RI RESEARCH INTELLIGENCE

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BRITISH EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

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FRAMING EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING

TOWARDS A TEF FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

FEATURING

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NEWS FROM THE BRITISH EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

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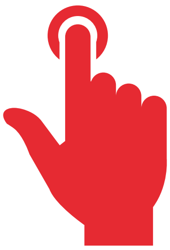

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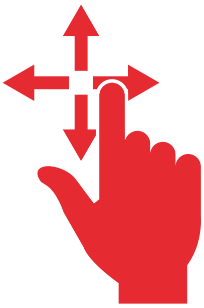

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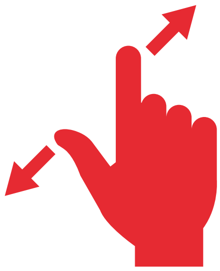

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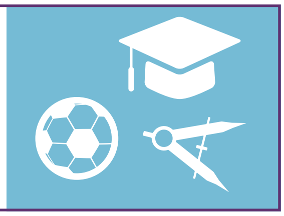

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From The President...

I began my term of office as President of BERA with a keynote at the annual Conference in Belfast, in which I set out an analysis of how the knowledge landscape is shifting, and the terms on which education researchers might best respond.

As President of BERA, I am very aware of the organisation's key role in advancing high quality research and promoting and defending its use in understanding and improving education for the public good. This is at the heart of what we do. Although there are always challenges ahead, I am confident that BERA will continue to rise to them.

During Ian Menter's term of office, membership has grown and we have extended our portfolio of activities to include, alongside our annual Conference and our journals, a wider variety of SIG communications and events, a growing number of commissioned research reports, and more varied opportunities to network with other stakeholders. The introduction of the BERA blog is a significant new venture which has been very well received. This expansion in our activities has in large part been made possible because of the support of our office staff, but I also want to thank Ian in particular for the role he has played in promoting these developments over the past few years. I look forward to continuing to work with him in the year ahead and build on BERA's recent achievements.

The external environment remains complex. The refugee crisis in Europe raises all kinds of questions for the functioning of collaborative governance structures in the EU, as well as for how the education systems in individual constituent countries should respond. In the United Kingdom the devolved school systems in the four nations that make up the UK are increasingly operating under different rules, driven by the very different priorities that policy-makers have decided on in terms of the structure of education, its modes of governance, and the particular aims these are intended to address. Even as large-scale international data sets such as PISA seem to increasingly set the terms of a supra-national policy debate, responses at national and local level continue to vary. The role of BERA in promoting high quality and independent research that can effectively scrutinise the policy routes chosen in different settings, drawing attention to both benefits and harms that may follow, remains crucial. So too does our capacity to redirect attention to issues facing a wider constituency, in particular teachers, pupils and the broader community for whom education may matter on very different terms.

In looking forward to the year ahead, BERA is facilitating new ways of harnessing researcher effort. Following a process of competitive tender, we have funded a series of Research Commissions with a brief to 'identify and address issues of current importance to the study and practice of education which may have future consequences for the discipline and its research communities'. They will map out an evidence base that can help set the strategic direction and aspirations of BERA going forward. This is being complemented by a series of Presidential Roundtable Seminars, focusing on key methodological challenges in the field.

A collaborative and consensual view of policy and research recognises the value of listening to each other, weighing the evidence together and acting collectively in the interests of the common good. The more divided and polarised societies become, the more difficult but also necessary it is to pursue such a common endeavour. BERA will continue to keep channels of debate open as it pursues its primary objective of supporting and sustaining the highest quality research across the educational field.

Professor
Gemma Moss
University of Bristol

NEWS

Updates from BERA

PLANS FOR 2016

As you will see elsewhere in this issue, we have ambitious plans for 2016. The three Research Commissions that we are supporting are an exciting new initiative that will help set the agenda for BERA and beyond. They are alongside the Presidential Seminar series that Gemma Moss announced in her inaugural address in Belfast and a new project to be launched in the New Year that will examine how we build capacity to undertake close to practice research of the highest quality. On top of this, we plan increased support for our SIGs, a range of workshops run by the Postgraduate Forum, new 'Masterclasses' for BERA members and other ambitious events. In 2015 we have seen well over 1,000 delegates at BERA events (not including the Annual Conference) and this promises to grow further in 2016. ■

NEW VIRTUAL ISSUE OF *BERJ*

"In praise of the *British Educational Research Journal*": a virtual issue of some of the most important papers appearing over the past 40 years has recently been published. Edited by Stephen Gorard, this virtual issue reissues a set of papers representing some of the landmark pieces that have appeared in its pages since 1975. For more please visit Stephen's new editorial as well as the selected articles. http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1002/(ISSN)1469-3518/homepage/best_of_berj.htm. ■

BERA BLOG

The BERA Blog continues to go from strength to strength.

Since launching in May, we have now had over 75 posts from a wide range of authors on topics spanning the breadth of educational research. It is particularly pleasing to see an increasing amount of teachers contributing. The Blog has had over 18,000 readers so far with some of the most popular articles attracting well over 2,000 each. Please do give the Blog a read – www.bera.ac.uk/blog and think about contributing. ■

THANKS TO HILARY BURGESS

As we announce the appointment of Kalwant Bhopal as the incoming editor of *RI*, we have to say a very fond and sad farewell to Hilary Burgess for whom this is the final issue as Editor. Hilary has edited *RI* for three years, during which she has really established it as a must-read for BERA members and a wider audience. Her insights into the themes that really matter has frequently meant that despite a relatively long production schedule, every issue has felt topical and relevant. She has also put her extensive networks to good use to give readers an eclectic but insightful set of contributors in each issue. *RI* has been able to address diverse topics from different perspectives without becoming too narrow and Hilary's leadership has championed the diversity of the educational research community.

