

CHERI

Centre for Higher Education
Research and Information



The Open
University

Publications

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CHERI undertakes research, consultancy and dissemination activities in higher education policy and related fields in the UK and internationally. Publications are an output of these activities - they range from project reports (often published by the project sponsors) to books, book chapters and journal articles written by CHERI staff.

This document provides comprehensive details of publications resulting from CHERI's work.

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New and recent books and reports by Centre staff

Higher education and society in changing times: looking back and looking forward

CHERI, 2011, London: CHERI.

www.open.ac.uk/cheri/documents/Lookingbackandlookingforward.pdf

This is the last CHERI report. It looks at some of the changes facing higher education and at the challenges they pose, both to those who work in higher education and those who use it. The papers draw broadly on research projects and experience from within CHERI and beyond.

Higher education and society: a research report

CHERI, 2010, London: CHERI.

www.open.ac.uk/cheri/documents/HigherEducationandSociety.pdf

This report includes a range of papers which draw on recent research projects, including some international, undertaken by the Centre. The papers examine different aspects of the changing relationship between higher education and society – in terms of the student experience, the employment of graduates, the regional impact of universities, and the growing international mobility within the academic profession – and also look across the separate projects at some of the global themes which connect them.

Supplementary report to the HEFCE Higher Education Workforce Framework based on the international Changing Academic Profession (CAP) study

William Locke and Alice Bennion, 2010, Bristol: HEFCE.

www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rereports/2010/rd02_10/rd02_10.pdf

The Changing Academic Profession: the UK and beyond, UUK Research Report

William Locke and Alice Bennion, 2010, London: Universities UK.

www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/Publications/Pages/Publication-268.aspx

Improving what is learned at university: an exploration of the social and organisational diversity of university education

John Brennan, Robert Edmunds, Muir Houston, David Jary, Yann Lebeau, Michael Osborne and John Richardson, 2010, London: Routledge.

As higher education has expanded, it has diversified both in terms of its institutional forms and the characteristics of its students. However what we do not know is the extent to which it has also diversified in terms of 'what is learned'. In this book the authors explore this question through the voices of higher education students, using empirical data from students taking 15 different courses at different universities across three subject areas – bioscience, business studies and sociology. The study concentrates on the students' experiences, lives, hopes and aspirations while at university through data from interviews and questionnaires, and this is collated and assessed alongside the perspectives of their teachers and official data from the universities they attend.

Through this study the authors provide insights into 'what is really learned at university' and how much it differs between individual students and the universities they attend. Throughout, notions of 'best' or 'top' universities are challenged and both

diversities and commonalities of being a student are demonstrated. Posing important questions for higher education institutions about the experiences of their students and the consequences for graduates and society, this book is compelling reading for all those involved in higher education, providing conclusions which do not always follow conventional lines of thought about diversity and difference in UK higher education.

Diversity in the student learning experience and time devoted to study: a comparative analysis of the UK and European evidence

John Brennan, Kavita Patel, Winnie Tang, 2009

Available from HEFCE

www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rdreports/2009/rd06_09/rd06_09.pdf

CHERI was commissioned by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) to undertake a study on diversity in students' study experiences and the time devoted to it. The study aims to examine international differences in the student experience, based both on a review of literature and on the re-analysis of existing data on students collected as part of two recent studies. The main focus is the hours students devote to study activity, but the investigation also takes account of other factors and different ways of thinking about the student experience.

CHERI found that there are undoubted differences in both the extent and the nature of the engagement of students with their studies in higher education: both differences between individuals and, to some extent, differences related to the subjects studied and to the kinds of institutions attended.

In particular the study found that there is evidence to support the view that UK students spend fewer hours each week on their studies (broadly defined) than students in other European countries. But although there is evidence of a relationship between time spent on university studies and a successful learning outcome, the relationship is not particularly strong. The study also found that just because there are differences in experience does not necessarily mean these experiences are in deficit, and that there are considerable commonalities in the experiences of students across UK higher education's increasingly diversified landscape.

Report to HEFCE on student engagement

Brenda Little, William Locke, Anna Scesa, Ruth Williams, 2009

Available from HEFCE

www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rdreports/2009/rd03_09/rd03_09.pdf

CHERI was commissioned by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) to undertake a study of the extent and nature of student engagement in the higher education sector in England. The study is concerned with institutional and student union processes and practices – such as those relating to student representation and student feedback – which seek to inform and enhance the collective student learning experience, as distinct from specific teaching, learning and assessment activities that are designed to enhance individual students' engagement with their own learning.

The study found that institutions view student engagement as central to enhancing the student experience, but the emphasis seems to be placed on viewing students as consumers. For student unions, the emphasis is on viewing them as partners in a learning community. The latter notion seems to be stronger in certain subject areas (for example, Art and Design and Performing Arts) than others.

