

A black graduation cap with a gold tassel and a pink ribbon. The cap is positioned diagonally across the frame. The tassel is made of brown threads and has a gold ring at the top. A pink ribbon is tied around the base of the cap.

Higher Education as a tool of social mobility:

Reforming the
delivery of HE
and measuring
professional graduate
output success

Michael Brown

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The logo for CentreForum, featuring the word "CENTRE" in black and "FORUM" in orange, separated by a stylized orange and black symbol.

CENTREFORUM

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: 1 Executive summary

Universities have an important role in delivering real social mobility and are capable of delivering innovative solutions if properly incentivised to do so. Government policy has been too narrowly focused on encouraging universities to recruit more students from disadvantaged backgrounds rather than on the outcomes they achieve. University recruitment alone is no indicator of having achieved social mobility in a sustainable or meaningful way.

Facilitating access to university programmes is only a first and somewhat modest step. It may be easy to measure but the ultimate objective should be to ensure that people from disadvantaged backgrounds are enabled to reach their full potential and thus to achieve good degrees and good professional careers. It could be seen as perverse to recruit students from disadvantaged groups without then providing the support needed to enable efficient progress into professional graduate employment.

In terms of graduation performance and employment outcomes students from areas of high disadvantage have a lower success rate than those from more advantaged backgrounds. And despite the political focus on access to Russell group universities, the most selective institutions do not necessarily deliver the best professional graduate outcomes for disadvantaged students either. It is time to raise the game.

Unless non-traditional students are both highly self-sufficient and academically exceptional, increasing their numbers is not likely of itself to produce positive outcomes for universities, especially those with major research agendas. There are two underlying and inextricably interlinked drivers of university activity: reputation, and money. Research success will lead to enhanced funding and reputation; and increased income will lead to improvements in teaching, research and international standing. The impact on newspaper league tables by students from non-traditional backgrounds is generally negative and they often need additional

academic and wider support systems. The issue therefore is how universities can be encouraged to see non-traditional students as valuable assets, and not as a drain on resources and a negative impact on league tables and therefore upon reputation.

The traditional university model represents a total focus on teaching by academic experts to inculcate subject mastery. This alone is really insufficient for present needs. Academic rigour and the highest international standards must remain a non-negotiable element of UK degree programmes, but present content is of itself insufficient.

To help students from disadvantaged backgrounds to achieve their full potential, Liverpool John Moores University and a few others, have shown that much better outcomes can be achieved by extending the traditional academic programme to include systematically delivered and assessed graduate and high-level skills training. It is not evident that universities generally recognise they have a responsibility to develop their graduates so that professional employment opportunities are maximised. To achieve such an outcome will require them to review fundamentally what they are delivering as a higher education experience. There are a number of ways to incentivise universities to adopt this approach. All universities should be encouraged to do so and their success in doing so should also be properly acknowledged, along with recognising the additional resources and skills required.

The most effective way to achieve this change would be to shift how the government assesses the social mobility impact of universities. Instead of looking solely at admissions, government should adopt the new HE graduation and employment outcome measure proposed in this paper, the Social Mobility Graduate Index (SMGI), as an additional key indicator of social mobility in higher education. This index uses existing data to measure professional graduate outcomes and enables a comparison of university performance in this crucial area. It both rewards the professional employment success of all graduates, and recognises that this achievement is greater for students coming from disadvantaged backgrounds. Using the SMGI would incentivise universities to pay more attention to student outcomes by providing clear and transparent data to inform students, their parents and schools in their choices of university. However given the wide variation in the graduate outcomes of disadvantaged students as measured by the SMGI, the government should retain a mechanism - such as control of student numbers or tuition fee levels - that enables it to

retain direct influence on the delivery of its social mobility policies in higher education.

Recommendations

1. All universities should develop their programmes to enhance and extend the traditional academic focus of courses by including systematically delivered and assessed graduate and high-level skills without any compromise to the quality of academic study.
2. The additional resources and skills required by universities to develop students from disadvantaged backgrounds should be recognised, and their success in achieving professional graduate outcomes for this group should be celebrated (e.g. public praise, awards, or additional funding).
3. The government should adopt the Social Mobility Graduate Index as an additional key indicator of social mobility in higher education.
4. Given the wide variation in the graduate outcomes of disadvantaged students as measured by the Social Mobility Graduate Index, the government should retain a mechanism, such as control of student numbers or tuition fee levels, that enables it to direct influence on the delivery of its social mobility policies in higher education.

: 2 Introduction

This paper looks at current government policy on social mobility with particular reference to Higher Education.

It suggests that government policy over a substantial number of years has been too limited in scope, focusing narrowly on university entrance for “non-traditional” students rather than their subsequent academic and job success. It proposes more comprehensive and ambitious policy objectives, and outlines how simple funding levers or competitive pressure could be used to achieve the desired outcomes.

It also questions the limited objectives of undergraduate higher education in an increasingly demanding and rapidly changing global marketplace, and suggests that universities should be encouraged to support much wider skills development in their graduates.

The paper recommends ways in which greater social mobility can be delivered in a highly cost-effective way, including the creation of a simple new index, using data already available, called the Social Mobility Graduate Index. This can be used to monitor the success of universities in preparing all graduates for professional employment, and especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

It is time for politicians to be bold and determined in order to deliver opportunities to young people who face more and more competition, and whose skills we will need to support the whole population in years to come.

3 Government policy on social mobility

In recent years, governments of various political outlooks have supported the idea of creating a meritocracy, such that the talents of people from all backgrounds can be developed effectively and to the economic and social benefit of both the individual and the state. Different phrases have been used to describe this ideal, such as “widening participation” and “social mobility”, and there is broad political consensus for this policy direction.

Social mobility is regarded as an important measure of how free people are to improve their positions in society¹, with upward social mobility reducing the extent to which a person’s prospective social attainment is dependent on the class or income of their parents.²

Social mobility matters for reasons of fairness: the circumstances of a person’s birth should not determine the life they go on to lead. There is also a strong economic rationale: untapped potential is a waste of productive resources that no country can afford if it is to compete effectively in the global market. Increasing social mobility supports the drive toward sustainable growth by creating a more highly skilled workforce and putting people in the right jobs for their talents.³ For example, the Sutton Trust has estimated the economic benefits of creating a more socially mobile, highly skilled workforce at up to £140 billion a year by 2050.⁴

The UK currently has relatively low levels of social mobility⁵ and there is some evidence to suggest that social mobility has actually fallen. For example, Blanden, Gregg and Machin (2005) compared

1 ODPM, ‘Opening Doors, Breaking Barriers: A Strategy for Social Mobility – update on progress since April 2011’, London: HM Government, page 4, 2012

2 A Milburn, speech to the Resolution Foundation, ‘Living Standards, working poverty and social mobility’, 13th November 2013.

3 Cabinet Office and ODPM, ‘Opening Doors, Breaking Barriers: A Strategy for Social Mobility’, London: HM Government, 2011.

4 Sutton Trust, ‘The Mobility Manifesto: A report on cost effective ways to achieve greater social mobility through education, based on work by the Boston Consulting Group’, March 2010, 2010.

