

National Research University Higher School of Economics
VII International Conference 'University between Global Challenges and Local
Commitments', Moscow 20-22 October 2016

The public good created by higher education institutions in Russia

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Two questions about public good

1. Is the public/private line a distinction between
 - non-market or market forms of education (economic distinction),
 - state or non-state controlled education (political distinction)?
2. What are 'public goods' in higher education? How are they defined, observe, measured and improved?

through the wall . . .

- “It is very important to understand the border of your knowledge, where is the wall, and how to come through . . .”

~ HSE historian, interviewed on 4 June 2013

The paper

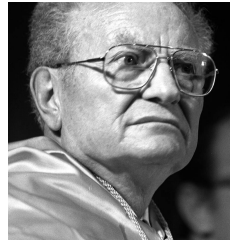
- A new generic theorisation of the understanding of public/private, that combines the economic distinction (non-market vs market) with the political distinction (state vs non-state)

Marginson, S. (2016). Private/public in higher education: A synthesis of economic and political approaches. *Studies in Higher Education*. DOI 10.1080/03075079.2016.1168797

- Application of this framework to higher education and research
- National variation in approaches to public/private
- Results from 30 interviews on public good in Russian higher education (part of eight-country study)

Economic definition of public/private—based on market vs. non-market production

Samuelson (1954)



Public goods are non-rivalrous and/or non excludable. They are under-produced or unproduced in economic markets. All other goods are private goods

Economic public goods: non-rivalrous and non-excludable

- Goods are non-rivalrous when consumed by any number of people without being depleted, e.g. knowledge of a mathematical theorem, sustains use value everywhere, globally, indefinitely, on the basis of free access
- Goods are non-excludable when benefits cannot be confined to individuals, e.g. clean air regulation, defence
- Private goods are neither non-rivalrous nor non-excludable. They can be produced, sold and bought as individualised commodities in economic markets. *This public/private distinction is between non-market production and market production*
- Research is primarily a public good. Teaching/student places can be either public or private; depends on policy

Political definition of public and private—state vs. non-state

- “The line between public and private is to be drawn on the basis of the extent and scope of the consequences of acts which are so important as to need control, whether by inhibition or by promotion... The public consists of all those who are affected by the indirect consequences of transactions”

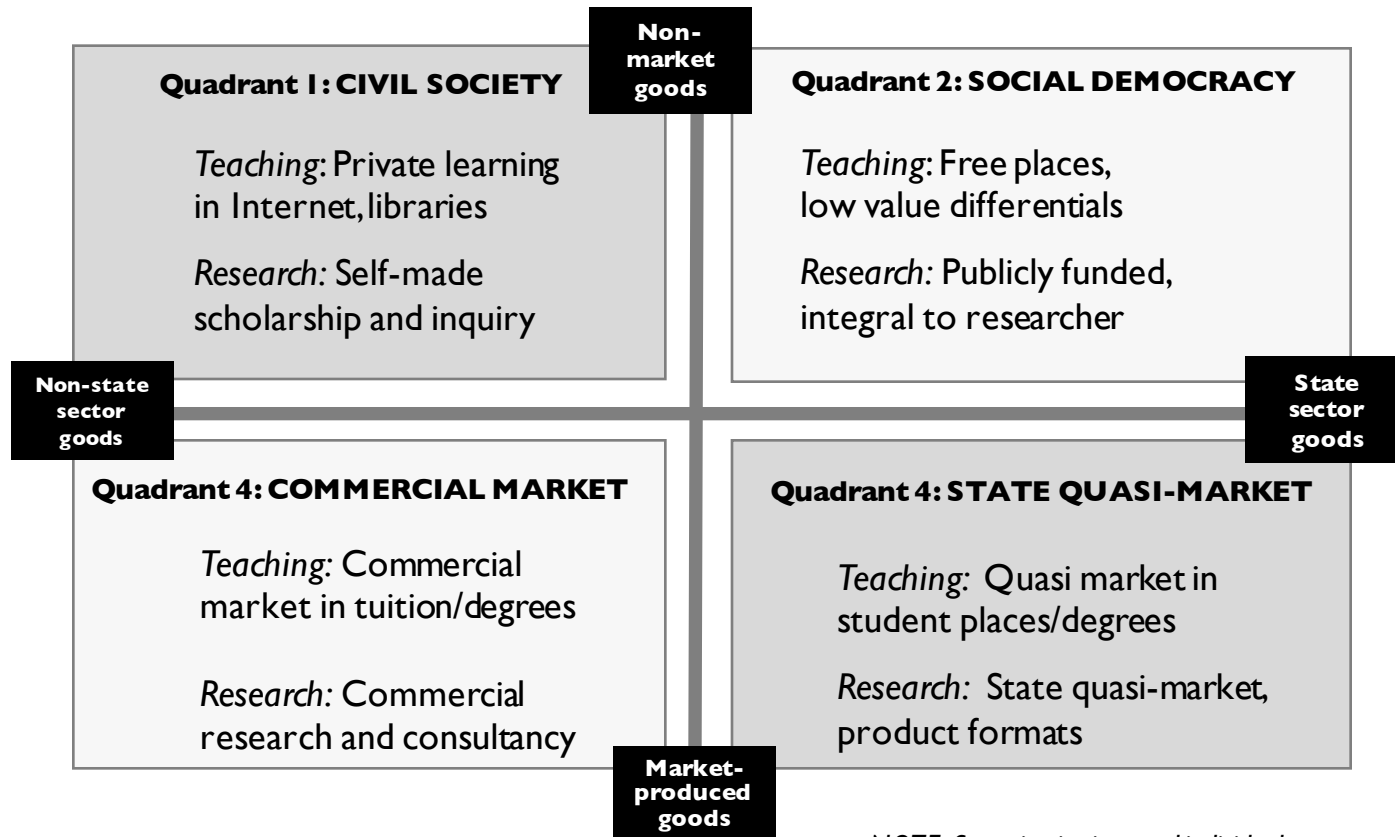
~ John Dewey, *The Public and its Problems*, 1927, pp. 15-16