The *RI* editorship follows two terms on BERA Council and while Hilary enjoys some well-deserved rest from the BERA frontline, we wish her well and thank her for her commitment and contribution to BERA. ■

NEW EDITOR FOR *RESEARCH INTELLIGENCE*

I am delighted to be taking on the role of Editor for *Research Intelligence*. I am particularly interested in using *RI* - unashamedly so - to champion issues that I think matter in education that need to be addressed - those of inclusion, equity and social justice. In a climate in which political discourse focuses on blaming and marginalising 'the other', there is an urgent need for us as educators to challenge, disrupt and dismantle such thinking. I look forward to exploring how education can be used as a vehicle for change in our quest for a socially just society. ■

Professor Kalwant Bhopal, University of Southampton

BERA RESEARCH COMMISSIONS 2015/16

Over the summer, BERA launched the idea of some funded Research Commissions in the 2015/16 academic year.

The aim of this major initiative is to identify and address issues of current importance to the study and practice of education. The Commissions will explore how educational research can respond to the challenges and opportunities raised by the changing nature of education across the four nations. The Commissions' findings will provide both theoretical rigour and an evidence base that can help set the strategic direction and aspirations of BERA and influence how it engages with other learned societies, Research Councils, Government and the education community more broadly.

In response to the open call to members to submit proposals, we were delighted to receive a high volume of exceptional applications – in both quality and range. It made the selection process very tough as we were only able to select three outstanding proposals. However, we are confident that these Commissions will not only meet the brief but also have a lasting impact. The three successful proposals are detailed below.

'Cost, Value and Quality in Professional Learning: promoting economic literacy in medical and teacher education.' This proposal is led by Vivienne Baumfield and Karen Mattick, co-leaders of the Centre for Research in Professional Learning (CRPL) at the University of Exeter.

This commission will invite a series of 'expert witnesses', representing a range of perspectives, to contribute to the interrogation of the types of evidence used in the evaluation of the relationship between the cost of provision for professional learning and impact on the value and quality of education. The overarching theme will be addressed in two intersecting contexts: the interface of education with economics, and between teacher education and medical education.

'Reviewing the Potential and Challenges of Developing STEAM Education through Creative Pedagogies for 21st Century Learning: how can school curricula be broadened towards a more responsive, dynamic and inclusive form of education?' This proposal is led by Laura Colucci-Gray from the University of Aberdeen and includes colleagues from across the four nations.

The focus of this commission is to explore, analyse and collate new understandings of science, how these relate and interface with changes in education and how this might enrich current debates. Reconceptualising school science has crucial implications for pedagogic practices. Specifically the commission will explore:

1. the changing conceptualization of science and arts, and the implications for science education;
2. the relationship between formal school science as it is currently taught and the differential access to science knowledge affecting groups inside and outside schools;
3. the potential of arts-based, creative pedagogies to foster inclusive, participatory and interdisciplinary learning in science.

'Poverty and Policy Advocacy.' This proposal is led by Gabrielle Ivinson of the University of Aberdeen, and builds on the relationships and work of leading academics already engaged in work concentrating on policy deliberations on poverty, education and schooling.

The focus of this commission is to build an interconnected transnational network of research-active practitioners across the UK to engage in knowledge building about poverty and cumulative multiple deprivations as these find expression in education and schooling.

We look forward to seeing the development of these commissions in the next year and how BERA can take forward the recommendations and outputs in the future. All three have various events and activities planned and they will be advertised on the BERA website in due course. ■

VIEW THE NEWS ON THE BERA WEBSITE

The BERA History Special Interest Group

By Gary McCulloch,
UCL Institute of Education

The American researcher Ellen Condliffe Lagemann points out that educational research needs 'an arsenal of varied methods and perspectives if we are to develop a rich and rigorously analytic understanding of education in all its forms' (Lagemann, 2005, p. 9). She goes to explain that history contributes to such an arsenal in a significant way 'when it connects with enduring dilemmas or current puzzles and, in so doing, helps one see the present in more depth' (p. 17). This is not in order to derive simple lessons from the past but 'to understand the past in its own terms, as different from the present, and in drawing such a contrast help to illuminate both past and present' (p. 17).

Lagemann is surely correct in these remarks. To put the matter another way, educational research that disregards history is missing an important weapon from its arsenal, a significant means of illuminating education.

Coming closer to home, our own Brian Simon argued famously half a century ago that 'There is, perhaps, no more liberating influence than the knowledge that things have not always been as they are and need not remain so.' (Simon, 1966, p. 92). Simon was one of the earliest presidents of BERA, and was a vigorous advocate of bringing different disciplines and specialisms together in a common cause of understanding education – its assumptions and limitations no less than its methods and solutions (Simon, 1978, p. 7).

So we can all be pleased, whether or not we have particular historical interests ourselves, that BERA is now introducing a special interest group (SIG) in History. For myself and many others, it is an occasion for special celebration. AERA has Section F and EERA has Network 17; now BERA also has a natural home and base to organise activities in this area.

I should emphasise also that the History SIG is designed to serve a broad and diverse constituency, and would identify in particular four related but distinct areas that we will seek to promote:

1. History of education – educational changes and continuities over the longer term in relation to a changing social and political context;
2. History in education – representations of history in the school curriculum, textbooks, museums, pageants, the media and other educational institutions;
3. Historical perspectives on current issues – the origins, antecedents and implications of policies and practices in education;
4. Educational life-histories and biographies – the contributions of individuals, groups and networks to educational change over the lifecourse.

Our work will also explore theoretical and methodological debates around oral, visual and sensory history, social and professional memory, transnational and cross-cultural approaches, and ethical and legal issues. We will engage with inequalities in education and society, and with the common concerns of other SIGs across the range of BERA's activities.

So please do join us if you would like to support this new area of our work. I am keen to have a strong programme at the Leeds BERA Conference in 2016, so applications to present papers in this area are most welcome, and I will look forward to working with other SIGs to develop areas of shared interest. ■

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Knowledge, Education and Research:

Making common cause across communities of practice

By Gemma Moss,
University of Bristol

In my BERA Presidential address, I considered the need to re-think the relationships between knowledge, education and research, as the institutional structures that sustain them change. Current efforts at large-scale education reform assume the key role in defining what counts as useful knowledge can safely rest in the hands of politicians and policy-makers. Yet 'useful knowledge' as it appears to policy-makers does not always translate into 'useful knowledge' from the perspective of practitioners. Distance and context matter. The metaphors of best practice, benchmarking and policy borrowing wear thin when they short-cut the processes through which knowledge is made in favour of collating and distributing a set of knowledge that is treated as closed.

