CHERI

Centre for Higher Education
Research and Information

The Open University

Higher Education and Society in Changing Times: looking back and looking forward

Edited by John Brennan and Tarla Shah

June 2011

Introduction

This is the last CHERI report. With the closure of the Centre, the tasks of researching and analysing higher education will henceforth lie with others. In the following pages, we look at some of the changes facing higher education and at the challenges they pose, both to those who work in higher education and to those who use it. The papers draw broadly on research projects and experience from within CHERI and beyond. As well as the papers prepared by CHERI researchers - John Brennan, Brenda Little, Mala Singh and Ruth Williams - the report contains papers from two of CHERI's visiting professors - Roger Brown and Roger King. And we are particularly pleased to be able to include three contributions from a new generation of higher education researchers – Marina Elias, Manja Klemenčič and Sofia Sousa – who also bring welcome international perspectives to the report.

The sub-theme of the report is 'looking back and looking forward'. Over its nearly 19 years of existence, CHERI has worked with some of the leading scholars in the higher education research field. And we remember the contributions of the likes of Maurice Kogan, Ulrich Teichler, Martin Trow, Harold Silver and many more with enormous respect and gratitude and as a reminder to ourselves and to our readers that there is a substantial international body of research and scholarship on the relationship between higher education and society which is too often forgotten or ignored in current debates and policy analysis.

In 2008, CHERI led a 'Forward Look' on higher education for the European Science Foundation and the reports from that project attempted to provide an agenda for future research in the field, research that would be highly relevant to policy-making but not constrained or limited by it. That agenda is being implemented in the subsequent 'Higher Education and Social Change' research programme of the ESF and, we hope, elsewhere. While CHERI may not be around to see the results of that implementation, we wish it well and hope that its fruits will be of benefit to all those who use and are affected by higher education.

Although CHERI as a research centre is set to disappear, the experience and expertise that it has built up over the years remains and we hope will continue to contribute to research and policy analysis in higher education, both in the UK and far beyond. The CHERI website – www.open.ac.uk/cheri – contains information about the past programmes of research carried out by researchers in the Centre and it will be updated to provide information about their new research as they develop it elsewhere.

We hope that readers will find much in this 'last report' that will be of interest and relevance to higher education's 'future'.

John Brennan

Tarla Shah

June 2011

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Higher education and social change: researching the 'end times'

John Brennan[1]

The well-known Slovene philosopher, Slavoj Zizek, has recently coined the phrase 'the end times' to describe and explain the world we are living in. For Zizek, the directions of contemporary social changes are apocalyptic:

> *The underlying premise of the present book is a simple one: the global capitalist system is approaching an apocalyptic zero point* (Zizek 2010: ix).

He goes on to identify 'four riders of the apocalypse' as the ecological crisis, the consequences of the biogenetic revolution, imbalances within the capitalist system, and the growth of social divisions and exclusions. Zizek is not alone, of course, is forecasting 'doom' and 'demise' although his suggestions of how to respond to it encompass some idiosyncrasy and not a little humour.

Within the larger global context, CHERI's own 'end times' look local and trivial, although they inevitably are currently concentrating the minds of its staff and friends. They also reflect much of the contemporary changes taking place in higher education and its wider relationships to the rest of society. In a narrow sense, they reflect the growing imperatives of the new public management, the replacement of knowledge by money as the key driver of institutions which are still called universities. But more broadly, they reflect larger questions of the forms and uses of 'knowledge' in contemporary societies and whether wider societal changes are to be embraced or resisted by those working in universities and other higher education institutions.

One current CHERI research project which will continue beyond the Open University's closure of the Centre is an international study of the changing role of universities in what are now frequently called 'knowledge societies'[2]. This is the subject of the paper by Little and Singh in this report. The project is part of a larger European research programme, itself entitled 'Higher Education and Social Change' (EuroHESC). The programme is a collection of collaborative and individual research projects involving research teams from 17 countries. It is a development from an earlier project led by CHERI for the European Science Foundation (ESF). This was a 'Forward Look' at higher education research, attempting to set a research agenda that built on existing social science research into higher education and engaging critically with policy agendas but without being set by them. The Forward Look examined the existing higher education research base in terms of five topic areas: (i) Higher education and the needs of the knowledge society; (ii) Higher

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[1] John Brennan is Professor of Higher Education Research and Director of CHERI at the Open University.

[2] 'Changes in Networks, Higher Education and Knowledge Societies' is a CHERI project funded by the Economic and Social Research Council as part of a larger international project supported by the European Science Foundation. Some details of this and other CHERI projects are provided as an annex to this report.

education and the achievement (or prevention) of equity and social justice; (iii) Higher education and its communities: interconnections and interdependencies; (iv) Steering and governance of higher education; and (v) Differentiation and diversity of institutional forms and professional roles (Brennan et al 2008). It was intended that the projects to be supported by the new 'EuroHESC' programme would address one or more of these topic areas but also that they would take account of a number of cross-cutting themes. These were: changing social contexts; the implications for higher education; mechanisms of interaction between higher education and society; higher education's impact on society.

The ESF research programme is ongoing and its results must await future publications. But its broad themes are useful to bear in mind in considering current debates about the relationship between higher education and social change. While much of this debate focuses on the economic, and assumes certain needs of a continuing, in Zizek's terms, 'global capitalist society', there are other voices which are suggestive of alternative futures and of a potential different role for higher education and science in shaping them. One such is Beck's notion of 'risk society' (Beck 1992) which is the subject of the paper by Sousa in this report. Zizek refers approvingly to the concept of risk society, suggesting that

> *Today's threats are not primarily external (natural) but are self-generated by human activities linked to scientific advances (the ecological consequences of industry, the psychic consequences of uncontrolled biogenetics, and so on), such that the sciences are simultaneously (one of) the sources of risk, the sole medium we have to grasp and define the risk, as well as (one of), the source(s) of coping with the threat, of finding a way out* (ibid: 361).

Or as one might more bluntly put it, "You got us into this mess, now get us out of it"!

While the ESF EuroHESC projects look at the effects on higher education of new forms of governance arrangements and the 'new public management' and of the changing relationships between academics and other 'knowledge workers', there may also be need to look at the other side of this relationship between higher education and social change, at how the activities of higher education help shape our modern world and determine its future.

A number of previous CHERI projects have looked at the relationship between higher education and social change, within the framework of the larger changes taking place over the last 20 years or so. One international project looked at 'The role of universities in the transformation of societies' with a particular focus on those societies which had recently undergone regime or other fundamental changes – post-communist central and eastern Europe, post-apartheid South Africa, a number of Latin American countries[3]. While, on the whole, the project suggested that higher education had not been all that central in 'removing the old' regimes and social structures, it did provide plenty of useful data on how universities and other institutions were involved in 'building the new' social, political and economic structures of

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[3] 'The role of universities in the transformation of societies' was a project led by CHERI and the Association of Commonwealth Universities with funding from the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations and from the Open Society Institute.

these societies. And several other CHERI projects of a more developmental nature worked with researchers and administrators in the countries of central and eastern Europe to help transform and modernise their higher education institutions and processes to reflect the needs of the new social orders being created in those countries after the collapse of communism.[4]

The above projects are worth mentioning because they remind us of some of the central and contradictory characteristics of higher education's relationship to the rest of society, how it can often be simultaneously serving to reproduce the old while, at the same time, serving to help build the new and contribute to a transformative agenda. With both functions, however, it is also worth questioning whose interests are being served, by both the reproductive and the transformative processes.

The transformative agenda was present in another recent project, in this case with a UK regional focus on the role played by higher education in processes of regional transformation and change. Four contrasting universities in four contrasting UK regions were examined with respect to their relationships to different regional stakeholders and their agendas[5]. The project attempted to offer 'social and cultural perspectives' to developments and relationships which are often seen primarily in economic terms. The book of the project will be published later this year. It will describe a wide range of different roles and relationships between higher education institutions and various regional actors, many of which are deeply embedded within their local and regional communities. Within some of them, higher education is playing a largely responsive and supportive role in developments initiated by others (political or economic) but there are also examples of higher education institutions themselves having regional and local impacts – positive and negative – which were both unplanned and unforeseen. A lot of them required higher education institutions to work in partnership mode with many different organisations, with weakening boundaries between higher education and organisations of very different types.

If one were to look for a single phrase to capture the general direction of change in higher education itself over the last few decades, 'expansion and differentiation' would probably serve as well as any and it also links well to Martin Trow's famous distinction between elite, mass and universal higher education systems (Trow 2006). A further useful distinction in looking at modern higher education systems is between 'vertical' and 'horizontal' forms of differentiation (Clark 1983; Teichler 2007), with UK higher education being one of the more famous exemplars of the former. This distinction refers to the status hierarchy or stratification of higher education institutions. This has implications for the relationships that different institutions have with the rest of society and for the people who work and study in them. To take just one example from CHERI's work: CHERI's participation in several international

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[4] In particular, there were both multi-country projects and national projects in countries such as Bulgaria and Macedonia funded by the European Training Foundation.

[5] CHERI's 'HEART' project – Higher Education and Regional Transformation – was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council.

projects on graduate employment over the years[6] has enabled us to draw out some of the distinctive features of the relationship between UK higher education and the labour market in which 'where' you study assumes greater importance than 'what' you study in the UK, unlike the rest of Europe where movement through the labour market is more heavily regulated by subjects studied and qualifications acquired (Brennan 2008). In relating this characteristic of UK higher education to other features of UK society, one can note a fit with the high levels of inequality within that society, generally regarded as one of the largest among developed countries.

This centrality of hierarchy explains, of course, the great interest in the UK in rankings and league tables of universities and the frequency of references to the 'best' and 'world class' universities. As Calhoun has written, this results in the equation of 'excellence' with being 'better' than somebody or something else (Calhoun 2006). Indeed, for higher education to play its role in the legitimation of social inequalities effectively, it is clearly necessary to at least 'pretend' that some universities are 'better' than others, and that they are better at 'everything'. Thus, their students are to be socially advantaged for the rest of their lives, not because of their advantaged backgrounds and possession of social and other forms of capital, but because of 'merit', in terms of their achievements and competencies.

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Several CHERI projects over the years have concerned themselves with equity issues, whether in terms of access and widening participation or in terms of the student experience and opportunities in the labour market. A recent project on the 'social and organisational mediation of university learning' revealed a much more complex set of differences between settings and contexts for learning than can be captured by a simple hierarchy[7]. And in looking forward at higher education's future role in relation to equity and mobility issues, its growing internationalisation looks to be an increasingly important factor, as the elites and socially advantaged in many countries engage in study abroad to help consolidate those advantages. It must also be remembered, however, that the same processes which support status confirmation for some also permit social mobility for others. The balance between the two remains a central question for higher education policy agendas and research.

Much of CHERI's work over the last two decades has been concerned with policy processes, connecting the inner world of academia with the politics of funding, quality assurance, management, governance and the like. Some of the more substantial projects are listed in Annex I to this report. Many of the early projects reflected CHERI's origins within the UK Council for National Academic Awards, the quality assurance body for the polytechnics and colleges sector which disappeared with the system restructuring in the early 1990s. Quality assurance was the basis of projects both in the UK and in many parts of the world. Some were explicitly developmental, helping to establish new quality assurance agencies and systems and the processes

> processes which support status confirmation for some also permit social mobility for others

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[6] In particular, CHERI has participated in two multi-country comparative projects on graduate employment funded by the European Commission as part of its Framework programmes.

[7] 'What is learned at university? The social and organisational mediation of learning' was a CHERI project funded by the Economic and Social Research Council as part of its Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP).

which they were introducing. Others were more evaluative, examining the impact of particular national quality systems and the responses of universities and academics to the requirements of those systems. Later projects became more drawn into student evaluations of their higher education and the development of rankings and league tables. As we remarked in a recent publication, whereas quality assurance 20 years ago was about ensuring and demonstrating that quality and standards were broadly equivalent across higher education, today the emphasis is much more about demonstrating and emphasising difference (Brennan and Singh 2011). This presumably reflects the growing need to differentiate within mass systems of higher education so that both elite and mass functions can be performed. However, the extent to which reputational differentiation really reflects differences in the experiences and achievements of students in different universities remains an important and largely unanswered research question[8].

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As well as research on quality issues and processes, policy-related projects undertaken by CHERI have addressed topics such as graduate employability, work-based learning, widening participation and equity issues, lifelong learning, learning/teaching and student assessment issues. In discussion with one senior officer of one of the national policy agencies, it was remarked that policy research could take a number of different forms. One form was to address research questions concerned with the *development* of policy. Another would be concerned with research questions connected with the *implementation* of policy. A third would be research questions concerned with the *evaluation* of policy. And CHERI has had plenty of experience of all three. But the policy officer went on to draw attention to a fourth set of research questions: these were "those research questions which are *too dangerous* to ask". Subsequently, when discussing this typology of research questions at a meeting with a group of other higher education researchers, a fifth type of research question was identified. This concerned "those questions which are best asked towards the end of an academic career", with the implication being that, if asked earlier, they could hasten this 'end'!

These conversations and the problems they reflected say something about one of the central problems of many kinds of social science research and one which is a particularly sensitive in the case of higher education research. This concerns the relationship between research and power and interests. Most higher education researchers are interested parties in the topics of their research. Where links to policy processes are involved, the researchers are likely to be affected by the policy outcomes. Thus, the potential for openly critical research may be limited. For example, the notion that higher education is a 'public good' which should be more equitably shared across all groups in society is a sentiment which is quite commonly held. Much less so, among researchers, would be the view that higher education is a public 'bad' which needs control and reform, and perhaps contraction.

One of the contentions of the ESF Forward Look was that higher education research tended to be too much influenced by policy processes and too close to 'power', whether in an institutional or a national policy context. Policy agendas – often quite short-term and context bound – tended to have too

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[8] There is a current UK research project entitled 'Pedagogic Quality and Inequality' funded by the Economic and Social Research Council and led from the University of Nottingham which is addressing this important and potentially sensitive topic.

much influence on research carried out by the higher education research specialists while social scientists beyond the higher education specialists generally showed little interest in higher education as a research topic. Yet it could be these social scientists beyond the membership of the specialist higher education research tribe who might bring fresh and critical perspectives to bear and who might more readily escape the dogmas and assumptions of the current policy debates.

Currently, a lot of higher education research tends to me a mixture of some 'grand narratives' (for example, 'knowledge society', 'globalisation') and what Ball has described as 'empirical analysis' or 'political arithmetic', i.e. largely quantitative studies shaped by pressing policy concerns (Ball 2004). Examples of higher education research which follow more recent social science paradigms, for example feminism, post-modernism, can be found but are not so widespread. The concept of the 'risk society' can be recalled here, with its principles of uncertainty and unpredictability. The related notion of universities preparing both individuals and societies for a world which is largely unknown is a further implication of the 'risk society'.

One of the 'grand narratives' which has frequently been applied to higher education concerns the effects of the 'new public management' and the idea that universities should not be considered as 'special' or exempt from rules applied to other organisations and 'businesses'. Klemenčič's paper in this report notes the growth of 'executive power' in the running of universities and the decline of 'representative democracy' as the principle form of governance. The implications of these changes in 'management' are central to several of the research projects supported through the European Science Foundation's EuroHESC programme referred to earlier. What may be at issue here is the survival of universities as distinctive institutions in a 'knowledge world' where knowledge is created and transmitted by all sorts of organisations and processes. What is being lost are the claims for the 'exceptionalism' and 'uniqueness' of universities which has been emphasised by a long tradition of scholarship on higher education. Writing in 1983, Burton Clark argued

> *It does not make much sense to evaluate business firms according to how much they act like universities, nor economic systems according to their resemblance to higher education systems. Neither does it make any sense to do the reverse, yet it is built into current commonsense and management theory that we do so* (Clark 1983: 275).

A more recent formulation of Clark's concerns was expressed at a recent seminar in London when one participant argued that 'the leadership and management of UK universities increasingly resembles that of 19th century mill owners'! It remains unclear how far the 'workers' will accept these new forms of authority and control.

The possibility is that the 'new managerialism' may be resulting in the loss of the essential and defining characteristics which ensured the survival of universities as recognisable entities over several centuries. We might begin to ask, therefore – and following Zizek – whether higher education itself is entering its own 'end times' and, if so, with what consequences for the rest of society? And, if not, what are to become its chief functions and forms? And

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will it be possible to find universalistic answers to these questions or will answers need to be context and time specific? We trust that there will be some higher education researchers around to try to find answers to these questions.

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Looking back, looking forward: the changing structure of UK higher education, 1980-2012

Roger Brown[9]

This chapter surveys the main changes on the "supply side" – the institutional structure – of UK higher education between 1980 and 2012. Three main developments are identified: the expansion in the number of universities; the removal of formal categories of institution; and the growth of larger, comprehensive institutions (at the expense, chiefly, of smaller, specialist providers). All can be explained by what the author regards as the central thrust of higher education policy over the period: the increasing organisation of the provision of higher education on market or "quasi-market" lines[10]. The last part of the chapter speculates on what further structural changes may follow the intensification of market-based policies from 2012[11].

Market based higher education

A market-based system of higher education has the following main characteristics:

1. universities are separate legal entities with a high degree of autonomy;
2. there are low barriers to entry for potential providers;
3. the public funding of teaching is separated from the public funding of research;
4. all or a significant proportion of the costs of teaching are met from tuition fees alongside or, in the case of a voucher system, in place of government grants to institutions. Institutions compete on price as well as on the quality and availability of programmes and awards;
5. all or a significant proportion of funds for research are allocated on a selective basis;
6. there is an increased amount of information to enable funders (students, families, employers, governments, government agencies) to choose between alternative producers (Brown 2010a, 2010b).

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[9] Roger Brown is Professor of Higher Education Policy at Liverpool Hope University and Visiting Professor at CHERI, the Open University.

[10] It can also be argued that there was an internal marketisation of universities as some activities (knowledge transfer, continuing education, the supply of services like catering and residences) were placed on a commercial, cost recovery basis.

[11] The date of 1980 is chosen because this is when UK universities were compelled to charge overseas students full cost fees: previously all students had paid the same fee (with public subsidy) regardless of domicile. At the present time, Finland and some other non-market systems are agonising about this (Holtta, Jansson and Kivisto, 2010).

The best statement of the rationale for such organisation remains that enunciated by Gareth Williams in 1995:

> *That efficiency is increased when governments buy academic services from producers, or subsidise students to buy them, rather than supplying them directly, or indirectly through subsidy of institutions;*

> *That as enrolments rise, the private sector must relieve government of some of the cost burden if acceptable quality is to be obtained;*

> *That many of the benefits of higher education accrue to private individuals, so criteria of both efficiency and equity are served if students or their families make some contribution toward the costs of obtaining the benefits* (Williams, 1995:179).

Very few systems are fully market-based. The term "quasi-markets" has been coined to describe the organisation of higher education on market lines where no or very little private capital is involved and where the state remains the principal funder and regulator (Le Grand and Bartlett, 1993).

The development of markets in UK higher education

An historical overview of the development of markets in UK higher education is provided in the annex to this chapter. The key developments were:

1. the introduction of selective funding of research based, since 1986, on a state supervised peer review process;
2. the introduction of loans to support students' living costs while studying, from 1990, initially to supplement maintenance grants then, from 1998 to 2006, to replace them (grants were restored after 2006);
3. the introduction of "top-up" fees in 1998 and, in 2006 (in England and Wales), variable fees;
4. the replacement, from 2012, of most direct state support for university teaching by a full cost tuition fee regime accompanied by price competition between institutions;
5. the development, from 1992, of sector-wide performance indicators and, from 1999, of sector-wide statistical benchmarks;
6. the generation from 2001, and especially after 2005, of increased information to inform and guide student choice.

> The lowering of entry barriers to facilitate supply side competition between institutions is a cardinal feature of a market-based approach to the provision of higher education

Market entry

The lowering of entry barriers to facilitate supply side competition between institutions is a cardinal feature of a market-based approach to the provision of higher education. Over the period 1980 to 2012 three particular developments can be identified:

1. an expansion in the number of universities;
2. the removal/reduction of formal limits on institutional development;

3. an increase in the number of larger comprehensive institutions and a reduction in the number of smaller specialist institutions.

