RESEARCH PAPER

Enabling and changing lives: Stakeholders who affect and are affected by the enabling initiative

Rosalie Bunn & Annika Westrenius*
The University of Newcastle, Australia

Higher education is undergoing significant change; with efforts to widen access and participation, new stakeholders become engaged and perceptions and expectations within the sector shift. In recent years, an increasing number of 'enabling' programs have been established to prepare non-traditional students for tertiary study. These programs occupy a special place within the sector as they reach out to a relatively new cohort of students who have not previously engaged with higher education, thereby engaging 'new' stakeholders in the sector. This paper considers the diverse, complex and intersecting perspectives, expectations and agendas that various stakeholders bring to the enabling initiative by reviewing literature on stakeholders in higher education generally and drawing on research data collected from one enabling program at the University of Newcastle, Australia. By understanding stakeholder perspectives, a clearer picture of the tensions and conflicting expectations within this field emerges. Although enabling programs are sometimes seen as a cost by both funding bodies and providers, an emerging body of research shows that they are a valuable investment in developing solutions to economic and social problems.

Keywords: enabling education, market and non-market stakeholders, value, higher education

Introduction

Higher education (HE) as a sector is undergoing significant change as the role of universities shifts on multiple levels (Maric, 2013; Miller, McAdam & McAdam, 2014). In order to develop a high level of education and support the concept of Australia as the 'clever country' (Phillips, 2014), there is a push for wider participation in higher education (Vincent-Lancrin, 2008), partly to increase equity and access, and cynically, to provide expanding markets for the education 'industry'. This market obsession (Storey & Asadoorian III, 2014) and massification of education (Vincent-Lancrin, 2008) has resulted in both positive and negative effects on the higher education sector. On the one hand, there are now more opportunities for people to engage in higher education, and potentially reap the rewards that a university qualification confers. On the other hand, it has resulted in higher education institutions having to adapt and provide additional support for cohorts of students who now enter university by non-traditional pathways and from non-traditional backgrounds. This change has meant significant shifts in the identity of stakeholders in the higher education sector; bringing new and more diverse expectations (Mainardes, Raposo & Alves, 2014). While this has resulted in various strains and tensions as

*Corresponding author. Email: annika.westrenius@newcastle.edu.au

HE adapts, it also brings benefits, including the ability to develop an increasing number of students who are unfamiliar with the tertiary environment. The sector could therefore be said to be experiencing disruptive change (Barnet, 2011; Christensen & Overdorf, 2000), a concept used in business theory to indicate displacement of existing markets and value networks and challenges to an organisation's mode of operating.

In order to adapt to changing market needs, an increasing number of universities have established 'enabling' programs, or tertiary preparation programs, to provide an alternative pathway to undergraduate study, thereby creating opportunities for a second chance at study and, in 'business' terms for higher education providers, a 'pipeline' of quality future undergraduate students. These programs typically target potential students who would not otherwise qualify for entry through traditional pathways (University of Newcastle, 2017; University of Tasmania, 2017; University of New England, 2017; University of Notre Dame Australia, 2017).

The range of programs available has also become diverse in terms of duration, content and delivery (Pitman et al., 2016). Some offer open entry with no prior educational credentials or prerequisites, while others are more restrictive in terms of access or fee. Enabling students may have little educational experience, may have disabilities, may have English as their second language or be first in their family to enter higher education (University of Wollongong, 2017). Effective approaches to up-skill students and provide support, including their ability to navigate the HE environment, are therefore required where individuals do not have the relevant forms of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Because of the expansion of student intake, the number of stakeholders is increasing and becoming more diverse and motivated by the potential for creating a 'new' source of pre-qualified and prepared students. Thus, universities take on a range of stakeholder positions, as do the students and their networks. The Federal Government is another important stakeholder with multiple interests in this field.

Many enabling programs across Australia are federally funded, but this funding stream is in a state of uncertainty as a result of the Higher Education Reform Package announced as part of the current budget proposal (Australian Government, 2017; Department of Education and Training, 2016; Ey, 2017). For funding bodies, such as governments, investment in enabling education is worthwhile because at universities, enabling programs provide a significant number of first year undergraduate students, sometimes as many as one in five (Bunn, 2014). The investment has a flow on effect, as on graduation the student's earning capacity improves and tax revenue potential therefore increases. In a report for Universities Australia, the graduate effect was regarded as having a spillover effect to the Australian workforce (Cadence Economics, 2016). Further return on investment may be far reaching as the student's success inspires family and friends to engage with higher education (Bunn, 2013). But such investment is not only monetary, participation in higher education also enriches people's lives and research shows it provides them with greater confidence and satisfaction (Bunn, 2013; Crawford et al., 2015; Adler, 2017). In addition, it is argued that the experience of participating in *any* form of higher education, contributes to 'national intangible capital' (NIC) which, according to Ståhle, Ståhle, and Lin (2015), accounts for 45% of global productivity. The concept of NIC enhances the understanding of wealth creation, as based on possessing capital and labour, by adding the insight that in a globally connected environment, more intangible assets such as skills, structures and processes are critical for the ongoing competitiveness and wealth of a nation (Lin & Edvinsson, 2011; Ståhle et al., 2015; Radjenovic & Krstic, 2017). In this frame, 'enabling' programs and courses can be recognised as providing value to both the individual and the nation by supporting its future competitiveness (Ståhle et al., 2015).

