Tina Besley has edited this collection which examines and critiques the ways that different countries, particularly Commonwealth and European states, assess the quality of educational research in publicly funded higher education institutions. Such assessment often ranks universities, departments and even individual academics, and plays an important role in determining the allocation of funding to support university research. Yet research is only one aspect of academic performance alongside teaching and service or administration components. The book focuses on the theoretical and practical issues that accompany the development of national and international systems of research assessment, particularly in the field of education. In our interconnected, globalised world, some of the ideas of assessment that have evolved in one country have almost inevitably travelled elsewhere especially the UK model. Consequently the book comprises an introduction, eighteen chapters that discuss the situation in ten countries, followed by a postscript. It gathers together an outstanding group of twenty-five prominent international scholars with expertise in the field of educational research and includes many with hands-on experience in the peer review process. The book is designed to appeal to a wide group of people involved as knowledge workers and knowledge managers – academics, students and policy makers – in higher education and interested in assessment and accountability mechanisms and processes.
Assessing the Quality of Educational Research in Higher Education
EDUCATIONAL FUTURES
RETHINKING THEORY AND PRACTICE
Volume 29

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Assessing the Quality of Educational Research in Higher Education

*International Perspectives*

Tina (A.C.) Besley
*University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign, USA*
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FOREWORD

There is little doubt that one of the most pervasive changes in the environment of higher education in recent years has been the introduction of centralised assessment and evaluation procedures. These have usually progressed under the banner of the pursuit of quality and their impact has been far reaching.

The most significant impacts have been in the areas of research. While higher education practitioners have long been accustomed to the processes of peer review in their many manifestations as part of the evaluation of applications for research grants and contracts, the assessment of individual contributions as researchers is a comparatively new phenomenon. The research assessments introduced by the UK University Grants Committee in 1986 were very much the fore-runner of an increasingly sophisticated and increasingly widespread ‘march of the assessors’. That the procedures were based on and made use of the familiar and accepted processes of peer review gave them both credibility and acceptability.

This collection of articles by acknowledged international experts brings together comprehensive and penetrating considerations of the position across the higher education sectors of all the principal jurisdictions other than the United States. This latter omission is not an oversight but simply a reflection of the current state of play.

Not only is there focus on the formal processes of research assessment in many countries but also their influence on the broader aspects of evaluating the quality of research as an activity in its own right is scrutinised.

The editor, Tina Besley, has assembled a rich diet for those in the academic community who feel a need to understand both their own circumstances and the comparative circumstances of their international colleagues. In its various guises, The Research Assessment Exercise or Performance Based Research Funding for example, the new world is here to stay. Those who have not yet become concerned and informed should seek to remedy this oversight. These articles provide ready access to the remedy – the contributions are timely and authoritative. They constitute a resource which will be both long lasting and valuable for all academics actively committed to the highest standards of research.

Sir Graeme Davies
London
November 2008
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book has taken over 18 months to come to fruition. There were inevitable delays for personal and professional reasons, but in the end it has been well worthwhile in waiting for everyone’s contributions. In the process it has involved twenty-five authors, so first I wish to thank them all for their valuable contributions.

At this point I wish to acknowledge a colleague from a Taiwanese University who was unable to contribute a chapter because despite having published a book and having published in several journals, was under immense pressure to perform to their requirements of publishing in journals that ‘counted’ – those in the Social Science Citation Index (SSCI). For obvious reasons this person has to remain unidentified, but this situation illustrates some of the issues that academics are now facing in assessing the quality of their research and scholarship.

Funding to attend the AERA conferences in 2007 and 2008 was provided by California State University, San Bernardino, my then employers, who were generous supporters of my research. I wish to thank the Dean, Pat Arlin and my Department Chair, Ruth Sandlin who were always supportive of my work and whose friendship I valued. The book would not have proceeded without support from Peter de Liefde of Sense Publishers, since edited collections seem to be out of vogue in some quarters.

I am as always indebted to my husband and colleague Michael Peters whose expertise in publishing so many books has been called upon for many technical and some intellectual questions. Michael’s unfailing cheerfulness saw me through a very successful hip replacement operation and a cross-country move back to Champaign so we could once more be living and working in the same location, during the book’s completion. To this end I wish to thank the Dean, Mary Kalantzis and the Head of Educational Policy Studies, James Anderson of University of Illinois, Urban Champaign. I am fortunate to be located in the USA where universities still value scholarship to a large extent, but where assessment systems are limited to those required for tenure.

The final stages of formatting the manuscript were undertaken by my research assistant, Ergin Bulut whose speedy work is very much appreciated. I am grateful to Bill Cope for his photographs of Cambridge University and Jyväskylä University, Finland which have formed part of the book cover montage.

Tina Besley
Champaign
USA
October 2008
INTRODUCTION

ASSESSING THE QUALITY OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH IN HIGHER EDUCATION: THE IMPACT OF THE KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY AND MERGERS

INTRODUCTION – WHY ASSESS EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH NOW?

Paradoxically, at a point historically when the interventionist state has been rolled back and governments have successfully eased themselves out of the market, they find themselves as the major owners and controllers of the means of knowledge production in the new knowledge economy (Peters & Besley, 2006: 91).

This book was conceived following a very successful symposium at AERA, Chicago in April 2007 which comprised papers from the editor, Tina Besley and fellow contributors, Fazal Rizvi and Michael Peters about assessing educational research. We are all now at University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign, but until August 2008 I was at California State University, San Bernardino. The large audience and lively discussion at the symposium indicated clearly that there was considerable interest, much concern and some dismay about the situations in many countries where new accountability systems had now emerged that assessed the quality of the work that academics undertook – in this case the research component of their work. It became apparent from the symposium that many countries were now instituting their own systems that all differed considerably. However, unsurprisingly in our interconnected, globalised world, some of the ideas of assessment that have evolved in one country have almost inevitably travelled elsewhere especially the UK model. The search for the perfect form of quality assessment may still be on, but nevertheless remains elusive. National systems for assessing research examine the education system within which education, the discipline or a field of study is located. So the research performance of education is almost inevitably compared with other disciplines. However, education while it can stand in its own right, in addition holds a vital foundational position as the discipline upon which many others are based, especially in terms of theories of pedagogy, of subjectivity, and in the ability to critique the politics of all aspects and levels of education and the educational system. Chapters in this book look at both the system and the discipline of education, at the general and the particular.

In the UK during Margaret Thatcher’s regime that introduced neoliberal economic theories, the notion of an ‘explicit and formalised assessment process of the quality of research’ began in 1986 by the University Grants Committee (UGC),
forerunner to later funding agencies, as the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) (http://www.rae.ac.uk/aboutus/history.asp). The RAEs of ‘1989, 1992 and 1996 became gradually more transparent, comprehensive and systematic.’ RAE 2001 ‘considered the work of almost 50,000 researchers in 2,598 submissions from 173 HEIs [Higher Education Institutions]. The RAE is the principal means by which institutions assure themselves of the quality of the research undertaken in the HE sector’ (http://www.rae.ac.uk/aboutus/history.asp). RAE 2008 a joint exercise by the UK Higher Education funding agencies: ‘Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) and the Department for Employment and Learning, Northern Ireland (DEL)’ (http://www.rae.ac.uk/).

Education, alongside health, is now one of the biggest portfolios in most national governments and is one that potentially provides the greatest returns to a country in productivity gains through skills acquisition and research and development. Consequently, it is not surprising that governments are becoming increasingly interested in how it operates, performs and can improve social and economic returns on national investments. Education not only provides potential for greater equity, mobility and social cohesion, but also in enhancing skill formation and development it adds to human and social capital. The assessment of the quality of educational research is now playing an increasingly important role in determining the funding to support research and the work that public universities conduct. As part of the neoliberal agenda which seeks accountability, transparency and value for money, government-funded university research programs that annually consume billions of taxpayers’ dollars have not surprisingly come under the spotlight. Several different national models of assessing educational research in higher education have evolved in different countries, with varying levels of consultation with the academic community. Some countries are contemplating setting up new systems or revising existing systems, others are continuing the status quo, but there overall seems to be an increased impetus to set up national systems of assessing research in all disciplines. In many countries universities are subsequently ranked according to a research assessment exercise. Furthermore, individual academics are ranked (formally or informally) through such assessment, a ranking that reflects what is usually only one component of their overall performance in a job that usually involves teaching and service or administration components as well.

Assessing the quality of educational research brings to the fore a number of issues. One issue that emerges when assessing any form of research is defining what counts as research. Another issue involves who the research is intended for – the users, audience or stakeholders? A further issue is the form of measurement used, who conducts the measurement and the assessment, and what the results are used for. Measuring research quality is complex and involves an understanding of the history of science, the development of information and web technologies, the increasing importance of the knowledge-based economy, the rise of global science, and the corresponding increasing imperative felt by higher education institutions and governments to find ways of measuring and benchmarking research quality
INTRODUCTION

both in national and cross-national terms. Two kinds of evaluation are apparent: in one the neoliberal emphasis is on individual performance and is linked to promotion and tenure – its knowledge workers are treated on an old industrial, factory type model. The newer model of formative evaluation utilizes peer review mechanisms and expert panels to shape knowledge cultures that implies a very different view of knowledge workers and knowledge institutions and can provide a feedback loop to researchers on strategic priorities. Other questions arise, such as to what extent does educational research inform teaching in higher education, and pedagogic practices in schools and how we think of and treat learners of any age – young people or adult learners. With the emergence of the knowledge economy, the diversity of what counts as research especially now that knowledge cultures and the creative economy have taken on increasing importance, there becomes a renewed emphasis and significance of the ‘soft’ social and human sciences (Peters & Besley, 2006).

This edited book focuses on the theoretical and practical issues that surround and accompany the development of national and international systems of research assessment, particularly in relation to the field of education. But education can not be considered in isolation since most national systems apply to the whole higher education sector – that is, they apply to the physical as well as the social sciences, arts and humanities and in some instances attempt to apply the same criteria to all disciplines. The book aims to provide an international perspective of the current situation in predominantly neoliberal countries in the West that had embraced export-led education policies and had devised or seemed headed towards devising some form of national system of research assessment. This meant however excluding the U.S. A which is not organised along such lines and focusing on the experience of Commonwealth and European countries. As a result the book comprises this introduction and eighteen chapters that describe and discuss the situation in ten countries, followed by a postscript. It has brought together an outstanding group of twenty-five prominent international scholars with expertise in the field of educational research and includes many with hands-on experience in the peer review process.

Increasingly across the world, but especially in Westernized countries where neoliberalism has become predominant, the assessment of research quality is part of a national system of rationalization in higher education and expectation that it contributes to the knowledge economy. It is this aspect that I next examine.

THE KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY AND ITS EFFECTS ON HIGHER EDUCATION

That knowledge has become the resource, rather than a resource, is what makes our society “post-capitalist.” (Drucker, 1993: 45)

If knowledge is a global public good, then governments (and universities) have a key role to play in the knowledge economy (Peters & Besley, 2006: 90).

I begin with two questions: what is the knowledge economy? How does this affect higher education and educational research? In Building Knowledge Cultures:

...
Education and Development in the Age of Global Capitalism, (Peters & Besley, 2006) with Michael Peters I traced the genealogy of the notion of knowledge economy within the discourses of both sociology and economics. In the sociology of postindustrialism, the technology-driven shift from manufacturing to service industries affects social structures, so the move is from the sociology of knowledge to the concept of knowledge societies. In economics discourse, we mapped back to the work of Friedrich von Hayek on the economics of knowledge.

The notion of a ‘knowledge economy’ as it is now formulated and adopted as part of government policy in most Western nations, is a very recent one, although it was probably first expressed by Peter Drucker in a chapter of that name in his 1969 book, The Age of Discontinuity: Guidelines to Our Changing Society, alerting us to what at that time was seen as a trend in the shift from manual labour and skills to skills based on knowledge, technology or intellectual work. He includes management within the category of knowledge worker. Knowledge has always been an important feature of capitalist societies, but, the current change in what he views as The Post Capitalist Society is that knowledge is now being applied to itself, not just to products and tools as with the industrial revolution (Drucker, 1993). However, it has only been in the last decade that the notion has been seen as more of a contemporary reality than just a speculative trend, consequently, the knowledge economy has only recently been taken up in public policy discourses and now in education.

Peters & Besley (2006), discuss ‘knowledge capitalism’ which emerged only recently to describe the transition to the ‘knowledge economy’ and denotes a sea change in the nature of capitalism. These twin terms can be traced within public policy discourse to a series of reports that emerged in the late 1990s by the OECD (1996a, b, c, 1997) and the World Bank (1998) before they were taken up as a policy template by world governments in the late 1990s (Peters, 2001; Peters & Besley, 2006). Education is reconfigured as a massively undervalued form of knowledge capital that will determine the future of work, of knowledge institutions, the formulation of education policy and the shape of society in the years to come. With the addition of the work on knowledge capitalism by Alan Burton-Jones who states “knowledge is fast becoming the most important form of global capital – hence ‘knowledge capitalism’” (Burton-Jones, 1999: vi), it becomes apparent that knowledge capitalism, which involves knowledge creation, acquisition, transmission and organization, exerts a profound influence upon national education policies.

Rather than be based on scarcity with resources depleting as they are used, the economics of knowledge are based on abundance, because it can be shared and even increase when applied. With new virtual technologies allowing 24/7 operations of many organizations, the tyranny of distance is diminished and even removed. For education, on-line information and library access as well as online and open access courses have begun to change how higher education and educational research are conducted. Knowledge is not easily containable by laws, barriers and taxes and moves or ‘leaks’ to locations of high demand where barriers are lowest e.g. Creative Commons, open access. Since knowledge is potentially mobile – it
can ‘walk out of the door’ in people’s heads – some institutions attempt to set up systems and processes to lock it in (e.g. patents, contracts and copyright). Knowledge managers are often responsible for containing the work produced by knowledge workers. When it is locked in and becomes proprietary, it has higher inherent value. Knowledge enhanced products and services (e.g. software, online businesses, online courses) can expect higher prices than those with low embedded knowledge, but this depends on the context since the ‘same information and knowledge can have different value to different people at different times.’ In the knowledge economy, human capital competencies become key competencies, but companies seem to have not caught up with this in their annual reports. (see David Skyrme Associates Home Page, http://www.skyrme.com/insights/21gke.htm; Peters & Besley, 2006)

Indicative of the recent acceptance of the notion of knowledge economy in public policy as the main vehicle for modernization for countries, is that it has been only since Joseph Stiglitz was chief economist and wrote Public Policy and the Knowledge Economy (Stiglitz, 1999) that The World Bank has strongly adopted the concept. Since 2002 it has set up a series of annual forums on the knowledge economy (see: http://go.worldbank.org/JUJTIBN8J0) and now has clearly delineated the following vital modernizing requirements for countries:

The following pillars are four critical requisites for a country to be able to fully participate in the knowledge economy:

**Education & Training**
An educated and skilled population is needed to create, share and use knowledge.

**Information Infrastructure**
A dynamic information infrastructure-ranging from radio to the internet-is required to facilitate the effective communication, dissemination and processing of information.

