Mike Finn, *British universities in the Brexit moment: Political, economic and cultural implications*, Emerald Publishing Limited: Bingley, 2018. 216 pp.: £40, ISBN: 9781787437432 (pbk)

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universities in the United Kingdom have a peculiar reflexive relationship to neoliberal political economy which helps to explain many of their travails in the Brexit moment…Brexit is a revolt against the prevailing norms of neoliberalism. (pp. 110–111)

The crises of the Brexit moment for British higher education had their roots overall in a profound crisis of trust in the authority of the university and its academic citizens. (p. 126)

One aim in reviewing Mike Finn's book is to invite *Management Learning* readers to consider its key themes reflexively: a crisis of trust in experts and in neoliberalism and class/education divides. The purpose of this topical book is twofold. First, it is a historical analysis of the negative impacts Brexit has had, and is likely to have, on British universities. Second, and perhaps less convincingly, Finn discusses the purpose of the university and increasing marketisation of higher education (HE). The author connects these two themes by discussing the potential intellectual and cultural damage for universities and society in the United Kingdom resulting from 'the Brexit moment' with growing nationalism and increased government centralisation.

This review of *British Universities in the Brexit Moment* considers the book's aims, Finn's background and key arguments in each chapter. It also highlights strengths and omissions, the book's potential audience and Finn's conclusions. The review was written in the context of the UK government's refusal to exclude international students from its net migration targets. This is despite the Higher Education Commission's (2018) view that such political targets damage UK HE, a major export.

Importantly, Finn's book provides timely reflections on why we should heed Bell and Bridgman's (2017) first editorial in Management Learning. The editors called for 'articles that analyse the contemporary power and politics of management learning, education and knowledge creation practices in diverse global contexts' (p. 3). Certainly, the 'Brexit moment' is a momentous political, economic and cultural shock and management educators must reflect on its global implications for the knowledge economy. As I wrote immediately after the EU referendum result,

amidst the 'dance' of everyday busyness…and insecurities such as financial crises and Brexit, we must in T.S. Eliot's words allow time for a 'still point' of reflection. As the Indian proverb says, before it pounces, the tiger takes a step back. (Davies, 2016: p. 911)

Finn's text provides this opportunity to guide reflection on how power and politics affect the exchange of ideas across borders. He writes about the effects of Brexit on UK higher education at a particular inflection point in history until early January 2018 when the book was published. Clearly, the implications of the 23 June 2016 EU referendum decision at the time of writing are uncertain, with the UK's exit from the EU planned for 29 March 2019. On the one hand, this relatively short book in Emerald's 'great debates in higher education series' is a useful compendium of facts about British universities, their EU research funding sources,

staffing and student collaborations. On the other hand, its emotive arguments about nationalism and the purpose of the university are relevant beyond Europe.

Most importantly, for those interested in management learning, this book presents a case study on reflexivity (or its absence) and the civic responsibilities of academics. The author blames academics for 'a measure of dereliction of duty…in terms of fighting hard in their daily practice for the vision of the university they professed to espouse' (p. 127). Finn argues that there is a crisis of trust in experts, and between academics, politicians and members of the public. Finn's message is stark: 'the Brexit moment will not merely impoverish the culture of Britain's universities, but the culture and democracy of Britain as a whole' (p. 146).

The author's viewpoint is clearly influenced by his background as a researcher in contemporary British politics and the politics of higher education. As a current senior lecturer (associate professor) and director of liberal arts in a Russell Group (research intensive) university, former Kennedy Scholar in history, Westminster speechwriter, political adviser, and journalist, Mike Finn is well qualified to capture the 'Brexit moment'. The pervasive tone of Finn's book, however, is one of regret, nostalgia and impending doom. The author portrays the British HE system which at its peak has produced world-class universities and attracted disproportionately high levels of EU research funding and students. He says that the UK is now becoming more inward looking, with universities having for so long privileged internationalisation at the expense of local community engagement.

Finn claims that 'the Brexit moment has highlighted the extent to which British universities have allowed themselves to be reconceived simply as service-providing businesses, rather than guardians of culture and criticism' (p. 145). He regards the 'Brexit moment' as a genuine threat to UK universities, democratic values and culture more broadly. He raises questions about the 'education gap' between 'remainers' with university degrees and 'Brexiteers', who are typically nongraduates and older. In particular, the author raises questions about academic citizenship, and unreflexive 'zombie' (Smyth, 2017) university leaders who played rankings games rather than took responsibility for the unintended consequences of higher education policy reforms.