The higher education sector is also characterised by increased competition for students, and the sale of programs and courses (Storey & Asadoorian III, 2014). Enabling programs operate in a global market place, particularly where overseas students are concerned, but also in a national and local market (Marginson, 2006) where Technical and Further Education (TAFE) and private education providers compete for a share of the market. Change in the higher education sector is driven by technology and new modes of blended and online learning, which creates a very different way of delivering education (Kalman, 2014; Lucas, 2014). Furthermore, students from low socio-economic backgrounds and those entering enabling programs, also often struggle to negotiate the technology, as well as an unfamiliar university culture (Bunn, 2013; Horn, Maddox, Hagel, Currie & Owen, 2013).

Our review of literature on HE stakeholders found that there are many groups that have a stake in higher education but not all the literature covers the full range of influences on the sector, nor does it deal in a comprehensive way with the contribution various stakeholders make to the field of enabling education (see Table 1 below).

Table 1: Higher education stakeholders: A review of literature

Stakeholder	Kettumen (2015)	Mainardes, Raposo & Alves (2014)	Maric (2013)	Rodman, Biloslavo & Bratoz (2013)	Ortenblad & Koris (2013)	Barnett (2011)	Alves, Mainardes & Raposo (2010)	Bolton & Nie (2010)	Vincent-Lancrin (2008)
Students: past, current and future	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
Families & Friends		✓	✓			✓		✓	
University (Admin)		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		
University (Teaching staff)		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
University (Student support)		✓	✓						
Student & staff unions	✓								
Government (AQF)	✓		✓					✓	
Funding bodies (HEPPP)	✓	✓	✓				✓		
Industry & employers		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Partners	✓		✓			✓	✓		✓
Local Community		✓	✓			✓		✓	✓
Wider Region	✓	✓	✓		✓				✓
Media	✓								

In order to understand the increasingly complex relationships in HE, including those concerning enabling programs, identifying how different stakeholders with a vested interest in enabling education contribute to the field is important.

Methodology

The methodological approach is framed by stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984), which is used to analyse and provide an overview of the 'field' of stakeholders. The discussion in this paper is based on empirical data collected as part of a doctoral study on the history and impact of an enabling program at the University of Newcastle. The data was collected using a mixed method

approach and included oral histories with 38 university executives, other decision-makers, lecturing staff, and support staff, in combination with a quantitative and qualitative survey of 350 former students which sought information about their experiences before, during and after undertaking their enabling program. The student respondents were sourced from the Potential Enabling Program Participant Research (PEPPR) register established by the University of Newcastle and, for this study, a 42% response rate was obtained.

What are stakeholders?

The term stakeholder has become fashionable and formal organisational reports typically include at least passing comment on organisations' efforts to engage stakeholders (Crane & Ruebottom, 2011; Westrenius, 2015). Stakeholders are frequently identified based on belonging to generic groups such as owners, customers, suppliers, and employees (McVea & Freeman, 2005). Other stakeholders such as the media and community may also be identified (Dunham, Freeman & Liedtka, 2006; Ulmer, Sellnow & Seeger, 2007). Although customers are generally highly ranked, owners and employees, at least officially, also rank highly while government and community are typically ranked as less critical in commercial enterprises (Westrenius, 2015). This may, however, be too simplified to represent a valid and useful analysis of the stakeholder environment in the Higher Education sector where stakeholders may, for example, include entities that are not currently engaged, such as alumni (Alves, Mainardes & Raposo, 2010).

Although there are a number of different definitions of stakeholders, Freeman's (1984) definition of a stakeholder as "any group or individual who can affect or be affected by the achievement of the firm's objectives" (p. 25) has been widely accepted. This definition allows the term to be applied in a variety of organisational contexts and situations. It also allows for the identification of stakeholders that may be internal or external, or straddling both environments. The wide scope of Freeman's definition provides a means for identifying and constructing a comprehensive list of stakeholders to be considered. The ability of these stakeholders to 'affect or be affected' by the organisation, then needs to be considered based on the type of effect and influence they may bring.

