35. Conclusion

Alice Diver (LJMU), Gerard Diver (LJMU)

1. Introduction

> *'Students play a central role in the achievements of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for the 2030 Agenda..'* [1] (Borges *et al*, 2017: 173)

It remains to be seen whether '…an academic revolution has taken place in higher education in the past half century marked by transformations unprecedented in scope and diversity.' (Altbach et al, 2009). It seems fair to state however that,

> '…the developments of the recent past are at least as dramatic as those in the 19th century when the research university evolved…and fundamentally redesigned the nature of the university worldwide. The academic changes of the late 20th and early 21st centuries are more extensive due to their global nature and the number of institutions and people they affect.' (Altbach et al, 2009).[2]

Economic austerities and political uncertainties seem set to continue for the foreseeable future, beyond within and beyond the borders of the UK. Higher Education's 'wider mission' must therefore surely be to keep engaging as fully as possible with those who are in need, providing or preserving a safe haven for all who wish to push themselves in the pursuit of learning and the embracing of ethical ideals and work practices, and the furthering of social justice. HE must offer where possible a meaningful 'career springboard' for those learners seeking socio-economic advancement and/or personal development via the challenges of learning. This collection has sought to analyse the nature, purposes, and remits of HE, particularly in respect of its capacity to affect positively the future employability or 'work-readiness' of our graduates. It has tried to define employability not simply as the achievement of a useful state of industrial preparedness, or narrowly-drawn professionalism. Rather, it argues for a wider, more holistic concept of well-rounded, 'graduate-ness,' underpinned by such key 'whole person' learning (Hoover *et al*, 2010) factors as e.g. emotional maturity, self-efficacy, resilience, and ethical awareness. [3]

---

[1] J C Borges *et al* 'Student organizations and Communities of Practice: Actions for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development' (2017) *International Journal of Management Education* 15 pp 172-182, on how the Sustainable Development Agenda was created in 2007, via the UN Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) under the UN Global Compact.

[2] P G Altbach, L Reisberg, L E Rumbley '*Trends in Global Higher Education: Tracking an Academic Revolution -A Report Prepared for the UNESCO 2009 World Conference on Higher Education* (2009) UN: Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, available at http://www.cep.edu.rs/public/Altbach,_Reisberg,_Rumbley_Tracking_an_Academic_Revolution,_UNESCO_2009.pdf (accessed 12.01.19) adding that 'comprehending this ongoing and dynamic process while being in the midst of it is not an easy task.'

[3] See further J D Hoover *et al* 'Assessing the effectiveness of whole person learning pedagogy in skill acquisition' *Academy of Management Learning and Education* (2010) 9 (2) pp 192-203 on 'desirable executive skills' such as communication, team-working, interpersonal skills, and problem-solving.

Arguably, a post-graduation desire to engage in lifelong learning, contribute meaningfully to society, and further the wider aims of social justice, can follow on from the achievement of such competencies (Steur *et al*, 2012).[4] Whether or not the innovations and ideas presented in this text will aid the creation of what Hall (1976) termed 'protean workers,'[5] or perhaps simply serve to bolster in some way a nervous student's nascent sense of identity and academic 'belongingness' (Yorke, 2016) is a matter for its readers. What is clear however, is that there is an increasingly acute need for university graduates to possess ever more diverse competencies (Cohen and Mallon,1999),[6] so that they might be able to 'self-manage' (Brown and Hesketh, 2004) their future career pathways. They should depart university equipped with the abilities (both academic and practical) needed to engage in critical thinking, and navigate challenging, fluid labour markets which are so often affected by such issues as political crises, deepening austerities, 'fake news,' and an ever-widening range of socio-cultural tensions and divisions.

The first and final substantive chapters of this collection (Evans *et al*, chapter 2; Barton *et al,* chapter 34) particularly underscore one of the chief aims of this book project, which was to offer (alongside a selection of workable learning and teaching strategies) a usefully critical analysis of the nature and purpose of employability 'training' within HE. Given the wider backdrop of highly challenging structural contexts (Reiner, 2012) on an increasingly global scale,[7] universities are likely to continue to be asked to produce holistically capable (and in many senses, *gifted)* graduate-scholars who can contribute to wider society. Tutors must generate the sort of 'emancipatory knowledge' that can further the 'sociological imagination'[8] (Mills, 1959) to challenge to injustice and inequality, and highlight the need for equitable, rights-grounded socio-cultural frameworks for learning (Putnam, 1996; 2000).[9] A wider human rights agenda,[10] grounded in principles of equality and human dignity, reminds us further that

---

[4] J M Steur, EPWA Jansen, WHA Hoffman 'Graduateness: An Empirical Examination Of The Formative Function Of University Education' (2012) *Higher Education* 64 pp 861-874, outlining also how 'intellectual cultivation' amongst learners arises, and arguing that reflective thinking offers the best scope for lifelong learning. See also however the seminal work of T Knight and M Yorke (2013) '*Embedding employability into the curriculum'* HEA: London

[5] D T Hall '*Careers in Organizations'* (1976) Pacific Palisades, CA: Goodyear

[6] L Cohen and M Mallon 'The transition from organisational employment to portfolio working: perceptions of boundarylessness' *Work, Employment and Society* (1999) 13(2) pp 329-352 on 'portfolio workers' (as cited by J M Nicholas 'Marketable Selves: Making sense of employability as a liberal arts undergraduate' (2018) *Journal of Vocational Behaviour* 109 pp 1-13)

[7] Borges *et al* (2017) further argue that 'SDGs need concerted global efforts and good governance at all levels, including local, national, regional, and global...' (citing J D Sachs, 'From Millennium Development Goals To Sustainable Development Goals' (2012) *The Lancet*, 379)

[8] C W Mills '*The Sociological Imagination'* (1959) OUP: New York (as cited by Barton *et al,* Chapter 33)

[9] R D Putnam '*Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community'* (2000) New York: Simon and Schuster (describing social life as 'networks, norms and trust'; see also R D Putnam '*Who Killed Civic America*?' (1996) https://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/magazine/whokilledcivicamerica (accessed 01.02.19); see also K J Arrow 'Observations on Social Capital' in P Dasgupta and I Serageldin (eds) '*Social Capital: A Multifaceted Perspective'* (2000) The World Bank: Washington DC

[10] See further Borges *et al* (2017) on Article 26 of the UNDHR (1948) and the various other rights milestones that have flowed from it, including the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (2000), and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (2015), adding however that the SDGs need 'unprecedented mobilization of global knowledge operating across many sectors and regions' and citing King (2016) on how the principal focus is still on 'developing countries' and the 'least developed countries' (K King, 'The Global Targeting Of Education And Skill: Policy History And Comparative Perspectives' (2016) *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education,* 46(6), 952 -975); See also K King 'Lost in translation? The challenge of translating the global education goal and targets into global indicators' *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International*

a juridical right to education does not simply exist within a socio-cultural vacuum, as a sort of stand-alone concept. Rather it is integral to the realisation of many other fundamental human rights goals and targets, such as freedom from poverty,[11] social inclusion (of vulnerable groups and persons),[12] health and well-being, child safeguarding, community development, peace-building,[13] and a meaningful furthering of social justice norms and principles.[14]

And yet, old divisions clearly linger. As Bellino *et al* (2017) have observed in respect of the role played by education generally in times of political transition and conflict,

> '…despite the practical and conceptual overlaps between education and transitional justice…scholarship about how both might contribute towards peacebuilding, reconciliation, and recovery from conflict have largely developed in isolation from one another.'[15]

King (2017) has similarly noted that, '…a good deal of the SDG aspirations for expanded rights to, and breadth of, education appears to get lost in their translation to the indicators.'[16] Unterhalter (2017:2) perhaps adds the most stringent note of caution, however, stating that:

> 'Unmeasurable processes in education are routinely addressed through appeals to measurement or indicators. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of 2000–2015, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)…and university rankings are some of the most well-known projects that attempt to measure aspects of education, linking the precision of measurement, with imprecisely formulated values.'

