

Higher Education Commission launches call for evidence to investigate how higher education exports can be protected post-Brexit

Monday 26 February, 2018

The Higher Education Commission is launching its sixth cross-party inquiry, examining the health of the higher education exports sector. This timely inquiry is co-chaired by Conservative Peer Lord Norton of Louth and Professor Simon Marginson, the Director of the Centre for Global Higher Education.

The UK education export industry is poised between policy-induced stagnation, and a return to forward advance. The future of education exports is currently the subject of a Higher Education Commission Inquiry which has now called for public evidence. The Commission is focused on what we need to do, as a country, to lift the performance of this crucial export sector. The 2015 Conservative Government announced ambitious plans to expand the UK's educational export industry, including a target to increase educational exports to £30 billion by 2020. A report issued by the Department for Education (2017) earlier this year showed that in 2014 the total value of UK education-related exports and Transnational Education (TNE) activity was established to be £18.76 billion.

Simon Marginson said *"Worldwide student mobility continues to grow strongly, competitor nations Australia and Canada are rapidly expanding their international student populations, and UK education providers are ready to roll. But after strong growth in the first decade of the century there has been almost no change in non-EU students entering UK since 2010-11. Through the regulation of supply and demand, especially restrictions to student visas and post-study work rights, the industry has been held down. The proportion of students coming from China continues to grow but that won't go on forever and there have been sharp falls in students from most other countries, such as India and Saudi Arabia. Yet this is a crucial sector for the economy; the second largest in UK services exports. International education has many benefits and few downsides. Yet it has been held in stasis by migration politics and the continuing decision to treat temporary student visitors as migrants when calculating net migration to the UK. As we approach Brexit it becomes more vital to send positive signals into Europe, as well as the rest of the world, to maintain flows of talent that are crucial to the country."*

Roberta Blackman-Woods, Member of Parliament for Durham City said *"Our Higher Education sector is renowned throughout the world for its quality and high standard of education. The HE sector remains very strong as an exporter of education services, both in terms of attracting international students to study in the UK and through transnational education, with the setting up of UK university campuses overseas and other partnership arrangements. It is very important that the final Brexit agreement does not impact negatively on the ability of HE institutions to be attractive to international students and remain at the top of global league tables. The Government also needs to do more to deliver a positive message about HE as a key part of our international trade. The Inquiry will look at current barriers to growing British Higher Education internationally as well as industry support mechanisms it needs to thrive in a highly competitive global market."*

Pooja Kumari, Research Manager at Policy Connect, said *"The impression we're giving to the world that UK PLC is closed for business, we are losing market share with international students and if we're not careful we risk harming the world class reputation of our higher education sector"*

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