

**HIGHER EDUCATION, NEO-LIBERALISM AND THE MARKET  
CITIZEN**

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**I declare that this dissertation is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.**

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## **ABSTRACT:**

Competition and success in the neo-liberal, globalised world both require and are contingent upon a new kind of citizen - a citizen for whom economic rather than political participation is privileged. The 'imperative' of neo-liberal globalisation demands that all domains of social and human activity become oriented towards maximising international economic competitiveness to ensure economic security and prosperity- and hence success. As the new globalised economy is increasingly argued to be a 'knowledge economy', it is education and skills - or human capital - which are important for maximising competitive advantage. Thus higher education has very particular roles in ensuring the nation's international economic competitiveness - in developing the higher order skills necessary to workers in the knowledge economy, and in producing the innovation that a successful knowledge economy requires. Also, because of the role of higher education in the development of character - that is, the development of the subjectivities of citizenship - a study foregrounding the relationship between higher education and economic citizenship is particularly relevant.

This thesis makes a contribution to this issue both empirically and theoretically. Empirically, it considers the manner in which higher education policy - both internationally and in Australia - has become focussed upon maximising the nation's international competitiveness in global capitalist markets through the development of human capital, and through research for innovation. It also considers the impact on staff and students. For, as a means of augmenting national competitiveness, higher education institutions have been reformed and restructured so as to govern individuals and institutions into more entrepreneurial practice. Institutions and staff are required to exhibit entrepreneurial practice in the interests of competitive advantage in the knowledge economy - through innovation, through the commercialisation of research, and through promoting and expanding the sale of education services.

Theoretically, it reflects on the complex interactions between higher education and its associated policy changes over recent decades, and the changing conditions and subjectivities of citizenship. It draws upon a number of disciplinary terrains – higher education policy studies, citizenship theory, political economy, and post-structuralism (particularly the governmentality literature) - to contribute to the critical analysis of the relationship between citizenship and higher education at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Citizenship is essentially about *belonging* - about *membership* of a community organised around national, political, social, and ethical axes. It is therefore constituted by “rules and norms of inclusion and exclusion” (Isin and Turner, 2000: 2). These rules and norms extend beyond the formal legal status of citizenship and include not only the political and social dimensions of citizenship, but also its *ethical* dimensions. The thesis argues that rather than inclusion in the ethical community of citizenship being a matter of the status of the rights bearing individual – as has traditionally been the case for liberal citizenship – ethical inclusion has become performative, with active *economic* participation a condition of inclusion in the ethical community of citizenship. This constitutes a new normative practice of citizenship – neo-liberal citizenship. The analysis makes use of the governmentality literature to illuminate the manner in which individuals are governed to adopt particular politico-ethical norms of conduct – that is, particular subjectivities of citizenship - to constitute them as active economic agents, that is, as neo-liberal citizens. Citizenship is reconfigured around the axis of the economy and the citizen becomes an economic, rather than a political, subject.

The thesis concludes with reflections on the relationship between higher education – the university - citizenship and democracy, arguing that neither neo-liberal citizenship nor an economically rational future for higher education is assured; rather, that the virtuous circle of higher education and democratic citizenship remains immanent in pluralist politics.

## CONTENTS

	Page
Chapter 1 – Introduction	1
Chapter 2 – Globalisation, the Knowledge Economy, and Learning For Life	11
Chapter 3 – International Trends in Higher Education Policy	36
Chapter 4 - Higher Education Policy in Australia, 1987 – 1996	71
Chapter 5 – Higher Education Policy in Australia, 1996 – 2007	99
Chapter 6 – The Changing Conditions of Citizenship	134
Chapter 7 – Active Economic Participation for Social Cohesion and Citizenship	156
Chapter 8 - Power, Governmentality and Citizenship	177
Chapter 9 – Concluding Reflections	208
References	228

## TABLES

	Page
Table 2.1 Post-Fordist Possibilities: Alternative Models of National Development	26
Table 3.1 Share of International Students, 2001	45
Table 3.2 Export Earnings from Foreign Students, 1989, 1997 & 2001	45
Table 4.1 The Higher Education Sector Pre and Post the Dawkins Reforms Principal Features	95
Table 4.2 The Karpin Recommendations	96
Table 4.3 The Hoare Review – Recommendations	96
Table 4.4 Growth of International Student Enrolments in Australia 1994 – 2001	97
Table 4.5 Export Earnings from Foreign Students, 1989, 1997 and 2001	97
Table 5.1 The Higher Education Sector Pre and Post the 1996 election of the Howard Government	126
Table 5.2 Essential Elements of Higher Education Policy in the 1993 Liberal Party election manifesto: <i>Fightback!</i>	127
Table 5.3 Recommendations of the West Review: <i>Learning for Life</i>	128
Table 5.4 Kemp Proposals: 1999 Cabinet Submission	128
Table 5.5 Reforms to Higher Education Research Funding <i>Knowledge and Innovation</i> (1999) <i>Backing Australia's Ability</i> (BAA) 2000	129

<b>Table 5.6</b>	
<b>The Higher Education Sector Pre and Post the Nelson Reforms (BAF)</b>	<b>130</b>
<b>Table 5.7</b>	
<b>Nelson Reforms: Research Policy and Industrial Relations</b>	<b>131</b>

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**Raymond J. de S. Dudley**

**(1948 – 2002)**

*He was a verray parfit gentil knyght*

Universities are not just supermarkets for a variety of public and private goods that are currently in demand, and whose value is defined by their perceived aggregate financial value. We assert that they have a deeper, fundamental role that permits them to adapt and respond to the changing values and needs of successive generations, and from which the outputs cherished by governments are but secondary derivatives. To define the university enterprise by these specific outputs, and to fund it only through metrics that measure them, is to misunderstand the nature of the enterprise and its potential to deliver social benefit.

(Boulton and Lucas, 2008: 17, para 62)