Similar warnings are sounded throughout this collection, for example on the dangers of eroding the foundations of a 'democratic education' (Dewey, 1956). As the third and fourth chapters of Section One argue, notions of Quality (Lawton, chapter 4) and Learning Gain (Gossman and Powell, chapter 3) within HE may be subject to a worrying degree of 'price-tagging' in respect of their definition, conflation with other concepts, and measurement by both internal and external gauges. What is being taught in HE may differ significantly however from what is actually being *learned* by our students, especially where harsh external factors (such as economic austerity, and political uncertainty) might well be serving to influence how students

---

Education, (2017) (47) (6) *Different Understandings Of Quality Education Across The Globe: A Special Issue On The Guiding Theme Of The BAICE 2016].*

[11] On illiteracy levels and poverty in the least developed countries (LDCs) see K Dev Regmi (2015) 'Lifelong Learning And Post-2015 Educational Goals: Challenges For The Least Developed Countries' *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education* (2015) 45 (2) pp 317-322

[12] On gendered poverty, see further S Bradshaw, S Chant and B Linneker 'Gender and poverty: what we know, don't know, and need to know for Agenda 2030' *Gender, Place & Culture* (2017) 24 (12) pp 1667-1688

[13] M J Bellino, J Paulson & E A Worden (2017) 'Working Through Difficult Pasts: Toward Thick Democracy and Transitional Justice In Education' *Comparative Education* (2017) 53 (3) pp 313-332

[14] See however J McArthur and C Zhang '*Who is talking about the UN Sustainable Development Goals*?' *Future Development* (2018) on how the various disciplines have embraced – or perhaps avoided – the issue. For example, *The Lancet* had the highest number of MDG references amongst 12 academic journals examined ('…it is probably not a coincidence that global health saw the most significant MDG breakthroughs…at least some portion of the health research community considered itself as MDG protagonist—an outlook seemingly not shared across all academic disciplines. The leading economics journals, for instance, rank among the lowest in terms of MDG references.' (available at https://www.brookings.edu/blog/future-development/2018/06/14/who-is-talking-about-the-un-sustainable-development-goals/ accessed 28.02.19)

[15] Bellino *et al* (2017)

[16] King (2017) adding that 'the complexity of the global governance architecture for the SDGs and their implementation' is relevant, as is the 'critical lens of the *Global Education Monitoring Report* (2016)'

and stake holders view HE's overall purpose and remit. It is important therefore to question what *types* of learning might be most valued and by whom (not forgetting the need for an accurate means of measurement and the reasons *why* measurement is needed, at any given time). As Zelenev (2017:1654) further stressed,

> '… decision-making that is based on public evidence-based and data-driven has a better chance to succeed even if it calls into question some existing conventional approaches…the existing evidence proves that citizens' engagement always make a difference.'

If the sole or primary perceived purpose of undertaking a degree is simply to secure the highest-paying job as soon as possible after graduation however, this seems likely to significantly colour the expectations, experiences and aims of learners and teachers alike.[17] At worst, the notions of teaching quality and learning gain may be subsumed within those learning outcomes that – perhaps through no fault of their own - focus almost entirely upon a fairly narrow range of neatly prescribed assessment activities and the acquisition of industry-relevant skills, much to the exclusion of other innate or learned personal qualities. Little room may be left for independent undertakings, extra-mural or otherwise, that might well align more closely with purely altruistic or creative endeavours, or indeed the pursuit of knowledge for knowledge's sake. If all of this occurs largely in a bid to boost university rankings on employability 'league tables,' then it can be argued that the purpose of HE has indeed changed significantly over the past few decades.

The competitive nature of HE in the wake of its widened-access 'massification' has also clearly altered, perhaps irrevocably:

> '…competition has always been a force in academe and can help produce excellence, it can also contribute to a decline in a sense of academic community, mission and traditional values.' (Altbach *et al,* 2009)

It is difficult to see how such an approach sits comfortably with the more expansive, ethical aims of the Sustainable Development Goals ['SDGs'] as outlined in *Agenda 2030.*[18] Put bluntly, graduates who might opt to do voluntary – or low-paid – work in a bid to build a fairer society, will do little to improve their university's employability rankings if the concept of graduate success (or indeed, academic 'teaching excellence') is measured largely in terms of wages earned, job title held, or taxes paid. Similarly, where there is an over-arching obligation to provide visibly high 'value for money' returns for consumer-modelled, investor-students demanding a clearly evidenced 'graduate premium' (and an increasingly sceptical media and tax-paying public) it is unsurprising that the awarding of higher grades by HEIs might be

[17] On the Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO) data (on graduate earnings), see: https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/graduate-earnings-data-on-unistats/(accessed 28.03.19). See further Kushner's (2011:311) observations on how evaluations offer 'a unique ethic based on citizen rights to information,' with 'every evaluation [is] itself a case study of society.' He argues however the dangers associated with having 'productivity and economic benefit …outweigh other criteria for measuring program quality…We know that good programs often miss their predicted outcomes – and that weak or even unethical programs can generate desired outcomes.' S Kushner 'A Return to Quality' *Evaluation* (2011) 17(3) pp 309–312

[18] See further https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld (accessed 12.03.19)

attributed to some manner of 'inflation.'[19] Staff too may fear that disappointed cohorts might seek some form of recompense or 'retribution' via poor modular or NSS feedback surveys, complaints, or indeed litigation,[20] which could potentially result in management censure, course closures, or staff redundancies. A 'progressively consumerist approach' to the purpose of HE can also easily impact upon wider perceptions of what the 'student journey' might, or should, involve (Dacre Pool *et al,* chapter 6). The notion of having a fixed 'calling' towards a particular career for example might lead to the creation of a 'double-edged sword' for employability strategies, where students or graduates are unable or perhaps unwilling to consider alternative pathways or professions (Lysova *et al*, 2018).[21]

Clearly, numerous 'tensions between global and national approaches to target-setting' do exist also, particularly in relation to issues of 'ownership of the global target discourse' (King, 2016).[22] The traditionally symbiotic nature of HE must be acknowledged: fee-paying students do not simply purchase a product, goods, or services with an instant or presumed, near-automatic return on their initial 'investment.' They must also actively invest *their* time and effort in the pursuit of their studies. (Clements, chapter 5). Positive job searching behaviours by students, using highly proactive, ethical efforts, from an early stage of the studies, are generally tied to much better career outcomes post-graduation. Such a basic truism might at times be overlooked however, in the rush to achieve meet ever-changing goals on generating or maintaining faculty income, improving pass-rates, raising course fees, or meeting retention targets. Student involvement in extra-mural events has also been an important aspect of HE: as Borges *et al* (2017) have argued, students who do take part in extra-curricular, practical activities often tend to gain enhanced levels of maturity (Eklund-Leen and Young,1997) and a 'greater sense of capacity…competence…increase[d] general knowledge, academic performance and freedom of expression.'[23] They are perhaps more likely to cope with the various challenges of a modern, much more 'flexible, globalised market' (Nicholas, 2018).[24]

---

[19] See further https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/news-blog-and-events/press-and-media/universities-must-get-to-grips-with-spiralling-grade-inflation/ (accessed 02.03.19)

[20] A small but telling body of case law – examined briefly later on in this chapter - has grown up around student disappointment: the role of academics (involved in course administration and in the design and delivery of assessment) is also discussed. See further D Palfreyman (2010) HE's 'get-out-of-jail-free card' *Perspectives* (2010) 14 (4) pp 114-119 on how academic judgement 'immunity' is threatened by ECHR/Judicial Review cases, the Consumer Rights Act 2015, Equality & Discrimination laws, and a growing over-precision in the drafting of 'learning outcomes;' See also P Kamvounias and S Varnham 'In-house or in court? Legal challenges to university decisions' *Education & The Law* (Mar 2006) Vol. 18 (1) p1-17

[21] E I Lysova, P GW Jansen, S N Khapova, J Plomp and M Tims 'Examining Calling as a double-edge sword for employability' (2018) *Journal of Vocational Behaviour* 104 pp 261-272

[22] See also S Pavlin and I Svetlik 'Employability of higher education graduates in Europe' *International Journal of Manpower* (2014) 35 (4) pp.418-424, p 420, on how '…the core area for the competitive advantage of European countries seems to be the development of professional human resources via a well-considered higher education system.'

[23] Borges *et al* (2017), citing C N Baker 'Under-Represented College Students and Extracurricular Involvement: The Effects Of Various Student Organizations On Academic Performance' (2008) *Social Psychology of Education*, 11(3), 273- 298; and also citing Peltier, Scovotti, & Pointer (2008) on how student organizations can contribute to future career preparation by offering 'a professional development environment…and practical learning experiences.' (J W Peltier, C Scovotti, C., & L Pointer 'The role the collegiate american marketing association plays in professional and entrepreneurial skill development' *Journal of Marketing Education* (2008) 30(1), 47-56).

[24] Arguing also that factors such as technology and corporate downsizing 'have increased job mobility and brought attention to the art of self-managing careers' and the need for 'diverse competencies' and 'dynamic fluidity' grounded in 'transferable critical thinking skills.'