5 Cabinet Office and ODPM, ‘Opening Doors, Breaking Barriers: A Strategy for Social Mobility’, London: HM Government, 2011.

cohorts born in 1958 with cohorts born in 1970 and found that adult earnings of the second cohort were more closely linked to their parental income than was the case for the first cohort.⁶

In recent years government has introduced a number of initiatives to improve social mobility^{7 8 9 10} and a Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission (SMCPC)¹¹ has been created to monitor progress in this area right across government policy. The body is chaired by a former Labour Minister and has a former Conservative Minister as deputy chair, a clear indication of broad political support.¹²

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- 6 J Blanden, P Gregg, S Machin, 'Educational inequality and intergenerational mobility', in S. Machin and A. Vignoles (eds), *What's the good of education?* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.
 - 7 National Evaluation of Sure Start (NESS), 'Getting Sure Start Started', London: DfES, 2002.
 - 8 A Cebulla, R Walker, 'Welfare, Work and Welfare-to-Work in the UK', in A Cebulla et al, 'Welfare to work: New labour and the US experience', Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2005.
 - 9 E Batty et al, 'The New Deal for Communities Evaluation: Final report – Volume 7', London: Department for Communities and Local Government, 2010.
 - 10 See both: Cabinet Office and ODPM, 'Opening Doors, Breaking Barriers: A Strategy for Social Mobility', London: HM Government, 2011; and ODPM, 'Opening Doors, Breaking Barriers: A Strategy for Social Mobility – update on progress since April 2011', London: HM Government, 2012, for a consolidated appraisal
 - 11 Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission (SMCPC). More information available: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/social-mobility-and-child-poverty-commission
 - 12 For cross-party support of SMCPC's 2013 Annual Report, see: N Clegg, 'The Coalition is improving people's lives, but we know the job's not finished yet', *The Telegraph*, 16th October 2013; P Wintour, 'Tristram Hunt: I support performance-related pay for teachers', *The Guardian*, 19th October 2013; J Nash, 'Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission: Annual Report', *HL Deb*, 17 October 2013.

4 Current government policy on social mobility within Higher Education

Higher Education plays an important role in facilitating social mobility. However, policy development so far has been rather tentative, and represents only a first step.

Up to now, policy has focused wholly on input measures. There has been a fixation with the number of students from “non-traditional backgrounds” being admitted to universities, as measured by the entry of young students drawn from geographical areas of low participation in HE.¹³ Particular political interest has centred on the performance of “research-led” universities, since it is largely these universities that have failed to recruit significant numbers in the past.¹⁴

This narrow focus continues to receive political attention. The government social mobility white paper, *“Opening Doors, Breaking Barriers”*¹⁵, included 17 indicators of progress in social mobility. Of these 17 indicators three had direct relevance to the performance of Higher Education. These are:

Indicator 13: *“Higher Education participation in the most selective institutions by type of school or college attended”*

Indicator 14: *“Higher Education – graduate destinations”*

Indicator 15: *“Access to the professions”*¹⁶

13 OFFA, ‘Progress in university participation is encouraging’, Press Release 24th October 2013, Available: <http://www.offa.org.uk/press-releases/progress-in-university-participation-is-encouraging/> Last accessed: 12/03/2014; OPM, ‘The Coalition Agreement: our programme for government’, London: HM Government, 2010.

14 The Sutton Trust, ‘University admissions by Individual School’, London: The Sutton Trust, 2008.

15 Cabinet Office and ODPM, ‘Opening Doors, Breaking Barriers’, London: HM Government, 2011; and ODPM, ‘Opening Doors, Breaking Barriers – update on progress since April 2011’, London: HM Government, 2012.

16 Cabinet Office and ODPM, ‘Opening Doors, Breaking Barriers: A Strategy for Social Mobility’, London: HM Government, 2011.

These indicators are explored in more detail in section 9 of this paper.

As this paper will show, the “most selective institutions” do not necessarily deliver the best professional graduate outcomes for students, especially for those from disadvantaged backgrounds, and universities do not currently have much of an incentive to deliver high-level skills development in order to equip their graduates for success in professional careers.

Universities have been encouraged to recruit more broadly through a variety of measures: initially additional money was provided to universities by HEFCE (Higher Education Funding Council for England) to recognise (however inadequately) the additional costs incurred in providing for the needs of non-traditional students.¹⁷ Later, universities were required to agree “access targets” with the Office of Fair Access (OFFA) as a condition of being able to charge enhanced tuition fees.¹⁸

A recent report by the SMCP (2013)¹⁹ has looked at the progress of universities in widening access to students from non-traditional backgrounds, and has found very low progress for universities overall, and alarmingly negative progress in the case of certain older universities.

The proportion of young full-time undergraduate entrants to Russell Group universities who are from state schools has decreased, from 75.6% in 2002/03 to 74.6% in 2011/12.²⁰ The proportion of young full-time undergraduate entrants to Russell Group universities who are from less advantaged social backgrounds (NS-SEC classes 4-7) has also decreased, from 19.9% in 2002/03 to 19.0% in 2011/12.²¹

It is not at all surprising that universities make assessments for entry on achievement rather than on the “potential” which is less easy to determine and justify. They also know that taking students from non-traditional backgrounds demands greater support and increased resources.²²

The SMCP has commented: “universities blame schools, schools blame parents and everyone blames the government”.²³ This lack of advance surely indicates a need to look afresh at the task in hand,

17 DfES, ‘The Future of Higher Education’, London: The Stationary Office, 2003.

18 Higher Education Act, 2004.

19 SMCP, ‘Higher Education: the fair access challenge’, London: SMCP, 2013.

20 SMCP, ‘Higher Education: the fair access challenge’, London: SMCP, 2013.

21 SMCP, ‘Higher Education: the fair access challenge’, London: SMCP, 2013.

22 M Boxall et al, ‘Determining the costs of widening participation’, Bristol: HEFCE, 2002.

23 SMCP, ‘Higher Education: the fair access challenge’, London: SMCP, 2013.

and to examine more effective means of meeting the challenge.

Facilitating access to university programmes is surely only a first and somewhat modest step; it may be easy to measure, and a legitimate initial aim, but the ultimate objective should be to ensure that people from disadvantaged backgrounds are enabled to reach their full potential and thus to achieve good degrees and good professional careers as a result. Indeed, it could be seen as perverse to recruit students from disadvantaged groups without then providing the support needed to enable efficient progress into professional graduate employment.

The Universities UK Chief Executive Nicola Dandridge responded to the criticisms of university performance in the SMCPC report²⁴ accepting many of the recommendations made in it. Universities need to satisfy government (through the Office of Fair Access (OFFA)) that they are increasing admissions of students from disadvantaged students in order to be able to charge the highest level of tuition fees. Universities without an OFFA agreement are limited to charging tuition fees at the “basic rate” of £6000 per capita. With an OFFA agreement, universities may charge tuition fees up to the highest permitted level of £9,000.²⁵ Given this, perhaps the response from Universities UK was not surprising. Simply meeting recruitment targets for students from disadvantaged backgrounds does not necessitate any review of academic fundamentals or disturb the status quo.

It is not evident that universities themselves recognise they have a responsibility to develop their graduates so that professional employment opportunities are maximised. To achieve such an outcome might require universities to review fundamentally what they are delivering as a higher education experience. This would require going beyond the traditional diet of academic subject excellence alone to provide relevant skills development as well, and most especially to disadvantaged students.

A central issue is that students from non-traditional backgrounds do not enjoy the critical benefits of the familiar social support structures that are taken for granted in middle-class homes, which can be extensive. Such support structures include the personal networks and professional experience of parents and other family members that can provide role models, advice, contacts,

24 SMCPC, ‘Higher Education: the fair access challenge’, London: SMCPC, 2013.

25 P Bolton, ‘Changes to higher education funding and student support in England from 2012/13’, Standard Note: SN/SG/5753, House of Commons Library, 2012.

placements, traineeships and the like.

There has been much recent debate about parents using their contacts and networks to secure internship opportunities for their children - an experience that the current Deputy Prime Minister has benefited from.²⁶ It is surely then incumbent upon universities to educate all their students about the needs and skills required for professional employment, and to facilitate the development of such skills in order to maximise opportunity for all.