The majority of HEIs and FE colleges rate their student engagement processes – comprising a basic model of student feedback questionnaires and student representation systems – as reasonably or very effective; student unions are less likely to do so. Detailed discussions with staff and students within a diverse range of HE providers showed that actual practices vary between and within institutions and that their effectiveness could be improved.

Higher education institutions, student unions and further education colleges with significant higher education provision were surveyed to establish a baseline measure of the nature and extent of student engagement processes. Further exploration of institutions' formal and informal processes and their effectiveness was undertaken through fieldwork with a number of higher education providers and student unions.

The report was launched at a conference organised by Universities UK on 18 February 2009 (www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/Events/Pages/Studentengagementandpartnershipshapingthelearningexperience.aspx). The study will help inform future policies and institutional practices.

The report can be downloaded at:
www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rdreports/2009/rd03_09/

The HEFCE press statement (18 February 2009) is at: www.hefce.ac.uk/news/hefce/2009/engage.htm

The employment of UK graduates: comparisons with Europe. REFLEX Report to HEFCE No 1 (uses data gathered for a major international study of graduate employment five years after graduation)

John Brennan and Winnie Tang, 2008

Available from HEFCE

www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rdreports/2008/rd22_08/rd22_08_1.pdf

This report explores the differences and similarities of the employment situation between UK and European graduates.

It found that UK graduates have spent less time in higher education, have acquired lower level qualifications, have studied less vocational subjects, have received less work experience through placements or internships, feel less well-prepared for their jobs after graduation and receive more employer-supported training in order to perform them. As well as providing more training, UK employers give more attention to the assessment and supervision of their graduate employees. There is no evidence of serious levels of unemployment among graduates and salary levels are comparable to those achieved by graduates in other countries. A proportion of UK graduates feel 'overqualified' for their jobs than do their European counterparts despite, in comparison with the latter, having spent less time in higher education and having achieved a lower level qualification. But there is no strong evidence that employer expectations are not being met. A looser link between one's studies and one's subsequent employment may be increasingly desirable. The division of labour between higher education institutions and employer organisations in equipping (and re-equipping) the workforce with necessary knowledge and skills may indeed be changing as a result of the changing pace and location of knowledge production.

In general, this report suggests that, in comparison with other European countries, UK higher education is a) still more about selection than about socialisation/training, and b) still more about a broad liberal education than about preparation for a particular job. These reflect distinctive traditions

within UK higher education as well as distinctive features of UK society. Of course, both may be changing.

The context of higher education and employment: comparisons between different European countries. REFLEX Report to HEFCE No 2 (uses data gathered for a major international study of graduate employment five years after graduation)

Lore Arthur, John Brennan, Rod Hick and Maki Kimura, 2008

Available from HEFCE

www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rdreports/2008/rd22_08/rd22_08_2.pdf

This second report in the series provides contextual information on the participating countries in the REFLEX project. Topics covered include the different histories and traditions of higher education, the characteristics of the higher education systems, as well as information on the national labour markets and the differences in the role of higher education in recruitment and preparation for the labour market. The information is intended to be used in relation to the other reports in the series, helping in the interpretation of country differences in the employment experiences of graduates

Subject differences in graduate employment across Europe. REFLEX Report to HEFCE No 3 (uses data gathered for a major international study of graduate employment five years after graduation)

John Brennan and Winnie Tang, 2008

Available from HEFCE

www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rdreports/2008/rd22_08/rd22_08_3.pdf

This report examines differences in UK and European graduate employment when subject differences are taken into account. There are a number of distinctive features in the experiences of UK graduates and these are reflected in some of the differences in the ways that the subject of study or programme type influences employment. The study found that there is a much looser relationship between the content and level of the course studied and the subsequent employment experiences, especially concerning the first job after

graduation. Many graduates have experienced periods of unemployment (though less prevalent among UK graduates) or non-relevant jobs (more prevalent for UK graduates), but five years on most graduates appeared to be in jobs characterised by considerable autonomy, security and the opportunity to continue learning. And these are all things highly rated by the graduates themselves.

When considering the lives of these graduates five years after their graduation, one is perhaps more struck by the similarities between them and differences, where they exist, may be more attributable to the characteristics of different national labour markets and economies. Thus, the most important conclusion to draw from this report is that the subject differences are not responsible for the differences in employment experiences between UK graduates and graduates elsewhere in Europe.

Competences possessed and required by European graduates. REFLEX Report to HEFCE No 4 (uses data gathered for a major international study of graduate employment five years after graduation)

Brenda Little, Edith Braun and Winnie Tang, 2008

Available from HEFCE

www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rdreports/2008/rd22_08/rd22_08_4.pdf

This report presents an analysis of graduates' perceptions of what competences they need to do their current jobs and whether they possess these competences.