Pinto and Ramalheira (2017: 167) similarly note that, often, 'academic credentials are not enough to find a suitable job.'[25] There is a pressing need now for graduates - and their degrees - to be seen as 'distinctive' (Brown and Hesketh, 2004) so as to better enable some measure of 'security on the job market as a whole' (Bernstrøm, 2019:234) rather than simply planning on an extended career within a single firm, discipline or sector. That said, if character-building activities, assessments and course content are perhaps not seen as directly relevant to formal, summative assessments, tied to a student's presumed career pathway, or necessary in terms of CV-building, then it seems likely that these will struggle to be included in curricula – or indeed much engaged with. They do however have value as part of a holistically-wider, 'whole person,' experiential learning experience, not least in relation to making an 'emotional commitment' [26] to learning. The notion of the relatively untouched, 'gold-plated horse trough' (O'Brien and Walker-Martin, chapter 8) and the exasperation that students' non-engagement causes on the part of HE tutors and support staff, cannot be easily ignored. As with many other aspects of the university journey, the onus must ultimately be upon students (and graduates) to engage meaningfully with their studies, tutors and peers, in both accepting and offering support. They should do so by reflecting clearly upon their own academic performances and commitment levels, viewing these as signifiers of a useful contribution to those communities of learning and practice which they signed up to upon entering HE (whether these are within or beyond their own university, discipline, or geographical region).

If, as Freire (1985) suggested, education can tend often towards the merely or predominantly decorative,[27] then it is important to frame our students from an early stage as having the clear potential to be 'natural stakeholders, leaders in training, and immediate agents of change for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda' (Borges et al, 2017). [28] Requiring them to take active (even if not quite fully proactive) ownership of their own learning, by expending effort and achieving time-management, and by moderating or honing professional behaviours, is an essential aspect of university success, and most, if not all, career pathways. Such thinking represents a move away from the concept of students being subsumed gently into the 'banking concept' of education, whereby teachers will simply 'feed' knowledge into a passive audience of learners: 'Words should be laden with the meaning of the people's existential experience, and not of the teacher's words ...' (Freire and Slover, 1983). [29]

[25] See further M Tomlinson 'The degree is not enough: Students' perceptions of the role of higher education credentials for graduate work and employability' *British Journal of Sociology of Education* (2008) 29 (1) pp 49-61 (as cited by Pinto and Ramalheira, 2017).
[26] See further Hoover *et al* (2010) on the emotional components underpinning behavioural skills, namely, emotional control and emotional management. (p 193)
[27] P Freire '*Pedagogy of the oppressed'* Peace and Earth, Rio de Janeiro (1983); see also P Freire, *'The politics of education: culture, power, and liberation'* (1985) South Hadley, Mass., Bergin & Garvey.
[28] See also C J Moon '*95 theses for reforming Higher Education. Are HEIs catalysts for a sustainable society?*' Advance HE/HEA, who argues that '…the moral imperative of universities is to tackle societal and global issues and problems…the UN Sustainable Development Goals provide a framework which universities can use to guide teaching, research and practice to address problems of poverty and the effects of climate change.' (available at https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/95-theses-reforming-higher-education-are-heis-catalysts-sustainable-society, accessed 01.03.19)
[29] See further P Freire and L Slover 'The Importance of the act of Reading' *The Journal of Education,* (1983) 165 (1) pp. 5-11 on how '…the student is the subject of the process of learning [to read and write] as an act of knowing and a creative act. The fact that he or she needs the teacher's help, as in any pedagogical situation, does not mean that the teacher's help annuls the student's creativity…'See also P Freire, 'The "Banking" Concept of Education' in '*Ways of Reading'* by D Bartholomae, A Petrosky and S Waite (eds) (2008) Boston: Bedford- St. Martin's

Personal, past learning histories can easily impact however upon present and future performances (Irving-Bell, chapter 7). A strong, accurate sense of learner identity clearly matters, especially where the lack of one (or the presence of one steeped in adversity, or failed attempts at earlier learning) may lead students to negatively self-construct a variety of barriers to academic success. Coping with disappointing results, accepting and learning from less than positive feedback, and perhaps being able to engage in goal revision where necessary, are all 'skills' or competencies associated with navigating the modern job market: as Hu *et al* (2019:90) argue 'learning experiences are important sources of self-beliefs for realizing goals' or, conversely, for spotting any degree of

> '..misfit between the current goal and the young person's interests, values and talents, while feedback on goal progress implies that the career goal might not be attainable due to lack of effort, engagement and/or skills/abilities.'

2. *On self-belief, self-efficacy, and holistic, whole-person learning*

As Turner (2014:592) notes, 'without the belief that one can apply one's understanding and skills, one cannot demonstrate nor meaningfully utilise one's understanding and skills.'[30] Resilience, stamina and emotional maturity are integral to career and HE success and to the lowering of HE attrition rates, regardless of academic discipline or jurisdiction (Cusciano *et al,* chapter 9). If, as Benson (2006:173) observed however, having good employability also offers up a revised form of traditional job 'security' then it seems only fair to conclude that 'a new kind of psychological contract' (Bernstrøm, 2019) now exists between students, universities, and the modern job market. Learners must quickly expect to become as prepared as possible for a very wide variety of challenges both in class and in the workplace. Self-perceived or preconceived identities, assumed latent weaknesses, and indeed certain resiliencies and competencies (often borne out of pre-enrolment experiences and/or socio-economic backgrounds) should not be discounted when we are planning (or trying to be supportive during) the student journey (O'Shea and Delahunty, chapter 11). Learners do, and should, come from a varied range of backgrounds: they will bring with them diverse skill sets that have much to offer in terms of enriching the academic community.[31]

As Zelenev (2017) observes however (in relation to implementing *Agenda 2030* at national levels), 'identifying the bottle-necks and removing the obstacles' is central to achieving success. There will likely always be significantly stressful 'points of transition' for HE students, which must be addressed when learning programmes and assessments are being designed and delivered (Ryan *et al* chapter 10). The critical first year of university (Mullen *et*

---

[30] N K. Turner (2014) 'Development of self-belief for employability in higher education: ability, efficacy and control in context' *Teaching in Higher Education*, (2014) 19 (6) pp 592-602, stressing that 'while critics of the skills agenda in employability have argued for a shift in focus from skills to action..the two are in fact inextricably linked. Self-belief underpins action and needs to be developed alongside and through the development of skills within the context of the disciplinary curriculum.'

[31] See further the excellent work of L McKenzie '*Getting By: Estates, Class and Culture in Austerity Britain'* (2015) Policy Press: Bristol, on how the increasingly urgent 'need' for widespread, upward social mobility further stigmatises poverty, as 'evidence' of an apparent unwillingness or inability to learn, which may easily mask the presence of 'strong, resourceful, ambitious people who are 'getting by', often with humour and despite facing brutal austerity.'

al chapter 12) often reveals a number of external or internal impediments to gaining a degree (i.e. mental, physical, emotional, gendered, or financial). These can serve to remind us of the struggles faced elsewhere in society, where even a basic education is, sadly, still a luxury for many people. Similarly, where 'ideals, objectives and actions contained in the national plans linking SDGs and social protection' demand realization, then 'all sectors of society must play a role in the implementation efforts and be involved in all phases of policy action'(L McKenzie, 2015).

Having found their own voices, it is to be hoped that HE graduates will then in turn use this to benefit those who often lack *any* advocates or platforms, by raising awareness of ethical causes and challenging social injustice in its many forms. As Audenaert et al (2018) recently stressed, worker-vulnerability (whether through long-term unemployment or 'limited educational attainment and multiple interdependent psychosocial issues') often leads to 'a vicious cycle of lowered human capital, mental health, wellbeing and poverty.'[32] Likewise, there may be several reasons why certain students cannot or will not engage fully with lesson activities, contact hours, pastoral care, peer support programmes or extracurricular activities designed to enhance their academic and employability skills. If we must embed or augment generic or career-specific forms of work-ready 'graduateness,' grounded in desirable personal qualities (i.e. psychological resilience, emotional maturity, ethical diligence, honesty) then we should surely examine and address where possible those barriers to success that exist within our various communities of learning, practice and pedagogy. There is sharp irony in the fact that some HE students cannot always afford to access the internet, or attend classes, whether through increasingly high costs of e.g. travel, accommodation, subsistence, or childcare. Not all students are able to take part in highly beneficial yet financially demanding activities, such as unpaid internships (Caddell and McIlwhan, chapter 19). Further research into pastoral care issues, including an examination of the reasons that students tend to offer as extenuating circumstances for failing to attend classes, meet submission deadlines, or pass (or indeed, perhaps, attend for) assessments, might well reveal that years of acute austerity measures have much to answer for in this regard (Lin, 2006).