On top of this, the White Paper later this year is widely expected to pave the way for new providers to enter the market in student education. Each of these developments will now be briefly described.

The expansion in the number of universities

The number of universities increased from 48 (1984) to 106 (2007). There were two main waves of expansion, both announced in White Papers. The first was in 1992 following legislation to permit the thirty polytechnics in England and Wales (and subsequently the five Scottish Central Institutions) to obtain a university title. The second was from 2004 with legislation to permit colleges without research degree awarding powers to obtain a university title.

The abolition of the binary line

The White Paper *Higher Education: A New Framework* (Department for Education and Science, 1991) began by stating that UK higher education was "more efficient and more effective" than it had ever been. More young people than ever before were staying on in full-time education after the age of 16. One in five of all 18 to 19-year olds now entered higher education compared with one in seven at the time of the last White Paper in 1987. The polytechnics and colleges had led the expansion, achieving considerable improvements in efficiency as capacity "at the margin" had been taken up. Moreover, this had been achieved without any loss of quality, the proportion of first and second class degrees awarded by universities, polytechnics and colleges having steadily increased during the 1980s.

The latest projections of student numbers indicated that participation rates would continue to increase. By the year 2000 it was expected that approaching one in three of all 18 to19-year-olds would enter higher education. There would also be increased demand from adults and for part-time study. Increasing national wealth could be expected broadly to match these increases. But the general need to contain public spending, the pattern of relative costs in higher education, and the demands for capital investment, all meant that a continuing drive for greater efficiency would need to be secured. The Government believed that:

> the real key to achieving cost effective expansion lies in greater competition for funds and students. That can best be achieved by breaking down the increasingly artificial and unhelpful barriers between the universities, and the polytechnics and colleges (Department for Education and Science, 1991: 12).

The creation of teaching only universities

One of the main themes of the 2003 White Paper *The future of higher education* heralding variable fees (Department for Education and Skills,

2003) was the need to raise the profile of teaching in higher education. A series of proposals was made including one that university title should no longer require the right to award research degrees. This was on the basis that:

> *The right to award research degrees requires that the institution demonstrate its strength in research. This situation is at odds with our belief that institutions should play to diverse strengths, and that excellent teaching is, in itself, a core mission for a university...It is clear that good scholarship, in the sense of remaining aware of the latest research and thinking within a subject, is essential for good teaching, but not that it is necessary to be active in cutting-edge research to be an excellent teacher.* (Department for Education and Skills, 2003: 54)[12].

The subsequent legislation incorporated this change and also extended Foundation Degree Awarding Powers to FE colleges[13].

The abolition of formal categories of institution

In 1980 there were three quite distinct categories of institution: universities, teacher training colleges, and polytechnics and technical colleges. There were also a small number of institutions directly funded by the Department (Cranfield Institute of Technology, Goldsmiths College, the College of Guidance Studies, the Open University, and the Royal College of Art). These formed quite separate sectors, the universities being funded through the University Grants Committee (UGC, formally a committee of HM Treasury), the colleges of education funded through the Department, and the polytechnics and colleges funded by their sponsoring local education authorities, though also part of a national funding system and soon to receive a national coordinating body, the National Advisory Board. Whilst the universities were free to offer what programmes and awards they wished, the other institutions awarded the degrees, diplomas and certificates of either one or more universities or the Council for National Academic Awards or the Business and Technology Council.

There was a clear government rationale for these distinctions. In particular, there were concerns on the part of the Department that if the polytechnics became universities they might lose their distinctive mission of providing mainly vocational and "applied" higher education to students attending in a variety of modes. The Department was also keen (then as now) to retain close control over the teacher training colleges (even though over the course of the next decade most of these were either

The one thing that nearly everyone agrees upon is that even if fees do not vary significantly – and the Government is clearly determined to see that they will – there will still be a big increase in competition and consumer power at the same time as public funding is heavily constrained

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[12] The other proposals for raising the profile of teaching included improving information for students about quality, requiring new professional standards for teachers, creating a new academy to develop and promote good practice (the Higher Education Academy), establishing Centres of Excellence to reward good teaching at departmental level, and increasing the scale of the National Teaching Fellowships Scheme.

[13] No FE College has yet been awarded these powers. The immediate beneficiaries of the changes were mostly colleges in cities and towns without a university that had diversified out of teacher education.

diversified or were incorporated into larger, multi faculty institutions). The local authorities were anxious to hang on to institutions they had founded or nurtured even though many now played a regional or even a national role.

All this was to change in the 1980s. Most of the teacher training colleges either diversified or were incorporated into larger, multi-campus institutions. The polytechnics and certain other colleges were incorporated in 1989. It may have been inevitable that at some point they would become universities[14]. But the actual trigger appears to have been the reluctance of the existing universities (as in the previous decade, and unlike the polytechnics) to reduce their prices when a limited system of bidding for marginal places was introduced by the two new Funding Councils at the end of the 1980s (Taggart, 2004). Thereafter, all the universities – and indeed all the institutions that formed part of the new single sector – were formally equal, a position that remains to this day.

The trend to comprehensive institutions

As well as the demise of the teacher training colleges as separate specialist institutions, two further waves of rationalisation have occurred.

In the 1990s, most of the London medical schools became part of larger London institutions. In the 2000s, many of the other specialist institutions were absorbed into larger ones. The reasons were various, but a common theme was the greater resources, protection against competition and spreading of risks which being part of a larger and more diverse institution afforded. This was both a response to market competition and, arguably, a reduction in market choice[15].

After 2012: new providers?

Finally, we should note the very distinct possibility that from 2012, and as a direct consequence of Government policy, universities and higher education colleges presently funded by the government funding agency will face increased competition from private providers, including more "for profit" ones.

Existing HEFCE-funded universities and colleges already face severe competition for UK and EU-domiciled students from overseas based institutions, for example, American universities with London campuses,

> The encouragement of new providers is only one of the Coalition Government's policies for marketising English higher education

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[14] This was what David Easton (1965) once called a "breeder demand", whereby one policy choice automatically predetermines another.

[15] Mergers that don't fit this pattern include London Guildhall University and the University of North London (2002) and Manchester and University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology (2004). The reports which Professor Brian Ramsden has been producing annually for UniversitiesUK since 2001 under the title of *Patterns of higher education institutions in the UK* contain useful information about mergers since 1994-5. The tenth edition (2010) lists 35 cases over the period where a specialised provider was absorbed into a comprehensive institution.

FE colleges, and even schools[16]. But the Coalition Government has made no secret of its belief that public providers would benefit from still greater competition particularly from private "for profit" organisations. The Government's intentions are expected to be made clear in the White Paper.

It is in fact nearly 40 years since the first non-publicly funded higher education institution was established in Britain: the self-styled University College Buckingham, which became the University of Buckingham in 1986. Ten years later, the then private Royal Agricultural College at Cirencester obtained taught degree awarding powers. More recently still, the College of Law, Ashridge, BPP College and ifs School of Finance have all obtained taught degree awarding powers. BPP College, which is now owned by the US Apollo Group, is actually a University College: it is the only "for profit" provider with its own degree awarding powers.

What form the Government's encouragement of these and other private providers will take is not yet clear. But there appear to be two main ideas.

First, the rules for obtaining degree awarding powers and university title may be made less stringent or, at least, be put on the same footing for HEFCE – and non-HEFCE- funded providers alike. At present private providers can only receive degree awarding powers for a limited period (6 years); HEFCE-funded colleges are under no such constraint. Second, private institutions and/or their students should have access to public funding: the direct funding of teaching for certain priority subjects and/or the funding of fee and maintenance loans. At the moment students at only about sixty such providers have such access (Attwood, 2011). The suggestion has also been made (by the Right- leaning think tank Policy Exchange) that where a private organisation takes over an institution which already has degree awarding powers and/or university title, the resultant entity should retain those powers/title without a further separate check (this was what happened when Apollo Group purchased the then BPP College in 2009). It remains to be seen whether these plans will come to fruition.

The future

The encouragement of new providers is only one of the Coalition Government's policies for marketising English higher education. The others are:

1.   The reduction of direct public funding of teaching so that nearly all the money goes via the student fee, what is effectively a voucher system (Bekhradnia and Massy, 2009).

2.   To introduce fee competition between providers, on top of competition on quality and availability.

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[16] According to a report in the *Times Higher Education* in January (Baker, 2011), Methwold High School in Suffolk plans to offer part-time courses leading to University of London external degrees.

To facilitate this competition, there will be more information for students and prospective students. A HEFCE report (HEFCE, 2010) proposes that additional course level information should include learning, teaching and assessment methods and professional accreditation (where relevant). Subject level data will include National Student Survey, employment and salary data. Institution level data will include bursaries, accommodation costs and information about the student union. This is in addition to the information already published on the UNISTATS website covering things like entry qualifications/salary points, students continuing/completing/leaving without awards, First Destinations, links to QAA reports, etc. This is being described as a Key Information Set.

The overall aim is to achieve a "paradigm shift" in the way in which higher education is provided or "consumed". As Peter Taylor-Gooby said in a recent letter in *The Guardian,* this is a Government that is "playing for keeps" (Taylor-Gooby, 2011)[17].

The one thing that nearly everyone agrees upon is that even if fees do not vary significantly – and the Government is clearly determined to see that they will – there will still be a big increase in competition and consumer power at the same time as public funding is heavily constrained. It is also clear that even before we have any variable fees, institutions' resources vary enormously[18]. If we do see significant fee variations then these resourcing differentials will be exacerbated as the wealthier institutions use the additional revenues from higher fees to put even greater distance between themselves and the rest. What will this mean for the future structure of the sector? Three predictions may be made with some degree of confidence:

1. there will be a greater variety of providers;
2. there will be a further rationalisation of existing providers;
3. there will be a sharper degree of differentiation between them.

If the Government's plans for the new providers come to fruition there is bound to be a greater diversity of providers. This will to some extent offset the long run reduction in the number and proportion of specialist institutions noted earlier. Whether this will lead to an increase in student choice is less clear, depending upon what it is that these newer institutions will offer. In the United States, where community colleges already provide an important segment of higher education, private "for profit" providers have essentially acted as demand absorbers, catering for market segments that conventional "not for profit" institutions cannot or will not service: typically, courses of varying length in applied

> If the Government's plans for the new providers come to fruition there is bound to be a greater diversity of providers. This will to some extent offset the long run reduction in the number and proportion of specialist institutions

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[17] Taylor-Gooby argues that the Government is not just trying to cut public spending but to change fundamentally how the welfare state works, so that private capital and the market are embedded at the heart of public provision.

[18] In work for the Higher Education Policy Institute in 2006, using data for 2004-5, Nigel Brown and Brian Ramsden found that, taking together teaching and research income per weighted full-time equivalent (FTE) student, and allowing for subject mix, the best funded institution enjoyed an income of up to two and a half times the mean sectoral figure, whilst the least well funded institution had an income of under half the mean figure. (Brown and Ramsden, 2006). In the same year, the top ten universities in the *Times Higher* league table had an average student/staff ratio of 13.97, against an average of 23.2 for the bottom ten. The top ten spent an average of £1,418 per student on academic services like libraries and computing and £326 on facilities for sports, health, careers and counselling. The comparable figures for the bottom ten were £674 and £198 (Leathwood and Read, 2009).

curriculum areas offered at times most convenient to the customer. One irony here is that this will almost certainly require them to be treated for regulatory (if not funding) purposes as public "not for profit" providers, as in the US[19].

Second, nearly everyone expects that the present trend toward the rationalisation of HEFCE-funded institutions will continue. A significant number of institutions – many of them diversified teacher training colleges – have been weak performers economically even in the relatively benign competitive conditions that have applied since the beginning of the century. Indeed a recent National Audit Office report warned that between 2007 and 2010 the number of universities at higher risk (according to HEFCE) grew from 10 to 43. In 2009-10 a quarter of universities were underperforming financially on at least one of the Funding Council's measures and 9 per cent had run a deficit for at least three years (National Audit Office, 2011). Many of these are bound to be absorbed into larger, multi-faculty institutions and/or be taken over by private providers. Even though the transactions costs (staff redundancies, absorption of senior management time, costs of rebranding, etc) are formidable, it is difficult to see any other scenario for these institutions.

Third, there is bound to be a greater degree of differentiation between institutions. In a monograph published last year by the University of California, Berkeley (Brown, 2010c) the author suggested that by the middle of the decade we could see a fourfold distinction between four groups: brand name universities, high quality specialist providers, convenience providers and all purpose institutions. Recent events have not made this any more remote.

> Developments can be seen as part of the gradual marketisation of the system with a more open and competitive playing field and a larger number of entrants and participants

Conclusion

This chapter argues that there have been three main changes in the institutional structure in the UK higher education since 1980: an overall expansion in the number of universities, a reduction in the formal categories of provision, and a growth in the number and proportion of comprehensive multi-campus institutions. It has been further argued that each of these developments can be seen as part of the gradual marketisation of the system with a more open and competitive playing field and a larger number of entrants and participants. The chapter predicts that with the intensification of marketisation after 2012, with a variable fee regime and with the entry of a significant number of new providers, these trends will intensify. By the middle of the decade, the wheel may have come full circle, with the formal hierarchies with which the period under review began replaced by equally clear and rigid informal distinctions which may prove more durable unless there is a

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[19] A Congressional committee is currently investigating the recruitment and educational practices of the US private "for profit" providers. Through their students they receive large amounts of Federal aid (over 90 per cent of their funding in some cases) but their students have high non-completion and loan default rates.

fundamental policy rethink. At the moment this seems highly unlikely.
Markets rule, OK?

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Annex

KEY DATES IN THE MARKETISATION OF UK HE

1980   Full cost fees for overseas students.

1984   *Report of the Steering Group on University Efficiency* (Jarratt Report) marks first step towards the corporatisation of university governance.

1985   Green Paper *The Development of Higher Education into the 1980s* sets out a government "agenda" for higher education, with the greatest emphasis being on the need for universities to serve the economy.

1986   The first Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) introduces selectivity in research funding for the first time (subsequent exercises in 1989, 1992, 1996, 2001 and 2008). First new private university (Buckingham).

1988   Incorporation of the polytechnics. New funding councils and contractual funding of teaching.

1989   Speech at Lancaster University by the Secretary of State (Kenneth Baker) setting out the Government's vision of an expansion of higher education on the American model, with greater "engagement" of private resources.

1990   Increase in the fee level and reduction in the level of teaching grant to institutions (though both continue to be paid in full by the government). Introduction of student loans for maintenance alongside grants.

1992   Abolition of the "binary line" between universities and polytechnics. Development of system-wide performance indicators.

1993   Introduction of Teaching Quality Assessment (Subject Review) as intended complement to RAE.

1996   First private non-university institution to receive degree awarding powers (Royal Agricultural College)

1997   Dearing Committee recommends significant fees to help meet institutions' teaching costs. New Labour Government emphasises universities' role in social mobility.

1998   Introduction of means tested "top-up" tuition fees. Abolition of maintenance grants.

1999   Publication of first HEFCE statistical performance benchmarks.

2001   Reforms to quality assurance regime. Teaching Quality Information replaces Subject Review.

2004   Modification of rules for university title. New "teaching only" universities. Extension of degree awarding powers to FE colleges.

2005   First National Student Survey.

2006   Introduction of variable fees and income contingent fee and maintenance loans. New Office of Fair Access to monitor institutions' widening participation plans. Partial reintroduction of maintenance grants. More private institutions gain degree awarding powers. New Office of the Independent Adjudicator to handle student complaints.

2010   Government accepts the recommendation of the Browne Committee that in future most teaching in English universities should be funded through the tuition fee, with direct funding of teaching confined to a small number of strategic subjects.

2011   Government publishes a White Paper proposing new arrangements to facilitate the market entry of private colleges.

2012   Introduction of higher fees and reduction of direct funding of teaching. Further concentration of public funding for teaching and research.

Globalisation and higher education

Roger King[20]

Introduction

The social structure of global higher education, both inter-state relations and the more a-territorial conceptions of global networks and national borderlessness, has become increasingly 'thicker' in recent years. Social interaction is now more intense, extensive, and elaborated between the individuals, institutions and states that constitute global higher education than two decades ago. Moreover, policy internationalization and diffusion, leading to isomorphism and similar forms of policy 'synchrony' between higher education states, appear widespread and characterized by such models as the New Public Management (NPM) and the Global Research University (GRU). International organizations such as the OECD, the WTO, the EU, and UNESCO have become more prominent and influential in higher education; and global rankings of universities have begun to exert powerful forces on both national states and many of their higher education organizations.

Prominent elements of globalization can be understood as the growth of shared forms of social coordination as the world reconstitutes itself around a series of networks – increasingly interlinked – that are strung around the globe on the basis of increasingly advanced communication technologies. By 'network' we refer to an interconnected group of people linked to one another in a way that makes them capable of beneficial collaboration (such as through the exchange of goods in markets, or through the exchange of ideas, or by possessing a common language). The *way* in which these networks operate, however, depends on the standards, the models - the norms of practice - that the individuals in them share, in a similar manner, say, to how standardized but technical protocols or codes enable computer networks to function.

> Globalization is characterized increasingly in higher education by the worldwide dominance of particular models and ideas

Globalization is characterized increasingly in higher education by the worldwide dominance of particular models and ideas, which follows a process of diffusion best explained, at least after a certain level of adoption of the model, by social network and normative pressures on agents rather than necessarily following strictly rationalist calculation by such agents. Some models, such as the NPM, become widely diffused across a range of quite different local circumstances. As we shall explore, the fact that social relations such as networks and their standards are largely a function of ideas, does not hide the fact that they nonetheless confront actors (not necessarily oppressively) as external social facts with real, objective effects. Inequality and exploitation exist even when they are constituted predominantly by ideas rather than material resources. The meaning of power and the content of interests in such networks of social relations are constituted by knowledge (including the shared ideas found, for example, in the relations of production in capitalist economies, as outlined by Marx).

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[20] Roger King is Visiting Professor at CHERI, the Open University.

Yet it continues to remain important to avoid the perils at the other end of the agent-social structure continuum - the 'over-socialisation' that may occur, for example, in some theories of 'world polity' where actors are viewed as simply enacting global cultural scripts, sustained by symbolic and other rituals of legitimation, and producing forms of isomorphism and homogeneity within the global system as a direct cultural consequence.

In summary,

1) The global higher education structure predominantly is a social rather than a material phenomenon. As the basis of sociality is shared knowledge we may regard the system as being predominantly structured ideationally and as characterized by a distribution of knowledge – the socially-constituted beliefs and expectations that individuals, universities, and states respectively have of each other. Although material power and interests are still important, their meaning and consequences rest upon the system's social structure. Moreover, the idea of social construction incorporates what is sometimes referred to as a 'productive' or discourse-generated sociality. For example, globalization has been created as a powerful discursive construct, by signs and significations in language. Yet, we retain the view that materiality and realism have their part to play in our social theories, that globalization refers to real observable developments upon which discursive notions of globalization then depend for their believability, as somehow referring to a materiality 'out there'. Globalization is not simply a made-up fiction. Nonetheless, politicians and others are able to harness the discursive power of such constructs to argue rhetorically for a range of 'inevitable' policy directions, for strong or lighter regulation of the banks, for example.

2) The global system of higher education as much constructs agent identity and interests as reflecting them, although construction at the national domestic level remains important for both states and universities. Nonetheless, their identities are increasingly made possible by, and are embedded, in a global systemic environment.

Global sociality

Simon Marginson (2010a), in analyzing the effects on the knowledge economy of the communicative globalization of the contemporary age ('the emergence of one-world systems operating in real time in communication, information and finance'), emphasizes the importance of agency, reflexivity, choice, and 'imaginings' in creating our global spatiality and the projects that both extend and take advantage of it. Both the socially-constructed and the more materialist self-organizing individual – in our terms - seem to be necessary for such an analysis, which stresses openness, creativity, and change. Yet, as Marginson notes, there are also less open dynamics at work in the global arena that a social theory of global higher education needs to take into account. These include 'strategies of closure', the attempts to maintain and promote status, power, identity, and material resources by shutting out

> Global university rankings effectively enjoin universities to be sure to connect with those of similar status

the competition. Preserving 'first-mover' advantages, through instruments of status hierarchy and exclusive ownership (exemplified, respectively, by university rankings and intellectual property), are as much a dynamic of global space as openness and meritocracy. Some of the models and templates that help serve such processes of closure (the systems of research performance evaluation advocated by elite universities, for example) come to possess properties of dominance and marginalization.