A stakeholder's level of influence may be understood in terms of Mitchell, Agle and Wood's (1997) widely cited concept of 'stakeholder salience'. Stakeholder salience is the combined effect of stakeholders' levels of power, legitimacy and urgency, as perceived by the decision-maker, and therefore a basis on which the decision regarding the relative priority of a stakeholder demand is made. A stakeholder perceived as possessing a high level of power and legitimacy, for example, may be seen to have the ability to negatively affect the organisation if its interests are not addressed, and it will therefore be given priority. Although potentially highly subjective and biased, this process is frequently a basis for decision-making (Westrenius, 2015).

Stakeholders may be further classified based on the work of Baron (2013), who, like Marginson (1997), argues there are two broad groups of stakeholders. Firstly, **market stakeholders** can be seen as having relationships governed by markets and contracts, which are usually voluntary and transactional and with varying levels of salience (Mitchell et al., 1997). In the case of enabling education, this includes education providers (universities and others) who are seeking to provide a service but also, often, to make profits and justify their position within a market economy. In addition, employees (academic, teaching, professional and other staff) who are contracted to deliver academic and administrative services that support the industry, and students (current, past, future) who are purchasing, have purchased, or are planning to purchase, the service are market stakeholders. This positioning of education places it as a commodity that is bought in a

competitive market, and providers need to be answerable for the quality and benefits of that service.

Secondly, framing the activities of these market stakeholders, are **non-market stakeholders**, frequently with considerable salience (Mitchell et al., 1997). Baron (2013) argues that the influences of non-market stakeholders can be classified into four subtypes, the four I's:

> **Institutions:** which impose the 'rules of the game', such as regulators, legislation, Australian Quality Framework (AQF) or funding bodies. This type of influence is considerable because it dictates standards and issues directives that are often conditional and must be complied with.
> **Issues:** are the basic unit of analysis for non-market activities and include matters relating to knowledge creation and dissemination.
> **Interests:** might be based on government, industry or society and includes individuals or groups with preferences or agendas.
> **Information:** relates to what institutions and officeholders know or believe about the issues, it includes their perceptions regarding the value of education. This can be influenced by the media.

In addition, it could be argued that '**Ideology**' would be a fifth 'I' shaping and influencing the activities in the sphere of non-market stakeholders because unlike issues that are typically transient, ideology is entrenched and provides an ongoing and fundamental basis from which issues may arise or be responded to. In fact, the whole notion of market and non-market stakeholders is based on the ideology of the neoliberal economy.

Stakeholders in enabling education

The dichotomy of market and non-market stakeholders does not take into account the various groups that have an impact on the education of enabling students and which incorporate both market *and* non-market relationships with the enabling enterprise. The enabling sector is diverse and complex in terms of stakeholders whose interests in enabling education may overlap. The following diagram indicates that there are as many as fourteen stakeholders involved in the enabling sector. Some stakeholders play multiple roles and could therefore be seen to have conflicting interests.
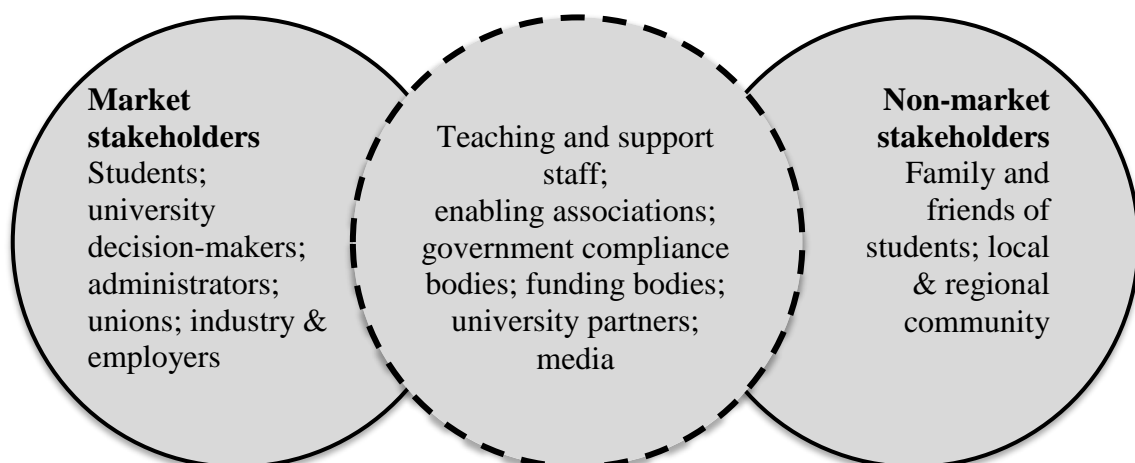

Market stakeholders
Students; university decision-makers; administrators; unions; industry & employers

Teaching and support staff; enabling associations; government compliance bodies; funding bodies; university partners; media

Non-market stakeholders
Family and friends of students; local & regional community

Figure 1: Stakeholders in enabling education

A brief discussion of the influences, expectations and objectives of the stakeholders in the enabling education sector is provided below, with key stakeholders discussed in more detail.