The practice of research orientates to the business of knowing in another way, keeping in tension what we think we know and what else might emerge to challenge or disrupt that state of affairs. Research at its best is transparent about the processes involved in its creation, and keeps in view the strengths and limitations of the tools it deploys. It develops over the long term by continuing to robustly test the propositions it encodes. Its capacity to adjust in the light of new data or different social conditions makes it a powerful means of learning from the past and reframing current questions in the search for better answers.

This kind of critical scrutiny has a crucial role to play in testing assumptions that others take for granted. The use of assessment data in the public domain provides a salient example. In educational settings, the machinery of assessment creates the variation which it then explores. In the case of PISA, the data are widely reported as country by country rankings that the media and politicians use to hold national systems to account. Yet in fact, analysis of the data does not yield a stable rank order for individual countries that holds regardless of the methods used to create the display. Indeed, many countries' scores are not significantly different one from another, nor consistently different over time and across tests. OECD's own reports make this clear (OECD, 2009).

But all this is forgotten in public discourse. The numerical precision lying behind the statistical calculations, the crucial questions about reliability and validity that underpin a test's design, and constrain the uses to which the data can justifiably be put, are instead recontextualised into commonplace thinking. Average performance is interpreted, not as a neutral descriptor of where most data will fall, but as meaning not good enough; statistical outliers, the term used in statistics to indicate those cases that inevitably lie beyond the mass of data, become goals at the top of the distribution curve that could and should be met by all. Re-exported into the education field, such commonplace thinking leads to harsher judgements of the data than the data warrant, not least for individual schools. Thus Ofsted treats any variation in year on year performance in the cohorts of pupils passing through individual schools as significant, even though most school cohorts are too small to be statistically representative of the population at large. Year on year fluctuations in performance are therefore only to be expected, as each cohort, no matter how socially stratified, is in effect a random sample.

The capacity of research to scrutinise and unpick assumptions that have been built into the interpretation of the data, and to rigorously question the commonsense logic that currently holds, all matter enormously here. It is in this spirit that as part of my Presidency of BERA I am instigating a series of Roundtable seminars over the coming year that will explore a range of methodological challenges that matter in education practice right now. The roundtables will focus on re-examining key topics where a previous consensus or ways of working are breaking down, taking stock of the dilemmas this creates in policy, in practice and for research, and suggesting where else research effort might need to go now. In this way it is hoped they will re-set an agenda for change, and a blueprint for more productive relationships between different communities of practice.

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+ OECD, 2009 *PISA 2009 Database*. Figure I.2.15

Framing Excellence in Teaching

By Hilary Burgess, University of Leicester

As this editorial goes to press, the Green Paper (Nov 2015) on planned changes in higher education has just been published and following ten weeks consultation will be enacted next year. Plans for a Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) are included so it seemed an opportune moment to invite those involved in teaching and learning in HE to provide their views of what counts as teaching excellence and whether this can be measured. All the articles were written several weeks in advance of the now published Green Paper.

At the recent Conservative Party Conference in Manchester (reported by Morgan in the *THE* October 2015), Jo Johnson (the Universities and Science Minister) commented that the Government wanted to see "more diversity, more new providers, more innovation, more new paths into higher education such as two-year degrees and degree apprenticeships", all of which raises the question, does this mean greater involvement of alternative providers in the future? He also indicates that "Widening participation and access will be intimately linked to the TEF" with retention and completion rates for disadvantaged students being a key measurement of success - a target that will be very difficult to achieve. The intended direction of future changes becomes clearer as he argues for a system where "market share can shift towards where teaching quality really resides. Our teaching excellence framework will be an important signal to students of where quality resides, discipline by discipline, institution by institution". For many BERA members in HE, such comments are unnerving and present concerns about the directions in which HE may be pushed. However, as some of the articles in this issue indicate, there may also be opportunities if they are firmly grasped during the consultation period for the Green Paper. A few of the articles in this issue discuss topics that have not, so far, been raised in earlier discussions about what should be considered in a TEF, such as the importance of ethical principles in teaching as well as research discussed in Fox's article, and the importance of a focus on equity in teaching and learning as discussed by Maylor. The National Student Survey (NSS) already has a key impact on the way institutions are perceived and two of the articles, by Pickford and Brown and Frankham, consider this aspect, noting the institutional pressures that league tables create. Klappa questions if it is possible to measure excellence in learning and education and what are the pertinent questions that need to be asked? One group of academics who have already begun to ask such questions and suggest a response are the Higher Education Academy National Teaching Fellows as reported by Scott, who also warns that one of the problems with data that can be measured is that it can also be manipulated in terms of how it is presented. Szwed raises the challenge in avoiding the TEF becoming a narrowly focussed and administrative burden for HE, while Palfreyman raises questions around student fees and consumer rights and queries how HE can develop a TEF around 'Quality' when agreement around what that might be is so hard to define. A completely different perspective is provided by Cain and Hayward, who make links to teachers in schools and focus on excellence in teaching as that which is research-informed. As can be seen on reading the articles, there is much to be debated and some aspects at all costs to be avoided in a TEF for higher education.