The impact of social marginalization and exclusion as forms of power in the current global age are underlined by strong urges held by individuals: to communicate and empathize with others as human beings, to value common understandings, and to desire to be connected socially in an electronically-mediated world. These human attributes tend to produce imitative behaviour of many kinds (or 'global synchrony', see Marginson 2010a and 2010b). Simon Marginson (2010a: 138-9) illustrates these processes well (using the term 'institution' to apply to what we have referred to as 'organization'). He notes that 'imitation is a means of entering systems and signalling empathy with their requirements'. In policy terms, 'voluntary convergence is apparent in the reform of higher education institutions in many nations to bring them closer to the dominant template, that of the comprehensive, science-based university on Anglo-American lines. This form of institution, which could be called the Global Research University, is powerfully valorized by university ranking systems. At bottom, national systems want to synchronize effectively with each other; the individual institutions want to synchronize with each other; and both want to be seen to do so....in the global knowledge economy all nations, and all institutions, share desires for global capacity, connectedness and success as measured by recognized templates. At bottom they do so because they have been drawn together into the single interdependent system of the global knowledge economy to which isolation is punished and there is no choice but to engage...the spontaneous synchronies of individual scholars with each other, researchers with each other, and institutions with each other are matched by mimetic approaches in government'.

Only the USA appears able to stand apart from such processes but it is the American model that provides the global exemplars, and world university rankings reinforce the strength of dominant models. Yet Marginson's research indicates that all university leaders value the connectivity of consortia and other networks, often as much symbolically as instrumentally. Moreover, the accelerating conceptual notion of global 'networks' provides encouragement to the view that connectivity is vital. However, global university rankings effectively enjoin universities to be sure to connect with those of similar status (exceptionally, as Simon Marginson notes, the commercial exploitation of international student markets sees a relaxing of such injunctions in favour of economic joint ventures by those universities with differential statuses but a potentially lucrative division of market resources that can be operationalized to maximize earnings and 'share').

Consequently, Marginson notes that cross-border research collaborations and university partnerships are expanding quickly. He

> High student selectivity and a global lead in knowledge formation, rather than mass growth, is the key to value for universities in both status (predominantly) and economic hierarchization

refers to Castells (2000) who describes the dynamic of networks as inherently expansionary. That is, when networks grow, the costs rise in a linear fashion but the advantages outstrip these as a result of a much higher volume of connections. Consequently, the disadvantages for being outside the network expand considerably (we consider this notion of 'power as exclusion' in more detail in our later discussion of network power, including as found in global higher education). Following Bourdieu, Marginson highlights the 'field of power' in the domain of global higher education which both includes and excludes: 'the global power of the sub-field of restricted production (in the elite) rests on the exclusion of most institutions and nations from the global field and the subordination of the rest'. Although, as sustained by global rankings and international comparators of research performance, status rather than economic hierarchy predominantly characterizes the higher education domain, nonetheless this can often be parlayed into considerable financial holdings, as found amongst the high-status, richly-endowed Ivy league universities in the USA. But high student selectivity and a global lead in knowledge formation, rather than mass growth, is the key to value for universities in both status (predominantly) and economic hierarchization.

As we have noted, a key concept here is 'synchrony', or concurrence, or imitative similarity, which derives from sociability and the urge for meaningful connection to others. Consequently, 'synchrony is more than simply establishing a communicative link across borders...it is part of the process of imagining ourselves close to those in distant locations' (Marginson 2010b). It is often based on loose, frequently disposable, and fluid connections between people that are sustained in the current globalization predominantly through the Internet. Global research and science is increasingly 'synchronized' in this way despite the close regulatory and funding interest in such activity by national governments.

Global model diffusion is not new, of course. Since the Treaty of Westphalia states have long regarded themselves as not only independent (at least for domestic purposes) but also as equal and often quite similar to each other in their 'nationhood' (Jakobi 2009). In Asia, for example, where learning from Western liberal democracy and capitalism is long-established, states are reforming their higher education systems to generate more international outlooks and connections as a means of enhancing creativity and innovation, economically and culturally. The Chinese government lays heavy stress in encouraging its leading universities to ally with world-class universities abroad, while Singapore, Hong Kong, Korea, and Japan are seeking to raise the quality of their higher education systems through accessing high-status global higher education networks. In some cases, such movements are the product of imitative (or risk-avoiding) action by universities; in other cases, national states adopt templates and models from elsewhere and broadly impose them on their systems. The emergence of global benchmarks and rankings serve to reinforce such tendencies.

This global diffusion is hardly composed of independent events as their 'wave-like' unrolling suggests high levels of interdependence (King 2009; Wildavsky 2010). As we shall see, the pressures predominantly are

normative, encompassing voluntary elements of emulation, learning, and imitation, but increasingly with diffusion of powerful models becoming more heavily and structurally constraining and 'involuntary' as a consequence of the sheer weight of existing model adopters. This is not to suggest a uniform convergence; both local conditions and the position of individual states in the world economy generate variations in model adoption and clustering based on location in the 'world system' of economic relationships, but the essential 'DNA' of the models remain.

Although a number of explanations are offered for global model diffusion, such as US hegemonic promotion (although US higher education is quite inward-looking compared to many nations), and technological and politically-induced national competitiveness and globalization, here we focus more on how particular states find their own decisions increasingly hedged in by the prior choices of other states. Particular models and standards establish the means of access to important social networks by setting the conditions for interaction. This is a social process of accelerating structural power that establishes the constraints that strongly influence agent beliefs and action, in ways analogous to the programming of network protocols (Castells 2000).

Global culture

It is useful to conclude these early sections on social theory with a reference to what has been termed 'world polity theory' or the idea of globalization as an enactment of world culture, not least because of its applied empirical work in organizational and higher education studies. World polity theory strongly employs a cultural ontology and epistemology (including the notion of symbolic rituals) in both understanding and explaining social reality and explicitly avoids notions of material causality (Boli and Lechner 2009: 332). Meyer (2006), a leading exponent, highlights the culturally and institutionalized embedded nature of agency. In education, for example, schooling has advanced, in a self-propelling and self-generating manner, in all regions of the world. It has become regarded as a sign of 'nationhood' (rather than necessarily because it fulfils economic functions) and its rise has been independent of a nation's 'material' characteristics, such as levels of economic development. Formal education has become a global process, mandated effectively by global culture that nations ignore at considerable loss of esteem and standing. It is a standard feature of a global cultural model of the state (Frank and Gabler 2006; Meyer 1994).

Many other features of the modern world have similarly 'gone global', such as the widespread worldwide extension of women's rights, the initial adoption of which originally following pressures from nationally-based movements but which eventually snowballed into 'a global script' for nearly all nations once the model became consolidated (Finnemore and Sikkink 1999). Thus, in this view actors (such as states and other organizations) enact the cultural models that the wider, increasingly global culture provides (nations generally claim, however, that such actions follow processes undertaken on the grounds of rational calculation, values, and interest, although this often may be construed as

after-the-event rationalization). The result of these global cultural scripts is a considerable structural and rhetorical isomorphism exhibited by states and other organizations in their organizational structures. Imitative behaviour by states may be particularly noted when they are located in environments of considerable complexity and uncertainty, and where the requirements for legitimacy (an objective for states as they adopt cultural scripts) are particularly strong.

In these world culture models, international governmental bodies (OECD, UNESCO, WTO, and so on) are influential formers and transmitters, as are increasingly international non-governmental or civil society actors, not least the economics profession, formulating and pushing normative claims derived from the global moral order. Undoubtedly, such an approach can be highly suggestive. In the field of higher education, for example, Jakobi (2009:2) evidences recently what is described as 'the emergence of an international norm that sees the promotion of Lifelong Learning as a necessity for modern statehood'. Jakobi skilfully demonstrates its promotion as tied to other cultural ideas, such as those for economic competitiveness, democracy, and participation. More especially, she regards international organizations (the OECD particularly) as playing a large part in constructing and globally diffusing the model of Lifelong Learning. The result is that 'there appears to be little choice over whether or not governments address Lifelong Learning issues'; they are compelled to do so culturally. International organizations are thus moving the locus of education policymaking from national to global referents. Consequently, the widespread policy adoption of Lifelong Learning is driven by policy goals found at the global level and appears little if any connected to particular national circumstances. The result is a strongly homogenizing process as states converge around globally-shared ideas.

Although world culture models of this kind are valuable in helping to construct a social theory of global higher education, there is a danger that the agency dynamics of change, innovation, and structural diffusion become over-determined by culture. It is still necessary to explore the processes of power and contestation that underlie global cultural processes and this involves a consideration of global networks and the often powerful role of universalizing models and standards.

International standards

Here we draw on aspects of network theory as discussed above and the observations on social connectivity made by Castells (2009) and Marginson (2010a; 2010b). Globalization is a form of social coordination, expressed in the growth and inter-linkage of networks worldwide. It is characterized by the sphere of sociability and the desire of individuals to interact with each other in networks or run the risk of social marginalization. This includes governmental policymakers and their interconnections, too. Networks are governed by standards. Rather like diplomatic and computer protocols, standards enable network members to access one another. They are necessary to regulate relationships, as members are independent and not formally organized hierarchically.

Interdependence occurs, therefore, on the basis of independence. Outside the standards there is no network. The standards are used as structures and resources by agents to constitute the space, the network, through their interactions and thus to reproduce and, over time, potentially to change the character and the power of the network.

The emergence of international standards particularly has enabled us to coordinate our actions on a worldwide scale, facilitated by the modern technological compression of space. Dominant standards or models enabling global social coordination – the conventions, rules, norms, languages, and so on – display a form of network power (Grewal 2008). But as well as enabling access to one another, they also tend to elevate one solution (set of standards, a model) for solving coordination problems above others and threaten the elimination of alternative solutions.

When we say that dominant or universalizing models have 'network power', we mean that they have the capacity to pull in people who are current non-adopters. This derives from their normative strength as indexed by the number and status of users, an attraction which accelerates particularly once a certain threshold of adoption has been reached. Although the temptation is to use concepts such as 'snowballing' we need to be careful here, as individual autonomy – choice - is still at work; adoption is not inevitable or the result of overwhelming – 'knockout' – force. Rather, late-adopters come to the view that any rationalistic evaluation of the merits of competing models is almost hopeless as the normative strength of the universalizing model accelerates the disadvantages – the costs – of other standards and models as coordination solutions for networks. Dominant models privilege access to powerful networks as forms of worldwide social coordination. Consequently, network power implies that: a) standards are more valuable when greater numbers of people use them, thus constituting network membership; and b) that after a certain' tipping point' or level of adoption of a model, their pulling power to non-adopters gains increased velocity. Such a capacity serves as a structural – a cultural - constraint on individual choice. Such choice consequently feels increasingly non-autonomous (unfree). Such constraints are both liberating and entrapping – the standards provide access to important networks but, locally, they appear as being difficult to influence.

Thus, in the applied context of global higher education, national policymakers make higher education policy, for example, in the context of decisions taken by other autonomous states. And the choices of other countries produce constraints (and opportunities) that can lead to policy convergence and isomorphism through increasingly common model adoption. The models and standards that other states adopt can result in mechanisms of strong structural inhibition. The human search for connectivity and synchrony reinforces the network power of universalizing models. Policymakers are nearly always confronted by structuration dynamics, in which the free choices of individual agents (here, national states) generate structures of constraint which then act back on individual choice.

> In the applied context of global higher education, national policymakers make higher education policy, for example, in the context of decisions taken by other autonomous states

Of course, standards and models usually are rather abstract and generic entities. It is this very generalizability and transposability that allows solutions to apparently similar problems worldwide. Yet 'domestication' and the relative malleability of models do not necessarily hinder the increasing appeal of such models (rather they may enhance it) and the inherent core of the model is generally retained in global diffusion.

Private standards and sociability

Global university rankings especially are establishing influential models that exhibit the characteristics of network power. They confront university leaders with processes of structuration – rankings are utilized by those in higher education for their own purposes and in the context of being confronted by structures over which they have little control but feel forced to take serious account of as having major external and internal impacts. Rankings thus strongly constrain their purposeful options, despite such actors being formally free to set their own courses of action. Yet these very practices then ensure the social reproduction of such structures as key universalizing models.

The dynamics of league table power have emerged, for the most part, through private forms of standardization and sociability. Rankings have developed less as an act of collective decision-making and deliberative democracy (sovereignty) than from the accumulation of decentralized, individual decisions (to produce them, to use them) that, taken together as acts of sociability, produce a set of structural constraints for higher education actors.

Ideal typically we can distinguish two routes through which our social relations (including the mediating role of standards) take form. One is through an accumulation of decentralized, individual decisions that come to constitute over time large-scale social structures, including global standards and models, which coordinate users in worldwide networks. This is a form of power through sociability, or connectivity and synchrony, as outlined in earlier sections, and are found in markets as well as in, say, global science. The other route is when our social relations take place through political procedures (sovereignty or governmentalism). This works not through the collection of many individual decisions aggregated over time but through instances of collective decision-making by specially constituted (such as democratically-elected) political bodies.

Of course, in real situations sovereignty and sociability intermingle. The growing range of state-collected and other standardizing data on universities has made possible – and credible – the idea of formalizing and disseminating judgements on the hierarchical standing of universities as found in higher education league tables (and at an affordable cost). Governments have sought increased information about the institutions that they fund as part of policymaking and accountability objectives. This public function provides a key underpinning for the private authority exercised by the league table compilers. The decision by the EU to devise its own 'alternative' multidimensional global ranking system (to include the non-natural sciences, and teaching and learning

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indicators) and to 'softly' regulate other rankings may be regarded as an attempt to return university rankings to processes of sovereignty and governmentalism.

Consequently, consent to power is provided in two distinct ways. Either, as in relations of sociability, individuals consent to their individual circumstances through their (individual) choice-making. This, of course, is strongly structured by the choices of others, in the same way that one's own choices affect the circumstances that others face (for example, in accepting the influence of league tables and acting so that they continue to be reproduced as structures of constraint). Or, alternatively, consent may be more expressly provided through a general consent to decisions undertaken collectively and properly by representatives effectively mandated to take them (by such representatives winning elections, for example, which provides some form of initial social contract by the people for them to undertake such decisions). While the former is consent through sociability, the latter is a found within sovereignty or governmentalism. University rankings take the first route: they elicit consent from higher education participants as social structures formed by decentralized sociability and its consent, not by acts of collective governmentalism. The consent flows from free but increasingly constrained choice-making.

Here we need a theory of structuration that ties together social structure and individual agency. Our social structures are both the product of our individual actions but also their grounding; that is, structures pattern or recursively organize our action as well as being reproduced across time and space by such actions. Thus, with university rankings, for example, we must be able to articulate why actors choose within a context that is itself highly constrained by the prior and simultaneous choices of others.

Rankings and network power

The data in rankings are subject to a variety of treatments by the compilers – they are not simply neutral. Outcomes are heavily influenced by the importance that the publishers attach to particular factors. The rankings do more than provide listings but are premised on a view of what higher education should be like as these are expressed in the criteria that the compilers operate. That is, the tables constitute standards and benchmarks for assessing the modern university.

The major rankings (especially the two primary global ones, the SJTUAWRU and the THE) and the standards they promulgate display forms of network power which increase the more that their findings are taken up and utilized to constitute networks – which both include and exclude. That is, whatever the intrinsic merits of such tables, the models they promote have the power to coordinate various worldwide university strategies through the sheer weight and accumulation of stakeholders using them. Thus, they achieve a form of global ordering by elevating one approach or set of standards over others and threaten the elimination of alternative standards.

University and other decision-makers are not forced to follow university rankings – their choices are as free agents – but increasingly such choices are involuntary as the global league tables especially generate universalizing and dominating templates and structures that inevitably act back on organizational strategies. These are processes of structuration.

Sauder and Espeland (2009) puzzle as to why relatively loose-coupled organizations such as universities that are well-versed in fending off external intrusions (such as by governmental quality assurance agencies) by engaging in forms of regulatory ritualism and symbolic compliance to secure legitimacy and to meet public expectations without disrupting basic activities, thus 'buffering' themselves from these outside influences, seem unable to do so in the case of university rankings. Taking law schools, they point to the influence of rankings at the heart of the organization as possessing high strategic force. 'Rankings have changed the fundamental activities of law schools, transforming, for instance, how actors make decisions, do their jobs, and think about their schools.' They apply Foucault's notion of 'discipline' and the associated processes of surveillance and normalization to show how rankings alter perceptions of legal education in ways that are both coercive and seductive (Foucault 1980). Such processes reinforce tendencies to internalize the pressure of rankings and become 'self-disciplining'. And why do university staffs internalize rankings? Rankings generate a form of psychic anxiety and an allure to do well in them, or to manipulate them. Even resistance promotes their increasing internalization as a guide to organizational and personal standing by generating an entanglement, a relationship that becomes invested in as a point of reference.

Sauder and Espeland, following Foucault, thus categorize rankings as a form of disciplinary power that act through processes of surveillance and normalization to change how both internal and external stakeholders view the field of legal education. Law schools become turned inside out and, unremittingly, are made 'visible' by rankings (such tables are simple, transparent, and widely-known media products that are broad in scope, easily de-contextualized, and circulate readily): they become legible to external 'outsiders', and thus more 'controllable' by them. Yet this has the effect of generating forms of self-management as a result of changing university perceptions, expectations, and behaviour. Even 'gaming the system' or selectively using 'the good parts' of rankings in media promotions reinforces the acceptance of the field-constituting properties of rankings and indeed extends them through a process of seduction. Universities absorb, modify, but essentially incorporate rankings within the culture of the organization – rankings become 'naturalized' as structural and cultural phenomena. No one can feel safe and untouched while the fear persists that everyone else is trying to improve their rank (Hazelkorn 2011; Wedlin 2006).

University rankings are therefore constitutive of power relations that are everywhere. They provide norms of practice (models and standards) as a form of structural power, a classificatory system that both constitute agents as forming a particular 'field' (as equivalent items) but also by

> Global rankings and their standards especially are emerging to enable universities to coordinate their actions on a worldwide scale

providing the means to differentiate them through processes of comparison and monitoring in a highly legible way. The notion of connectivity – and the threat of exclusion or marginalization – is useful here to account for universities conforming to normative standards that many disavow publicly. Not to be included in a ranking is worse than appearing at the very bottom: at least at the bottom of the table, the organization has been constituted as legitimate. It may not be perceived as possessing high status; rather it is confirmed in its low reputation. But at least it has been confirmed as existing in its defined field as a legitimate actor and is thus is better located than the zombie land inhabited by those entities that do not even merit inclusion (global rankings by definition are quite exclusive, but also some national rankings do not provide full coverage within their territory, using as exclusionary criteria factors such as organizational size, subject coverage or, in the case of business or professional schools, the lack of accreditation).

Conclusion: Rankings as globalization

In earlier sections we noted that prominent elements of globalization can be understood as the rise to dominance of shared standards for mediating social coordination. Global rankings and their standards especially are emerging to enable universities to coordinate their actions on a worldwide scale. They are examples of network power, which emerges in processes of structuration when a particular solution to a coordination game becomes a dominant point of reference – a universalizing standard – and attains a capacity to 'pull in' those who might otherwise rely on alternative models and standards. The standards gaining global prominence are not the products of common public deliberation but seem to emanate from and privilege certain higher education systems, such as those of the USA and others in the West.

