A Compatible Partnership?

Student-community engagement and traditional university education

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This article explores the relationship between student learning from community engagement (SLCE) and traditional university education (TUE). In so doing it seeks to contribute to our understanding of the rationale for efforts to include SLCE in higher education.

Student learning from community engagement (SLCE) normally involves the inclusion within the higher education curriculum of a period of time in which students work for some form of community-based organisation, to learn from the experience and to provide benefits to the community. The 'engagement' in the term 'student learning from community engagement' refers to students working on a community-based project(s) within a community setting. For example:

> [it] *relates to a practical task or project carried out either for or with a community organisation. Projects are either suggested by local groups or identified by students through established volunteering networks* (Cupp 2005, p. 2).

SLCE can take many forms, ranging from accredited volunteering in the community, where learning is distilled from the volunteering experience, to full-blown service learning, as found in many universities in the USA. It doesn't include student volunteering on campus or forms of student-community engagement where student learning is not a major object of the exercise. A significant feature of student-community engagement is reciprocity, that is, the 'give and take' involved. Students give their time and talents to community groups and organisations and receive valuable learning.

At first sight this seems so different from 'traditional' university education, which is centred on some specific academic subject(s), that it raises a range of questions, especially:

—Are SLCE and TUE different ways of realising the same ends and, if so, could SLCE replace TUE for at least some students?

—On the other hand, are SLCE and TUE so different that they are incompatible? If they are compatible, what value does student

learning from community engagement add to traditional university education?

—Where does SLCE fit within a program of traditional university education?

The aim of this article is to explore these questions and offer some answers.

The issues are explored within the context of university education in the UK. A particular feature of university education in the UK has been its slowness in moving from an elite to a mass system (Scott 1995; Trow 1973). The UK made that transition at a relatively late stage of its economic development (measured in terms of real GNP per head). The existence of a binary system of Higher Education until the 1990s meant that many of the pressures to change higher education were directed at the polytechnics rather than the universities, including the pressure to make universities more responsive to their local communities. Consequently, traditional university education, at least at the undergraduate level, held sway longer in the UK than in other countries at comparable levels of economic development. Thus, for example, the USA has a much stronger tradition of student-community engagement within its universities, particularly in the form of service learning, than does the UK (see, for example, Butin 2010 or Stanton et al. 1999). The dominant position of TUE within UK universities until relatively recently makes it a particularly fruitful context in which to explore the relationship(s) between TUE and SLCE.

The focus of this article is on university education at the undergraduate level. There are two reasons for this. First, SLCE is most commonly found at this level in the UK rather than at Masters or PhD levels. Second, undergraduate education is the largest single component of higher education.

THE PROBLEM OF HETEROGENEITY

A major difficulty in exploring the relationship between student learning from community engagement (SLCE) and traditional university education (TUE) is that SLCE programs are far from homogeneous. Some courses of student learning from community engagement involve well-defined projects whereas others involve simply a period of activity in the community. Some involve student engagement with the local community whereas others involve engagement with the wider community. Some focus on the application of knowledge acquired in the university whereas others focus on the distillation of knowledge from the experience of student engagement. Some are based on a single module within a degree program that students take while continuing with other modules whereas others are more like a sandwich placement, that is, a period of full-time learning in the community between periods of college-based studies. In the light of such heterogeneity what do we actually mean when we use the term 'student learning from community engagement'?

The solution to the problem of heterogeneity employed in this article is the concept of the 'majority model'. Such a model comprises those features that are shared by the majority of programs of student learning from community engagement in the UK.

This is only a partial solution to the problem, however, because most programs of SLCE in the UK are relatively new, which means there is still a considerable amount of curriculum experimentation and development going on. The case study at the end of this article provides an illustrative summary of student-community engagement at one university in the UK where it is relatively well established, albeit a development of this decade. Much has been written about the specific practices found in student-community engagement in those countries where it is relatively well developed, particularly in the USA. Less is known about the full extent of student learning from community engagement across Britain and the range of practices involved. There are accounts of the experiences and practices within particular institutions (for example, Hart, Maddison & Wolff 2007) but no up-to-date survey or profile of the position across the whole country. The status of the 'majority model' of student learning from community engagement in the UK proposed by this article must therefore be regarded as provisional. What is needed is a national profile of programs of student-community engagement to discover the variety of practices in programs of student learning from community engagement and establish empirically which features are shared by most and which are local variations. Such a profile could also facilitate the spread of emergent developments, good practice and new ideas. Until we have such knowledge, the 'majority model' of student learning from community engagement in the article must be viewed as tentative and corrigible.