The majority (over three quarters) needed to be subject specialists who were flexible and adaptable (in terms of acquiring new knowledge) and were capable of working on their own and with others. Such findings lend some weight to the rhetoric of 'flexible professionals' though we note there was less of a requirement to be able to assert authority and to be a generalist (in terms of having knowledge of other subjects). In comparison with European graduates overall, UK graduates' job requirements tended to emphasise aspects of using time efficiently, working productively with others, and making meaning clear to others more than professional expertise and functional flexibility (in terms of subject knowledge in their own and other fields, and the acquisition of new knowledge).

The extent to which graduates considered they possessed such required competences tells us

something about possible mismatches between graduates own competences and job requirements, in terms of both surpluses and deficits. The main surpluses, identified by almost a third of all graduates were in their capacity to perform well under pressure, and their foreign language competence. A much smaller proportion of graduates perceived deficits - with the biggest deficit being using time efficiently. There was little difference in the 'top ten' list of surpluses and deficits for European graduates overall and UK graduates.

The report notes that further detailed analyses would be needed to explore variations in skills sets required in the different types of graduates' jobs, and whether certain aspects of graduates' work and graduates' propensity to undertake further education and training resulted in particular patterns of competence mis-matches.

Age differences in graduate employment across Europe. REFLEX Report to HEFCE No 5 (uses data gathered for a major international study of graduate employment five years after graduation)

Brenda Little and Winnie Tang, 2008

Available from HEFCE

www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rdreports/2008/rd22_08/rd22_08_5.pdf

This report examines differences between European and UK graduates' patterns of employment and characteristics of their current work when age differences are taken into account. Overall UK graduates were both younger and older at entry to higher education compared with Europe as a whole. Such differences, when aligned with the longer duration of courses elsewhere in Europe, results in UK graduates being much younger on graduation than European graduates generally.

Regardless of age on graduation, UK graduates were more likely to have been faced with changes in their workplaces; were much more likely to supervise staff; and to have responsibility for assessing others' work. In fact, many of the overall similarities and differences in employment experiences of UK and European graduates reported in other reports in this series remained, even when age on graduation was taken into account. '

Graduates' retrospective views of higher education. REFLEX Report to HEFCE No 6 (uses data gathered for a major international study of graduate employment five years after graduation)

William Locke, 2008

Available from HEFCE

www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rdreports/2008/rd22_08/rd22_08_6.pdf

This report analyses graduates' retrospective views of their course are analysed according to factors relating to the course and institution, the characteristics of the respondent, aspects of their behaviour during study and success on the course, and their experiences after graduation. For example, graduates of Russell Group institutions were less likely to rate their course as a good basis for 'personal development' or 'future career' to a high or very high extent than graduates from all other types of institution.

A substantially higher proportion of Post-2004 university and higher education college graduates would have decided not to study in higher education at all, compared with all other respondents. Also, UK graduates were more likely than respondents from most other countries in the study to report that they made little use of the knowledge and skills gained from their degree in their *first* job after graduation. However, when reporting on their *current* work, five years after graduation, they were much more likely to feel they were utilising their knowledge and skills, although the latter may not have been acquired exclusively during their higher education course.

Higher education looking forward: An agenda for future research - Synthesis report of the European Science Foundation 'Forward Look' on Higher education in Europe beyond 2010: resolving conflicting social and economic expectations

John Brennan, Jurgen Enders, Christine Musselin, Jussi Valimaa and Ulrich Teichler, 2008, Strasbourg:

European Science Foundation

Available from ESF

This is the final report of a project funded by the European Science Foundation as part of its Forward

Look programme. It is based on a series of literature reviews discussed at workshops across Europe during 2006-7. Research themes covered are Higher Education and the Knowledge Society Discourse; Higher Education and the Achievement (or Prevention) of Equity and Social Justice; Higher Education and its Communities; the 'Steering' of Higher Education Systems; and The Changing Patterns of the Higher Education Systems in Europe. In the synthesis report, the authors draw on the reviews of the above themes (published in the ESF report: *Higher Education Looking Forward: relations between higher education and society*) to propose an agenda for future research on the relationship between higher education and social change. The report is structured around four main sections: Changing Socio-Political Contexts; Mechanisms of Interaction between Society and Higher Education; the Implications for Higher Education; and Higher Education's Impact on Society. It also contains a discussion of methodological issues in the research field.

The report concludes that 'the purpose of researching higher education is not just to make higher education 'better' – although hopefully it will also do that – but to enhance our understanding of contemporary societies and the futures that are available to them. The parts that learning, knowledge and science in all their forms and in all their organisational settings have to play in achieving such understandings and in shaping such futures deserve, we believe, to have a central place in social science endeavours.'