- Matters with ‘consequences’ for others include market transactions, organisation of education systems, etc
- *This public/private distinction is between state-controlled and non-state controlled production*

Putting the two definitions together

- The economic distinction is non-market vs market
- The political distinction is state vs non state
- For Paul Samuelson higher education is public, unless it can be produced in a market outside the state. For John Dewey public or private is decided by states and/or democratic communities
- The economic and political definitions each have virtues, but also gaps, and each is ambiguous
- Putting them together creates four unambiguous categories (four political economies) that can be used to explain higher education and research

Public and private goods: four political economies of education



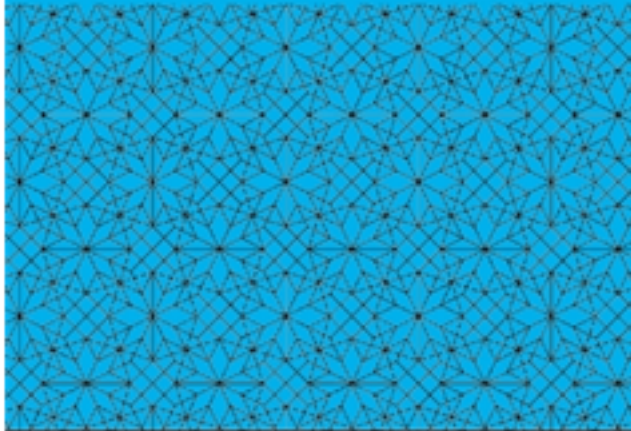
NOTE: State, institutions and individuals are active agents in all four quadrants

Common goods

- A particular kind of political public good. Collective and relational goods, goods that provide for social solidarity, equity, democratic self-determination, and social and geographic mobility in populations
- The provision of higher education on the basis of equal social opportunity and maximum social mobility is one such common good

HIGHER EDUCATION
AND THE
COMMON GOOD

SIMON MARGINSON



 MUP | ACADEMIC

Published 28 November 2016,
Melbourne University Publishing
<https://www.mup.com.au/items/199659>

Global public goods

- ‘Global public goods are goods that have a significant element of non-rivalry and/or non-excludability and made broadly available across populations on a global scale. They affect more than one group of countries, are broadly available within countries, and are inter-generational; that is, they meet needs in the present generation without jeopardizing future generations.’