There is also considerable heterogeneity within 'traditional university education'. Some courses of traditional university education place considerable reliance on coursework in assessment whereas others rely entirely on examinations; some include group work and others do not; and so on. However, traditional university education is more familiar because it has been around for longer and because many of its features are recorded in published guides for prospective students. Faced with the problem of variation in traditional university education, the solution employed in this article is the same as that employed for SLCE, that is, reliance on the concept of the majority model which focuses on features shared by the majority of traditional university education courses in the UK.

WHAT IS MEANT BY 'TRADITIONAL UNIVERSITY EDUCATION'?

The primary aspiration of a university education has changed over the long history of the university. In the earliest universities of the Middle Ages it was to serve the needs of the Latin church

with its espoused aim of serving the will of the God of Western Christendom. In the early modern period it was to produce Godly gentlemen, men of virtue who could tell right from wrong morally, socially, intellectually and aesthetically. In the early 19th century its main goal began to change to preparing graduates to serve the advancement of knowledge (through research, dissemination or application of knowledge) and it was this change in mission that led to the type of university education we now regard as 'traditional' in the UK. Appendix 1 provides a brief account of the origins of what is regarded as traditional university education in the UK.

So what is a traditional university education? It is one that seeks to equip students with knowledge, skills and attitudes that enable them to play a part in the advancement of knowledge of an academic subject. The intended learning outcomes of traditional university education follow from that superordinate goal and include:

Knowledge

—*Knowledge that is up-to-date.* In order to equip students to contribute to the advancement of knowledge it is important that they are familiar with current knowledge, its boundaries and the gaps that most need to be filled. The height of traditional higher education rises with its proximity to the leading edge of the advancement of knowledge. At its higher levels students discuss the most recent knowledge discovered by research. And at the highest level of all, doctoral level, they finally reach the leading edge itself as they are expected to make an original contribution to new knowledge.

—*Text-based knowledge.* Traditionally, new knowledge is published in academic journals after which it is distilled down into advanced textbooks and later into textbooks for intermediate and foundation levels of higher education. The arrival of e-learning is impacting on this process but the knowledge available online remains predominantly text-based.

—*Knowledge that is located within academic subjects.* The advancement of knowledge implies the accumulation of knowledge. As the stock of knowledge expands the only way to gain an understanding of knowledge at its leading edge is by increasing specialisation. The accumulation of knowledge over time therefore implies growing subject specialisation and consequently a progressive rise in the number of individual academic subjects.

Skills

—*Critical thinking skills that enable a student to test the validity of assertions and conclusions.* If students are to play a role in the advancement of the knowledge of a subject then they need to be able to evaluate claims for new knowledge. In the words of Douglas Hague, chair of the UK's Economic and Social Research Council for much of the 1980s:

> *Academics must believe that acquiring the ability to test ideas and evidence is the primary benefit of a university education* (Hague 1991, p. 64).

—*Skills of written communication.* Apart from the ability to test ideas, assertions and evidence, what other generic skills would most help a student destined to serve the advancement of new knowledge? The main one is the ability to communicate effectively. Since the normal way of communicating new knowledge is through publication in an academic journal, traditional university education has placed much emphasis on written communication and, in particular, producing written work for an academic audience.

—*Subject-specific skills.* Economists, for example, might need statistical skills, chemists might need laboratory skills, physicists might need mathematical skills, and so on. In some subjects the subject-specific skills comprise a relatively large part of the syllabus and in other subjects they comprise a relatively small part. In some subjects, such as languages and mathematics, there is a large grey area between the acquisition of subject-specific skills and the acquisition of subject knowledge itself.

