THE INTRINSIC AND EXTRINSIC PURPOSES OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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Melbourne CSHE conference on ‘The purposes of Australian higher education’
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Introduction: precarity, multiplicity

Intrinsic and extrinsic purposes

Biesta’s three functions

What holds higher education together?

Qualification and subjection

Conclusions

Arts clocktower, University of Melbourne
IDEAS THAT WILL BE DISCUSSED

1. Higher education is less stable than it looks;
2. There’s no single value proposition (except in ideology). Higher education is multiple and heterogeneous;
3. Higher education has intrinsic and extrinsic purposes, and Biesta’s (2009) three functions of education;
4. Higher education is socially central not so much because it produces employable human capital, but because the intrinsic core of education/research has become attached to the main extrinsic purpose of the sector. This is the formation and distribution of social status;
5. Higher education is effective int allocating social status, half good at social inclusion and bad at social equalisation;
6. Intrinsic education and knowledge are out of whack with extrinsic employability and industry innovation

Brad Holland
1. Today’s higher education is less stable than it looks
LONG HISTORY OF DIFFERENT KINDS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

• China’s Imperial academies, training scholars in statecraft, began in Western Zhou (1046-771 BCE)
• The great scholarly monasteries of Northern India
• Library and Mouseion at Alexandria, 270 BCE
• The golden age of Islamic scholarship, 7th-13th CE
• Medieval European universities, Bologna 1088 CE
• Von Humboldt's teaching/research university in Berlin 1809 CE, followed by the comprehensive US science university that has spread everywhere

University of Al-Qarawiyyin (Fez, Morocco) founded 859 CE
EVERY KIND OF HIGHER EDUCATION HAS HAD TWO CORE PURPOSES, WHICH HAVE CONTINUED INTO THE PRESENT

• The educational formation of students
• The reproduction (and also often the creation) of knowledge through scholarship and inquiry

University of Cambridge, UK
THE EUROPEAN-AMERICAN SCIENCE UNIVERSITY, WITH THESE TWO PURPOSES, HAS SPREAD ACROSS THE WORLD

WORLD TERTIARY PARTICIPATION RATE NOW OVER 40%: Growth of tertiary students worldwide since 1970

OVER 65 NATIONS HAVE SCIENCE SYSTEM: science papers have grown by 5.2% p.a. since 2020

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UNESCO and World Bank data

OVER 65 NATIONS HAVE SCIENCE SYSTEM: science papers have grown by 5.2% p.a. since 2020

US Science Board data, derived from Scopus
All the previous forms of higher education were suppressed or lost support.

- Vikramshila, Nalanda and other Indian monasteries were brutally suppressed with everything lost.
- Scholars in Alexandria were driven into exile and the library defunded.
- Cosmopolitan medieval Islamic scholarship and the scholar-officials in China have given way to more Westernised universities.

The end of Nalanda, 1193 CE
AND GERMANY HOUSED THE WORLD’S LEADING SCIENCE UNIVERSITIES BEFORE 1933

Students collecting ‘Un-German’ books and papers for burning, 1933
CONSIDER
KARAZIN
KHARKIV
NATIONAL
UNIVERSITY,
UKRAINE

Before March 2022 Karazin Kharkiv was Ukraine's second ranked university.
2. HIGHER EDUCATION IS ESSENTIALLY COMPLEX AND HETEROGENEOUS
This was Clark Kerr's point about the 'multiversity' in 1962:

- Multiple historical origins and layers
- Multiple fields of knowledge, none of them reducible to another
- Multiple institutions, and agencies
- Multiple social groups and interests
- Multiple connections and stakeholders
- Multiple social, economic, political, cultural and educational outcomes
- Multiple objectives, norms and values

Clark Kerr, University of California President and author of *The uses of the university* (1962)
Reducing the multiple outcomes of higher education to a single purpose or single measure of value blocks from view most of what’s actually there.

