

Universities in Medialand: A special webinar on the public discussion of higher education and research, 30 March 2021



00:48:16 Hongwei Gu: During a time of high uncertainty for UK universities, how UK universities explore more sophisticated models for marketing themselves overseas? Thanks to all the speakers for this insightful talk.

01:05:36 Johnny Rich: To what extent is it fair to say the media portrays two HE sectors: the one that does research creating vaccines and the one where overpaid VCs fleece overly woke snowflakes students? Is there any way to join the dots in the public eye (as well as the versions of the HE sector that provide economic hubs, educates the labour market, etc, etc, etc)?

01:08:08 Jeffrey Kyle Grim: That is a great point "Universities should be engaging with the public rather than with policymakers with the purse strings" - thank you for that nugget of wisdom.

01:12:06 Catherine Montgomery: As well as an intense focus on the 'faults' of Oxbridge (and Durham!), the media reports HE as an homogenous sector. Sadly, the Covid crisis has accentuated the fragmentation of the sector. How would our journalist colleagues on the panel respond to being portrayed as an homogenous media (i.e. being a Guardian/THES journalist is exactly the same as being a Sun/Daily Star journalist). Maybe HE can learn from their responses?

01:16:35 Alison Wheaton: Question - it seems we've been touching on the role of media in a wider university stakeholder engagement strategy which could take place at multiple levels - department, university, region, nation/sector, global. Do any of our speakers have a view on at what level this might be most effectively tackled/progressed and what actors might take the lead? Can we learn anything from other sectors? health, energy?

01:17:45 Maria Ditchburn: Really strong arguments from everyone so far. Another interesting challenge for universities is developing a collective voice. The marketization of the sector works as a disincentive to collaborative working. If institutions could work together to challenge the negative narrative and highlight the good work universities do in their communities and in contribution to national and global priorities, this could have a significant impact.

01:18:07 Solomon ZEWOLDE: Media engagement with university students during the pandemic has been hugely disappointing! What are the problems from your point view to investigate and report the full impact of the pandemic across the student diversity?

01:20:13 Debbie McVitty: @Maria this is certainly the view of UUIK who valiantly tries to build this kind of all-encompassing narrative about the good universities do. But actually I think that tactic isn't working because it's too big and too bland. I think universities engaging vigorously at an individual level in public debate is likely to get more traction than a grand meta-narrative.

01:38:43 Ryan Wilkinson: In my experience, universities are generally petrified of receiving negative press in the media. Marketing departments, higher management etc reach into every day practices within HE including research and teaching to limit potential exposure to bad press. Anyone working in HE will have examples of varying severity of this happening in our every day lives. We can call this marketisation as many of the panel have already mentioned. Without intending to be critical of our panel, are journalists guilty of furthering this marketisation agenda through the framing of the (mainly negative) coverage and enforcing government agendas as opposed to hearing about the opposition to the marketisation doctrine?

01:41:22 Gabriel Alfaro: I liked Harriet's observation of media doing a better job of covering young people/ university students not really having a voice.... not surprising social media, becomes their pulpit to consume and share, I'm thinking of BLM Black Lives Matters, which I wouldn't necessarily call 'snowflakes', of which the majority of BLM protesters are actually white in Major US cities.

01:46:20 Johnny Rich: I thoroughly recommend this essay by Wonkhe's Mark Leach on what and how the sector should be addressing its negative portrayal in the media and government. <https://wonkhe.com/blogs/the-enemy-within-why-the-narrative-about-universities-and-students-went-so-wrong/> The essay is now more than 3 years old, but sadly as relevant today as it was at the time – if not more so.

01:50:36 CGHE Webinars: Thank you for joining us today. A recording of this webinar will be on the CGHE site tomorrow morning: <https://www.researchcghe.org/events/cghe-seminar/universities-in-medialand-a-special-webinar-on-the-public-discussion-of-higher-education-and-research/>

01:52:39 CGHE Webinars: Our next webinar will be after Easter on 8 April, 'Navigating the labour markets: International graduates need more than credentials'. You can register here: <https://www.researchcghe.org/events/cghe-seminar/navigating-the-labour-markets-international-graduates-need-more-than-credentials/>

01:53:28 CGHE Webinars: You can also sign-up to CGHE Annual Conference 2021: Remaking higher education for a more equal world here: <https://cgheannualconference2021.hubilo.com/>

01:53:35 Gabriel Alfaro: Howard Gardner has a large study coming out soon on the state of higher education campuses in the US from a comparative standpoint. I don't know of any studies in the UK. but would be interested to know. <https://www.therealworldofcollege.com/>

02:00:57 Catherine Montgomery: Great discussion - fantastic example of a university listening to diverse points of view! :)

02:01:34 Trif Victorița: Thank you!

02:02:02 Gabriel Alfaro: Thank you.