Attitudes

—*A sceptical/questioning attitude.* Scepticism is a natural ally of critical thinking. Traditional university education seeks to equip students with the ability and disposition to test ideas and evidence. The *ability* depends on critical thinking skills and the *inclination* to do so depends on an attitude of questioning and scepticism.

—*Intellectual curiosity.* Traditional university education applauds the idea of 'learning for its own sake'. Its overarching project is to increase the stock of knowledge from which all can draw and it makes the implicit assumption that this project can be best advanced if academic staff and students are free to pursue knowledge for its own sake. In the words of the founding figure of the modern research university, Wilhelm von Humboldt:

> *At the highest level, the teacher does not exist for the sake of the student: both teacher and student have their justification in the common pursuit of knowledge* (Humboldt 1970, p. 243).

—*Impartiality.* Traditional university education prizes the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, which implies disinterested enquiry. It is not surprising that the long tradition of rhetoric as a subject of study in university education petered out with the arrival of the research-based university. Disinterested enquiry seeks to discover rather than persuade and in that sense it does not take sides. It eschews advocacy and reveres impartiality.

STUDENT LEARNING FROM COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND ITS LEARNING OUTCOMES

If the main purpose of traditional university education is to equip students with the knowledge, skills and attitudes to serve the advancement of knowledge of an academic subject, then

what is the main purpose of student learning from community engagement? It is to equip the students with the knowledge, skills and attitudes to make a difference to the lives of those in the community.

What sort of knowledge?

—*Knowledge that enables students to make a difference*. Since this is likely to depend on context (particularly time and place), it is more important for students to know where and how to find answers from a range of sources than to absorb an established, but limited, body of general principles or theory. The knowledge needed, for example, to help establish a dedicated childcare centre on an estate in a disadvantaged neighbourhood is likely to be different from that needed to help a local school extend its after-hours involvement in community projects, and different again from that needed to best help with a scheme whereby knowledge and skills gained by contributing to neighbourhood renewal is counted towards formal qualifications.

—*Knowledge distilled from experience*. Whereas traditional university education has most respect for the sort of knowledge found in academic journals and textbooks, student learning from community engagement applauds the sort of knowledge that is distilled from experience.

—*Self-knowledge*. What sort of knowledge would be most helpful in enabling students to make a difference? Knowledge that is specific to the student's role in the community-based issue on which they are working. The most specific knowledge of all is student knowledge of themselves, including understanding their own talents, strengths and weaknesses. This is particularly important because the main instrument for change that students will bring to every future situation is themselves so they need to know about their own strengths and weaknesses.

What sort of skills?

—*Reflective thinking and strategic thinking skills*. These are the key thinking skills that are needed to make a difference. They are needed to capture the lessons of the students' experiences in the community and they are needed to develop strategies, plans and actions to realise the goals that the students set themselves. Like critical thinking they are both forms of question-based thinking but the searching questions needed for reflective thinking and strategic thinking are different (Bourner 2009).

— *Listening skills*. Writing for an academic audience is not as highly valued by SLCE as it is by TUE. By contrast, oral skills (listening and talking) are of particular value to those who would seek to make a difference in the community. Listening skills are especially important because responding to a need often starts with listening.

—*Personal transferable skills*. Enhancing students' abilities to make a difference after they graduate means preparing them for problems, situations and contexts that cannot normally be predicted far in advance. This is why it is important to hone up their skills that are transferable between a wide variety of different situations. What

makes a person effective as a change agent is the particular set of personal skills and other strengths the individual brings to a situation.

What sort of attitudes?

—*Desire to make a difference.* It is one thing to develop the capacity to make a difference in the community and another to have the disposition or inclination to do so. By making students more aware of the needs within the community, student engagement enhances the motivation of the students to contribute to change within the wider community.

—*Proactivity.* A proactive attitude equips students with a bias for action – a clear asset for those who aspire to make a difference.

—*Commitment.* A person's ability to make a difference is enhanced by a commitment to the changes they seek to make … and if they are passionate in their commitment then so much the better.