Market stakeholders

Marginson (1997) argues that education is "implicated in economic policy discourse; in strategies for population management; in the preparation of labour for work, and its retraining; and programmes for unemployment" and that the "management of education is shaped by economically defined objectives and methods" (p. 13). As such, education holds a prominent place in the market. The most prominent stakeholder in this market is the student as both customer and consumer.

Students as stakeholders
Almost a decade ago, Vincent-Lancrin (2008) reported that the profile of university students had changed. The main impetus for this change was explained as the increasing corporatisation of the sector. A market environment now exists in which students are positioned as consumers (Baldwin & James, 2000). This means that they are subject to the vagaries of the market, to funding decisions such as changes to the Higher Education Loan Program (HECS-HELP) (Department of Education, 2017a), but as consumers they also wield a significant amount of power to purchase the educational product of preference. In the HE enabling sector a widening participation agenda is currently favoured to admit students from non-traditional backgrounds. This context has allowed expansion of opportunities for those from disadvantaged backgrounds and for those whose circumstances did not allow traditional entry. The dominant discourse around this approach to attracting students is 'right to access' for all, which fits with equity requirements embedded in legislation (Department of Education, 2017b). Enabling students are thus stakeholders with considerable salience (Mitchell et al., 1997).

It is clear, however, that not all students come to enabling programs for career development or in pursuit of higher wages. This research on former Open Foundation students who completed their enabling program at the University of Newcastle indicates that students were more likely to enrol in the program because of issues relating to self-identity than specifically to enhance their career opportunities. For some students, accessing education was a matter of timing, while for others some "disorienting dilemma" (Mezirow, 1978) had occurred which caused them to re-evaluate their lives and seek an alternative direction. Qualitative responses from students numbered 834 as the 350 respondents were able to cite multiple reasons for enrolling. While 10% of responses to why students enrolled related to a disorienting dilemma, this constituted 23%, almost one quarter, of all respondents to the survey. Among this mix of responses some former students saw education as an end in itself.

Table 2: Reasons students enrolled in an enabling program

Reason(s) cited by students	Frequency	Percent of overall responses
Self-identity	325	38.9%
Seeking career & economic stability	239	28.7%
Right time in lives	122	14.6%
Disorienting dilemma	83	10%
External factors	65	7.8%
TOTAL	834	100%

As Table 2 indicates, the majority of responses, in fact some 71%, relate to reasons other than career and economic benefit as motivation for enrolling. This result suggests that the attraction of the program is far more complex and diverse than it might first appear and belies the perception of enabling as a 'simple' pathway to university. Students as stakeholders have diverse expectations of a how a tertiary qualification might fulfil psychological and social needs in addition to educational ones. As the following responses indicate, students may be seeking enhanced self-esteem, study flexibility, and/or quality and relevance of content. As one student articulated:

> I found the program empowering and exciting. I discovered that I had the ability to attend university. I found the experience of study at university one of the positives in my life at a particularly difficult time … It led to my completion of a degree. It gave me direction. It helped with my self-esteem. I discovered personal qualities I was not previously aware of … it gave me a greater ability to express myself and communicate with others.

Flexibility was important to a number of students who needed to fit their study in alongside domestic and relationship obligations. One student commented:

> My experience [of Open Foundation] was positive. Learning was flexible and enabled me to balance studies with family/home commitments. Subjects were interesting and related to the degree I proposed to apply for … I applied to university and completed a BSocSci. I am now in a job that utilizes my degree and is fulfilling. OF gave me confidence and incentive to pursue further education. It improved my written communication.

Quality and relevance of the content also featured as important; being satisfied that the enabling program delivered the skills required by students. As stated by another student stakeholder:

> Having never been a great studier it changed my learning habits for the better. I feel that if it wasn't for this course I would still struggle to study IT as I need to as new technology arrives … It enabled me to enrol in the course I wanted and set me on the path to a career in IT. Assessing the worth of content and delivery is now embedded in most programs, which conduct Student Evaluations of Courses and Teaching and allow the student a voice in the running of programs.

University decision-makers and administrators as stakeholders
University administrators and decision-makers, as well as the students, must follow policies, standards and protocols, which have consequences for the organisation and reputation of the institution. Such policies, standards and protocols have a profound effect on governance and, in turn, regulate matters such as student numbers, curriculum and organisation. In the enabling sector, which Ramsay (2004) has identified as at the margins of university operations, enabling programs nevertheless figure prominently in assisting universities to meet equity requirements. In the oral history phase of data collection, participants were asked: "How significant do you think the Open Foundation is to the University of Newcastle?" One former UON Chancellor made the following observation:

> … looking at issues of equity and access … the University of Newcastle does two things … it more than fulfils its obligations as a regional institution that provides access and equity of access ... sets an example … as to what can be done and should

