failing to draw on higher education theory. Arguably, the problem of *academic drift* may be particularly acute within the business school system, as the see-sawing conclusions of this 70-year debate across the management literature suggests. However, the failure of these debates to draw on the *academic drift* literature may also explain why the rigour-relevance critiques remain limited and cyclical. In Section 7 of this chapter, I go on to ask whether any specific characteristic of the business and management knowledge base helps explains why it has become such a chronic and complex example of this phenomenon.

Disciplinary taxonomies, knowledge work, the sociology of the professions, and *academic drift* all provide useful insights into how occupational knowledge domains may establish their academic legitimacy and what challenges they face in balancing their legitimacy across the two key interest groups. However, none of these perspectives consider how occupationally relevant knowledge is legitimised outside the loosely defined structures of the 'professional school'. In practice, there are multiple ways that higher education serves expert occupations and I suggest that there are at least two other types of occupationally relevant knowledge that need special consideration:

- Firstly, applied scientific disciplines that are closely allied to scientific occupations and act as a major source of innovation e.g. artificial intelligence, robotics, nanotechnology, material science.
- Secondly, the theoretical knowledge that underpins *transversal* skills, which are relevant to a range of expert occupations and may be linked to career stage transitions.

As both of these examples raises different questions about the interface between academic and occupational interest groups, I address them individually.

5.1.3 Applied scientific disciplines

Scientific knowledge domains with a direct occupational application and an economic rationale are not dealt with by the sociology of the professions or professional education literatures. However, I include them in my analysis as they present a unique set of challenges and an alternative model for the legitimacy of an occupational knowledge base.

The relevant academic disciplines generally fall within the *hard/applied* category, according to Biglan's classification (1973). Examples might include software design, machine learning, or robotics. In these cases, ostensible control remains with the academic community and strong links to disciplinary *singulars* support the academic legitimacy of these knowledge domains. However, there is also an argument that such programmes provide a uniquely advantageous form of career preparation. It is also the case that significant sections of the occupational workforce may maintain research interests and academic collaborations. A fuller account of how these disciplines are shaped by occupational interest groups is the focus of Section 5.2.

5.1.4 Transversal skills

A class of expert occupational knowledge, increasingly referred to as *transversa*l skills (UNEVOC, 2022), is not the property of any one occupation and can be used in a wide variety of situations and work settings. These skills may include interpersonal, teamwork or communication skills (Vicent *et al.*, 2006) as well as the process of 'management' itself (Eraut, 1994, p. 75). They are also considered 'absolutely central to a profession's claim to autonomy in the workplace' (Winch, 2014, p. 54) and, as such, are of interest to a wide range of expert occupations, as well as the *ideal typical* professions.

Although they feature periodically in debates on professional education or knowledge work, how transversal skills should be organised as a knowledge domain is not generally detailed. For example, Eraut (1994, pp. 75–99) suggests a provisional framework, which is based on the needs of educators taking on leadership roles as head teachers. Other studies propose specific ways of delivering transversal skills within higher education, such as e-learning (Vicent *et al.*, 2006). Some of these techniques appear somewhat speculative and I suggest that locating responsibility for transversal skills within one academic entity, such as the business school system, may be the logical way of ensuring a robust research community and the development of a cohesive *region* of relevant knowledge. Although they hold promise for the legitimacy of the business school system, the place of transversal skills in the actual higher education system remains under-theorised.

5.1.5 Summary

In summary, the combined insights from a range of theoretical perspectives suggest that wider academic recognition of any *region* of occupational knowledge is necessary to its legitimacy (although not sufficient). The key elements that promote this legitimacy appear to include a close relationship to a *pure* academic discipline, the social organisation of the relevant research community and the maturity of the occupational *region* of knowledge. The factors that might compromise this legitimacy include:

- A loose social organisation of the *region* that makes it hard for occupational interest groups to identify a coherent academic contribution
- A lack of direct occupational engagement and control mechanisms (see next section for further discussion).

Although the business school system faces the challenge of *academic drift* and a *divergent/rural* disciplinary organisation, my analysis suggests that these are common to other forms of *occupational higher education*. Equally, there are normative frameworks that endorse knowledge domains that have economic, labour market and commercial rationales. On this basis, there is no fundamental reason why the business school system should not maintain its legitimacy with either academic or occupational interest groups.

However, all the sources I draw on focus exclusively on *academic* legitimacy and assume that an occupational knowledge base is also recognised by the relevant occupational interest group. This is an interesting gap in these debates and one of the key legitimacy problems that the business school system faces. As I argue in Section 5.3.1 of this chapter, this problem may also apply to other academic entities that are highly 'marketised' and used by parent institutions to meet utilitarian aims. It is curious that higher education literatures ignore those examples of *occupational higher education* that do not 'do what they say on the tin', as this is a matter of ethical concern.

5.2 Mechanisms of occupational control

An important element of Freidson's model of the *ideal typical* professional school is the process of 'occupational control' (Brante, 2011, p. 6). This control is exerted through credentialisation, which involves formal control over mechanisms such as curricula, modes of delivery and qualifications awarded. The specific nature of these controls is dictated by issues such as the relationship of programmes to the eventual credential, the function of external professional associations and the requirements of regulatory or legislative frameworks (Barnett, Becher and Cork, 1987). As such, *credentialisation* becomes the defining characteristic of the first legitimacy pathway of *occupational higher education* that I propose in Section 6 of this chapter.

However, my analysis of knowledge domains suggests that the landscape of *occupational higher education* is more complex than a series of discrete expert occupations that adopt or adapt the *ideal typical* professional school model. In contrast, I suggest that occupational controls are successfully exerted in a range of quite different ways.

I deduce the presence of these alternative control pathways and their mechanisms from a set of disconnected literatures that are not primarily concerned with this specific question but touch on it tangentially. These include literatures on academic identity as well as debates on knowledge production.

To this end, I propose that there are two additional control pathways

- The *applied scientific* disciplines (introduced in Section 5.1.3) that are subject to strong occupational control within a disciplinary culture.
- Academic entities that exert occupational controls through strong socialisation processes and have a *vocational* element e.g. conservatoires, theological colleges, medical schools and agricultural colleges.

I discuss each of these in turn:

5.2.1 Applied scientific disciplines

I return to the case of *applied scientific* disciplines with a strong occupational rationale in this section as they present a distinctive example of occupational control. I deduce the presence of these controls from the literatures on knowledge production, although the control mechanisms described in these studies are not necessarily labelled as such. For example, debates on the *triple helix of University-Industry-Government relations* acknowledge a complex network 'of university spin-off firms, tri-lateral initiatives for knowledge- based economic development, and strategic alliances among firms large and small, operating in different areas, and with different levels of technology, government laboratories, and academic research groups' (Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff, 2000, p. 112). Other mechanisms of control implied in this literature include managed research funding schemes that speak to economic priorities (Benner and Sandström, 2000) and government promotion of new disciplines on the 'critical technology list', such as nanotechnology or materials science (Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff, 2000, p. 117).

That these features are experienced as control mechanisms by academic interest groups is evident from a study on the academic identity of researchers working in agricultural biotechnology. Participants reported how these interventions sometimes become problematic for academic workers in this field:

> 'University–industry research relationships raise concern about the influence of non-scientific interests, specifically economic interests, on the work of academic scientists' (Biscotti *et al.*, 2009, p. 262)

The concept of *epistemic drift* introduced in Section 5.1.2 explicitly presents these mechanisms in terms of control. While the *ideal typical professional school* is vulnerable to academic drift, scientific disciplines are liable to the contrary process, *epistemic drift*, which explains how knowledge production priorities in science are shaped through 'strong linkages to utilization domains' (Elzinga, 1997, p. 421).

Unlike the *credentialised* pathway, the *applied scientific discipline* has a strong disciplinary identity that is shaped by occupational interest groups rather than the other way round. On the basis of this distinctive structural characteristic, it forms the basis of the second legitimacy pathway of *occupational higher education* that I propose in Section 6.

5.2.2 Vocational career preparation

My use of *vocational* in relation to *occupational higher education* needs some preliminary explanation, as I use the term in a very specific way. Entities in this category share two characteristics, which means that graduate career trajectories are more varied and less certain than the other legitimacy pathways introduced so far:

- The occupational field may be a highly competitive one, and the career preparation presents a high risk, high gain calculation for students. The chances of success of establishing a financially sustainable career may be low (Bennett and Hannan, 2008, p. 61).
- The occupational field may involve a high level of personal commitment (e.g. artistic, lifestyle or spiritual), which means that a proportion of graduates continue their association with the field in an unpaid or amateur capacity.

Examples of *vocational* career preparation might include advanced musical training delivered in a conservatoire setting, art schools, agricultural colleges and theological colleges. In addition, this form of occupational preparation often remains 'detached' from the broader higher education system with an academic community 'largely isolated from letters and science "academics"' (Clark and Boyer, 1987, p. 93). As a result, some *vocational* entities hold a peripheral status within the University. Interestingly, the business school system also shares some of these 'detached' characteristics.

The defining feature of the *vocational* pathway is that it provides preparation for expert occupations that have a strong social identity but may lack formal, centralised organisation. Apart from the case of theological colleges and church organisations, there may be no national association that provides governance and the sheltered labour market is less likely to apply.

However, I suggest that this detachment from the academic mainstream and the strong occupational identities of academic workers serve as an important mechanism of occupational control. It appears that the academic workers in the *vocational* context sometimes struggle to develop a conventional academic identity. As Findlow (Findlow, 2012, p. 117) states in relation to nursing academics, 'traditional professional identities are more reliable conferrers of meaning than academic ones' while White (2014) draws the same conclusion about teacher educators and Smith and Boyd (2012) suggest this also applies to allied health professionals. Clark and Boyer (1987, p. 96) also acknowledge that occupational forms 'stretch(es) the academic system by differentiating and proliferating the roles of faculty-level personnel: into both clinical and scholarly, part-time and full-time, nontenured and tenured, and outside-based and inside-committed.' I suggest that this tendency will be even more pronounced in settings such as art schools and conservatoires, where staff often work on fractional contracts as a supplement to their creative practice.

As these examples show, the status of dual identity academic workers is discussed almost exclusively from the perspective of their academic identity. There is far less emphasis on how *vocational* academic workers maintain their occupational identities in the face of academic pressures or much acknowledgement that their occupational identities may be a crucial legitimising factor.

A lesson from *vocational* forms for the business school system is the potential importance of dual identity academic workers. A key factor may be an insufficient proportion of dual identity academic workers. To illustrate this point, the AACSB 2021 Business School Data Guide (AACSB, 2021) shows that the largest category of full-time faculty in AACSB accredited business schools are 'scholarly academics' (50,357 survey participants) while just 7,397 academic workers fit the 'practice academic' category. In addition, 'scholarly academics' are most likely to act as 'participating faculty' who 'actively and deeply engage in the activities of the school in matters beyond direct teaching responsibilities'. As a form of *occupational higher education* that has some affinity with the *vocational* pathway, the profile of the academic workforce may prove to be a significant determinant of Business School legitimacy.

On the basis of the importance of dual identity staff, *vocational* forms constitute the basis of the third legitimacy pathway of *occupational higher education* that I propose in Section 6.