**Economic Incentive & Institutional Regime**
A regulatory and economic environment that enables the free flow of knowledge, supports investment in Information and Communications Technology (ICT), and encourages entrepreneurship is central to the knowledge economy.

**Innovation Systems**
A network of research centers, universities, think tanks, private enterprises and community groups is necessary to tap into the growing stock of global knowledge, assimilate and adapt it to local needs, and create new knowledge. (http://go.worldbank.org/5WOSIRFA70)

It is highly significant that education has been given pride of place in this list and in fact all these pillars are underpinned by education, teaching and research. The medium is an infrastructure revolves around ICT, which clearly needs appropriately educated people. In its neoliberal conception, the World Bank usually stands for deregulation of economies. Here, in setting out the preferred
economic and institutional regime, that is what The World Bank views as the appropriate environment for the knowledge economy, it suggests an openness of systems and especially of knowledge rather than closed proprietary systems in creating an entrepreneurial economy. Could they be supporting systems such as the Creative Commons rather than copyright? Their last pillar, innovation systems, seems to move away somewhat from the usual World Bank neoliberal emphasis on privatization to include public institutions such as universities and community groups. Education clearly plays a vital role in this generational pillar in developing a creative economy.

In the Keynesian welfare state education was primarily seen as an aspect of social policy that provided the state with the policy means for addressing questions of social equality, equity and for encouraging social mobility and greater economic well-being. With the modernizing thrust of the knowledge economy, education becomes the primary driver for the economic system, linked to ICT as the medium, and innovation and creativity as the mainspring for productivity growth. Education now plays multiple roles. The knowledge economy concept highlights human and social capital as the main resources for generational economic development, production and innovative capacity. Now equity arguments are tied to ‘wastage’ of human capital; and cultural capital provides models for understanding how institutional rigidities penalise all but the middle classes.

In this new environment, governments have come to see that education, as the discipline that focuses on teaching and the education of teachers, needs to be linked more effectively to research and to evidence–based practices. At least this is the rationale for the recent policies that have merged colleges of education with universities, highlighting not only the move towards research-based improvements in teaching per se, but also the encouragement of research in education that focuses on the modernizing thrust of national systems of education at all levels.

The quality of the contemporary university depends upon both the quality of teaching as well as the quality of research, but for many universities the prestige emphasis and funding has been primarily attached to research rather than teaching which has not been considered to be particularly important. The perception of the discipline of education in relation to other disciplines both in national and international rankings indicates that it is seldom held in high regard or ranked highly, is now ‘confirmed’ by its relatively poor ‘performance’ in research compared to other disciplines. So far, the spate of recent mergers has not generally improved the quality and quantity of educational research in higher education. In time this may well happen, but for now this is not the case, therefore the next section explores these mergers in more detail.

THE ERA OF MERGERS OF UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES OF EDUCATION

First, I wish to pose the question, why in the last 20 years, has there been a move towards merging higher educational institutions in countries where it is publicly funded? To a large extent the answer lies in the way higher education is now considered central to knowledge creation and production; an essential component
INTRODUCTION

of a country’s social and economic growth and competitive advantage; a means to reduce poverty, to increase its participation in the knowledge economy (World Bank, 2002). Higher education plays a crucial role to play in developing high quality teaching and research that bolsters productivity. Yet in many countries, the assessment of educational research as part of national monitoring systems, shows its low status and low performance compared with other disciplines (e.g. as revealed in the Performance-Based Review in New Zealand). Part of this problem stems from historical factors but also from mergers which have been something of a double edged sword for education. They are important for professionalizing teacher education, for having research-informed teaching and may eventually result in raising the status of education vis a vis other disciplines, but too often the result of recent mergers between teachers colleges, that have historically have seldom been expected to be research-active, and universities, much educational research is low level, poorly funded, unrigorous, misdirected and uncritical. Most countries need better quality educational research – both quantitative and qualitative –and not just a lot of low level evaluations of programs.

The impact of neoliberalism and globalization on education is discussed in earlier work (Peters & Besley, 2006: 36), arguing that ‘neoliberalism both as a political philosophy and policy mix had taken deep root by the early 1980s as the world’s dominant economic and development metanarrative’ But by the mid-Nineties, many governments throughout the world looked to a new philosophy and policy mix—one that preserved some of the efficiency and competition gains of neoliberalism, but did not result in the serious threats to social justice, national cohesion, and to democracy itself when large sections of populations had become structurally disadvantaged, working and living, on the margins of the labour market; rapidly growing social inequalities had become more evident as the rich had become richer and the poor, poorer; public services had been “stripped down” and were unable to deliver even the most basic of services; many communities had become split and endangered by the rise of racism, crime, unemployment and social exclusion (Peters & Besley, 2006: 36). In response, the ‘Third Way’ model espoused by Tony Blair and Bill Clinton emerged. Despite Blair’s sloganised commitment to “education, education, education”,

the Third Way: has not yet attempted to rework the concept of education as the basis for economic and social participation, citizenship and access in the knowledge economy, beyond paying lip service to the OECD notion of “lifelong education”. In order to succeed, the Left must customise or indigenise the concept of education for social democratic politics. To do this we must return to the history of education rights in the early documents of human rights and renew its ethos as a basis for the new society. We must investigate the links between education, knowledge, and learning processes, especially meta-cognitive abilities. We must also look to establishing the means for fostering what we call “knowledge cultures”. Above all, we must re-establish education as a minimum welfare right and global public good (Peters & Besley, 2006: 37-38).
What has happened in education though is that higher education restructuring and mergers have continued at an even faster pace with the development of a higher education market that competes both nationally and globally, aims to become more efficient and effective, is associated with new management structures, notions of quality assurance, and accountability – that result in both teaching assessment exercises and research assessment of academic knowledge work. Consequently the relationship between the state and higher education has now moved from one of state control to ‘state supervision’. Academic knowledge work has been changing too. University curricula now emphasize more practical, vocational and professional knowledges often at the expense of theory and philosophy. University faculties are increasingly encouraged to engage in e-learning and to prepare some or all of their lectures as online courses. In this context, the questions of immaterial labor, intellectual property, and the culturalization of economic knowledge become leading policy issues. Many of the strategies concerning technology transfer have been centered on universities with an emphasis on partnerships with business and the development of new start-up and spin-off companies.

Mergers are located at one end of a continuum that ranges from inter-institutional co-operation agreements, to co-ordination with formal consortia, to federation, to a fully merged unitary structure (Harman & Meek, 2002). This section focuses on full mergers which may range from ‘voluntary’ to the extent that participating institutions are able to freely choose their partners (as with most UK mergers, especially in England and Scotland) to ‘involuntary’ and imposed by government to fulfill some largely political objective (e.g. post-apartheid South Africa to change racially based institutions). Yet all mergers are somewhat involuntary. They are not likely to happen if it seems simply to be a pedagogically sound idea, rather, they primarily happen in response to new economic and social contexts – moves toward a knowledge economy that highly values research and a highly educated population; government financial incentives; economies of scale aimed to increase efficiencies; globalization’s opportunities and threats; neoliberal economic policy changes; social changes – the democratization and massification of higher education; and technological changes in the higher education market.

Goedegebuure describes four types of academic merger where the academic products are teaching and research:

- A horizontal merger is ‘between institutions which operate in similar academic fields and are oriented towards a similar type of product’;
- A vertical merger is ‘between institutions which operate in similar academic fields and are oriented towards a different type of product’;
- A diversification merger is ‘between institutions which operate in different academic fields and are oriented towards a similar type of product’; and
- A conglomerate merger is ‘between institutions which operate in different academic fields and are oriented towards a different kind of product.


Some governments have encouraged full mergers of institutions as detailed below, or a new grouping of related departments, as well as a ‘clustering’ of universities to aid regional development. Different models of merger have been
INTRODUCTION

defined – aimed to change from a binary system to a non-binary system (i.e. 2 tier systems such as polytechnics or Teachers Colleges and Universities as detailed for Australia, New Zealand and Scotland); federal or multi-campus forms (e.g. University of London; California State University which have several campuses which are all highly autonomous); and unitary mergers (with one board of governors, or trustees or directors e.g. in January 1990 University of Sydney was amalgamated with Cumberland College of Health Sciences, Sydney College of the Arts (NSWIA), NSW Conservatorium, Sydney Institute of Education (Sydney CAE), Institute of Nursing Studies (Sydney CAE). Orange Agricultural College was added in 1994. (http://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/documents/universities/AustralianHEMerges-Amalgamations.pdf).

The second question I pose about mergers is, what effect have they had on educational research? One of the problems for educational research capability has resulted from the reform and rationalization of higher education as conducted through institutional mergers in many countries that publicly fund higher education from the 1990s onwards (e.g. UK, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Hungary, Canada and Germany) – some of which are discussed in this volume. Different terms occur for the concept ‘merger’ in different locations – Australia tends to use ‘amalgamation’ whereas Canada and USA tend to use ‘consolidation’. Nevertheless these terms encompass a feature of particular relevance to the discipline of education, that is, many vocationally oriented teachers’ colleges, either independent institutions or located in other higher education units, and university education departments have merged, sometimes willingly, sometimes not. There are many push and pull factors involved in such mergers. Some mergers have been driven by government policy or incentives aimed at efficiency and effectiveness, others by the institutions themselves, sometimes when one institution has had a clear financial need. For example, the South African, Australian and New Zealand governments and agencies have actively promoted mergers, whereas in UK the move has varied in England, Wales and Scotland. Wales has actively promoted mergers. After 1997, Scotland encouraged mergers by providing financial assistance through the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council’s (SHEFC) Strategic Change Grant. Overall, higher education mergers reflect a change in the relationship between the state and education, a change whereby the state demands wider access for more students and more accountability for the funds it provides these institutions.

The United Kingdom, undertook some twenty-five HE mergers in the years 1994/5 to 2002/3. These included several colleges of education merging with universities in England: Brunel University/West London Institute of Higher Education, 1994-95; Westminster College Oxford and Oxford Brookes University 2000-01; North Riding College/University of Hull, 2000/2001; Bretton Hall College/University of Leeds, 2001-02(for a list of UK HE mergers 1992-2004, see Brown, Denholm & Clark, 2003). In Scotland the teachers college/ university mergers included: Moray House Institute of Education merged with The University of Edinburgh in 1998/9; Jordanhill College of Education merged with Strathclyde University, 1993; St Andrew’s College of Education merged with The University
of Glasgow in 1999/2000; Craigie College of Education and Paisley University, 1992; Northern College of Education merged with Aberdeen and Dundee Universities in 2001/2. Michael Peters and I were both employed from 2000-2005, in the second year of the merger creating the Faculty of Education at the University of Glasgow – a merger between St Andrew’s Teachers’ College and a group of academic education related departments at the University of Glasgow, so have first hand experience of this process. Not least of the problems was the merger of a religiously based Catholic institution with a secular one.

By 2003 the proposal for restructuring higher education in England emphasised the importance of research collaboration and the intent ‘to reward research that is more concentrated and better-managed’ (DfES, 2003). It suggested there should be only a small number of research intensive universities, ‘concentrating the best research in larger units – better infrastructure, better collaboration within and between disciplines, easier development of research-only posts and better pay for excellent researchers’(DfES, 2003). The remainder should concentrate on teaching and knowledge transfer, but that there should be collaboration between the two types of institution to support research strengths in non-research intensive universities. In the knowledge economy with a more market-oriented environment, especially when there has been some external threat (usually to do with numbers of students and funding problems) or opportunities associated with new government incentives as per the UK 2003 White Paper, universities, are being forced to examine the benefits of potential strategic collaborations, economies of scale and especially mergers.

In Australia, higher education mergers (amalgamations) were largely imposed by government as the Hawke Labor government radically reformed higher education after 1987, dismantling the existing 2 tier system and creating the Unified National System (UNS) (Harman, 2000). For a list of mergers from June 1987 and October 2004, see: http://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/documents/universities/AustralianHEMerges-Amalgamations.pdf). The Australian government, broadly supported by many institutions, set a national strategy and objectives for publicly funded higher education. It aimed to bring together research based universities and other institutions that emphasised vocational education. Needless to say there was some fierce opposition, but in threatening financial penalties for institutions not pursuing appropriate mergers the government won the day. The result has been the establishment of relatively large, comprehensive research and teaching institutions, that are intended to compete in the new international, globalized education market.

In New Zealand in a rationalization process from 1991-2007, all of the long-established variously named Teachers’ Colleges (or Colleges or Education) merged with their local universities, forming a new faculty, school or college of education that placed the vocational aspects of teacher education into a university environment. Before 1989 the eight universities all had education departments, but did not conduct teacher education. Until 1989 initial teacher education was almost entirely restricted to six colleges of education, offering a three-year primary Diploma of Teaching, shortened to two-year for those with degrees, and a one-year
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post-degree secondary Diploma of Teaching. However the subsequent neoliberal reforms emphasising markets, competition and de-regulation saw a rapid proliferation of institutions offering teacher education. In 2004 there were 31 providers and 156 different programmes of initial teacher education in New Zealand offering 75 programmes for primary school teaching and 32 programmes for secondary teaching. With the pendulum swinging back in the 1990s, Labour-led governments wanted consistency in teacher education and so promoted mergers that involved people in professional practice, training and research aiming to create nothing less than world-class centres for teacher education research that underpins and supports educational policy and development. Hamilton Teachers College was the first, amalgamating with the University of Waikato in 1991. In 1996 Palmerston North College of Education (formerly known as Palmerston North Teachers College) merged with Massey University. By the mid 2000s Auckland and Wellington Colleges of Education merged with the Universities of Auckland and Victoria (Wellington), respectively. In 2007, the remaining two stand-alone Colleges of Education in both Christchurch and Dunedin, respectively merged with the University of Canterbury and University of Otago. This ended a tradition of over one hundred and thirty years of specialist stand-alone teachers’ colleges.

Mergers in post-apartheid South Africa became one form of institutional reform used to address racially separate institutions and to integrate different types of institution. They were instigated by government as mandatory restructuring because institutions had failed to explore voluntary solutions. In 2001 the Council on Higher Education (CHE) established a task team to investigate the state of governance in higher education ‘to improve efficiency, effectiveness and accountability in higher education governance with due cognizance of such principles as democracy, academic freedom and equity’ (for a list of mergers up to 2005 see http://www.che.ac.za/documents/d000072/Governance_of_Merger_HE_Aug2004.pdf). This document focuses on merger governance and barely mentions research.

In Europe, Germany is now promoting similar mergers amid fears about the ‘isolation’ of academic universities from the real world (Brown, Denholm & Clark, 2003). In Norway, the government created a new college sector (Harman & Meek, 2002). In the Netherlands the restructuring of the non-university sector launched in 1983 resulted in the merging of 348 institutions into 51 new institutions while 34 remained independent (http://www.che.ac.za/documents/d000072/Governance_of_Merger_HE_Aug2004.pdf).

The success of higher education mergers has been decidedly varied and has often taken a long time – up to 10 years or more – to become fully cohesive and effective in making real changes as two or more very different institutional and educational cultures are brought together. In general a merger involves the takeover of one institution by another, such that the name and form of the pre merger entity(ies) ceases to exist. The process is undoubtedly painful for many people, some more so than others, with the result that many personnel leave – voluntarily or otherwise and institutional histories are discarded or lost.