Report to Foundation Degree Forward on the impact of foundation degrees on students and the workplace

Brenda Little and Maggie Greenwood (with Eddie Burch, Carol Collins, Maki Kimura and Karen Yarrow), 2008

Available from CHERI

www.open.ac.uk/cheri/documents/CHERILSNreport.pdf

The study (commissioned by Foundation Degree Forward) was undertaken by a team of researchers from the Open University's Centre for Higher Education Research and Information and the Learning and Skills Network. It set-out to explore the impact of foundation degrees from students' and employers' perspectives. By design it also aimed to build capacity among (mainly) staff in further education colleges delivering Foundation degree (Fd)

programmes through the involvement of Fd practitioners in the study.

Many of the Fds in the study were still rather new, and some of the research findings reflect this recency. The study found that students and employers perceive a range of benefits that Fd study brings to individuals and the workplace. Full-time students cited gaining real business/industry experience, gaining broad knowledge of a specific industry, developing relevant knowledge and skills, and making contacts for future jobs as some of the benefits. Those already in employment cited getting back to learning, gaining new subject knowledge and an understanding of theories linked to, and informed by workplace practices, the development of academic skills, and gaining broader perspectives on their current work. Most students considered they had gained confidence through their studies. Employers also noted the gains in broader understandings and improved performance in the workplace. However, the study also found that employer involvement in the design and delivery of Fds was very variable. A few had been actively engaged, and practitioners acknowledged that engaging employers effectively and persuading them to take part in future developments could be a challenge.

The report notes that many of the Fds involved in the study had yet to capitalise on the intended levels of integration of academic and work-based learning, and of employer engagement which are seen as some of the distinctive features of Fds.

Interim evaluation of lifelong learning networks

Brenda Little and Ruth Williams, 2008

Available from HEFCE

www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rdreports/2008/rd05_08/

Lifelong learning networks (LLNs) are groups of higher education institutions and further education colleges covering a city, area or region of England to create new opportunities for vocational learners. Their overall objective is to improve the coherence, clarity and certainty of progression opportunities for vocational learners into and through higher education. Part of HEFCE's strategy for evaluating lifelong learning networks is a formative evaluation, which was undertaken by CHERI between June 2007 and January 2008; this report is the findings of that evaluation.

The aim of the formative evaluation was intended to provide a progress check which would help to develop policy, link with other key agendas (e.g. employer engagement), and support good practice. In undertaking the evaluation, desk research and interviews with eight case study LLNs were carried out. The report includes a discussion of the national and regional/sub-regional policy agendas. The main body of the report comprises the findings from the research, which are elaborated through examples from the desk research and the case studies; a number of 'exemplars' are presented in the appendices (which have been produced by some of the case study LLNs). The findings are followed by conclusions and recommendations to both LLNs and HEFCE.

Counting what is measured or measuring what counts? League tables and their impact on higher education institutions in England

William Locke, John Richardson and Roger King with Hobsons Research (Line Verbik and Mark Puncher), 2008

Available from HEFCE

www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2008/08_14/

This report was commissioned by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) to investigate league tables and their impact on higher education institutions (HEIs) in England. It presents findings from two strands of research:

- an analysis of five league tables selected for the study, their methodologies and the underlying data employed
- an investigation of how higher education institutions respond to league tables generally and the extent to which they influence institutional decision-making and actions.

The five league tables analysed are:

- national
 - *Sunday Times University Guide*
 - *The Times Good University Guide*
 - *The Guardian University Guide*
- world rankings
 - *Academic Ranking of World Universities* (Shanghai Jiao Tong University Institute of Higher Education)
 - *Times Higher Education Supplement / QS World University Rankings.*

The purpose of the research was to stimulate informed debate about the approaches and limitations of the varied league tables, and greater understanding among the users and stakeholders of the implications of making decisions based on these sources of information.

Excellence in teaching and learning: a review of the literature

Brenda Little, William Locke, Jan Parker and John Richardson, 2007

Available from HEA

www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/York/documents/ourwork/policy/Excellence_in_TL_LitRev.doc

The literature review set out to address three main questions: how is the term excellence used in the context of teaching and the student learning experience? What are the key conceptualisations of excellence? What are the implications of usage and conceptualisations for future policy in relation to promoting and developing excellence?

Within a diverse and expanding system of higher education, such as in the UK, the discourse on teaching and student learning highlights tensions between different notions of excellence: for example, as a positional good for students, as an aspirational target for continuous quality enhancement, a form of reputational advantage for higher education institutions, a means of achieving government economic and social goals.

A recurring critical theme within the literature contends that the current focus on teaching (and to a lesser extent learning) excellence reflects a contemporary desire to measure higher education performance by means of standardised criteria and quasi-scientific practices. But such a focus might actually stifle and constrain some essential, but less tangible and less convergent dimensions of excellence.

Policy-making at all levels should acknowledge that teaching and student learning are distinct, although related phenomena. Notions of teaching and student learning could usefully be disentangled, particularly in the context of more distributed sites of learning and sources of learning support; the increasing range of (access) to learning resources; and arguably more importantly, continuing debates about forms of knowledge and knowledge construction.

