

Referring to a number of data collections done by the authors and others on student learning experiences in HE, looking at the views of pre-entry students and their parents, undergraduate students, academic staff and employers, (see Jameson et al 2009; Strudwick and Jameson 2010; Purcell et al 2010), this paper discusses the dynamic and competitive landscape of current HE provision in the UK. Featuring a case study on the use of Open Educational Resources (OER's) to enhance student employability, funded as part of a larger HEA project on OER's, the paper discusses contradictions and problems within the current political rhetoric around the delivery and purpose of HE.

Applying the Browne review (2011) as the main political context to this work, the paper documents how employability has become centre stage in HEI's, with the justification for high tuition fees being rooted in terms of the economic good of having a degree, and with students being given the 'choice' in purchasing a stake in their economic wellbeing. According to Collini (2010) the apparent 'retreat of the state' from financial responsibility, means that HE is seen as predominantly benefitting individuals in a consumer led marketplace, rather than being for the collective public good.

However, whilst critiquing the apparent commoditisation of knowledge, and what could be seen as the industrialisation of HE, the authors use work by Bauman (2007) to identify contradictions within political rhetoric and policy-making in HE. Arguments surrounding the problems of consumerism and commoditisation, which according to Bauman results in both a passive and risk adverse consumer, who at the same time is commoditised themselves, are discussed in relation to graduate identity and the skills and attributes that employers apparently state they require from graduates. Whilst Browne (2011) might argue that the free market in HE will push up the quality of the student experience, and that students will choose courses that provide them with the highest paid jobs according to strategic Key Information Sets, provided by universities, Collini (2010) challenges that students are best placed to 'shape the landscape of higher education' in this way. The paper goes on to argue that the values of a consumer culture can potentially undermine student employability because according to Bauman (2007) the consumer identity is inextricably linked in what individuals consume, and that by definition, commodities must come with all of the answers and therefore 'confess all there is to be confessed and more without asking for reciprocity' (ibid:16). Thus applying Bauman's contentions, it could be argued that students as consumers are more likely to take on a passive identity, expecting to 'buy' a risk free product and do not expect to have to engage with the knowledge from their studies. It also could be argued that neither do they expect to take responsibility for their own learning, as they believe that they are buying a product. This is potentially contrary to the skills that employers and businesses say that they want from graduates, which according to the HECSU and AGCAS graduate advice site (2011), includes self-reliance skills and other general employment skills such as problem solving, communication and flexibility. Jameson et al (2009) also identified that employers identified that graduates were particularly poor at taking calculated risks.

As a challenge to this situation, whereby students passively consume privileged knowledge, the concepts of the Student as Producer (see Neary and Winn 2009) and

the use of Open Educational Resources are applied to the debate, in order to explore alternatives to the commoditisation of HE. Referring to data on the views of various interested parties, common themes linking these issues are discussed including the de-privileging of knowledge, challenges to power relations in the production of knowledge, and issues relating to the value of university as a landscape of learning, rather than a knowledge provider for industry. It will be argued therefore that both the student as producer and the use of OER's are complimentary in that they both challenge the commoditisation and ownership of knowledge. It will also be suggested that not only are the relations of learning multi-dimensional and complex, but that the commoditisation of knowledge does not necessarily produce the enterprising citizens so apparently required by the market.

Practical issues underpinning these themes will be integrated into the theoretical debate with reference to the research data from the collaborative project on the use of OER's in HE to enhance student employability. Discussions about access, quality and ownership of knowledge will be critically analysed, as will issues about the values of sharing, the purpose of university and the development of students as producers of themselves as enterprising citizens.

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