The task of 'shaping' ethical, professional, and reliably employable HE graduates must inculcate an enhanced awareness of the more difficult issues of ethics and social justice, at both domestic and international levels. Graduates should be able to offer evidence to the wider community that their hard-earned scholarship will ultimately make a difference. This is not just in relation to the securing of 'a good job' as soon as possible after graduation, but also in the sense that they, in reading for their degree and successfully completing HE, have achieved something of merit and of which they should be rightly proud. As Steur *et al* (2012) noted, 'scholarship and moral citizenship' are also 'important elements' of embedding a desire for lifelong learning. This multi-faceted approach to the concept of 'graduateness' fits well with the wider pursuit of student success strategies, that aim to have tutors, students, support workers, university management teams and, in particular, HE policy- makers (not least those overseeing cuts to student support funding) working in unison to evolve practicable solutions to issues such as non-attendance, poor engagement, plagiarism, or too-high attrition rates.

---

[32] M Audenaert *et al* 'Vulnerable workers' employability competences: The role of establishing clear expectations, developmental inducements, and social organizational goals' *Journal of Business Ethics* (2019) (available at http://hdl.handle.net/1854/LU-8608525, accessed 11.04.19)

Lack of self-efficacy is clearly often a significant factor in terms of absent or weak student motivation, especially on those pathways where students must engage in successful job-searching activities from an early stage of their degree studies. Certain fundamental, generic traits, innate or learned, do encourage and enable the sort of self-beliefs that are highly valued by most employers, regardless of professional or industrial affiliation: 'self-belief enables action and, therefore, is essential for agency, underpinning the readiness to take part and contribute and the drive to make new ideas happen' (Turner, 2014). Where learners are encouraged to articulate clearly their own employability skills (Bostock, chapter 13), they will be generally much more able to accurately ascertain what their future role(s) might be within wider, multi-disciplinary contexts. They can in turn gain a sense of belonging to wider communities of practice and academic scholarship, even against difficult backdrops of very uncertain economic and political landscapes (Thomson, chapter 15). Often, a sort of 'wickedness' attaches to modern workplace problems that will demand of HE graduates a high level of inter-disciplinarity and an enhanced sense of global connectedness, allowing them to engage in skilled, strategic networking and demonstrate transferable core skills (Gurbutt, chapter 14). The ability to forge and maintain collegiate, meaningful relationships is essential for navigating and surviving the many uncertainties of both academia and life in the modern workplace, post-graduation (Delahunty and Harden-Thew, chapter 18). Opportunities do exist, especially in relation to some of the 'pedagogic advantages' afforded by technology via, for example, online networking, alumni groups, and distance learning (Mogaji, chapter 21; Fowlie and Forder, chapter 22).

Gauging what prospective employers will actually want – and indeed expect - from the university graduates that they might seek to recruit, is particularly important in times of austerity. That said, the dynamic nature of 'the self' might easily remain overlooked or unrecognised: some course designs and content lists may also result in learning being misrepresented as strictly linear, modular, and compartmentalised (Goldspink and Engward, chapter 20) with instrumental evaluations often tending to be grounded in monitoring only the most superficial aspects of the student learning experience. A programmatic focus on assessments (Whitfield and Hartley, chapter 16) could offer a means of overcoming or at least addressing this issue. Greater authenticity within assessments is similarly needed (Davidson *et al,* chapter 17) given how practical approaches to HE learning frequently tend to offer the best means of helping students make a successful transition from university into the workplace.

3. Authenticity of approach?

As Morin (2003) highlighted, an authentic education must involve contextualization, implementation, and globalization, in the sense that there often are differing levels of reality between learned theories and lived experiences.[33] In terms of offering innovative learning and teaching suggestions, Delors *et al's Five Pillars of Education* (2006) are clearly acknowledged within the third, more subject-specific section of this collection.[34] *Learning to know* (serving

[33] E Morin '*The seven knowledges needed to educate the future'* (2003) UNESCO, São Paulo, Cortez; Brasília, (as cited by de Paula Arruda Filho, 'The agenda 2030 for responsible management education: An applied methodology' *The International Journal of Management Education*, (2017) 15:2 Part B, pp 183-191

[34] J Delors et al '*Education: A treasure to discover'* (2006) UNESCO, São Paulo, Cortez

also as a model for lifelong learning) and *Learning to do* (tied to professional education and market pressures, technical and professional competence, team working, and self-efficacy) sit comfortably alongside each other: the modalities of *Learning to live together*, perhaps offer one of the main challenges for modern HEIs given the apparent direction of certain global political trends however (de Paula Arruda Filho (2017). *Learning to be,* is the key pillar that particularly

> '…expands the understanding of formal education in conjunction with non-formal and informal education. It indicates that every human being should be prepared to have intellectual autonomy and a critical view of life, in order to be able to formulate their own value judgments, develop the capacity of discernment and of acting in various circumstances. *Education must provide everyone with intellectual forces and references that allow them to understand the surrounding world and perform as responsible and fair actors*.' (de Paula Arruda Filho, 2017:186) [35]

Experiential, 'whole person' models of learning (including e.g. workplace simulations, a programme-embedded employability focus, and charity-driven 'pop-up shops') can clearly be used to enhance graduate employability.[36] As Forster and Robson (chapter 23) argue, experiential learning can sometimes seek to 'squeeze a quart into a pint pot,' with academic, subject expertise perching closely alongside the 'softer' skills ('organisational deftness') so needed and valued within the workplace. Embedding employability widely across undergraduate curricula (as fundamental core skills) can also work however, rather than having certain activities appear as course-extraneous events or aims (Lock, chapter 24). Such an approach potentially provides opportunities for learners and graduates to 'boundary hop' across the borders and divisions of academic disciplines, professions, industries, and perhaps cross geographic boundaries. Brown *et al's* (chapter 25) substantial review of the literature on simulations, allows for further discussion of their pedagogical benefits and possible limitations, given the 'ever more marketised' HE landscape, where students are looking gimlet-eyed at the promise of a high-earning, 'Graduate Premium'[37] to stave off the likelihood of being unemployed post-graduation.

A constructivist approach to learning (Hill and Bass, chapter 26) can similarly acknowledge the consequences of austerity, e.g. by raising much-needed funds for a student-selected charity, whilst at the same time promoting greater student resilience and self-efficacy within practice-relevant, stressful situations. Student placements, career advice provision, and live projects also

---

[35] (Emphasis added) adding that the 5th pillar (*Learning to transform oneself and society*) also 'recognizes that each one of us can change the world by acting individually and together, and that quality education provides the tools to change society.' (p 186)

[36] See further Hoover *et al* (2010) for a useful discussion of a whole-person learning and experiential/behavioural skill pedagogy, developed for an executive skills course (an MBA), aimed at addressing criticisms over program 'irrelevancy' and graduate skill sets.

[37] See further S Kemp-King 'The Graduate Premium: Manna, Myth or Plain Mis-selling?' (2016) *The Inter-generational Foundation* (available at http://www.if.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Graduate_Premium_final.compressed.pdf accessed 21.02.19) arguing that 'No matter what unquantifiable, subjective quality controls – such as the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) – are put in place, the planned deregulation of the sector …could well result in an evolution of English universities echoing America's experience. The new "for-profit" colleges could end up as little more than debt-generating engines with lower and lower entry standards and huge dropout rates blighting the financial future of a generation of graduates – and ultimately the entire economy.' (p 38)

afford opportunities to inculcate professional development skills into an ever-evolving arena of undergraduate learning, providing further scope for enhancing or engendering work-readiness (Whatley, chapter 27). Innovations such as a 'Living CV' (Dibben and Morley, chapter 28) can tie academic learning outcomes firmly to our students' CV outputs. Raising awareness of the relevance of such learning outcomes (through personalised, explicit coaching on 'work literacy') could be more widely integrated into university programmes at all levels, to enable valuable, fuller discussions on lived experiences within the world of work. Increasing employer engagement, and aiding interview preparation, are likely further benefits of such an approach. The use of e-portfolios for distance learning (Van Staden, chapter 29, on South African Education students) similarly allows for the design and inclusion of key *learning* tasks (as opposed to more narrowly-focussed assessment tasks). The prompt provision of online feedback facilitates present and future learning, and enables post-graduate students to engage meaningfully in reflective peer and self-assessment, even when not physically present on campus.