‘Forward Look’ on Higher education looking forward: relations between higher education and society

ESF, 2007

Available from ESF

www.esf.org/publications/forward-looks.html

This report includes the five thematic overview reports which were prepared for the European Science Foundation ‘Forward Look’ on ‘Higher education in Europe beyond 2010: resolving conflicting social and economic expectations. The five reports are:

- Higher education and the knowledge society discourse (Jussi Välimaa and David Hoffman);
- Higher education and the achievement (or prevention) of equity and society justice (John Brennan and Rajani Naidoo);
- Higher education and its communities: interconnections and interdependencies (Ben Jongbloed, Jürgen Enders and Carlo Salerno);
- The ‘steering’ of higher education systems: a public management perspective (Ewan Ferlie, Christine Musselin and Gianluca Andresani);
- The changing patterns of the higher education systems in Europe and the future tasks of higher education research (Ulrich Teichler).

Employer and higher education perspectives on graduates in the knowledge society. A report from the European Commission Framework VI project: ‘The Flexible Professional in the Knowledge Society’

Lore Arthur, John Brennan and Egbert de Weert, 2007

Available from CHERI

As part of the larger EC Funded ‘REFLEX’ project, employers and senior experts from higher education were interviewed in five European countries - Germany, Norway, France, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom - about their perceptions of the relationship between higher education and the labour market. Employers were also asked about their objectives and experiences of recruiting new graduates and how expectations had been changing in recent years. The report indicates both

commonalities and differences between the various countries plus some signs of convergence

The changing academic profession in the UK: setting the scene

William Locke, 2007

Available from UUK

www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/Publications/Documents/changing%20academic.pdf

ISBN 978 1 84036 159 X

This research report provides an initial analysis of issues being investigated in a current international study, *The Changing Academic Profession*, supported by Universities UK and other national higher education bodies. The research is examining the nature and extent of the changes experienced by the academic profession in recent years, the reasons for these changes and their consequences. Against this background, the report outlines current characteristics of the academic profession – i.e. those who teach and/or research - providing a profile of academics in the UK and describing some of the conditions of academic work.

The report focuses on the three main themes being addressed by the study: relevance, internationalisation and management. 'Relevance' refers to the growing requirements to justify and account for the 'outputs' as well as the processes of academic work, such as the employability of graduates, the usefulness of research and the accessibility of higher education to disadvantaged students and communities. It is also clear that higher education will become more international, with greater mobility of students and staff, its growth as a trans-national business and increasing international collaboration in research and teaching. Both the demands for relevance and growing internationalism have contributed to new forms of management in higher education institutions, which have helped to shape academic work and provide some academics with opportunities to progress their careers in new ways.

Different views of these changes and their overall impact are identified. The picture that emerges is of an academic profession facing change but also much continuity, transforming many aspects of academic work while at the same time creating an increasingly stratified higher education sector.

Engagement in course development by employers not traditionally involved in higher education: student and employer perceptions of its impact

Anna Scesa and Ruth Williams, 2007

Available from EPPI-Centre, Social Science Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London

eppi.ioe.ac.uk/cms/Default.aspx?tabid=2316

The Department for Children, Schools and Families set the topic for this review to improve understanding of employer engagement in higher education (HE) curriculum development and, in particular, the impact (if any), of that engagement. The underlying rationale was that a number of studies have set out to capture employers' views of graduate skills and qualities, and some have indicated that employers are often not satisfied with graduates' 'softer' skills. Furthermore, policy pushes have created an environment where employer engagement is the expected norm for both higher and further education.

The review looked for research on engagement in course development by employers that have not traditionally been involved in higher education. This was done through key word searches of bibliographic databases, and searches of websites and key journals. Inclusion and exclusion criteria were then applied to build up a map of relevant studies. Additional criteria were applied to the studies in the map, which produced the eight studies that were used to address the research question.

Results included the following:

- Benefits of work-based learning to students include gaining new and improving existing skills.
- Benefits of work-based learning to employers were their recognition that students'/employees' skills had improved.
- Issues and difficulties around the management of work-based learning concerned the actors involved – students (e.g. organising placements), and employers and institutions/academics (e.g. the need to brief all involved about the aims and responsibilities of placements).
- Realism of work-based learning activities was highlighted as helping the achievement of WBL learning outcomes.
- Academic staff development can arise from tutors' close working relationship with employer organisations.

- Barriers to engaging employers included lack of interest, lack of understanding, and lack of ability through time and work pressures on the part of employers, and the unnecessary use by institutions/academics of academic language and terminology.
- Size of employer organisation was a factor. Co-operation between educational providers and SMEs can be time consuming; there is some evidence to suggest that engaging employers through employer networks is more beneficial.