> be done … in terms of providing access it also saves the nation a tremendous amount of waste …

His comments indicate decision-makers' responsibilities locally and nationally where the role of Chancellor includes overseeing matters relating to equity as well as maintaining the reputation of the university and overseeing the efficient running of the business. This former Chancellor could also see the wider benefits of attracting untapped talent where both individuals as well as their communities are enriched by educational advancements. He commented:

> … here were really bright, intelligent people who, other than for this opportunity, would not have been able to express themselves to the benefit of the wider community because they simply didn't have the opportunity for an education. So here we've got bright people who get an education … for a variety of reasons they missed out on the opportunity of a normal process … who've already graduated from life. They've done it and survived and they have tremendous life skills. And as someone who teaches university students, particularly the mature aged students are just so highly motivated … They're there to do a job. And their standard is very high.

In his history of the University of Newcastle, Wright (1992) stated:

> The concept [of Open Foundation] must be regarded as a success from the point of view of both students and University. The former have had a completely open opportunity to try themselves out at Undergraduate or near Undergraduate level work but within a carefully structured and supportive atmosphere with no penalties imposed for failure and substantial rewards if they succeed. For the University, and especially the Arts Faculty, it has provided a seemingly endless stream of mature age and often high quality entrants. The scheme is also an excellent piece of public relations work. (p. 138)

This analysis indicates that the enabling programs reach deep into the community to promote the importance and value of higher education in areas where there is no previous tradition. Open access is therefore an important priority to support and facilitate educational ambitions and engagement. Decisions made by administrator stakeholders therefore serve multiple purposes, not least of all in terms of reputational value for the university.

Unions (student and staff) as stakeholders
Unions have a vested interest in ensuring that their members' needs are met and oversee the enabling sector as an area with different concerns than other parts of the university. Unions also have an interest in the sector as representation is their very reason for existing and without membership this is undermined. In this way, they are a stakeholder with power and legitimacy, and, on occasion, also urgency (Mitchell et al., 1997). Undergraduate and postgraduate student associations are tasked with protecting students in their interactions with teaching staff and university administrators. University staff unions have the responsibility of protecting staff in matters relating to industrial relations and enforcement of enterprise agreements. Their responsibilities range from taking personal cases right through to overseeing change management and organisational restructuring within institutions. This is a role that is increasingly conflicted due to disruptive change in the wider market environment. It therefore represents a significant challenge for members as well as the organisation.

Industry and employers as stakeholders

Change is also occurring in the labour market with some occupations becoming redundant while others require new and innovative skills and training. Employees may have to retrain and move between types of jobs more frequently than previous generations (Orr & Hovdhaugen, 2014). As Drucker (1999) predicted, this shift represents a move from blue collar manual work towards knowledge work in a 'knowledge economy' in which new occupations are being created and lifelong learning becomes the norm. Employers, local and global, therefore have a vested interest in the kinds of training being offered to prospective employees (Bolton & Nie, 2010). Updating of professional competencies is also vital to industry (Mainardes et al., 2014) as well as setting a research agenda and benefitting from basic and applied research. Rodman et al. (2013) found that of key importance to employers was practical training, implementation of research, and graduate employability as well as the institution's responsiveness to changes in the environment. Industry and employers are therefore stakeholders of some significance in the HE sector as they look to the future workforce, which is partly sourced from enabling programs. Indeed, in their roles as employers, higher education institutions themselves need to become learning organisations that are constantly up-skilling and adapting their requirements. As such, they must promote learning within the organisation as well as to the external environment (Örtenblad & Koris, 2014).

Non-market stakeholders

Families and friends as stakeholders

Families and friends are non-market stakeholders and often provide emotional, practical and sometimes financial support to students. Many enabling students are First in Family to attend university. At the University of Newcastle (2015), 62% of enabling students were identified in this category. Families often invest significant time in supporting their family member's studies and can also feel significant pride in their achievements. A former UON Chancellor, reflecting on interactions with and observations of families at Enabling Attainment ceremonies, commented:

> When you looked down into the audience and saw such a congregation of people, many of whom had never been near a university and were obviously in clothes that they didn't feel quite comfortable in but saw it as being important enough to do so out of sheer respect for the occasion and the individual who was attaining a certificate.

According to the survey data, of the 142 responses that indicated they learned about the UON enabling program by word of mouth, families were cited 37 times or in 26% of responses, as the source of recommendations to enrol (Bunn, 2013). This constituted 10.9% of all responses to a question about how students found out about the program. Friends figured even more prominently in word of mouth recommendations to enrol with 53.5% (n=76) citing this source. Several students indicated that they had enrolled specifically to accompany a friend who had a desire to undertake Open Foundation. According to Reay (2004), parents can be seen as 'educational consumers' as they have power to influence collective decisions, they give voice to their family member's concerns, and they can influence where their family member attends university. Mainardes et al. (2014) identify families as overlooked stakeholders who have the potential to expand the number of enrolments or create traditions of studying at particular locations. Parents and families who invest financially and emotionally in the student's education, may be considered to bear some risk (Bolton & Nie, 2010), and are therefore stakeholders.