~ Inge Kaul, I. Grunberg and Marc Stern (Eds.), *Global Public Goods: International cooperation in the 21st century*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 2–3

National variation: Russia



Ideas about role of the state in higher education (1): Soviet style

- “we define the needs of economy and society, for graduates, predicting what the market will need. And then we provide the necessary funding, with implementation of this order. This is my understanding of what government should do”

~ government official

- “Both government officials and public opinion still regard the state as the main patron for higher education... 80% of the university expenditures are covered by the state, so the universities mainly depend on the state... Many people here consider education as a public benefit, and it’s like it should be provided for free”

~ HSE economist

- “Universities in Russia... It’s a production plant of employees for the government and for society. Yes. It’s a training system to produce specialists. Lawyers, mechanics, engineers, so they are ready for work’

~ HSE administrator

Ideas about role of the state in higher education (2): Post-Soviet style

- “Most of the benefits (of higher education) are not collective for sure, they are personal, individual”

~ government official

- “Government has an extremely heavy hand. This heavy hand is only good for turning the biggest bolts and nuts”

~ HSE executive

- “In the 1990s the state collapsed and had no capacity to intervene and at the same time had no capacity to fund the new important things. Now there is the opposite movement of the pendulum... If I want I can get a lot of money from government. But my attitude is to be as far away as possible...”

~ HSE sociologist

- “(Government should fund higher education when people under-invest in it)... But actually we have no serious funding from business. In Russia we simply have the tradition of the charity”

~ HSE executive

A split history, split tuition, a split higher education system

- “In Russia we have a split history. Some believe in one version of history, the others believe in quite the opposite version of history”

~ HSE historian

- “I don’t like the Russian way when the best students get free education and others pay, and we have in one room students that pay and not pay, and they have different attitudes towards the university”

~ HSE executive

Hybrid thinking (combining old and new)

- “... is there a direct public good that goes not through individuals? The idea of university as a public good is that individuals get knowledge and become more productive and then, in addition to the individual rate of return, there is a social rate of return. They pay higher taxes, they live longer. Fine. But the interesting question is, do the universities do something directly for the public, not through this social rate of return through the taxes and productivity?”

~ HSE executive

Collective goods produced in and through higher education: many and hard to delineate

- “You cannot divide an ocean by parts”

~ HSE historian

- “knowledge, which is certainly public...”

~ HSE historian

... and also publicly available expertise in all disciplines, information and ideas, tolerance, helping people to live better together, lifting the common literacy, improving cultural life, social and economic modernisation, providing opportunities for students from poorer families

~ various interviewees

- “I think the university, it’s like a fjord inside of society”

~ HSE international programs

High participation, students learn little, too many graduates?

- “there are too many people with higher education from our point of view... many people who have a higher education degree go to work in jobs which do not require this degree”

~ government official

- “the economy does not consume all the graduates... for socialisation and citizenship, that’s a larger function ”

~ government official

- “the diploma of higher education became mostly a piece of paper which doesn’t guarantee that any knowledge can be behind it... we need to regain the status of higher education credentials ”

~ MISIS engineering faculty and planner

- “we have actually many graduates with very high self-efficacy but very low level of real skills”

~ HSE sociologist

Global public goods

- “Let me tell you first of all, in my point of view, there is no Russian science or American science or Chinese science. It’s world science.... There is no national science, it’s absurd”

~ HSE mathematician

- “It helps to globalise, to live in a more global world, to be more open and understand different cultures, to be engaged with other researchers and not reinvent the wheel”

~ HSE international programs

- “Here of course we’ve run into the free rider problem, big time. One country pays and the whole world benefits”

~ HSE economist

- “Unfortunately, not many people within the university and within the government see internationalisation as a public good function. They see it as part of the global competition”

~ HSE executive

Internationalisation: still partly closed

- “Our contribution (to global public good) is not enough. It is not adequate to our possibilities and our potential, we could do more. Of course in Soviet time we were more evident, and more useful for the world, than right now”

~ government official

- “the system is still fairly inward looking and Russian focused”

~ government official

- “we have many, many articles in our journals. But they are not introduced into Web of Science. It’s only Russian”

~ MISIS executive

- “never ever have I heard any kind of discussion at any university with which I was part of, (about) international production of public good ”

~ HSE sociologist

Measures of public good(s) in higher education

- “I don’t think there are any convincing measures of the impact of education on the society, but everybody believes that there are”

~ HSE economist

- *Graduates in leadership positions, in government and companies*

~ *several MISIS interviewees*

- *Longitudinal study of graduate careers, social mobility of graduates, effects of higher education on student personality, effects on attitudes of tolerance, health outcomes of graduates*

~ *various HSE interviewees*