A single value proposition (e.g. graduate salaries as the ‘master’ measure of value for individuals) can only be *ideological*.
3. GRASPING THE COMPLEXITY: TWO KINDS OF PURPOSE AND THREE FUNCTIONS
• The **intrinsic purposes** are the classical inner core of higher education, where value is judged on academic grounds
  - education of students
  - transmission, creation, dissemination of knowledge

• The **extrinsic purposes** are the external social roles of higher education, carried out in partnership with other social agents, who share judgments about value
  - this includes the allocation of social **status** via higher education, and the preparation of students in **work**, the professions and occupations

*Rene Magritte, *The human condition*, 1935*
BIESTA’S (2009) THREE FUNCTIONS OF EDUCATION


• **Qualification:** providing the knowledge, skills understanding, dispositions and judgements that enable students/graduates to ‘do something’

• **Socialisation:** ‘The many ways in which, through education, we become members of and part of particular social, cultural and political “orders”’

• **Subjectification:** The ‘individuating’ effects of education, whereby students become autonomous and self-realising subjects
### Biesta (2009) function (understood as student learning)

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#### Qualification:
- learning to do things

- Secondary: The intrinsic core is foundational to extrinsic qualification
- Primary: Qualification is largely realised in relations with social partners

#### Socialisation:
- ordering students in terms of external norms and values

- Primary: Teaching, knowledges contribute to socialisation
- Secondary: Relations with social partners also contribute to socialisation

#### Subjectification:
- becoming an autonomous self-realising person

- Primary: Subjectification in knowledge-intensive learning and sociability
- Minor: Social partners want regulated not self-determining autonomy
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### THE TWO PURPOSES AND THREE FUNCTIONS (3)

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When policy defines the purposes of higher education in terms of economic value, this pushes the intrinsic educational activities to conform – creating a square pegs in round holes situation - and hiding from view the non-economic functions of higher education.
Higher education enables people to transform themselves through the never-ending work of the self on the self. Higher education as intrinsic self-formation offers students much more than higher education as extrinsic consumption.

‘Life isn’t about finding yourself. Life is about creating yourself, and creating things’

– Bob Dylan, Nobel Prize for literature 2016
4. CLARK KERR’S QUESTION WAS ‘WHAT HOLDS THE MULTIVERSITY TOGETHER?’
HIGHER EDUCATION HAS SURVIVED AND EXPANDED THROUGH THE 935 YEAR HISTORY OF THE EURO-AMERICAN UNIVERSITY BECAUSE ...

• It produces graduates who become employable human capital for the knowledge economy?
• Its research generates innovations in industry which lift global economic competitiveness?
• It creates a more equal society?
• None of the above??
THE UNIVERSITY - WHICH FORMED PEOPLE THROUGH IMMERSION IN KNOWLEDGE -

• developed the extrinsic function of producing and allocating social opportunity and status,
• and of sorting and differentiating populations,
• and hence became the common and increasingly universal focus of aspirations

THE UNIVERSAL DESIRE FOR SOCIAL BETTERMENT THROUGH STATUS AND MATERIAL IMPROVEMENT

- Desires for higher education have universalised though average graduate earnings have fallen
- Individual status is the driver. Students and families want higher education to augment earnings, but they know it will lift individual status above those not in higher education.

’The desire of bettering our condition ... comes with us from the womb and never leaves us till we go into the grave’

~ Adam Smith, The Wealth of Nations (1776/1979), p. 441
THE ANSWER TO CLARK KERR’S QUESTION IS ‘STATUS HOLDS THE MULTIVERSITY TOGETHER’

- Higher education’s role in producing and distributing individual status is joined to cultural formation within teaching/research institutions.
- The universities that engineer and calibrate individual status, on a differentiating basis, pursue a second form of status – institutional status.
- There is also an exchange of status between institutions and students. Status is ubiquitous!
IN SHORT, HIGHER EDUCATION IS, MOST BASICALLY EDUCATION + KNOWLEDGE + SOCIAL STATUS
THE SOCIAL POWER OF THE TOP UNIVERSITIES = STATUS + RESOURCES + TALENT + KNOWLEDGE (SCIENCE)
Higher education is now central to many societies across the world, but there are two problems each could bring it undone.
5. The reliance of higher education on Social Status has downsides
   (Aside from the obvious point that there are too few winners)
Higher education is good at creating and allocating social status via cultural formation in knowledge.