Finally, I am very pleased to welcome as the next Editor of *RI*, Kalwant Bhopal, and wish her every success in taking the *RI* newsletter forward in new directions at this interesting time in higher education. ■

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Towards a Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF)


By Ruth Pickford, Director of the Centre for Learning and Teaching,
and Sally Brown, Emerita Professor, Leeds Beckett University

Since the introduction of the National Student Survey (NSS) a decade ago, the sector has used the NSS, with varying success, to serve the multiple purposes of quality assurance, quality enhancement and to inform student choice. However, it has proven difficult to use for enhancement purposes, data that is published in national league tables. In 'Teaching at the heart of the system' (Johnson, 2015), UK HE Minister Jo Johnson announced that the ambitious and numerous aims for the proposed new national Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) were to ensure all students received an excellent teaching experience that encouraged original thinking and prepared them for the world of work; [aiming] to build an HE culture where teaching has equal status with research and excellent teachers enjoy the same professional recognition and opportunities for career and pay progression as great researchers; to include incentives that reward institutions that do best at retention and progression of disadvantaged students; and to provide students with the information they need to judge teaching quality. Thus, the sector is again preparing itself for the introduction of a set of metrics that aim to serve multiple and arguably conflicting aims. We've also learned from the NSS how important the choice of metrics is, that which is not measured becomes less valued than that that is, and whatever is measured becomes the subject of gamification as institutions seek to move up the league tables. Discussions relating to measurement of teaching quality are not new. It is widely accepted that defining quality teaching, let alone measuring it, is difficult. This task becomes even more difficult when the purpose of the measurement is not clear. Trying to make the TEF process serve too many conflicting purposes (such as guiding decisions on fee increases and rewarding excellent teaching) is likely to prove impossible.

Any useful national teaching evaluation process, regardless of its aims, would need to be highly nuanced and couldn't rely on simple metrics. Quantitative processes, for example, would need to be input-adjusted to measure added-value, and to ensure that such measurements didn't merely reinforce (at exit) existing privilege of students (on entry). However, no convincing metrics have yet been proposed on how to measure added-value without involving time-consuming pre and post-tests. There is likely to be skewing of outcomes should certain metrics be adopted without recognizing the importance of context, for example the use of graduate salary as a measure without taking into account disciplinary differences. Additionally, cynicism that the ultimate purpose of the process is to ensure that Russell Group universities come out on top of any ranking needs to be recognised, as does the widespread and genuine worries that the wrong metrics will be chosen. If the process is not demonstrably fair it could lead to time consuming and judicial review.

The TEF may have perverse outcomes which actually lead to a reduction in teaching quality; any TEF process will use up institutional and individual staff time, energy and resources that could otherwise be directed towards improving the student experience. Likewise, if initiatives such as the Higher Education

Achievement Record (HEAR) and Grade-Point Averages (GPA) form part of the metrics there is a possibility that HEIs will adopt them rapidly without thinking them through properly. If schemes such as the UK Professional Standards Framework are hijacked so that a simple number of HEA Fellowships at each level become a metric, the reflective element of the current scheme could be devalued.

At the time of writing, the shape of the proposed Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) is unknown and various proxies for teaching excellence are being debated across the sector in the run up to the publication of the Green Paper expected to be published in Autumn 2015. The choice of metrics is unclear but as the student experience primarily relates to the student's course, we argue that a TEF should consider teaching excellence at the programme level. There are three broad, interrelated elements that together determine the quality of teaching and learning within a course: the teachers (teaching capabilities, teachers' relationships with students and so on) the curriculum (quality assurance, assessment and so on) and the student charter (conditions, opportunities and expectations). We therefore propose that a TEF could incorporate eight metrics relating to aspects of teaching, curriculum and charter as depicted in Figure 1.

DIMENSIONS OF TEACHING EXCELLENCE

The teaching excellence of a course could be characterised by:

Teachers

Teaching staff on the course **are recognised and rewarded for excellent teaching through teaching** fellowships and professorships for L&T, which have equivalence with research professorships. Academic leadership is recognised at module and course level, and pedagogic scholarship that underpins research-informed and evidence-based approaches to teaching on the course is captured. Existing data from HEA Fellowships and National Teaching Fellowships, and from pedagogic research publications could be used as ready measures of commitment to excellence. The importance of training to teach in higher education and academics' ongoing CPD is regarded as a priority and there is investment in teaching development. All new to HE staff, including graduate teaching assistants, sessional and fractional staff, are trained and supported through the early years of teaching, and this is linked to probation. **Career-wide CPD** is provided for all who teach and engagement in staff development activities is monitored. Engagement with the UK Professional Standards Framework is taken seriously, particularly on the matter of remaining in good standing. Relationships between teachers and students are excellent as evidenced by **student retention outcomes**.

Course

Excellent student achievement, that takes into account process, study time and effort, and input as well as outcome measures as indicated by degree classification are used as one indicator of course quality. **Fit-for-purpose assessment**, appropriate to subject and level, is integrated with learning, with strong moderation in place to assure standards. **Robust quality assurance** measures result in PSRB confidence and align with expectations of the new quality framework. Peer evaluation is central to the quality assurance process and panel review, as currently used in the REF and in NTF review panels, is used to ensure the quality of the course and to underline that the process is valued and trusted by the sector. A system similar to that used by the University of Sydney to give points to highly valued activities and outcomes may also be usefully employed.

Student Charter

A commitment to inclusivity and redressing all kinds of disadvantage, particularly in terms of Widening Participation and Fair Access is evident. **Students are involved in assuring and enhancing teaching** at all stages from curriculum design through teaching to evaluation and there are robust systems

