

# **The contributions of higher education to society: a conceptual approach**

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# How can we embrace multiple contributions of HE?

## Existing approaches:

- as market and non-market benefits (McMahon 2009, Brennan et al 2013),
- public and common goods (Marginson 2016; Boyadjieva & Ilieva-Trichkova 2019),
- impact (O'Carroll et al 2006, Oketch et al 2014, McCowan 2018, Findler et al 2019),
- social value (e.g., Kelly and McNikoll 2011, Ayuso et al 2020),
- public role (e.g., Calhoun 2006, Biesta et al 2009),
- social responsibility (e.g., Larran Jorge and Andrades Peña 2017),
- stakeholders or communities (Brennan 2008, Jongbloed et al 2008),
- regional engagement and development (Trippel et al 2014, Kempton et al 2021),
- nodes in knowledge societies (Hoffman and Valimaa 2016);
- 'sieve', 'incubator', 'temple' and 'hub' (Stevens et al 2008);
- central in shaping modern societies (Meyer et al 2007, Baker 2014),
- historical approaches (Zgaga 2009, McCowan 2016)

# How can we embrace multiple contributions of HE?

## Existing approaches

### **Economic perspective:**

- knowledge/skills transmission + social status (signaling)

### **Sociological perspective:**

- knowledge/skills + norms/values transmission + social status/positional value

### **Philosophy of education/pedagogical perspective:**

- knowledge/skills + norms/values transmission + self-transformation

### **Political science perspective: power**

# How can we embrace multiple contributions of HE?

## Limitations of the existing approaches which we can try to overcome:

- Thematic approach: there are too many thematic areas HE can contribute to, but we cannot embrace everything;
- Black box approach: internal processes of HE should be emphasised;
- The centrality of knowledge, teaching and learning, their transformative nature should not be overlooked;
- Social neutrality of HE: positional nature of HE should be embraced

**The new conceptualisation cannot be exclusive or exhaustive, but should be built on, and be complementary to the existing approaches.**

# Higher education: what is it about?

## How can we conceptualise it? Two dimensions

### Key objects of HE activities (axiological dimension):

- Knowledge and skills (as applied knowledge)
- Norms and values
- Social value/social statuses

### Key processes in HE (praxeological dimension):

- Transmission (incl. transfer)
- Transformation
- Creation

# The contributions of higher education, individual/collective/local/national/global

<i>Praxeological dimension (processes, activities)</i>				
		Transmission	Transformation	Creation
<i>Axiological dimension (domains)</i>	Knowledge/ skills	Qualification (1)	Knowledge-based transformation (4)	New knowledge creation (7)
	Social and cultural norms	Socialisation (2)	Norms and values-based transformation (5)	Normative innovation (8)
	Social value/ statuses	Credentiailling (3)	Social value-based transformation (6)	New status construction (9)

*Source:* Author.