University input parameters are only the starting point and if social mobility is to be a serious policy aim, degree outcomes and successful first professional employment should be the crucial measures of success. University recruitment alone is no indicator of having achieved social mobility in a sustainable or meaningful way. On its own it is not an acceptable result; it is time to raise the game.

26 BBC News, 'Cameron and Clegg differ publicly on internship places', 23rd April 2011, Available: www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-13173505, Last accessed: 12/03/2014; A Stratton, G Snowdon, 'Clegg admits parental job boost amid crackdown on unpaid internships', The Guardian, 5th April 2011, Available: www.theguardian.com/politics/2011/apr/05/nick-clegg-parental-job-boost Last accessed: 12/03/2014

5 Universities and what drives them

Having established governments' desire for universities to accept more undergraduates from non-traditional backgrounds, this chapter looks at the highly complex and competitive drivers of university activity, and postulates that they do not encourage universities to see non-traditional students as valuable assets, giving universities very little incentive to increase the recruitment of these students.

Politicians often overlook the fact that universities are independent autonomous bodies and not part of the public sector.²⁷ They have a range of local, national and international products and markets, selling their services to both the private and public sectors.

There are two underlying drivers of university activity: reputation, and money.

Research success will lead to enhanced funding and reputation; and increased income will lead to improvements in teaching, research and international standing. The twin drivers of reputation and money are thus inextricably interlinked.

Reputation

Universities are naturally driven by endeavours that will enhance their academic reputations both in teaching and more especially in research, and are impelled to pursue the funding necessary to support their academic activities, whether this comes from public or private sources.

Reputation is the equivalent of "brand". It is signified by

27 "Higher education institutions are legally independent entities. Their governing bodies or Councils are responsible for ensuring the effective management of the institution and for planning its future development. They are ultimately responsible for all the affairs of the university or college. Nearly all higher education institutions are charities and must therefore comply with charity law and regulation. HEFCE performs the regulatory role for the great majority of these, but some are regulated by the Charities Commission." From HEFCE, 'About Higher Education in England', 6th January 2012, Available: www.hefce.ac.uk/about/intro/abouthighereducationinengland/. Last accessed: 12/03/2014

league tables; by the number of applications per student place; by research success; and by public perception. Teaching reputation is judged by the public primarily through a variety of newspaper league tables whose indices differ slightly (and change from year to year) but are largely driven by factors such as student entry qualifications; academic staff-to-student ratios; facilities spend per student; degree classifications; and student satisfaction.

Money

University income comes from a wide variety of sources, but is substantially represented by income streams from both government and private sources for research and teaching. Large sums are needed for universities to stay in business, and to fulfil their multiple missions. Government spends a significant amount of public money supporting university services, primarily in the form of undergraduate teaching delivered in the UK to both UK and EU students.²⁸

Undergraduate teaching income is derived from the successful recruitment of students to the maximum number allowed by government, and by setting the authorised tuition fee level. Government and students are thus both customers.

Government resources for research comprises two elements: a general funding allocation to departments based on outstanding success as judged by academic peers; and grants awarded competitively by research councils to specific projects.²⁹ Research activity is assessed within an international market, and global competition for both funding and expert staff is fierce. UK universities need urgently therefore to ensure that their research-active academics remain strongly supported.

Other markets include consultancy, post-graduate programmes, short courses, international students, overseas delivery, distance learning, commercial research and development and Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) exploitation. None of these is regulated, except for the

28 Government funds universities and higher education institutions through the HEFCE. Funds for teaching comprised around 65% (£3,233 million) of the HEFCE's funding allocation for 2012-13. HEFC, 'Recurrent Grants for 2012-13: Adjusted allocation', March 2013.

29 HEFCE, 'Guide to funding and student number control 2013-14', October 2013, Bristol: HEFCE, page 6

quality of teaching delivery, which is overseen by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and a wide variety of established professional bodies like the Royal Pharmaceutical Society or the Law Society.

For many universities, only a minority of their funding comes from government sources. Even where there is a principal reliance on government finance, almost all higher education institutions have a number of other significant income streams and a wide variety of clients.³⁰ These markets are complex and often interact, such as research, development and the exploitation of IPR. Similarly, the recruitment of international students to the UK may be significantly influenced by the delivery of its programmes overseas, either through partners or by establishing overseas campuses. Such markets are highly internationally competitive and are greatly affected by a university's reputation and standing.

It is within this highly complex and competitive marketplace that the desire of government for universities to accept more undergraduates from non-traditional backgrounds needs to be seen. Put bluntly, unless the non-traditional students are both highly self-sufficient and academically exceptional, increasing their numbers is not likely of itself to produce positive outcomes for universities, especially those with major research agendas.

The impact on newspaper league tables by students from non-traditional backgrounds is generally negative. The entry qualifications of such students tend to be lower, their degree outcomes are lower, and discussion with students suggests that their satisfaction rates are lower because they often find the traditional academic process challenging. They are typically of course also undertaking paid work for substantial hours in addition to studying a full-time academic programme. Add to this the need for additional academic support³¹ and wider support systems and it is clear that increasing recruitment of such students is not an instinctive business decision.

The issue therefore is how universities can be encouraged to see non-traditional students as valuable assets, and not as a drain on resources and a negative impact on league tables and therefore upon reputation.

30 HEFCE, 'Guide to funding and student number control 2013-14', October 2013/05, Bristol: HEFCE, page 15

31 M Boxall et al, 'Determining the costs of widening participation', Bristol: HEFCE, 2002.

: 6 Ways to deliver genuine social mobility through Higher Education

Of course, the benefits of a graduate education are much wider than the development of a fulfilling and financially beneficial career. It must be recognised however that professional employment is an outcome of growing importance both to potential students and to their parents. There is also substantial financial liability to be considered.

At a time when more highly qualified and multi-skilled personnel are required in the workforce and are competing in a global marketplace, there is also clear economic and social benefit to the state in fully realising the potential of all.

As international competition and investment in Higher Education grow and the demands on our young people increase, there are questions to be asked about whether the current model of undergraduate experience is still fit for purpose.

The traditional model represents a total focus on teaching by academic experts to inculcate subject mastery. This alone is really insufficient for present needs. While academic rigour and the highest international standards cannot be compromised and must remain a non-negotiable element of UK degree programmes, present content is of itself insufficient. Rapidly growing demands place an inescapable pressure on universities to give far more emphasis to the development of relevant professional skills.³²

This has been a consistent message to universities from such bodies as the CBI and the NUS over many years.³² It is time that vigorous encouragement is given to universities to enhance their programmes to meet escalating modern needs; government policy change and appropriate modes of encouragement will be needed to

³² CBI, 'Universities must embed employability skills in course structures - CBI / NUS', Press Release, 16th May 2011.

stimulate universities into responding with creativity.

Recent data analysis by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) has shown how the relative disadvantage of students (as measured by POLAR3³³ groupings) impacts upon Higher Education access as well as upon degree success, and ultimately upon graduate career outcomes.

POLAR3 analysis rates each student for “disadvantage” by looking at the rates of participation in Higher Education within the geographical area from which that student comes. The POLAR3 data defines five even levels of “disadvantage”, with POLAR3 quintile 1 representing the lowest levels of Higher Education participation and hence areas of high “disadvantage” and POLAR3 quintile 5 representing the highest levels of Higher Education participation and hence a relatively low level of “disadvantage”.

In its Issues Paper “*Higher Education and Beyond*”, HEFCE looks at the overall performance of full time, first-degree students, breaking down the data by their POLAR3 classification.³⁴ The paper examines the employment outcomes from five cohorts of full time, first-degree students from all universities for the years 2002/03 to 2006/07.