Sometimes the institutions have a different academic standing and reputation. Many teachers’ college lecturers were hands-on practitioners engaged primarily or
only in teaching rather than research. Many did not have doctorates, some only undergraduate degrees but years of valuable teaching or administration experience. In merging with a university, suddenly they have been expected to become research active, a skill that not only did many not possess but one which their former teachers’ colleges often had not valued or had actively discouraged. University based education departments certainly were involved in teaching, but less often in teacher education. In addition they were involved in research and in publishing books and papers. The mergers were almost invariably to move the teachers colleges into a university system. Consequently newly formed Education Faculties (Colleges or Schools of Education) immediately had an influx of non-active researchers. Following mergers, with a predominance of former teacher’s college staff, rather than being focussed on forms of critique, analysis, evaluation and qualitative and quantitative research, the current emphasis within many universities is now on teacher education and on practitioner-based and evidence-based research activities that seem to have relatively low prestige. In the expectation that faculty would become research active, some universities funded strategic change that encouraged and enabled faculty to upskill to doctorate level (e.g. University of Glasgow and University of Auckland). However, this takes many years to achieve especially when faculty are still holding down full-time positions.

ORGANIZATION OF THIS BOOK

The book is divided into four sections and includes a chapter, ‘Research Quality, Bibliometrics and the Republic of Science’ by Michael Peters as a postscript.

In the first section, ‘Theorizing and Comparing Different Assessment Systems’ sets the scene for the subsequent chapters which examine educational research assessment in different countries. Chapter 1, Neoliberalism, performance and the assessment of educational research quality: Comparing united kingdom, Australia & New Zealand by Tina Besley and Michael Peters, sets out some of the key terms and theories – neoliberalism, New Public Management, New Institutional Economics, Public Choice Theory, Principal-Agent theory, Transaction Cost Analysis, and Contractualism – that underlie the whole move towards assessing educational research. Besley & Peters outline four accountability regimes, the notion of performativity and quality assurance in knowledge management. They briefly outline the systems of research assessment in UK, Australia and New Zealand to foreground work in later chapters. Under neoliberal governmentality, technologies of government that operate in higher education employed principal-agent theory as a means of structuring delegated power within hierarchical forms of authority, which erode, and seek to prohibit, traditional academic autonomy. This shift in regulative modality constitutes a structural shift which has greatly transformed the academic’s role.

RAE 2008 has a two-tier panel system of 15 main panels and 67 expert sub-panels, one for each Unit of Assessment (UOA). Each main panel comprises ‘broadly cognate disciplines whose subjects have similar approaches to research’
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(http://www.rae.ac.uk/panels/), so education is in main panel K comprising Psychology, Education and Sports-related Studies. Fazal Rizvi, currently working at University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign, is on the RAE section K main panel. Rizvi in Chapter 2, ‘Internationalization and the Assessment of Research Quality in Education’ expresses his initial misgivings about being expected to be ‘an ‘international’ voice on the panel helping it assess how British research ‘stacked up’ against ‘some presumed international standard,’ when what this entailed was not spelled out. ‘The assumption was that I would somehow know instinctively what this was, on the basis of my own work as a researcher and my familiarity with international research networks.’ He discusses the discourse of ‘international’ research – a notion that is now used in some other national assessments (NZ, Hong Kong & Australia – all of which feature in this book). He warns of the dangers of circular arguments about the quality of journals and how the bibliometric assessment of research quality is inadequate not least because of ‘its cultural and language bias towards research published in English, which potentially marginalizes both the content and approaches to knowledge not located within the English-speaking world.’ Rizvi’s rich exploration of internationalization draws our attention to globalized forces and transnational issues like quality in educational research, its spatiality and power relations that are increasingly dynamic. He concludes by noting that ‘the state plays a crucial role in promoting certain kinds of research and not others, in prioritizing certain research questions, and in privileging certain methodological approaches.’

Chapter 3, by Chris Coryn, ‘Research governance by evaluation: A Meta-evaluation of International Systems for Evaluating Government-Funded Research’ presents the only quantitative research based chapter in the book. He begins by discussing the vitally important place of evaluation in educational research, how it ‘permeates nearly every aspect of the work of researchers.’ Coryn’s research covers the research assessment models used in sixteen countries – Australia, Belgium, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Hungary, Ireland, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, Sweden, United Kingdom and USA – aiming to assess the absolute and relative merits of their models, rank them in terms of the quality of their evaluation mechanisms for distributing research funding, and provide a means for improving them, ‘which could ultimately result in large gains in money saved, good research done, and valuable results obtained.’ Seven of the countries he evaluates are included in later chapters in this book. His conclusion indicates a major concern for educational research assessment, for he states that his evaluation uncovered the huge variability in quality, not of the educational research per se, but the different national models themselves, with most of them being given low ratings. This is a major concern considering how it ultimately impacts on the lives and livelihoods of individual researchers. Coryn’s comparative research usefully precedes the following chapters that discuss research in individual countries.

The next section, ‘The United Kingdom,’ begins the series of chapters that look at assessing the quality of educational research in individual countries. Not surprisingly, the first of these sections is allocated to the UK, since it was the RAE
that set this type of state research assessment ball rolling and which several other countries use as their model. This section comprises three chapters by distinguished UK based educationalists and researchers.

Chapter four, ‘Assessing the Quality of Research in Higher Education: the UK Research Assessment Exercise’, is by David Bridges, who has been a member of the 2001 and 2008 Education expert sub-panels for the RAE. Bridges discusses the different ways of assessing research, the effects of massification of university education and provides detail about the latest RAE 2008. He points out the positive aspects of a system that has been refined over 22 years – the levels of critique and extensive consultation and in particular how almost all the primary sources are read by the panel of peer nominated experts rather than government officials. Bridges discusses three issues raised by the current RAE – the first two relate to quality – academic rigour; and significance; the third concerns assessment in terms of the international and the world class, in some aspects linking to Rizvi’s chapter. Bridges ends by examining some of the unintended consequences of the RAE. One of the results of the RAE process has been an increased performativity and managerialism that has resulted in ‘more vigorous internal management of research including staff appraisals’ and mentoring schemes, encouragement to present papers at international conferences, as well as other institutional incentives. He notes research selectivity and game playing by institutions in who and what they put forward for RAE. That as star researchers have emerged, wealthier and more prestigious universities can relatively easily attract them especially if they have substantial external funding, thus further reinforcing winner/ loser universities. Of particular concern is that with some universities appointing teaching only positions and not returning all or any faculty, there becomes a much greater separation of research and teaching which challenges central the principal of the modern university, that teaching should be informed by research. Of major concern is the enormous cost in terms of time and money (the Roberts Review estimated RAE 2001 cost £5-6 million), so the question needs to be asked – is the exercise cost-effective? Are the administration costs taking people away from research? Consequently, the latest move is towards bibliometrics. Given the inadequacies and biases in existing citation indices, which may well measure quantity, but can scarcely measure quality, there is huge disquiet in the humanities and education about such a move. Bridges argues forcefully that there is ‘no real substitute for peer assessment of the quality of work based on a direct encounter with that work’.

In Chapter 5, ‘Standardisation and versatility in the assessment of education research in the United Kingdom’, Alis Oancea, follows on directly from where Bridges left off by detailing and extensively discussing the current context of consultation and debate in UK surrounding HEFCE’s 2007 proposals to change the RAE. This proposal would further separate assessment methods for sciences and humanities based disciplines. The sciences would use bibliometrics to create citation profiles using data from the ISI Web of Science database, while the humanities a “light-touch peer review” that reduces the amount of reading of outputs by the panels and puts greater weight on quantitative indicators. Oancea then uses policy analysis, ‘literature review, informal discussion, and written
requests for information from key persons’ to analyse comparative evidence from six countries, as she examines eight problematic issues in discourses of research assessment ‘to show that the aspirations towards increased efficiency, accountability, management principles, and quality assurance, mostly taken for granted in the recent debates about research assessment, may be a double-edged sword when it comes to nurturing sound, viable research cultures.’ These eight areas are: performance-based allocation of research funds and externally-defined indicators; pressure towards increased transparency and accountability; institutionalisation of research evaluation; specialisation (professional, methodological) of research assessment and the emergence of assessment expertise; mismatch between economic & strategic, and professional & academic, indicators; leaning towards peer review in micro evaluations and metrics in meso and macro; diversification and variation of modes, criteria, procedures, and agencies of research evaluation; and de-sensitivisation of research evaluation. Oancea then returns to the UK scene to discuss the ‘the myth of the perfect indicator’ examining the three main contenders – peer review, bibliometrics, and econometrics at some length. Her next focus is on restoring the socio-cultural, historical and philosophical nature of research assessment, because she argues that in public policy a technicist instrumentalism has become the means of evaluating and assessing research. Oancea concludes that our understanding of the relationship between the process and substance of assessment needs to change, accompanied by ‘a discursive opening towards accepting diversity, hybridisation, and versatility in research.’

Chapter 6, by Geoff Whitty and Emma Wisby, ‘Quality and Impact in Educational Research: Some lessons from England under New Labour’ rounds out this section of the book by examining how educational research in the UK has fared over the past ten years under the New Labour government of Tony Blair. Their assessment reveals mixed blessings – from the positive benefits from increased funding (total expenditure of approximately £75m per year on educational research in English universities) and that from being much criticised; the RAE has now gained increasing support from academics because it supports basic research through rewarding research that meets traditional social science criteria. Whitty and Wisby’s chapter explores two tensions. The first tension is between the UK government’s drive for policy-relevant research and other frameworks that emphasise traditional social science criteria. The second tension involves the thrust for evidence –based research and notions about ‘what works’ which plays out as a tension between the technocratic and democratic control of education. Whitty and Wisby briefly examine the relationship between the educational research community and the government, noting that the set of reports in the late 1990s suggested that UK educational research was of poor quality, lacked rigour and theoretical coherence, was ideologically biased and did not accumulate research findings. Moreover it was not cost effective because it was irrelevant to schools; did not involve teachers, was inaccessible and poorly disseminated. Needless to say the rebuttal from the educational research community was robust. Whitty and Wisby discuss the funding of educational research, the RAE, and the issue of public value of educational research. They alert us to the dangers that educational research is being shaped
more narrowly by the government’s agenda, and the thrust for evidence-based research; that researchers, should engage in addressing the technocratic notions that erode democracy in education rather than bemoaning their loss of autonomy to research whatever they wish. Whitty and Wisby make ‘the case for a more sophisticated understanding of the relationship between educational research, policy and practice and the assessment and funding of that research.’ They end by looking at the role of the national educational research associations in representing the education community and the growing need for those associations to work together.

The third section of the book, ‘A British Connection: Hong Kong, New Zealand, Australia and South Africa’ examines four countries that have or had a British connection as former colonies and members of the Commonwealth, and which have educational research systems influenced to a greater or lesser degree by the RAE. The section begins with Hong Kong. The Hong Kong RAE was set up when it was still a British colony and so is directly based on the UK RAE. In 1997, Hong Kong became a Special Administrative Region of The People’s Republic of China, and although no longer politically connected to Britain, nor in the Commonwealth, has maintained the RAE system. The section then looks at New Zealand’s system, the Performance-Based Research Fund (PBRF) which most closely uses the RAE as its model but with the major difference that it assesses at an individual level. Neighbouring Commonwealth country, Australia has a new Labor government which in 2007 decided to change from its Research Quality Fund (RQF) model that was about to begin, to the Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) model which will use a combination of metrics and expert review. The Republic of South Africa which remains in the Commonwealth does not use the UK model. Its assessment is set by the National Research Foundation (NRF) which distinguishes researchers as emerging, established and internationally renowned from individuals who apply to be considered.

Chapter 7 ‘Ambiguities in Assessing Higher Education Research in Hong Kong: Critical Reflections’ by Kokila Roy Katyal and Colin Evers, show that despite the return of Hong Kong to China, the influence of Britain remains in how higher educational research is assessed, even in the terminology used. Hong Kong was the first of the East Asian countries to apply quality measures to higher education. The University Grants Committee of Hong Kong (UGC) has instituted a Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) based on the UK’s RAE every three years since 1993, the most recent being 2006. In future though the interval will be six years. The Hong Kong RAE focuses on output and the quality of research which increases selectivity in the distribution of resources in support of research, as well as of teaching and learning. Katyal and Evers begin by looking at some international systems used in assessment of quality, pointing out that such quality assessment is based on twin aims of research excellence and research productivity. In a globally competitive higher education market, reputation comparisons and rankings come to the fore. Katyal and Evers discuss the Hong Kong mechanism and context noting concerns about ambiguity in terminology, local impact, local versus international, and units of assessment. They reflect on the methodology of assessment by posing
the question, ‘Why cannot research quality be defined any way we choose, so long as it can be measured?’ In this section they look at the Times Higher Education Supplement-OS formula for ranking of the top 100 universities in the world, which in 2007 placed University of Hong Kong at 18. Katyal and Evers express a final concern ‘that in many cases the proxies require that Hong Kong’s educational research be portable in a way that British or North American research is not required to be, and that the twin demands of particularity and portability make for a more burdensome load than the assessment of research excellence requires for work done in some other jurisdictions.’

Brian Opie’s work in Chapter 8, ‘Tertiary Education and Research Policy in New Zealand’ looks at the wider higher education context within which PBRF is located, the way knowledge is constructed and looks to the future for the humanities. Opie opens by looking at the way PBRF consists of three strands that ‘produce the knowledge society’: the dominance of science and technology that has supplanted the humanities as the most valued knowledge; knowledge about business and the economy becoming more systematic and the shift to neoliberal government, economy and society from the mid-1980s in New Zealand. Then in order to examine ‘positioning research’, Opie looks at the foundations for the PBRF; discusses what is research; how we produce rigorous (bureaucratic) knowledge; regulating society, not nature; asks what followed the report that led to PBRF being set up (Investing in Excellence, 2002). The section, Positioning research (2) sees Opie expressing concern that New Zealand has unable to transcend colonialism, ‘and is now under the imperial sway of other “international” knowledge systems, notably the United States and Europe.’ Opie argues that ‘For knowledge policy to be effective, it must provide a full account of the ways in which new knowledge creation is achieved in a particular society. To illustrate what might be included in such an account, I will discuss five representations of tertiary knowledge work in a sequence which repeats the structure of the PBRF definition, from scientific to indigenous knowledge.’

Following the more general contextualizing of research assessment in New Zealand presented by Brian Opie, Sue Middleton takes a more specific and reflexive look at the PBRF and its effects on education in Chapter 9, ‘Becoming PBRF-able: Research assessment and Education in New Zealand’. Her approach is epistemological drawing attention to ‘the historical/social conditions in which particular social theories and disciplines, such as Education, develop and change’ and is framed by the last book by Basil Bernstein (2000). Middleton begins with an overview of the PBRF’s quality evaluation processes and introduces the qualitative research project she conducted in 2005. She identifies key terms from Bernstein’s conceptual framework in particular the ‘PBRF as a pedagogic device’, ‘the classification and framing of Education’ then ‘applies them in an historical account of the structural ambivalence of Education as a subject: before the introduction of the PBRF, during the quality evaluation process, and afterwards.’ Middleton concludes by summarising her responses to two related questions: ‘What is it that New Zealand’s PBRF does to Education? And, conversely, what is it that Education does in relation to understanding of the PBRF?’ She ends by stating that
What Education (as subject) offers to a broader understanding of the PBRF is precisely this kind of reflexive analysis of the policies enabling and constraining what and how we research, teach, think, critique, consult, advise, administer, converse and write.