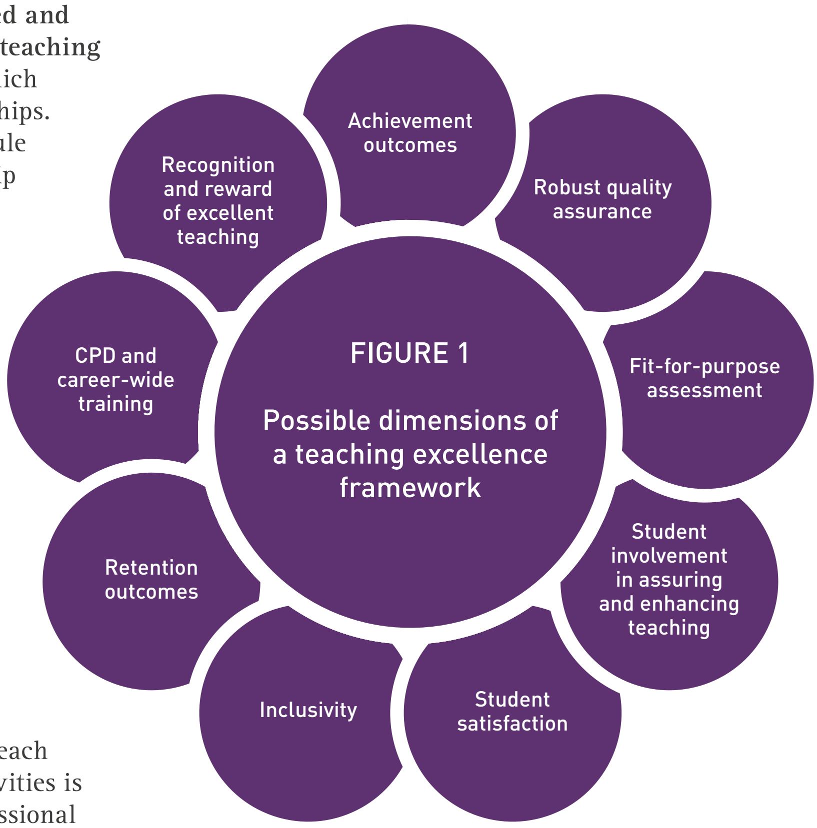

FIGURE 1

Possible dimensions of a teaching excellence framework for training, supporting, valuing and making good use of student representatives. There is a strong student enhancement voice with views not just of final year students but also of first and second year undergraduates, pre-degree students and postgraduate students being taken into account. The UK Engagement Survey or similar may be used to formatively identify areas for development, and **student satisfaction** with their learning experiences as indicated by a basket of measures, one of which will be NSS outcomes, is high.

We have developed a spider diagram that programme leaders could use to self rate on these eight dimensions, which can be found at http://lthechat.files.wordpress.com/2015/08/tef-grid-august-2015.jpg.

Our conclusions and recommendations

In a higher education system that in the recent past has sought to measure and reward research, the commitment to introduce a framework to recognise universities offering the highest teaching quality, and provide "incentives to make good teaching even better" (Johnson, 2015) has the potential to increase the recognition of teaching, counterbalancing current prioritisation of the REF. A well-designed TEF (neither too bureaucratic nor too permissive) offers the potential to move further towards professionalising teaching in higher education and to focus on student engagement as well as student satisfaction.

Our recommendations are:

1. Do be explicit about the purposes that the TEF is trying to serve;
2. Do report TEF data at course level rather than at institutional level (as is KIS data currently) as this is the level that is most relevant to an individual student's experience;
3. Do use existing peer-reviewed metrics of excellent teaching such as National Teaching Fellowships and UKPSF Fellowships (but consider different levels of fellowship, not just raw percentages of how many staff have achieved them at any level), and pedagogic research published in peer-reviewed publications;
4. Do prioritise the TEF being seen to be fair to all institutions and that it isn't regarded as reinforcing reputation and prestige. For example, don't use raw employment and first destination data unless a granular approach is adopted to take account of subject and HEI mission differences. ■

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Framing Excellence in Teaching:

IS IT THE RIGHT THING?

By Peter Klappa,
University of Kent

When the 'Teaching Excellence Framework' (TEF) was announced earlier this year, I was wondering what it actually meant - and I still have lots of questions about this Government initiative. First of all, I wonder why we want to measure excellence in teaching? I agree that with the increase of fees to £9k and possibly even higher, there is pressure on HEIs to be accountable for the service they deliver. While a university's contribution to research has been measured over the years through the various 'Research Assessment Exercises', followed by the latest 'Research Excellence Framework', the assessment of efficient education has been neglected. It is therefore only fitting that we also begin to hold universities accountable for the provision of excellence in education.

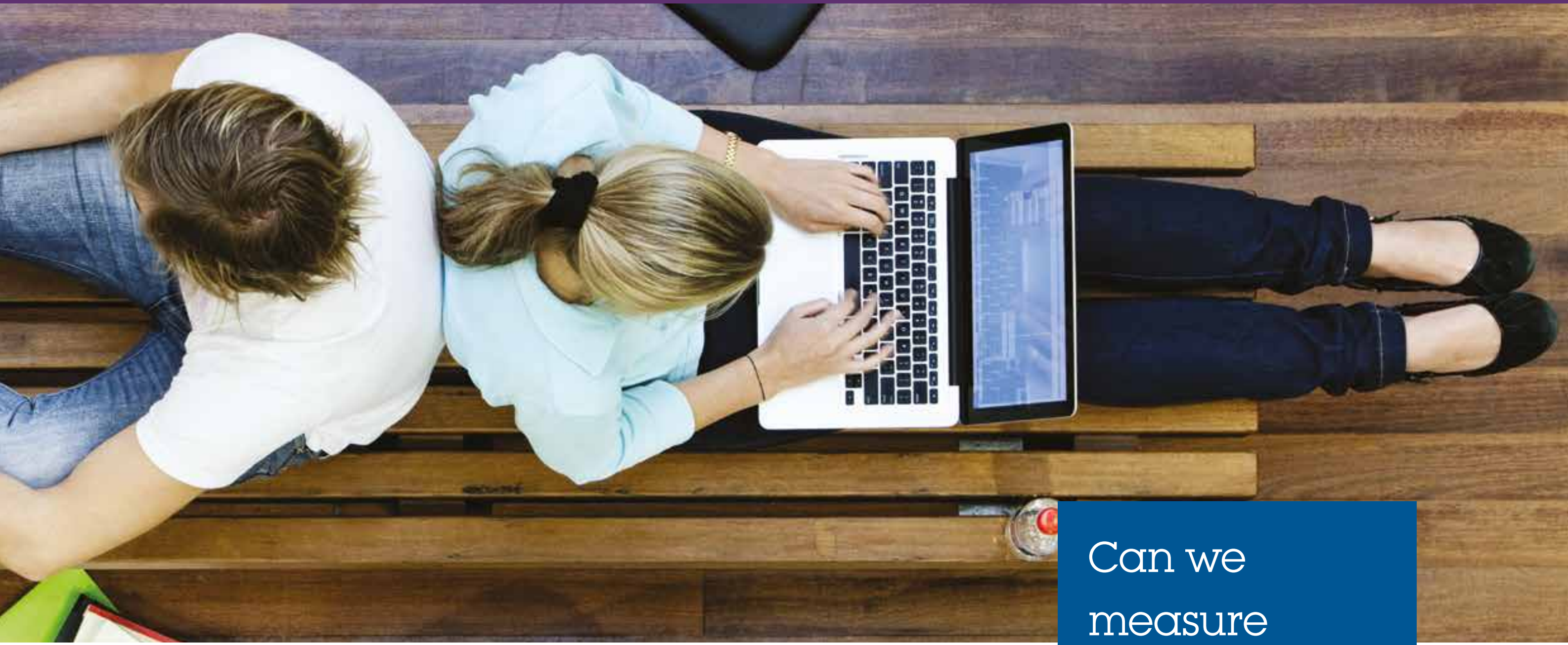
However, when we now talk about framing teaching excellence, aren't we making the wrong assumptions here? Is it really the excellence of teaching we want to measure or is it in reality the education of students that we want to look at? Wouldn't a teaching excellence framework imply that the emphasis lies on the teaching and not so much on the learning? Shouldn't we focus more on the learning and education aspect instead? After all - every modern institute of teaching prides itself on a 'learner-centred' approach, thus putting the learner before the teacher.