The gaining of knowledge is *not* simply a passive process but a highly active one, grounded firmly in cognition, adaptive in nature, and tied closely to contextual factors. (Bippert, chapter 30). Online learning clearly requires certain things: authenticity of learning experience, social interaction, and students who are willing and able to make valid contributions in terms of their own experiences and unique perspectives. The role of the tutor here is to be facilitative: flexible teaching techniques matter, as does the provision of opportunities for synchronous communication between learner and tutor. Similarly, adapting learning and teaching methods to meet the increasingly diverse needs of students entering certain professions (K Toole, chapter 31; Lodge and Elliott, chapter 32) is not always an easy feat. Linking legal employability for example, to skills-diversity and enrichment, to prepare law students for the rigours of practice and unforeseen career changes, poses certain challenges, but can be achieved. Criminal Justice similarly requires strong working partnerships with interested stakeholders, to form a triadic framework comprising of university careers staff, employers, and the students themselves, who can work together to enhance work-readiness and forge a meaningful community of practice (Altham and Ragonese, chapter 33).

4. A note of caution: hearing and heeding 'student voices'?

HE has clearly 'been issued with several new challenges' in recent decades, not least in respect of its rapid and unprecedented massification, and the fact that many entrants to HE will tend to 'need special attention to develop their capacities to the expected level' (Pavlin and Svetlik, 2014:420).[38] Arguably, education, and the increasingly juridical right to an education, seems often to be about trying to 'bring the sea to the landlocked' (Casal and Salamé, 2015) [39] through the sharing of scarce or finite resources, on an equitable basis. This image perhaps to some extent also sums up what the authors involved in this project are attempting to do; in sharing our ideas, critiques and experiences, we are trying to alert policymakers to the issues that are

[38] Arguing further that 'on the other hand, there is a need to support investments' in research and development .. 'whereby these investments shorten technological cycles and rapidly change job requirements which tend to increase..[raising] the problem of the fit between the knowledge and competencies that are acquired and actually required.'

[39] On the challenges associated with this in the literal sense (and the harsh consequences of failing to offer any possible solutions) see P Casal and N Selamé 'Sea for the landlocked: a sustainable development goal?' *Journal of Global Ethics* (2015) 11 (3) pp 270-279

hindering the aims of HE, while also finding new ways of helping our learners survive within and beyond university, as employable scholars. As Suleman (2018:263) has recently observed of the notion of generic employability skills,

> '…the identification of those skills is an impossible endeavour. Agreement is only found on some cognitive, technical, and relational skills…the supply-side approach overlooks economic and social processes that might affect employability. The problem of graduates' employability transcends higher education institutions' provision of useful and matched skills.' [40]

Where students tend to focus almost solely on outcomes, they may internalize the importance of future employment pathways; this may in turn yield graduates who lack the dispositions desired by certain employers. Such a 'highly performative culture' within HE, is perhaps further compounded by being tied to TEF and LEO metrics, and often does little to prepare students for the realities and challenges of the modern workplace (Frankham, 2016) and the demands of achieving a hoped-for 'social mobility.'[41] In respect of the significant role played by universities in tackling social problems such as poverty, injustice or ignorance of one's rights, it is worth recalling here how the once plain and quite 'pact-like' (Gornitzka et al, 2007) relationship between HE and wider society has clearly altered over recent decades:

> '…initial doubts developed into major debates concerning the foundation of the university as a social institution. Ultimately, the massification of higher education undermined the pact and not only because of the growing costs of higher education… It led to a plurality of belief systems attached to the university, while it also affected the university's role in selecting socioeconomic and political elites' (Maasen and Stensaker (2011:759). [42]

Palmer's recent observation (on the UN's SDGs) could perhaps equally be applied to the various questions that hang over the future directions – and potential remit and role - of HEIs:

> 'Public consultation and public discourse – carried out in regular, visible forums that allow the space for collective and individual voices to discuss the ends and means of sustainable development – will be vital to making the process over the coming 15 years one of genuine development, rather than a political push (Palmer, 2015: 262).'

It can be argued that we are letting students down if they are exiting university completely unequipped for the many challenges that they will face post-graduation, outside of academia. A small but significant body of case law deals with this very idea, and is quite telling insofar as it serves to identify and challenge some of the HE systems and policies that have not perhaps

---

[40] See also J Brennan et al '*Things We Know And Don't Know About The Wider Benefits Of Higher Education: A Review Of The Recent Literature'* (2013) London, UK: LSE

[41] For a disheartening view of 'social mobility' see further The 2019 Report of the Social Mobility Commission *'State of the Nation 2018-19: Social Mobility in Great Britain'* available at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/798404/SMC_State_of_the_Nation_Report_2018-19.pdf (accessed 30.04.19)

[42] Adding that 'research has been decoupled more and more from (mass) higher education and linked to the needs of the national economy.'

worked as well as they could have. Arguably, one section of the 'student voice' is represented here amongst such litigation, albeit as a highly aggrieved expression of disappointment or dissatisfaction with certain aspects of the HE system (e.g. teaching, assessment, inclusion, pastoral care, and administration). Recent court hearings have tended to focus upon the complaints of students who either did not ultimately gain the qualification they were expecting to, or who were perhaps removed from their degree course altogether for failing to achieve the grades required to progress. Broadly and briefly summarised, the jurisprudence suggests that 'matters that fall within the remit of general education decisions, may [still] be seen by the courts as beyond their jurisdiction.' In other words, certain aspects of learning and teaching still 'enjoy' some measure of academic judgement 'immunity'[43] from judicial oversight and are essentially non-juridical. Procedural issues might however more easily 'fall within the concept of natural justice' (Cummings, 2017) and can therefore find themselves sitting directly under the court's gaze, via the process of Judicial Review. Cases involving breaches of contract or the tort of negligence – in connection with teaching delivery and marking of assessments - have also featured, as has the issue of the human right to education, under the European Convention. [44]

Decisions likely to affect a student's employment opportunities or their future capacity to earn may be particularly problematic. The recent case of *Siddiqui* [2018][45] is quite significant, given how much time had elapsed since the claimant's undergraduate days. Here, a law graduate was disappointed with having gained a 2.1 rather than the first class law degree that he had set his sights on many years previously. He claimed that the resultant stress, depression, and insomnia had impacted adversely upon his legal career, over two subsequent decades. He argued that the teaching he had received as an undergraduate had been deficient and that the university had therefore been negligent. One module in particular had, he felt, been very harshly marked: in addition to this, an unusually large number of lecturers had been off on sabbaticals at the same time, which had left the department generally 'understaffed.' The university conceded that it had indeed encountered some problems, not least in terms of providing cover for a certain module, and that this was directly due to staff shortages. The claimant alleged further that the 'negligently inadequate' teaching had also breached the contractual standard of care required of the university. Similarly, he argued that there had been a failure on the part of his personal tutor to convey information concerning his various illnesses to the relevant authorities responsible for making reasonable adjustments, and for moderating results.

It was suggested by the university that the claimant had himself been lacking in certain 'historian skills' and had failed to undertake the high level of independent study needed to achieve academic success in this field. Lectures were meant to 'address the inherent structural problems in this particular subject' which represented 'a problematic course.'[46] The fact that some of the students had bought their professors champagne at the end of the year was also noted: [47] the court looked in detail too at such matters as class size and accepted that extra hours of work had been put in by the tutor who had been delivering the teaching. A letter of complaint received from another former student at the time (sent, apparently, in the spirit of improving things for future cohorts, and in conjunction with another course tutor) was of central importance to the proceedings, in terms of evidencing teaching quality – or the alleged lack of

[43] *Clark v University of Lincolnshire and Humberside* [2000] EWCA Civ 129
[44] *Croskery's application* [2010] NIQB 129
[45] *Siddiqui v The Chancellor, Masters & Scholars of the University of Oxford* EWHC 184 (QB)
[46] *Ibid,* at para 29: the student accepted that it was a difficult course with certain '*issues peculiar to it*'
[47] *Ibid,* at para 59

it. The professor's reply to this concerned third party however, was relevant in relation to the formal complaint and subsequent litigation:

> 'The logic would be that, in order to be prepared properly for the gobbets paper, it would have been necessary for anything that appeared in the examination paper to have been covered specifically in class. The expression 'spoon-feeding' comes to mind which is hardly to be expected for an Oxford undergraduate degree course.'[48]