5.2.3 Summary

My analysis suggests that the *credentialisation* process of the *ideal typical professional school* is not the only way to exert appropriate levels of occupational control. As the two alternative pathways outlined above show, effective control mechanisms can also be less formalised and diffuse. The case of the *applied scientific* pathway shows how research funding and policy priorities are used to exert occupational control through disciplinary mechanisms. The case of the *vocational* pathway demonstrates that the dual identity of academic workers can help embed occupational priorities and values.

5.3 Accurate graduate outcome claims

All forms of *occupational higher education* make claims about how they prepare students for relevant careers or achieve knowledge transfer. As I have already demonstrated in this chapter, the *occupational higher education* landscape is structurally diverse and none of the conditions of legitimacy are tied to the *credentialised* pathway that leads to a sheltered labour market. I suggest that outcome claims are legitimate when they meet the following two criteria:

- The claims made about contributions to the occupational knowledge base and career preparation for workers are directly endorsed by occupational interest groups.
- The career preparation process is either essential or uniquely advantageous for a career in the relevant occupation.

The four pathways that I identify in this chapter can all be classified by the distinctive way they make and evidence their outcome claims (or fail to do so). As discussed in Section 5.2, the *applied scientific* and *vocational* pathways operate through more diffuse mechanisms of occupational control, which will have a knock-on effect on how they may navigate their *graduate outcome claims*. For example, it is accepted the most prestigious conservatoire or theatre programmes mitigate the risk of failure rather than ensure career success. If this point is understood by students embarking on their *vocational* programme, then *graduate outcome claims* are legitimate, as the career pathway remains uniquely advantageous or essential despite the inherent risks.

It is widely accepted that the higher education system raises the status of an occupation by taking on aspects of its career preparation. However, the importance of the occupation itself in legitimising forms of *occupational higher education* appears to be absent from the literature. This may seem like such an obvious requirement of legitimacy that it needs no further comment but, as I go on to discuss in this section, there are examples of self-proclaimed *occupational higher education* that exist without sufficient occupational mandate and do not live up to their outcome claims.

As there is a lack of research on this topic, I continue to rely on isolated insights from a range of literatures (as well as noting interesting absences) to piece together the factors that may influence the legitimacy of *graduate outcome claims* and the factors that compromise them. As my starting point, I suggest that legitimate outcome claims may be dependent on:

- The controls exerted by occupational interest groups
- The capacity of academic workers to exert normative guardianship
- The utilitarian imperatives that bear upon the entity in question (Albert and Whetten, 1985)

As I demonstrate in Chapter 3, normative narratives of higher education often reject all external influence as damaging to academic values and legitimacy. This makes it hard to identify sources that provide a more nuanced account of pressures exerted on the higher education system. As a result, the impacts of different external interest groups are not routinely distinguished from each other or analysed comparatively. In addition, the ideography of <academic identity> and <academic values> is so often engrained in normative literatures that a disciplinary *singular* model of legitimacy becomes the only thinkable option.

In contrast to this position, I suggest that a lack of appropriate external engagement may prove problematic in the case of *occupational higher education* and compromises its legitimacy. This gives rise to the interesting possibility of an additional and problematic manifestation of *occupational higher education* that is not driven by labour market demand. In the next section I consider that case of entities that recruit students onto attractive-sounding occupational programmes on the basis of misleading employability claims.

5.3.1 Marketised occupational programmes

Although they may not receive much attention in higher education literature, there are clear examples of occupational programmes that are not endorsed by occupational interest groups and offer neither essential nor uniquely advantageous routes into the career in question. To illustrate, a degree in forensic science does not provide optimum preparation for a career in forensic science (DoJ, 2022) according to occupational interest groups themselves. I suggest that this illustrates how legitimacy failures cannot be blamed purely on the actions of external stakeholders and may also rest with a marketised higher education system that exploits students' career aspirations to generate income.

The case of forensic science illustrates this key difference between varying types of external demand for higher education and their relative impact on the system. Goddard (2009, p. 6) is unusual in acknowledging that different categories of demand have different implications. He particularly highlights the problems of a funding model that 'has followed student demand rather than demand from local or national labour markets'. The directly related problem of 'cash cow' status, which exploits student demand, is a well-recognised issue for the business school system that undermines academic standards (Starkey and Tiratsoo, 2007).

How multiple external pressures operate within a system is a central concern of the large institutional theory literature (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Oliver, 1991; Pache and Santos, 2010). According to this framework, appropriate occupational controls may be seen as a form of 'internal representation' (Kim *et al.*, 2007), which prompts organisations to respond to external demands in particular ways. Where there is a lack of internal representation, this may lead to higher education entities that superficially adopt the logic of labour market demand but conceal their non-compliance (Oliver, 1991) through misleading outcome claims.

The impact of these broader economic and labour market pressures means that the legitimacy of individual entities may fluctuate over time. Even those forms of *occupational higher education* that are generally well-established and respected can find themselves on a *marketised* pathway. As the case of US law schools shows (Campos, 2012), an oversupply of graduates from expensive programmes who incorrectly believed they would join the lucrative legal profession precipitated a legitimacy crisis, even in a *credentialised* 'professional school' environment. Interestingly, the author argues that the only possible solution to this legitimacy crisis would have been drastic, structural changes to the tenured academic community, amended faculty pay structures as well as reductions to both tuition fees and the number of law school places available.

This example shows how both the understandable self-interest of academic workers and utilitarian priorities of the higher education interest groups combined to leave law graduates with massive debt and little chance of appropriate employment. This raises a further issue that normative higher education literatures rarely consider. In brief, academic workers are both employees (with the attendant self-interest) as well as normative guardians of the system. An understandable reluctance to argue oneself out of a job makes researching the problems of the *marketised* pathway of *occupational higher education* particularly complex and problematic. However. I suggest that *marketised* characteristics always act as a distinctive marker of legitimacy problems and, on this basis, I incorporate this fifth pathway into my model.

5.3.2 Summary

In summary, it may help to distinguish between labour market and student demands as a key determinant of legitimacy. I identify how *marketisation* processes lead to *graduate outcome claims* that cannot be met and suggest that a lack of appropriate occupational control makes this situation more likely. This, combined with the inevitable self-interest of academic workers who rely on these entities for their livelihoods, may prevent any effective resolution.

5.4 Value Alignment

Value alignment is a recurring concern throughout this thesis. Increasing the status of particular occupations by aligning them with the value system of the University is one of the key drivers that lead occupational interest groups to engage with the higher education system in the first place, as the case of 'management' shows:

> 'science, the professions and the research university represented legitimate institutions to which management could attach itself, thereby validating its own rationality, disinterestedness and commitment to commonly held values' (Khurana, 2007, p. 87)

As I demonstrate in Chapter 3, the anti-commercial rhetoric of influential *ideal essential* narratives suggests that many *occupational higher education* programmes are, by definition, poorly aligned with the values of higher education. Given this tension, the ideographic <professional school> model has achieved a talismanic status as the only way to circumvent these problems. As a tool to counteract *ideal essential* rhetoric, the <professional school> holds two advantages:

- Firstly, it has historical roots in the medieval university's faculties of law, medicine or theology (Khurana, 2007, p. 80) and medieval origins have a key rhetorical function within *ideal essential* logics (see Section 4.3 in Chapter 3 for a full discussion).

- Secondly, many definitions of 'profession' are generally understood to have an inherent code of ethics that is compatible with the higher education value system (see Section 2.1 of this chapter).

However, insisting that the 'professional school' is the only viable solution to the challenge of value alignment does not explain how many *vocational* and *applied scientific* modes of *occupational higher education* also avoid systematic legitimacy challenges, even though their occupational structures preclude *credentialisation*. Once the principle of appropriate occupational control is accepted as a condition of legitimacy, alternative ways of bringing occupational and academic values into alignment become evident. In the rest of this section, I outline three ways of achieving this alignment:

- The vocation
- The moral economy of science
- Civic engagement and economic contribution

5.4.1 The Vocation

One of the most obvious and longstanding ways that certain expert occupations can ensure value alignment with higher education is through the concept of the 'vocation'. As with so much core terminology in this thesis, 'vocational' is used variably across the relevant literatures. On one hand, the term is sometimes used to designate occupations more suited to further education in contrast to the professions (e.g. Giroux, 2002; Bennis and O'Toole, 2005) or as the slightly inferior counterpoint to purely scientific enquiry (Starkey, Hatchuel and Tempest, 2009, p. 552). However, 'vocational' also describes a long-established higher education value system that is based on equipping students for the workplace and has acted as the counterpoint to liberal education in a debate that started a century and a half ago (Tight, 2015, p. 95).

For the purposes of this chapter, 'vocation' can also be used to distinguish a spiritual or moral commitment that transcends personal gain. As the case of theology illustrates, this aligns an expert occupation and academia. This idea of 'vocation' is inherent to *ideal essential* narratives, which rely heavily on a monastic and medieval analogy to signpost the legitimacy of the contemporary system (see Section 3.3 of Chapter 3) while phrases like 'science as a job and a vocation' are still current today (Holden, 2015, p. 1). On this basis, I suggest that any expert occupation that requires a personal commitment unrelated to personal gain (e.g. the Arts, Theology) or societal benefit (such as any *ideal typical* profession) has solid grounds for a legitimate claim to a place in the higher education system and does not come into fundamental conflict with the *ideal essential* legitimacy framework. Conversely, any occupation that prioritises personal gain may have a more problematic status and I suggest that this has been a particular challenge for the business school system.

5.4.2 The Moral Economy of Science

Scientific endeavour also has its own value system, which may be understood in terms of qualities such as integrity, trust, civility and self-command that go 'beyond the calculus of self-interest' (Daston, 1995, p. 24)). This capacity to transcend self-interest corresponds to certain definitions of both 'vocation' or 'profession' (see Section 5.2.2) and dovetails neatly with the re-definition of 'profession as an expert occupation with a scientific basis' (cf Brante, 2011).

This lack of *self-interest* emerges as a fundamental criterion of legitimacy in both scientific and 'vocational' value systems and one that has the capacity to justify the place of a variety of expert occupations within higher education. The moral economy of scientific endeavour is, therefore, useful in legitimising the *applied scientific* category, which has a strong disciplinary orientation. However, neither *vocational* nor *scientific* value systems help to dignify or accommodate commercial engagement, which is the perennial challenge of the business school system.

5.4.3 Civic engagement and economic contribution

The problematic relationship between commerce and academia may explain the substantial body of research that actively makes the case for the legitimacy – and even primacy – of academic knowledge that is rooted in economic priorities. These include debates on *Mode 2* research (e.g. Gibbons *et al.*, 1994) and the *Triple Helix of university-government-industry relations* (e.g. Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff, 2000), which have become 'two of the catchwords used to denote new models of scientific knowledge production' (Elzinga, 2003, p. 21). Both of these literatures have a strong rhetorical bent, although this is less overt than the *ideas of the university* debates. For example, the authors of the *Triple Helix* assert that 'academia encompass a third mission of economic development in addition to research and teaching' (Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff, 2000, p. 110) without providing any particular justification for this statement.