But it is less good at social inclusion.

And poor at social equalisation.

These factors undermine higher education’s social and political base.

6. THERE IS A POOR FIT BETWEEN

1. INTRINSIC KNOWLEDGE AND EXTRINSIC INNOVATION
2. INTRINSIC EDUCATION AND EXTRINSIC EMPLOYABILITY
• Capital ‘pull’ and risk-taking is the main driver of industry innovation, not university or researcher ‘push’, though that also helps

• Higher education builds industry capacity indirectly by training researchers, some of whom go to industry, and by linking to global developments in S&T
UNACKNOWLEDGED ‘LEAKAGE’ IN NATIONAL R&D SYSTEMS

• Science is a single global pool, R&D policy is nation-bound
• Discoveries by national science are often taken up first by foreign firms
• National industry often sources its innovations from foreign science in the pool, not national science

THE GROWING DISSONANCE BETWEEN

• the intrinsic educational function of higher education in culturally preparing students as autonomous persons, via immersion in disciplinary knowledges, and

• the extrinsic policy expectation that higher education creates employable graduates who augment productivity and growth
Many students want personal development, and immersion in disciplinary knowledge, and they want to be employable. Multiple purposes.

While higher education and work co-exist in the lives of many, these intrinsic and extrinsic domains are heterogeneous. Agentic positioning, objectives, values, knowledges and skills, and the required behaviours, are all very different.

CHALK AND CHEESE
THE **INTRINSIC** PURPOSES OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN CLASSROOM LEARNING AND KNOWLEDGE ARE DIFFERENT IN KIND TO THE **EXTRINSIC** PURPOSE OF PRODUCING EMPLOYABLE GRADUATES.
In policy and public debate – and in research on higher education – ‘employability’ is the new universal, the goal of every higher education programme. Yet learning in higher education is immersion in knowledge, not work, and higher education cannot create jobs for graduates.

In UK the TEF judges the quality of the intrinsic education function in terms of graduate salaries. ‘Low value courses’ are vulnerable to enrolment reductions.

In Australia the government wants ‘job ready graduates’
CONCLUSIONS

AI generated image *Castles of a new world*
https://creator.nightcafe.studio/creation/drElbWKSL0RVCsmlGdyi
ECONOMIC POLICY DOES NOT LIKE MULTIPLICITY. THIS HAS LED TO EDUCATION/ WORK DISSONANCE

• Policy positioning of employability as the universal measure of value – so that educational/cultural/personal formation through learning scarcely exists – has perverse effects.

• Instead of students as self-forming autonomous learners aiming for the highest level of personal achievement, they are reduced to satisfied or unsatisfied consumers. Bizarrely, surveys of student experience model self-formation through learning
GOVERNMENT AND HIGHER EDUCATION ARE TALKING AT CROSS PURPOSES

• If government set out to design higher education focused on employable graduates it would not use cultural formation, academic knowledge and the teaching/research nexus! But trying to push the existing system in that direction is never going to work
• Higher education is now responsible for economic outcomes it cannot control
• Trust will become increasingly poisoned
The core intrinsic purposes of higher education are education and knowledge/research.

The primacy of extrinsic employability, measured by labour market outcomes, blocks student self-formation from view and creates unachievable expectations. Will higher education sustain its purposes, or will it focus solely on employability, or employability plus status and stratification?

Education as self-formation is potentially more attractive to students than narrow vocationalism.