Table 1: Traditional university education and student learning from community engagement compared

Knowledge, skills and attitudes	*Key questions*	Traditional university education (TUE) (majority model)	Student learning from community engagement (SLCE) (majority model)
	What type of knowledge is most valued?	The most recent/ advanced knowledge discovered by research	Knowledge that most enables students to make a difference, including knowledge of where and how to find things out
Knowledge	*What is the principal source(s) of knowledge from which students learn?*	Textbooks and (at the more advanced level) academic journals	Distillation of knowledge from experience and reflection
	What domain of knowledge epitomises this form of higher education?	Knowledge located within academic subjects	Self-knowledge
	What thinking skills are most highly valued?	Critical thinking skills that enable a student to test ideas, including assumptions and conclusions	The skills of reflective thinking and strategic thinking
Skills	*What communication skills are most highly valued?*	Skills of written communication, especially the ability to write for an academic audience	Listening skills
	What other skills are most prized?	Subject-specific skills	Personal transferable skills
Attitudes	*What attitudes are most highly valued?*	1. Sceptical/ questioning attitude 2. Intellectual curiosity, that is, a spirit of disinterested enquiry 3. Impartiality	1. Desire to make a difference 2. Proactive, that is, a bias towards action 3. Commitment

Table 1, above, contrasts the knowledge, skills and attitudes of traditional university education with those of student learning from community engagement. It is important to appreciate what columns 3 and 4 do, and do not, represent. Column 3 represents the sort of knowledge, skills and attitudes embodied in the *majority* of traditional university education that was inherited from earlier generations of university academics (it also represents an ideal of subject-focused education that dominated UK universities

during at least the middle half of the 20th century). It does not purport to represent all of traditional university education; there is still, for example, a thinning strand of the sort of higher education advanced by Cardinal Newman (Newman 1976) and there is a range of recent additional tributaries that are serving to broaden higher education. These include the development of skills for graduate employment (particularly in the 1980s), skills for independent study (particularly in the 1990s) and the 'skills' of reflective learning (particularly over the last decade) (Bourner 2004). However, the ideas of traditional university education continue to exert such power that it is reasonable to believe that a majority of UK academics across the range of universities would want a university graduate to be equipped with the knowledge, skills and attitudes as described by column 3. Those UK academics who would see the attributes of column 3 as unimportant constitute a very small minority.

Column 4 claims (with rather less confidence) to represent the set of knowledge, skills and attitudes embodied in the *majority* of SLCE. Most academics engaged with SLCE will have their own particular views about the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values they want to flow from SLCE as well as their own priorities. So each is likely to see omissions. Column 4 does not claim to represent *all* of SLCE nor even all the knowledge, skills and attitudes to which the majority of SLCE practitioners subscribe. There will be those, for example, who would wish to stress the role of contextualisation of knowledge, the importance of developing interpersonal skills and openness to the experiences and perceptions of diverse others. Column 4 claims only to show a range of learning outcomes in the domains of knowledge, skills and attitudes to which a majority of SLCE practitioners would subscribe.

A glance at Table 1 shows a large discrepancy between the items in the column for traditional university education and the corresponding items in the column for student learning from community engagement. Even if the absence of a national profile of SLCE means that there are some errors in the 'majority model' of SLCE it is clear that SLCE seeks to equip students with knowledge, skills and attitudes that are quite different from those of TUE.

This gives the answer to one of the questions posed at the start of this article: 'Are SLCE and TUE just different ways of reaching the same higher education ends?' Clearly, they are not. Table 1 implies very different graduate profiles, each with a range of quite different strengths. These are summarised in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Contrasting graduate profiles

TUE: Graduate profile 1
According to column 3, traditional university education seeks to produce a graduate with up-to-date knowledge of an academic subject, mostly gleaned from books, journals and other written sources. This graduate has acquired the skills needed for success in an academic subject, the ability to write in ways approved by academics in that subject discipline and well-honed critical faculties. She or he ends their university course with

a questioning mind that values learning for its own sake and respects impartial enquiry.

SLCE: Graduate profile 2
According to column 4, student learning from community engagement seeks to produce a graduate who has learned where and how to find knowledge from a wide range of sources, how to capture knowledge from their own experience and, in so doing, has acquired considerable self-knowledge, including awareness of their particular talents and strengths. She or he has acquired skills that are transferable to a wide range of situations including the ability to develop a strategy or plan and the ability to listen in ways that lets the people they are speaking with know they have been understood. This graduate recognises the value of action when they want to make a difference to a cause to which they feel committed.