Some contributors even suggest that one function of these debates is to establish an alternative vision for marginalised academic communities. For example, in relation to *Mode 2* research, which argues specifically for the co-creation of knowledge by external stakeholders:

> 'Those with most to gain from such a thesis espoused it most warmly - politicians and civil servants struggling to create better mechanisms to link science with innovation; researchers in professional disciplines such as management, struggling to wriggle out from under the condescension of more established, and more 'academic', disciplines; and researchers in newer universities, other non-university higher education institutions, or outside the academic, and scientific, systems strictly defined.' (Nowotny, Scott and Gibbons, 2003, p. 179)

The same arguments may apply to the literature on the *entrepreneurial university* (e.g. Clark, 1988), which seeks to reconcile normative frameworks with utilitarian imperatives by proposing a 'heartland' of traditional disciplines and a 'developmental periphery' occupied by entities such as the Business School. In both cases, the financial sustainability of individual academic entities and institutions is made paramount. As in the case of *Mode 2* research, a study by Sánchez-Barrioluengo, Uyarra and Kitagawa (2019) suggests that less established and less research-intensive institutions have embraced this concept of the 'entrepreneurial university' most enthusiastically.

Although frameworks that advocate civic or commercial engagement remain isolated from the normative literatures that I focus on in Chapter 3, they use some of the same tropes. For example, both civic and commercial strands use tradition and historical precedent to legitimise their position:

> 'Many of our great universities were created in the 19th century to meet the needs of growing cities. Local entrepreneurs and civic leaders responded to the needs for scientific knowledge and a healthy and skilled workforce by founding universities' (Goddard, 2009, p. 6)

> The practical impetus to scientific discovery is long-standing. The dissertation of Merton (1938) reported that between 40% and 60% of discoveries in the 17th century could be classified as having their origins in trying to solve problems in navigation, mining, etc'. (Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff, 2000, pp. 115–6)

These alternative normative frameworks also present commercial engagement in terms of 'mission', in this case 'a third mission: the role of the university in economic development' (Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff, 2000, p. 110). It seems that economic development, as a collective action, may remain compatible in some iterations of a higher education value system and circumvent the difficult issue of personal gain. This further reinforces Goddard's qualitative distinction between higher education entities that respond to labour market demand rather than to student demand. However, it is interesting that none of these frameworks go head-to-head with the *ideal essential* framework and frequently appear to take a complementary stance. This is achieved by proposing a pure disciplinary heartland (Clark, 1988), evoking tradition (Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff, 2000, pp. 115–6) or distinguishing broader economic interest from personal gain (Goddard, 2009).

While this should be encouraging for the legitimacy of the business school system it is worth re-emphasising that the Business School is rarely used as an exemplar in these literatures and that the management self-critique literature does not draw on these sources to establish a stronger normative position. I return to this question in Section 3.2 of the following chapter.

5.4.4 Summary

The literatures I draw on in exploring how to achieve *value alignment* suggest that there are multiple alternatives to the anti-commercial rhetoric of *ideal essential* legitimacy frameworks and the 'professional school' model the management literature frequently proposes as a solution. While commercial engagement may always remain problematic amongst sections of the academic workforce in its capacity as normative guardians, I conclude that contributing to the economy or civic life is a more palatable way of framing the contribution of the business school system as long as the more deeply problematic factors of self-interest and personal gain are negated.

6. MODEL OF OCCUPATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION

My analysis in this chapter suggests that there are several structures and normative frameworks that modes of *occupational higher education* can use to support their legitimacy, which release them from the constraints of both *ideal essential* anti-commercial rhetoric and the structurally unattainable 'professional school' ideal.

My model incorporates three elements:

- Four legitimacy criteria
- Five legitimacy stressors
- Four principal interest groups

THE CRITERIA FOR LEGITIMATE OCCUPATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION

Criterion 1 - A distinctive region of theoretical knowledge with clear connections to disciplinary *singulars* that is also relevant to occupational interest groups
Criterion 2 - Appropriate occupational controls, which enable forms of *occupational higher education* to claim an essential or uniquely advantageous role in career preparation and also protect against the effects of marketisation
Criterion 3 – Accurate claims about graduate outcomes based on an essential or uniquely advantageous role in career preparation
Criterion 4 - A value system shared by academic and occupational interest groups that can make the case for societal benefit over personal gain or self-interest.

If any of these four criteria are not met by a form of *occupational higher education*, I argue that it cannot maintain its legitimacy. I also identify a series of obstacles and challenges that may compromise the capacity of individual entities to maintain their legitimacy and need to be continually managed. I label these as 'legitimacy stressors' and summarise them below:

THE LEGITIMACY STRESSORS OF OCCUPATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION

Stressor 1 - A loose social organisation of the *region* of knowledge that leaves the academic contribution diffuse and hard to identify
Stressor 2 – Conflict between academic and occupational interest groups over the appropriate balance in the knowledge domain
Stressor 3 – Vulnerability to marketisation in the absence of appropriate occupational *controls*
Stressor 4 – Commercial engagement that is not alleviated by a *value* system that deemphasises self-interest and personal gain
Stressor 5 – Labour market and demographic fluctuations that the higher education entity cannot respond to with sufficient agility to match the provision of *occupational higher education* to labour market demand

I identify one particular scenario that leads to an irretrievable failure of legitimacy. This occurs when student demand for attractive programmes is consistently exploited for utilitarian ends. This leads to programmes with a stated occupational rationale that do not make accurate and appropriate graduate outcome claims or receive the endorsement of occupational interest groups.

The importance of appropriate control by occupational interest groups in ensuring legitimacy is a key insight of this chapter. However, this is not addressed in the management self-critiques of Chapter 4 or remains compatible with the *ideal essential* frameworks of Chapter . Equally, the important distinction between labour market requirements and student demand in shaping legitimacy is not widely recognised.

Consequently I also highlight the specific roles of four distinctive interest groups in my model, including:

OCCUPATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION INTEREST GROUPS

Interest Group 1 - The academic community i.e. normative concerns
Interest Group 2 – Expert occupations that engage with higher education to deliver career preparation
Interest Group 3 – Managerial functions of higher education institutions i.e. utilitarian concerns
Interest Group 4 – Students and graduates

How these three elements interact at a systemic level are summarised in the figure below:

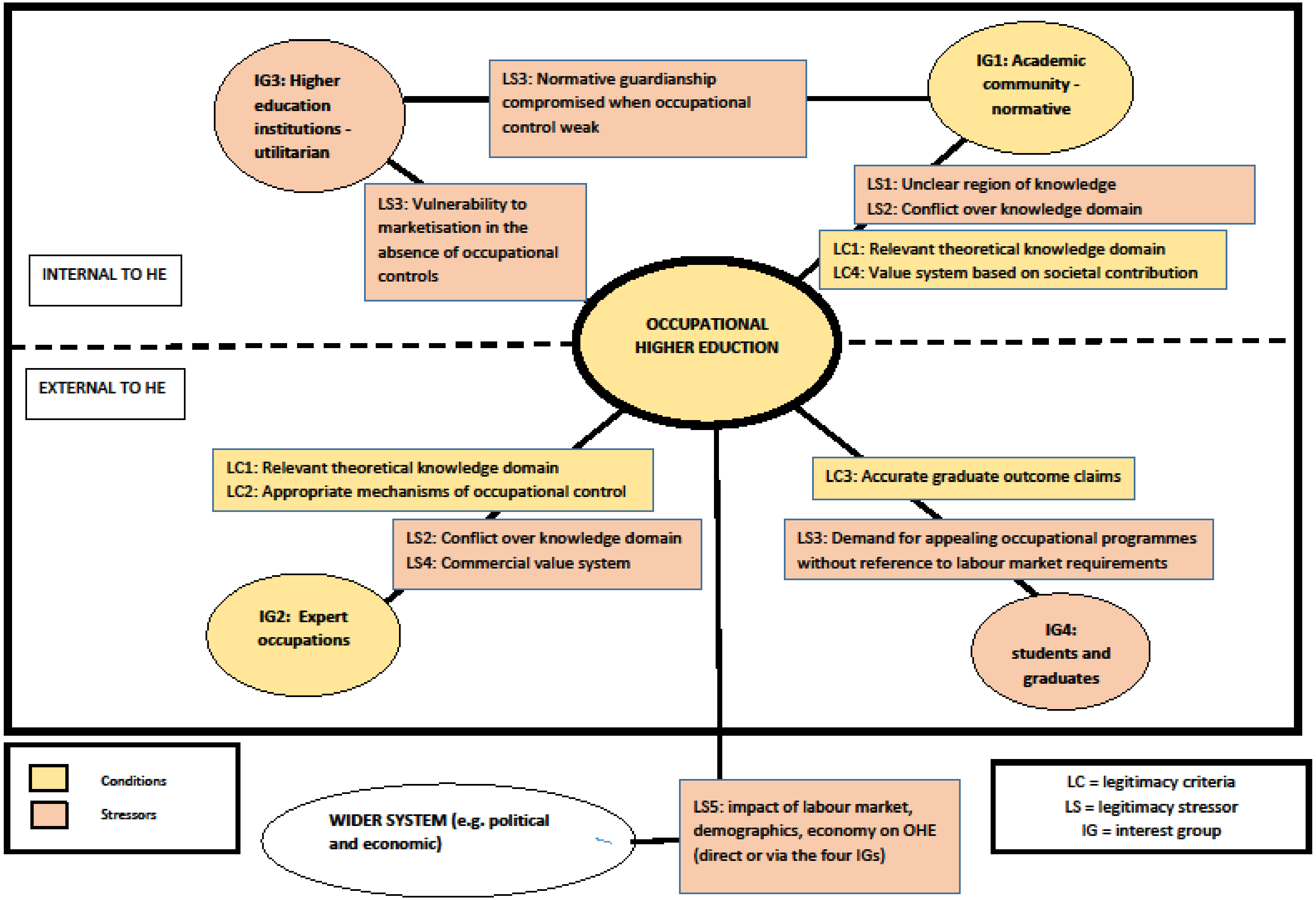

Fig 1: Legitimisation of occupational higher education

According to my model, the legitimacy of *occupational higher education* is not entirely dependent on strong normative control by internal academic stakeholders. I suggest that external occupational stakeholders are also key agents of legitimacy in their own right. Meanwhile, both higher education institutions and students can interact to have a negative impact when student demand outweighs labour market demand.

The four 'legitimate' pathways that I propose in Section 6 represent the distinctive ways that different forms of *occupational higher education* may meet the four criteria and mitigate the five stressors. Each pathway describes how the relationship between occupational and academic interest groups may be mediated in relation to the *knowledge* domain, mechanisms of *control,* graduate outcome *claims*, and shared *values*. The point of this model is not to create a taxonomy that slots individual entities into single categories but to demonstrate the range of pathways that an individual entity might take to build its legitimacy and the vulnerabilities it might experience in relation to each one.

However, for clarity, I provide some preliminary examples of how individual pathways relate (singly) to some categories of *occupational higher education*:

- *Credentialised* pathway: typified by Freidson's *ideal typical* professional school
- *Vocational* pathway: typified by the theological college and conservatoire
- *Applied scientific* pathway: typified by a postgraduate programme in artificial intelligence
- *Transversal* pathway: typified by executive education or specialist MBA programmes offered within the business school system.

I also add a fifth category to my model, which represents academic entities that claim an occupational rationale but may depend on student demand rather than labour market demand, namely:

- *Marketised pathway*: occupational programmes designed to meet student demand rather than labour market requirements e.g. forensic science

A variety of pathway combinations is possible. For example, schools of Engineering and Medicine might use *credentialisation* as a form of occupational *control* but also draw on the *value* systems of the *applied science* category. Similarly, Allied Health programmes and Theology both draw on the strong socialisation and personal commitment that characterises the *vocational* form, along with the *credentialisation* that provides access to a sheltered labour market.