In sum, the court proceedings were based upon the idea that significant, long-term 'employability harms' had flowed directly from the plaintiff having had a 'serious, adverse reaction to his degree results.' At this point his 'entire identity and personal psyche' had been 'shattered by these poor results.' On the issue of pastoral care, the tutor had had no recollection of the student having raised any issues of depression, anxiety or insomnia at any stage, but had apparently advised the student that no documentation would be required from him to evidence his claim of extenuating circumstances. Email exchanges retrieved from the time related to the student having hay fever. With hindsight, it was argued that factors such as depression, insomnia, and anxiety had played a key part in his poor academic performance. He claimed further that his personal tutor had been fully aware of all of his conditions but had failed to refer this information on to the Proctors (which would have been best practice, rather than a strictly formal requirement, at that time). It is significant that the court examined in detail matters such as the teaching hours and administration surrounding the course, and looked at much of the correspondence that had been exchanged between other academics and students. Though eventually dismissed, the claim does raise some difficult questions as to the pastoral care remit of tutors (and the avoidance of tortious or contractual liability) especially in terms of accommodating inherent or unseen conditions or weaknesses, and indeed spotting and addressing the various challenging circumstances that can hinder students on their journey throughout - and beyond - HE. [49]

In *Re Croskery* (2010),[50] the right to education under Article 2, Protocol 1 of the European Convention (A2P1) was discussed in connection with a student's complaints over dissertation supervision and his final grade award. The court stressed that A2P1 was clearly concerned with preventing the *denial* of *any* right to education, rather than a failure to remove obstacles or barriers to learning from the student pathway. They stated that 'plainly the applicant …had access to and ha[d] exercised his right to third level education' [51] in spite of his dissatisfaction with his dissertation supervisor. It was further noted that A2P1 said nothing about a human

---

[48] Adding that, '…last year I was simply (and physically) unable to devote the same amount of time to each student - which, I accept, an exceptionally demanding student, such as [SB], may have taken as an affront to her 'rights'…'

[49] Other urgent issues –which are beyond the scope of this book but can undoubtedly impact significantly upon students' opportunities for success - include the need to better safeguard students who are vulnerable on the basis of e.g. undeclared or undiagnosed disabilities, mental health issues, financial hardship, gender or sexual orientation. Austerity measures clearly compound the strains on support mechanisms within HE. Greater funding for pastoral care and peer support systems could perhaps be framed as a key component of employability-enhancing measures.

[50] *Croskery's application* [2010] NIQB 129

[51] *Ibid*, [per Treacy J, at para 18. Article 6 of the European Convention (on the right to fair hearing) was also discussed.

right to be conferred with a degree or indeed any other academic qualification, 'much less ..academic assessment' [as such]…it [was] not engaged in this case.' [52]A further example can be found in the case of *Re Humzy Hancock* (2007),[53] where an Australian law student was found to have committed three instances of plagiarism during his time as an undergraduate. As references for post-graduate practice courses required a formal attestation to his 'good character' by a former tutor, he was denied admission. Significantly, the court held that plagiarism had occurred, but, oddly, it had not been defined as such under the University's own Regulations. The court suggested that universities should consider very carefully the wording of their policies on plagiarism, to avoid any such ambiguities in future.

Cases such as these offer useful guidance as to the direction that student litigation might potentially take in future, if the notion of 'employability-harm' takes root. The court's language seems also to focus almost entirely on the *quality* of the academic work being assessed, rather than on the more relevant issue of whether procedural fairness had been achieved. This could suggest that there are circumstances where the courts might well intervene and make judgments of an essentially academic nature i.e. on educational decisions, where the '…determination of facts [becomes] a judgment of academic quality and behaviour, not of an expected standard of behaviour' (Cummings, 2007). The earlier case law that the court referred to in *Humzy Hancock* centred upon the issue of students admitting to plagiarism but then pleading external, mitigating pressures in their 'defence.' [54] Stress and anxiety featured repeatedly, often in respect of financial problems or familial issues. The courts have also considered in detail how questions of 'procedural unfairness' are interpreted and dealt with by decision-makers and – to a lesser extent – academics carrying out pastoral care duties. [55] In respect of the various processes of academia, it can be argued that the interpretation of University Regulations, their application, and the use of discretion (e.g. in determining what exactly constitutes extenuating or mitigating circumstances, cheating, or plagiarism and levels of seriousness) may well come in for increasing external scrutiny, via formal student complaints or litigation. [56]

---

[52] Para 21

[53] *Re Humzy Hancock* [2007] QSC 034 His reasons for plagiarising are noteworthy: in addition to having collaborated on an essay with a fellow student, he also cited family issues which caused him to run short of time and fail to reference his sources correctly. A third incident involved a 'take-home' paper assessment, which had contained only minimal citation of sources.

[54] The court looked, for example, at *Liveri, Re* [2006] QCA 152, and *AJG, Re* [2004] QCA 88, *Law Society of Tasmania v Richardson* [2003] TASSC 9

[55] See also *Gopikrishna, R v The Office of the Independent Adjudicator* [2015] EWHC 207, where the issue was one of the student being withdrawn, having failed her second-year medical exams, on the presumption that she had little chance of successfully completing the course. This was deemed 'an act of academic judgement' by the OIA (on which Offices, see further https://www.oiahe.org.uk, accessed 21.03.19). The student argued that the decision-making *process* was unfair, because the university panel had looked only at her first year's performance. Her mitigating circumstances had not been considered, nor had her personal tutor been consulted with (a requirement under the university's own Regulations). Given that these factors equated to clear 'failings of reason and procedure,' the usual norms of academic judgement immunity did not apply.

[56] See for example *R (Mustafa) v OIA* [2013] EWHC 1379 (Admin) on plagiarism, where the student gained a mark of zero, citing a number of mitigating factors. Having been assigned group work, for example, he claimed that he was unable to either find or join a group, so as to complete his assignment. An extension to the deadline had led to exhaustion and depression, which in turn impacted upon his exam performance. The court looked in detail at the University's definition of plagiarism, noting that it differed to that of other HEIs. The OIA made it clear that questions of plagiarism (and the extent to which these might adversely affect a student's mark) fell under the protective umbrella-immunity of academic judgement. See also *R (Cardao-Pito) v OIA* [2012], EWHC 203 (Admin) where a student complained that 'harassment' by a lecturer had adversely affected his mark.

5. Conclusion

This book project has sought to adopt an inter-disciplinary approach, across a variety of institutions and jurisdictions, to offer a fairly wide range of observations, reflections, and possible suggestions for improving practices and policies within HE.[57] The authors are united in their concerns over the future direction[s] of university learning and teaching, especially in terms of identifying future roles and remits, and in aiming to honour both the traditions and spirit of academia, whilst highlighting the need for ethical, sustainable learning systems and pedagogies. As Haertle *et al* (2017) have argued,

> '…the academic sector can play a strategic role as change agents, educating the managers of today and tomorrow, incorporating the values of responsible corporate citizenship into their education activities.'[58]

More research is needed into a number of issues, for example the increasingly challenging pastoral care needs of some of our students. More training and support for staff - and for student peer groups - involved in delivering or overseeing this type of care, would perhaps go some way towards addressing some of the inequalities and barriers to accessing learning that still exist within HE. The reasons for the rise in the use of essay mills by some students,[59] not to mention the charges of 'grade inflation'[60] laid against some HEIs, also merit further investigation and discussion. There are no easy, 'quick-fix' answers to the various questions that continue to arise on the issue of how best to enhance – or perhaps ensure - graduate employability via HE.

Student engagement itself tends often to be triadic in nature, requiring emotional, cognitive, and behavioural elements. It can be argued that much of the learning within HE occurs largely via prolonged periods of social cognition (i.e. through observation, positive reinforcement, and, at times, via meaningful 'penalty' (Bandura, 1989), [61] mirroring most, if not all, workplaces, and indeed many of the problems of modern society. As such, the current 'lack of social mobility and the widening gap of inequality' (McKenzie, 2015) cannot be ignored. Academic staff must be increasingly mindful of the obstacles and challenges facing students and graduates, especially in age of ongoing austerity and increasingly divisive political uncertainties. As McKenzie (2015) has stressed,

> '…within communities across the UK, where the poorest people live, are hardships caused by the consequences of structural inequality, a political system that does not

---

[57] On the need for an interdisciplinary approach to education (for sustainable development, and to acknowledge differing perspectives on sustainability and corporate social responsibility) see F Annan-Diab and C Molinari, 'Interdisciplinarity: Practical approach to advancing education for sustainability and for the Sustainable Development Goals' *The International Journal of Management Education* (2017) 15 (2) pp 73-83

[58] J Haertle, C Parkes, A Murray and R Hayes 'PRME: Building a global movement on responsible management education' *The International Journal of Management Education* (2017) 15 (2) pp 66-72

[59] See further https://www.qaa.ac.uk/news-events/news/contract-cheating-and-academic-integrity-qaa-responds-to-essay-mill-revelations# (accessed 12.04.19)