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Learning and engagement dimensions of higher education in knowledge society discourses

Mala Singh[21] and Brenda Little[22]

Background

Higher education and social change is a perennial subject for both policymakers as well as for analysts of higher education. Since the 1990s, the role and place of higher education in the knowledge society has become a common perspective from which to view the connection between higher education and social change. Many current analyses of higher education and social change resort to discourses about the knowledge society and related notions of knowledge production, transmission and transfer. Within such discourses, there are differing views about the role of higher education and its knowledge functions. On the one hand, the traditionally dominant role of higher education in knowledge production and transmission is under challenge. On the other, its place in knowledge production and knowledge transfer is viewed as an intrinsic part of knowledge economies and socio-economic development. In this latter role, the emphasis is on the research function of higher education and its importance in the production and transfer of innovative and applicable knowledge to industry and business. Notwithstanding such differences of view, it seems that within these overarching knowledge society discourses, rather less emphasis is placed on what these developments mean for higher education teaching and learning, for those within formal and informal learning settings who support learning, and for non-economic dimensions of social engagement and public good issues. In this paper we set out to redress this imbalance by posing a number of questions relating to the learning and engagement dimensions of the knowledge society and the challenges posed for higher education.

First, we start with a brief look at the key features and debates about knowledge societies.

> It seems that within overarching knowledge society discourses, rather less emphasis is placed on what these developments mean for …teaching and learning…and for non-economic dimensions of social engagement

Knowledge society discourses in higher education-key features and debates

In their article *Knowledge society discourse and higher education* Valimaa and Hoffman (2008) provide a useful overview of some of the key issues and debates relating to this subject. The centrality of knowledge to post-industrial society is evident both in the role played by scientific research in innovation and technology development, and in the role of knowledge and high level skills in economic productivity. In such a context, higher education institutions (HEIs) become indispensable role-

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[21]Mala Singh is Professor of International Higher Education Policy at CHERI, the Open University.

[22] Brenda Little is Principal Policy Analyst at CHERI, the Open University.

players in knowledge societies on account of their research activities and their education and skills development functions. Correspondingly, both the form of the research knowledge which is produced as well as the nature of the desired skills so developed have taken on a particular emphasis. The influence of two familiar sets of argument is evident in how HEIs demonstrate their societal responsiveness (even though the universal applicability of these arguments has been challenged). The one argument is that a new form of multidisciplinary knowledge produced in the context of application (Mode 2) is increasingly displacing traditional mono-disciplinary Mode 1 type knowledge (Gibbons et al 1994). Such knowledge is viewed as being relevant within a problem-solving approach to societal challenges. The second is the concept of the 'triple helix'' which has been used to describe the closer interrelationships among universities, industry and government (Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff 2000) and which has led to the expectation that universities can contribute to innovation through research and knowledge and technology transfer. Added to these is the recognition of the importance of innovation and high level 'world of work' skills in maintaining national and regional competitiveness.

On this reading, the role of the university in national and regional economic development agendas and within national systems of innovation is often explicitly emphasised, sometimes more so than its role as a teaching and publicly engaged institution. A look at how universities represent themselves on their websites and in other public communications often indicates detailed information about their research activities as the basis of industry partnerships and a variety of entrepreneurial and commercialisation projects, for example, the setting up of spin-off companies. Many higher education institutions point to their multidisciplinary teaching and research programmes, the variety of innovative knowledge applications which they have facilitated through their transfer of knowledge to external social and economic partners, and the 'employability' skills and experiences which they afford their graduates. In the case of some institutions, these aspects have translated into distinctive structural arrangements for how research, innovation and knowledge transfer are managed, in contrast to the arrangements for teaching and learning and various forms of community engagement which may be less extensive in scope and external reach. This structural configuration no doubt also reflects the increasing levels of anticipated income from industry partnership, technology transfer and spin off companies as the proportion between (decreasing) state funding and institutionally-generated income from external business activities changes, combined with the possibility of accessing dedicated (additional) state funding for knowledge transfer activities e.g. the Higher Education Innovation Fund in the UK.

One reading of the above (admittedly very brief) sketch indicating the role of HEIs in a knowledge society frame of reference is an interpretation of social engagement which is predominantly related to the research functions of HEIs and their potential for knowledge generation and transfer in support of innovation and business development. Rather less emphasis seems to be placed on the learning dimensions of knowledge societies, including the development of

graduate competencies for democratic citizenship and for updating knowledge and skills within a context of lifelong learning and meeting changing employment needs.   The role and activities of HEIs in addressing the non-economic dimensions of social engagement, especially responsiveness to and knowledge transfer arrangements with civil society and community organisations, is even less likely to be referenced by knowledge society and innovation discourses. It is to these aspects that we now turn.

Changes in higher education teaching and learning

The expansion and diversification of higher education has prompted debates about the nature of higher education degree courses. Certainly in the UK (and elsewhere) continuing calls from government for closer linkages between higher education and the world of work has been behind several initiatives geared towards increasing the relevance of the higher education curriculum to work, and arguably, a broadening of the curriculum to embrace the development of disciplinary knowledge, general intellectual capacities, transferable personal attributes and capabilities relevant to specific professions and occupations (where applicable). But such a broadening of the curriculum prompts debate about 'what' is and should be valued in higher education terms, and may suggest that an emphasis on the acquisition and development of generic skills could be undermining more fundamental notions of the purpose of higher education.

Since the mid-1980s there has been, in some quarters of higher education, a growing interest in experiential learning in general, and in learning from and through the experience of work in particular. Some suggested that the assessment and accreditation of experiential learning would become a major feature of moves to open up formal (educational) institutions to a wider population of learners (see for example, Mulligan and Griffin 1992). But these same commentators also noted that "the process of assessment and accreditation [of experiential learning] has thrown up some highly significant issues about the ways in which knowledge and learning have been traditionally conceived in education" (ibid, 20).

Arguably, it is the development -or rather the negotiation - of programmes of study based around workplace learning that brings to the fore parallels to discussions around Mode 1 or Mode 2 knowledge production, and analogies with the 'triple helix' concept. In the current climate of the UK and other governments seeking ways of promoting more flexible, work-related higher education provision, it is worth exploring these aspects further. Much of the literature on workplace learning refers to the interplay between a number of stakeholders involved in negotiating and agreeing an appropriate programme of study – in a sense setting the agenda for learning, and giving value to 'knowledge-in-action' (Boud 2001; Boud and Solomon 2001; Bridges 2006). First there is the individual learner/worker who is seeking to develop their own knowledge base, including theories informing workplace practices, and personal skills and attributes (and gain some

academic recognition for prior knowledge) through the programme of study, some of which will be based on work tasks; second there is the employer who is seeking to support the individual's personal development as well as gaining new knowledge and/or insights into work related activities undertaken by the learner (and hence meeting some business needs); third there is the higher education institution which ultimately has a gatekeeper role in certifying the validity of the resultant learning gains in the form of academic credit (or a full award). Additionally, in theory at least, both the employer and the higher education institution are expected to provide support for learning including through assessment. Further, the nature of the resultant (individualised) programme of study is likely to be transdisciplinary, which aligns to one of the distinguishing features of Mode 2 knowledge production.

Higher education teaching and learning and the legitimisation of knowledge

Whether the above changes are adequately explained with the help of intellectual devices like 'mode 1 and 2' and 'triple helix', it is the case that the traditional role of universities in both the production of knowledge and the transmission of knowledge *to* students through teaching is being challenged – even if such challenges tend to be raised more at the margins of higher education institutions' provision, rather than within the mainstream. The breakdown of distinctions between formal and informal learning, and an emphasis on lifelong learning wherein individuals' ongoing professional development may well occur across a range of sites of learning, including the workplace, has weakened the dominant knowledge transmission function of HEIs. We now see individuals being able to draw together and build on knowledge, skills and capabilities derived from different sites in such a way that the resultant learning can be recognised in higher education terms. As noted earlier, this is the situation characterised by developments in workplace learning, in which the individual builds on learning derived from the workplace. In theory this type of learning 'package' comprises a number of phases: advice and guidance; negotiating a planned programme of study; support for learning; assessment and recognition of learning (Brennan and Little et al 2006). Further, both the higher education institution and the individual's employer are involved with the individual in negotiating the learning programme, supporting the learning, and assessment of learning. But such activities, and their distributed nature can pose considerable challenges for higher education and for employers.

> An emphasis on lifelong learning wherein individuals' ongoing professional development may well occur across a range of sites of learning, including the workplace, has weakened the dominant knowledge transmission function of HEIs

As Saunders notes, the validation of such learning requires the reconstruction and production of the learning experience in ways that display "academic characteristics or meets higher education aims ….higher education is struggling to determine precisely what these might be…" (Saunders 2006: 23). Such struggles relate to a number of issues, including 'levels' of learning outcomes and the academic value that might be accorded to workplace learning. Harris' thorough review of the workplace learning literature (Harris 2006) noted that the transfer of knowledge from one context and its re-contextualisation in a different

context poses challenges for all forms of learning. Arguably forms of knowledge that are solely context-bound (for example, to a specific workplace) may not be appropriate for recognition in higher education terms. In their in-depth study of the integration of work-based and subject-based knowledge in workforce upskilling through higher education qualifications, Evans et al. (2009) extend the concept of 'context' from settings or places to encompass notions of "schools of thought, traditions and norms of practices, the life experiences in which knowledge of different kinds is generated" (Evans, Guile and Harris 2009: 12). As such, for knowledge generated and practised in one context to be used in new and different contexts, it has to be recontextualised in ways that simultaneously engage with, and change those practices, traditions and experiences.

Alongside issues of re-contextualisation, there are some other rather more fundamental issues relating to the nature of knowledge. Abukari, Costley and Little's (2009) review of research literatures relating to workplace learners notes the dominance of assumptions about propositional knowledge as the 'foundational form of knowledge' but also notes that this position is increasingly being challenged by those developing workplace learning programmes who question whether such codified knowledge is the main source of knowledge with which learners in the workplace need to engage. Rather, those researching work-based learning are exploring "the relationship between 'knowing and 'understanding' and judging these in terms of the agency of the worker (learner) within organisational and professional work contexts" (ibid, 49). For those academic staff involved in negotiating (workplace learning) programmes of study, many of the challenges revolve around recognising learning that may well not 'fit' wholly (or even partly?) within their own disciplinary frames of reference, their academic belief systems and epistemic traditions. It is these same disciplinary norms which have traditionally determined 'what' is valued and recognised in academic terms, and at what level. But as Walsh notes, those engaged in work-based learning are very likely to be adults functioning competently in their work life. As such, they are as likely to be seeking from higher education ways of researching and developing knowledge, reflecting on and evaluating situations, thinking autonomously and hence enhancing their capabilities for dealing with complex situations, as they are factual (subject-based) knowledge (Walsh 2008).

But such notions are not solely bound to discussions of work-based learning. While such programmes built around work-based learning may still be largely on the margins of higher education provision, a further issue worth some attention is the extent to which graduates in a knowledge society need to be able to work *across* disciplinary boundaries, to draw new insights and suggest ways forward in uncertain situations by drawing on ways of thinking and ways of knowing bound-up in *different* disciplinary traditions. Hence the question for higher learning becomes to what extent can higher education promote such learning in that learners develop both a secure disciplinary knowledge base and are sufficiently confident to be open to new ideas (possibly from other disciplinary areas), and can make connections between different disciplines. It also suggests that higher education learners should

A further issue is the extent to which graduates need to be able to work across disciplinary boundaries, drawing on ways of thinking and ways of knowing bound-up in different disciplinary traditions

continue to develop critical thinking skills such that existing knowledge bases and 'ways of knowing and doing' can be subjected to well-judged questioning; and alternative sources of knowledge can be approached with some confidence, and drawn/built upon as and when necessary to critique conventional wisdom and established practices (Brennan et al 2008).

Having looked at some of the issues relating to the learning dimensions of knowledge societies, we now turn our attention to aspects of public engagement.

Higher education and public engagement

The issue of the accountability of higher education to its societal stakeholders and financiers is now an undisputed part of higher education policy principles within a knowledge society framework. This is expressed in financial terms as 'value for money' and cost effectiveness but also in non-financial terms as social responsiveness and social engagement. These terms allude to quite specific activities of community engagement or service learning but also to more abstract notions about the publicness and 'public good' dimensions of HEIs. The latter is raised in debates about higher education and social change, often in relation to concerns about dominant neo-liberal trends in higher education, especially the marketisation and commodification of education and the emphasis on private benefits over public interests (Singh 2001; Jonathan 2001). What is the relationship between concepts like social engagement or the public good and knowledge society discourses? As noted earlier, ideas about the knowledge society have become commonplace in higher education policy discourses and frameworks, with strong emphases on the role of HEIs in innovation and economic competitiveness.   In the face of such trends, there are worries about the receding role of states (public authorities) and the ascending role of markets and private interests in higher education. This is particularly acute in a context where the commercial and private interest dimensions are argued to have overshadowed the social and public interest dimensions of change (Marginson and Considine 2000; Kezar et al. 2005; Brennan et al. 2008). Concepts like academic capitalism (Slaughter and Leslie 1997) have been used to analyse and critique neo-liberal transformations in higher education, including narrowly economistic notions of the knowledge society and the commodification of knowledge in the current policy approaches. Tensions have also been identified between the intention, on the one hand, to expand the knowledge 'commons' (making knowledge into a resource that is available to and accessible by communities and individuals for the purposes of development and social progress) and, on the other hand, the move to protect the intellectual property rights of those who produce and 'own' potentially valuable commercialisable knowledge (Brennan et al 2008).

Within such a context, it appears that the public identity and public responsibility of higher education is still urged, but often at the level of symbolic policy. This is evident in a number of national, regional and

international policy frameworks and declarations. The 2001 Prague Communique in the Bologna Process where ministers supported the idea that 'higher education should be considered a public good and …a public responsibility'; the commitment to higher education as a 'public mandate' in the 2004 Accra Declaration on GATS and the Internationalisation of Higher Education in Africa; HEFCE's 2009 call for micro-studies demonstrating the public benefits of UK universities; and the 2009 Communique from the UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education declaring higher education to *be* a public good (deserving of support from the public purse) as well as a contributor to it, are some examples of this. This kind of symbolic recognition of publicness is also evident in the mission statements of HEIs, and in their representation of their responsibilities to, and engagement with, society.

Although there appears to be a normative consensus around the importance of the social responsiveness of higher education and for the idea that HEIs should engage with their publics, there are different understandings and approaches to what this means by way of concrete interventions, strategies and indicators of achievement, and the nature of the social partnerships and networks which reflect this focus. What is also not clear is the extent to which the non-economic forms of public engagement are central to the identity, mission and activities of HEIs which claim to be engaged, or whether they are peripheral to the predominant business-oriented social partnerships and networks of the institution. This is aggravated by multiple (sometimes conflicting) demands made on HEIs to be accountable and responsive to a variety of external stakeholders, to increase research productivity and teaching effectiveness, to climb the reputational ladders of various rankings systems, and to address the knowledge transfer and income generation demands of the 'third mission'.

As indicated earlier, HEIs' research functions feature strongly in knowledge society discourses, often as an expression of the HEIs' societal responsiveness to the knowledge needs of business and industry. But what is the nature and extent of HEI engagement with *other* societal stakeholders and interest groups? One of the concerns of public good proponents is to clarify how HEIs connect their core functions to the broader objectives of social development which are not reduced narrowly to economic development. For Calhoun, for example, questions about what makes a university 'public' relate to the ways in which knowledge is produced, circulated and used (Calhoun 2006). Who has access to, and benefits from, HEI knowledge production and for what purposes? If one looks at the dominant patterns of knowledge transfer at many universities, the private and public sectors feature clearly in the primary networks and relationships of HEIs. What is categorised as community engagement often appears to have an unclear connection (if at all) to the research and knowledge transfer functions of HEIs.

> What is the nature and extent of HEI engagement with other societal stakeholders and interest groups?

Knowledge-related dimensions of community engagement

So what are the knowledge-related dimensions of community engagement? This form of engagement is sometimes narrowly viewed

as the sole public good dimension of higher education, but it is possible that public good aspects of higher education can also be advanced by research as well as through teaching and learning. In relation to community or public engagement, there are long-standing and well documented traditions of linking academic work to civic and social responsibility. For example, in the US, Australia and South Africa, such engagement usually covers a range of activities which include philanthropy (free or subsidised public services like eyesight testing), service learning opportunities (student placements in community structures and projects), development of community expertise and capacity (training of community organisers), to more radical reconfigurations of all core functions as being in the service of local or regional development objectives. It is clear that many HEIs offer credit and non credit bearing courses to non-traditional students in a variety of lifelong learning and continuing education programmes, open some of their conferences and lectures, music and theatre performances to members of the public, and encourage their staff and students to become involved in volunteering and community development and support activities.

Within the context of the engagement activities indicated above, not enough is known about how HEIs negotiate the terms of engagement with different publics. For example, are they primarily responsive to particular social and economic needs, or are HEIs pro-actively identifying and creating communities of interest as potential partners and collaborators? Do HEIs perceive themselves as pools of expertise offering academically informed solutions to community needs, or is there some level of co-construction of engagement agendas and programmes? One of the most pressing questions relates to the *kinds* of knowledge produced in social engagement activities and the nature of the transfer arrangements. Are there particular forms of theoretical or applied knowledge emerging from community collaborations, partnerships and networks? Do intellectual property rights issues emerge in relation to such knowledge? Does such knowledge play a role in enriching disciplinary knowledge, informing the development of new curricula, identifying new research themes or fuelling social innovations? Is such knowledge valued in the same way as innovations and knowledge applications for technological and economic development? Or are such forms of engagement only recognised within alternative reward systems e.g. the Times Higher award to the University of Teesside (in the north east of England) in recognition of its activities relating to widening participation and social inclusion, student experience and employer engagement-'putting itself firmly at the heart of its community'?

It is to be expected that within a knowledge society framework, there are likely to be different dynamics in how widely or narrowly HEIs interpret and enact social and economic engagement, and whom they target for knowledge production and transfer partnerships networks. What we need to know more about are the differing approaches to economic and non-economic forms of social engagement among HEIs, especially in relation to the claims and aspirations of HEIs to impact on social change within a knowledge society discourse. The differences would be particularly interesting to investigate within the context of institutional ambitions to be

> Are there particular forms of theoretical or applied knowledge emerging from community collaborations…does such knowledge play a role in enriching disciplinary knowledge.or fuelling social innovations?

> Do HEIs perceive themselves as pools of expertise offering academically informed solutions to community needs, or is there some level of co-construction of engagement agendas?

global research intensive and highly ranked players or locally and regionally focused HEIs.

Concluding remarks

As noted at the outset, many current analyses of higher education and social change revolve around discourses about the knowledge society and related notions of knowledge production, transmission and transfer. Within this frame of reference, higher education's role is described predominantly in terms of its research functions and the potential for knowledge generation and transfer in support of innovation and business development.

In this chapter we have tried to redress the balance by considering two other dimensions of higher education's role in knowledge societies, namely teaching and learning; and non-economic aspects of public engagement.

We have explored how the traditional role of universities in the creation and transmission of knowledge to students is being challenged in terms of more distributed sites of learning and concomitant issues around the legitimisation of knowledge, and the need for graduates to be able to work across disciplinary boundaries and access alternative sources of knowledge to critique established practice and deal with uncertain situations.

We have also considered the nature and extent of higher education's engagement with stakeholder needs other than business and industry. In so doing, we have posed questions about the forms of knowledge which emerge from community collaborations and partnerships, and how such forms of knowledge and their transfer are structurally co-ordinated and valued both internally and externally.

Much literature continues to be generated on the role of HEIs within the knowledge society. Investigating the relationship between higher education and social change could be greatly enriched through greater attention being given to the learning and public engagement dimensions of the knowledge society discourse.

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Supporting students in a time of change

Ruth Williams[23]

Introduction

Student support services are often the invisible and 'unsung' support function within higher education institutions (HEIs). Yet they are recognised as being of vital importance to the student experience and in particular the many students relying on the services they provide. They are also of vital importance to the teaching function through the range of support that is given to academics and administrators.

In the UK, student support covers a wide range of services, including (but not limited to) careers (advice, information and guidance), counselling, disability support, financial advice and support, mental health, study support, health and welfare, and accommodation. The organisation of support services varies from institution to institution but in general they tend to be delivered centrally as 'a central aspect of teaching and learning… Those who provide support are significant partners, with academic and other teaching staff, in the student learning experience' (JM Consulting, 2008: 37).