These are two very different graduate profiles but they are not incompatible. Each graduate is prepared for their next steps after graduation depending on the direction of those next steps. A graduate who is best described by profile 1 is particularly well prepared to progress further in academia by way of further academic study at postgraduate level, teaching and research. A graduate who can be described by profile 2 has developed many of the attitudes associated with graduate employability more generally (Universities UK 2003). A recent study of the changes in first destinations of UK graduates over the last four decades revealed that in the early 1960s about six out of every 10 graduates remained within the education system after graduation – going on to teaching or other training, research, further academic study, or education administration. Today that ratio is down to about three out of 10 (Bourner & Rospigliosi 2008). The large majority now find jobs in other sectors, including industry, wholesale/retail, financial services, commercial and public services other than education. Clearly, graduates who can be described by both profiles are better prepared for their next steps in either direction after completion of their university studies. In other words, they are more versatile and have a wider range of options when they graduate.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS
This article started with the aim of exploring the relationship between traditional university education and student learning from community education. Its approach has been to identify the superordinate goal of TUE (to develop the capacity, and disposition, of students to contribute to the advancement of knowledge of an academic subject) and that of SLCE (to develop the capacity, and disposition, of students to contribute to the community). It has looked at what these goals imply for the main learning outcomes of TUE and SLCE respectively. These learning outcomes were then examined in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes, and summarised in Table 1. This table allows the questions posed at the outset of this article to be answered:

1 *Are student learning from community engagement (SLCE) and traditional university education (TUE) different ways of realising the same ends and, if so, could SLCE replace TUE for at least some students?* The knowledge, skills and attitudes that flow from SLCE are largely different from those that flow from TUE. This is shown by comparing columns 3 and 4 in Table 1 above.

2 *On the other hand, are SLCE and TUE so different that they are incompatible? If they are compatible, what value does student learning from community engagement (SLCE) add to traditional university education (TUE)?* SLCE and TUE are not incompatible as neither precludes the other. Including SLCE within a program of higher education adds a range of learning outcomes of much value in preparing students for their lives after university (including finding graduate employment).

3 *Where does SLCE fit within a program of traditional university education?* SLCE doesn't fit *within* a program of traditional university education; it fits *with* it. It is not a means of achieving the same learning outcomes as TUE; it contributes valuable *additional* learning outcomes resulting in a bigger, richer higher education experience for university students. The relationship between SLCE and TUE is, therefore, one of complementarity as SLCE and TUE offer complementary learning outcomes.

These answers have a number of implications. First and foremost they imply that the role of student learning from community engagement in higher education is not to serve TUE but rather to play a significant part in higher education *in its own right*. SLCE makes a significant contribution in developing students' social responsibility and capacity for community action as well as preparing students for their lives after university, apart from any contribution it might make in advancing the knowledge and understanding of an academic subject.

This is not to imply that SLCE can make no contribution to TUE in some subject areas. There is a limited range of subjects, mostly those that provide a training for professional practice involving community engagement, where SLCE can be drawn on by TUE, such as education, some health studies and some applied social sciences. And there are a limited number of additional subjects where TUE offers opportunities for the application of campus-based studies (for example, where a computer studies student sets up a website for a community group). But in the majority of university subjects (such as maths, modern languages, chemistry, classics, physics, literature, engineering, ancient history, biology, etc.) its contribution to traditional university education is clearly marginal. This is evident by comparing column 3 with column 4 in Table 1.

A second implication is for the advocacy of SLCE within higher education and, in particular, the different approaches to making the case for SLCE. One approach is to focus the case for

SLCE, in the first instance, on those subjects such as education, nursing and applied social studies, where SLCE can make some obvious contribution to TUE (either as input or as an opportunity to apply campus-based learning). Demonstrating its viability and value in these subject areas provides a basis for rolling it out into other subject areas. In other words, having demonstrated that SLCE 'works' in easy-to-reach subjects it is assumed that this will make harder-to-reach subjects more receptive. This may be termed the 'trojan-horse' approach, as it uses the easy-to-reach subjects as a means of gaining entry to higher education more generally.