[60] See further https://www.qaa.ac.uk/news-events/news/degree-classification-system-consultation (accessed 10.04.19)

[61] A Bandura 'Social cognitive theory' in R. Vasta (Ed.) '*Annals of child development: Six theories of child development'* (1989) Greenwich, CT; JAI Press(pp 1-60); See also A Bandura 'The evolution of social cognitive theory' in K. G. Smith, & M. A. Hitt (Eds.) '*Great minds in management. Employability Skills Assessment'* (2005) Oxford: Oxford University Press (pp 9-35)

engage those who have the least power, disenfranchisement relating to the notion of fairness regarding their families and communities.'[62]

Decision-makers must be careful too, to avoid the sort of rhetoric or thinking that places a 'classifying' blame for exclusion upon those who have already been actively or subtly excluded (i.e. from education, certain types of employment, or societal approval):

> '..known and named, stigmatised because of where they lived, and their practices and behaviours became scrutinised as problems within themselves, rather than methods for managing the difficult situations they encountered.' (McKenzie, 2015)

Focusing instead upon human resourcefulness, resilience, community spirit, and a willingness to embrace – and survive – change, offers an alternative approach. By widening access,

> '…the university environment provides a stage for social transformation through education, research and extension. Students…search for fulfilment, personal growth and active participation in the social changes of their time' (Borges et al, 2017).

Students and graduates must be regarded as potential stakeholders within wider communities of academic and professional practice, especially given how HE fits within the contextual frameworks of the UN's PRME principles and the 2030 Agenda for the SDGs. [63] The dangers associated with a lack of 'moral responsibility' (Ghoshal, 2005) [64] are becoming increasingly apparent, on a global scale. Making 'a science' out of Business Studies, for example, runs the risk of ignoring the wider consequences of unsustainability, in terms of adverse environmental impacts and deepening levels of social injustice. (Borges et al, 2017). Arguably, having students engage more fully in socially-relevant learning activities such as voluntary work, placements or internships with NGOs or charitable organisations as part of their degree course, could go some way towards bridging some of the gaps that exist between academia and wider society, perhaps not least by convincing a sometimes quite sceptical public – and suspicious press - of the deeper value of education and lifelong learning.

In sum, there are various, fundamental skills needed for 'work-readiness' post-graduation: this is so whether the concept of employability is defined as speedy job-finding or longer-term career success, or framed as part of a wider notion of opening up opportunities, and making 'greater good' contributions to a sustainably just, and fair society. Key aims for HE students and staff should include intellectual improvement, and the promotion of those principled behaviours that will be required from our graduates as employees, and perhaps as future employers themselves. The concept of a basic, underpinning 'work ethic,' though somewhat

---

[62] McKenzie (2015) at Loc. 3452, kindle ed.)
[63] *Ibid,* arguing further that universities 'are not fully capable of managing CoPs, but they can provide the right environment for the CoPs to succeed.'
[64] Outlining how a scientific-model approach to business studies can easily exclude 'human intentionality or choice' and 'the use of sharp assumptions and deductive reasoning.' On 'the pretence of knowledge' which can also occur in such scenarios, see further F A von Hayek 'The Pretence of Knowledge' *American Economic Review* (1989) 79 (6) pp 3-7

unfashionable, could include such qualities as ‘good interpersonal skills, initiative, and dependability’ (Hill and Petty, 1995).[65] Certain ‘boot-camp’ qualities are clearly required to succeed (or indeed survive) within both the ‘real world’ of the workplace, and the halls of academia. Personal attributes such as integrity, honesty, and diligence, whether learned or inherent, can be quite easily evidenced via the traditional, tough challenges of HE already present within most curricula (e.g. meeting tight assessment deadlines, engaging in self-led reading and independent research, taking part in viva voce to reinforce the learning achieved in written assignments, and respectful team-working with others who might not share their point of view or attitude towards work). Moreover, as the litigation referred to above suggests, if a more formal, contractual relationship now exists between student and university (together with a symbiotic duty of care to avoid negligent or inappropriate behaviours and promote an atmosphere of mutual respect), then we, as staff, are duty bound to act as community of practice ‘exemplars.’[66] We must promote greater awareness too, of how, often,

> ‘…environment affects an individual, and the individual also affects the environment. An individual’s emotion and knowledge influence behaviors and societal reactions to behavior serve as feedback. Individuals shape and change their emotions and future actions based on the feedback…self-efficacy and self-regulatory capabilities are important characteristics.’ (Park and Hill, 2016:175)

Practitioners and policy-makers in HE should be especially prepared to engage in the sort of sharply reflective practice that we have long encouraged our students to attempt in the wake of assessment attempts, by listening to and acting upon feedback, to achieve or maintain improvements where possible. Vassilis and Race’s (2007) prescient observation merits having the last word:

> ‘…the increased benefit of a group of people being involved in shared reflection is even more significant in many situations where collaborative and team activity is to be encouraged. ***In short, there has been no better time to get our act together regarding evidencing reflection – both our own reflection, and that of our students***.’[67]

[65] R B Hill and G C Petty ’A new look at selected employability skills: A factor analysis of the occupational work ethic’ *Journal of Vocational Education Research* (1995) 20 (4) pp 59-73; see also H Park and R B Hill, ‘Employability Skills Assessment: Measuring Work Ethic for Research and Learning’ *Career and Technical Education Research*, (2016) 41(3) pp 175 -194

[66] Arguably, we are their ‘trustees’ too in the sense that we must act equitably and fairly in overseeing their efforts to gain a university education.

[67] A Vassilis and P Race ‘Enhancing Knowledge Management in Design Education Through Systematic Reflection Practice’ *Concurrent Engineering* (March 2007) 15 (1) pp.63-76, p 76 (emphasis added)

References

Altbach, P G L Reisberg, L E Rumbley '*Trends in Global Higher Education: Tracking an Academic Revolution -A Report Prepared for the UNESCO 2009 World Conference on Higher Education* (2009) UN: Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, available at http://www.cep.edu.rs/public/Altbach,_Reisberg,_Rumbley_Tracking_an_Academic_Revolution,_UNESCO_2009.pdf

Annan-Diab F and Molinari C 'Interdisciplinarity: Practical approach to advancing education for sustainability and for the Sustainable Development Goals' *The International Journal of Management Education* (2017) 15 (2) pp 73-83

Arrow K J 'Observations on Social Capital' in P Dasgupta and I Serageldin (eds) '*Social Capital: A Multifaceted Perspective'* (2000) The World Bank: Washington DC

Audenaert M *et al* 'Vulnerable workers' employability competences: The role of establishing clear expectations, developmental inducements, and social organizational goals' *Journal of Business Ethics* (2019) (available at http://hdl.handle.net/1854/LU-8608525, accessed 11.04.19)

Baker C N 'Under-Represented College Students and Extracurricular Involvement: The Effects Of Various Student Organizations On Academic Performance' (2008) *Social Psychology of Education*, 11(3), 273- 298

Bandura A 'Social cognitive theory' in R. Vasta (Ed.) '*Annals of child development: Six theories of child development'* (1989) Greenwich, CT; JAI Press (pp 1-60)

Bandura A 'The evolution of social cognitive theory' in K. G. Smith, & M. A. Hitt (Eds.) '*Great minds in management. Employability Skills Assessment'* (2005) Oxford: Oxford University Press (pp 9-35)

Bellino, J, Paulson J & Worden E A (2017) 'Working Through Difficult Pasts: Toward Thick Democracy and Transitional Justice In Education' *Comparative Education* (2017) 53 (3) pp 313-332

Benson G 'Employee development, commitment and intention to turnover: a test of 'employability' policies in action' *Human Resource Management Journal*, (April 2006) 16(2) pp.173-192

Bernstrøm, V H et al 'Employability as an alternative to job security' *Personnel Review* (2019) 48 (1) pp 234 - 248

Borges J C *et al* 'Student organizations and Communities of Practice: Actions for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development' (2017) *International Journal of Management Education* 15 pp 172-182

Bradshaw, S et al 'Gender and poverty:what we know, don't know, and need to know for Agenda 2030' *Gender, Place & Culture* (2017) 24 (12) pp 1667-1688

Brennan J et al '*Things We Know And Don't Know About The Wider Benefits Of Higher Education: A Review Of The Recent Literature'* (2013) London, UK: LSE

Brown P and Hesketh A (2004) *The Mismanagement Of Talent: Employability And Jobs In The Knowledge Economy'* (2004) New York: OUP

Casal P and Selamé N 'Sea for the landlocked: a sustainable development goal?' *Journal of Global Ethics* (2015) 11 (3) pp 270-279