Local and regional community as stakeholders

Local communities gain considerable value from having a university in their region. Kettunen (2015) comments that regions "are important stakeholders for universities as their mission is to support regional development" (p. 60). Regional universities are increasingly expected to contribute to economic and regional growth as well as the more traditional contributions of education (Strauf & Scherer, 2008; Bagchi-Sen & Smith, 2012; Gerritsen, 2016). In addition, contributions such as to innovation and knowledge, cultural and social life, and image and identity of the region as well as the university are increasingly expected (Strauf & Scherer, 2008; Gerritsen, 2016). These values may be mutually beneficial for the universities and the region in which it is located, particularly if synergies can be developed (Strauf & Scherer, 2008). Furthermore, the presence of a university provides the ability to attract and retain talent in a local economy, creates job opportunities and provides reputational benefits. A former lecturer at the University of Newcastle commented:

> So many people have had their lives enriched by the Open Foundation course. And the image of the university has also been enriched as well, because people in the university, people in the Newcastle community see the university as being *their* university … It's there for their children, even if their children didn't quite get through high school.

Another lecturer remarked:

> [Open Foundation at UON has] meant that the region has had a, probably disproportionately, large cohort of students come through the university that wouldn't otherwise have done so … people who are inspired to learn, some of that inspiration comes from the programs and the people who teach them as well. But once they get into this sort of study, then do go on to study. And you know this lifelong learning has become a bit of a fashionable sort of thing ... people do take on this sort of lifelong learning approach and many of these people will continue to see the benefits of ongoing study. So I think that it's had huge benefits in the region.

This finding is consistent with Garlick (2000), who argued that 'communities' are not just a geographical place but "…crucibles of learning, nurturing and creativity…" (p. 83) and that regional universities have an important role to play in the building of social capital. Such social capital in return supports and sustains the success of the university, a reciprocal relationship.

Combined Market and/or Non-market Stakeholders

According to Marginson (1997), when examining a political economy of education, some outputs are relatively easily measured in economic terms; others are not. The attraction of a market-based approach to education is that it allows quantification and measurement of outcomes where a focus on the production and consumption of education is evident. This leads to education becoming commodified, but does not tell a wider story beyond commercial enterprise. An alternative, explored in this paper, is to consider the various stakeholders involved and to examine their perceptions of educational value. Through this style of analysis it becomes clear that some entities are neither entirely market orientated nor entirely non-market orientated. Relationships with educators, particularly those which enabling students have in higher education, are not typically transactional in nature. The consequences, for example, for students completing an enabling program and continuing on to an undergraduate degree and further, can be life changing and therefore move beyond just educational delivery. Enabling education also

affects the student's sphere of influence: family, friends and colleagues, as well as the communities in which they reside. Each are considered separately.

University teaching staff as stakeholders
In enabling education, teaching members of staff have multiple roles. They are employees who deliver the programs but also engage with the process and students on other levels. Some lecturers interviewed for this study see their work as an important contribution to facilitating change in individuals' lives, as well as contributing to the greater social good (Bolton & Nie, 2010; Maric, 2013). In this role, teaching staff are part of the non-market environment. As expressed by one lecturer:

> Well I saw it, I guess, as … a social enhancement, an assistance to capitalize on talent that had not been able to manifest itself for various reasons, and that we in a sense had a kind of duty to give people a better second chance or to make the most of themselves. So I thought that fitted very well with a broad educational ethos of a University.

Enabling students are also adult learners, and in the words of another lecturer:

> … they come with a different background. Now my belief is that they can use their life experience, or certainly have their life experience channelled into helping them to cope with the demands of an academic program. They need to cover the ground that a student coming with a traditional school leaver background would have, but they need to cover it much more quickly because they don't have much time in the program. So the teaching and the focus has to be able to get them from that low point that they start at to the high point that they want to be at, at the end of the program very effectively.

The art of teaching and learning for adults is a specialised field referred to as andragogy, different from the pedagogy of child learners because adults bring with them prior knowledge, interests and capabilities (Knowles, Holton III & Swanson, 2005; McGrath, 2009). Academic staff must therefore have an awareness of the needs of adult learners and a philosophy of teaching that incorporates the notion of transformative learning (Mezirow, 1978).