Table 5 from the issue paper, reproduced here as Table 1, shows the number of students from the 2006-07 cohort who fall in each participation quintile, along with the percentage of the cohort in each of the four outcome categories.

The success rate of students in terms of graduation performance and employment success is very much better for students drawn from high POLAR3 (low disadvantage) areas than for those drawn from low POLAR3 (high disadvantage) areas. Indeed the difference in performance gets more pronounced as the students progress through Higher Education into employment.

33 POLAR3 is an area-based measure of young participation rates in HE. Classifications are formed by ranking 2001 Census Area Statistics wards by their young participation rates for the combined 2000-2004 cohorts. This gives five young participation quintile groups of areas ordered from ‘1’ (lowest participation) to ‘5’ (highest participation), each representing 20% of the UK young cohort. Graduates are allocated to neighbourhoods on the basis of their postcode prior to entry. More information is available in HEFCE (2012), ‘POLAR3: Young participation rates in higher education’, October 2012/26, Bristol: HEFCE

34 HEFCE, ‘Higher education and beyond: Outcomes from full-time first degree students’, Issue Paper July 2013/15, Bristol: HEFCE, 2013.

Table 1: Numbers of starting cohort in each POLAR3 quintile and the percentage of the cohorts achieving each outcome

POLAR3 Quintiles	1 (Low) quintile	2	3	4	5 (High) quintile	Unknown
Starting cohort	19,875	31,545	42,680	54,595	75,855	1,220
Degree - qualified	77.0%	79.5%	80.9%	83.1%	85.3%	74.5%
First or upper-second	45.0%	48.7%	49.9%	54.4%	58.6%	50.2%
Degree & employed or studying	66.7%	69.4%	70.1%	72.0%	73.9%	64.9%
Degree & graduate job or study	41.2%	44.3%	45.9%	48.2%	51.8%	47.2%

This data indicates that existing university degree programmes are not particularly successful at facilitating the outcome that young people and their parents seek, which is graduate entry into professional employment. Nor are they meeting the economic needs of the country. Anecdotally, one hears of graduates who cannot get the job they feel they are qualified for. Equally, one hears anecdotally that employers complain that, degree or not, job applicants for key posts do not have the required skills.³⁵

The data presented here in Table 1 and the conclusions drawn from it are supported by data analysis associated with the government's social mobility 'Higher education – graduate destinations' measure. This indicator measures the proportion of graduates in full-time employment 6 months after graduating who are in 'graduate jobs', by social background (defined as the occupational group of their highest earning parent). The government found that students from more advantaged groups are more likely to gain 'graduate jobs' than those from less advantaged groups.³⁶

The policy aim in the twenty-first century should be for all students, and most especially those from lower POLAR3 (higher disadvantage) groups, to be better enabled to obtain professional employment.

³⁵ A Levy, 'Graduates lack basic skills and are more interested in 'what a job can do for them, not what they have to offer an employer'', The Daily Mail, 16th March 2013.

³⁶ ODPM, 'Social Mobility Indicators', 16th November 2013, Available: www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-mobility-indicators/social-mobility-indicators, Last accessed: 12/03/2014

In order to facilitate future career success for all students, particularly those without social support structures, universities need to broaden their human development scope beyond the standard academic offer alone. This will require an emphasis on undergraduate education going beyond subject mastery to include systematic graduate skills and high-level professional skills.

Such an approach is in line with ideas included in the DIUS paper "*Higher Education at Work - High Skills: High Value*"³⁷ 2008; the CBI statement "*Future Fit: Preparing graduates for the world of work*", March 2009³⁸; the notions of student choice and open information included in the White Paper "*Students at the Heart of the System*"³⁹ June 2011; as well as a raft of CBI reports over several years concerning higher skills in education.⁴⁰

Universities need to offer graduate skills that are delivered systematically and are assessed effectively. They need also to develop the complex and advanced personal and professional skills that employers now require from high-flying graduate-level staff. It should be noted that these skills are not mechanistic or highly specific skills to be delivered by a "course". Rather, they need to be developed systematically, and to be "evidenced" and validated as an integral part of study.

Such skills should include high-level emotional intelligence; business and professional understanding; project management skills; and fundamental skills in presentation, personal management, and IT. Senior business leaders regard these skill sets as crucial.

These objectives are well within the reach of universities, and are capable of inclusion within programmes with no loss of academic rigour. Certainly there is no constraint on universities from using their HEFCE funding currently allocated to "Widening Participation" to support enhanced facilities.

Some universities are already pioneering such approaches⁴¹, and offer degree enhancement by way of a variety of additional workplace skills. In many of the older and more traditional institutions however, the dominance of research within the overall range of university activities can mean that the need to enhance the

37 DIUS, 'Higher Education at Work - High Skills: High Value', London: DIUS, 2008.

38 CBI, 'Future Fit: Preparing graduates for the world of work', 31st March 2009, London; See also: CBI/NUS, 'Working towards your future: Making the most of your time in higher education', London, 2011.

39 BIS, 'Students at the heart of the system', White Paper, London: The Stationary Office, June 2011.

40 CBI, 'Tomorrow's Growth: New routes to higher skills', 2013; CBI/Pearson, 'Changing the Pace: Education and skills survey 2013', 2013.

41 See case studies in Appendix.

student experience and employment prospects is a lower priority.⁴² This needs to change.

Many traditionally minded academics still take the unspoken view that a “good education” will fit able students for career success. This is an attitude that somewhat mirrors the nineteenth-century view that a classical education will prepare a gentleman for any challenge in any chosen profession.

A crucial measure of success should be the proportion of graduates achieving professional graduate employment, most especially those from low POLAR3 groups; in other words, an outcome measure directly related to social mobility attainment.

Universities are capable of delivering innovative solutions to this problem if a proper incentive, such as the measure of social mobility discussed in the next chapter, is put in place.

⁴² UKCES, ‘The Employability Challenge’, London: UKCES, 2009.

7 Making social mobility happen through HE with minimal bureaucracy

It is imperative to achieve better outcomes for non-traditional students. It would be facile to suggest that the tired old technique of policy-makers whereby guidelines for change are derived from “best practice” in the sector would achieve better outcomes for non-traditional students at pace. What is needed is an entirely fresh slant. This section of the report proposes the use of a measure of social mobility that provides clear and transparent output data to inform students, their parents and schools in their choice of university.

Universities are autonomous bodies, with many deriving the greater part of their funding from non-government sources⁴³, and there should be no external interference with their right to determine curricula or admissions policies.

Higher Education is full of talented people well able to deliver innovative solutions if encouraged to do so. Universities are more than capable of responding to the challenge if given appropriate credit in addition to enhanced recruitment or resources.

As so often mentioned in the White Paper “*Students at the Heart of the System*”,⁴⁴ diversity and choice of products across universities would be good both for the sector and for students, provided that clear information on objectives and outcomes is available.

UK and EU students choose to go to a particular university, and money then follows the student through the tuition fees paid to the university by the government. In order to encourage a competitive

43 HEFCE, ‘Guide to funding and student number control 2013-14’, October 2013/05, Bristol: HEFCE, 2013.

44 BIS, ‘Students at the heart of the system’, White Paper, London: The Stationary Office, June 2011.

market in Higher Education the government has taken steps to ensure that clear comparative information on different universities (including student satisfaction surveys) is readily available in order to assist students in making informed choices.

Students and their parents thus have choice and can make informed decisions on the basis of all the available information. Until recently, the government limited its financial exposure by setting a maximum number of UK and EU undergraduates that could be recruited by universities, and the HEFCE allocated maximum student numbers to individual institutions⁴⁵. In such a situation the government could exercise its right to purchase undergraduate services (via the HEFCE) and could choose to expand student places in universities where professional graduate success is high, and vice versa. The government could therefore effectively reward universities which delivered professional graduate success.