Meanwhile, any form of *occupational higher education* that is not subject to an occupationally determined quota on student numbers, can be delivered in low-cost settings and has the capacity to generate a financial surplus for its host institution is also vulnerable to some of the problematic features of the *marketised* pathway. This may result in a more complex set of legitimacy challenges for individual entities.

In the following table I summarise the five pathways and their relationship with both legitimacy Criteria and Stressors:

Pathway	LC1 Knowledge Domain	LC2 Occupational Control	LC3 Graduate Outcomes	LC4 Value Alignment	Stressors
Credentialised e. g. medicine, law, architecture, education	Knowledge domain and curriculum developed in conjunction with occupational interest groups.	Credentials are determined by occupational interest groups	Linked to a sheltered labour market and defined occupation	Academic and occupational values aligned through an occupational code of conduct that rejects self-interest. Draws on the traditions and status of the 'professional school'	LS5
Vocational e.g. medicine, conservatoires, art schools, theological colleges	Knowledge domain developed by dual identity academic workers who remain active within the occupation.	Dual identity academic workers provide strong socialisation and networking for students	Linked to a demanding practice or expert skill that requires high levels of personal commitment (and may only be remunerated for a minority of graduates or is insufficiently renumerated compared to the skill required). These risks are understood by students.	Personal commitment and dedication of academic workers and students – at the expense of personal gain or self interest	LS1 LS3
Applied scientific e.g. medicine, machine learning, pharmacy, metallurgy	Occupational knowledge base derived directly from cutting edge research.	Indirect control via funding mechanisms and close collaboration of occupational and academic partners	Graduates may move between academic and occupational settings and/or retain research identity. Only graduates from these programmes have the capacity to work in these fields	Strong scientific value system and identity amongst work force	
Transversal e.g. management or leadership training for specialist occupations	Multi-disciplinary input	Labour market demand for programmes and sponsorship of employees on programmes.	Highly specific and evidenced by employer sponsorship and career outcomes. Suits graduate programmes designed for senior employees at specific career stages	Transversal programmes need overt ethical components to ensure value alignment	LS1 LS4
Marketised e.g. forensic science, advertising	No region of knowledge that has developed organically via academic interest groups	Programmes driven by utilitarian motives rather than occupational interest groups. Occupational engagement may be cosmetic	Available programmes are not the optimum route to a career in a specific occupation	Given that occupation not involved then academic-occupational value alignment does not apply. Unlikely to fulfil student expectations and investment in fees/time	LS1 LS2 LS3 LS4

Table 2: Summary of legitimacy pathways in occupational higher education

6.1 Credentialised pathway

The first pathway in my model corresponds most closely to Freidson's *ideal typical* professional school. However, I avoid using 'professional' to label this pathway, as the term is so contested and variable.

The defining feature of this pathway is the use of occupationally determined credentials as the gateway to a sheltered labour market. This process serves as a mechanism of *occupational control,* helps define the *knowledge domain* and provides a shared *value* system through a code of professional conduct. This straightforward control mechanism also ensures that the entity's *claims* to an essential role in career preparation are robust. The key characteristic of the *credentialised* pathway is not the status of the occupations it typically serves but the way that occupations exert control over content, delivery and assessment.

In brief, a *credentialised* pathway is dependent on a recognised body (generally operating nationally) that can determine credentials on behalf of the occupation. This limits the number of occupational groups that can access this pathway because the presence of a governing body is a prerequisite of this process.

For example, in the UK:

- The General Medical Council (GMC) decides which higher education institutions can issue primary medical qualifications
- RIBA validates schools of architecture
- The Engineering Council accredits engineering degrees
- The Department for Education accredits initial teacher training programmes

Each of these entities has a different relationship with the occupation they help govern and each form of *occupational higher education* that they validate or accredit has a different role in the career preparation process. However, they all exert direct control, and the significance of this structural feature is not always fully understood by other entities that claim 'professional school' status, including the business school system. Decoupling this pathway from the idea of the 'professional school' means that *credentialised* pathways are not dependent on a particular organisational context. For example, UK accountancy programmes are *credentialised* by the Institute of Chartered Accountants but typically offered within the business school system.

As argued in Chapter 4, an uncritical commitment to the 'professional school' ideal as the only way to structure legitimate *occupational higher education* is likely to prove counterproductive for the business school system. Although the *credentialised* pathway offers a neat way to resolve the four criteria of *knowledge*, *control*, *outcomes* and *values*, it is simply not accessible to every expert occupation.

An 'accreditation' process created by academic interest groups is not a sufficient substitute in the absence of a gateway credential to a sheltered labour market. The various international accreditation schemes available across the business school system (e.g. AACSB) may act as useful indicators of the quality and status of provision but do not indicate that programmes provide an essential or uniquely advantageous route to a career in management. I suggest that this gives these mechanisms a limited role in legitimisation.

Despite its structural advantages, I suggest that the *credentialised* pathway may also prove vulnerable to fluctuations in the labour market where student quotas are not imposed as part of the credentialisation process. This may lead to an over-supply of fully qualified specialists that cancels out the benefits of a sheltered labour market (i.e. Legitimacy Stressor 5) .

6.2 Vocational pathway

The *vocational* pathway is characteristic of a diverse set of occupations that are connected by the *values* of personal dedication and rejection of self-interest or personal gain. This includes entities with a religious or artistic mission, such as theological colleges, conservatoires or art schools. Typically, these entities are not strongly integrated into higher education institutions and have their own sub-culture. They may even have a completely separate identity as a specialist institution with academic validation provided by a larger higher education institution. Some of these features of the *vocational* pathway are shared by the business school system.

In the absence of *credentials,* occupational *control* is exerted by a significant proportion of the academic workforce maintaining a dual identity, who remain actively engaged with their occupational practice. The sub-culture of the entity and dual identity of staff work together to create a strong socialisation process for students.

For entities that fit this category, developing a robust *knowledge* domain*,* which is recognised by both academic and occupational interest groups is likely to present a major legitimacy challenge. In particular, creating a body of theoretical knowledge that meets the standards of the wider academic interest groups (Sciulli, 2005, p. 937) may prove challenging.

Given that some entities in this category service highly competitive and prestigious occupations, their *graduate outcome claims* need to be carefully calibrated in order to maintain legitimacy. Even in elite contexts, a successful career in the occupation may not be assured. There may be considerable vulnerability to the *marketised* pathway when programmes are fuelled by student demand and do not offer any particular career advantage. This may leave ostensibly *vocational* forms particularly vulnerable to the utilitarian priorities of higher education interest groups. I suggest that this variation in the accuracy of *graduate outcome claims* may also be evident within certain sections of the business school system although, as I discuss in Chapter 4, management self-critiques give very little attention to the legitimacy challenges faced by lower ranking business schools.

6.3 Applied scientific pathway

This pathway is characterised by highly specialist academic *knowledge* domains with a strong economic rationale and close relationships with expert occupational interest groups. Specialist sections of the industrial and technology workforce are supplied with graduates with advanced degrees. Examples might include artificial intelligence, branches of applied mathematics, engineering and computer science. In these fields, academic staff are likely to engage actively in industrial collaborations, which ensure appropriate occupational *control*, and there may also be movement between roles in academia and industry. There is already a substantial literature on this relationship between higher education and industrial partners, which suggests that industrial researchers are likely to retain a strong academic identity and may continue to publish in academic journals (Okraku *et al.*, 2017).

This makes the legitimacy criteria of both *knowledge* and *claims* very stable, as occupational and academic identities are more closely coupled than across the other three legitimate pathways in my model. A scientific *value* system (see Section 5.4.2) or one based in broader economic development (see Section 5.4.3) addresses *value* dimensions where the issue of commercial engagement might assert itself in a problematic way. In particular, academic interest groups may have an important role in exercising normative guardianship over how knowledge is applied. For example, they might highlight issues of ethics and governance in relation to commercial applications of scientific knowledge or to areas like artificial intelligence (Winfield and Jirotka, 2018).

6.4 Transversal pathway

The *transversal* pathway differs from the other three legitimate pathways in my model in that it deals with generic career preparation activities, such as developing leadership skills. This makes it hard to provide examples of actual entities (in terms of either programmes or academic departments) that are dedicated to this form of occupational skills development. As suggested earlier, the business school system (particularly post-experience MBA and executive education programmes) may make the nearest approach. These forms of *occupational higher education* cater for a wide range of career trajectories in different sectors that all involve a management component. As such, the *transversal* pathway remains, to some extent, hypothetical, and it is hard to provide comprehensive examples of how it might meet the four Legitimacy Criteria and navigate the Legitimacy Stressors.

It remains an open question whether *transversal* elements are best delivered by a discrete academic entity with its own *region* of knowledge (Biglan, 1973) or as an adjunct to specialist, occupation-specific programmes that align to the other pathways. As such, each of the other three legitimate pathways could productively accommodate *transversal* elements, perhaps delivered via the business school system. Modules in project management or communication would be the obvious example of this sort of transversal provision (Young and Muller, 2014, p. 52).

The main unanswered question (and potential vulnerability) of the *transversa*l pathway is that of *control*. This is well illustrated by the case of the Business School where there is no one occupational interest group that can authoritatively define the *knowledge* domain. Taking the executive MBA as a potential example of a *transversal* pathway, *control* can only be exerted by the willingness of employers to sponsor their employees as students and/or recruit graduates . However, this is a doubtful form of control as it offers a dangerous overlap with the *marketised* pathway unless the demand rests with occupational interest groups rather than students. The lack of direct occupational *control* and overt *marketisation* of the MBA may help explain the wide variations in provision, outcomes and level of career advantage that any specific programme confers. As I argue in Chapter 4, the MBA has a strong association with students motivated by personal gain and self- interest, which compounds the Legitimacy Stressor of commercial engagement. The case of the MBA suggests that the transversal pathway may also struggle with establishing a legitimate *value* system unless strengthened through combination with another pathway.

6.5 Marketised pathway

The *marketised* pathway is included in this model as it is such a distinctive feature of the higher education landscape although, by definition, it lacks legitimacy across every dimension of my model.

Central to the logic of *occupational higher education* is that occupational interest groups acknowledge the value of specialised career preparation within the higher education system and are involved in achieving this. Any programme that emerges primarily from the utilitarian imperatives of higher education institutions leaves a vacuum in occupational *control.* Meeting the Legitimacy Criteria of a shared *knowledge* domain and *value* system only makes sense when these *controls* are exerted. This also means that the *graduate outcome claims* are unlikely to prove accurate.

I also suggest that academic workers, whose continuing employment is based on a *marketised* pathway, cannot be expected to exert normative guardianship if doing so jeopardises their own employment. When combined with the lack of occupational *control*, this leaves entities unable to build legitimacy. On this basis, I argue that the *marketised* pathway is inherently problematic. As previously discussed, the other pathways may also be vulnerable to elements of *marketisation,* in particular those of labour market demand or demographic contexts.

The pressure on higher education institutions to expand student numbers and generate income means that this issue has been systemic since the end of the second world war. For example, the introduction of higher education programmes for paramedics was partly motivated by the need to maintain student recruitment in the sciences (Eraut, 1994, p. 100). As detailed in Chapter 4, elements of the business school system have also been used periodically as an institutional cash cow (Starkey and Tiratsoo, 2007). While some elements of the business school system may exemplify the problems of the *marketised* pathway, they are not the only example of this and, as I show in Chapter 1, I do not suggest that the entire system owes its existence to *marketisation*.