The review found that there are benefits to employer engagement (e.g. work-based learning) but there are also barriers and one of these barriers is size of employer organisation: smaller organisations are less likely to engage with higher education. However, the review also found that there is a need for more rigorous evaluative, analytical and longitudinal studies that will shed further light on the impact of employer engagement in course development – and in the disciplinary areas and occupational sectors that were the focus of this review.

Higher education effects on disadvantaged groups and communities

John Brennan, Brenda Little and William Locke, 2006
Available from CHERI
www.open.ac.uk/cheri/documents/esrc-crossregional-final-report.pdf

Although much of the drive to extend and widen participation in higher education draws on economic imperatives for both the locality/region and the individuals concerned, the potential contribution to social cohesion, civic engagement and general quality of life is also likely to be considerable. This ESRC network, part of the ESRC initiative on The Impact of Higher Education Institutions on Regional Economies, set-out to examine the research evidence relating to the transformative impact of higher education on disadvantaged groups and communities.

Four themes were explored:

- local and regional partnerships to extend participation in higher education to socially disadvantaged groups;
- the 'cultural presence of higher education institutions in disadvantaged communities;
- the civic role of higher education institutions and their constituencies;

- local employment opportunities provided by higher education institutions.

Much of the literature related to the transformative impact of higher education on disadvantaged groups and communities concerned policy initiatives and intentions, mostly at a local level. But rather large gaps in the research literature were found. The report synthesises the issues raised within the four themes, and presents a research agenda through which both policy and theoretical questions can be addressed and located within wider research literatures.

An investigation of vocational progression pathways for young people and adults in building crafts and hospitality CoVEs: a London case study

Ruth Williams and Karen Yarrow with Anthony Hudson and Maki Kimura, 2006

Available from LSDA

<https://crm.lsnlearning.org.uk/user/order.aspx?code=062540>

Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) deliver specialist vocational provision with a focus on increasing learner numbers at Level 3. They aim to produce skilled and appropriately qualified workers to meet the needs of the economy by enhancing the skills and careers of those already in work, the employability of new entrants to the labour market, and the employment prospects of those seeking work. There are around 60 CoVEs, or prospective CoVEs, in London. The London CoVE network provides the key to driving up vocational progression.

This report is the outcome of a study funded by the Learning and Skills Council through the then Learning and Skills Development Agency. The project aimed to explore the changes brought about by London-based CoVEs in two occupational areas – building crafts/construction and hospitality – and the practical reality for the city's vocational learners in these two sectors.

Between October 2005 and April 2006, the project undertook a literature review of London's regional profile, general policy developments in vocational education and training since 2000, research into the CoVE programme, and specific research into the two occupational areas. Data from the LSC's Individual Learner Record and the CoVEs were analysed, and interviews were undertaken with sector skills councils, the London Development Agency, CoVE

managers, CoVE partner organisations, employers of CoVE learners and learners themselves. The areas explored included current vocational pathways and progression opportunities, widening participation issues, employer and SSC engagement, and skills shortages and the impact of the Olympics.

One of the main conclusions of the study is that while construction and hospitality are two of the largest employment sectors in London, both industries are characterised by workforces with low-level or no qualifications. Demand is high for workers with Level 2 qualifications but less so for those with Level 3. Thus, the lack of currency of Level 3 qualifications in the industries is seen to be the main barrier for learner progression and a major challenge to London's CoVEs operating in these occupational areas.

Learning through work placements and beyond

Brenda Little and Lee Harvey, 2006

Available from HECSU

www.prospects.ac.uk/downloads/documents/HECSU/Conferences%20and%20events/Changing%20Student%20Choices/Work_based_learning_LH_BL.pdf

Recently reported studies of work placements within higher education programmes continue to cite personal skills development as an important feature but less is reported about the extent to which there is a positive transfer of learning from the placement to subsequent stages of an individual's learning through the taught stages of the programme.

This study, commissioned by the Higher Education Academy's Work Placements Organisation and funded by the Higher Education Careers Services Unit investigated students' perceptions of learning from placements, and the extent to which students try to transfer and build on such learning in subsequent stages of their programme. It explores how values and ethical positions are developed on placement. Over eighty positions are developed on placement. Over eighty students, from seven different higher education institutions, undertaking a range of programmes were interviewed during the study. Additional interviews with key members of staff with responsibility for placements were also undertaken.

The report looks at students' reasons for choosing to undertake work placements and their expectations of placements, before moving into an exploration of the type of work undertaken, and how that work evolves during the course of the placement.

Using students' voices, the report explores aspects of personal development experienced by the students on placements, including their growing self-awareness and establishment or revision of their own values. The transition 'back' to the final year of the programme, and adapting 'back' to student was a particular focus of the study. Many students spoke of how their approaches to learning had changed (for the better); how they now adopted more questioning attitudes; how their experiences of work had enhanced their understanding. Such changes related both to issues of confidence and motivation to study generally, and to a sense of a more active engagement with learning tasks. But not all the students interviewed had such positive views: a minority were ambivalent about the academic benefits (and focused solely on aspects of personal development), and other drawbacks were mentioned (including the fact that their 'peers' who had chosen not to take a placement were no longer around).

