

Write-up of HEPN Launch Event - Monday 15 October 2012

The Government's reform of higher education - the gap between rhetoric and reality

Speaker: Bahram Bekhradnia

The formal launch of the Sheffield Higher Education Policy Network took place on Monday 15 October. Our guest speaker, Bahram Bekhradnia, founding Director of the Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI), led a discussion on current policy and policy making for higher education in England, in a talk entitled "The Government's reform of higher education - the gap between rhetoric and reality." Bahram's talk aimed to look at the Government's current higher education policies (outlined in the White Paper) and what it was trying to do, what the reality was and what the implications for universities might be.

Bahram discussed how the rhetoric and ideology of the Government reforms (market rule, reduced Government involvement, removal of recruitment controls) cannot in his view be implemented due to the flawed ideology and the reforms being a victim of circumstances. This was, he said, demonstrated in the effects which have already been encountered i.e. the tuition fee levels, the core and margin fiasco and impact on WP.

The cost analysis conducted by HEPI has claimed that the costs will be far higher than the Government has estimated and could easily wipe out any savings that the new system is believed to bring, the so-called "£1 billion black hole". The reality, said Bahram, was that cuts will likely come to other areas e.g. HEFCE residual grant, increased graduate repayments or a reduction in participation.

In his concluding remarks Bahram said that the price will probably be paid by the next generation.

The University of Sheffield and the Higher Education Policy Network would like to thank Bahram for taking the time to come and talk to us about HEPI's research and findings and an eye-opening examination of Government policy. Slides from the event can be viewed through the link in the Downloads box on the right hand side of the HEPN web page.