7. DISCUSSION

My model suggests that there are four pathways to legitimacy within the *occupational higher education* landscape. It also indicates that there is no absolute barrier to the legitimacy of the Business School from either occupational or academic interest groups. However, my model does highlight the particularly complex constellation of challenges that the business school system faces and provides possible reasons for the prolonged and multi-faced nature of its legitimacy crisis. In this final section, I provide a more detailed discussion of how my model may apply to the business school system, as well as what it tells us about how the system has failed to balance academic and occupational legitimacies. I also consider the potential for structural change and the factors that might prevent this change from taking place.

7.1 The problems

As discussed across this thesis, it is difficult to treat the 'business school' as a unitary concept that has a shared and consistent set of legitimacy challenges. Globally, the business school system is particularly large and diverse compared to any other single discipline or form of *occupational higher education*. For example, one in six US bachelor's degrees were awarded to business majors in 2019/20 (NCES, 2021) while UCAS data show that business and management accounted for the largest number of undergraduate acceptances in the UK in the 2020 cycle (79,435 acceptances compared with 73,740 for subjects allied to medicine, including nursing, and 27,730 acceptances for law) (UCAS, 2020).

As different business school system entities will face different challenges, there is no one-size-fits-all structural solution that can be applied. However, the underpinning problems may be summarised as follows:

- The business school system's historic and ongoing inability to balance the needs of occupational and academic interest groups in relation to the *knowledge domain* may be attributed to both a lack of effective *occupational control* and the fragmentation of academic interest groups across both normative and disciplinary lines.

- The business school system does not have appropriate *occupational controls* in place that allow labour market demand to outweigh student demand and appears particularly vulnerable to *marketisation*.
- In terms of *graduate outcome claims*, it is not always easy to argue that most business and management programmes offer an essential or uniquely advantageous route to a general management career (with a few exceptions for elite MBA programmes or *credentials* that provide access to a sheltered labour market, such as accountancy).
- As I argue in Chapter 4, the association of the business school system with corporate scandals and financial crises, has damaged perception of its *value* system. As I argue in Chapter 3, it is also vulnerable to the anti-commercial rhetoric of *ideal essential* narratives and may be subject to marginalisation and scapegoating, as a consequence. This leaves the perception that the business school system is strongly associated with self-interest and personal gain.

However, it would be counter-productive to impose (or attempt to impose) a single set of structural reforms across the whole system. I suggest that discrete entities in the business school system will face different challenges at different periods in their development and in different institutional contexts. For example:

- An elite MBA programme in a prestigious institution might correspond to the *vocational* pathway because it offers a programme of socialisation and networking as well as the expert skills needed to succeed in highly competitive occupations such as management consultancy or investment banking.
- A customised executive education to mid-career leaders, managers and professionals might correspond most closely to the *transversal* pathway because it offers management expertise to specialists from a range of occupational fields.
- Specific programmes and specialisms within the business school system also show elements of the *credentialised* pathway (e.g. accountancy) or *applied scientific* pathways (e.g. operational research)

This means that there can be no single solution to the Business School legitimacy crisis as there is no single crisis or much cohesion across the entities that use the 'business school' label. It may also be that parts of the overall system, or even elements within individual business schools, may not face any legitimacy challenges at all. As I demonstrate previously, most management self-critiques focus on elite business schools that adopted the US model (see Section 3.2 in Chapter 4) while higher education research tends to marginalise or ignore the business school system altogether (see Chapter 3). This means that we do not know a great deal about how different business school system entities operate or could meet the legitimacy criteria of my model. Consequently, one of the recommendations of this chapter is that a fine-grained analysis of the function of different types of business school entity and their legitimacy challenges would be beneficial.

In summary, my model does not suggest that all parts of the business school system are inevitably marked out for illegitimacy. However, the current structures of the system appear to leave it vulnerable across all dimensions of my model.

7.2 Enabling solutions

The overarching question for this thesis is why the legitimacy crisis of the Business School has endured for more than a century and what can be done about it. Given the lack of *control* by occupational interest groups (IG2 in my model), the task of resolving the problems currently rests with academic interest groups (IG1). However, there are three factors that may prevent the effective structural changes required. The three issues are complex and deeply embedded within the business school system, making them theoretically resolvable but potentially intractable. I address each of them in turn.

7.2.1 Marketisation and the problem of resistance

Research on the marketisation of higher education tends to frame the process as a purely external force that threatens the integrity of the academic community. Although this may include the 'relatively silent colonisation of hearts and minds' (Lynch, 2015, p. 7). In Chapter 3, I demonstrate the importance of academic *resistance* as a way of countering this process. As I show in Section 3.2.2 of that chapter, *resistance* is a powerful trope of academic legitimisation within *ideal essential* narratives, which is also evident in other higher education literatures.

However, narratives of *resistance* skirt the issue of the academic employment that would not exist without marketisation. Higher education debates also ignore how the forces of marketisation can become deeply embedded in career-shaping academic activities, such as scholarly publication practices and academic hiring decisions. In this context, a successful act of *resistance* against marketisation may prove self-destructive for the academic workers of the business school system.

The marketisation process within the business school system is particularly complex because it comprises two different managerial interest groups with a different set of priorities: host institution and business school system. Firstly, the individual business school (as an organisational unit) comes under the same utilitarian pressures from higher education institutions as any form of *occupational higher education* that is subject to high student demand, no cap on student numbers and low-cost delivery mechanisms. While marketisation is generally discussed in relation to disciplines that face cuts or closure because of market imperatives, the impact on the integrity and intellectual contributions of entities with cash cow potential receives less attention from the higher education literature.

Competition between individual business school organisations, at least at the elite level, generates an additional set of utilitarian pressures and mechanisms that appear unique to the business school system. These include non-occupational accreditations, journal lists and media-led ranking exercises, which all shape individual academic careers and academic interest group priorities. Given the intensity of international competition *within* the business school system, particularly at the elite end of the spectrum, the risks of refusing to engage with these mechanisms would be extremely high.

On this basis, I suggest that it is important to understand *marketisation* as a force that structures and defines an academic workforce rather than purely as a set of external pressures that must be met with 'resistance'. Without the support of occupational interest groups that are not subject to these pressures, it will be difficult for academic interest groups to effect reform, even if we assume the academic workforce has sufficient cohesion and a shared normative position.

7.2.2 Fragmented vision of knowledge and values

As I argue in Section 2.3 of this chapter, the business school system does not benefit from an academic interest group that is unified on any normative or disciplinary basis. This leaves the Business School *knowledge domain* and *value* system particularly vulnerable. As with the other criteria of legitimacy, the lack of occupational *controls* makes this situation especially acute. Firstly, a wide range of disciplinary *singulars* contributes to the business and management *region* of *knowledge*. As I also argue in Section 5.1.1 of this chapter, the *divergent/rural* properties of this *region* may make it hard for the business school system to demonstrate ownership over a discrete territory of knowledge or demonstrate how the academic workforce pursues occupationally relevant knowledge in a coherent way.

To illustrate, the term 'foundational disciplines' is regularly used in the context of the Business School (e.g. Khurana and Spender, 2012, p. 627). This assumes that the original research training of academic workers can align to a number of different disciplinary *singulars*. Although this may also be the case in other forms of *occupational higher education*, I suggest that the diversity of disciplinary origin may be an especially marked feature of the business school system.

As I illustrate in Chapter 4 (Section 3.5), a *region* of knowledge that consists of so many disciplinary *singulars* from across the sciences, social sciences and humanities may also result in marked normative diversity and very different ways of perceiving and describing legitimacy problems. I suggest that this means that business school system academic workers may not see themselves as a single interest group that can act collectively to legitimise the system. Even within the elite academic interest group behind the management self-critiques of Chapter 3, there is very little consistency in the authors' normative positions. Section 3.5 of that chapter demonstrates the diversity of views and the lack of recognition, or even awareness, of contrasting positions.

The second issue is the lack of dual identity academics who could exert appropriate occupational *control* as exemplified by the *vocational* pathway of my model. As I show in Section 5.2.2 of the present chapter, only a small and relatively non-influential proportion of academic workers in AACSB accredited schools maintain active engagement with practice. However, any shift towards dual identity roles would challenge existing academic hierarchies and require enormous structural re-adjustments that may call for academic workers to act against their personal interests.

7.2.3 Commitment to specific solutions

Across all the literatures I analyse in this thesis, only the management self-critiques of Chapter 3 pay attention to the legitimacy problems of the Business School in a way that suggests they can actually be solved. However, as I show in that chapter, the proposed solutions are often articulated in a shallow and ideographic way.

For example, the idea of the <professional school> has been a holy grail of Business School reform throughout the history of the system. For a wide range of influential and iconic examples, see Wooster (1919) through Simon (1969) and Khurana (2007) to Georges *et al* (2015). Khurana's central thesis in his influential intellectual history of the Business School is that the 'loss of this historical metanarrative as management as a profession' (Khurana, 2007, p. 368) has been disastrous for its legitimacy. According to his view, 'professionalism' is the only logic that can build legitimacy, although by this, he clearly means a commitment to certain intellectual or ethical *values* (LC4) rather than a structure defined by formal occupational *controls* (LC2) that service a sheltered labour market.

In contrast, my model suggests that the *credentialised* form (which broadly corresponds to the 'professional school') is not structurally possible for the business school system. This means that the single-minded pursuit of this particular ideal, rather than exploring alternatives, may actually hamper the system from resolving its legitimacy problems. I suggest that holding on to an unattainable, but appealing, aspiration allows academic interest groups to signal their unease with the current system without advocating the structural change that would damage existing hierarchies.

8. CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I suggest any legitimate form of *occupational higher education* needs: a robust theoretical *knowledge* domain; appropriate occupational *controls*; accurate graduate outcome *claims* to an essential or uniquely advantageous role in career preparation, and a *value s*ystem that aligns academic and occupational interest groups. My analysis suggests that all of these criteria can be met outside the context of the 'professional school', which has historically dominated debates on how expert occupations may engage legitimately with higher education. It also emphasises the role of occupational *control* in ensuring effective normative guardianship. This contradicts some major assumptions of both management literature self-critiques and *ideal essential* narratives.

There appears to be no fundamental reason why the business school system, in principle, cannot meet these four legitimacy criteria. This is despite evidence that some elements of the system, over sustained periods of time, fail to meet any of the four. My model also highlights the need for a more rigorous understanding of the diversity and complexity of the business school system in order to make specific recommendations. However, I suggest that many entities within the system could align to elements of the *vocational* and *transversal* pathways and that the *credentialised* pathway (which equates to the 'professional school') is not an option because there is no sheltered labour market for most business and management occupations.

Both of these pathways would require a shift towards more selective or specialist programmes, perhaps with an emphasis on postgraduate provision. The *vocational* pathway would imply a more critical perspective and passionate student engagement that emphasises societal benefit. In contrast, the *transversal* pathway implies selective post-experience programmes for practitioners with multiple specialisms as they make the move into leadership or management roles, perhaps delivered in partnership with other *occupational higher education* entities. In both cases, the academic workforce would be characterised by dual identity academic workers.

