

29.7.2024

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Title

The impact of market-driven higher education on student-university relations : investing, consuming and consumption / Michael Tomlinson

Publication year

2016

Source/Footnote

In: Higher education policy. - 29 (2016) 2, S. 149 - 166

Inventory number

39370

Keywords

Hochschule und Wirtschaft ; Ausland : Großbritannien : Hochschulwesen allgemein

Abstract

This article examines the ways in which the increasingly market-based higher education (HE) landscape of UK HE is shaping students' attitudes and responses towards their HE. Contemporary HE policy has framed HE as a private good that generates largely private benefits. There has also been a concern that these changes will distort institutional relations and the traditional value of participating in HE, reinforcing the growing commodification of UK HE. On the basis of a qualitative study with students in a range of higher education institutions from the four UK countries, it outlines the main impacts recent policy is having on students' attitudes and relationship to HE. Dominant market-driven discourses around investment, consumerism, employability and competition indicate widespread concerns among contemporary HE students about operating in higher-stakes markets, which are intensified by increased personal financial contribution towards HE. While the data reveal an identification with the student as 'consumer' and stringent expectations over what HE provides, it also points to an ethic of self-responsibility that is built on highly individualised discourses of personal

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application, proactivity and experience optimisation. Goal-driven and instrumental learning are evident, which relate to widespread concerns about future returns and the private good value of HE.

(HRK / Abstract übernommen)