However, in December 2013, the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his Autumn Statement announced that in 2014/15 an additional 30,000 student places will be created and that all controls on student numbers would be lifted for 2015/16.⁴⁶

This essentially means that the government has relinquished all influence and is relying entirely on the market to deliver the outcomes that it desires. In such a situation, the importance of providing timely and accurate performance information to allow students and their parents to make informed choices on the best institution to deliver the outcome they seek becomes critical.

So what students need is a tangible measure of genuine social mobility to aid their choices, and government also needs that measure to assess general social mobility progress as well as the differential contributions of individual universities. This paper proposes the development of a simple measure that could be used - the Social Mobility Graduate Index.

The achievement of universities in delivering successful, career-ready graduates - especially those from non-traditional backgrounds - is readily capable of measurement. One simple and straightforward indicator would be the performance of graduates entering professional graduate jobs by using university-by-university data that already exists and could easily be further enhanced.

45 HEFCE, 'Guide to funding and student number control 2013-14', Bristol: HEFCE, October 2013.

46 HM Government, 'Autumn Statement', delivered at House of Commons 5th December 2013, Available: www.gov.uk/government/speeches/chancellor-george-osbornes-autumn-statement-2013-speech Last accessed: 12/03/2014

The SMGI is a market based solution that through the provision of transparent outcome data could give universities the incentive they need to respond to the challenge of ensuring that non-traditional students achieve better outcomes. The next section explains what the SMGI might look like.

: 8 The Social Mobility Graduate Index (SMGI)

This section discusses in detail the proposed Social Mobility Graduate Index (SMGI), including what the results emanating from it might look like and how universities would fare if assessed using this measure.

The index is designed to indicate the success of individual universities in priming all students to achieve professional graduate employment, but also recognises that the achievement of (and the effort to achieve) professional employment for students from low POLAR3 (high disadvantage) backgrounds is greater. It is very much a measure of output success in achieving professional careers for all graduates but especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

It gives additional value to students with low POLAR3 quintile values, thus encouraging universities to regard such students as assets to be developed appropriately for both academic and professional success.

To create this index, data has been obtained from the Higher Education Statistical Agency Services on the employment destination outcomes for UK domiciled, full time, first-degree graduates who graduated in 2011/12. These data sets were broken down by institution and by POLAR3 quintiles.

It is formally noted that in supplying this data, HESA Services does not accept responsibility for any inferences or conclusions derived from the data by third parties.

The available activity outcomes 6 months after leaving university that were classified by HESA Services were as follows: -

- A= Work (professional)
- B= Work (non-professional)
- C= Work and study (professional)

D= Work and study (non-professional)

E= Further study

F= Unemployed

In creating the Social Mobility Graduate Index, some value judgements have inevitably had to be made and these are outlined here for clarity and transparency.

It is assumed a standard expectation should be that a student from POLAR3 quintile 5 (low disadvantage) should achieve both a degree and employment – this outcome is therefore weighted as '1'.

For POLAR3 quintile 5 students achieving a degree and professional employment, a weighting of '1.5' is applied, recognising from the HEFCE data that this outcome seems currently 50% more difficult than obtaining non-professional employment.

These weightings are also applied to work and study (non-professional) and work and study (professional) respectively. Further study has been weighted as 0.5, on the basis that the development task has yet to be completed, and a weighting of '0' has been applied to unemployed graduates.

Turning to the weightings for output success by POLAR3 classifications, greater weight is placed on the outcomes of low quintile (high disadvantage) groups. Weightings from 1 (for POLAR3 quintile group 5) to 2 (for POLAR3 quintile group 1) have been applied, graduated uniformly over the quintile range. This is based on a judgement that the achievement of a university in educating and developing a POLAR3 quintile 1 (high disadvantage) student to achieve professional employment is twice that for a POLAR3 quintile 5 (low disadvantage) student. This places a differential value on students drawn from different backgrounds and recognises the different levels of achievement.

The formula for the SMGI is then=

$$\frac{\sum \text{POLAR3 weighting} \times (1.5(A+C) + 1(B+D) + 0.5(E) + 0(F))}{\text{Total number of graduates}}$$

Total number of graduates

The Social Mobility Graduate Index simultaneously rewards the professional success of all graduates, and recognises that this achievement is greater for students coming from disadvantaged backgrounds. To gain a better idea of what the different values of the SMGI mean, it is instructive to look at index values in particular extreme cases.

If a university only recruited advantaged students (POLAR3 quintile5) and all achieve professional employment, the SMGI would have a value of 1.5.

On the other hand, if a university only recruited disadvantaged students (POLAR3 quintile1) and all achieved professional employment, the SMGI would have a value of 3.0 (the maximum value).

A university with an even distribution of students across POLAR3 quintiles, with all graduates achieving professional employment, would produce a SMGI of 2.25.

Looking at non-professional employment outcomes, a university recruiting only “advantaged” students (POLAR3 quintile5), with all achieving non-professional employment, would achieve a SMGI value of 1.0.

By contrast, if a university recruited only disadvantaged students (POLAR3 quintile1), and all achieved non-professional employment, the SMGI would have a value of 2.0.

So what would constitute a “good” SMGI value? Given that most universities have a distribution of students by POLAR3 quintiles, albeit typically weighted towards the “advantaged” end of the spectrum, a minimum value between 1.5 and 2.25 should be anticipated, driven by the relative success of graduates in obtaining professional employment. The current average SMGI across the Higher Education sector is 1.45.

To exceed this range of index values, universities would need to enhance their student numbers drawn from low POLAR3 quintile groups and ensure their degree success and development to secure professional graduate employment. However, given that no institution yet exceeds the level of 2.0 for their SMGI (see Table 2 below), there is some way to go.

Table 2: Top twenty ranked universities according to their SMGI values (see appendix for full results of analysis)

Ranking	Institution	SMGI value
1	The School of Pharmacy	1.81
2	University College Plymouth St Mark and St John	1.80
3	Ravensbourne	1.79
4	University Campus Suffolk	1.74
5	Edge Hill University	1.73
6	The University of Huddersfield	1.72
7	Glyndwr University	1.71
7	The Arts University College at Bournemouth	1.71
9	The University of Lincoln	1.69
9	The University of Wales, Newport	1.69
11	The University of Northampton	1.68
11	Leeds College of Art	1.68
11	Leeds Trinity University College	1.68
14	Coventry University	1.67
14	Norwich University College of the Arts	1.67
16	Canterbury Christ Church University	1.66
16	University of Derby	1.66
16	Institute of Education	1.66
19	Aston University	1.64
19	University of Chester	1.64
19	University of the West of England, Bristol	1.64

Some relatively high-scoring institutions do not come as a surprise. For example, The School of Pharmacy (in London), and to some extent Edge Hill University (which focuses heavily on nursing and teacher training) prepare their students for all-graduate industries that are still recruiting well. Indeed a further refinement of the index could be engineered to take into account university subject mix (along the lines outlined in the HEFCE Issue Paper “*Approaches to measuring employment circumstances of recent graduates*”⁴⁷).

Russell Group universities do not fare well in the analysis, primarily because their student populations are very much skewed to the higher POLAR3 quintile groups (lower disadvantage) - 70% of their students are in the two most advantaged quintiles.

Moreover, looking at the detailed data of professional employment success by university, and removing any weighting for different POLAR3 backgrounds, it is immediately evident that professional employment success does not correlate with notions of university “brand value”.