Finn's arguments are rooted in Robbins' ideology over half a century ago which capture the book's main message (p. 1; p. 65):

We must teach at all times the impersonality of knowledge and the transcendence of values…Above all, we should set our forces against the intrusion into science and learning of the anti-social forces of nationalism…Without weakening the sense of duty to their local society, we must seek to make our young men and women citizens of that republic of mind which knows no frontiers. (Robbins, 1966: p. 1)

Finn's book starts with a vignette of David Cameron's anti-EU stance prior to his resignation as Prime Minister following the Brexit decision. The first part of the book then focuses on the actual and potential effects of Brexit on university staff and students and research funding in the United Kingdom. The second part reviews the place of universities in contemporary Britain. Finally, in the third part, Finn looks to the future.

Chapter 1 includes rich historical background about British universities leading to the 'Brexit moment' and examines what Brexit says about society and Britain's place in the world. Finn juxtaposes the view of universities as a social good (Robbins, 1966) with the current government policy perspective in the United Kingdom of universities as drivers of the knowledge economy

The second and third chapters explore the potential impact of Brexit on individuals and research funding in British universities. Finn sees restrictions on freedom of movement and reductions in EU research collaborations as intellectually, not just politically and financially, damaging. Finn also considers a rise in nationalism, combined with UK government centralisation and commoditisation of research funding, as a major blow to the international reputation of British universities. The second chapter presents interesting data: according to 2016 estimates, EU students in the United Kingdom generated £3.7bn income. EU27 citizens from outside the United Kingdom comprised 5.6% of the total students, 16% of the total staff, indeed 38% of staff employed at the London School of Economics and Political Science. It is interesting that in the United Kingdom in 2016, 69% of research only staff in economics, 66% of research only staff in mathematics, 36% of modern languages staff, over a third of academics in economics, and more than a quarter in physics and chemical engineering were from the EU beyond the United Kingdom. Finn discusses how post the EU referendum non-UK academics and their families worry about their residence status and a xenophobic backlash. He notes the potential loss of the UK's soft power as many of its university alumni occupy powerful political positions. Post-Brexit, EU students will be classified as international students and in future they will no longer access UK tax payer-funded tuition fee loans to study in England or be entitled to study in Scotland free. Most of all, Finn bemoans the loss of cultural interchange as he believes that fewer EU students in UK universities will impoverish classroom discussions, lower mutual understanding and harm domestic students' global employability. Finn concludes that the UK government's policy 'has been inimical to…norms of academic citizenship' as it is 'emphatically nationalistic…in favour of a commodification of domestic UK innovation', representing 'part of a broader assault on expertise in public life which has consequences for the very health of democracy in the Brexit moment' (p. 97).

In chapters 4 and 5, Finn discusses the chasm between universities and society, with universities under attack for élitism and self-interest. The author reflects on the massification of higher education which has resulted in more graduates: 60% of London's population in 2013 cf. only 29% in the North East (p. 119). However, he argues that this exacerbated the resentment was felt ofby many non-graduates who felt disenfranchised. Finn argues that 'by failing to articulate an alternative notion of the university in practice…, the academic community has, to a great extent, abdicated the field in publicly defining what universities are for' (p. 125). The result is 'universities slavishly adhering to a "zombie" paradigm and conniving in the dissolution of their own authority' (p. 109).

Finn bemoans how policy reforms of British universities continued relentlessly without a pause for policymakers to reflect before the Higher Education and Research Act 2017 was passed so soon after the Brexit vote. Moreover, Finn (p. 133) argues that after its imperial past and post World War II, the United Kingdom has been in inevitable decline and has 'transformed its higher education system in order to maximise its human capital in a more-or-less desperate attempt to retain global political power' amid a 'declinist paradigm' (p. 134).

Other trends noted in the book include a bias towards the commercialisation of STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) research to support the UK's research and innovation and industrial strategies. Finn contends that the government's neglect of the humanities and modern languages will be further damaged if British students cannot access placements available through ERASMUS programme of student exchange, established in 1987. He stresses that the UK regions which will suffer most economically are where, ironically, the majority of the local population voted for Brexit and higher education is a key industry. This sounds like an own goal. Culturally, Finn predicts that UK universities will be side lined and unable 'to effectively influence public discourse at the level of values' (p. 143).

Finn includes very useful data on EU funding and staffing with interesting commentary from influential actors in the United Kingdom. The author is clearly very disappointed by the Brexit referendum outcome and pessimistic about prospects for British universities if mobility of people and ideas diminishes. His only solution is to preserve as much as possible of what was, without recognising that the EU is constantly changing. If EU research funding in future is allocated not just to 'excellent' research but more widely, then the UK's share of EU funding would have diminished even if it remained in the EU.