The analysis in this article, summarised in Table 1, suggests that this strategy is unlikely to achieve more than limited success. The argument that SLCE can contribute to TUE is only ever likely to convince those academics in the hard-to-reach subjects who wish to be convinced. Consider the problem of persuading subject-centred academics in a discipline such as physics that student-community engagement will contribute to their intended learning outcomes centred around the contents of column 3 in Table 1. It would require advanced skills of rhetoric (and possibly sophistry) to convince such academics that student learning from community engagement could help prepare their students to contribute to the advancement of knowledge and understanding of modern physics.

The more that advocates of SLCE convince themselves that SLCE contributes to TUE (either as input or as application) and base their advocacy on that argument the less successful they are likely to be in making a case that is persuasive to academics in the hard-to-reach subjects. To have more than a marginal impact in such areas it is necessary to provide reasons that have more appeal to academics in the hard-to-reach subjects. The analysis in this paper implies that it is better to focus on the society-centred outcomes and student-centred outcomes. It is indicative of the seismic shifts that have occurred in the university landscape over the last half-century to say that most subject-centred academics are likely to agree that there is value in developing the social responsibility of students, particularly if a way can be found that will help prepare students for their lives (including work) after university. SLCE offers such a way.

The third implication is for further research. At an early stage in this article the need was identified for a national profile of programs of student-community engagement in the UK to discover the variety of practices in programs of student learning from community engagement and to establish empirically which features are shared by most and which are local variations. What has also become apparent is the need for profiling the incidence of SLCE across the range of university subjects and types of universities. This sort of profiling will identify the extent of the variation and make it possible to test ideas about why some subjects and some sectors lag behind others in adopting SLCS. It will also make it easier to test ideas about why countries like the UK lag behind other countries, particularly the USA, in

the adoption of SLCE. Also, the conceptual typology of Table 1 offers a theoretical framework for informing future empirical enquiry. There is, for example, a need for future work to explore empirically how educators perceive the learning outcomes of student-community engagement in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes. This will contribute to an understanding of how different views on the knowledge, skills and attitudes that flow from SLCE affect actual SLCE applications and practices.

The purpose of SLCE is not to serve TUE. SLCE makes a contribution to higher education in its own right. It contributes *additional* learning outcomes. Together, TUE and SLCE offer a broader higher education curriculum and experience and together they better prepare students for life after university than either can alone.

CASE STUDY: STUDENT COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AT BRIGHTON UNIVERSITY

The student community engagement (SCE) program at Brighton University is run by the university's 'gateway' unit, the Community University Partnership Project (Cupp), which was set up in 2004. This SCE strand of Cupp's work operates via projects that are integrated within academic courses. The largest element of the SCE program is the Community Participation and Development (CPD) module, which operates in six schools of the university. In addition, there are politics and business versions of the module. The other main element of SCE at Brighton University is modules designed around larger projects within a particular course or school. For example, the School of Architecture has developed an Open Architecture Studio that enables students to take on building projects with local schools and playgroups. They get an opportunity to gain experience of tendering, costing, designing, sourcing and building a structure as they work with stakeholders who have a vital interest in the outcome but rarely have much say in it.

The CPD module is based on 30–50 hours of practical work in the community by the students. During the 2007–2008 academic session about 1500 hours were contributed by about 350 students to about 180 different community organisations. This implies that, on average, each student completed almost 45 hours of practical work in the community. Examples include work in local primary or secondary schools, prisons, play centres, refuges, and mentoring and ambassadorial work through the university's program for widening participation in higher education. The CPD module provides a broad template specifying various parameters (including the number of hours of practical work – normally 50 – and the nature of the assessment at various points) but the range of actual work that the students undertake is as wide as their fields of interest, the contacts they can identify and the roles they can undertake.