This article is based on the AMOSSHE[24] project – *assessing the value and impact of services that support students* - known as the 'value and impact project[25]'. It was sponsored by the Higher Education Funding Council for England's Leadership, Governance and Management Fund, and was undertaken by the Centre for Higher Education Research and Information (CHERI) and AMOSSHE. The project has its origins in the 2008 report of the Financial Sustainability Strategy Group and AMOSSHE's supplement to that report. These two reports are discussed below to provide the context against which the project was developed. This is followed by a more detailed description of the value and impact project and its outputs, and how it aims to support the professionalisation of the student support services community in the UK's higher education sector. The concluding section places the discussion in the broader context of the massive changes that are taking place to the funding of higher education in England, and its implications for the services that are provided by HEIs to support students through their studies and beyond.

Report of the financial sustainability strategy group

In 2008, a report was prepared for Higher Education Funding Council for England's Financial Sustainability Strategy Group (FSSG) 'to examine

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[23] Ruth Williams is Principal Policy Analyst at CHERI, the Open University.

[24] AMOSSHE is the UK higher education student services organisation; it informs and supports the leaders of student services, and represents, advocates for, and promotes the student experience.

[25] AMOSSHE Value and Impact Project, including the toolkit and the literature review, can be found at www.amosshe.org.uk/content/vip

the level of resource required to maintain an appropriate high quality student learning experience, on a sustainable basis, in the changing environment of higher education over the next five years' (JM Consulting, 2008: 6). It found that higher education institutions (HEIs) in the UK (and elsewhere) are under pressure leading to an increasingly complex set of activities, which in turn put greater stress on resources. The factors identified as contributing to this pressure included: a decline in the proportion of university income from the core block grant; new regulatory and accountability requirements; an increasingly diverse and complex student population; greater government expectations (for example, regarding widening participation, employer engagement and work-related skills); and a more marketised higher education sector. Furthermore, while the student body has diversified (in terms of greater numbers of mature, part-time, disabled and international students; and students from ethnic minority groups, lower socio-economic classes and neighbourhoods with a lower participation in higher education), it has also increased - by more than 2.5 times in the last 20 years.

The report also notes that '50% of all the resources of higher education are devoted to teaching and students' (13), covering academic input, the learning environment and student support services. In terms of the latter, it went on to note that an increasingly diverse student population 'brings new or enhanced requirements and costs in terms of physical infrastructure and support services required to enable such students to remain and progress in higher education' (30). In this respect, the report acknowledges that student services have developed significantly as a result of the pressures noted above and in particular in response to the 'increased needs of the more diverse student population and the enhanced obligations and expectations on universities in the more marketised environment' (37). The report notes a number of phases underpinning this development: from an *administrative deficit model* (the last 'port of call' for student problems), to an *integrated customer care model* (the 'one stop shop') towards a *professional support services model*, where student services are recognised as 'more interventionist and crucial to the broader student experience' and the academic/administrative divide becomes less important (37). The report concludes that this development has been accompanied by a growth in student services, which has added significantly to their cost.

AMOSSHE's response to the FSSG report

In response to the FSSG report, AMOSSHE produced its own report (2009) as a supplement and to contribute to the debate. It notes that while four of the five primary cost pressures on teaching and learning identified by the FSSG report (i.e. the relationship of staff to students, changes in the curriculum and assessment, changes in the student population and experience, and infrastructure for teaching and learning) 'are judged to be relatively measurable and well documented', the fifth - student support services - 'is acknowledged to be in need of further evidence and metrics in respect of value for money' (paragraphs 1.2). AMOSSHE's report also highlights the breadth of student support services beyond the core provision (as described above). Examples of

this breadth include: community cohesion and relations (e.g. 'studentification' problems, complaints and student behaviour); drugs and alcohol awareness; safe and green environments; diversity and equality; the National Student Survey; the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) Agreements; and employability strategies.

Looking towards the future, the report emphasises that student services will continue to play a critical role in the delivery of the government's widening participation agenda, and 'lead on compliance with the range of equality legislation that underpins many aspects of widening participation' (paragraph 4.2.1). The retention of students will also be critical as the country moves out of the recession: 'Recruiting and keeping students in education, and workforce up-skilling will be key government agendas in responding to increasing levels of unemployment; rising welfare benefit costs; and consequential social division and decreasing community cohesion' (paragraph 4.3.1).

The report acknowledges that the 'individual, institutional and reputational risks managed by student service departments on a daily basis are often poorly understood' (paragraph 4.6.1). Reasons for this are the very nature of the services provided, which are essentially people focussed - 'frequently dealing with the inherent complexities of an individual and every facet of their life' (paragraph 5.2). Nonetheless, there is a need for student support services to operate transparently and evidence their value and impact on teaching, learning and the students' experience. The report concludes that while much data exist within individual HEIs about student support services, there is a need to develop richer data to test or prove the impact and value for money of such services.

The value and impact project

Against the background of this debate on the financial sustainability of learning and teaching, the value and impact project was developed. In 2009, AMOSSHE confirmed that the lack of appropriate sector-wide agreed or understood tools, or sufficiently developed measures for evaluation needed to be addressed. In particular, it was agreed that any such work would need to contribute significantly to the evidence base for the value and impact of student services in the higher education sector in the UK; be a core part of the continued professionalisation of the student services community; and contribute directly to improvements and enhancements within student services.

With this in mind, AMOSSHE and CHERI designed the value and impact project with the aim of filling this knowledge gap, and to develop a holistic approach to understanding and evaluating the value and impact of services that support students. To meet this aim, the project would identify meaningful ways to measure and demonstrate the impact and value of services in HEIs, develop potential measures and pilot them, and produce and disseminate tools and techniques to measure the value and impact of services. A successful application for funding was made to the Higher Education Funding Council for England's Leadership,

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Governance and Management Fund – with the project commencing in April 2010 and finishing in June 2011.

There were a number of phases to the project:

- Development phase – an international review of literature and published best practice in evaluating student support services was undertaken, including a search for examples of good practice from other UK public sectors;

- Implementation phase – arising from the material identified by the literature review, a toolkit of methods and practice to evaluate impact and value of student support services was developed;

- Pilot phase – the toolkit was piloted and further elaborated with real-life examples by four universities and different types of student support service, together with materials identified from additional sources;

- Evaluation and dissemination phase – the findings of the pilot phase were evaluated and the toolkit further developed along with an online version.

The project's outputs

As noted above, one of the main outputs of the project has been the *literature review*. The aim of the literature review was to identify and produce a thematic analysis of existing literature and other published resources on the policy and practice of undertaking evaluations of student services provision. One of the inclusion criteria for the review was that the literature identified had to have a broader focus than process monitoring and user satisfaction surveys, and ask how services help students to 'develop, grow, achieve, learn and succeed' (CHERI, 2010: 4).

The majority of literature found for the review originates in the United States. This was not surprising, given the well-documented and researched 'assessment movement' that has developed in US student affairs departments since the 1980s. However, as the literature itself noted (see, for example, Clark and Mason, 2001), although much has been written about evaluation theory and why it is important to evaluate the value and impact of student services, there is a lack of research into the extent to which evidence based evaluations in student services are in fact taking place. Furthermore, '(t)he evidence that does exist remains ad hoc and anecdotal and stems primarily from single institutional case studies' (CHERI, 2010: 4). The review also found that the literature on the whole was stronger on conceptual frameworks and approaches than on practical solutions for real situations, and, reflecting the US-centric nature of the literature, much was focused on student learning outcomes-based evaluations.

Given that one of the aims of the project and the literature review was to shift the focus of much practice in student support services from user satisfaction surveys to objective evaluations of impact and value, it was

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recognised that this would require a significant learning curve. As the literature review notes, introducing new methods of evaluation 'will undoubtedly have significant implications for staff development, recruitment and promotion, leadership, resource allocation, communications and so on' (CHERI, 2010: 5). The process will be challenging, mistakes are likely to be made, but ultimately it is a journey and experience that will be rewarding in the longer-term. Thus, the other main output of the project was to be the *toolkit* to support this learning curve.

As already noted, much of the literature identified through the literature review (which was to form the basis for the toolkit) originates in the United States. While there are historical and structural differences between the UK and the US higher education sectors, and the provision for student services within them, both countries have faced and are continuing to face similar pressures. Nonetheless, those ideas, methods and practices that were felt to be useful had to be carefully modified and adapted to the UK context, and the very different institutional circumstances in the UK.

The development and pilot phases that saw the creation of the toolkit was not as straightforward as envisioned when the project methodology was originally conceived. This manifested itself in a number of ways. First, the CHERI research team was faced with a body of literature that was strong on concepts but weak on practical solutions. Second, much of the literature focused on impact and very little was found on value or value for money. Thus, the challenge of producing a toolkit based on conceptual methods and theories presented a significant problem, and the lack of material on value/value for money signified that further searches had to be undertaken to plug this gap.

Third, given the time-limited nature of the project, the piloting of the draft toolkit with the four universities that had volunteered for the task was based on the material that had been identified through the literature at *that stage* of the project. The significant and many challenges that the pilot universities experienced in undertaking their evaluations cannot be underestimated or overemphasised. The main challenge was the realisation that the universities would not be piloting ready made tools to use, but would be using the concepts and theories presented in the draft toolkit to develop new practical tools. Other challenges were presented along the way, not least the timescale of the pilot phase and its timing during the academic year. In particular, one of the universities was delayed in starting its evaluations by that institution's requirements for the proposed studies to undergo its ethical review process. Nonetheless, the pilot universities have found the exercise a very useful and worthwhile experience, and all have expressed intentions to continue to build on their studies. And despite the many challenges experienced by the pilot universities and the research team, the toolkit has been published and an online version created.

The future

The conception and implementation of the project has taken place at a time when UK higher education is undergoing enormous change. On the one hand this change is a response to the expansion of the sector and the associated growth in its public resourcing over the last three decades, and on the other hand it is part of the measures imposed by the coalition government to reduce the fiscal deficit in the UK economy.

The measures imposed on the higher education sector can be traced back to the 2009 pre-Budget statement, which announced that £600 million had to be saved from higher education and science and research budgets by 2012-13 (HM Treasury, 2009: 114). These savings are being implemented through the government's annual grant letters to the funding council, with the requirement that institutions in receipt of public funding deliver efficiency savings (see, for example, BIS 2010). Also in 2009, the then government established an Independent Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance to make recommendations on future fees policy and financial support for full and part-time undergraduate and postgraduate students. The review reported in 2010 (Browne 2010) and recommended wide-ranging changes, including the removal of the cap on the level of tuition fees that HEIs can charge (which at that time was £3,000 per year). It proposed a 'soft' cap of around £7,000 based on a number of principles that:

- more investment should be available for higher education;

- student choice should be increased;

- everyone who has the potential should be able to benefit from higher education;

- no-one should have to pay (for the costs of higher education) until they start to work;

- when payments are made they should be affordable;

- part-time students should be treated the same as full-time students for the costs of learning.

In 2011, in response to the review's recommendations, the government announced a new system of higher education funding comprising a much reduced teaching grant but allowing HEIs to charge higher fees, up to £9,000 per year (i.e. a 'hard' cap), with the latter taking effect from 2012. It would seem, therefore, that the government's intention is to introduce greater competition in the higher education sector by increasing student choice, which in turn will put pressure on HEIs to raise the quality of their courses in order to attract students. It will also 'create incentives for universities to think seriously about their costs, and to deliver courses that offer value to both students and taxpayers' (Leunig, 2011: 41).

This article started out by stating that student support services are of vital importance to the student experience. Yet in the changing higher education landscape that is starting to unfold, the student experience will become vital to the very survival of HEIs. Students are being given a greater role in shaping the higher education sector – they are truly becoming 'student customers'. HEIs will be forced to change and

improve as students make their choices based on perceived academic quality. Yet, the student experience is not just an academic one. In the new funding landscape, HEIs will need to pay greater attention to the wider experience of students, which goes beyond the lecture theatre or seminar room (or the laptop for those students that are not campus-based). This wider experience will form part of the demand for better services by students in return for the higher costs of their tuition.

This means that the services HEIs provide to support students through their studies are likely to become more visible – not just in the eyes of students (and prospective students) – but perhaps more importantly in the eyes of those who evaluate and measure their value and performance. Thus, if student support services are not in a position, themselves, to address questions of value and impact, their contribution to this debate will be increasingly limited. As a result, the future of services that support students, an essential part of the higher education and student experience, could be jeopardised as HEIs seek to cut costs. Developing the means to evaluate and quantify the impact that student support services make to further the institutional mission and ultimately enhance the student experience has become essential in today's context. How this is done will depend ultimately on the circumstances and strategic goals of student services departments and, indeed, of each HEI.

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The value and impact project has made a timely contribution to the debate and has produced some of the tools that will help higher education student services address these important questions. The project invites a shift in managerial approaches to improve both the professionalism of services and, in turn, the student experience. This is a challenging and perhaps daunting request to make of student support managers. But if it is taken on, real insights into departmental working and the student lifecycle can be opened up. Furthermore, in the new higher education landscape, it is essential that this challenge is taken on, especially if HEIs are to continue to provide excellent support services to students in an increasingly demanding environment.

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Higher education in the 'risk society'

Sofia Branco Sousa[26]

Introduction

Contemporary societies and higher education have been broadly defined and contextualised by diverse frameworks such as 'post-industrial societies' (Bell 1973), 'network societies' (Castells 1996), and 'knowledge societies' (Stehr 2001). Due to the privileged linkage between higher education and production of knowledge, the 'knowledge society' discourse have been largely embraced and 'celebrated' by academics and higher education as the most adequate manner to define contemporary societies. Living in a knowledge society would mean a particular care and attention towards knowledge and its main producers, academics. In fact, what is happening is that we are facing huge hazards and uncertainties. This applies to academics as well as the production of knowledge. Competition seems to rule in the academy and it threatens the existence of an academic community. That is why we are more sympathetic to the concept of a 'risk society' (Beck 1998) to define the times we are living in.

> Competition seems to rule in the academy and it threatens the existence of an academic community

The knowledge society discourse

Much has been said about the origins and the nature of the knowledge society (e.g. Stehr 2001; Valimaa and Hoffman 2007). However, we will focus on the main characteristics and implications for knowledge produced in higher education. Valimaa and Hoffman defined the knowledge society as:

> *An imaginary space, a discourse which is based on certain intellectual starting points in the analyses of social realities of modern societies. (...) Knowledge society as a discourse, therefore, tends to create an imaginary social space in which everything related to knowledge and/or knowledge production can be included and interconnected, regardless of whether the discourse concerns individuals, organisations, business enterprises or entire societies* (Valimaa and Hoffman 2007:2).

This definition emphasises the interdependence among different kinds of knowledge and among different activities, such as research and business. It seems that 'knowledge' will gather us all in its celebration. In that imaginary space, society is articulated by a system of knowledge production with features such as:

> *Transdisciplinarity; collaborative partnership which involve researcher(s) and practitioner(s) in an interactive dialogue around problem construction and solution implementation (not necessarily in that order); a heterogeneous market of knowledge-producing organization; the most sought after*

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[26] Sofia Sousa is Researcher at CIPES - Centre for Research in Higher Education Policies, Portugal. sofia@cipes.up.pt.

> *knowledge producers are those with great capacity for transforming academic knowledge into applications for resolving practitioners' problems and/or using practitioners' problems and knowledge as a basis for theorizing; the primary institution of reference or intellectual stimulus for research teams is not the academy but the practitioner or the group of practitioners who provide these problem* (Adler et al. 2000:125).

In the knowledge society knowledge is produced in a transdisciplinary environment that mainly focuses on the practice and the solutions of 'problems'. This kind of knowledge production suggests an emergent mode of knowledge production (Gibbons et al. 1994). Other authors have pointed out the reconfiguration of universities in relation to the knowledge society. Nedeva described a process of re-casting universities based on conceptual developments and their significance and influence to policy:

> *This process of recasting the universities as agents of the 'knowledge society' is also evidenced by shifts of emphasis in theoretical and empirical focus and new conceptual developments. Examples here are provided by the shift from 'science' to research' and from 'research' to 'innovation', and by conceptual developments such as the National Innovation / Research Systems (Freeman 1987; Lundvall 1988, 1992; Rip and Meulen 1995), the 'Mode 1 – Mode 2' concept of knowledge (Gibbons, 2000; Gibbons et al., 1994; Nowotny, Scott and Gibbons 2004) and the Triple Helix concept (Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff 1995; Leydesdorff and Etzkowitz 1996, 1998). While each of these concepts has been subject to critique (Boden et al. 2004; Shinn 2002) their policy significance and influence need to be acknowledged (Boden et al. 2004)."*

<div align="right">(Nedeva 2007: 88, 89)</div>

Boden argued that universities are repositioning themselves in response to profitability:

> *An essential aspect of this architecture is the repositioning of universities as globally competitive marketplace actors capable of profitability by selling their teaching and research knowledge products to suitable paying customers. Implicit in this reconstitution of universities as knowledge-trading organisations is a commensurate and commutative transformation of students and the other social and economic stakeholders in higher education's knowledge product into 'customers'* (Boden 2007:105).

The concept of the knowledge society must be questioned, not 'naturalised' as it is the case in the OECD report (2008a, 2008b). As Valimaa and Hoffman stated:

> *Knowledge society as a notion is and has been used globally in the media and in academic research as a term which needs neither introduction, nor explanation; while politically knowledge society has been defined as the objective towards which both nation states, regions (the EU) and the global community (as*

> *defined by UNESCO) should aim to develop* (Valimaa and Hoffman 2007:3).

The knowledge valued by the knowledge society is associated with specific kinds of knowledge, not with knowledge as a whole. The OECD report makes clear a concern about the commercialisation of science. The report argued, following Tether et al. (2005), that "the public science base is funded by national taxpayers and so it is not unreasonable to expect this research to be relevant to national business interests" (OECD 2008b: 162). Knowledge transfer is important to the economy, and it should be considered according to several dimensions and in the context of knowledge society:

> *Moreover, other forms of knowledge transfer are important, and D'Este and Patel (2007: 1310) argue that government policy has been too focused on patenting and spin-off activity, and this can obscure 'other types of university-industry interactions that have a much less visible economic payoff, but can be equally (or even more) important, both in terms of frequency and economic impact'* (OECD 2008b:164).

Therefore, we agree with Robertson when she claimed that the concept of the knowledge society can be perceived as a 'silver bullet':

> *Yes, we say, like good believers following the service and coming in on cue. Yes, knowledge work — our work — is really important. We will be the new Stakhanovites; the heroes of the new global economy. But what are we saying yes to? What does a knowledge society mean and how is it, if indeed it is, different to the world of the socialist worker hero?* (Robertson, 2008).

It may be the case that only the kind of knowledge that can the improve economy is central to the knowledge society, not the focus on all type of knowledge (from different disciplinary areas and with a diverse focus). That is why the author said, "Our brains have become increasingly important to firms seeking a competitive edge, not because our brains were unimportant before, but because the stakes are increasingly higher" (ibidem).

Even though the expression 'knowledge society' is referred as the most appropriate term to define the times we are living in (Stehr 2001:.44), we agree with Weiler's argument that "the invocation of a 'knowledge society' has become ubiquitous" (Weiler 2006: 61) and that "among its many dangers is the illusion that we know what we are talking about with reference to 'knowledge'" (ibidem).

Considering the analysis of the discourse of Portuguese and English academics we can argue that knowledge society presents distinguishable and contradictory features. The knowledge society discourse features more diffuse, less obvious, contradictions than other discourses sustained by academics[27]. It can be represented by the

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[27] Results draw upon the PhD thesis "The Academic Community and the Transformation of Modes of Knowledge Production: A Disciplinary, Institutional, Professional and Generational Study", with the supervision of António M. Magalhães and John L. Brennan, at the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences of University of Porto.

perfect image of a silver bullet, as coined by Robertson (2008). The struggles involved in a knowledge society are even more nuanced and less clear, governed as they are by factors like chaos and risks.