In a shift across the Tasman Sea, Chapter 10, ‘The Quality and Impact Problematic in Australia: Developing a ‘Research Quality Framework’ in Australia’ Lyn Yates examines the establishment between 2004-07 of a new program of research assessment in Australian universities, the ‘Research Quality Framework’ (RQF). As for other countries, the RQF allocated funding. However, it departed first from the RAE by not ranking quality of research by department or discipline, and second from New Zealand’s PBRF that ranked individual researchers and their output, instead RQF ranked by ‘research group’. In addition it assessed ‘impact’ as well as ‘quality’ of these different research groups. The first RQF was to begin on 30 April 2008 with a second round three years later, and thereafter at six-yearly intervals. A change of government in 2007 cancelled the RQF, rejecting the form of the RQF, ‘not the commitment to government-led research assessment and benchmarking, including the criteria of the need to justify the detailed allocation of research spending to taxpayers.’ The details of ‘Excellence in Research in Australia’ (ERA) are yet to be announced, but it is likely to be a modified version of the RQF. In the rest of her chapter, Yates sets out to answer the following questions:

‘what effects are these interventions having on the practices of research in education? Do they represent merely an intensification and new explicitness of existing processes by which those who work as education researchers have always been tacitly governed, or are they redefining in significant ways what will begin to count as quality? How, in practice, has quality been assessed before such ‘research assessment exercises’ come to be mounted? What are the specific mechanisms, and proxies and people and networks that come into play?’

Yates points out that in Australia because universities and government policies are closely linked and ‘because there is far less diversity of funding sources for research available than in the USA or Europe, these assessment programs have the effect of driving universities to a single template of how ‘quality and impact’ are to be operationalised.’ These assessments frame research as a monolithic entity, tied to national productivity, and compare how educational research stacks up against world benchmarks and other disciplines. Despite acknowledging disciplinary differences, science and medicine or economics remain the dominant models.

Jill Blackmore in Chapter 11, ‘Feeling the Quality and Weight of Research Accountability in Australian Universities’ looks at the ‘convergences and divergences of policies on research assessment and their effects in the Australian context. She asks why research assessment has become important now, and how notions of quality and accountability are conflated in discourses around research assessment. Blackmore starts by examining quality and accountability in the ‘knowledge economy’. She points out that a 2005 government proposal that argued for greater diversity between research intensive, research and teaching, and
teaching intensive universities would have significantly disadvantaged education faculties, which are generally located in the newer, regional and less research intensive Australian universities, when vertical ranking of universities and differential funding of research, was applied (as occurred in the UK and the NZ). Blackmore examines the shifts and issues in Australian research assessment policies, looking at the shift in emphasis to ‘excellence’ (ERA) after the RQF was abandoned. In 2008, research was ‘placed within a new Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research (DISR) rather than in the newly formed Department Of Education, Employment, Workplace Relations, indicating that the equation of science to innovation and research remains unsullied’. She ends with a warning that measuring does not assume quality and the amount of bureaucratic paperwork runs the risk of stifling creativity and innovation.

Still in the Southern Hemisphere, Chapter 12, ‘Higher Education Research in South Africa: Between Conservatism and Radicalism’, by Yusef Waghid, provides an account of themes, theoretical strands and approaches to higher education research in South Africa over the past three decades, using the South African Journal of Higher Education. Waghid indicates that higher education research in South Africa is conducted by individual researchers at twenty-three universities, and through research commissioned by government organisations or affiliates. Research is reported on and promoted by the National Research Foundation (NRF) which uses a system of ‘evaluation and rating to distinguish emerging from established and internationally renowned researchers’ assigning those researchers who apply to be considered. In his examination of the articles in SAJHE, Waghid assesses the research from 1987 – 1990s as ‘conservative’ since there was none on democratic theories probably because of the excessive levels of state interference in higher education under apartheid with many critical books banned (Freire and Giroux) and fears that academics held if they spoke out. The next phase he calls, ‘compliant research,’ still largely descriptive, ‘empiricist approaches of the 1980s were extended to problem-centred approaches, mostly action research. At least issues of transformation surfaced, in particular regarding disadvantaged communities, Black education, critical praxis and post-apartheid education. Central to research during the 1990s was an engagement with policy about the new education system.’ The 2000s saw a shift to ‘radical’ and critical research, some use of poststructuralism as issues such as ‘globalisation, internationalisation, indigenization of knowledge, democratic education, equitable redress and quality assurance’ emerged. He focuses on the research contributions of the Philosophy of Education community as an instance of higher education knowledge production in South Africa. Finally, Waghid explores some of the quality assurance processes of the Higher Education Quality Committee in South Africa, specifically focusing on the notion of quality in higher education research with reference to the national review on teacher education.

The fourth section of the book presents the situation in some European countries, starting in Scandinavia. Chapter 13 by Torill Strand and Tone Kvernbeck, ‘Assessing the Quality of Educational Research: The Case of Norway’ notes that Norwegian ‘educational research is funded by and legitimised through a social-
In examining the current quality standards of educational research, Strand and Kvernbekk, ask, ‘why do educational research?’ They ‘argue that the quality standards of educational research are closely linked to the judgements of the relevance and the usefulness of such research’ with the mission of educational research being ‘defined by two different groups of stake-holders; the research community and the policy-makers.’ How each of these groups identifies the mission of educational research forms two sections of the chapter. The historical and present situation in Norway is described, then a national evaluation of Norwegian educational research conducted a few years ago. Strand and Kvernbekk conclude by pointing out the complexity of multiple processes of defining and justifying the mission of educational research arguing that ‘a systematic and professional meta-reflection helps promote the quality of research and move educational research forward.’

Rita Foss Lindblad, Sverker Lindblad and Thomas Popkewitz, discuss ‘Narratives on Educational Research Evaluations in Sweden’ by taking a historical perspective of cultures of assessment in Chapter 14. They do this ‘in order to present and discuss distinct characteristics in research evaluation related to different ways of organising educational research within the changed landscapes of higher education.’ Their chapter is organized around the following three theses: ‘evaluation of educational research in terms of procedures and assessments are coloured by disciplinary procedures and boundary work’; ‘the assessment and evaluation of educational research are increasingly impregnated by generalised criteria of research quality in a restructuring higher education system’; and, ‘there is, and has been, a general neglect of more developed assessments of “relevance” that directs attention to “relevance” as a mark of more intricate meanings, associations and connections than merely that of making a difference in evaluation practises.’ The first section is ‘on the making of education as a scientific discipline in Sweden’, the second, ‘relevance: research for the teaching profession and for educational reform’ looks at how ‘scientific boundary work in the late 19th century discourses made it possible to introduce education (Pedagogik) as an autonomous discipline’; the third looks at the 1970s – 1990s – ‘bringing in international peers – step by step’ when Swedish higher education and research was based on a European, Humboldtian tradition. In response to different criticisms, the 1980s and 1990s involved a ‘turn from a disciplinary organisation of research assessment to a multi-disciplinary field of study has entailed that the autonomy of the single discipline has decreased and that the criteria for assessing scientific qualities have remained the same but are now applied to proposals from different disciplines and judged by researchers from other disciplines.’ The 1990s market model saw a restructuring of higher education in Sweden, that is examined in a section ‘a performative turn – on the look out for a new system’ that is transparent and which has resulted in a number of models being discussed, all related to the notion that universities now have to compete for state research funds.

In Chapter 15, Palle Rasmussen presents ‘Educational Research and Knowledge Policy: the case of Denmark’. As in many earlier chapters, Rasmussen similarly
asks why the policy emphasis on quality in Danish educational research in the last ten years; why an OECD review was commissioned and several task force reports have been produced. This is mainly because the question of the quality of educational research has been closely connected to a number of reforms that have transformed the institutional frameworks for research and teaching in education and learning. The chapter is structured in three main sections. The first describes educational research in Denmark and the types of quality assessment used. The second discusses the 2004 OECD review of educational research in Denmark, its quality assessment and consequences. The third critically discusses some influential current notions about quality in educational research: evidence and knowledge; international quality and local usability; research and professional judgment.

Bas Levering and Paul Smeyers focus on ‘Assessing the Quality of Educational Research in the Netherlands’ in Chapter 16. In a similar situation to that of many countries, the focus on quality did not become an issue in the Netherlands until the 1980s. Levering and Smeyers first provide a background and brief history of educational research in the Netherlands. They note how most research funding was assigned to research groups and individuals whose output was measured only by publication in English in particular journals on the list of the web of science. The effects of this were, first, for 30 years university research became separated from educational practice; second, the disappearance of qualitative or interpretative educational research – including philosophy and history of education; third, quality demands in terms of international standards means that university research becomes increasingly estranged from national and local educational interests. Moreover, the imperative to publish academic work in English is a great concern to many for the way it stifles diversity and marginalizes the Dutch language. The question of whether Dutch is a suitable language for publishing scientific research in ‘education is considered from three perspectives: firstly, from the perspective of the communication of scientists world-wide; secondly by considering the use that is made of such publications in the area of appointments and of promotion of academic staff; and thirdly, with respect to the relationship between various research groups.’ Publishing in English raises a number of ethical issues. It also raises several questions about what problems are studied in education and what type of research is required.

‘Innovations in pedagogy and educational research in France’ are discussed by Roxana Bobulescu and Sophie Reboud in Chapter 17, the last chapter that provides a perspective on educational research from different countries. In France, education is located in the Human and Social Sciences (HSS). The chapter explains how quality criteria are defined in the evaluation of research. Bobulescu and Reboud point out that in France, research is ‘an extremely complex system that comprises a variety of interdependent organizations which are evaluated at several levels and at various frequencies.’ They point out the disconnection between educational research which is conducted in universities and innovations in pedagogy which are not informed by French research. Educational research, presented in publications, is oriented towards the scientific community and has little to do with what happens
in schools with teachers rarely informed of the results. Innovations ‘in pedagogy come from those in the field, teachers and trainers of the various disciplines who do not get involved in the world of educational science.’ Bobulescu and Reboud point out how ‘France is under enormous pressure from the growing liberalization of education’ and the neoliberal encouragement of private ownership of educational services. ‘Pedagogical innovation is therefore not fed by French research; it develops in the private sector, triggered by the competition between educational establishments and follows the Anglo-Saxon model. They illustrate this by presenting an example of pedagogical innovation in French Business Schools. They begin with an evaluation of research in Human and Social Sciences; followed by a review of the characteristics of educational research; the commercialization of higher education; and then a case study: business schools. In conclusion they make some highly critical comments about the state of educational research and how evaluation dominated by quantitative criteria and bibliometrics ‘tend to standardize these criteria without taking into account the different editorial prerequisites, situations and the specific characteristics of the language and culture. French publications are automatically under-evaluated compared to those in English, even though the quality is not taken into consideration. Standardized evaluation criteria give but a partial view of the true impact of the research and foster academic research at the expense of other forms of evaluation and practical applications. Consequently, responses to social demands and the practical applications of the results are completely ignored in the evaluation process. Researchers consider this to be a waste of time with regard to their objectives. The motivation of researchers is misguided in that their research is measured by the number of articles published in academic reviews and not in the intrinsic quality of their work. Certain fields of educational research have been completely abandoned. Until recently, this was the case for higher education. In this context, given that pedagogical practices used by teachers in higher education are not evaluated, motivation to improve was almost zero.’

In the Postscript, the book returns to the way it began by looking at the general picture of educational research and links in with many of the concerns already expressed, especially those concerning bibliometric. In Chapter 18, ‘Research Quality, Bibliometrics and the Republic of Science’, Michael Peters, in the tradition of Michael Polanyi’s ‘republic of science’ raises some philosophical and political questions about the governance of science and the role of bibliometrics in mapping research quality. Peters begins with various ideologies of knowledge based on the Enlightenment—that scientific knowledge can free us from superstition and religion, that it is possible to provide for universal access to knowledge—only to move to today’s illusory ideal of the ‘total information solution’ and the possibility that a private multinational like Thomson can map the emerging world of global science. It is against this background that he raises the issues of control, democracy and peer review in relation to the governance of public good science. He follows Funstonic (2001) in suggesting that ‘quality assurance can thus be seen as a core commitment of post-normal science, replacing “truth” as science’s ultimate regulative principle.’ In the era of post-normal science, questions of peer
review and the autonomy of science come under close scrutiny as do the problems of metrics-based citation analysis as a means of judging quality. Peters clearly embraces the notion of the democratization of science governance and the attendant notion that we should extend the circle of expert peer review to include ‘users’ and also younger scientists. He concludes by mentioning new web technologies characterized by ‘radical trust’ and ‘decentralization’ and suggests that these ‘developments have the potential not only to change the communication of science but also to radically alter its traditional institutions, its organization, its value and the historical underlying ideologies of forbidden knowledge (Christian), of the encyclopaedic knowledge system (Enlightenment secularism), and of the knowledge economy (capitalist technoscience).’

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Theorizing and Comparing Different Assessment Systems
INTRODUCTION

This chapter comprises two main sections. The first section describes the features of state education systems, in particular higher education, that in many Western countries have been restructured by neoliberal managerialist policies in recent decades. Key features of these changes are outlined with subheadings in the chapter: The Restructuring of Higher Education under Neoliberalism and the New Managerialism; Accountability Regimes; and ‘Perform or else’ – Performance and knowledge management in Higher Education. This first section sets the scene by providing a political economy of contemporary higher education as a context for understanding the implementation of quality assurance systems in higher education.

The focus of second section of the chapter entitled ‘Publish or perish’: University Research and the Development of National Systems of Quality Assurance: The United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand, looks at the imperatives to not just publish, but to do so in particular journals with an excellent reputation. As a form of quality assurance and accountability, currently many advanced knowledge capitalist economies are moving to review their arrangements for monitoring research quality in universities and public institutions and allocating research funding according to the results. The United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand, for example, have all introduced or are about to introduce new systems. Australia has yet to conduct a research assessment and seems is still searching for a system. It is indicative of just how politically charged the issue is that with a change of government, Australia abandoned the Research Quality Framework (RQF) which was about to be implemented in 2007 and decided in 2008 to reformulate its assessment as Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA), with a Pilot beginning in 2009, but no date specified beyond then. Therefore the second section ends by outlining national higher education quality assurance systems developed in these three countries which as exemplars of types of accountability systems offer possible points of comparison for other countries. Measuring research quality is a complex comprising the history of science, the development of information and web technologies, the increasing importance of the knowledge-based economy, the rise of global science, and the corresponding increasing imperative felt by higher education institutions and governments to measure research quality both in national and cross-national terms.