Aligning to either of these pathways would require deep-seated structural change to the business and management academic workforce. This would need to be enforced in the face of the utilitarian priorities of higher education interest groups. In the absence of effective occupational *controls*, driving this process would rest solely with academic workers willing to risk their own careers in the service of reforming the business school system. This does not seem to be a likely outcome and may help explain why the legitimacy crisis persists.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

In this thesis, I have explored the paradox of the one-hundred-year legitimacy crisis of the Business School and considered the possibility that the problems may have a structural origin. In meeting this aim, I asked the following research questions:

RQ1 How and why is the Business School negated by the wider academic community in normative narratives of higher education? Does this confer an intractable legitimacy ‘disadvantage’ on the business school system?

RQ2 How do the internal academic stakeholders of the business school system frame its legitimacy problems? Why do these stakeholders ignore existential challenges and avoid structural explanations?

RQ3 How do other academic entities that provide career preparation for expert occupations maintain their legitimacy with academic and occupational stakeholders? Are any of these pathways appropriate for the business school system?

In this concluding chapter, I bring together the findings of my two textual analyses in Chapters 3 and 4 and discuss them in the context of the hybrid theoretical model that I develop and propose in Chapter 5. In doing so I address the second part of each of my research questions.

To summarise, in Chapter 3, I addressed the first part of RQ1 by exploring normative higher education literatures, using a rhetorical analysis of influential post-war *ideas of the University* narratives. This literature has an iconic status in building the mythology of concepts such as ‘traditional academic values’ and ‘academic legitimacy’. In Chapter 4, I addressed the first part of RQ2 by exploring the legitimacy crisis through a critical realist thematic review of the problems, as reported by business school system insiders within peer-reviewed management journals over the last 100 years.

The literatures I drew on for my analyses are polarised between:

- Negating or marginalising the Business School within narratives that claim normative primacy for the <scholars>, in the case of higher education literatures.
- Proposing simplistic or tactical solutions to the problems, such as the ‘professional school’ model or programme redesign, in the case of the management self-critiques

My analyses challenge both of these perspectives and offer a new way of understanding the legitimacy challenges faced by the Business School, the problems that underly these challenges and why effective solutions have proved so elusive. In Chapter 5, I propose a hybrid theoretical model of a new concept: *occupational higher education.* I use this model to explore the different ways that occupational and academic interest groups can align to create legitimising structures that work for both sets of stakeholders. By developing a theoretical model that focuses on all types of expert occupation that engage with higher education, I identify four pathways to legitimacy that can be used to balance these stakeholder interests.

My main insights about the origins of the problems can be summarised as follows.

- The anti-commercial rhetoric of normative narratives of higher education result in the Business School being singled out as a target of normative resistance by the broader academic workforce. This scapegoating serves a broader, and covert, legitimisation agenda based on deference to a restricted academic interest group. This is not a process that academic stakeholders of the business school system can easily challenge.

- The Business School has become strongly associated with personal gain and self-interest, which makes aligning with the value system of the University more problematic.
- The academic work force of the business school system exhibits considerable normative diversity with a significant internalisation of utilitarian aims. These factors combine to lessen the possibility of effective normative guardianship by academic interest groups.
- The fragmented disciplinary structure of the academic workforce and lack of direct occupational control does not promote a cohesive, balanced knowledge domain.
- The business school system does not have the appropriate occupational controls that would ensure occupational relevance and help defend the system against utilitarian influence for managerial interests within the higher education system.
- The ‘professional school’ model, in its capacity as a legitimising mechanism that reconciles occupational and academic interests, is not structurally available to the business school system. This is because the occupation of ‘management’ does not operate within a sheltered labour market.

My model identifies several ways to navigate these challenges, which are not all unique to the business school system. The scapegoating process is the obvious exception to this but, even so, *ideal essential* narratives are not the only legitimising power in higher education and there are other normative frameworks that are accessible to the Business School. On this basis, a number of these pathways should prove structurally possible for the business school system. In the rest of this chapter I bring together the findings from my three analyses to highlight: the structural challenges that underpin the legitimacy crisis; available pathways to sustainable legitimacy; the obstacles to successful reform, and reasons why the legitimacy crisis is structurally embedded in the business school system.

1. STRUCTURAL CHALLENGES TO BUSINESS SCHOOL LEGITIMACY

In brief, my model suggests that legitimate forms of *occupational higher education* must balance effective controls by occupational interest groups with normative guardianship by its academic community in order to produce a strong knowledge base that permits uniquely advantageous career preparation within a value system that is appropriate to the University context. Problems arise when a form of *occupational higher education* does not have the structures that support these four Legitimacy Criteria (i.e. knowledge domain, occupational control, outcome claims and value alignment).

I argue that these challenges are also apparent across other forms of *occupational higher education* but that the business school system has multiple vulnerabilities across all of them. My textual analyses point to three structural flaws that leave the business school system vulnerable to a chronic legitimacy crisis:

1.1 Weak and fragmented academic guardianship

I argue that the legitimacy of *occupational higher education* is dependent on effective normative guardianship by academic interest groups alongside appropriate *control* by occupational interest groups (see *Fig 1* in Chapter 5). However, my analysis in Chapter 4 suggests that the academic workforce of the business school system (even within the small proportion that publishes on its legitimacy) holds a range of contradictory perspectives about the purpose and mission of the system (see Chapter 4, Section 3.5 for full discussion). Curiously, this diversity of normative positions passes largely unremarked upon by those who publish on this topic. This diversity includes a striking internalisation of utilitarian aims, which is very unusual amongst academic interest groups. In addition, the governance of the system rests with managerial rather than disciplinary interests.

For example, as discussed in Chapter 1, I also highlight how 'academic' governance of the business school system does not operate through disciplinary associations or learned societies. Instead, a distinctive set of legitimising entities with a managerial orientation are more prominent, such as the AACSB (see Section 2.1.3 for full discussion). Unlike a learned society, membership of these organisations is gained through managerial routes. I argue that this weakens the potential for normative guardianship by academic interest groups. The business school system also attracts strong interest from policy stakeholders and managerial interests within higher education, which further dilutes the potential for normative guardianship by academic interests.

1.2 Lack of occupational control

As I explain in Chapter 1, the business school system has been shaped by a distinctive range of external forces, including philanthropy, policy interest groups and high levels of student demand. At a national and international level, policy stakeholders promoted the Business School as a way to support Western capitalist democracy during the Cold War or as a means to promote national economic development. At an organisational level, higher education institutions have (literally) profited from high student demand for a Business School education. I suggest that the force of these 'Legitimacy Stressors' may detract from effective occupational *controls* as well as the academic guardianship needed to maintain legitimacy (see *Fig.1* in Chapter 5) .

Even if we set aside the presence of these significant Legitimacy Stressors, there are also some inherent challenges to maintaining effective occupational *control* within the business school system. As I discuss in Chapter 5 (Section 2.2), 'manager' is a nebulous occupational category and it is hard to identify the occupational representatives that could exert appropriate *controls* in any particular national context. Unlike sheltered occupations (i.e. the 'professions'), there is no one national organisation that could govern such a broad occupational category and the academic workforce is not characterised by dual identity workers who could exert softer forms of control, as in the *vocational* pathway of *occupational higher education*. This situation is further exacerbated by the lack of a well-defined knowledge base that responds to occupational needs and is recognised by a broader range of academic stakeholders. This may help explain why a business school system qualification does not necessarily confer a uniquely advantageous route to a career in 'management'.

1.3 Occupational and academic value misalignment

The third challenge I identify is the problem of value alignment, given that the Business School is negated or marginalised within normative narratives of the University. According to the *ideal essential* texts that I analyse in Chapter 3, commercial interests are inherently *other* to the *idea of the university* and threaten its integrity. The authors of these narratives invite other academic workers to legitimise themselves (and identify as <scholars>) by supporting the dominance of the elite humanities and resisting commercial infiltration, as exemplified by the Business School.

Scapegoat status may also explain the business school system's dogged pursuit of the <professional school> ideal as the solution to its legitimacy problems. In brief, the 'status professions' (such as medicine and law) are the only occupations that are granted a legitimate place in the *ideal essential* framework and acquiring <professional> status is a clear route to legitimacy on these terms. However, there are a number of problems with this aspiration. Prominent sociological theories also present commerce as inherently *other* to the 'professions' (see Chapter 5, Section 1). This makes is impossible for the business school system to build legitimacy by aligning with either the *ideal essential* or complementary 'professional' frameworks.

2. PATHWAYS TO SUSTAINABLE LEGITIMACY

The four interrelated Legitimacy Criteria proposed in my theoretical model point to some alternative structures that the business school system could adopt to resolve its problems. These are summarised below (but see Chapter 5, Section 4 for a full discussion).

LC1 - A distinctive region of theoretical *knowledge* with clear connections to disciplinary *singulars* and that is also relevant to occupational interest groups
LC2 - Appropriate occupational *controls*, which enable forms of *occupational higher education* to claim an essential or uniquely advantageous role in career preparation and also protects against the effects of *marketisation*
LC3 – Accurate *claims* about graduate outcomes based on an essential or uniquely advantageous role in career preparation
LC4 - A *value* system shared by academic and occupational interest groups that can make the case for societal benefit over personal gain or self-interest.

In this section, I apply these criteria to the Business School context and propose a series of reforms that could help establish a more sustainable legitimacy.

2.1 LC1 - Knowledge

My analysis of management literature self-critiques in Chapter 4 highlights problematic aspects of the business and management knowledge base (see Section 3.2.3 for a detailed discussion). In particular, the longstanding 'rigour relevance' debate demonstrates how the business school system has consistently failed to produce research that meets the standards of both academic and occupational interest groups. According to my theoretical model, resolving the problem of the knowledge base would require the following:

- Empowering purely academic interest groups to determine collective normative goals for knowledge production, which would shape enquiry. These norms might vary across different parts of the business school system.
- Identifying the advanced theoretical knowledge base required by relevant expert occupations and responding to these requirements.
- Realigning the qualifications, skills and experience of the academic workforce to meet these two new requirements of knowledge production.

Whether these changes are practicable or likely is a separate question that I return to in Section 3.1 of this chapter.

2.2 LC2 - Control

My model suggests that the legitimacy of *occupational higher education* depends on appropriate control by occupational interest groups. However, identifying who best represents an occupation is not easy outside the realm of sheltered labour markets or beyond occupational categories with distinctive sub-cultures and socialisation processes. In order to identify the stakeholders, structures and processes that could ensure appropriate occupational control of the business school system, the following issues need to be resolved:

- Identify the occupational category (or categories) that the business school system (or particular elements of the system) serve.
- Establish how the representatives of these interest groups can best exert the controls that mitigate the Legitimacy Stressors of the system.

My model points to several structural mechanisms that different elements within the business school system could draw upon to achieve this. These might include a dual identity academic workforce (as per the *vocational* pathway) or post-experience programmes that provide the precise expert knowledge required for specialist labour markets and are co-created in partnership with occupational stakeholders (as per the *transversal* pathway). Given the size and diversity of the system, it is perfectly reasonable to suppose that different elements might adopt different pathways.

2.3.1 LC3 - Claims

According to my model, the legitimacy of *occupational higher education* also depends on providing an essential or uniquely advantageous contribution to a particular career. One of the major challenges facing the business school system is that, with a few exceptions, a business and management degree represents one of several routes to a career in the nebulous occupational field of ‘management’. Other academic qualifications may prove equally useful in achieving this end and there is even a school of thought that argues that academic qualifications are unnecessary for a successful business career.