In this context we probably have to ask what the role of a teacher/lecturer should be, especially in HE. At primary and secondary school level, teachers provide knowledge and skills to learners, which are considered a pillar of our society, for example reading, writing, numeracy, science and so on. However, HE expects learners to equip themselves with more advanced skills sets - critical thinking, creativity, problem solving, independent learning, to name only a few. Taking a degree at university level is so much more than just acquisition of standardized knowledge - it is getting prepared for the challenges society and life will present in the future. In my view this is the true essence of education - or in Albert Einstein's words "Education is what remains after one has forgotten everything he learned in school".

So what are the components of education? Surely, learning is a fundamental principle in education; although we must accept that learning is a very individual, almost intimate process. We know that learners need to be in the appropriate frame of mind to learn. Learning theories indicate that learners also need to have the right environment for effective learning, which might be very different from learner to learner. Exactly when a learner is ready to learn, what they learn and how they learn is highly individual. Even the best teacher in the world will not be able to create the optimal circumstances for the most effective learning for each and every student.

Is it really the excellence of teaching we want to measure or is it in reality the education of students that we want to look at?

We also need to be aware that teaching and learning are two different and not necessarily connected activities. While I can try to teach a particular biochemical pathway, it does not mean that my students will actually learn - learn as in 'fully understand and being able to solve problems in



a creative way related to this pathway'. Sometimes it requires only a simple question, explanation or even just a single word by the lecturer and 'the penny drops'. I very much doubt that this would be regarded as an example of good teaching, although the gain for the student could be immense. Even by NOT teaching students, we can foster learning. The concept of problem-based learning (PBL) is indeed an approach to stimulate students to become independent learners, who take responsibility for their own learning.

Don't we really want students who no longer need a teacher, because they have acquired all the skills for independent, self-motivated learning, paired with critical thinking, self-reflection, problem solving, curiosity and creativity? Shouldn't we, as the teachers and lecturers, in fact step away from teaching and instead focus predominantly on providing the right environment for our students to achieve this goal? Wouldn't this be the holy grail of education?

Can we measure excellence in learning and education? The answer is 'yes' and 'no' at the same time. If we reduce education to the mere acquisition of knowledge in a particular subject, then this can be measured in a TEF, using standardized tests, exams and so on. The US K-12 and UK primary/secondary school system are based on exactly this - the assessment of knowledge a student gained during their time at school. School inspections, performed by Ofsted, aim to ensure that students and teachers adhere to certain standards when it comes to the acquisition of knowledge. A uniform set of rules is applied to a uniform set of students, taught by teachers, whose success is measured by the number of students passing GCSEs and A-levels.

Can we measure excellence in learning and education? The answer is 'yes' and 'no' at the same time.

It is abundantly clear to me that excellence in education, especially in HEIs, cannot and should not be measured in the same way. Of course, one could use already existing metrics to assess the acquisition of standardized knowledge, even at university level. One could use the number of first and 2.1 class degrees a university or department awards, the number of contact hours students are scheduled to attend, how many students are employed six months after graduation, how satisfied students are with their courses and so on. Likewise, we can easily measure the number of different words in Shakespeare's 'Romeo and Juliet', how many paragraphs there are or whether the choice of language is different to other pieces of work by the same author. Does this tell us anything meaningful about the work itself?

What should we measure then instead? If we are serious about assessing excellence of education we must ask questions like, 'How are students supported during their time at a specific university?', 'How do universities support staff and students in their continuous professional development?', 'How does a university promote and support lifelong learning skills for students (and staff)?', 'How do we prepare students for the challenges of society, now and in the future?' and 'How do universities develop and improve excellence in education?', to name only a few. To me these are examples of pertinent questions we need to ask, if we are serious about the education of generations to come. What we truly need is not a Teaching Excellence Framework - we need an Education Excellence Framework. ■

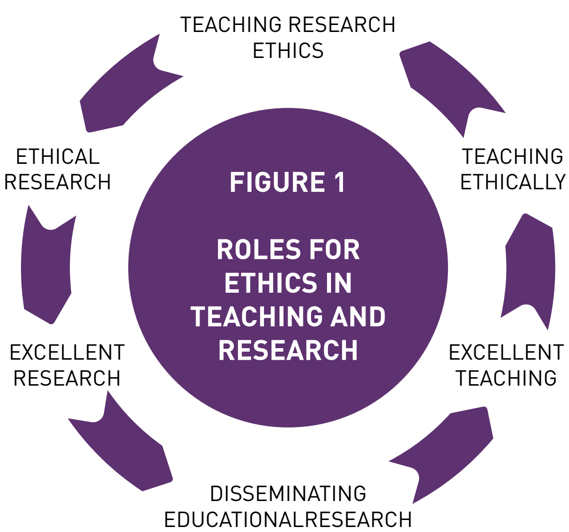
Does Ethicality Have a Place in the Teaching Excellence Framework?