THE RESTRUCTURING OF HIGHER EDUCATION UNDER NEOLIBERALISM
AND THE NEW MANAGERIALISM

The restructuring of state education systems and particularly higher education in many Western countries during the last two decades has involved a significant shift away from an emphasis on administration and policy to an emphasis on management. This phenomenon needs to be viewed in the context of the rise of neoliberalism as the predominant ideology of globalization. The ‘new managerialism’ functions as an emergent and increasingly rationalized and complex neoliberal technology of governance of what Foucault (1991) coined as ‘governmentality’ that operates at a number of levels: the individual (‘the self-managing’ technologies), the classroom (‘classroom management techniques’), the academic program (with explicit promotion of the goals of self-management), and the educational institution (self-managing institutions) (see Peters et al, 2000). Under neoliberal governmentality, technologies of government that operate in higher education have seen principal-agent line management chains replace delegated power with hierarchical forms of authoritatively structured relation, which erode, and seek to prohibit, an autonomous space from emerging. This shift in regulative modality constitutes a structural shift which is likely to transform the academic’s role.

The new managerialism has drawn theoretically, on the one hand, on the model of corporate managerialism and private sector management styles which have been applied as New Public Management (NPM), and, on public choice theory and New Institutional Economics (NIE), most notably, agency theory and transaction cost analysis, on the other. The main elements of these are briefly outlined later in the chapter. The NPM and NIE theories and models have been used both as the legitimating basis and instrumental means for redesigning state educational bureaucracies, educational institutions, and even the public policy process (Aucoin, 1990; Boston, 1996, Boston et al, 1996). Most important, there has been a decentralization of management control away from the center to the individual institution permitted by a new contractualism – often referred to as the doctrine of self-management – coupled with new accountability and funding structures. This shift has often been accompanied by a disaggregation of large state bureaucracies into autonomous agencies, a clarification of organizational objectives, and a separation between policy advice and policy implementation functions. The new managerialism has also involved a shift from input controls to quantifiable output measures and performance targets, along with an emphasis on short-term performance contracts, especially for CEOs (chief executive officers) and senior managers. In the interest of so-called productive efficiency, the provision of educational services has been made contestable; and in the interest of so-called allocative efficiency state education has been marketized and privatized.

The central defining characteristic of this new brand of neoliberalism can be understood at one level as a revival of many of the central tenets of classical liberalism, particularly classical economic liberalism. In classical liberalism the individual is characterized as having an autonomous human nature and can practice freedom. In neoliberalism the state seeks to create an individual that is an enterprising and competitive entrepreneur. While for classical liberalism the basis
of government conduct is in terms of ‘natural, private-interest-motivated conduct of free, market exchanging individuals’, for neoliberalism:

… the rational principle for regulating and limiting governmental activity must be determined by reference to artificially arranged or contrived forms of free, entrepreneurial and competitive conduct of economic-rational individuals (Burchell, 1996: 23–24).

The central presuppositions shared between classical liberalism and neoliberalism include:

– The self-interested individual: a view of individuals as economically self-interested subjects. In this perspective the individual was represented as a rational optimizer and the best judge of his/her own interests and needs.

– Free market economics: the best way to allocate resources and opportunities is through the market. The market is both a more efficient mechanism and a morally superior mechanism.

– A commitment to laissez-faire: because the free market is a self-regulating order it regulates itself better than the government or any other outside force. In this, neoliberals show a distinct distrust of governmental power and seek to limit state power within a negative conception, limiting its role to the protection of individual rights.

– A commitment to free trade: involving the abolition of tariffs or subsidies, or any form of state-imposed protection or support, as well as the maintenance of floating exchange rates and ‘open’ economies.

Apart from these shared aspects, neoliberalism cuts across the spaces of classical liberalism. The institutionalization of models of principal-agent chains of line management inserts a hierarchical mode of authority by which the market and state pressures are instituted. For academic staff this carries with it the effect of de-professionalization involving first a shift from collegial or democratic governance in flat structures, to hierarchical models based on dictated management specifications of job performance in principal-agent chains of command (Peters, 2003). Second, the implementation of restructuring initiatives in response to market and state demands involves increasing specifications by management over workloads and course content. Such hierarchically imposed specifications erode traditional conceptions of professional autonomy over work in relation to both teaching and research. Neoliberalism systematically deconstructs the space in terms of which professional autonomy is exercised. Third, traditional conceptions of professionalism involved an ascription of rights and powers over work in line with classical liberal notions of freedom of the individual. Market pressures increasingly encroach and redesign their traditional understandings of rights, as higher education institutions must adapt to market trends (for example, just as individual departments and academics are being told of the necessity for acquiring external research grants, so they are also being told they must teach summer schools).

This means that from neoliberal perspectives, the end goals of freedom, choice, consumer sovereignty, competition and individual initiative, as well as those of compliance and obedience, must be constructions of the state acting now in its
positive role through the development of the techniques of auditing, accounting
and management. It is these techniques that:

... enable the marketplace for services to be established as ‘autonomous’
from central control. Neoliberalism, in these terms, involves less a retreat
from governmental ‘intervention’ than a re-inscription of the techniques and
forms of expertise required for the exercise of government (Barry et al, 1996:
14).

The neoliberal theories that underpin the redesign of public institutions (which
include higher education) invoke Public Choice Theory which includes elements of
Principal Agency Theory, Transaction Cost Analysis, Contractualism, New Public
Management, New Institutional Economics will now be briefly outlined.

Public Choice Theory was developed by James Buchanan and others who
extended Hayek’s promotion of markets as means to regulate private-business
conduct, such that the market should become a mechanism for the institutional
regulation of public sector organizational contexts (see Olsens & Peters, 2005).

Principal Agency Theory specifies a range of monitoring, information eliciting
and performance appraisal techniques, which include the following: determining
the best form of contract; determining the best way of motivating agents; determining
the best way of spurring performance (via targets, rewards and sanctions); finding the
best way of monitoring and specifying contracts to guard against excesses and
dangers produced by opportunism on part of agent (provider capture), due to
‘shirking’ deception, cheating or collusion.

Contractualism is the use of contracting all manner of things and includes
relations where parties have some autonomy to their role; there are distinctions
between roles and therefore where a clarification of roles is obtainable; role
components are specifiable and consequently individuals can be held accountable;
responsibility flows downwards, rather than upwards, i.e., responsibility can be
identified as fixed in terms of a specific role; work is assigned according to
agreement; there is an objective basis for judging performance; transparency is a
feature of the agreement process and there are explicit consequences (sanctions or
rewards) for fulfillment or non-fulfillment (Matheson, 1997). The essence of
contractual models involves a specification, which is fundamentally at odds with
the notion of professionalism. Professionalism conveys the idea of a subject
directed power based upon the liberal conceptions of rights, freedom and
autonomy. It conveys the idea of a power given to the subject, and of the subject’s
ability to make decisions in the workplace. No professional, whether doctor,
lawyer or teacher, has traditionally wanted to have the terms of their practice and
conduct dictated by anyone else but their peers, or determined by groups or
structural levers that are outside of their control. As a particular patterning of
power, then, professionalism is systematically at odds with neoliberalism, for
neoliberals see the professions as self- interested groups who indulge in rent-
seeking behaviour.

The New Public Management can be traced to cameralist ideas. Their common
underlying features included: a “top-down” orientation; a shared view that thrift
was the queen of virtues in public management; a predilection for particular forms of organization; an ascendency built less on the production of conclusions drawn from “hard data” than on maxims followed by reasons and persuasive examples. NPM models in UK, Australia & NZ, share common features including: the switch in emphasis from policy formulation to management and institutional design; from process controls to output controls; from integration to differentiation and from statism to subsidiarity.

NPM involves a number of characteristic processes. It is characterized by the use of performance management techniques including incentives to enhance performance, at both the institutional and the individual level (e.g., short term employment contracts, performance-based remuneration systems, promotion systems, etc.). It applies contractualism in an extensive use of ‘contracts’ to specify the nature of performance required and the respective obligations of agents and principals (including, performance and purchase agreements). Under NPM, throughout the public sector there has been the development of an integrated and relatively sophisticated strategic planning and emulation of private sector management styles. At the same time, there has been the removal, wherever possible, of dual or multiple accountability relationships within the public sector, and the avoidance of joint central and local democratic control of public services. A further characteristic has been the institutional separation of commercial and non-commercial functions; the separation of advisory, delivery, and regulatory functions; and the related separation of the roles of funder, purchaser, and provider. There is the maximum decentralisation of production and management decision-making, especially with respect to the selection and purchase of inputs and the management of human resources. Under NPM, financial management is based on accrual accounting (sometimes including capital charging), to distinguish between the State’s ownership and purchaser interests, outcomes and outputs, an accrual-based appropriations system, and legislation requiring economic policies that are deemed to be ‘fiscally responsible’. Finally, there is the strong encouragement for, and extensive use of, competitive tendering and contracting out, but few mandatory requirements for market testing or competitive tendering (see Boston et al, 1996: 4-5).

The New Institutional Economics holds the following characteristics:

- the separation of ownership and purchase responsibilities; separation of policy from operations; separation of funding, purchasing and provision of services; competition between service providers; and reallocation of functions for focus, synergy and information (Scott, 1997: 158).

ACCOUNTABILITY REGIMES

The notion of accountability takes approximately four different contemporary forms that we might call accountability regimes. They are not mutually exclusive and may exist as hybrids. First, there is the state-mandated agency form that regulates activity or performance according to standards or criteria laid down at state or federal level. Typically, this form is often associated with devolution of
management (though not necessarily governance) and the development of parallel
privatization and/or the quasi market in the delivery of public services. Second,
there is professional accountability which tends to operate through notions of
collegiality, peer review and the control of entry and codes of practice that are
struck by professional associations, most often in occupations like law, accountancy,
dentistry, doctoring. This professional self-regulation often does not include
occupations like teaching and nursing, although it may include counseling (see
Besley, 2002). Third, there is consumer accountability, that is, accountability through
the market, especially where consumer organizations have been strengthened in
relation to the development of public services delivered through markets or market-
like arrangements. Fourth, there is a form of democratic accountability requiring
both internal and external accountability, that is, typically accountability of a
politician to parliament or governing organization and accountability to his/her
electorate.

In higher education, two main accountability regimes exist but with neoliberal
changes there has been a shift from the former to the latter, consumer–managerial
accountability models. First, bureaucratic-professional accountability which is ex-
ante, with rules and regulations specified in advance, formulated in terms of
standards, emphasising process and based on expertise of those who work in a
particular area. Second, consumer-managerial accountability is associated with
market systems based on price, sets up contracts that reward or punish according to
performance in achieving pre-set targets and externally imposed objectives (Olssen
& Peters, 2005).

There exists an inherent conflict between the between neoliberal managerial and
liberal professional cultures, so this is acknowledged below in figure 1 which
outlines an ideal-type model of the internal governance of universities. Since
neoliberal managerialist regimes distrust professionalism arguing that it generates
the conditions for opportunism, sets self-serving standards, and is prone to provider-
capture, the recent shift has been towards neoliberal forms of accountability that
emphasise market processes and quantifiable output measures. Consequently, with
consumer–managerial forms of accountability, academics must now demonstrate
both their teaching and research capabilities. They must demonstrate their utility to
society (which pays for those in publicly funded institutions) by marketing their
courses, competing for students who provide the bulk of core funding through
tuition fees. Academic research must stand up to the rigors of competition for
limited funds (Olssen & Peters, 2005).

‘PERFORM OR ELSE’ – PERFORMANCE AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT
IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Arguably, the culture of ‘performance will be to the 20th and 21st centuries what
discipline was to the 18th and 19th centuries, namely, an onto-historical formation
of power and knowledge’ (McKenzie, 2001: 18). ‘Performance’ has emerged as a
crucial term in at least three different areas of social life: economics, technology
and art. McKenzie also views performance as:
not only as transgressive cultural praxis but also as a global formation of power and knowledge, one that challenges us to perform—or else. Performance in this sense extends and displaces the disciplinary power analysed by Michel Foucault. Its politics are post-colonial rather than colonial, its infrastructures electronic as well as industrial, its economies dominated by services more than manufacturing. Factory labour and tradeoff commodities have obviously not disappeared: instead they have been overcoded by ‘soft wares,’ forms of immaterial production found in communications, finance, healthcare, and social work (McKenzie, 2003, http://www.dokkyo.ac.jp/kokuse/symposium/performance2002/english-abstract-jon_mKenzie.htm).

Performance ‘effectiveness’ and ‘efficiency’ are growing in power as the new conventions and conceptual tools defining the basis for measuring and assessing human and technological standards in the business world – e.g. annual performance reviews for staff which form part of performance management systems and are will likely be conducted or performed orally will also be recorded in written form or
digitally. Moreover, performance is fast becoming the dominant social model of evaluation and is now being applied in education (McKenzie, 2001; Besley & Peters, 2005). McKenzie uses Foucault’s notion of discipline, stating that ‘performance must be understood as the stratum of power/knowledge that emerged in US in late 20th century. Discursive performatives and embodied performances are the knowledge-forms of this power’ (McKenzie, 2001: 25). While disciplinary mechanisms produce unified subjects in institutions such as the school, factory, prison, hospital, each with its own discrete archive of statements and practices, performative power blurs the borders of social institutions by connecting and sharing digital archives. All manner of information files about one’s performance – financial, medical, academic, criminal, housing, tax etc, that were formerly stored in filing cabinets are not only being copied into online databases, but many are now electronically networked, especially those of government departments.

The genealogies of ‘performance’ reveal multiple and disparate sources in performance studies (Carlson, 1996) and almost simultaneously in both Austin (1974) and Marcuse (2002) who coined the term ‘performance principle’ in 1955 to name the reality principle of post-industrial societies. Yet it is Lyotard’s use of ‘performativity’ and ‘the logic of performativity’ that gets referred to in the field of educational studies. In *The Postmodern Condition*, Lyotard developed a philosophical interpretation of the changing state of knowledge, science and education in the most highly developed societies, reviewing and synthesising research on contemporary science within the broader context of the sociology of post-industrial society and studies of postmodern culture. Lyotard brought together for the first time diverse threads and previously separate literatures in an analysis which many commentators and critics believed to signal an epochal break not only with the so-called ‘modern era’ but also with various traditionally ‘modern’ ways of viewing the world. Lyotard’s major working hypothesis: “that the status of knowledge is altered as societies enter what is known as the postindustrial age and cultures enter what is known as the postmodern age” (Lyotard, 1984: 3). He uses the term ‘postmodern condition’ to describe the state of knowledge and the problem of its legitimation in the most highly developed societies. Lyotard argues that science and technology are falling under the sway of “another language game, in which the goal is no longer truth, but performativity—that is, the best possible input/output equation” (Lyotard, 1984: 37).

Performance management draws upon the paradigm of cultural performance and substitutes for scientific management or ‘Taylorism’, which was the dominant organizational paradigm developed in the early part of last century for a manufacturing-based, nationally-oriented, and highly industrialized economy. Performance management in contrast to scientific management no longer produces highly centralized bureaucracies or rigid, top-down management styles or perceived controlling, hierarchical and conformist organizational cultures. Performance management doesn’t sell itself as scientific but rather adopting the paradigm of cultural performance it re-describes itself as an *ars poetica* of organizational practice, which is evident in texts like *Corporate Renaissance: The Art of Reengineering* (Cross et al, 1994); *Jamming: The Art and Discipline of*
Business Creativity (Kao, 1998); Cultural Diversity in Organizations (Cox, 1993). This new soft power of management theory and practice recognises performance as having acquired a normative force.