Support staff as stakeholders
Within the university setting, support staff include those attached to teaching and learning centres, counselling services, disability services, and libraries; areas which assist the learning process. As stakeholders, learning support staff provide additional academic and literacy support that does not fall within the workload of ongoing or casual academic staff. When asked what her role entailed, one learning support advisor commented:

> Because they've never written an essay before, they really have nothing to go on, about what's actually expected of them, or how to go about it. So they come for that kind of help. Often they come for help with an assignment, but really, actually it's an issue about … how they're managing their time management skills or their study habits … So they come not really knowing what skills they need, often they don't know what they should ask …

For enabling students, support staff are a crucial part of the larger team that manages student learning needs. Counselling staff are also critical to a team approach in enabling education as

their clients are seen as having more complex problems than the wider university cohorts (Crawford et al., 2016). When asked about her role, one counsellor commented:

> To ensure that students not only have access to education but they have timely support and additional services to ensure their success. So it's about countering attrition, no sorry, about keeping them in university and studying and making sure they've got the support to do that, rather than just getting them into uni and then not having enough support there.

This response indicates the duty of care to students and therefore a stakeholder role. The complex and interrelated roles of support staff are also reflected in the comments of a disability officer who stated:

> Well the range of disabilities that impact on Open Foundation students is pretty well the same as all students at the uni. The majority of clients registered with us, like the largest proportion would be people with mental health issues. One thing different, I guess, with Open Foundation students is a lot of them are also first in family, they have come through from a disadvantaged educational background. Quite often the students that we get report to us that they have a history of difficulty with reading and writing. At school they were told, you know, that they would never amount to much or they were the typical class clown. They are very aware that they have possible learning disabilities, but have never been diagnosed officially. And that can be a barrier for the students too because it's quite costly to have that assessed.

As a stakeholder, this disability support officer must comply with the policy and rules that govern their position, as institutions are unable to meet all students' needs which causes some discomfort to the staff who endeavour to support them.

An English as a Second Language (ESL) instructor was recounting memories of students she had assisted:

> The one that sticks out is a student that I worked with … he said to me "You're like a doctor for my language". And I wrote it down, I thought "How wonderful" … I've also got a few students that I've helped to gain employment with the university, so that's been really nice, a young woman who did the Newstep course, from a Sudanese background. I had a feeling that she would be a really good role model and mentor for other young women in a similar situation to her, so I recommended her to the Equity and Diversity Unit and they took her on ... my greatest memories are not necessarily about the sort of nitty gritty of helping with correcting an essay or something, it's the other effects I can have on students' lives I suppose ... they're the things that stick with you.

As stakeholders, the support staff interviewed were cognisant of the broader role they could play in some students' lives. This was consistent with their enabling ethos and beyond the scope of their professional duties, yet provided greater satisfaction than the more official/formal responsibilities of their roles.

Enabling associations as stakeholders
Associations such as the *National Association of Enabling Educators Australia* (NAEEA), *Foundation and Bridging Educators New Zealand* (FABENZ), *Forum for Access to Continuing*

Education (FACE) and other similar international organisations, provide platforms for knowledge sharing through conferences and publications. These forums also provide opportunities for collective problem solving, constituting a kind of community of practice. The stakeholder role of these associations is similar to that of unions in that they represent and carry the voice of their membership and may lobby government if required.

Other combined market and non-market stakeholders

The following stakeholders, although perhaps not typically regarded as key stakeholders, possess both power and legitimacy and can on occasion gain urgency (Mitchell et al., 1997). For example, where political decisions result in proposed restructures of both number of student places and funding arrangements, prompting active response from other stakeholders such as educators, students, universities and university partners. Such responses may be facilitated by the involvement of media, also with their own interests at stake as discussed briefly below.

Government compliance bodies as stakeholders
Enabling programs that work to transition students into undergraduate study must equip students with adequate and relevant academic skills to enable them to undertake HE. In Australia, quality and standards are set out by the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) (Department of Education and Training, 2017c), which provides a framework of standards and quality on ten levels, right up to doctoral qualifications. This government body is an indirect stakeholder because it influences the standards set for undergraduate programs by which the universities then come to expect commencing students to meet, along with assumed forms of knowledge and academic skills.

However, currently the quality of enabling programs and courses are often measured pragmatically by the successful entry of its 'graduates' into undergraduate study rather than to a formal standard. While this may appear to introduce a problem of quality standard (Shah & Whannell, 2017) it may also be argued that it promotes diversity and encourages innovative practices and approaches to achieve quality and tertiary standards, a function that may be critical. Enabling programs may well be included in the AQF in future, meaning that the body would be a direct as well as an indirect stakeholder.

Funding bodies as stakeholders
Funding bodies exert considerable influence on the enabling sector. In Australia, the tax payer and the public purse have traditionally been a significant source of funding in HE (Department of Education and Training, 2017b), including enabling education, making the taxpayer a stakeholder. However, as Mainardes et al. (2014) argues, university funding is moving away from public sector funding towards a market orientation and a user-pay approach. This, it could be argued, represents an ideological shift from a collectivist to a more individualistic approach, and in the process changing the stakeholder relationships. In the individualistic approach, education is seen as focused on enriching the lives of individuals who therefore reasonably should be expected to pay. In the collectivist approach, education, including higher education, is seen as a 'right' and as enriching society and should therefore be open and accessible to all citizens.

