

HUMANITIES GRADUATES AND THE BRITISH ECONOMY: THE HIDDEN IMPACT



A recent report demonstrates the valuable contribution made by humanities graduates to the economy and society

Transcript of video interview with Professor Shearer West, Head of the Humanities Division [speaking at the launch of the report: Humanities Graduates and the British Economy: The Hidden Impact], and Dr Philip Kreager, Senior Research Fellow in Human Sciences

SHEARER WEST

This is a very exciting report as it is the first study of its kind to look at a very large sample of humanities graduates over a long period of time – more than 20 years. There is nothing else like it and it has given us a very interesting set of evidence and data about what humanities graduates do with their lives.

PHILIP KREAGER

The approach taken in the research has two halves. One is to actually track the aggregate trends in education at an institution like Oxford, in relation to the standard national statistics on the improving economy – or the not-improving economy! We have one in three graduates over the period 1960–89. That's 11,000 people, 30 to 50 years on in their careers. This is an entirely different picture from the one you would get from the first six months. Fewer than one in three even remain in the sector that they started out in. We have conducted interviews with a random sample of graduates to show their involvement and the active contributions that young people who have graduated from Oxford then make over the course of their careers.

What we decided to do in formulating the research was to take a period in which the economy was changing very rapidly, in ways that have subsequently become very important. In short, the 70s and 80s – the period in which the service sector for the financial, legal and media worlds and so forth became a very, very important part of the economy.

PHILIP KREAGER

As a pilot project, this can only be one piece in a wider puzzle. It's very important, I think, that we expand on this knowledge base, because we've shown that it's possible to document what higher education does. Parallel studies could embrace the sciences and the social sciences, and also then take into account other universities, so that we actually have a knowledge base for educational policy in this country which we as educationalists, and ministers for that matter, can rely on.

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To view the video, visit: www.ox.ac.uk/annual-review