The discourse of a risk society

We prefer to use the concept of the risk society rather than that of the knowledge society to characterise the present context. A knowledge society indicates a kind of celebration of knowledge and, simultaneously, a myth that involves great expectations about knowledge. The discourse of a risk society on the other hand, challenges this myth; i.e., these are parallel discourses, one dominant and the other competing. The same society that seems to be celebrating the production of knowledge seems to be creating a sensation of 'chaos' in the academic world, giving researchers less time to think and devaluing research careers.

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Risk society is a discourse in competition with knowledge society. Risk society translates the tensions and the discursive struggles of what constitutes knowledge and the privileged actors who manage that knowledge. The fact that we are now producing safer science can be a risk to the progress of science and knowledge. The transgressive character of the production of knowledge in the academy seems increasingly residual, and we are now witnessing academics doing 'new' versions of knowledge already produced.

The concept of risk society appears as a discourse in competition with the hegemonic knowledge society. In the work of Ulrich Beck, *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*, the author argues that the risk society is characterised by new attitudes related to the modernisation of 'traditional' roles or notions (e.g., gender, family and sexuality) of intellectual life and of political democracy. Science is viewed as "*one of the causes, the medium of definition and the source of solutions* to risks, and by virtue of that very fact, it opens new markets of scientization for itself" (Beck 1998: 155 emphasis in the original). Contradictions arise among the multiple roles of science as cause, definition and solution regarding risk. Beck discussed this perspective by means of four theses.

The first thesis is related to the distinction between 'primary scientization' - "science is applied to a 'given' world of nature, people and society" (ibidem) - and 'reflexive scientization' – "sciences are confronted with their own products, defects and secondary problems" (ibidem). Primary scientization is related to a solid faith in science and progress and when it suffers transformation into reflexive scientization, a critique of science emerges - "a process of demystification of the sciences is started, in the course of which the structure of science, practice and the public sphere will be subjected to a fundamental transformation" (ibidem: 156).

The second thesis is a derivative of the first one. Beck argued that science is a 'necessity' and, at the same time, is "less and less sufficient for the socially binding definition of truth" (ibidem), which creates an ambivalent process:

> *It contains the opportunity to emancipate social practice from science through science; on the other hand it immunizes socially*

prevailing ideologies and interested standpoints against enlightened scientific claims and throws the door open to a feudalization of scientific knowledge practice through economic and political interests and 'new dogmas'. (ibidem:157, emphasis in the original)

The third thesis is related to these 'new dogmas'. The author argues that the "new taboos of unchangeability" (ibidem) are the touchstone of the independence of scientific research. These taboos arise in opposition to the triumph of claims of scientific knowledge, which means that things that are, in principle, changeable (like actors, agencies and conditions) are being perceived as being excluded from this condition of change. Beck argues that sciences are no longer 'taboo breakers' (where things are changeable); they are also 'taboo constructors' (where things are unchangeable) (ibidem).

The fourth thesis is related to the foundations of scientific rationality. Beck argued that "what matters is whether risks and threats are methodologically and objectively interpreted and scientifically displayed, or whether they are downplayed and concealed" (ibidem: 158).

In Beck's work (2008), the category of risk emerges, as related to 'knowledge' and 'non-knowing':

> *The category of risk opens up a world within and beyond the clear distinction between knowledge and non-knowing, truth and falsehood, good and evil. The single, undivided truth has fractured into hundreds of relative truths resulting from the proximity to and dismay over risk. This does not mean that risk annuls all forms of knowledge. Rather it amalgamates knowledge with non-knowing within the semantic horizon of probability. (...) Through risk, the arrogant assumption of controllability - but perhaps also the wisdom of uncertainty - can increase in influence* (Beck 2008:5).

Such an influence relates to scientific knowledge:

> *Nowadays the semantics of risk is especially topical and important in the languages of technology, economics and the natural sciences and in that of politics. Those natural sciences (such as human genetics, reproductive medicine, nanotechnology, etc.) whose speed of development is overwhelming cultural imagination are most affected by the public dramatization of risks. The corresponding fears, which are directed to a (still) non-existent future, and hence are difficult for science to diffuse, threaten to place restrictions on the freedom of research* (ibidem: 6).

From a knowledge society to a risk society: final remark about the future of higher education

There is a dual role for scientific knowledge passing from transformative and essential - as it can be identified in a knowledge society discourse - to be questioned in its own authority:

Arguing that academic freedom and peer review are the major warranties of the 'quality' of academic work will today elicit a wry smile from almost every academic

> *Over the past two centuries, the judgement of scientists has replaced tradition in western societies. Paradoxically, however, the more science and technology permeate and transform life on a global scale, the less this expert authority is taken as given* (ibidem).

The risk society emerges as an alternative and competing discourse in contemporary society.

Nowotny et al. discuss the process of the shift from a knowledge society to a risk society, meaning that

> *The shift from confident and unproblematical forms of social forecasting fuelled by technological determinism, the knowledge society, to much less predictable styles of socio-cultural analysis reflecting the growth of intellectual and social volatility.* (Nowotny et al. 2004: 30)

The authors eloquently described the contrast between the two accounts of a future society – the knowledge society and the risk society:

> *The first is schematic, linear, confident, while the second is discursive, diffuse and gloomy. The former describes the culmination of past and present trends; the latter their radical subversion. The first emphasises the primary role of production; the latter, by suggesting that uncontrollable risks have become an integral part of any production process, challenges such a primacy. Consumers, patients and ordinary citizens at the mercy of such a runaway production process are cast into the heroic role of having to resist the self-proclaimed authority of those who still make believe that they know and are in control. The risk society is therefore a latent political society, oscillating between public hysteria, tension-ridden indifference and attempts at reform* (ibidem).

Will academics continue to have the possibility to produce knowledge for its own sake or/and for the betterment of global societies? Arguing that academic freedom and peer review are the major warranties of the 'quality' of academic work will today elicit a wry smile from almost every academic. The pressure to produce applicable, profitable and visible knowledge is entering academic world in a manner that was unnoticeable before. Those discourses are creating a social reality regarding what can constitute knowledge in the realm of universities and academics.

We hope the considerations made in this piece can contribute to the discussion about what knowledge should be produced by academics and what kind of academics our (risk) society really needs.

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Implementing the Bologna Process: an example of policy recontextualisation – the case of Spain

Marina Elias[28]

In this paper, a concept of 'recontextualisation' is used to help understand the development of different power levels at university and to exemplify how a major European policy is being implemented at each level of power, using Spain as an illustrative country.

University missions

In the context of 'universal' higher education (Silver 2009) most academics and politicians insist that university should be a public good. But for whom? In what sense? To what extent does university deliver social benefits? If we gather and simplify the diversity of university missions, we could basically retain: a) the orientation towards the profession, which corresponds to the function of the economic adjustment to the labour market, as well as the emphasis on applied training and performance; b) the orientation towards science and content, which deals with the production, reproduction and transmission of knowledge; and c) the orientation towards the student, which, under the broad concept of education, aims at cultural broadening, is concerned with subjects related to social and political responsibility, with the citizens and, finally, it aims at integral training and the development of the self (Barnett 2000; Troiano *et al* 2006).

Policy globalisation

Nowadays, governments tend to manage universities from a 'distance'. The relationships between the state and its public services, the market and the reference community are being revised completely in the west (Clark 1998; Neave 2003). Basically, due to reductions in state financing service providers, including universities, have to assume a larger part of the responsibility and the risk of failure in a competitive environment (Henkel 1997).

In this context, quite a large number of universities have changed the balance between the three missions and, trying to make their services more appealing, they have emphasised more the professionalising mission; at the same time, they have tried to pay more attention to students, helping them in their development at university (Witte 2004). The change in some university degree profiles towards a greater emphasis on clearly professional components is a symptom of this new balance of missions (Troiano and Elias 2006).

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[28] Marina Elias is Teacher of Sociology of Education at University of Barcelona and researcher at GRET (Research Group of Education and Work) at the Autonomous University of Barcelona. marinaelias@ub.edu
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There are many different actions that higher education institutions (HEIs) may carry out to operate well in these new circumstances. Some HEIs respond by adopting a business ethos because they see that it may bring some advantage in a more competitive environment (Symes & McIntyre 2000; Harris 2005; Troiano *et al* 2007). From the society and student point of view, education is embedded in the discourse of meritocracy and the need to obtain qualifications to show in the labour market.

> Education is embedded in the discourse of meritocracy and the need to obtain qualifications to show in the labour market

Levels of power and recontextualisation

Traditionally, universities have had a large amount of autonomy to make their own decisions though countries differ in this respect.

Power has been diffuse, the faculty staff have had much autonomy (Kezar 2001; van Vught 1989). And despite the fact that the rules of the game for university professors have changed a lot over the last few years (Henkel, 2005), the faculty staff continue to play a key role when innovations are implemented (Troiano and Elias 2006).

The policy implementation process must take into account the transformations which may occur at different levels of power within an organisation. At university we have to include the levels of the degree, basic unit, middle managers, teachers, staff and students. Each has its interests, culture, rules and aims. In this sense, when a policy is implemented each level translates it into something else.

We can describe this process as one of recontextualisation. This term was used initially by Bernstein (1990) especially in relation to social actors - especially those involved in symbolic production institutions - such as universities, churches and, more recently, the media, international organisations and the state, who produce and disseminate legal knowledge both in the strictly scientific and in the ideological sense (Bernstein 2000; Vaira 2004).

In education, Bernstein applied the concept to the pedagogic process with different actors adapting and defining qualifications at different levels, selecting content, writing curricula, developing teaching methods and establishing standards. At a lower level stands the 'pedagogical recontextualising field' (PRF), whose main players are managers, teachers and technicians[29]. Even a top-down policy is not usually implemented as planned from the top with changes made at each level of power.

In higher education, middle managers play a key role in the process of recontextualisation, reinterpreting the policy in relation to traditions, culture and disciplinary needs. Other actors in the institution, e.g., teachers and students, tend to perceive the overall reform in the light of that recontextualisation that has been carried out in their context.

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[29] Bernstein considered the official pedagogic discourse as a player element of inequality, with a spirit from top to bottom. While showing the existence of the field of recontextualisation pedagogue, i.e. the actors were able to resist or adapt to the official line (see Troiano *et al* 2010, for a further analysis).

Both aspects, levels of power and recontextualisation are fundamental to understanding policy implementation. In the remainder of this paper, these two concepts will be used to review the implementation of the Bologna Process.

Bologna Process

Bologna is an intergovernmental process that seeks to establish a European Higher Education Area (EHEA). It started originally with 29 European countries and now involves 46. The EHEA aim is that all countries implement policies to ensure mutual confidence and recognition, and to enhance the quality, attractiveness and comparability of qualifications, and promote student and staff mobility around EHEA. It aims to contribute to economic, social and political objectives of all partners in the process of promoting learning and research. More specifically, the political authorities in charge of guiding the reform indicate that one of the axes of European harmonisation is the search for the employability of graduate students through the definition of professional profiles. It wants to emphasise the central importance of the skills and competences that graduates bring to the labour market.

The three key points of the Bologna Process are:[30]

- Harmonisation of qualifications to foster European mobility and cooperation in order to guarantee and develop comparable criteria and methodologies (involving strengthening the role of quality agencies) and the fair recognition of foreign degrees and other higher education qualifications.

- Introduction of the ECTS (European Credit Transfer System), which is a transfer and accumulation system that focuses on the students, for it takes into account the total amount of work they do. The value of an ECTS credit fluctuates between 25-27 hours; therefore, the work in one academic year per student is 60 ECTS, assuming students devote 40 hours per week to studying.

- The same system of qualifications for all countries divided into three stages: graduate, master and PhD. Countries are currently setting up national qualifications frameworks that are compatible with the overarching framework and define learning outcomes for each of the three cycles. Access to the second cycle (Master) usually requires successful completion of first cycle studies (Bachelor), lasting a minimum of three years. The degree awarded after the first cycle should also be relevant to the European labour market as an appropriate level of qualification.

The various guidelines and official laws, however, are undergoing a process of *recontextualisation* in the sense that the different authorities and agents involved in them are adapting official texts (EUA 2005). The reception of the process is received differently according to the national–local policies and cultures (Kogan 2003; Vaira 2004; Witte 2006).

> Levels of power and recontextualisation are fundamental to understanding policy implementation

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[30] From an official web page on the Bologna Process:
www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/documents/Bologna_leaflet_web.pdf.

Harmonization and divergence could seem contradictory but this is not necessarily the case. Broadly speaking, the Bologna Process has a convergence aim, to homogenise universities around Europe. Precisely because all countries have different traditions and cultures, each country has to make different changes to arrive at the same finishing line. This does not mean that one country is closer to Bologna than another. For instance, Spain was more closer to the Bologna Process aim on lifelong learning but not on teaching focused on learning. Moreover, in each country there are different levels of power with their different traditions and cultures. In this sense, the recontextualisation analysis is needed. This balance between flexibility and harmonisation is valid at each level of power. From a governance point of view, it is also concluded that recontextualisation is necessary in order to arrive at the final aim of convergence (EUA 2005).

In each country, the implementation of the guidelines of the Bologna Process has been different. Also it has been different for each university, faculty or university degree, for it has been implemented in a relatively flexible way according to different needs. In this respect, the Bologna Process supports autonomy and flexibility, and it promotes comparison and recognition through ease of articulation between different national frameworks, and the compatibility of those frameworks within the EHEA. Bologna supports the idea of autonomous institutions; it is not about homogenisation and does not seek to make all HE systems the same.

> This balance between flexibility and harmonisation is valid at each level of power

Another Bologna Process feature is that some politicians take it as a brand (or flag) to explain the necessity to make changes that would otherwise be difficult to justify. Some countries had tried unsuccessfully to introduce changes at universities similar to Bologna trends, and then EHEA was seen as a second chance to do so. The Bologna Process is used to implement a lot of policies, some of them not explicitly related to the EHEA.

The changes brought about by the Bologna Process are found to be along the same lines as the European trends and reformulations that universities were already following before the Declaration. They were the result of the confluence of multilateral synergies. As we have explained in this paper, firstly the anticipation of a university system with a high mobility of European students and future graduates justifies the rapprochement to the European models, in order to favour the recognition of qualifications. Secondly, the continuous growth in the number of students, together with the increase and diversification of the social demands made of universities, forces the legislators to acknowledge the multifunctionality of higher education: scientific development, cultural extension and, the formative aspect which up until then had been neglected, professionalisation. In this way, the need for adjustments according to the demands for graduate students observed in the market is legitimized[31].

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[31] As EUA (2005) points out "The main reason why so many institutions transformed the Bologna reforms into their own institutional agenda seems to lie in the perceived need to review and reform curricula. At about a quarter of the institutions, different groups commented that the Bologna reforms had a "trigger effect," hastening the implementation of reforms that had already been prepared by many internal discussions beforehand. Sometimes, there were comments that the external pressure made it easier to focus on a

Bologna Process reviews

Generally speaking, there has been an oscillation between scepticism and suspicion. The most optimistic views on the Bologna Process sustained by many politicians and researchers consider the reflection and the changes that it may involve to be an opportunity to improve the effectiveness of the university system (Valle 2005).

However, critical voices very soon started to make themselves heard. Some of these objected to the way that, despite the process being aimed at provoking major changes in the re-evaluation of European universities, it is leading to generalised confusion (Mora 2005). According to this view, the establishment of the EHEA is taking place within the framework of a global process, the characteristics of which are common to most western countries. So, governments do not presently tend to directly govern universities, but rather use the means of what has been called "governance". In this new framework, assessment systems are more linked to rewards and accountability, which involve replacing the 'trust principle', reducing the dependence on public funding and introducing market mechanisms to higher education (Harris 2005; Tomusk 2004). Relatedly, entry into the EHEA has been a further step by universities in their search for private funding and not the beginning of it, as some authors claim. It appears that the tendency will be for this situation to increase even further due to the economic crisis that has existed since the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century.

Current European reform is oriented mainly towards labour market demands. The emphasis on 'employability' is reflected in the extension of the general need to 'professionalise' more studies, but in practice it often takes a specific form that runs the risk of widening the generic model based primarily on 'competences'. Pedagogic discourse about skills sometimes is assumed without a proper analysis of the meaning and even a complete analysis of the context and the possible consequences of implementation. Furthermore, the Bologna Process in Spain started later (around 2004) and the pedagogic discourse of skills was implemented for all degrees, taking little account of discipline, tradition and cultural diversion. 'Competences' are being applied rather bureaucratically, sometimes involving confusion and have relegated contents and knowledge to a secondary position (Masjuan *et al* 2007).

> 'Competences' are being applied rather bureaucratically, sometimes involving confusion and have relegated contents and knowledge to a secondary position

UK and Spain in EHEA

According to a recent report by the British Council (Sweeney 2010) higher education in the UK is following key Bologna demands for the three cycle framework, quality assurance, credit accumulation on learning outcomes, a commitment to lifelong learning and articulation of the EHEA. Although the UK was involved at the beginning with the Bologna Process, in the mid-nineties it became a reluctant partner

set of reforms, to prune the existing offer of superfluous or outdated elements and to push a reform agenda forward that could have been more easily held up by disagreements if it had been a purely internally generated agenda."

adopting stances that were variously defensive, dismissive and aggressive. The benefits of joining the Bologna Process are still not clear from the UK point of view, nor are the changes implied by it. However, for some, the EHEA is considered as an opportunity to strengthen links with the rest of Europe, to increase mobility of persons and research, and to sustain the competitiveness of the UK.

Taking Burton Clark's analysis of university governance as a starting point, we can see that the three elements of market, state authority and academic oligarchy axis distribute power separately (Clark 1983). This framework is useful to understand the differences between Spain and UK.[32]

The United Kingdom for a long time had all three aspects fairly balanced, but from the eighties and nineties was moving to a situation dominated mainly by the market. Thus, governments prevailed over a dynamic of change 'from top down' that increased openness to the market along with the reduction in autonomy and self-control of academic oligarchy (Brunner 1991). In Spain, the starting point was closer to the power of academic oligarchy, being away from state control and market. Bologna has meant an approach to the dynamics of the state because they have political demands 'from top down' and the ultimate consequences - also related to globalisation and the weight of the economy - have been the approach to the market. In this way, Spain and all countries involved in the EHEA are approaching the Anglo-Saxon university model - increasing differentiation (horizontal and vertical), growing marketisation and consumerism, changes between higher education and state, and manageralism (Brennan 2010).

It is too bold to say that the Bologna Process is the only factor in Spain affecting the movement to market dynamics. Globalisation, including the political, educational expansion and economic crisis and the weakening of the welfare state, has also been important.

In Spain, a discourse on the need to professionalise university students already appeared during the 80s through the political authorities of the Ministry of Science and Education (Sánchez Ferrer 1996; Maravall 1987). It became more important with the increasing access of students to university, which has diversified the social origins of all the students bringing new expectations, attitudes and demands to the university (Troiano 2005; Langa and David 2004; Masjuan and Troiano 2003).

What happened in Spain is similar to other European countries, where university transformations took place initially in the nineties in opposite directions. However, the changes that have occurred more recently, in the early 2000s, tend to convergence (Teichler 2009). In this sense, it is a clear example of some countries using the Bologna Process as a brand to implement different policies, some of them not clearly related to Bologna.

> The benefits of joining the Bologna Process are still not clear from the UK point of view, nor are the changes implied by it

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[32] It is important to insist that the Academic oligarchy is not only one level of power. As Brennan (2010) criticised in his article, the analysis fails to address the different ways in which power can be distributed at the academic oligarchy. Also, as is mentioned before there are different university traditions.

ECTS as a centred teaching –learning conception

The definition of quality education has been modified by the Bologna process. It is now generally considered to be more student-centred, more constructive and useful for the future. The ECTS system (transfer and accumulation system) aims to promote the introduction of the formal language of student-centred teaching. This was not developed at the beginning by official Bologna declarations but some countries, including Spain, developed it behind the Bologna Process brand.