The annex to the report contains a statistical analysis (undertaken by the Analytical Services Division of the Higher Education Funding Council for England) of student numbers of sandwich courses, and 'out' on placement years. The analysis (from 1999 onwards) shows there has been a steady decline in the numbers of first degree students taking-up placements.

Towards a strategy for workplace learning

CHERI/KPMG LLP, 2006

Available from HEFCE

www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rereports/2006/rd09_06/

Workplace learning takes many forms, occurs in many contexts and can have widely differing relationships to higher education programmes and awards. This report explores this variety and discusses the implications for policies and practices of national bodies, higher education institutions and employers in responding to the future needs of learners and workers.

The report is the outcome of a study commissioned by the Higher Education Funding Council for England to help ensure a concerted approach across the Council to future strategies on workplace learning and related matters of employer engagement, and to feed into the wider review of the Council's teaching funding review. In particular the study set out to help inform HEFCE's thinking on developing a strategy for workplace learning by exploring the nature, purposes

and outcomes of workplace learning; considering workplace learning within the broader relationships between the worlds of work and learning; exploring the emerging changes in higher education which may impact on workplace learning in the future; and identifying structural issues that currently enable or inhibit workplace learning and identifying future opportunities.

The report considers institutional strategies on workplace learning, and employer perspectives both with regards to different types of workplace learning, and in relation to strategic issues concerning employer and higher education links. From a workplace learner perspective, the report examines the expectations that different types of learners might bring and discusses whether there are specific 'entitlements' available to them in areas such as advice and guidance, support for learning, and assessment and accreditation. International experiences of workplace learning and higher education are also reviewed.

Funding issues raised by workplace learning are reviewed, with distinctions made between funding different types of existing provision and the funding likely to be needed to stimulate any expansion of provision and extension into new academic and employment areas, and to generate new forms.

The report concludes with a summary of some of the main arguments and considers the sorts of actions to be taken by HEFCE and others to enable all learners and workers to achieve maximum benefits from what they learn in the workplace. The report contains a number of annexes, including a review of the academic literature on workplace learning and more generally on the relationships between learning and work; detailed consideration of funding issues; and consideration of contexts and traditions of workplace learning and higher education in Germany and the Netherlands.

Vocational ladders or crazy paving? Making your way to higher levels

Brenda Little and Helen Connor, 2005

Available from LSDA

<https://crm.lsnlearning.org.uk/user/order.aspx?code=041702>

ISBN 1 84572 043 1

This report is the outcome of a Learning and Skills Council funded study, and commissioned by the Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA). It

was part of a suite of research projects on apprenticeships being carried out by the LSDA (under the overall theme of 'making work-based learning work'). The study aimed to explore the role of vocational qualifications and work-based learning as progression routes to higher education and to higher-level knowledge and skills more generally. The study re-analysed existing statistical sources on education and training in England to create a quantitative picture on progression to higher education. It also explored in-company education and training schemes (in a limited number of employment sectors) that provide opportunities for progression to higher-level knowledge skills. The study aimed to identify key inhibitors and enablers for work-based progression. The report concludes with a series of recommendations to key stakeholders aimed at improving vocational pathways to higher levels of learning.

The role of universities in the transformation of societies: an international research project

CHERI/ACU, 2004

Available from CHERI

www.open.ac.uk/cheri/documents/transf-final-report.pdf

ISBN 0 7492 0513 X

This report synthesises and highlights the roles universities play in contributing or inhibiting social, economic and political change in countries and regions that have recently undergone major transformation (Central and Eastern Europe, Sub-Saharan Africa, Central Asia and Latin America). The report is based on case studies prepared by researchers in these regions for a project on the Role of Universities in the Transformation of Societies, funded by the Rockefeller Foundation and Open Society Institute.

Vocational higher education - does it meet employers' needs?

Brenda Little, Helen Connor, Yann Lebeau, David Pierce, Elaine Sinclair, Liz Thomas and Karen Yarrow, 2004

Available from LSDA

<https://crm.lsnlearning.org.uk/user/order.aspx?code=041538>

ISBN 1 85338 913 7

This report is the outcome of a study funded by the Learning and Skills Council, the Department for

Education and Skills, the Higher Education Funding Council for England and the Council for Industry and Higher Education. The study was undertaken at a time when government policies for higher education included a new 'push' towards work-related higher education, and educational policies more generally were seeking to redress the balance between academic and vocational qualifications at various levels within the compulsory and post-compulsory education and training systems in England.