Cohen L and Mallon M 'The transition from organisational employment to portfolio working: perceptions of boundarylessness' *Work, Employment and Society* (1999) 13(2) pp 329-352

Cummings JJ 'Where courts and academe converge: Findings of fact or academic judgment? *Australia & New Zealand Journal of Law & Education* (2017) 12 (1) pp. 97-108

Delors J et al '*Education: A treasure to discover'* (2006) UNESCO, São Paulo, Cortez

Dewey J '*Philosophy of Education'* (1956) Ames, Iowa: Littlefield Adams
Eklund-Leen SJ and Young RB 'Attitudes Of Student Organization Members And Non-Members About Campus And Community Involvement' (1997) *Community College Review*, 24(4) pp 71 – 81

Frankham J 'Employability and higher education: the follies of the 'Productivity Challenge' in the Teaching Excellence Framework' *Journal of Education Policy* (2016) 32 (5) pp 628-641

Freire P '*Pedagogy of the oppressed'* (1983) Peace and Earth, Rio de Janeiro

Freire P and Slover L 'The Importance of the act of Reading' *The Journal of Education,* (1983) 165 (1) pp. 5-11

Freire P, 'The "Banking" Concept of Education' in '*Ways of Reading'* by D Bartholomae, A Petrosky and S Waite (eds) (2008) Boston: Bedford- St. Martin's

Freire P, *'The politics of education: culture, power, and liberation'* (1985) South Hadley, Mass., Bergin & Garvey

Ghoshal S 'Bad management theories are destroying good management practices' *Academy of Management Learning & Education* (2005) 4(1) pp 75-91

Gornitzka A *et al* 'Europe of knowledge: Search for a new pact' in P. Maassen & J. P. Olsen (Eds.), '*University dynamics and European integration'* (2007) Dordrecht: Springer pp 181-214

Haertle J et al 'PRME: Building a global movement on responsible management education' *The International Journal of Management Education* (2017) 15 (2) pp 66-72

Hall D T '*Careers in Organizations'* (1976) Pacific Palisades, CA: Goodyear

Hill R B and Petty G C 'A new look at selected employability skills: A factor analysis of the occupational work ethic' *Journal of Vocational Education Research* (1995) 20 (4) pp 59-73

Hoover J D *et al* 'Assessing the Effectiveness of Whole Person Learning Pedagogy in Skill Acquisition' *Academy of Management Learning & Education* (June 2010) 9 (2) pp. 192-203

Hu et al 'Does socioeconomic status shape young people's goal revision processes in the face of negative career feedback?' (2019) *Journal of Vocational Behaviour* 110 pp 89-101

Kamvounias P and Varnham S 'In-house or in court? Legal challenges to university decisions' *Education & The Law* (Mar 2006) Vol. 18 (1) p1-17

Kemp-King S 'The Graduate Premium: Manna, Myth or Plain Mis-selling?' (2016) *The Inter-generational Foundation* (available at http://www.if.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Graduate_Premium_final.compressed.pdf accessed 21.02.19)

King K 'Lost in translation? The challenge of translating the global education goal and targets into global indicators' *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education,* (2017) (47) 2017 [Issue 6: *Different Understandings Of Quality Education Across The Globe: A Special Issue On The Guiding Theme Of The BAICE 2016]*

King, K 'The Global Targeting Of Education And Skill: Policy History And Comparative Perspectives' (2016) *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education,* 46(6), 952 -975)

Knight T and Yorke M (2013) '*Embedding employability into the curriculum'* HEA: London

Kushner S 'A Return to Quality' *Evaluation* (2011) 17(3) pp 309–312

Lin C, 'Culture shock and social Support: An investigation of a Chinese student organization on a US campus' *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research* (2006) 35(2) pp 117- 137
Lysova E I et al 'Examining Calling as a double-edge sword for employability' (2018) *Journal of Vocational Behaviour* 104 pp 261-272

Maassen P and Stensaker B 'The knowledge triangle, European higher education policy logics and policy implications' *Higher Education* (2011) 61 pp 757–769

McArthur J and Zhang C '*Who is talking about the UN Sustainable Development Goals*?' *Future Development* (2018) https://www.brookings.edu/blog/future-development/2018/06/14/who-is-talking-about-the-un-sustainable-development-goals/

McKenzie L '*Getting By: Estates, Class and Culture in Austerity Britain'* (2015) Policy Press: Bristol
Mills C W '*The Sociological Imagination'* (1959) OUP: New York

Moon C J '*95 theses for reforming Higher Education. Are HEIs catalysts for a sustainable society?*' Advance HE/HEA (https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/95-theses-reforming-higher-education-are-heis-catalysts-sustainable-society, accessed 01.03.19)

Morin E '*The seven knowledges needed to educate the future'* (2003) UNESCO, São Paulo, Cortez; Brasília
Nicholas J M 'Marketable Selves: Making sense of employability as a liberal arts undergraduate' (2018) *Journal of Vocational Behaviour* 109 pp 1-13

Palfreyman D (2010) HE's 'get-out-of-jail-free card' *Perspectives* (2010) 14 (4) pp 114-119

Palmer E (2015) Introduction: The 2030 Agenda, *Journal of Global Ethics,* 11 (3) pp 262-269

Park H and Hill R B 'Employability Skills Assessment: Measuring Work Ethic for Research and Learning' *Career and Technical Education Research*, (2016) 41(3) pp 175 -194

Pavlin S and Svetlik I 'Employability of higher education graduates in Europe' *International Journal of Manpower* (2014) 35 (4) pp 418-424

Peltier JW, Scovotti, C and Pointer L 'The role the collegiate american marketing association plays in professional and entrepreneurial skill development' *Journal of Marketing Education* (2008) 30(1), 47-56

Pinto L H and Ramalheira D C 'Perceived employability of business graduates: The effect of academic performance and extracurricular activities' (2017) *Journal of Vocational Behaviour* 99 pp 165-178

Putnam R D '*Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community'* (2000) New York: Simon and Schuster

Putnam R D '*Who Killed Civic America*?' (1996) https://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/magazine/whokilledcivicamerica

Regmi K (2015) 'Lifelong Learning And Post-2015 Educational Goals: Challenges For The Least Developed Countries' *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education* (2015) 45 (2) pp 317-322

Reiner R 'Political Economy And Criminology: The Return Of The Repressed' in Hall and Winlow (eds) *New Directions in Criminological Theory (2012)* Abingdon: Routledge, pp 30-51

Sachs J D 'From Millennium Development Goals To Sustainable Development Goals' (2012) *The Lancet*, 379

Steur J M *et al* 'Graduateness: An Empirical Examination Of The Formative Function Of University Education' (2012) *Higher Education* 64 pp 861-874

Suleman F 'The employability skills of higher education graduates: insights into conceptual frameworks and methodological options' *Higher Education* (2018) 76 (2) pp 263–278

Tomlinson M ‘The degree is not enough: Students’ perceptions of the role of higher education credentials for graduate work and employability’ *British Journal of Sociology of Education* (2008) 29 (1) pp 49-61
Turner N K (2014) ‘Development of self-belief for employability in higher education: ability, efficacy and control in context’ *Teaching in Higher Education*, (2014) 19 (6) pp 592-602

Unterhalter E ‘Negative Capability? Measuring The Unmeasurable In Education’ *Comparative Education* (2017) 53 (1) pp 1-16

Vassilis A and Race P ‘Enhancing Knowledge Management in Design Education Through Systematic Reflection Practice’ *Concurrent Engineering* (March 2007) 15 (1) pp.63-76

Von Hayek F A ‘The Pretence of Knowledge’ *American Economic Review* (1989) 79 (6) pp 3-7

Yorke M ‘The development and initial use of a survey of student ‘belongingness’, engagement and self-confidence in UK higher education’ *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education* (2016) 41 (1) pp 154-166

Zelenev S ‘Translating the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development into local circumstances: principles and trade-offs’ *International Social Work* 2017, Vol. 60(6) pp 1652–1655

Case law

Siddiqui v The Chancellor, Masters & Scholars of the University of Oxford EWHC 184 (QB)

Croskery's Application [2010] NIQB 129

Re Humzy Hancock [2007] QSC 034

Liveri, Re [2006] QCA 152

AJG, Re [2004] QCA 88, *Law Society of Tasmania v Richardson* [2003] TASSC 9

Gopikrishna, R v The Office of the Independent Adjudicator [2015] EWHC 207

R (Mustafa) v OIA [2013] EWHC 1379 (Admin)

R (Cardao-Pito) v OIA [2012], EWHC 203 (Admin)