The Spanish government[33] has introduced changes in teaching and learning processes in order to meet students' needs to fit in current labour market needs. A comparison of Spanish universities with other European universities reveals that certain maladjustments between school methodologies and student needs were problematic. Thus, the introduction of the EHEA has been regarded as an opportunity for improvement, for it involves a reappraisal, and subsequent reform, of existing teaching methodologies. Basically, there is a need to develop a kind of teaching that stimulates lifelong learning, a form of active learning that can help students to learn in a more constructive way. The idea is that learning involves student commitment and active participation; in short, learning does not arise from didactic teaching. There needs to be a change in mindset to approaching teaching and learning; consequently, it means a change in the attitudes both of academic staff and students (Ferrer *et al* 2004; Elias 2010).

This specific recontextualisation of the Bologna Process and concretely of ECTS is not a Spanish idiosyncrasy. An important report concerning the Bologna Process policy - *Trends 2010* - identifies four priorities, the first of which is full exploitation of the link between the Bologna Process and curricular and pedagogical renewal with continued emphasis on student-centeredness, lifelong learning and diversity. The report states that "The Bologna Process should be regarded as a means to an end. Its main goal is to provide the educational component necessary for the construction of a European of knowledge within a broad humanistic vision and in the context of massified higher education systems with lifelong access to learning that supports the professional and personal objectives of a diversity of learners (EUA 2010:9)".

This paradigm implies a change in the roles of students and lecturers: lecturers should accompany students throughout their learning process and fulfil a tutorial function. The series of methodologies and actions included in this teaching paradigm are learning through discovery, learning based on problems (PBL), learning based on the student's own practice, cooperative work and role-playing, etcetera[34].

> The definition of quality education has been modified by the Bologna process. It is now generally considered to be more student-centred, more constructive and useful for the future

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[33] Almost each policy level has a quality agency with an important paper in implementation process. In Spain the State agency and more the autonomous community agency of Catalonia (Autonomous Community with regional government) lead the process in this region and also in Spain.

[34] We should point out that notions and concepts that are presently used in the academic environment regarding active, constructive, through discovery –and many more– types of learning, which are included in the notion of European credits that originated centuries

Bologna Process reviews in Spain[35]

It is important to mention just some of the assessments about the Bologna Process in Spain, because of the specific implementation on ECTS. As mentioned before, implementation depends on the recontextualisation at each level of power, and each level brings different meanings. In this process, the roles of the middle manager and basic unit are fundamental. There are different assessments depending on the concrete implementation, but we have collected some data that is shared in most of the degrees and universities in Spain. Academics' (including managers') concerns may be summarised as follows:

- There is a clear lack of funding to carry out the processes of change (EUA 2005).

- This student-based education system involves many more hours of work for lecturers often in large classes in which they must implement methodologies that are closer to students (seminars, tutorials, continuous assessment…).

- There is a complex and contradictory process that has not provided more time for lecturers to assume and stabilise the changes.

- Lack of coordination and too many reforms have taken place in a short time, which adds to the constant lack of means (Masjuan *et al* 2007).

- The recontextualisation process creates confusion about the general policy and what it implies in a particular context.

The students' views are more complex. Obviously there are different profiles of students, different HEIs, different disciplines, etc. (Masjuan and Troiano 2009). However, generally speaking, students' perceptions of the changes are both positive and negative. They believe that the methodological changes are theoretically positive in the sense that they can improve their learning. Moreover, because teaching methodologies imply more teamwork, seminars and presence in class, students feel more integrated and engaged (Elias *et al* 2011). Albeit they consider that, due to the way in which the Bologna Process is being implemented - fast, without enough resources and with insufficient information - it is producing negative outcomes such as confusion and feelings that the aims are unclear.

The data show that students need to feel that they have achieved a minimum threshold in some aspects defining quality education. Factors such as the organisation of the schedule, the calendar, appropriate assessment strategies and information and guidelines by the lecturers are elements that should not necessarily be valued negatively by the students. They may feel that they have some control over these

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ago, are based on the pedagogic principles of the movements of school renewal that started in Europe and Spain in the late nineteenth century (Masjuan, 2004; Rué, 2007).

[35] These results come from a most part of research done by GRET research group of autonomous University of Barcelona. More information about it: university publications at http://grupsderecerca.uab.cat/gret/.

opportunities and devote themselves to studying and learning. The last European Commission ECTS Users' Guide reflects this relation between credits and learning outcomes, with changes related to ECTS entailing an increased workload. Accordingly, students are becoming more strategic, doing superficial or deep actions according to the tasks required. Thus, the effects were not those expected and in some respects entailed the opposite of Bologna aims.

Many students also concluded that the Bologna Process developed a masked privatisation of the university and was making higher education more elitist. They considered that the increase in workload made it more difficult to combine work and study, a clear problem for working class students. Moreover, some university taxes have been increased in the last few years. In 2009 and 2010 there were a lot of strikes and demonstrations. Nowadays, the environment seems to be more quiet, but the last political decisions (for instance, doubling the university fees) could entail student mobilisations again.

> The Bologna process is hindering the access and persistence of students who have fewer economic resources and who have to work while studying

Conclusions

The recontextualisation framework is useful in that it takes into account both the macro politics and the various actors. Further developments of research should follow this because the Bologna Process has entailed changes that affect the daily lives of university actors (staff, teachers and students). Sometimes policies that are successful in one context are applied into another without a complete analysis of the contextual differences, their implementation needs or possible consequences.

We have seen how the Bologna process is hindering the access and persistence of students who have fewer economic resources and who have to work while studying. This process could imply a return to a more elite university model in conflict with notions of equity and social justice. This effect of Bologna was not anticipated.

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The public role of higher education and student participation in higher education governance

Manja Klemenčič [36]

Interest in the public role of higher education has gained momentum in recent years. One of the triggers for this lies in the popular concern over a sustainable democratic order and culture when populations in our societies are becoming increasingly diverse, whether in terms of nationality, ethnicity and race, socio-economic standing, religion or age. While diversity is enriching, it also brings challenges. Weaker social bonds, more fragmented societies raise concerns about social cohesion and inclusion, common identity and sense of common community; and these elicit further concerns about the maintenance and development of a sustainable democratic order and culture. Higher education institutions are called into service to help societies tackle the challenges posed by increased and increasing diversity. Within notions of fragmented societies, the 'public role' played by higher education institutions may be seen as an integrative force. The idea that higher education has a contribution to make in the maintenance and development of democratic societies appears largely undisputed (Biesta 2007a). Zgaga (2009, p. 185), for example, argues that democratic citizenship is a concept inherent in the idea of the university and that higher education's contribution to citizenship 'can – and should – be conceptualised as an integral fibre within the "full range of its purposes"'.

Higher education legislation in many – if not most - European countries shows appreciation for the idea that higher education should play a role in preparing students for life as active, responsible citizens in democratic society, thus fulfilling a 'full range of purposes'. Most prominently this idea has been affirmed within the Bologna Process, and most vocally advocated by the Council of Europe (Keating et al. 2009). There are, however, profound divisions as to how exactly institutions in higher education should achieve it (Biesta 2007a, p. 477). Most attention so far has been dedicated to the various approaches on how to integrate democratic citizenship education into teaching and research; in other words, what the institution should do to serve the public at large. This article takes a different approach. Instead of asking what institutions should *do*, it poses the question of how institutions should *be* in order to promote democratic citizenship among their members. The focus is thus shifted to higher education institutions as 'sites of citizenship'[37] and how democratic citizenship is cultivated and indeed promoted within its governance structures, internal practices and processes, relationships with different stakeholders – and students especially – and the wider

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[36] Manja Klemenčič is Postdoctoral Researcher at the Centre for Education Policy Studies at University of Ljubljana, Slovenia and Visiting Scholar at the Center for International Higher Education at Boston College, USA. manja.klemencic@gmail.com

[37] This term has been introduced by Council of Europe's project "Universities as Sites of Citizenship and Civic Learning" and used also in contributions by Biesta (2007b).

community (Biesta 2007b, p.5). The underlying argument is that all of these aspects of institutional governance not only offer practical opportunities in citizenship, but they also transmit norms, values and attitudes, i.e. the so called 'hidden curriculum'. With a particular view on students' democratic citizenship learning, this article focuses on the principles and practice of student participation in institutional governance. The question posed is: 'What is happening with student participation in institutional governance in Europe?' and 'What do the challenges for representative student organisations tell us about the transformation of European higher education and European societies at large?'

This article, thus, argues that higher education governance in general and student participation in particular is of particular relevance for students' civic learning, as one of the purposes or social roles of higher education. First, student participation in institutional governance opens practical learning opportunities for the student representatives directly engaged. As Biesta (2007b, p.4) suggests, 'the most significant "lessons" in citizenship actually are the result of what people learn from their participation (or for that matter: non-participation) in the communities and practices that make up their everyday life'. And the community of a higher education institution is for students a significant (if not the most significant) space of their life. The argument is thus that student participation has a positive educational impact on student representatives, i.e. preparing them for life as active, responsible citizens in a democratic society.

Second, and more far reaching, involving students in institutional decision-making as partners emphasises the value of individuals' engagement in the public sphere (to which public higher education institutions undoubtedly belong). Cultivating such value in higher education becomes ever more relevant as we observe among students a growing culture of individualism, a pre-eminence of self-interest and a preference for the benefit to the individual over concerns for the common good (Colby et al. 2007). Students appear increasingly concerned with prioritising personal advancement and gratification over moral and social meanings (ibid.). Furthermore, trust in, respect for, knowledge of, and interest in democratic institutions and political processes appear to be decreasing among citizens (including our students) of democratic societies. In order to counteract de-politicisation of the student body and general distrust in democratic process and institutions, higher education institutions can offer a positive example of fully welcoming student participation in governance and ensuring that principles of democracy, equity and diversity permeate the entire institutional life (Bergan 2004). There is, hence, "consequentialist" logic in full student participation, democratisation of higher education institutions and student political socialisation (Luescher 2010).

> Students appear increasingly concerned with prioritising personal advancement and gratification over moral and social meanings

The highly differentiated provisions and practices of student participation across European countries

The democratization of European higher education institutions, which began with the student revolts in the late 1960s and early 1970s, has

reinforced the argument in favour of student participation in institutional governance. It came to be widely agreed that universities as public institutions, and in the domain of the public good, ought to be governed democratically, and that this implies the participation of all politically significant constituencies, including – and especially – students. The modern governance-theory further reinforced this principle by pointing out that no single actor has all the knowledge and information required to solve complex, dynamic and diversified problems pertaining to HEI, that no single actor has an overview sufficient to make the application of needed instruments effective, and that no single actor has sufficient action potential to dominate unilaterally in a particular governing model (Kooiman 1993). Thus, seeking divergent views from different stakeholders enriches deliberation and improves decision-making. Furthermore, involving student representatives is not only beneficial for the institutional atmosphere, i.e. the sense of openness, trust and cooperation, but also as a way to give students a 'voice' and thus deter mass action (Luescher 2010).

Thus, this period was marked by a shift from the older European model of professorial self-rule to the model of the university as a representative democracy with students being represented on governing bodies. The degree to which this model has in fact been implemented has varied, of course. Traditionally-structured British universities have arguably changed the least, whereas the German *Gruppenuniversität* has adopted a tripartite governance system in which the university governance was shared equally between academics, students and staff. While the tripartite system was indeed only transient, countries in Continental Europe by and large incorporated provisions for student participation into their primary and secondary higher education legislation. Hence, students as a collective body are in some way represented in the governance of public higher education institutions in basically every European country (Persson 2004; Bergan 2004). Accordingly we can find in Europe advanced – but also highly diverse – multilevel systems of national student representation which send student representatives to represent student interest in the institutional and national higher education governance structures (Klemenčič 2011a).

There is still quite a variety among European countries as to whether the national legislation specifies the composition of internal and external stakeholders in institutional governance arrangements or whether it is the institutions that have the autonomous prerogative to decide on these questions. Typically, the legislation is most specific regarding the provisions on the roles, responsibilities and composition of the central institutional governing bodies (Bergan 2004; Persson 2004). Accordingly, student participation in these bodies tends to be the strongest across institutions and countries. Sub-institutional levels are decided at the institutional level and they may or may not be regulated in the organisation's by-laws; thus noticeable differences arise between countries and even institutions within the same systems (ESU BSWE 2007, p. 23, 26). Legal provisions vary also in terms of whether student participation is granted in purely consultative or also in decision-making bodies. Moreover, when students participate in decision-making bodies they may enjoy full voting rights on all issues, or their voting rights may

Student representatives are increasingly being eclipsed by the executive leadership, and their role is increasingly being transformed from decision-making to advisory

exclude issues, such as for example budget, faculty appointments or student admissions. In view of these differences between countries, representative student organisations have continued to argue a case for more participation, formal as well as actual.

Is student participation in higher education governance in Europe actually improving?

The European Students' Union [ESU], the European platform of national student representations, brought the issue of student participation onto the agenda of the Bologna Process (Klemenčič 2007, 2011b). The Process, although an intergovernmental initiative, adopted a uniquely participatory-governance approach. Stakeholder organisations, among them also the ESU, have been involved as consultative members to the governing structures. Student participation has been a salient issue for ESU and its member unions, and the European ministers responsible for higher education acknowledged its importance by reaffirming in unambiguous terms that 'students are full members of the higher education community' and 'should participate in and influence the organisation and content of education at universities and other higher education institutions' (Bologna Process 2001). Such political affirmation was virtually unprecedented within European higher education.

In some parts of Europe, such as Central and South Eastern Europe, the political endorsement arguably led to improved student participation in national-level higher education policy making (ESU BWSE 2009). The general tendency across Europe has been to involve student representatives in the Bologna-initiated policy processes and implementation. These developments, however, appear to transfer to a much lesser degree, if at all, to the institutional and sub-institutional levels. The cases where general improvement in student participation in institutional decision-making has been reported are few. The institutional governance reforms now sweeping across Europe evince a trend away from the ideal of partnership (which implies that students are involved in all stages of the decision making, on all vital policy and strategy decisions, and that they act in decision-making capacity) to a model of universities providing services that are useful in terms recognizable by the state and business. Along with other internal stakeholder representatives, student representatives are increasingly being eclipsed by the executive leadership, and their role is increasingly being transformed from decision-making to advisory.

With the increasing pressure to modernise European higher education, universities have been granted more institutional autonomy. Institutional autonomy gives institutions the right to decide by themselves on their internal organisation and conduct of their operations. As evinced by contemporary studies of the transformation of European universities, the university governance reforms tend to be marked by the introduction of new public management regimes (CHEPS 2008). A general tendency is towards the creation of managerial infrastructures parallel to academic ones, leading to a shift in decision-making from the collegiate governing bodies, where students – as discussed earlier – tend to be formally

> New managerialism implies a distinct organisational culture which conceives students as 'customers' or 'clients' and solicits student participation for the purposes of feedback for improved quality performance

represented, to managerial bodies where they are represented less or not at all. The composition of the university boards typically favours participation of external stakeholders – especially from industry and government – to increase accountability and cultivate links with the broader environment. Concomitantly, the relative political weight of student representatives (as well as of other internal stakeholders) in these boards has decreased. New managerialism, as the extreme form of new public management approaches in higher education governance, implies a distinct organisational culture which conceives students as 'customers' or 'clients' and solicits student participation for the purposes of feedback for improved quality performance. The underlying model of student representation tends to be characterised by a de-politicised student government which concentrates on providing student services that complement the institutional quality agenda. In sum, strong executive leadership has come to be seen as a new ideal supplanting the representative democracy model discussed above.

Furthermore, the modernisation discourse highlights that more funding is needed for European higher education if it is to serve effectively the envisaged European 'knowledge economy and society' and compete with the rest of the world. While the financing formulas continue to be debated across Europe, the overall trend is towards shifting the burden of financing public higher education from the governments to the institutions. The public spending crisis across Europe, reflecting the global financial crisis has largely reinforced this trend. Institutions bearing an increasing burden of self-financing are trying to compensate by strengthening links to business and industry, but also by increasingly passing the burden onto students. Eurostudent (2008, p. 83) reports that the general trend in Europe over the six years between 2000 and 2005 is an increase of contributions from household and private entities to a higher education institution's income. The current trend seems to be towards cost sharing by way of tuition fees (Eurydice 2007, pp.25-27). For example, in Germany tuition fees were gradually introduced across the federal states (or Bundesländer) between 2006 and 2008, while in the United Kingdom (except in Scotland) tuition costs increased significantly in 2006, under the label of top-up fees (Eurostudent 2008, p. 83). The view that cost sharing is acceptable in view of the private benefits of obtaining a higher education degree is today much more in vogue than it was only ten years ago. The introduction of or substantial increase in tuition fees in some countries have significant implications for student-university relations. Paying students conceived as customers rather than partners fits well into the emerging ideal of the modern corporate university.

Conceiving students as customers does not preclude student participation in institutional governance, but it fundamentally transforms it. In the consumerist view of educational provisions, there is a contractual relationship between the institution as a provider of educational services and students as consumers of these services who are expecting value-for-money. Students are invited and expected to contribute in institutional quality assurance procedures aimed at improving services and overall institutional performance. Quality assurance is also a powerful element of the new public management agenda as research and teaching and

Cost sharing ….. in view of the private benefits of obtaining a higher education degree is today much more in vogue than it was only ten years ago

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learning have become increasingly subjected to the scrutiny of institutional management and external bodies. The contemporary institutional preference for student participation is clearly towards an advisory or "accessory" rather than decision-making model of student participation, i.e. student participation in a form of consultation and quality assessment rather than partnership. Indeed, institutional leadership may be less interested in the representativeness of students and more interested in their expertise and ability to perform various student services and manage student facilities.

The challenges for representative student organisations

While on the one hand the representative student organisations across Europe continue to pledge the case for more participation in institutional governance, they are on the other hand struggling to elicit participation in their own organisations. A major cross-national survey of student participation in university governance in Europe conducted by the Council of Europe (Bergan 2004, Persson 2004) suggests that although voter turnout in student elections varies considerably across Europe, it tends to be low: most of the time, less than half the student population elects those representing the whole student body, and in most cases voter turnout is actually one in three or less.

One way to explain the low mobilisation of the student body and growing political apathy is perhaps as a reflection of the general population's political apathy combined with a lack of trust in and respect for political institutions. The Eurobarometer (2007, p. 37-39) reports that Europeans tend not to consider politics important in their life. It also shows that students tend to have rather low trust in political institutions (53% of students are reported not to trust any of the three political institutions: local council, parliament, government) (ibid.). Another explanation may lie in the rising concerns of students about their present and future financial sustainability. These concerns deepened with the global financial crisis and its implications for (reduced) employment opportunities. It comes then as no surprise that career orientation of students (i.e. vocationalism) is on the rise. Working alongside studying also reduces time and energy available for student political engagement. The Eurostudent Survey (2008) reports that more than half the students in eleven EU countries work alongside their studies, either to earn income essential to making a living, or for improving their lifestyle. Full-time students who do not need to worry about financing their education typically have more time, indeed leisure, to engage in student activism. A vocationalist orientation is typically not conducive to student political activism unless that activism is directly linked to career prospects (which indeed it may be for some student representatives). One more possible explanation for decreasing student activism – and the one often given by the anti-Bologna protesters – relates to shortened study cycle introduced by the Bologna reforms. The argument goes that shorter study cycles increase study duties which in turn prevent student participation in institutional life (Bergan 2004).

> A vocationalist orientation is typically not conducive to student political activism unless that activism is directly linked to career propsects

Regardless of what the most plausible explanation for low student participation in student representation is in a particular context, the fact is that student representative organisations across Europe experience very low turnout rates in student elections and that this elicits a criticism of the legitimacy of student organisations. In a way, they are caught up in a vicious circle where legitimacy of student representative organisations presupposes high mobilization capacity of the student body, and this in turn presupposes that students perceive that their participation in student politics makes a difference and that they have genuine influence.