Limitations

This index has been created using existing data that is essentially in the public domain. This is the very data used by government and their agencies to give an indication of universities’ success in “employability”. However, the available data has obvious limitations. Firstly, universities collect the graduate employment data from their graduates six months after leaving their university. This does not always give a complete picture of graduate employment and this arbitrary and quite early census date can have different impacts depending on the subject studied. This is, however, the only source of data in this area that is readily available.

Also one of the outcome categories – “Further Study” – is not sub-categorised in any way. “Further Study” could mean anything from advanced professional studies leading to a guaranteed professional position to “remedial study” in order to provide supplementary training to get any employment at all.

Whether “Further Study” consists of a post-graduate scholarship to Harvard or a basic secretarial course, the graduate has not yet entered professional graduate employment. Consequently in the construction of the SMGI a half way position has been adopted

47 HEFCE, ‘Approaches to measuring employment circumstances of recent graduates’, Issue paper Jan 2011/12, Bristol: HEFCE

so that “Further Study” has been taken to mean that a graduate is not yet “fully formed” and immediately entering professional employment and so a weighting of 0.5 has been assigned. Without any available sub-division of the data from this category, this is all that can be achieved.

However, some universities do have relatively high numbers of students going on to “Further Study” and this might be activity that would certainly lead to professional employment beyond the six months census date. This may be the reason that Cambridge University does not score well in the SMGI as it has a relatively high number of students undertaking further study. It would be helpful in the future if this category of “Further Study” could be sub-divided and better defined.

The SMGI deliberately and simply seeks to make disadvantaged students more valuable to universities, and to recognise the additional achievement of supporting and developing these students through to ultimate success. If adopted, the government, working in partnership with the university sector, could make use of the SMGI to further promote social mobility in a real sense, as well as enhancing the professional skill base of the nation.

9 Other social mobility indices

As mentioned in section 4, social mobility indices being used by government to monitor social mobility⁴⁸ contain three indices of relevance to social mobility in Higher Education.

Firstly, Indicator 13 measures the *“Higher Education participation in the most selective institutions by type of college attended”*. Of course all HE institutions are selective depending on subject demand and obtaining places in some subject areas is a notoriously competitive business, such a medicine and veterinary sciences. Therefore a university’s level of selectivity will depend on its subject mix and its reputation, both in the particular subjects offered and overall.

Whilst indicator 13 is again an interesting *input* measure, in terms of the performance of state schools and universities in progressing students to Higher Education opportunities, the reason the government cites for this indicator being important to social mobility is that *“graduates leaving the most-selective universities have a greater chance of quickly moving into a graduate job and experience higher labour market returns”*.⁴⁹

Looking at the available data used to create the SMGI and taking the Russell Group universities as a proxy for “the most selective universities”, one can quickly test this assertion.

Ignoring student background and just looking at the simple percentage of graduates from all of the Russell Group universities that secured professional employment six months after graduating, one obtains an average figure of 51.3%. The average for all universities, excluding Russell Group universities, is 48.7%. The Russell Group university scores ranged from 45.8 to 61.9%.

However, there are 11 institutions that exceeded the best SMGI

48 ODPM, ‘Opening Doors, Breaking Barriers: A Strategy for Social Mobility – update on progress since April 2011’, London: HM Government 2012.

49 ODPM, ‘Opening Doors, Breaking Barriers: A Strategy for Social Mobility – update on progress since April 2011’, London: HM Government, 2012.

performance of any Russell Group university, and 48 (out of a total of 153) institutions that exceeded the average of the Russell Group universities.

It has earlier been demonstrated that the chances of a graduate from a low POLAR3 quintile background obtaining a professional job is much lower than a graduate from a high POLAR3 quintile background. The distribution of graduates amongst POLAR3 quintiles averaged across all Russell Group universities shows that 70.2% of their graduates are from the two most advantaged POLAR3 groups with only 5.3% of their graduates coming from the most disadvantaged POLAR3 groups. Thus the Russell Group universities should have far less of a challenge in developing their students to achieve professional employment.

This situation is not outlined in order to criticise the performance of Russell Group universities, which have large research operations⁵⁰ and attract highly qualified students. It is rather to demonstrate that there are many “less-selective” universities with wider ranges of student backgrounds that are doing a remarkable and better job of developing their graduates into professional employment. Thus the general rule cited in the government paper simply cannot be justified.

Indicator 14 measures “*Higher Education – graduate destinations*”. It looks at the proportion of graduates in full-time employment in “graduate jobs” six months after graduating by social background (defined as the occupational group of their highest-earning parent).⁵¹ It simply divides graduates into two social groups – “most advantaged” and “less advantaged”.

Whilst this indicator is operating in similar territory to the SMGI and has had to use the only graduate employment data available (six months after graduating), it does not take into account the greater efforts and resources that universities should be mobilising to produce good career results for their graduates from disadvantaged backgrounds. It also does not operate at individual university level to demonstrate what contribution is being made to social mobility by particular universities.

Indicator 15 measures “*Access to the professions*” and demonstrates that “*a large number of the professions remain dominated by a small*

50 Russell Group, ‘Research at Russell Group universities’, 2014. Available: www.russellgroup.ac.uk/research/ Last accessed: 12/03/2014

51 ODPM, ‘Opening Doors, Breaking Barriers: A Strategy for Social Mobility – update on progress since April 2011’, London: HM Government, 2012.

section of society and that in recent decades many professions have become less socially representative".⁵² Whilst this does not have any direct relevance to the SMGI, this trend does add strength to the argument made in this document that universities need to include both graduate and high-level skills in all their programmes in order to ensure that all graduates, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, are fully prepared for the professions.

52 ODP, 'Opening Doors, Breaking Barriers: A Strategy for Social Mobility – update on progress since April 2011', London: HM Government, 2012.

10 The government as a service buyer

The need to maximise individual potential has become a more urgent driver across the spectrum. A critical issue concerns how incentives can be put into place in order to encourage institutions to maximise individual potential effectively at minimum administrative cost while delivering optimal value.

What mechanisms does the government have then to influence universities, particularly in this area of social mobility enhancement?

Currently, government decides each year how many undergraduates it is prepared to finance in Higher Education. An allocation of funded places is then made to individual universities by HEFCE, based on government advice. Institutions have been heavily penalised in the past for exceeding these numbers.⁵³ In recent times government has changed the basis of institutional allocations (by allowing universities to accept students with grades exceeding ABB on top of allocations⁵⁴) in order to encourage competition, so there is already precedent for using these allocations to drive fundamental change.

With such a system it is possible to bring influence to bear to achieve a particular outcome without regulation or difficulty, by means of the government simply exercising its prerogative as a customer (via HEFCE). It could for example fund greater numbers of students who wish to attend those universities demonstrating success in professional graduate outcomes, especially by those graduates from “non-traditional” backgrounds.

To bring about effective change, student allocations could simply be adjusted by HEFCE based on a combination of the number of graduates obtaining graduate careers (or post-graduate training) and the number of graduates coming from low POLAR3 districts. This is precisely what the social mobility graduate index seeks to

53 S Baker, ‘HEFCE fines 19 institutions for over-recruitment’, The Times, 7th March 2011, Available: www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/415737.article Last accessed 12/03/2014

54 HEFCE, ‘Students outside the student number control allocation in 2013-14’, September 2013, Bristol: HEFCE, page 1.

measure, so that universities would quickly perceive professional graduates from low POLAR3 groups as highly valuable assets and not, as now, as students requiring more support and additional resources that have to be accepted in numbers simply to appease the government.

In effect, using this approach, if universities wanted to retain or increase their allocation of undergraduate places, they would need vitally to improve professional outcomes for their graduates, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds. They would thus be encouraged to review and enrich undergraduate programmes in order to achieve the employment outcomes both desired by students and demanded by the economy.

