When readers of IMHE-Info were surveyed about their expectations of the newsletter one of the things they asked to see more of was short reviews or updates on research and policy in higher education (for more information: www.oecd.org/edu/imheinfosurvey). For a trial period we have therefore agreed with CHERI, the Centre for Higher Education Research and Information (CHERI) of the UK Open University (an IMHE member) to reproduce some items from the Higher Education Digest which is published by CHERI three times a year.

The Digest aims to provide an effective means of helping academics, administrators and managers in higher education to keep up to date and informed about important publications and other significant developments and issues that affect higher education in the UK and internationally.

INSTITUTIONAL AUDIT: THE STUDENT ROLE

Outcomes From Institutional Audit: The Contribution of the Student Written Submission to Institutional Audit, Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 2007, 24p, http://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews/institutionalAudit/outcomes/StudentSubmission.pdf.

An aim of the institutional audit process is 'to contribute, in conjunction with other mechanisms, to the promotion and enhancement of high quality in teaching and learning'. In that this aim can be furthered by identifying what, according to the audit reports, are areas of either good practice or in need of improvement, this report examines the input made by students to the audit process as reflected in the 70 audit reports published between 2002 and November 2004. The focus is the written submissions which students were invited by the QAA to submit through their elected representatives. A selection of the issues reported is outlined below.

Students' representatives provided written submissions on a voluntary basis, and of the 70 institutional audits, 66 received such submissions. In addition, the audit process included meetings between QAA audit teams and students and student representatives and officers.

About a third of the institutional audit reports describe the methods used by students to produce their written submissions; only a few evaluate the methods used. Some of the evaluative comments on the written submissions are about whether these cover students other than mainstream undergraduates, in particular research students and partner-institution students.

The audit teams tended to approach the written submissions with far more cautious courtesy than that given to the institutions' self-evaluation documents, probably a response to the fact that they were voluntary.

In their written submissions, students tended to concur with the self-evaluation views taken by their institutions. There are few references in the audit reports to discrepancies between the written submissions and the self-evaluation documents, but where they have been detected audit teams consistently tried to resolve the issues by establishing the facts of the matter.

The main focus of comments and criticisms in the written submissions concern learning and student support, especially library and information technology provision and personal tutoring arrangements; student representation and the handling of evaluative feedback; and accuracy of information. While published information was regarded as mostly accurate, there were criticisms of the timeliness with which information on institutional changes was provided, with the greatest criticisms being reserved for that publicising year-on-year changes to elective and optional courses and modules.

Students' written submissions contributed to the institutional audit process by providing information on students' views of their learning experiences. Apart from their immediate contribution to institutional audit, the reports were regarded by the institutions involved as valuable in helping them enhance the quality of their teaching and learning.

In some cases, the changes constituted tactical adjustments to library and learning resource arrangements, and to student representation to improve the position before the audit. But in other cases, the changes made constituted genuine enhancements, with institutions having readily accepted their students' written submissions as an important source of information in the work of improving their quality management and academic standards arrangements.

The fact that the written submission (along with an institution's self-evaluation document) was submitted 18 weeks before the audit meant that it could be used by the institution to enhance their policies and practices. This seems to apply to at least 10 per cent of the audits conducted between 2002 and the summer of 2004.

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GRADUATE CAREERS

The UK Graduate Careers Survey 2007, High Fliers Research, 2007, 25p, High Fliers Research Limited, 10a Belmont Street, Camden Town, London NW1 8HH, tel: 020 7428 9000, email: surveys@highfliers.co.uk

This large survey, undertaken by High Fliers Research on an annual basis, aims to give employers and graduate recruiters an insight into the careers aspirations and expectations of final year students. For the 2007 edition over 17,000 finalists at 30 leading universities were interviewed face-to-face in late February 2007 and a further 2,800 participated in additional in-depth research. Students were selected on a random basis but each university's final year population was profiled to ensure that the survey was representative of all main course and degree subjects.

This year's results show that after a slump in 1999-2004, students' confidence in the labour market for graduates is improving: 40 per cent of finalists expect to either start a graduate job or be looking for one by the end of the year. Alternative graduate 'destinations' include postgraduate studies (24 per cent), time off or travel (16 per cent), non-graduate work (8 per cent) and no definite plans (12 per cent). Two-thirds of survey respondents, however, still stated that there are not enough graduate jobs for all those graduating in the summer.

The most popular five career destinations for 2007 graduates were media, teaching, investment banking, marketing and accountancy. Compared to 2006, the largest increase in the number of applications made has been registered in the legal sector. The most important factors considered when deciding whether to apply for a job were: gaining a professional qualification and having a good work/life balance (both considered very important by 32 per cent of respondents), customer contact (30 per cent), using the subject studied and having a 'real' job (both considered important by 29 per cent of respondents), being able to give something back to the community (27 per cent) and joining a structured graduate programme (26 per cent).

Looking ahead at what they thought they might have achieved in their personal and working lives in five years' time, 77 per cent of finalists thought they would own a house, 57 per cent be married and 35 per cent have children. In terms of work, 49 per cent aimed to have achieved a professional qualification, 27 per cent to have reached a senior management position and 18 per cent to have worked in three or more organisations.

ANNA SCESA

KNOWLEDGE AND POWER

Knowledge Society vs Knowledge Economy: Knowledge, Power and Politics, Sverker Sorlin and Hebe Vassuri (eds), 2007, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan

The terms 'knowledge society' and 'knowledge economy' are both much used and loosely used in contemporary academic and political debates. That is the starting point for the contributions contained in this book, based on a research seminar held as part of the UNESCO Forum on Higher Education, Research and Knowledge.

The editors point out, in an opening overview chapter, that discussions of 'knowledge-based economies' assume and, on the whole, celebrate the fact that such economies are 'market-driven and perform according to a market ideology'. However, discussions of a 'knowledge society' cannot avoid addressing a series of 'democratic, ethical and normative dimensions' and lead to a conclusion that 'knowledge economies' suffer a 'democratic deficit'.

The book is about the 'relationship between knowledge and power: organisation, actors, and structures; the role of the state in the context of knowledge production; the impact of fragmentation of knowledge in the process of specialisation; universality vs identity, language and values; the role of the intellectual and the future of ideas, thought and critical analysis; hegemony of knowledge norms; alternative readings'.

These are the issues addressed by the book's contributors, drawing on experience of a variety of national and international contexts and settings, developed and developing.

If there is one idea which connects them all, it is that higher education's engagement with modern societies and economies has to be multi-dimensional and cannot be reduced to 'narrow corporate understandings of the "knowledge-based economy"'.

Contributors are Maurice Kogan writing about knowledge and power from a largely theoretical perspective; Mala Singh bringing a sub-Saharan African view to issues of how universities respond to imperatives of accountability and social responsiveness; Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, also writing from an African perspective, finding the source of many problems to lie in globalisation itself; Nouria Benghabrit-Remaoun and Fahima Charaffedine with two chapters which address gender issues in the Arab world; Roberto Fernandez Retamar exploring meanings of the 'universal' and the 'local' mainly from Latin American perspectives; Hebe Vessuri also taking a Latin American perspective on the 'failure' of national research and development systems to address, let alone solve, national problems; and Akira Arimoto writing about the relationship between academic productivity and economic productivity in Japan.

For academics and academic managers, the issues raised in this book are unlikely to help solve the problems to be faced on Monday morning. But they are an extremely healthy reminder of the source of many of those problems, which is knowledge's relationship to structures of power.

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