

11.7.2025

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Title

Speculations on University Futures in 2025 : Corporate Cloning, Intellectual Underground, and a New Critical Awareness / George Cairns

Publication year

2017

Source/Footnote

In: The future of university education / Michai Izak ; Monika Kostera ; Michal Zawadzki (Eds.). - Cham : Palgrave Macmillan US, 2017. - S. 293 - 308

Inventory number

47962

Keywords

Hochschulreform : allgemein ; Hochschule : Idee und Aufgabe

Abstract

Looking back quarter of a century to the Millennium, many predicted a new era of cooperation and collaboration. All member nations had signed up to the UN Millennium Development Goals, aimed at halving global poverty, curbing the spread of HIV/AIDS and providing universal primary education by 2015. Many countries had signed the 1997 Kyoto Protocol on reversing climate change, with hopes that major players like the USA who initially refused would follow suit. Universities were seen as key institutions for producing graduates and promoting research that would enable these ambitious targets to be met. However, events of the first decade of the century contributed to global failure to meet these stretch targets. By 2015, the gap between rich and poor had widened across the globe, scientists were warning of global collapse of key ecological indicators; access to education – particularly by young women – had become impossible in many areas; and HIV/AIDS remained one of many global health issues. At the same time, universities had seen their public funding reduced

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dramatically; “non-performing” faculties had been closed; and the focus on providing graduates to meet the needs of the economy, i.e. big business, had become the rallying call from politicians, business leaders and vice-chancellors. To replace lost public funding, universities had drawn upon corporate support, whilst students were required to cover the major cost of their education. The chapter speculates how by 2020, universities might become dominated by faculties of business; producing corporate clones for company management structures; and engineering and science; undertaking research to meet corporate R&D agendas. From 2020 to 2025, what might change about this situation? This very much depends on whether you, dear reader, contribute to it happening in the first place, through your actions or by your lack of action (HRK / Abstract übernommen)

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