



Editorial

An Extraordinary Gentleman

Higher Education Policy (2007) 20, 1–3. doi:10.1057/palgrave.hep.8300146

Let me, as the new editor of *Higher Education Policy*, look back before I address the contents of the current issue and first pay homage to the previous editor. Looking back, or better, putting higher education issues — abiding or not — in historical perspective, has been one of the finest qualities of the person that held the editorial sceptre of *Higher Education Policy* for 19 years. A remarkable achievement, indeed, during a turbulent period in which the notion of ‘higher education policy’ underwent considerable change from being predominantly guided by nation-states to a multi-stakeholder and multi-level phenomenon. Guy Neave is renowned for his sharp analytical editorial pencil and linguistic eloquence. He has shown us throughout these years that history matters (although it should never be repeated). But he did not use — as some historians do — the references to the past to show that things were better in the old days. On the contrary, George Bernard Shaw’s dictum ‘we are made wise not by the recollection of our past, but by the responsibility for our future’ is fully appropriate to characterize Guy’s use of historical wisdom, concepts, metaphors and analogues, even if it sometimes meant that the reader was forced to look through the wrong end of the telescope!

Another noteworthy quality is his skill to bring together articles for an issue of *Higher Education Policy* that at first sight seem to discuss unrelated issues. Guy is able to seamlessly weave together different articles. One certainly needs an almost limitless pool of knowledge and expertise and a very sound dose of creativity to bring a variety of articles together, and not only once, but almost consistently, year after year. His high-quality editorials of the issues of *Higher Education Policy* will survive history as almost stand-alone articles. The fact that these editorials are regularly quoted in journal articles and books is proof that his editorials will not disappear as footnotes in the annals of higher education policy research.

Let me finally address a third quality. Guy is an extraordinary gentleman. As an editor he treated all those that submitted articles to *Higher Education Policy* gentlemanlike: encouraging those that needed support and critically approaching those that would be able to cope with high-level scholarly criticism. I am tempted to pursue the analogue with the leader of the League of Extraordinary Gentlemen, Allan Quatermain — in the 2003 movie — in-depth, for example, given the Scottish background of the actor playing the role of Quatermain, as



well as for the actor's grey beard. But I will leave most of the further reflections to the creativity of the reader. And, admitted, there is a danger to take the analogue too literally. One may wonder about Quatermain's illustrious fellow Extraordinary Gentlemen: who would be the Dr Jekyll (and Mr Hyde) of higher education research? One may ponder about the identity of the invisible man in higher education policy. And who would be the Dorian Gray; the forever young scholar of higher education? Suffice to say, that Guy Neave has much in common with Allan Quatermain, the main character of Rider Haggard's novel *King Solomon's Mines*. Guy's adventurous editorial role, his understanding and appreciation of other cultures, his successful attempts to reveal the lost (?) world of higher education policy research, a good sense of practical relevance of higher education research, and a gentleman-like approach in communication with fellow researchers, have all contributed to revealing many academic discoveries: gold, diamonds and ivory for researchers and practitioners in the higher education community, located within the International Association of Universities and beyond.

The Current Issue

Now back to the reality of the first issue of the 20th volume. It is easy to spot the theme of this issue: Africa. Having said this, a diversity of articles looms behind this unifying theme. This issue brings us from particular countries of the continent (South Africa, Zimbabwe) to the continent as a whole and from tangible topics to virtual issues. Chrissie Boughey addresses educational development in the recent decades of South African higher education and its apparent change from social reproduction to capitalist expansion. Bringing us to the virtual realm, Fredrick Nafukho defends the need for e-learning on the African continent and discusses the consequences in terms of institutional policies and quality assurance if the challenge of e-learning is taken up. A partnership model is proposed for the design of e-learning programmes. In the fourth contribution to this issue, Michael Kariwo addresses widening participation in Zimbabwe and argues for changes in resource allocation to the higher education institutions that better are able to provide a solution for the current demand for higher education. Berte van Wyk and Philips Higgs reflect — from mainly a philosophical perspective — on the idea of an African university. Michael Cross addresses information and communication policies and strategies in South Africa, particularly the match between governmental priorities and institutional strategies. The odd one out in this issue of *Higher Education Policy* — for not addressing Africa — is an article by Loo Seng Piew, the winner of the 2006 International Association of Universities Palgrave Higher Education Policy Research Prize. His study addresses the two cultures



of science. Obviously the essay refers to Snow's 'two cultures', but takes a very original approach — using the perspective of language–culture incommensurability — to analyse the concepts of nature and observation from Eastern and Western language perspectives. Instead of deciding on irreconcilability or incommensurability, the article argues for an intercultural dialogue.

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