Such an approach would in effect create payment-by-desired-results. Universities would undoubtedly use their own creativity, experience and talents to determine how to rise to the challenge and to achieve success for themselves and their graduates.

Success in achieving improved outcomes through the delivery of a more rounded curriculum would attract more student applications as well as an enhanced HEFCE recruitment allocation. More importantly, it would deliver social mobility in a real sense and would enhance the professional skill base of the nation.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer in his Autumn Statement in December 2013 announced that it was his intention to remove the student numbers cap from 2015/16. From 2015/16, universities will be able to recruit as many students as they care to, and receive the commensurate student tuition fees, paid, in effect by government, through the student loans company.⁵⁵ This change is significant and welcome. However, it has the unintended consequence of effectively removing any opportunity for the government, working through HEFCE, to use the mechanism described above to encourage universities which are especially successful in producing professional graduates.

This would imply that in the future the government will have to rely solely on the market to drive outcomes in the way that is needed. Yet it is not clear that the market will necessarily be an effective mechanism to drive the social mobility agenda in higher education at the pace desired by government, or in a systematic and sustainable way.

55 HM Government, 'Autumn Statement', delivered at House of Commons 5th December 2013, Available: www.gov.uk/government/speeches/chancellor-george-osbornes-autumn-statement-2013-speech Last accessed: 12/03/2014

There are two possible mechanisms that would provide the government with levers of influence on universities without limiting student opportunities to access higher education.

Firstly, one could continue the present approach of setting a total number of undergraduate students to be funded by government but set the funded number to cover the maximum level of expected student demand.

Each year a simple estimate of the number of qualified students likely to be seeking university places could easily be made based on demographic data and current higher education participation rates. This estimate would then become the new system-wide student number to be allocated by HEFCE under government guidance, as is current practice.

This would allow differential university performance to be recognised as outlined above whilst not limiting higher education opportunities for future students. In this way one gets all the advantages of the change in government funding strategy without the downside of loss of influence and the mechanisms to encourage change. This would provide a low cost and simple approach to deliver the government's objectives.

A second approach would be to utilise the structure of the Office of Fair Access (OFFA), and the authority given to universities by government to apply the highest levels of undergraduate tuition fee. Currently for universities to be able to charge the higher tuition fees (above £6000 pa), they have to demonstrate to OFFA that they have a deliverable plan to enhance student admissions from disadvantaged students and essentially enter into a performance agreement with OFFA.⁵⁶

The focus of OFFA could simply be moved from the input measure of student admissions to the output measure of professional graduate employment. However, compared to the first option of effecting change through HEFCE, this would be an expensive way to encourage change. Additionally, universities would claim that they had no direct levers to deliver on any promises made to OFFA on output measures.

There are strong arguments for government to shift policy from supporting simple *input* measures (admission of students) towards interventions that support social mobility *outputs* for universities

⁵⁶ OFFA, 'Find an access agreement', 2014 . Available: www.offa.org.uk/access-agreements/ Last accessed 12/03/2014.

in terms of professional graduate employment. The SMGI would provide a mechanism measuring the impact of this approach. If this were pursued through the allocation of student numbers through HEFCE as outlined above and if over time outputs proved to be a more effective approach, then there would be implications for OFFA given its focus on inputs and its current limited powers. A review of the OFFA and HEFCE arrangements has already been recommended by the report *University Challenge: How Higher Education Can Advance Social Mobility*.⁵⁷

57 A Milburn, 'University Challenge: How Higher Education Can Advance Social Mobility', London: Cabinet Office, 2012.

: 11 Using the market to drive social mobility enhancements

If the government decides to relinquish all influence on universities to deliver its policy objectives on social mobility, we would be left with the market as the sole influence on universities in delivering social mobility outputs in the form of professional graduate employment.

Given the increasing importance to students and parents of having “good prospects” on graduation, it is reasonable to assume that the SMGI will play a key role in guiding student choice. It will also provide a valuable additional mechanism for allowing universities to judge their performance in this arena.

Another tangible benefit for universities would arise from publishing data on graduate success linked to social background. The SMGI would be another useful parameter of university output success that might constructively find its way into newspaper league tables and serve to further enhance the reputations of those universities doing a good job in providing rounded student development. The SMGI is essentially a value-added measure for universities based on employment output set against the backgrounds of students entering the university.

The question of enhancing undergraduate curricula remains, but is perhaps the topic for a future paper.

: 12 Conclusions and recommendations

The Social Mobility Graduate Index (SMGI) provides a measure of professional graduate outcomes with particular emphasis and recognition of the differential resources and actions required for success with disadvantaged students. It treats disadvantaged students as valuable assets to be developed for success and could form a useful basis for comparative university performance in this crucial area. It is an output indicator that works at individual university level and should be adopted (with possible enhancements) as a social mobility indicator of particular value in the Higher Education field.

1. All universities should develop their programmes to enhance and extend the traditional academic focus of courses by including systematically delivered and assessed graduate and high-level skills without any compromise to the quality of academic study.
2. The additional resources and skills required by universities to develop students from disadvantaged backgrounds should be recognised, and their success in achieving professional graduate outcomes for this group should be celebrated (e.g. public praise, awards, or additional funding).
3. The government should adopt the Social Mobility Graduate Index as an additional key indicator of social mobility in higher education.
4. Given the wide variation in the graduate outcomes of disadvantaged students as measured by the Social Mobility Graduate Index, the government should retain a mechanism, such as control of student numbers or tuition fee levels, that enables it to direct influence on the delivery of its social mobility policies in higher education.

■ Appendix 1: Universities ranked according to their SMGI values

Ranking	Institution	SMGI value
1	The School of Pharmacy	1.81
2	University College Plymouth St Mark and St John	1.80
3	Ravensbourne	1.79
4	University Campus Suffolk	1.74
5	Edge Hill University	1.73
6	The University of Huddersfield	1.72
7	Glyndwr University	1.71
7	The Arts University College at Bournemouth	1.71
9	The University of Lincoln	1.69
9	The University of Wales, Newport	1.69
11	The University of Northampton	1.68
11	Leeds College of Art	1.68
11	Leeds Trinity University College	1.68
14	Coventry University	1.67
14	Norwich University College of the Arts	1.67
16	Canterbury Christ Church University	1.66
16	University of Derby	1.66
16	Institute of Education	1.66

19	Aston University	1.64
19	University of Chester	1.64
19	University of the West of England, Bristol	1.64
22	The University of Chichester	1.63
22	The University of Worcester	1.63
24	University College Falmouth	1.62
24	University of Glamorgan	1.62
24	Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance	1.62
27	Anglia Ruskin University	1.61
27	Birmingham City University	1.61
27	Bournemouth University	1.61
27	University of Cumbria	1.61
27	Harper Adams University College	1.61
27	Newman University College	1.61
27	The University of Northumbria at Newcastle	1.61
27	York St John University	1.61
35	Rose Bruford College	1.60
35	The University of Salford	1.60
35	St George's Hospital Medical School	1.60
38	The Robert Gordon University	1.59
39	The University of Bradford	1.58
39	The Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts	1.58
39	The University of West London	1.58
42	The University of Wolverhampton	1.57
43	The University of Central Lancashire	1.56
43	Leeds Metropolitan University	1.56
45	Edinburgh Napier University	1.55
46	Sheffield Hallam University	1.55
47	Glasgow Caledonian University	1.54