By Alison Fox,
University of Leicester

The interface between teaching and research

Whilst a political and policy imperative, the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) for UK Higher Education Institutions allows us, as academics, an opportunity to reflect on the relationship between research and teaching and, in this article, on ethics as an aspect of both practices (see Figure 1).

Although ethics are not mentioned directly in the launch of the TEF, 'some rebalancing of the pull between teaching and research is undoubtedly required' (Johnson, 2015). The figure offers an overview of possible connectivities, focusing on three, illustrated with sessions from the recent BERA Conference in Belfast ('BERA 2015'): firstly, teaching research ethics to University students; secondly, the relationship between University support for research ethics and teaching excellence in practitioner settings; thirdly, although mentioned only briefly, the application of ethical principles to excellent Higher Education teaching.



'Measuring' Higher Education teaching of research ethics

A review of data useful to 'measuring' teaching excellence (Owen, 2015) included student outputs: 'learning gains' across University careers, 'employment data' as University leaver destinations and University 'grades'. Postgraduate taught and research degree criteria cover ethicality in conducting research, therefore measuring it as part of University accreditation. It is more difficult to find a metric of a student's abilities to take research skills into their places of work. Yet this is, as all of us who support practitioners and future practitioners in education appreciate, a key 'value added' from University study. Across the country and abroad University-'trained' practitioners are leading enquiry in professional settings. These outcomes connect with the first aim of the TEF to: 'ensure all students receive an excellent teaching experience that encourages original thinking, drives up engagement and prepares them for the world of work' (Johnson, 2015). Ethical awareness-raising applies whether our University courses prepare students for academic, school or other educational-related work.

Teaching research ethics

A focus on teaching 'excellence' parallels the research 'excellence' required of researchers undertaking enquiries of, about and for enhancing the development of teaching (see Figure). A BERA-approved framework to support the teaching of research ethics was launched at BERA 2015 (Fox & Jones, 2015). The four-dimensional ethical appraisal framework hosted by the University of Leicester offers downloadable audio, audio-visual and worksheet documents: http://www2.le.ac.uk/colleges/ssah/research/ethics/eaf. This framework elides four traditions of ethical thinking (Stutchbury & Fox, 2009) to appraise social science enquiry. The

University teaching has a significant role to play in creating the spaces, support and challenge to develop ethical practitioners/practitioner researchers.

dimensions are introduced through the stages of: focusing a study (consequential ethical thinking), considering possible research approaches (ecological ethical thinking), developing data collection methods (relational ethical thinking) and preparing for formal ethical approval (deontological ethical thinking). The website offers a bank of student podcasts, illustrating the framework's support for ethical decision-making, as well as information about its application to school-based research.

The role of ethics in supporting excellent school teaching

Teachers develop self-awareness through enquiry into their practice. Excellent teachers will be reflective practitioners. A Scottish study looking at how teachers become 'good' at teaching concluded that excellent teachers act on ethical guiding principles which exceed merely doing their duty, extending into their practitioner enquiry (McArdle et al, 2013). University teaching has a significant role to play in creating the spaces, support and challenge to develop ethical practitioners/practitioner researchers. A recent study of headteachers' views of practitioner research, presented at BERA 2015, reported mixed awareness and understanding of the significance of ethics (Bryant & Burstow, 2015).

Ethicality as a dimension to Higher Education teaching

In parallel with the teacher standards for school-based colleagues, broader professional codes of teaching practice exist, such as the College of Teaching which, at doctoral level, requires evidence of 'Ethical awareness & application: Analyses and manages ethical dilemmas and works pro-actively with others to formulate and implement solutions' (College of Teaching: n.d.). Surprisingly, the Higher Education Authority UK Professional Standards Framework does not explicitly refer to ethics. BERA 2015 hosted an interesting session led by Jean McNiff (McNiff, 2015) who challenged the audience to reflect on the ethical principles driving their teaching and examination practices, including considering whether they would, hypothetically, be prepared to offer Al Capone a PhD.

In conclusion

This article promotes the teaching of research ethics as important to teaching excellence in Higher Education and other educational settings. This includes turning the ethical gaze on ourselves, as academics, and reviewing the ethicality of our teaching. This article argues that ethical awareness and commitment to ethical principles should be included in any Teaching Excellence Framework. In line with Gunn and Fisk's conclusions, having reviewed literature about University teaching excellence, 'we require a stronger comprehension of the relationships and intersections between...the ethics and ethos of higher education, as well as the ethics and ethos of institutions in which these are played out' (Gunn & Fisk, 2013, p21). ■

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Framing Excellence in Teaching:

FOR EDUCATIONAL EQUITY

By Uvanney Maylor,
University of Bedfordshire

In advocating the need for a Teaching Excellence Framework, Jo Johnson, the Minister for Universities and Science argued (9th September 2015, online) that in exchange for their higher education fees, students should receive 'great teaching, combined with rigorous assessment, useful feedback and preparation for the world of work', and have access to 'inspiring academics who go the extra mile, support struggling students, email feedback at weekends and give much more of their time than duty demands'. These are the type of teachers he considers will 'change [students] lives'. Therefore for the Government excellence in teaching is designed to 'drive up student engagement with the learning process'.

There is no denying that students in higher education need to experience excellent teaching, value for money and have their rate of employability post degree enhanced. A concern, however, is that educational equity appears to be absent from Government calls for excellence in teaching, which suggests that students as individuals rather than as consumers of education are not taken into consideration when thinking what excellent teaching in higher education represents.

What does framing excellence in teaching mean if we are to achieve educational equity for our students? This for me means that higher education educators would need to have an understanding that Britain is an ethnically diverse society and becoming even more diverse. Further they would need to understand the ethnic make-up of the student population they encounter on under- and postgraduate courses. Thus a key starting point is that students' backgrounds are positively recognised and this will enable lecturers to deliver an engaging and inclusive curriculum.