As the four Legitimacy Criteria of my model are interlinked, addressing issues with the knowledge *domain* and occupational *control* would also support robust career outcome *claims* and demonstrate how programmes fit into a qualification pipeline for specific expert occupations. There is no one template for this process and the way that higher education programmes contribute to career preparation varies widely. For example, any of the following formats might foster robust *claims* in the absence of a sheltered labour market:

- Customised post-experience, *transversal* qualifications for individuals making the transition into leadership positions, which are developed and delivered with the direct engagement of occupational stakeholders. Employers would typically sponsor students enrolled on the programmes.
- *Applied science* programmes that provide the knowledge base for particular expert occupations and are a major source of labour supply. There is likely to be considerable interaction between academic and occupation work forces.
- *Vocational* programmes delivered by dual identity academic staff who provide strong socialisation and introduction into practice communities.

As the business school system is so diverse, there may be many examples of programmes that already use elements of these structures. However, a more systemic articulation and labelling of specific entities, as well as addressing those that do not make accurate claims, would help build a sustainable legitimacy across the wider system.

2.4 LC4 - Values

My analyses in Chapter 4 and 5 suggest that commercial engagement is hard to reconcile with the dominant normative frameworks of the University and the *ideal typical* profession. The first rejects commercial engagement and the second represents an alternative logic to commercial occupations. As discussed, this makes it impossible for the Business School to co-opt the *ideal essential* framework or to align with the ‘professional school’ model in the service of legitimacy building.

A key challenge for the business school system is to develop a collective normative position that articulates its intellectual and societal contribution and does not fall back on utilitarian measures such as graduate salaries or the growth in student numbers to justify its presence in the higher education system. This might involve aligning with normative frameworks that accommodate economic or civic engagement. As I discuss in Chapter 3 (Section 4.2) well-established models including the civic university (Goddard, 2009) the entrepreneurial university (Clark, 1988) and the triple helix of innovation (Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff, 2000) are all available for the business school system to draw on. Of course, whichever *value* system is adopted needs to align with an appropriate *knowledge* domain and the values of the occupation itself.

3. OBSTACLES TO BUSINESS SCHOOL LEGITIMACY

Although my thesis suggests that several pathways to sustainable legitimacy are open to the business school system, there are two sets of obstacles that may prevent effective adoption of new structures. The first obstacle relates to the range of stakeholders who may have a vested interest in maintaining the problematic status quo. The second obstacle relates to how the scapegoating of the Business School protects the vulnerable legitimacy of other academic workers.

I discuss both of these problems in more detail below:

3.1 Vested interests in the status quo

In Chapter 1, I demonstrate that the business school system has evolved in response to a range of conditions that leave it with a strongly *marketised* orientation. In Chapter 5, I argue that this orientation hampers the effective academic guardianship and occupational controls that are required for legitimacy building.

However, letting go of the unfeasible ‘professional school’ model and aligning to either the *vocational* or *transversal* pathway would involve radical structural change. I suggest that the negative impact of these changes on the current academic workforce, which may have personally or collectively benefited from a *marketised* orientation, could prevent any genuine attempt at reform. Indeed, enduring the inconveniences and humiliations of a chronic legitimacy crisis may prove a preferable outcome to definitively resolving the problems through structural upheaval and losing status in the system.

I suggest that aligning the business school system with *vocational* or *transversal* pathways would have some or all of the following consequences:

- Accreditation mechanisms (e.g. AACSB, EQUIS, AMBA) would become redundant in favour of occupational *control*. Acknowledging that the business school system does not primarily serve a sheltered labour market would also bring the entire logic of 'accreditation' into question. Dismantling these structures would mean that the individual business schools holding accreditations would need to give up the competitive advantage conferred by a *marketised* system.

- In a reformed structure where normative guardianship is asserted strongly through learned societies, the managerial associations of business school system leaders would have less leverage over the system.
- An emphasis on the specific occupational categories that the system serves and differential labelling of component entities might result in fragmentation of the system and an erosion of the idea of the Business School as well as the global dominance of the system it denotes.
- Linking student numbers to labour demand rather than student demand could also result in a contraction of the system.
- Any shift towards the *vocational* form would require a parallel shift towards dual identity roles for academic workers. This would demand a different set of skills and experience from the business school system academic workforce and upset current hierarchies.

All of these structures are firmly entrenched in the current system and changing them would have enormous personal and organisational consequences for the entities involved. I suggest that the academic workforce and managerial interests of the elite business school system, along with managerial interest groups of the higher education system, are unlikely to relinquish the utilitarian benefits of the *marketised* form in service of the system's legitimacy.

3.2 The Business School as higher education scapegoat

My insights into the scapegoating of the Business School raises some broader questions about how academic workers and academic disciplines acquire their legitimacy. If *academic legitimacy* is not the automatic product of an academic contract of employment, we need to understand how it is conferred and what interest groups control the process. Understanding whether *academic legitimacy* is a *property* or a *power* is, in both cases, crucial. For example, *ideal essential* narratives position the elite humanities as normative guardians of the system and this role is partly justified by their *resistance* to commercial infiltration. A consistent message is that this *resistance* helps determine the legitimacy of the entire academic workforce, with the Business School consistently singled out as its target. While many other academic institutions, workers or entities are also 'tainted' by commerce, a diffuse campaign of *resistance* against a broad swathe of the academic workforce would prove unfeasible. In brief, there might be too many targets if the criterion was applied objectively. In rhetorical terms, it is more effective to identify a specific object of resistance that can unify the <scholars> and the Business School is an eminently suitable target. As this scapegoating serves the dominance of other academic interest groups, this situation is hard to resolve.

I suggest there are two available options that would help counteract this scapegoat position or minimise its impact. These include aligning with alternative normative frameworks (as described in Section 2.4) or mounting a direct challenge to the *ideal essential* framework. I discuss the implications of each of these in turn.

3.2.1 Alternative frameworks

In principle, it should be straightforward enough for the business school system to align with alternative normative frameworks and not engage with the hostile *ideal essential* perspective. After all, this is the approach of STEM disciplines, which are also disparaged in *ideal essential* narratives and whose legitimacy remains intact.

However, the Business School is curiously absent from, or marginalised within, suitable alternative frameworks. Many of the higher education literatures that propose disciplinary taxonomies or address the question of commercial engagement rarely use the Business School as an example (see Chapter 3, section 4.2). Given its dominance within the global higher education system, I suggest that this illustrates the effects of scapegoating. Proposing a legitimate place for the Business School may be a risky business for those academic interest groups that wish to preserve their own legitimacy.

This leaves the Business School in a normative vacuum because legitimacy, by definition, cannot be achieved without consensus. This means that the academic interest groups of the business school system always have the unenviable task of inserting themselves into normative frameworks where the Business School is negated or left invisible.

3.2.2 Challenging the ideal essential framework

Scapegoating one specific academic entity is a useful rhetorical strategy for the elite humanities, as it promotes the deference of those academic workers that share vulnerabilities with the business school system. Attributing blame to one specific entity also allows the logic behind the scapegoating process to remain invisible. When examined closely, the principle of rejecting commercial infiltration also leaves many types of academic institutions, disciplines and workers with compromised legitimacy. Challenging this logic highlights the following issues:

- An academic contract of employment does not, by itself, confer any *academic legitimacy* or associated privileges. As a result, legitimacy becomes a function of specific academic behaviours (deference to the elite humanities) or contextual features of the individual's employment (such as disciplinary or institutional affiliations).
- According to *ideal essential* logic, individual academic workers can only assume a place in the normative hierarchy if their post is not 'commercially' motivated. This includes areas fuelled by high student demand or that have overt industrial links.
- Participating in acts of *resistance* against commercial engagement is the other key determinant of legitimacy. By scapegoating the Business School, the wider academic workforce signals that it rejects the problematic commercial value system and forces of *marketisation*.
- *Ideal essential* narratives do not clarify whether acts of *resistance* can mitigate other circumstances of employment.

All of these issues seem to merit wider debate, especially given the contradictions between *resistance* and circumstances of employment. If every academic worker is allowed to acquire legitimacy through acts of *resistance,* then this is a loophole that many academic workers of the business school system can exploit. Arguably, many of them do just this, as evidenced by the large self-critique literature and the presence of Critical Management Studies within the business school system. However, if all academic workers with commercial associations were also targeted, *resistance* would become a contentious and destabilising process.

As a result, challenging the assumptions of this influential normative framework is extremely risky and problematises two central tenets of higher education research.

- On one hand, *ideal essential* narratives treat the <scholar> as sacrosanct and act as an important source of a legitimising mythology that is cherished by many academic workers.

- On the other, these same perspectives mandate an exclusionary approach to *academic legitimacy* and impose a normative hierarchy that requires deference from less secure members of the academic workforce.

This is a fundamental conflict and can only be resolved by accepting that some members of the academic workforce dictate the legitimacy of other academic workers. As with the structural changes discussed in the previous section, I suggest that enduring the status quo and ignoring inherent contradictions may be preferable to addressing these uncomfortable issues. As such, there may be little appetite for a full-scale challenge to *ideal essentia*l assumptions.

3.3 Structural origins of the Business School legitimacy crisis

In summary, this thesis suggests a range of causal mechanisms that may explain why the legitimacy crisis of the Business School may have proved so enduring and intractable. In brief, I offer five related reasons why the business school system has evolved into a form of *occupational higher education* that has neither the necessary occupational *controls* nor the strong normative guardianship that permits stable legitimacy:

- The capacity to attract large volumes of students onto low-cost delivery programmes and act as an institutional cash cow means that the Business School has become heavily *marketised* and disproportionately controlled by managerial (rather than disciplinary or occupational) interest groups.
- The nebulous nature of 'management' as an occupational category has resulted in an ill-defined and inconsistently labelled business school system with a range of career preparation goals.
- The policy importance of the Business School and high student demand have imposed a rate of development that has not been matched by a high-quality academic labour supply or the maturation of the *region* of knowledge.
- The multi-disciplinary origin of the academic workforce and fragmentation of the system has resulted in contradictory *normative positions* that preclude consistent guardianship.
- The scapegoating of the Business School makes it very challenging to align with wider academic *value* systems.

To some extent, this convergence of issues is coincidental but the unfortunate combination has left the business school system heavily *marketised* and with a severely compromised legitimacy. In Chapter 5, I identify a number of pathways to legitimacy that have proved effective with other forms of *occupational higher education* and could move the business school system towards a more sustainable position. In particular, the *vocational* and *transversal* forms might prove particularly appropriate to the Business School context although there is also some possibility of using the *applied science* pathway (e.g. operational research) and *credentialised* forms (e.g. accountancy) in discrete settings.

However, the imprecise labelling of entities within the business school system and a bias towards addressing the problems of the elite business school makes it difficult to map the potential of each of these possibilities in any definitive way. In summary, I suggest that there are two additional reasons why the legitimacy crisis may prove difficult to resolve, despite the possibility of pathways that have proved effective in other parts of the system.

Firstly, the vested interests in the status quo may explain curious features of the management literature I analyse in Chapter 4. These include why the 'professional school' model is advocated so persistently, despite its complete lack of traction over a hundred-year period.   In addition, the puzzling repetitions, paucity of empirical or theoretical investigations and lack of cohesive debate across the management literature self-critiques may also evidence an ambivalence about actually resolving the problems. Given the findings from Chapter 3 about the importance of *resistance*, much of management literature has a performative aspect and may not always aim to reform the business school system through empirical research, theory building and debate.