It is interesting that Finn has omitted facts and figures about how British universities benefit from partnerships outside the EU. He has not provided counterfactuals, insights from interviewing students directly or optimistic scenarios. His sources are from anti-Brexit academics and journalists. The book is UK-centric, with an overall tone of apocalypse.

Nevertheless, the author writes clearly and effectively in his polemic about a crisis of trust, the need for academics in British universities to engage with the public and politicians, and the contribution of higher education to democratic values. For the sake of balance, alternative perspectives would be useful. One particularly vehement section is Finn's attack on the UK government's requirement that UKRI (UK Research and Innovation) funding bids address a narrow set of national industrial strategy grand challenges, with a focus on industry and technology. Finn sees this as a clear violation of the Haldane Principle which states that university researchers, not politicians, should determine what is researched. Finn's point of view overlooks the UK's status as world-leading in national research evaluation policy using impact case studies.

In terms of audiences for British Universities in the Brexit Moment, the book raises important issues for discussion in workshops with higher education policymakers, leaders and managers who are interested in issues of democracy, class and trust. It is useful to inform debates on a whole range of topics, for example, the roles of experts and universities in civil society, agency, mobility of people and ideas, research collaborations, national identity, isolationism/integration, internationalisation and localisation and decline. The book also provides a dynamic and ongoing case study to illustrate lessons learned from reflections and reflexivity pre- and post-Brexit. In the text, allegations that Brexiteers were unreflective about the potential consequences such as loss of national competitiveness are balanced by Finn's concerns that experts, including academics, were too arrogant to anticipate the EU referendum outcome.

The book's strength is that it is well researched with historical data and quotations from policymakers and vice-chancellors. The author (p. 63) draws respectively on the views of the British scientists Polyani and C.P. Snow to emphasize the shared values of communities of scholars which transcend national differences:

in the free co-operation of independent scientists we shall find a highly-simplified model of a free society.

there are common attitudes, common standards and patterns of behaviour, common approaches and assumptions. It cuts across other mental patterns, such as those of religion or politics or class.

While I commend Finn's aspiration that post-Brexit we should 'preserve as much as possible of the European and international dimension of higher education' (p. 146) to sustain a 'republic of science' (Polanyi, 2000), it will be impossible to resurrect Britain's status as the major beneficiary of EU university research funding. Nevertheless, the book is a salutary reminder for us to reflect on our own practices. For example, how are we as managers and management educators individually engaging proactively both internationally and locally with non-graduates and politicians?

Surprisingly, Finn omits to mention business and management studies which are the most popular subject in UK universities and attract with a high proportion of international, postgraduate and working students. His text is a reminder of the importance of including history in the curriculum of business schools (Van Fleet and Wren, 2005). In contrast with Finn's rather pessimistic perspectives on British universities, Fuller (2017) is relatively optimistic about Brexit with respect to British business schools that influence so many managers:

universities manufacture knowledge as a public good through the creative destruction of the social capital originally formed by research networks…Business schools may be uniquely positioned to perform this function…most of the people they train will not remain in the academic field of business. If any part of the university deserves to carry the torch for anti-expertism, it is business schools. (p. 580)

Finally, following his exposition about the Brexit woes of British universities, Finn calls for the reinstatement of 'trust between academic citizens, their institutions and the broader publics they serve' (p. 140). He advocates protecting EU higher education and the UK's international networks to sustain 'a genuine republic of science' (Polanyi, 2000). These networks, however, may already be diminishing. While the United Kingdom has been second only in popularity to the United States as a destination for international students, Marginson (2018) suggests that as a result of the Brexit referendum outcome Australia will surpass the United Kingdom in 2019 (if Australia has not done already done so).

Overall, Finn's political, economic and cultural review of UK higher education at this critical historical juncture raises important issues about what caused Brexit and the fate of British universities as the UK exits the EU. While this book is invaluable for those interested in Brexit and British HE, it would benefit from a companion web site of blogs and alternative viewpoints, e.g. http:// chrisgreybrexitblog.blogspot.com and https://briefingsforbrexit.com/. For Management Learning readers, the book is a fascinating case study of pre-Brexit British higher education. As Bristow and Robinson (2018) point out, Brexit represents nationalism

and anti-intellectualism. I would argue then that Brexit is a serious wake up call for us all to take responsibility for demonstrating greater critical reflexivity and civic engagement across class, educational and regional divides.

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