

# History shows degrees are worth more than a bigger pay packet

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Ten years after the Dearing Report, which paved the way for tuition fees, a new University of Sussex study challenges the current 'market place' approach to higher education policy.

In *Going to University: funding, costs and benefits*, Professor Carol Dyhouse demonstrates that the long-term benefits of higher education to the individual and the economy take time to materialise, making them hard to factor into the kind of cost-benefit analyses promoted in current policy debates. The long-range benefits include a diminution in crime rates, better parenting skills and enhanced awareness of citizenship and social cohesion.

Historian Professor Dyhouse shows that students have always gained different advantages from their degrees depending on their gender and background. Since they were first admitted to universities in the late 19th century, women have benefited less in straight economic terms from their degrees than men, but have still considered the experience "a gift beyond price".

Professor Dyhouse's study, which is published on the History and Policy website, traces the history of university funding from grants to top-up fees. She shows how the university experience has changed over the past century; one hundred years ago the 'typical' student was a full-time male undergraduate, now female part-time students are more representative.

Professor Dyhouse said: "Before the First World War, two per cent of

18 years olds went to university. Now the Government wants 50 per cent to experience higher education. The continuing debate about funding and widening participation would benefit from being informed by the experiences of past students.

History shows there can be no single measure of the 'value' of university education, despite the recent tendency to focus exclusively on graduates' earnings. The experiences of students over the last 70 years demonstrate clear variations in the financial benefits according to students' gender and class, but all shared an appreciation of the less quantifiable benefits of higher education. The recent tendency in policy debates to quantify the 'value added' by a degree obscures these wider effects."

Source: University of Sussex

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