The CPD module is intended to enable the students to take the initiative in choosing projects. For the most part, the student suggests a project they would like to undertake or works to a brief agreed with a community organisation they have chosen to work with. Examples include community nursing students working with groups that mainstream services find hard to reach (such as setting up a health clinic for refugee women and children) and business management students developing business plans to support funding applications by community organisations. Some of the opportunities are provided by the university's Student Volunteering Network; some are found through local volunteer organisations; and some come from contacts the students have or manage to identify and develop. A significant dimension of this module is that most of the students go through application, interview, selection and training processes that are similar to those they will experience when looking for work after they graduate.

Academic credit is based on project work, analysis and reflection on their particular community-based project. The students are graded on their success in examining and making sense of their experience rather than the success or otherwise of their task (which may depend on factors outside their control). Assessment requires the completion of a learning journal, analysis of the organisation where they are located, and exploration and review of the literature that is relevant to their work. They are required to identify and assess the relevance of their learning from other modules they have studied in the university, identify what they brought to the experience and assess what they have gained from the experience. They are also asked to discuss whether this is the sort of organisation in which they might wish to work after graduation.

APPENDIX 1

A brief account of the birth of traditional university education[1]
According to conventional wisdom the universities were in disarray by the start of the 19th century.

> *By the eighteenth century universities everywhere were in the doldrums, confined to the training of priests or pastors, a few civil servants, and those gentry too poor to educate their sons by private tutors and the increasingly popular 'grand tour' of the Continent … most universities in eighteenth century Europe were moribund, with idle professors ... despised by the intellectuals of the Enlightenment. In England the historian of the Roman empire Edward Gibbon described his student days at Oxford as 'the fourteen months the most idle and unprofitable of my whole life', [sic] and his teachers, 'the monks of Magdalen', as 'decent, easy men who supinely enjoyed the gifts of the founder'. In Germany civil servants and politicians seriously discussed whether universities did more harm than good and ought to be abolished* (Perkin 1997, pp. 14–15).

[1] This is only the briefest summary. The standard works on the development of the university and university education in Europe are the three volumes of *A history of the university in Europe* sponsored by the Standing Conference of Rectors, Presidents and Vice-Chancellors of the European Universities (CRE), now the European University Association (EUA) – see de Ridder-Symoens (1992, vol. 1 & 1996, vol. 2) and Rüegg (2004, vol. 3). For a good brief account of European universities to 1914 see Rudy (1984), and Anderson (2006) gives a useful account of the development of UK universities and university education over the last 200 years.

A way out of the malaise was provided by Wilhelm von Humboldt who established the University of Berlin with a new mission: the pursuit of knowledge. It was not the role of the Humboldtian university to serve the needs of students but rather it was the role of students as well as the staff of the university to serve the pursuit of knowledge. In Humboldt's own words (in translation):

> At the highest level, the teacher does not exist for the sake of the student: both teacher and student have their justification in the common pursuit of knowledge (Humboldt 1970, p. 243).

Knowledge is pursued in order that it may be found, so the goal of the pursuit of knowledge is the discovery of knowledge and that meant research. This was to become the superordinate goal of the university. It was the birth of the research university.

Berlin's lead was followed by other German universities and what became known as the German model was adopted by universities in other countries too. There are at least three reasons:

—German industry was thriving in the latter part of the 19th century and this was attributed, at least in part, to the adoption of research (and especially research into the natural sciences) by the German universities

—There was a large inflow of students to German universities particularly from those wanting to get a training in research

—German professors' commitment to research and publication gave them a source of reputation not enjoyed by the staff in other universities who confined themselves to teaching. This enhanced the esteem of the German universities as well as German academics.

Consequently, the German universities that had been regarded as the most backward in Europe at the end of the 18th century transformed themselves in the course of the next century into the universities that were seen as the most successful. In other words, by the start of the 20th century not only were the German universities seen as being at the leading edge but also they were the ones that had made the most progress. The conclusion was clear: if you wanted to build a successful university you needed to prioritise the advancement of knowledge.

It is easy to see the role of university staff in the 'advancement of knowledge'. But what was the role of the *students*? For the students the university offered a period of preparation during which they could equip themselves to contribute to the advancement of knowledge through research, dissemination or application of the growing stock of knowledge. What we now regard as traditional university education in the UK is the sort of higher education that was developed during the nineteenth and the first half of the next century to serve that purpose.

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