Higher education is a crucial sub-sector where these types of performative power intersect, especially when framed by the policy template of the knowledge economy for in the knowledge economy the cultural and the symbolic are paramount. This is the very idea behind the so-called sign economy no longer based on raw materials but rather on the transformation of ideas and symbolic resources by means of intellectual, human and social capital. In this environment increasingly the three spheres of the economic, technical and cultural are brought into a close alignment as performative power combines the rational calculation of (‘high performance’) technical systems and databases with the domain of affective management based around personal experience and social interaction. Performance management in this context first came to light with the development of performance measurement systems developed by the performance indicator movement and later under New Public Management that drew on principal-agency theory and transactional cost analysis (see Besley, 2002; Peters, 1990; 1994; 2002). Performance management is an ideal system for knowledge management especially where one of the main aims for the knowledge manager is to extract knowledge from people’s heads (often tacit knowledge that is difficult to codify) and to embed it in intellectual systems or processes as soon as possible, both protecting it as intellectual property under copyright, patent or international trade law and putting it into commercial service to make a profit (Besley & Peters, 2005). It is classically speaking concerned with the appropriate of the knowledge surplus and often performance management utilises the soft psychotherapeutic technologies in the affective domain, alongside traditional peer review mechanisms and collegial exchange, and in combination with simple counts, computer and/or accounting methodologies (including the weighting and the arithmeticisation of soft variables like ‘reputation’) to produce departmental, faculty, and institutional performance ‘profiles’ and, institutional, national and international league tables.

‘PUBLISH OR PERISH’: UNIVERSITY RESEARCH AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL SYSTEMS OF QUALITY ASSURANCE: THE UNITED KINGDOM, AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

A prime technology of accountability that is used in business world and now in higher education involves the notion of quality. The proliferation of ‘quality initiatives’, ‘quality units’ and the ever-more-frequent use of the term ‘quality’ in institutional discourse is evidence that State control over Universities will substantially be achieved by some version of ‘Quality Assurance’ (QA) auditing. As with accountability, the effectiveness of this form of managerial discourse depends upon the rhetorical device of switching between general and technical meanings of the word.

Quality Assurance is a technical managerial term for that type of auditing which is concentrated upon systems and processes rather than outcomes (Charlton, 2001). QA is built on the assumption that any properly-constituted organization should be
based around a system of auditing systems and processes. QA auditing has become closely identified with older managerial approaches including the word ‘Quality’ – such as Total Quality Management (TQM) and the awarding of quality assurance systems of organizations with ‘UK Standards’ and ‘International Standards’ (Feigenbaum, 1983; Perigord, 1990; TQM International, 1992). QA auditing therefore has close evolutionary links to ‘quality enhancement’ strategies, based upon creating a ‘culture’ centred on ‘quality’ which usually means reorganizing production around reliable processes and systems of checking and feedback.

Criteria to measure the real-world excellence or ‘quality’ of university teaching have proved impossible to agree upon. Instead, the ‘quality’ of teaching has been re-defined by the variously named Quality Assurance Agencies in many countries in terms of documented compliance with an approved QA system. The most fundamental attribute of a QAA approved system of teaching is that it is auditable – in other words that it can be comprehensively and self-consistently documented. ‘High quality’ teaching is therefore an explicit system characterized by vision &/or mission statements, aims and objectives, flow-charts, monitoring, feedback and formal procedures for all imaginable contingencies. Only that which is documented, hence auditable, is deemed to count as legitimate teaching activity (Charlton, 2002). This section proceeds to outline the research assessment procedures in The United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand as exemplars of quality assurance systems.

The United Kingdom Research Assessment Exercise (RAE)

The UK Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) 2008 is the sixth in a series begun in 1986 under Margaret Thatcher ‘conducted nationally to assess the quality of UK research and to inform the selective distribution of public funds for research by the four UK higher education funding bodies’ (http://www.rae.ac.uk/). It provides quality profiles across all disciplines evaluated by experts in some 70 units of assessment. The cycle runs every five years and it is used to enable the higher education funding bodies to distribute around £5 billion of public funds (in 2001) for research selectively on the basis of quality. The RAE provides quality ratings on the basis of panels of experts who use a standard scale of 1 to 5* to award a rating for each submission, according to how much of the work is judged to reach national or international levels of excellence. Outcomes are published to provide public information on the quality of research in UK universities (see http://www.hero.ac.uk/rae/).

The 2008 exercise is currently in train and should be seen in the context of ongoing review of Sir Gareth Roberts’ Review (July 2003), the House of Commons Report (October 2004), and the 10 year report Science and innovation investment framework 2004-2014: next steps (March, 2006). Central to the RAE ethos is that the process is based on expert review and is not mechanistic. Panels use their professional judgment to form a view about the overall quality of research activity described in each submission. The overall quality profile is comprised of
the aggregate of the weighted profiles produced for outputs (min. 50%), research environment (min. 5%) and esteem indicators (min. 5%).

There have been many criticisms of the RAE. Michael Day (2004), for instance, provides an account of the impact on national research productivity and summarizes the criticisms in terms of fundamental objections, which ‘note that the RAE has unintended consequences in terms of academic ‘game-playing,’ the deterrence of collaborative research, and a downgrading in the importance of teaching and the regional role of universities,’ and criticisms that focus more on the process and methodology adopted by the exercises (transparency, cost, neglect of bibliometric indicators, use of checking statistics, and possible bias). Day (2004) considers how the introduction of institutional repositories and citation linking between papers in repositories might be used as the basis for generating quantitative data on research impact that could be used for assessment. He backgrounds the ePrints UK (http://www.rdn.ac.uk/projects/eprints-uk/) project whose aim is to develop a national service that gives access to e-print records, indicating that by 2003 it was estimated that 75 per cent of all scholarly journals were available online. He notes also the emphasis on open access and the use of the Internet to make the results of science and scholarship freely available, such as the Budapest Open Access Initiative (http://www.soros.org/openaccess/), the emphasis of ‘self-archiving’, and the House of Commons Select Committee on Science and Technology (2004) recommendation ‘that the research councils and other Government funding bodies should mandate their grantees to deposit a copy of published output in institutional repositories’ (p. 13). In short, he makes the case for institutional repositories based on automatic reference linking, citation analysis and webometrics.

It is perhaps not so surprising then that in the recent Budget statement (22 March, 2006) Science and innovation investment framework 2004-2014: next steps the Government announced its intention not to conduct further Research Assessment Exercises (RAE) after 2007-08 and to substitute a system based on metrics. The discussion paper on the framework begins:

Against the background of increasing global competition for knowledge intensive business activity, this paper presents next steps on five key policy areas: maximising the impact of public investment in science on the economy through increasing innovation; increasing Research Councils’ effectiveness; supporting excellence in university research; supporting world-class health research; and increasing the supply of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) skills (http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/D2E/4B/bud06_science_332v1.pdf).

The discussion paper emphasizes the RAE as the second main key element to the investment framework:

In order to maintain the UK’s world-class university system, the Government is keen to ensure that excellent research of all types is rewarded, including user-focused and interdisciplinary research. Recognising some of the burdens imposed on universities by the existing Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), the Government has a firm presumption that after the 2008 RAE the
system for assessing research quality and allocating “quality-related” (QR) research funding to universities from the Department for Education and Skills will be mainly metrics-based. The Government will launch a consultation on its preferred option for a metrics-based system, publishing results in time for the 2006 Pre-Budget Report.6

A metrics-based system is seen as an important aspect of creating an ‘innovation ecosystem’ to improve the strategic management of investment in science and innovation which is more responsive to economic and public policy priorities. It is still unclear exactly what this means for research assessment but already there are fears of its impacts. While it may encourage concentration of research resources it may also distort the nature of research and push up transaction costs. Tom Sastry and Bahram Bekhradnia (2006) conclude:

The move from the RAE to metrics as the basis for allocating QR funds represents a huge leap into the unknown. Whatever weaknesses the RAE is believed to have – and the majority of these have not been demonstrated as effects of the RAE – it is apparent that metrics represent an alternative that will cost more, could lead to behaviours at least as deleterious as the RAE, and could lead to considerable instability.

Australia – still searching for a system – from RQF to ERA

Until the change to a Labor government in late 2007, Australia was intending to implement the Research Quality Framework (RQF). First we briefly look at the now abandoned RQF, then the ERA. In 2005, after a lengthy consultation process, Professor Sir Gareth Roberts from Oxford University (who also reviewed the UK RAE July 2003), as Chairman of the Expert Advisory Group (EAG) which was responsible for the Final Advice paper, states in his Foreword:

Fundamental to the model is the importance of review by peers and qualified end-users. My experience in the United Kingdom clearly demonstrates that the only system which will enjoy the confidence and consent of the research community is one based on expert review. I am pleased that the Australian RQF will be underpinned by this vital principle.

The Group is confident that the proposed RQF model, once implemented, will establish greater transparency of the quality and impact of publicly-funded research. The EAG also requests that additional resources be provided by the Australian Government to implement the preferred RQF model and use the RQF as the basis for significant extra funding for research.

A distinguishing feature of the Australian RQF is its explicit assessment of the impact of university research. (Department of Education, Science and Training, 2005: 3)

Quoting from the Executive summary, the main features of the preferred RQF model were:
– Institutions to nominate Research Groupings that can be aggregated to Research Fields, Courses and Disciplines (RFCD) Codes, subject to adherence to RQF Guidelines as developed by the RQFIG;
– Assessment of both the quality of original research outputs and associated impact, within the assessment period for the RQF;
– An expert review-based assessment process overseen by the RQFIG;
– A Research Grouping to provide an Evidence Portfolio (EP), comprising of:
  – A Context Statement detailing the type, composition and focus of the Research Grouping;
  – The 4 “best” outputs of each of the eligible researchers;
  – The full list of Research Outputs produced in the 6 year production period; and
  – Statements of early impact, verified by qualified end-users of research.
– 12 Expert Assessment Panels to develop their own discipline-specific guidelines (consistent with overarching RQF Guidelines) and assess EPs of nominated Research Groupings;
– Panels able to flexibly expand membership and have access to Specialist Assessor Groups to make assessments, as required, particularly for cross-discipline and/or emerging research areas;
– Panels moderated by an RQF Moderation Panel;
– Independent validation of a statistically-significant sample of panel assessments to ensure RQF ratings are appropriately benchmarked both nationally and internationally, coordinated by the RQF Moderation Panel;
– Assessment of quality and impact to be primarily based on the same “best” four Research Outputs per eligible researcher for each Research Grouping over a six-year period;
– Quality to be assessed against a 5-point scale and impact against a 3-point scale;
– Reporting of RQF ratings of quality and impact by Research Groupings, and discipline areas (including profiles of ratings at either 6, 4 or 2-digit RFCD level) for each institution; and
– Funding distributed to institutions based on quality and impact ratings through an appropriate mechanism. (Department of Education, Science and Training, 2005: 7-8)

In an indication that he understands the competitive global higher education market Roberts had earlier advised “If you do invest in this sort of quality research framework, it will pay huge dividends, otherwise, with the rise of China and other nations, in 10 years, Australia will be struggling.” (March 21, 2005, http://www. the-funneled-web.com/N&V_2005(Jan-Dec)/N&V_0503/news__views_item_march_ 2005-050321a.htm).

As can be clearly seen the Australian RQF model drew considerably on the UK RAE and consolidates the importance of expert peer review by panels, but adds in an impact factor.

In February 2008, Kim Carr, the new Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research, announced the new model, the Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) initiative.
to be developed by the Australian Research Council (ARC) in conjunction with the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research, will assess research quality using a combination of metrics and expert review by committees comprising experienced, internationally-recognised experts.’

http://www.arc.gov.au/media/releases/media_26feb08.htm

Unlike its predecessor, the new system is intended to be ‘a streamlined, internationally recognised and transparent research quality assurance system.’ To this end, ‘ERA would start with those disciplines where the metrics were most widely accepted, for example, in the physical and biological sciences. In parallel, we will continue consultation with other disciplines about metrics appropriate to their disciplines, noting that some measures will be appropriate to all disciplines and that for all disciplines expert review of the metrics is essential.’ (http://www.arc.gov.au/media/releases/media_26feb08.htm). Presumably education will be located as one of the ‘other disciplines.’ The website does not make clear when the ERA will occur until the FAQs are explored. These indicate that a staff census at 31 March 2008 ‘will be used for both the ERA pilot and the formal ERA submission processes conducted in 2009.’ (http://www.arc.gov.au/pdf/FAQ_Era_Pilot.pdf). Full details of the ERA system have yet to be released, but already it has been welcomed by Professor Stuart Cunningham, President of the Council for the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (CHASS), saying ‘This new approach appears to be committed to a sensible balance between metrics and expert review.’ He thought that ‘using the well-credentialed assessment resources of the Australian Research Council (ARC)’ would support the streamlined approach, but it may ‘take two or three years to work through the various discipline clusters.’ (http://chass.createsend4.com/viewEmail.aspx?cID=C3BF461A1B857A6F&sID=338681A7CE6273FF9A5F45F2411A6F1E&dID=5CB9CB5A1CE688CE)

Despite the endorsement from the President of CHASS, the emphasis with the change now to ERA seems to strongly favor bibliometrics, keeping expert panels – presumably as a form of peer review, but it seems to have dumped the impact factor – staying more in line with current RAE changes that are proposed.

The New Zealand Performance-Based Research Fund (PBRF)

New Zealand introduced its research assessment exercise, the Performance-Based Research Fund (PBRF) in 2002. It is administered by the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC). Unlike the UK which describes the sector as ‘Higher Education’, New Zealand uses the term Tertiary Education Organization (TEO) to describe the universities, polytechnics and other post-secondary school institutions. The major element, the Quality Evaluation, is held periodically. The first was completed in 2003 and the second, a partial round, was held in 2006. The next full round is scheduled for 2012. The New Zealand model, in principle, follows now-standard procedures for expert peer review by panels. The PBRF provides ‘the largest pool of research funding for the tertiary education sector, has distributed $664 million since its inception in 2002, and is anticipated to distribute a further $1
billion through 2012.’ (http://www.tec.govt.nz/templates/standard.aspx?id=3633). The other major funding source for research in NZ is from the Marsden Fund, ‘established by the Government in 1994 to support excellent ideas-driven research initiated by the researchers themselves’ and administered by the Royal Society of New Zealand which in 2008 allocated $54million (http://marsden.rsnz.org/).

Full details about the PBRF are available on the TEC website. It provides links to consultation papers; the 2012 Quality Evaluation Sector Reference Group; results for the Quality Evaluation 2006 (PBRF TEO results; PBRF panel results; PBRF subject area results; PBRF Research Fund results; and Peer Review Panels for the 2006 PBRF Quality Evaluation); PBRF Phase 2 Evaluation; and Research in Tertiary Education Organisations. The PBRF website states:

The primary goal of the Performance-Based Research Fund (PBRF) is to ensure that excellent research in the tertiary education sector is encouraged and rewarded. This entails assessing the research performance of tertiary education organisations (TEOs) and then funding them on the basis of their performance.