One part of the study re-analysed existing data sources to explore the size and nature of vocational higher education provision in England. The main part of the study was an exploration of employers' views (in a limited number of employment sectors) on the value of vocational higher education for recruitment and workforce development purposes. To complement the 'employer view' a limited investigation of the 'direct consumer' view (i.e. students on vocational higher education programmes) was also undertaken.

The report highlights a series of key issues for policy-makers, and also makes recommendations for improvements to data collection.

Ten years on: changing higher education in a changing world

CHERI, 2004

Available from CHERI

www.open.ac.uk/cheri/documents/ten-years-on.pdf

ISBN 0 7492 6683 X

This publication marks CHERI's first ten years. But the focus is not on CHERI itself but upon the changing relationships between higher education and society which have provided the backcloth to CHERI's work over this period.

Articles included are:

- Saleem Badaat, Higher education and society in post-apartheid South Africa
- Andree Sursock, Higher education in central and eastern Europe: a turbulent reform process
- Bahram Bekhradnia, 20 years of higher education policy in the United Kingdom: looking back 10 years and forward to the next decade
- John Brennan, The social role of the contemporary university: contradictions, boundaries and change
- Richard Lewis, Ten years of international quality assurance.

Collecting and using student feedback. A guide to good practice

John Brennan and Ruth Williams, 2004

Available from LTSN

www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/resource_database/id352_collecting_and_using_student_feedback

ISBN 1 904190 55 3

As a result of the project 'Collecting and Using Student Feedback on Quality and Standards of Learning and Teaching in Higher Education' CHERI has produced a good practice guide to collecting and using student feedback.

The Guide builds on the information collected during the project and draws on the experiences of the sector and the good practice that exists, as well as the problems that higher education institutions are experiencing in using student feedback. As such the Guide uses examples provided by the institutions involved in the project to illustrate the points made.

Access to what: converting educational opportunity into employment opportunity

John Brennan and Tarla Shah, 2003

Available from CHERI

www.open.ac.uk/cheri/documents/access-final-report.pdf

ISBN 0 7492 6667 8

This is the final report of a project aimed at improving employment prospects for graduates from socially disadvantaged groups. The project examined the relationship between social disadvantage, educational opportunity and employment. The project was interested in whether there was social equity at the point of exit from higher education and whether there were aspects of the higher education experience that were serving as either facilitators or barriers to the achievement of equity.

Report of feasibility study on the creation of a Greater Manchester Strategic Alliance

November 2003.

Available from CHERI

www.open.ac.uk/cheri/documents/gmsa-final-report.pdf

This is a report to a Steering Group that was established to take forward the idea of a Strategic Alliance of higher education institutions, and further education and sixth form colleges in the Greater Manchester sub-region. It was intended that a Strategic Alliance would offer a long-term view on sustainable measures needed to extend opportunities for higher education in the sub-region, and raise aspirations of potential learners (both young and mature adults) whilst seeking to take account of regional and sub-regional agendas for economic regeneration. The Steering Group commissioned a feasibility study of a proposal to create a Greater Manchester Strategic Alliance from a team led by CHERI.

Collecting and using student feedback on quality and standards of learning and teaching in higher education

John Brennan and Ruth Williams, 2003

Available from HEFCE

www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rdreports/2003/rd08_03/

This report is the outcome of a HEFCE-funded project. The project arose from the recommendations of the final report of the Information Needs Working Group (informally known as the 'Cooke Report' – HEFCE 02/15) – set up to identify what information on quality and standards of learning and teaching HEIs should have available internally and what information should be published, as part of the new quality assurance arrangements. The Group proposed that information on students' views should be an important aspect of the information set, collected through institutions' own internal mechanisms of current students and a national survey of recent graduates. However, the Group recognised that further work needed to be carried out to

- i) Review current good practice by HEIs in collecting and using feedback from students

on the quality and standards of their higher education programmes, and make recommendations.

- ii) Make recommendations on the design and implementation of a national survey to collect such feedback from students who have recently graduated and publication of the results.

The project was undertaken by CHERI in collaboration with Segal Quince and Wicksteed Limited and National Opinion Polls Research Group. CHERI led on the first part of the project and SQW and NOP on the second. The main elements of the project were a consultation with institutions, visits by the project team to 20 of these and a literature review. The report is in three main parts: the two aspects of the project and the literature review.

The first aspect reports on institutional practice and makes recommendations in the following areas:

- Purposes in collecting and using student feedback
- Mechanisms for collecting feedback
- Collection in terms of questionnaires, student representation and other forms of feedback
- Analysis and interpretation of feedback data
- Actions and decision-making
- Presentation and publication of results and actions
- Dissemination to students.

The second aspect – the National Survey – looks at and makes recommendations about:

- Users of the National Survey
- Methodological issues
- Undertaking the survey
- The proposed questionnaire
- Reporting the survey
- Costs.

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