47	Liverpool John Moores University	1.54
47	The Nottingham Trent University	1.54
47	St Mary's University College	1.54
47	Teesside University	1.54
52	The Manchester Metropolitan University	1.53
53	University for the Creative Arts	1.52
53	The University of East Anglia	1.52
53	University of Gloucestershire	1.52
53	The University of Plymouth	1.52
53	St Mary's University College, Twickenham	1.52
53	The University of Sunderland	1.52
59	Bishop Grosseteste University College Lincoln	1.51
59	Cardiff University	1.51
59	Cardiff Metropolitan University	1.51
59	Central School of Speech and Drama	1.51
59	The Royal Veterinary College	1.51
64	Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh	1.50
64	Southampton Solent University	1.50
64	Staffordshire University	1.50
67	The University of Bath	1.49
68	The University of Bolton	1.49
68	The University of Brighton	1.49
68	The University of Portsmouth	1.49
68	The University of Stirling	1.49
68	Stranmillis University College	1.49
68	The University of Winchester	1.49
74	Loughborough University	1.48
74	The University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne	1.48
74	Royal Conservatoire of Scotland	1.48

77	University of Abertay Dundee	1.47
77	University of Bedfordshire	1.47
77	Heriot-Watt University	1.47
77	The University of Kent	1.47
77	The University of Surrey	1.47
82	University of Hertfordshire	1.46
82	Swansea University	1.46
84	Bath Spa University	1.45
84	De Montfort University	1.45
84	The University of Southampton	1.45
84	The University of the West of Scotland	1.45
88	The University of Liverpool	1.44
88	The University of Reading	1.44
90	The University of Birmingham	1.43
90	University College Birmingham	1.43
90	The University of Hull	1.43
93	The University of Keele	1.43
94	Brunel University	1.42
94	The University of Lancaster	1.42
94	The University of Sheffield	1.42
94	The Queen's University of Belfast	1.42
94	University of Wales Trinity Saint David	1.42
99	The University of Manchester	1.41
99	Oxford Brookes University	1.41
101	The City University	1.40
101	The University of Essex	1.40
101	The University of Greenwich	1.40
101	The University of Nottingham	1.40
101	Royal Agricultural College	1.40

101	Swansea Metropolitan University	1.40
107	The University of Dundee	1.39
107	The University of Leicester	1.39
107	Royal College of Music	1.39
107	The University of Strathclyde	1.39
107	Writtle College	1.39
112	Buckinghamshire New University	1.38
113	The University of Leeds	1.36
114	The University of Exeter	1.35
114	Roehampton University	1.35
114	Royal Northern College of Music	1.35
114	The University of York	1.35
118	University of the Arts, London	1.34
118	University of Ulster	1.34
120	Bangor University	1.33
120	London School of Economics and Political Science	1.33
120	The University of Warwick	1.33
123	The University of Bristol	1.31
123	Royal Academy of Music	1.31
123	SRUC	1.31
123	The University of Sussex	1.31
127	The University of Edinburgh	1.30
127	Imperial College of Science, Technology and Medicine	1.30
127	King's College London	1.30
130	The University of Aberdeen	1.29
130	Kingston University	1.29
130	Middlesex University	1.29
130	University College London	1.29

130	The University of Westminster	1.29
135	The University of Cambridge	1.28
135	London South Bank University	1.28
137	Aberystwyth University	1.27
137	Conservatoire for Dance and Drama	1.27
137	University of Durham	1.27
137	University of the Highlands and Islands	1.27
141	Queen Mary and Westfield College	1.26
142	Glasgow School of Art	1.24
142	Guildhall School of Music and Drama	1.24
144	The University of Glasgow	1.23
144	Heythrop College	1.22
146	The University of East London	1.21
146	Goldsmiths College	1.21
148	Courtauld Institute of Art	1.19
149	Royal Holloway and Bedford New College	1.17
150	The School of Oriental and African Studies	1.12
150	The University of St Andrews	1.12
152	The University of Oxford	1.09
153	The University of Buckingham	1.07

■ Appendix 2: Case Studies

Liverpool John Moores University: World of Work Initiative

As described in the BIS paper “Higher Ambitions: The future of universities in a knowledge economy”, “*Liverpool John Moores University’s World of Work™ (WoW) initiative aims to ensure that every student is equipped with the skills they need to successfully engage in the world of work, either because they possess skills which are highly valued by employers or because they are well equipped to set themselves up in their own business.*

The programme, developed and delivered collaboratively with employers, identified the need for higher level skills most valued by employers covering Self Awareness, Organisational Awareness and Making Things Happen. It also identified eight graduate transferrable skills as being essential for employment: analysing and problem solving, team working and interpersonal skills, verbal communication, written communication, personal planning and organising, initiative, numerical reasoning, information literacy and IT . All students are encouraged to develop these key skills within their subject and also at the purpose-built Graduate Development Centre.

These employability skills are developed and recognised through the WOW™ Certificate which comprises a skills gap analysis, workshops and a filmed one-to-one interview with an employer...⁵⁸

The WoW initiative is not a ‘bolt on activity’, or a series of courses to build skills and CVs. It required a fundamental review of every single undergraduate programme without exception across the University, to ensure that graduate skills were explicitly delivered

58 BIS, ‘Higher Ambitions: The future of universities in a knowledge economy’, November 2009, London.

and transferred to students within all programmes. As the CBI put it: *“The whole institution is signed up to this approach, so by the time that all 400 plus of LJMU’s programmes have been reviewed, even a student who concentrates solely on their academic course will have spent time identifying and reflecting on the development of the skills.”*⁵⁹

It also required the building of strong partnerships with business: at Chairman/CEO level with major international companies (such as Oracle, SONY, NHS, Siemens, CBI, Airbus, M&S, and Ford) to determine the high-level skills sought by business in the graduates it wanted to employ; and with employers at regional/local level to advise on delivering skills development and assessing students for the skills sought. Given the fundamental strategic and operational changes required in the main business of the university, it is perhaps not surprising that no other university to date has attempted such an ambitious transformation.

York University: York Award and Employability Skills Audit

York University offers the ‘York Award’, an employability certificate awarded alongside a student’s degree. The York Award enables students to gain accreditation for work experience, volunteering and participation in extra-curricular clubs and societies. Pupils also gain accreditation for ‘skills training’ by attending York Award courses - courses delivered or supported by employers that are designed to help students develop key skills and experience that will be useful in the workplace.⁶⁰

York University offers an ‘Employability Skills Audit’ to help students to categorise the skills they value, identify the main employability skills most employers look for, explore their evidence for these skills and to identify gaps.⁶¹

59 CBI, ‘Future Fit: Preparing graduates for the world of work, 31st March 2009, London.

60 University of York, ‘The York Award’, 2014. Available: www.york.ac.uk/students/work-volunteering-careers/skills/york-award/ Last accessed 12/03/2014

61 University of York, ‘Careers: Developing your employability’, 2014. Available: www.york.ac.uk/media/studenthome/workandvolunteering/infosheets/careerplanning/Career-Planning.pdf Last accessed 12/03/2014

Leicester University: Leicester Award for Employability Skills

The Leicester Award for Employability is an experiential career development programme designed to help students develop, assess, recognise and record the employability skills they are gaining through extra and co-curricular activity. The Leicester Award is achieved by completing core Leicester Award units and by taking part in one of the accredited extracurricular Leicester Award experiences. Leicester offers a broad range of Award experiences covering the specialisms of Industry Awareness, Leadership and Management, Community Engagement, Business and Enterprise and Personal Development. For example, the 'Tomorrow's Teachers'⁶² Community Engagement experience requires students to attend teacher training workshops and complete a 30 hour classroom placement with an allocated school in Leicester/Leicestershire.

62 University of Leicester, 'Tomorrow's Teachers', 2014. Available: www2.le.ac.uk/offices/careers-new/exp/ia/experiences/tomorrow-s-teachers/tomorrowteachers Last accessed 12/03/2014.