Between 2004 and 2007 the PBRF is progressively replacing the current EFTS (equivalent full-time student) ‘top-up’ funding for research. The PBRF model has three elements to:
- reward and encourage the quality of researchers – 60 percent of the fund
- reflect research degree completions – 25 percent of the fund

As part of a process of continuous improvement, TEC set up an evaluation strategy from 2004-2014, after the first full Quality Evaluation round and scheduled to finish after the second round. As the Phase two evaluation, TEC commissioned an Independent Strategic Review ‘of the positive effects and unintended consequences’ by UK based Jonathon Adams in February 2008 to assess the PBRF to date after the 2006 partial round. Key findings of Adams’ Independent Review of PBRF are on the TEC website: http://www.tec.govt.nz/templates/standard.aspx?id=3633. The summary sets out the key findings in three subheadings. The first is that PBRF has met government objectives and ‘been effective and would benefit from additional funding’ … it is ‘already delivering important and appropriate outcomes of significant economic, social and cultural benefit; delivering beneficial outcomes in financial, reputational and formative terms.’ It ‘has directed funding more selectively to institutions delivering better research; increased the quantity and quality of information about relative research strength in New Zealand; spurred improvements in the management and conduct of research.’ The latter suggests clearly that improvements had been needed in these areas and that PBRF has provided the impetus that has spurred such improvements.

The second subheading of the report lists four ‘strengths to protect’, but these can really be read as warnings. One strength is the investment in people, in ‘creating HE institutions that produce very highly-skilled graduates… finding and using knowledge to solve problems.’ In what appears to be an acknowledgement of
the concerns expressed by many who see problems for assessing the humanities and Maori and Pasifika research, it acknowledges that the ‘core model of research and excellence that is more western and science-focused, and research in modes that are distant from this core may fare slightly less well, however this is addressable through minor improvements in panel processes.’ It also notes dangers of conflicting goals if the focus is extended beyond ‘identifying and funding research excellence’ e.g. ‘prioritising utility or commercial value, promoting innovation or developing basic research capability at institutions whose research base is not yet well established.’

The last subheading of the report suggests six improvements as follows:

– Alter panel membership, training, deliberation time and practices to improve the breadth and depth of the quality assessment.
– Better-recognise applied research and research with applied outputs such as reports for external bodies.
– Restrict staff eligibility to a core group of more closely-defined permanent academic staff who represent principal investigators.
– Shift the unit of assessment from the individual to the group after 2012.
– Dissociate scores from staff names. Making individual scores available “undermines proper staff development processes in some institutions” and leads to some TEOs inappropriately using the PBRF as a staff-appraisal substitute.
– Alter weightings in several ways to ensure continued emphasis on increasing quality. An “A” quality category could have stronger financial and scoring benefit compared to a “B” so that there is a clear benefit to raising staff to the highest level of excellence. Weightings for research degree completions might be reduced because they represent quantity rather than quality. Subject-area weightings should also be reviewed.


The points made as strengths to protect and the suggestions for improvement reflect many of the concerns and criticisms that academics have expressed to date about the PBRF (see Codd, 2005; 2005; and Smith & Jesson, 2005). Robyn May (2004), Academic Vice President for the Association of University Staff NZ, for example, signals the main concern with ‘the individual basis of the rating system and the wide-ranging effects this has on academics’ which can be highly divisive and ‘work against the collegial culture of the profession.’ Dalziel (2005) also has pointed out the negative consequences of the individualistic basis of the PBRF that has impacted badly on new and emerging researchers, compromised interdisciplinary team-based research and worked against the cultural values of Maori and Pasifika researchers. The publication of results of the Quality Evaluation on the website (the 2003 results had been available but have been replaced by the 2006 results) has also enabled inferences to be made about the quality categories assigned to individual researchers. Adopting a unit of assessment that focuses on individuals is the main departure from the UK RAE. The 2008 evaluation report clearly recommends dropping this aspect and shifting the focus to the level of the research group. There also have been criticisms about the high administrative and compliance costs and a range of methodological objections concerning the applications of
guidelines and evidence of their official recognition and attempts to address the concerns (see Boston, 2005).

It is pertinent to indicate something of the status of the discipline of education in New Zealand and how it fared in the 2003 PBRF evaluation. As Crothers (2005) records according to the 2003 PBRF data collected there are 1077 educational researchers in NZ, of which 530 submitted evidence portfolios. This group is overwhelmingly female (70%) and most falling in the 40s age group (roughly 45%). Only 8% are Maori. These 530 educationalists produced some 10,000 outputs over the six year period, an average of 19 research outputs per researcher. In terms of comparative analysis education as a discipline ranked 39 out of 41 subject areas just above design and nursing (Smith, 2005: 46). In terms of international comparison Crothers (2005) draws on bibliometric data from the Swiss Centre for Science and Technology (CEST, 2004a, b) based upon the ISI, especially the SSCI, databases which as he indicates tends to be biased in terms of only those nominated education journals, mostly Western and overwhelmingly U.S., that are officially recognized. Crothers (2005) calculates that only the University of Auckland (the largest research university in NZ) fell into the world category, ranking 53rd, suggesting that it ‘has enough scholarly contingent in education to produce a moderate performance in terms of output and impact’ (p. 158). Crothers (2005) indicates the separateness of New Zealand’s educational research culture with its own research association the New Zealand Centre for Educational Research (NZCER), national research institutes and funding base within the Ministry, hiving it off from the social sciences. He also suggests that there is ‘little evidence of strategic research’ or ‘critical research’ and raises questions about ‘capacity building, culmination of research findings and the deepening of research knowledge’ (p. 159).7

CONCLUSION

A range of questions can be asked about the parlous state of educational research at the national and international level and its relatively poor ‘performance’ compared to other disciplines. The reform and rationalization movement in higher education meant a spate of mergers of teachers’ colleges with university departments in many countries. The result has been that newly formed faculties, colleges or schools of education have had their ranks swelled with non-active researchers since most teachers’ college lecturers tended to be hands-on practitioners engaged in teaching rather than research. This dilution and the time it takes for upskilling faculty have never been researchers, to produce research has meant that the number of active researchers in education remains low. Given time this will presumably change. The strong emphasis within universities education faculties is on teacher education and on practitioner-based and evidence-based research. It is important that research assessment systems do not compare the numbers of researchers with those of other disciplines and so unfairly penalise education faculties for the low number of researchers. Instead they should respect the contribution education faculty make to other key aspects of academic work – to teaching, administration and service.

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Support needs to be given to enable faculty to become research active in newly merged institutions. We can see this as part of the professional development of teaching per se.

With the emergence and development of national systems of assessing the quality of research it is of paramount importance that educational researchers take some responsibility for monitoring and measuring their own ‘performance’ both nationally and internationally. This means not only attention to the emerging political economy of performance-based systems and performance management world wide (Peters, 2005; Peters & Besley, 2006) with reference to their critique (Lyotard’s 1984 ‘performativity’; see also Peters, 1995), the historical formation of the human sciences (Foucault, 1971), and the growing audit culture (Power, 1997), together with their distorting effects on practice and on the value of local knowledge and culture, but also some broader understanding of emerging trends and patterns of ownership of academic journals and publishing within the context of the rise of global science as it is underwritten by developments in information and communications technologies, including the increasing sophistication of bibliometrics and webometrics. Crucial to this context are political issues concerning the preservation of peer review, the changing nature of scientific practice, and the governance (as opposed to the management) of science within a rapidly emerging global knowledge economy.

NOTES

1 Earlier versions of this chapter were presented in a seminar at Stellenbosch University, South Africa in 2006 and at AERA, Chicago, 2007. A version appeared as A.C. Besley & Michael A. Peters, Neoliberalism, performance and the assessment of research Quality in the South African Journal of Higher Education (20 (6) 2006).

2 Michael Peters was a consultant for the New Zealand Ministry of Research, Science and Technology in 1991 producing An Evaluation of Science Review Processes in New Zealand and Selected Countries (Peters, 1991) and later a member of the national policy analysis group on technology and science policy which resulted in published material on the new science policy regime (Peters, 1994a). As a British Council Fellow at the Institute of Education in 1990 he carried out research into performance indicators, an interest that has remained (e.g. Peters, 1992a, b; 1994a, b, 2000, 2002, 2006) as part of his wider focus on universities, the knowledge economy and the changing nature of public science.

3 See also Gillies (2004) who argues on the basis of lessons from the history and philosophy of science, including reference to Wittgenstein, that the likely effect of the RAE ‘is to shift the UK research community in the direction of producing the routine research of normal science resulting in slow progress and small advances, while tending to stifle the really good research – the big advances, the exciting innovations, the big breakthroughs’ (p. 24).


5 The Budget statement is available at http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/budget/budget_06/assoc_docs/bud_bud06_adscience.cfm.

The framework document is at http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/D2E/4B/bud06_science_332v1.pdf.
NEOLIBERALISM, PERFORMANCE AND THE ASSESSMENT

Interesting the discussion paper notes: ‘With just 1 per cent of the world’s population, the UK undertakes 5 per cent of the world’s research, publishes over 12 per cent of all cited papers and almost 13 per cent of papers with the highest impact… The UK dominates the European science base too, with six higher education institutions in Europe’s top ten’ (p. 8).


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NEOLIBERALISM, PERFORMANCE AND THE ASSESSMENT


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INTERNATIONALIZATION AND THE ASSESSMENT OF RESEARCH QUALITY IN EDUCATION

Over the period 2006-2008, I had the privilege of being a panel member of an assessment panel with the UK’s Research Assessment Exercise 2008 (RAE 2008). When I was asked to join the panel I was not sure about the role I was expected to perform. Nor was I entirely convinced that, as a scholar who regarded himself as ‘critical’, I would be entirely comfortable performing a state-mandated task. I knew I was expected to assess the quality of educational research in Britain, but I was less clear as to how my assessment would feature in the calculations by which individual and institutional careers might be affected. I was told that I was to represent an ‘international’ voice on the panel, helping it assess how British research ‘stacked up’ against some presumed international standard. This was indeed a daunting task, not least because the criteria by which this standard was to be judged was left entirely unspecified. The assumption was that I would somehow know instinctively what this was, on the basis of my own work as a researcher and my familiarity with international research networks.

After much reflection, I accepted the challenges associated with this role, while remaining mindful of an acute observation made by the late Edward Said in his 1993 Reith lectures, later published as *Representations of the Intellectual*. Said (1994) argued that critical scholars working for the state occupied an ambiguous position, for they could not afford to be too much ‘out of step’ with the established rules of governance, while as critics they could not afford not to be. A way out of this dilemma, he suggested, was for critical scholars to work pragmatically, to speak the language of the state but keep that language unstable enough so that their ability to be critical was never compromised. This was good advice, which I sought to follow at all times, always interested in theorizing the relationship between state patronage and the production of research, within a framework that recognizes the needs of the state and universities to assess research performance for a wide variety of purposes, and to use the discourse of international significance to position themselves within an increasingly globalized market in higher education. However, as a critical scholar, I continued to be sceptical of the politics surrounding these developments, insisting on the need to imagine more radical possibilities associated with the idea of internationalization of educational research.

As is widely known, the idea of ‘international’ is used in research assessment schemes not only in the United Kingdom but also in Hong Kong and New Zealand where similar schemes exist and other places like Australia where it is being developed. Indeed, in describing its criteria for judging the relative merits of submitted research, RAE 2008 invoked the idea of ‘international’ in no less than
three of the four different grades it awarded, and in the fourth it was implied, where ‘national’ was read as ‘non-international’. It was explicit in maintaining that the quality of research was to be judged in terms of originality, significance and rigor, but also in suggesting that these criteria of quality might themselves be defined, interpreted and judged in international terms. In this way, ‘international’ served as a kind of meta-criteria. This construction is expressed widely in such notions as ‘internationally refereed’, ‘internationally benchmarked’, ‘internationally recognized’ and ‘world class’ used not only by RAE2008 but also by funding bodies and universities around the world in articulating their aims and objectives. So much as so that this discourse might itself be said to have become globalized.

Yet when we look more closely at this discourse, it is abundantly clear that the term ‘international’ is often taken to have a self-evident meaning. Seldom is it analysed in any systematic fashion, even by the critics of research assessment schemes. It thus serves as a symbolic marker – as an honorific title for research that is considered meritorious in terms of originality, significance and rigor, as judged by peers, panels and commentators alike. Over the years, a large literature has emerged in relation to the politics of research assessment schemes, especially about of the ways it enables states and organizations to establish frameworks for distributing research funds, for holding researchers accountable and for steering them towards certain priorities. Some of this literature also seeks to explain the origins and the popularity of research assessment schemes in terms of the new management practices in higher education, the dynamics of neo-liberal state policies and the requirement of the globalizing knowledge economy. The impact of these schemes on the professional practices of research, the formation of research communities and the organizational changes and leadership has been investigated; as is the manner in which such schemes are utilized to strengthen policy and practice in education. It is often assumed that such mechanisms represent a culture of performativity (Lyotard, 1984), or an ‘audit culture’ (Strathern, 2000)

At the conceptual level, numerous educational scholars have sought to re-examine the concepts of originality, significance and rigor in educational research, seeking to provide greater depth to our understanding of these criteria, and how they might be aligned to the diversity of methodological traditions. They have also commented on the requirements of greater impact, affectivity and relevance to educational practice. In Australia, Lyn Yates (2006), for example, has written eloquently about how the notion of significance in educational research might be interpreted, and to what extent it is possible to measure the impact of educational research. In Britain, John Furlong (Furlong & Oancea, 2006) has led a team of researchers and users of educational research to develop a framework for assessing quality and practice-based research in education. In Canada, Ben Levin (2005) has put forward a powerful argument about how research in education can contribute to the production and assessment of education policy. And in New Zealand, John Codd (2006) has described the origins and the broader organizational politics of research assessment systems. In a more policy and practical context, I remain full of admiration for the members of the sub-panel on Education for RAE2008, under the leadership of Margaret Brown, who struggled to understand in operational
terms the criteria of originality, significance and rigor so that these were inclusive of the diverse methodological traditions of educational research, and also of the needs of most stakeholders in Britain’s educational community.

Now, for all this outstanding work, there is remarkably little that has been published on the idea of internationalization as a criterion for assessing research quality. This is indeed surprising given the theoretical and policy importance attached to it. A major exception to this is a highly perceptive and insightful analysis presented by David Bridges (2007). In his paper, Bridges has sought to examine the relationship between the discourse of international on the hand and the discourse of research quality on the other. He has identified a number of problems with the application of the concept of ‘international’ to make judgments of research quality. He has noted that each of the key criteria of originality, significance and rigor of research raises questions of not only ‘of what’ but also ‘for whom’. And the question of ‘for whom’ inevitably raises the issue of the geographical scope of the reach of educational research, both through its international dissemination and its impact. RAE2008 specifically suggested that ‘spatial’ considerations of geography should not enter into an assessment of quality, but it has always been hard for me to imagine how the idea of ‘international’ could be conceptually untied from these considerations, for ‘international’ is inextricably a spatial concept.