Secondly, it is rhetorically convenient for powerful academic interest groups to scapegoat the Business School. Indeed, challenging the logic that underpins this scapegoating would highlight the troubling implications of the *ideal essential* framework. I suggest that there is no incentive to do so and that those in thrall to its legitimising power would have no interest in acknowledging that the Business School may have a place in the University.

In brief, I conclude that sustainable legitimacy is possible for the business school system but may not be desirable in the face of its utilitarian success and the vested interests of powerful interest groups. As such, I predict that the legitimacy crisis will continue with periodic, performative gestures towards legitimisation.   Meanwhile, the Business School remains too useful as a scapegoat for those academic interest groups that want to establish their normative dominance or need to consolidate their own fragile legitimacy.

Chapter 7: Contribution, Limitations, Reflections

In this final chapter I summarise my contribution to knowledge, outline the limitations of my investigation, suggest future directions for research and, finally, reflect on the process that led me to producing this thesis.

1. CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

In this thesis, I offer new insights into the causal mechanisms of the Business School legitimacy crisis, which has persisted for the last century in the face of enormous success and concerted attempts to address the problems. As such, I frame the crisis as 'normative' throughout this thesis on the basis that legitimacy claims generally focus on the failure of the business school system to reach one of several ideals of what the Business School should be in relation to higher education or business stakeholders.

In conducting my research, I questioned some deeply held assumptions about the role of the Business School, as well as associated concepts such as <academic legitimacy> and the <professional school>. I integrated the divergent perspectives of two contrasting management and higher education literatures, which I treated as primary datasets and subjected to rhetorical analyses. I used my findings from these two analyses, as well as a series of theoretical perspectives that are not represented in these sources, to develop a hybrid theoretical model of *occupational higher education*. *Occupational higher education* is a new concept in higher education research and my model demonstrates the different ways that expert occupations can engage with higher education and build legitimacy with both sets of stakeholders. I conducted this research within a critical realist framework and my outcomes included a set of potential causal mechanisms that may explain why this complex legitimacy crisis has proved so intractable.

I provide further discussion about the originality of my questions, novelty of my methods and significance of my findings below.

1.1 Originality of questions

Existing academic literatures that relate to Business School legitimacy tend to focus on negating the Business School as an idea, levelling allegations against some part of the system or proposing specific solutions to some part of the problem. In this thesis, I have taken a broader approach to the issue and investigated why these legitimacy problems are so complex and intractable. I did so by exploring the following issues:

- How far other parts of the academic workforce delegitimise the Business School.
- How internal academic stakeholders have described and addressed the multi-faceted legitimacy problems of the business school system.
- How other expert occupations engage successfully with higher education and build legitimacy across diverse interest groups.

This broad approach allowed me to move on from the current state of the relevant literature, which often advocates a single normative position or a pre-conceived solution. Very little research asks *why* the Business School is scapegoated, *why* the business school system seems unable to solve its own problems or *why* other expert occupations have succeeded where the business school system has failed.

In answering these questions I identified a series of other issues that deserved further exploration:

- Why management literature discussions of the legitimacy crisis focus exclusively on the elite business school and do not differentiate between different parts of the system.
- Why the 'professional school' model has never gained traction in the business school system and why contributors continue to advocate this solution.
- Why the Business School is negated and marginalised across the higher education system and how this process serves the legitimacy of other academic workers.
- Why structural reform may prove unacceptable to internal stakeholders, even though I propose several workable pathways to legitimacy.

As I explain in the 'Reflections' section of this chapter, I have approached this topic with a willingness to accept two points that appear to be unthinkable to many who engage with this topic. Firstly, I can accept that the legitimacy problems of the business school system may be intractable, given the extent of structural change required to balance the interests of key interest groups. Secondly, I treat the academic community as a workforce that has been profoundly shaped by marketisation, as well as a scholarly community with primarily normative goals. This allows me to entertain the idea that academic workers may play an important role in *maintaining* the problematic status quo or that they may seek normative dominance *at the expense* of other members of the workforce.

1.2 Novelty of design and method

The Business School legitimacy crisis is, by definition, normative. Given the utilitarian success of the system and its rise to global dominance, evidence for the crisis is largely perceptual and textual, although this is not to say that its problems have ever been considered trivial. As initiatives such as the Ford Foundation report (Gordon and Howell, 1959) and Advanced Institute of Management Research (2002) show, belief in the severity of the legitimacy crisis has prompted multiple interventions over many decades. The two main sources that document these problems are an influential higher education literature that fuels the crisis and a large management literature that addresses the problems from an insider perspective over more than a century. Both literatures feature high profile contributions by prominent figures, but both resist synthesis or conventional review, as follows:

- Both literatures are dominated by polemics or experiential accounts
- Neither literature has much empirical nor theoretical content, and neither has sufficient cross-citation to coalesce into a debate.
- Both have strong ideographic tendencies and remain conceptually vague.
- The two literatures diverge from each other ideologically and the management literature demonstrates an additional internal normative divergence.

These features may explain why their explanatory potential has been overlooked in relation to questions of academic and Business School legitimacy and why they have never been considered in parallel. As the two literatures appeared to evidence different aspects of the crisis and signpost a different set of causal mechanisms, I developed ways of analysing the relevant content systematically and integrating their findings. On this basis, I made the unusual decision to treat both as primary datasets (in the form of textual corpora) rather than as conventional academic literatures that act as repositories of empirical evidence. To this end, I conducted rhetorical analyses of each literature in order to identify how the texts in my corpora framed *academic legitimacy* of the Business School legitimacy crisis and acted persuasively on their readers.

I addressed the paucity of theoretical content in my two corpora by drawing on a wide range of perspectives from other disciplines that could help explain the findings from my analyses. This helped me interrogate ideographs such as <academic legitimacy> and <profession> and consider whether legitimacy should be understood as a property or a power. I integrated these perspectives along with the outcomes of my rhetorical analyses into a hybrid theoretical model that introduced *occupational higher education* as a new concept within higher education research, This allowed me to explore how occupational and academic interests combine to create legitimising structures in the context of career preparation for expert occupations.

My overall investigation took a critical realist approach, which accommodated this plurality of theory and method. Critical realism also helped me accommodate the normative diversity of my corpora and acknowledge the significance of absences in my source material.

1.3 Significance of findings

My thesis offers a new perspective on the Business School legitimacy crisis through a series of counter-intuitive findings. In brief, these findings indicate that establishing legitimacy with some external academic stakeholders may prove impossible for the business school system, that there are possible structural solutions to aspects of the problems and that internal stakeholders may not have the appetite for the necessary structural change. Specific insights include:

- How scapegoating the Business School helps secure the normative dominance of other academic interest groups and the deference of entities that have similar vulnerabilities to the business school system.
- How *marketisation* shapes the broader academic workforce and the implications this holds for the legitimacy of individual academic workers who are employed within heavily *marketised* disciplines or institutions.
- A marked reliance on ideographs such as <academic legitimacy>, <scholar> and <profession> instead of drawing on theoretical perspectives from allied disciplines that provide a rigorous interrogation of these core concepts.
- The importance of direct occupational control (in addition to academic guardianship) and *value* alignment between these two stakeholder groups as conditions of the legitimacy of *occupational higher education.*
- How the impact of the required structural reforms on the business school system might result in serious contraction of and re-modelling of the current academic workforce.

- Why the management self-critique literature largely ignores lower ranking parts of the business school system, shows little awareness of the normative diversity within the system and avoids proposing structural solutions.
- Whether the management self-critique phenomenon may be better understood as performative acts of *resistance* rather than as genuine attempts to resolve the problems.

Some of these conclusions may not be attractive to the academic interest groups who take an interest in the normative position of the Business School. While I do not expect these findings to prove popular, they represent original contributions to discussions of *academic legitimacy*, the relationship between expert occupations and higher education, and help to explain the complexity and longevity of the legitimacy crisis of the Business School.

2. LIMITATIONS

My research in this thesis has been largely textual, based on a rhetorical analysis of two literatures, and is therefore limited by what influential academic voices think or say about the Business School, and dependent on the scope or direction of their arguments. Although I highlight absences as part of my analyses and treat them as informative, the unexpected extent of the gaps (e.g. absence of non-elite business schools, failure to acknowledge the extent of normative diversity, reliance on ideographs, lack of precision on what legitimises the individual academic worker) and the partial accounts provided by my two corpora mean that some of my findings are notional. I fill those gaps with theoretical insights from other disciplines (such as social psychology and sociology).

While the two higher education and management literatures that I analyse provide a wide-ranging and contrasting account of the issues, they are not the only sources that address Business School legitimacy. I could have chosen to prioritise media articles, popular literatures and policy reports that address the same issues from different perspectives. Ultimately, I decided not to do so as non-academic sources do not benefit from the strong editorial controls or peer review of academic literatures and, in any case, are extensively referenced by the management self-critiques. On this basis, they are indirectly represented in Chapter 4 and also acted as inspiration for my hybrid theoretical model in Chapter 5.

In Chapter 4, I broaden my discussion to other higher education literatures that have a normative function (see Sections 4.2 and 4.3). It was beyond the scope of a PhD thesis to provide a formal analysis of these sources and I rely on some indicative (although clearly argued) examples instead. These examples strongly suggest that *ideal essential* narratives have a long reach across adjacent literatures, but this can only remain a suggestion without a more extensive investigation.

Equally, I have not conducted any empirical work, such as interviews with academic or occupational stakeholders. Whilst this would be useful in filling gaps and augmenting my conclusions (and I recommend this as a future research direction), I do not believe that the lack of this data source undermines the validity of my rhetorical analyses. Given that my corpora of academic literatures have been subject to peer review and rigorous editorial control, they cannot be dismissed as representing fringe views. More importantly, the management self-critique literature shows clear signs of fragmentation and problematic normative diversity without further triangulation. This is a conclusion that I can draw from textual analyses with confidence in the absence of qualitative or survey data.

3. FUTURE DIRECTIONS OF RESEARCH

The nature of my textual corpora mean that this thesis raises as many questions as it answers. This leaves plenty of scope for further research on the topic that tests or extends my model. I suggest that future topics might include:

- Mapping the entities and legitimacy problems of different parts of the business school system, including non-elite schools and those that have not adopted the rankings-led US model.
- Survey or interview-based projects on how individual academic workers view their own legitimacy as academics and how participants frame the legitimacy of the Business School. This might extend to how conflicts in values play out in the day-to-day interactions of academic workers from different sub-disciplines in individual business school settings.
- Provide a taxonomy of different forms of *academic legitimacy* and explore how far it functions as a power as well as a property.
- An empirical test of my theoretical model to test how far it reflects the actualities of *occupational higher education*.
- More critical engagement with *ideas of the university* narratives and how they fit in with other normative narratives of higher education.

4. FINAL REFLECTIONS

As I explain in my positionality statement at the end of Chapter 2, I am neither a business school system insider nor dependent on academic mythology in constructing my own occupational identity. Consequently, I have felt free to argue that the scapegoating of the Business School is unfair but that the legitimacy problems of business school system may be intractable. I also make the case that the academic workforce is has a more complex relationship with the problems of higher education beyond acting as valiant resistance fighters. These conclusions may not prove palatable to some readers. Nonetheless, my findings are intended as constructive and offered in the spirit of a critical friend and supporter of both the business school and higher education systems.

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