Low mobilisation is not, however, the only challenge to the representative student organisations. Their institutional autonomy may be threatened through interference from political parties, identity politics, governments, and higher education leadership. The relationship of elected representatives to political parties has always been a particularly contested aspect of student politics. While cooperating with different societal actors on shared student interests is an expected part of the political process, safeguarding the independence of student representation is paramount not only as a value in itself, but also because perceived political bias leads to further mistrust of students and thus to further political apathy. As national politics is coupling with diversity according to religion, language/ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientations – and challenges of accommodating identity politics, the same challenges exist also in student politics. Involving minority student groups in student representation requires special effort, as does accommodation of the diverse and often conflicting interests of these groups. To preserve openness, its organisations need rules and regulations that are 'exhaustive, open and robust' in terms of representation of all student societies, including minority political and religious student groups (Quilliam 2010). Involving these groups may moderate potentially negative effects of such groups on the cohesive nature of the university environment (ibid.)

The relationship of student organisations with government and higher education leadership is also a sensitive issue, especially in times of higher education reforms that are unpopular among the student body, such as the introduction of or increase in tuition fees. If student representatives are unable or unwilling to contest such reforms, they are perceived to have grown too close to the establishment – be that the government or the higher education institution proposing the reforms. While student representatives in most cases do fight the proposals that jeopardise student welfare, there are a number of reforms – especially those following the Bologna recommendations – where – on the basis of the knowledge and information they have – they are likely to support the national policies and still face the opposition from at least some parts of the student body. This trend of growing distance between the political decisions taken by the political elites – in our case the student representatives, and those of their constituency – in our case the student body, very closely resemble what we are witnessing in national politics across many advanced democracies. One of the consequences of this trend is the rise in student protests and student movements.

> Involving minority student groups in student representation requires special effort

While student protests are a permanent feature in higher education space (Altbach 2006), the last decade has been marked by a widening and strengthening of student movements. This trend is clearly a reaction to - what is broadly labelled as - the neoliberal approach to the higher education reforms across Europe. The opposition to GATS in education, which used to be the most salient issue of student protests within the general opposition to commodification and commercialisation of higher education, is now overshadowed by other issues: rising tuition fees, decreasing public spending on higher education and the focus on the commercially-driven research and university-industry partnerships. New managerialism in higher education governance is also contested. The participants in these groups and protests often also involve school pupils, academics and trade union members. Sometimes, the protests are marked by constellations of 'strange bedfellows' from extreme leftist and rightist groups, but all finding a common ground in opposing not only the educational reforms, but government's social agenda in general. Many of these protests are connected – at least virtually – through the initiatives called 'unibrennt' [university burns], 'Bologna burns' and 'unsereuni' [our university].[38] There are very different examples across Europe of how student representative organisations relate to these groups. In some countries – such as Austria – the formal student representative organisation acknowledges and participates in the movement. In other countries, there is no formal recognition, but individual student representatives take part in the activities. In other countries again – and especially at the institutional level – there might be a conflict between the student unions and protest groups.

Conclusion

Institutional governance is not a singular phenomenon and neither is student participation. It comprises various dimensions in terms of domains and extent; and, to be properly understood and assessed it necessarily needs to be contextualized in terms of the legislative, historical and cultural setting of higher education governance and student representation in general. Given its institutional embeddedness, it is also difficult to compare across countries. The diverse practices of student participation in higher education governance reflect the diversity of institutional governance arrangements and different approaches to governance reforms. While we cannot ignore the diversity of forms of student participation across Europe, there is, however, evidence of the emergence throughout Europe of a new concept of student participation contained within the new public management approach to higher education governance. This concept depicts student participation much more in an advisory than decision-making role and focuses the domain of participation on areas directly linked to quality assurance of educational services. The more an individual institution subscribes to the managerial model, the more likely it is that, though there will still be some measure of student participation, students will increasingly be perceived as

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[38] For more information see: www.unsereuni.at; www.unsereuni.ch/; www.unsereunis.de/vernetzung/.

consumers rather than partners. In a consumer role, students will be having lesser opportunities for democratic citizenship education as described above, and higher education institutions will be less able to perform that particular aspect of their public role.

The challenges that the representative student organisations face across Europe allude to several plausible interrelated causes. One is that of rising vocationalist orientation of students that are increasingly concerned about their present and future financial sustainability in view of the global financial crisis and the (concomitant) reduced employment opportunities coupled with the rising personal burden of financing their education. The other is the growing distance between the political decisions taken by the political elites and those of their constituency. This trend is not only pertinent to national politics, but indeed also to student politics. The low turn-outs in student elections and the rise in student movements suggest a detachment of the student body from the representative student organisations, their politics and policies.

> In a consumer role, students will be having lesser opportunities for democratic citizenship education

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Annex I: Current and recent research projects, June 2011

Research projects on the changing shape of higher education and its relationship with the rest of society

Changes in Networks, Higher Education and Knowledge Societies (CINHEKS)

This is a three-year project funded by the Economic and Social Research Council within the European Science Foundation's Higher Education and Social Change (EUROHESC) research programme.

'Knowledge society' is one of the key ideas in explaining the current changing relationship between higher education and society. This notion is based on a premise about the importance of knowledge in contemporary social and economic development. Within this frame of reference, higher education systems and institutions are viewed as 'engines' of development for economic competitiveness and social progress. Such changing missions and roles for higher education imply major changes in traditional arrangements for governance, academic practices, research orientation and social partnerships and networks.

The CINHEKS project is a collaborative multi-country investigation into how higher education institutions are networked in knowledge societies in three regions of the world: Europe, the USA and Japan.

The CINHEKS project is being led by the University of Jyvaskyla (Finland) and is being undertaken in collaboration with researchers from CHERI, plus research teams at the University of Kassel (Germany), Hiroshima University (Japan), Technical University of Lisbon (Portugal) and the University of Arizona (US). The project runs from October 2009 – September 2012.

Higher Education and Regional Transformation (HEART): Social and Cultural Perspectives

Research into the local and regional impact of universities has tended to focus on economic factors. This project explored the relatively under-researched impacts of universities on the social and cultural lives of the communities of which they are a part, including the impact on social cohesion and inclusion, on citizenship and on the alleviation of various forms of social disadvantage.

This project was funded by the UK Economic and Social Research Council under its initiative on the Impact of HEIs on Regional Economies between May 2007 and December 2009. Its aim was to develop a comparative framework to research the direct and indirect impacts of higher education institutions on disadvantaged groups and localities in their sub-regional environment.

The case study approach that was adopted combined a regional focus and a grounded institution-centred approach. Four universities/regions were selected.

Five themes have emerged from the project, which reflect the findings from the four case studies:

- Universities and economic development/regeneration

- Regional and university images, cultures and the drivers and resistances to change

- Universities and active citizenship, regional leadership and the 'public good'

- Universities and social disadvantage: winners and losers from the regional impact of universities

- Communications and dialogue between universities and their regional stakeholders

These themes and the findings from the individual case study universities/regions will form the basis of book to be published in 2011.

The Changing Academic Profession (CAP)

CHERI is collaborating on an international study of the academic profession – a successor to the well-known Carnegie study carried out in the early 1990s. Its aim is to examine the changes being experienced by academics in different parts of the world and to consider differences and similarities between countries and between types of higher education institution, different subjects and types of academic job.

Surveys of nationally representative samples of the academic profession in different countries provide the central focus of the project. Over 20 countries worldwide are participating in the study. The project has resulted in several conferences and publications on the changing experiences and expectations of academic staff in different countries.

What is Learned at University? The Social and Organisational Mediation of University Learning (SOMUL)

This four year project was funded by the UK Economic and Social Research Council as part of its Teaching and Learning Research Programme. Its aim was to increase our understanding of the range of learning outcomes of an increasingly diverse higher education system and to investigate how these are socially and organisationally mediated.

The study concentrated initially on students and graduates in three contrasting subjects – biosciences, business studies and sociology. For each subject, five study programmes were selected to represent the different social and organisational features in which the project is interested. Students from these programmes were investigated at various stages during and following their undergraduate careers with a focus on their conceptions of learning and personal and professional identity. The wider applicability of findings from the initial three subjects was assessed in relation to a further group of subjects, again taking a range of programmes with different social and organisational characteristics.

Working papers based on the project, published by the Higher Education Academy are available on the project website at www.open.ac.uk/cheri/pages/CHERI-Projects-SOMUL-Outputs.shtml

A book based on the project entitled 'Improving What is Learned at University: An exploration of the social and organisational diversity of university education' is published by Routledge.

The Flexible Professional in the Knowledge Society (REFLEX)

This project was funded by the European Commission under its Sixth Framework Programme. CHERI undertook the project with partners in eight other European countries (The Netherlands, Germany, France, Norway, Italy, Finland, Spain and Austria). The main aim of the project was to look into the effectiveness of higher education in meeting the challenges posed by the 'knowledge society'. The project focused on three broad and inter-related questions:

- Which competencies are required by higher education graduates in order to function adequately in the knowledge society?

- What role is played by higher education institutions in helping graduates to develop these competencies?

- What tensions arise as graduates, higher education institutions, employers and other key players each strive to meet their own objectives and how can these tensions be resolved?

Reports based on the project have been prepared by CHERI for HEFCE are available on the CHERI and HEFCE websites. The reports cover:

- The employment of UK graduates: comparisons with Europe

- The context of HE and employment: comparisons between different European countries

- Subject differences in graduate employment across Europe

- Competencies possessed and required by European graduates

- Age differences in graduate employment across Europe

- Graduates retrospective views of HE

Read them all at www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rdreports/2008/rd22_08/

And www.open.ac.uk/cheri/pages/CHERI-Reports-2008.shtml

Higher Education in Europe Beyond 2010: Resolving Conflicting Social and Economic Expectations

This project was part of the 'Forward Look' programme of the European Science Foundation. Its aim is to develop a scientific agenda for future higher education research.

John Brennan of CHERI led the project with Jurgen Enders of the University of Twente in the Netherlands, Christine Musselin of the University of Sciences Po in France, Ulrich Teichler, University of Kassel in Germany, and Jussi Valimaa of the University of Jyvaskyla in Finland. CHERI's Tarla Shah was the co-ordinator. The project reviewed existing research literatures and made recommendations for future research under the following themes:

- Higher education and the needs of the knowledge society

- Higher education and the achievement (or prevention) of equity and social justice

- Higher education and its communities: interconnections and interdependencies

- Steering and governance of higher education

- Differentiation and diversity of institutional forms and professional roles.

ESF published the thematic report entitled "Higher education looking forward: relations between higher education and society" in September 2007 and the synthesis report entitled "Higher education looking forward: an agenda for future research" in July 2008. Both are available on its website at www.esf.org/publications.html.

Research projects directed towards particular aspects of higher education policy

Understanding and Measuring the Value and Impact of Services in HE that Support Students, with AMOSSHE – The Student Services Organisation (funded by the HEFCE Leadership, Governance and Management Fund)

The project is developing a holistic approach to understanding and evaluating the value and impact of services in HE institutions that support students.

It will:

- consider the rationale for institutional policies and practices;

- identify meaningful ways to assess and demonstrate the impact and value of student services in HEIs;

- develop potential measures and pilot them in different support services in several HEIs;

- produce and disseminate tools and techniques to evaluate the value and impact of services.

Outcomes will include a literature review; and a 'toolkit', or series of toolkits, for service managers to use to implement this approach and thus demonstrate service value. This will recognise the varied approaches and needs of different institutions and allow HEIs to adapt the tools as best befits their institutional circumstances. The toolkit will be piloted in four different types of HEIs in England.

The Experiences of Black and Minority Ethnic Staff in HE

CHERI and the Centre for Higher Education and Equity Research (CHEER) at the University of Sussex are collaborating on a research and development project commissioned by the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU).

The study aims to explore the experiences of black and minority ethnic (BME) staff working in English higher education institutions and contribute towards developing better work environments for them. The study focuses on three thematic areas: 'management practice', 'support frameworks and relationships' and 'leadership and development'.

EUROSTUDENT: The 'Social dimension' of Studying

CHERI is collaborating in an EC-funded European project on the social and economic conditions of student life. The project aims to provide data, especially to national higher education ministries and other policy bodies, on various aspects of students' living and studying conditions in order to better understand the different national situations and to assess the strengths and weaknesses of their respective frameworks in international comparison with a view to improving effectiveness.

CHERI is part of the international consortium, led by the Hochschul Informations System GmbH, which is conducting the project.

The Comparative Student Experience

This study was commissioned by the Higher Education Funding Council for England and explored differences between the experience of higher education study in the UK and the experience of study in other (mainly European) countries. The study took the form of a literature review and further analysis of existing national and international datasets from other CHERI projects.

The study looked at how much time students devoted to their studies and how that time was spent, at their attitudes and approaches to study and at how these seemed to affect the outcomes of learning. Comparisons were made with students in other European countries and, within the UK, between different universities and subjects and between different types of student.

The project's report – *Diversity in the student learning experience and time devoted to study: a comparative analysis of the UK and European evidence*- is available on the HEFCE website.

Read the report at www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rdreports/2009/rd06_09/

Study into Student Engagement

CHERI completed a study commissioned by HEFCE which aimed to determine the present extent and nature of student engagement in higher education in England to help inform policy development and institutional practice in this area.

For the purposes of the study, student engagement was defined as the processes whereby institutions (and sector bodies) make deliberate attempts to involve and empower students in the process of shaping the learning experience. As such, it was concerned with institutional and student union processes and practices such as those relating to formal student representation and student feedback, and other informal processes which seek to inform and enhance the collective student learning experience. It was not concerned with specific teaching, learning and assessment activities that are designed to enhance an individual student's engagement with their own learning.

The study comprised two main strands:

- an online survey of publicly-funded higher education providers (higher and further education institutions) and student unions; and

- fieldwork with a number of providers and student unions.

Read the report at www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rdreports/2009/rd03_09/

University League Tables and Their Impact on Institutional Behaviour

The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) commissioned research into newspaper league tables of higher education institutions (HEIs), how they are compiled and the impact they have on institutions. CHERI undertook these two major strands of research in collaboration with Hobsons Research.

The first strand investigated the methods and underlying data used in those rankings of most interest to English HEIs: specifically the national rankings produced by the Guardian, Sunday Times and the Times and the world rankings produced by THES and Shanghai Jiao Tong University.

The second strand consisted of small-scale case study research looking at how six higher education institutions were respond to league tables and whether or not they were taking steps to climb the rankings. This included semi-structured interviews with key personnel and small group discussions with a selection of academic and other staff in each case study institution. Concurrently, an online survey of all English HEIs gathered top-line data on the impact of league tables on institutions and their views on this.

Read the report at www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rdreports/2008/rd05_08/

Interim Evaluation of Lifelong Learning Networks

Lifelong Learning Networks (LLNs) are a Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) initiative which aims to improve the coherence, clarity and certainty of progression opportunities for vocational learners into and through higher education. The first LLNs were established in 2005 and there are now 29 LLNs representing almost national coverage of higher education institutions and further education colleges.

CHERI undertook an interim evaluation of the LLNs as a 'progress check' to help HEFCE develop policy and support good practice as it develops. Though each LLN has developed its own approach to fulfilling the overall objective, HEFCE identified three aspects as fundamental to each LLN: curriculum developments that facilitate progression; establishment of appropriate information, advice and guidance; establishment of robust progression agreements. The interim evaluation comprised a range of interlocking activities, including exploration of a eight case study LLNs, supplemented by analysis of documentation relating to the full complement of LLNs.

Read the report at www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rdreports/2008/rd05_08/

The Impact of Foundation Degrees on Students and Employers

This study was commissioned by Foundation Degree Forward as part of their research strategy. Foundation degrees (Fds) were a specific UK government initiative launched in 2000 with the aim of meeting a perceived shortfall in the numbers of people with intermediate higher technical and associate professional skills, and of increasing and widening participation in higher education. By design, Fds are intended to be developed in close collaboration with employers, to ensure the integration of academic and work-based learning.

The study was undertaken during May 2007 and February 2008 and aimed to cover issues relating to the impact of Fds as follows:

- Student perspective: exploration of the factors that led them to enrol on an Fd; their views and experiences of integrating academic and work-based learning; and (for students who have now completed their Fd) the benefits of having a Fd qualification;

- Employer perspective: exploration of factors that led them to make a commitment to Fds; the extent of their involvement in Fds; their assessment of the impact of Fds on their workplace.

Read the report at www.fdf.ac.uk/files/CHERILSNreport.pdf

Engagement in Course Development by Employers Not Traditionally Involved in Higher Education: Student and Employer Perceptions of its Impact

CHERI has undertaken the above systematic review for the Department for Children, Families and Schools. The CHERI review team worked in partnership with the EPPI-Centre of the Institute of Education, University of London.

The work was published in January 2008 on the EPPI-Centre and DIUS websites: eppi.ioe.ac.uk/cms/Default.aspx?tabid=2316 and www.dius.gov.uk/publications/DIUS-EPPI-08-01.pdf

Excellence in Learning and Teaching

The Higher Education Academy commissioned a review of the literature on excellence in learning and teaching in higher education to enhance the sector's understanding of the varied conceptualisations and usages of the term 'excellence' and consider the implications for future policy and practice in relation to promoting and developing excellence.

The review addressed questions of conceptualisations and usage at different (but interlinked) levels: system-wide; institutional; departmental; individual, and from two different perspectives, teaching and student learning.

The report, which sets out a number of implications for policy and practice, is published by the Higher Education Academy.

Read the report at www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/York/documents/ourwork/policy/Excellence_in_TL_LitRev.doc

Research into Part-time Students' Career Decision Making: A Feasibility Study

This feasibility study for the Higher Education Careers Services Unit (HECSU) aimed to produce a specification and rationale for how research on part-time students' career decision-making can be implemented.

As part of the study, the relevant literature (e.g. on methodology, gaps in the existing research evidence etc) was reviewed and a small number of individuals with relevant expertise were consulted in a systematic way. The resulting research specification sought to facilitate comparison with the concurrent HECSU-funded study of full-time students, *Futuretrack*.

The feasibility study commenced in August and was completed in December 2006. The outcome of the evaluation was a report to HECSU.

Towards a Strategy for Workplace Learning

CHERI undertook this project together with management consultants KPMG LLP to assist the Higher Education Funding Council for England in the development of a workplace learning strategy. The main purposes of the study were to establish the current objectives of workplace learning in relation to higher education, to evaluate the extent to which they were being achieved and to assess the potential future contribution of workplace learning to higher education.

Read the report at www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rdreports/2006/rd09_06/

Learning Through Placements

This study, commissioned by the Higher Education Academy and funded by the Higher Education Careers Services Unit, was undertaken jointly with Sheffield Hallam University's Centre for Research and Evaluation. The study aimed to investigate students' perceptions of learning from work placements, to explore how they try to transfer and build on

that learning in later stages of their programmes. It also explored how values and ethical positions are developed on work placements.

Read the report at
www.prospects.ac.uk/downloads/documents/HECSU/Conferences%20and%20events/Changing%20Choices/Work_based_learning_LH_BL.pdf

Vocational Provision for Young People and Adults in Building Crafts and Hospitality CoVEs in London

This project investigated vocational provision and progression routes (including to higher education) for young people and adults in Building Crafts and Hospitality CoVEs (Centres of Vocational Excellence) in London. The research team included colleagues from Continuum at the University of East London.

The work was undertaken between September 2005 and March 2006.

Read the report at www.lsneducation.org.uk/user/order.aspx?code=062676&src=XOWEB

Information on the many other higher education research projects undertaken by CHERI since its creation in 1992 are available on the CHERI website – www.open.ac.uk/cheri.

Annex II: CHERI, June 2011 – Who they were …

CHERI staff

John Brennan	Professor of Higher Education Research and Director
Brenda Little	Principal Policy Analyst
Deana Parker	Director's Assistant
Anna Scesa	Information Officer
Tarla Shah	Administrative Head and Projects Officer
Mala Singh	Professor of International Higher Education Policy
Ruth Williams	Principal Policy Analyst

CHERI visiting professors

Caroline Baillie

Roger Brown

David Jary

Roger King

Harold Silver

Ulrich Teichler

CHERI associates

Lore Arthur

Edith Braun

Paul Close

Allan Cochrane

Helen Connor

Maggie Greenwood

Judy Harris

Terri Kim

Richard Lewis

Rajani Naidoo

Jan Parker