In making and supporting judgments of quality in educational research, the idea of ‘international’ could be interpreted in a number of ways. First, it might be suggested that to meet some international criteria of rigor, originality and significance is to invoke certain universal standards by which research quality is judged. This would suggest that no matter who, where and how a particular piece of research is done, the same standards are applicable, and that those who have been initiated into these standards would recognize it without hesitation. Here, the assessment of research quality is not tied to any particular socio-spatial context, but is based instead on universally recognized criteria appropriate to particular disciplines, determined either transcendentally or made through some historical generalization. One suspects that it is this idea of ‘international’ that RAE2008 had in mind; and that, as a result, it envisaged that the role of the international panel members was to authenticate the application of these universal criteria to particular pieces of research.

Now while the appeal of this universalistic understanding of international excellence is understandable, based as it is within positivist and rationalist epistemological traditions, articulated against the dominant western conception of enlightenment and modernity, it has in recent decades become increasingly difficult to sustain it. Some fifty years ago few would have challenged its plausibility. But in light of recent post-structural, post-colonial and feminist critiques of the notion of universal reason, it is no longer possible to accept its assertions of absolutism and certainty. Sociologists of knowledge have shown that any claim to such universality is located in a history, and that it serves only to benefit particular political interests. Following Wittgenstein (1973), it is widely argued that all language games, and by implication, including those associated with claims to rigor, originality and significance, are located within particular forms of
life. And even more strongly, Foucault’s analysis (1980) of the relationship between power and knowledge suggests that all epistemic claims are subject to genealogical analyses. And if this is so then a universalism inherent in many claims about research quality is at least contestable.

A second way of thinking about ‘international’ in the assessment of research quality is to tie it to bibliometric considerations. In this way, ‘international’ might signal the fact that a given piece of research is published in an internationally renowned journal, following a rigorous process of refereeing. This might suggest that the journal is read and admired widely, perhaps even internationally, and serves as something of a bearer for the standards of quality. Plausible though this line of thinking might be, on both pragmatic and historical grounds, I find this reasoning to be circular: for quality is judged in terms of the journal and the journal in turn is considered meritorious because of its quality. So while the high regard in which the journal is held around the world could arguably be regarded as a necessary condition for judging quality it can hardly be assumed to be sufficient.

Given the multiplicity of theoretical, methodological and political positions, the claim of quality of a journal is almost invariably contested by some, especially in the humanities, social sciences and professional disciplines such as Education.

There are a number of other reasons why the bibliometric approach to the assessment of research quality is inadequate. Some of these relate to its cultural and language bias towards research published in English, which potentially marginalizes both the content and approaches to knowledge not located within the English-speaking world. Goodall (2006) has argued that the bibliometric approach favors natural sciences over the social sciences and humanities. It moreover favours research that pursues particular methodological approaches based on a scientific paradigm expressed in terms of the norms of replicability of experiments and the generalizability of results. It sidelines interpretative and critical research based on creative insights into evolving phenomenon such as those associated with globalization. It also marginalizes narrative and oral traditions of research, valued and cherished in many indigenous communities (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999).

The bibliometric approach of such research assessment technologies as RAE2008 is often associated with the practices of citation. But the use of citations in judging quality and research impact is not without its problems. Authors often self-cite and receive citations for both ‘bad’ and ‘good’ works. So citations practices are at best only indicative of quality – and certainly not its key measure. A more serious problem with the bibliometric approach is acutely revealed in any examination of the political economy of publishing, relating to such issues as how journals are now produced and marketed, the ways in which commercial interests often steer the publication of particular kinds of research and not others, and the manner in which commercially-driven publishing reproduces the current asymmetrical circuits of knowledge production, circulation and utilization. As Michael Peters (2007) has argued, the relationship between publishing houses and academic researchers is a symbiotic one, which needs to be elaborated, if we are to appreciate the political economy of research and its assessment.
INTERNATIONALIZATION AND THE ASSESSMENT OF RESEARCH QUALITY

A third perspective on the concept of ‘international’ might involve accepting the need to view research quality in spatial terms, pertaining to the geographical reach of a particular set of ideas and their take-up in educational policy and practice around the world. This approach might extend the bibliometric perspective by looking at the extent to which a particular research is applicable across places beyond that in which it is produced – that is, beyond the reach of the normal circuits of bibliometric circulation among, for example, the non-English-speaking audiences. The quality of research might furthermore be judged in terms of its preparedness to engage with a wider range of topics embedded in and dealing with various ‘other’ cultural traditions, often in ways that are comparative. The originality might consist in its applicability across a range of cultural and educational traditions. Issues of scale might be relevant here, in terms of the research’s symbolic and material impact, and of the extent to which it is referred to and utilized and generally held in esteem not only within the West but also in other parts of the world.

However, it is possible for such an approach to the internationalization of research to still remain tied to the existing relations of power. Appadurai (2000: 16) uses the term ‘weak internationalization’ to refer to those practices of research which while accepting the need to build international and democratic community of researchers nonetheless assume the existing ‘research ethic as given and unquestionable’. He contrast this with a ‘stronger notion of internationalization’, which is more clearly characterized by its attitude of openness. It implies supporting creative ideas about education and educational research that are not constrained by the narrow requirements of methodological rectitude but encourage instead a spirit of exploration and respect for traditions of thinking that have been marginalized by the legacy of the positivist orientation. Here research is judged not in terms of the extent to which methodological rules and protocols are followed but the ways in which it articulates new ideas and innovation and intercultural comparison, especially about those matters that involve cross-cultural variations. This approach invites – perhaps even demands – speculation, criticality and reflexivity. It encourages ‘playing’ with concepts in a spirit of experimentation – involving conjectures and refutations, as Karl Popper (1978) so eloquently put it many years ago. It encourages democratic debate that is not confined to professional researchers within the familiar geographical spaces, but spans many diverse communities.

Never before has this attitude of openness to educational research more important than in our contemporary social context characterized by rapid economic, political and cultural change; and by global interconnectivity and interdependence, forged at an unprecedented speed and intensity. This context has rendered many of our traditional concepts and categories unstable and deeply problematic. These now hang uneasily on the hinges of certainty. Even such taken-for-granted concepts in education as ‘the society’, ‘the public’ and ‘the school’ do not any longer admit uniform and universal definitions. This is so because the social field within which education now takes places is increasingly transformed by the complex processes associated with the global mobility of ideas and people, and
by the transnational circuits of communication and power. This transformation no longer permits us to sideline or simply ignore interpretations that lie outside our immediate field of vision, by other communities that might interpret global realities differently. So, for example, the idea of ‘the public’ that education is meant to serve can no longer be defined solely in national terms, but must attend to the issues of global interconnectivity and networks and to the scope of our responsibility.

The rapid and intense social changes affected by globalization and the advances in the information and communication technologies raise new questions in both our personal and professional lives at almost every turn of world events. September 11, for example, raised new questions about the politics of terror, how best to represent and respond to it. The events in the summer of 2005 and 2006 in the United Kingdom demanded that we re-think about how our communities are globally constituted, and how purely national responses to the issues faced by our students may not be sufficient. Throughout the world, we are witnessing major demographic transformations, economic upheaval, political shifts, social changes resulting from the ways people use media and technology and new cultural formations, especially among the young. Local politics are stretched in new ways, especially when the diaspora is able to remain in touch with and exercise power in the communities they left behind.

If localities around the world are now becoming ‘transnationalized’ then the implications for educational research are also profound and potentially involve new ways of assessing its quality. How do we, for example, research spaces that do not have any clear boundaries and where social relations potentially span vast distances? How do we take into account the distribution and dynamics of power whose contours potentially involve the entire globe? How do we provide accounts of social meaning when these are not linked to any specific community? How do we study social inequalities when its causes do not necessarily reside within the community that is the object of our research? In other words, how do we address the conceptual difficulties that inevitably arise in modes of social research when the very constitution of ‘the social’ cannot be easily defined?

Educational research has traditionally involved the collection and analysis of information about how teachers and students relate to each other – how they make social meaning – within some specified locality or organization. This implies that research almost inevitably occurs within an assumed space, be it a social organization like a school or a community marked by deep, familiar and co-operative ties between its members and defined by its geographical borders. While educational research can, of course, have many purposes – to provide an account of social identities, to understand how students make meaning of their lives, to understand the changing nature of teachers’ work, explain social, economic and political relations expressed in education policy, to reveal patterns of inequality and power, to determine deep structural barriers to the realization of objectives of reform and so on – it always takes place within a space. We cannot therefore ignore issues of how, in the era of globalization, space is constituted and how its boundaries are drawn.
Of course, space is never constituted in a uniform and consistent manner. Not all spaces are transnationalized in the same way or, indeed, to the same extent. Some spaces, like global cities (Sassen 1995) such as Chicago and London, have become transnationalized to a greater extent than isolated rural communities in Africa, for example. In this sense, transnationalization may be viewed as an on-going dynamic social process affected by changing forms of connectivity between the global and the local, between a community’s interior and its exterior. At a conceptual level, however, the notion of a transnational space would seem to undermine any meaningful distinction between the inside of a space and its outside, long regarded as central to social and educational research. If such traditional naturalistic distinctions as the inside and outside of a community or an organization cannot be easily maintained, then many new questions emerge for educational research that takes seriously the idea of ‘international’.

In recent years, numerous ethnographers have pointed out, for example, that, in the emerging global context, both the ideas of ‘ethno’ and ‘graphic’ have become problematic. The relationship between ethnographers and the people they studied was already complex, but in transnational spaces, new questions arise around such key terms as ‘othering’ and ‘authorial’ control, leading to what Wittel (2000: 1) calls, a ‘crisis in objectification’. With respect to the idea of ‘ethno’, a culture can no longer be treated as a coherent entity, unique from and unaffected by its engagement with other cultures. Through enhanced mobility of capital, people and ideas, cultural contact has become a norm, leading Clifford (1997) to suggest that human location is now constituted by displacement as much as by status. With the deterritorialization, pluralization and hybridization of cultures, the notion of ‘the field’ as a geographically defined research area has also become more complex. As Marcus and Fischer (1986) point out, the transnational, political, economic and cultural forces that now shape localities have undermined the traditional notion of ‘the field’. Gupta and Ferguson (1997) therefore suggest the need to redefine the notion of ‘the field’, by ‘decentring’ it in ways that deny any clear cut distinction between ‘the here’ and ‘the elsewhere’.

If people and objects are increasingly mobile then, Gupta and Ferguson (1997) argue, ethnography has to engage these movements and, with them, the ways in which localities are a product of the circulations of meanings and identities in time-space. Educational research is becoming embedded with the world systems, shifting its focus from single sites and local situations to become multi-sited and multi-local, responsive to networked realities. Castells (2000) has drawn our attention to the ways in which our communities are becoming globally networked. A ‘network society’, for Castells, is an open structure, able to expand without limits and in ways that are dynamic. It consists of a set of nodes and connections across the nodes, characterized by flows and movement. The Internet is a good example of how its ubiquitous uses are re-shaping our everyday practices, affected, as they are, by the ways in which information flows across various nodes of networks, in spaces that are highly mediated and interactive. These nodes are often transnational, and deeply connect us to social networks that do not necessarily reside within a specific territory. Research then is increasingly characterized by
greater levels of displacement, dynamism, contingency, plurality and complexity. This challenges some of the most taken-for-granted categories in educational research. It demands new theoretical and methodological resources.

Most importantly, it requires a new research ethic, as Appadurai (2001) has insisted. If educational research is to adequately address these complexities surrounding the new global realities, and the challenges they pose, then such an ethic needs to acknowledge how societies are imbricated with unequal power relations, which reflect both contemporary geo-politics and past political struggles. Recognition of the researcher’s positionality within Western universities and their relationships to these geographies of power could be a beginning for challenging the silent valorization of Western epistemologies in research of all kinds, including education policy research. Such a challenge is central to what Appadurai (2001: 15) calls the ‘deparochialization’ of research, in the light of enhanced global flows of students and academics as part of the mobilities and networks of globalization. He argues for the need to deconstruct in both an anthropological and pragmatic sense, the ‘taken for granted’ assumptions of the contemporary systems of research. In the context of increased flows of capital, people, ideas, images and technologies and disjunctions and related asymmetries of power, he suggests a number of ways in which the dominant research ethic might be challenged, including a reconnection with earlier pre research paradigm thinking premised on a strong moral position; the promotion of the style of argumentation of public intellectuals; and paying greater attention to research linked to policy making and state functions in a range of nations, particularly those in the developing world.

Appadurai maintains that ‘epistemological diffidence’ is necessary for deparochializing research. This must involves challenging the assumptions pf modernization theories that accepted without question that theory and research were metropolitan, modern and western, while the rest of the world was simply a research site to test and confirm such theory. Here relations of researcher and researched paralleled relations of coloniser and colonised, even within decolonising and postcolonial politics and aspirations. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) similarly calls for Decolonizing Methodologies in her study of the relationship between research and Indigenous peoples and knowledge in New Zealand, where she suggests that the term ‘research’ is ‘inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism’. Relations of power and politics in both macro and individual relations senses distort even the most arcane theories to some extent’ (Lingard 2006: 34).

In rejecting an epistemological innocence characteristic of the dominant forms of education research, both Appadurai and Smith call for an ‘epistemological openness’. Such a project, according to Appadurai, needs to be aligned with ‘grassroots globalization’ or ‘globalization from below’. We need to ask: whose globalization? and in doing so, issue a challenge to globalization from above as driven by leading international organizations and the global cultural industries (Klein, 2001). Appadurai emphasizes the need for research to examine its own rhetoric and practices of ‘systematicity, prior citational contexts, and specialized modes of inquiry’, replicability, along with ‘an imagined world of specialized
professional readers and researchers’ (Appadurai, 2001: 12) which taken together work to inhibit the deparochialization of research, its theories and methodologies. Prior citational contexts and an imagined world of specialized readers ensure the reproduction of more ‘parochial’, western dominated theories.

What this analysis demonstrates then is that the notion of internationalization assumed by RAE2008’s assessment technology was based on existing geographies of knowledge and geometries of power (Epstein, 2008). RAE2008 used the idea of ‘international’ to simply reproduce and privilege the existing practices of research, and in doing so it failed to open up a discussion how the current realities of globalization, and how these require a new research ethic of openness to a greater diversity of theoretical and methodological traditions that are not tied to the western academy. However, on a personal note, my participation on a RAE2008 panel gave me an opportunity to reflect on the ways in which educational research is funded, conducted and assessed for thinking, and how the state plays a crucial role in promoting certain kinds of research and not others, in prioritizing certain research questions, and in privileging certain methodological approaches. It also confirmed for me Appadurai’s insight (2001) that ‘strong internationalization’ in unlikely to come from the processes of ‘globalization from above’ but only through ‘grassroots globalization’, which involves the creation of communities and conventions of research in which membership does not require unquestioned prior adherence to existing norms, and that the term ‘international’ need not inevitably be ‘the property of state-capital’ nexus.

NOTES

* This paper is a revised version of the Routledge Lecture delivered at the annual conference of the British Educational Research Association in Warwick England, September 2006

REFERENCES


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