University partners as stakeholders
University partners such as alumni and scholarship providers may support enabling programs. They have a role to play, which may be market oriented in the sense that they have an interest to promote the university's reputation and their attachment to it. Additionally, they engage with issues, ideologies and structures in the non-market environment. However, the main partner for

university would be society at large. Society gains a higher level of education and the flow on effects from that, new knowledge springing from research and potentially international engagement with partners overseas. The university, on the other hand, could not exist without support from society. Such support might be financial, but society is also the source of students, employers and employees.

Media as stakeholder

The media will take a stakeholder position depending on their own agenda, which may or may not coincide with that of other stakeholders. They may be adversary or ally to other stakeholders, which may result in conflicts of interest. They might, for example, be paid to advertise programs which makes them a market stakeholder and beholden to the university for remuneration. The media may also engage in current debates that are newsworthy, informative or have personal appeal, such as the suggested budget re-structure of university funding in Australia (McGhee, Ross & Elvery, 2017; Bennett, Harvey & Fagan, 2017), a debate which has featured prominently in the media, highlighting stakeholders' contested points of view.

Kettunen (2015) locates media as external to the university but having impact, which may influence regions by affecting perceptions of the institution. This places them as spanning both market and non-market environments where, in fact, they may act as intermediaries between the two. However, they may also be biased, and their level of engagement may fluctuate depending on the news cycle.

Competing Discourses

By examining the roles, responsibilities and inclinations of all these stakeholders, the potential for competing discourses becomes apparent both across and within different stakeholder groups. While the items in the following table are not always mutually exclusive, such as in the case of equity and excellence (Whiteford, Shah & Nair, 2013) the potential for stakeholders to have different agendas is highlighted.

Table 3: Stakeholders with multiple roles

University	Students	Government	Society
Knowledge dissemination vs knowledge creation	Consumers vs being a 'student learner'	Upholder of qualifications and standards vs promoter of equity	Users of knowledge, eg benefits of research
Financial viability vs equity (widening participation)	Need to work vs time to study	Funding and perceived return on investment	Employers and employees using knowledge for commercial gain
Global, national, state and cross sector competition	Reputation & achievement vs ease of attainment		Taxpayers expecting low taxes and efficient use of funds
Reputation vs corporatisation			

Indicated in Table 3 is the potential for some stakeholders to have multiple responsibilities, influences and agendas, and even conflicts of interests. This may cause dilemmas that may not

be immediately apparent. There is, for example, an inherent conflict between seeing students simply as consumers, a transactional approach, and seeing students as engaging in a process of learning, a relational approach.

These dilemmas indicate embedded paradoxes, which Smith (2014) argues extend and complicate the way decision-makers may tackle issues. Smith states the dilemmas and paradoxes are "…interwoven, explicating a consistently inconsistent pattern of addressing tensions, and framing both differentiating and integrating practices as necessary for engaging paradox" (p. 1592). While Smith's argument applies to leaders, it also has relevance for the predicament some stakeholders encounter when negotiating the field of enabling education.

The ideological shift to a more individualistic view of students as consumers also generates new funding dilemmas. As the number of students increases, the cost also increases and who pays becomes an issue (Mainardes et al., 2014). Paradoxically, in the long-term, a more far-reaching dilemma may develop as past students think of their education as transactional, with no long-term loyalty or interest to support the university as alumni.

Rather than a 'gift' to individuals, education may be understood as a collective investment in the nation's intellectual, intangible, capital or collective knowledge, which represents "…a non-physical claim to future benefits" (Kavida & Sivakoumar, 2009, p. 56). This more collectivist perspective recognises that in a globally connected, increasingly competitive and highly interdependent economic world, the very sustainability, future viability and economic success of the nation may well depend on sustained investment to support the effective development of this critical resource.

Conclusion

Emerging from this examination of stakeholders in the higher education sector, specifically in the enabling sector, is that perceptions of legitimacy and 'rights' to education are in a state of flux as 'new' stakeholders introduce different expectations, and existing stakeholders modify their approach and level of engagement. Within the 'system', there is also tension between market and non-market stakeholders. In fact, some stakeholders might have multiple and conflicting responsibilities. The stakeholder environment of universities is clearly competitive, complex and highly dynamic. The enabling path may well provide a means for navigating at least some of those complexities as it provides a way to strengthen the relationship between universities and their increasingly diverse stakeholders, including students from non-traditional backgrounds. In this way, universities may find a way forward to continue their charter of building and disseminating knowledge by engaging with new sectors of society. In the long-term, this holds strong potential to benefit both the higher education sector and society-at-large, as well as individual students and their families.

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