The Equality Act (2010) requires higher education institutions to advance equality of opportunity for all students and eliminate discrimination. Teaching excellence for educational equity would need to have at the forefront the salience of students from all ethnic backgrounds achieving equitable outcomes when they leave university. This means that lecturers would need to start from the position of having high expectations for all students, and judge students according to their ability not ethnic background. If for example, the starting point for teaching and assessing Black students in higher education is that they underachieve in GCSE examinations nationally (DfE, 2013) and the proportion who receive a first or upper second class degree at undergraduate level is lower than other ethnic groups (ECU, 2014a), then lecturer perception of their attainment abilities will be clouded by such biased preconceptions. What is needed in teaching excellence for equity is that all students are judged fairly in the same way and using the same assessment criteria. Added to this, lecturers would need to be prepared to challenge any misconceptions they hold of the achievement abilities of different student groups, but particularly

The Equality Act (2010) requires higher education institutions to advance equality of opportunity for all students and eliminate discrimination

that of Black and minority ethnic students, because if lecturers only believe for example, that Black students will underachieve, drop out of their studies or fail (frequent lecturer comments), this can lead to lecturers not recognising or nurturing Black student potential. As well as a focus on ethnicity it is important that teachers challenge any unconscious biases they may have which affect the way they perceive, recognise, interact with and assess students according to gender and/or class group. Equitable teaching also requires teachers to be open to having their biased perspectives challenged by students and peers.

Teaching excellence for equity needs to be applied at post-graduate level. Recently, I was disturbed to learn that the doctoral work of some minority ethnic students who have favoured for example, post-colonial and critical race theory (predominant in the USA) discourses, had been criticised for not using 'distinguished theorists such as Bourdieu and Foucault' in theorising their research findings. As the dominant culture in English higher education is White British one might not be surprised at such a comment. However, this suggests that only European/Western theorists are considered to have influential theoretical positions which should be utilised, and in the case of the students concerned, not using such theorists counted against them. Further it suggests that there is a hierarchy of theorists which some lecturers consider acceptable to be drawn on. As educational theory is not confined to Europe, and it is evident that 'among full-time students in postgraduate research programmes, England has almost equal proportions of students from the UK (49 per cent) and from other EU and international countries (51 per cent)' (HEFCE 2014, para. 36), then higher education teaching should be open to non-Western perspectives. Furthermore, an emphasis on theorists such as Bourdieu and Foucault highlights a problem identified by Adams and Gurney (2014) in relation to research excellence concentrating on the 'signals' of excellence as opposed to the substance of excellence, and how this may serve to reinforce unconscious biases vis-à-vis race, gender (Rees, 2004) and class constructions of excellence. Clearly, the Government is keen to develop a teaching excellence framework in the same way a research excellence framework has been developed. Notwithstanding, as the majority of lecturers in higher education are White (ECU, 2014b), and the dominant culture is White we have to be mindful that teaching excellence is not constructed as White, and equally, that what is constructed as essential in learning is not constructed as White.

To conclude, Teaching for educational equity requires special educators who according to Hilliard (2000: 293) are:

The ones who create powerful educational environments. They are the ones who are not puzzled about how to raise the achievement levels of [students] from any background to levels of excellence. They are the ones who see the universal genius, spirit and humanity in all [students]. Things like poverty, bilingual status, single parent families, and even threatening neighbourhood environments present no obstacle to the attainment of excellence for their students.

It would also mean that teachers do not teach in a colour blind way (Maylor, 2014) but bring colour into 'difference' and recognise that as well as students not being homogeneous, that they bring a range of cultural knowledge to the learning process from which educators can learn through dialoguing with their students (Freire, 1996). Ultimately, teachers will need to think about how the curriculum they deliver and how their knowledge of students can negatively affect student outcomes. Through a more informed understanding of the students they teach, and their own practice as educators, lecturers will be able to teach equitably and as a consequence transform the educational outcomes of all students. ■

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The Teaching Excellence Framework – An opportunity for development?

By Christine Szwed,
University of Birmingham

The commitment to 'introduce a framework to recognise universities offering the highest teaching quality' formed part of a checklist of aspirations for higher education within the Conservative Party's 2015 manifesto.

The subsequent announcement of a proposed Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) and current consultation document has prompted much debate in higher education, by suggesting that the quality of teaching in universities is worth careful consideration in its own right. Jo Johnson, the new minister for universities and science, delivering his first major policy speech on 1 July, asserted that the TEF would "root out bad teaching" and provide "incentives to make good teaching even better" (Johnson, 2015). One of his stated aims is to 'build a culture where teaching has equal status with research, with great teachers enjoying the same professional recognition and opportunities for career and pay progression as great researchers'. Indeed, the TEF is being viewed by many as teaching's equivalence to the REF and it has been argued that this can only be a positive development in that the two complementary areas of teaching and research should now be given equal status. Supporters view the idea as a long overdue corrective to a system that measures and rewards only research quality, via the research excellence framework.

Whilst clearly this is a laudable aim, as teaching and learning has to be at the heart of quality within our higher education system, there are many challenges in avoiding this becoming another narrowly focussed activity providing extra administrative burdens for university staff. Johnson has argued that the framework should be informed by "a clear set of outcome-focused criteria and metrics." What must be avoided however at all costs is a rigid metrics approach that is not fit for purpose. Clearly with George Osborne's statement in the Budget that universities which could demonstrate high quality teaching would be able to charge students more than £9,000, there could be much at stake here. Undergraduate provision has been subject to the NSS performance data for several years and detractors have objected to a simple metrics approach based on questionable formulae supporting those universities more experienced at manipulating data. Commentators have suggested that the declared mission to drive up standards in teaching is in effect a justification of an increased and more explicit marketisation of education.

If we want to consider what a data-driven TEF could embody, we might look towards Ofsted, the inspectorate of England's schools, nurseries, childminders, and Initial Teaching Training providers. As an academic leading postgraduate teaching training courses that are subject to external accountability through Ofsted, I am fully aware of how much time and effort goes into preparing the necessary paperwork to achieve the outstanding grade we have retained over several years. Other less fortunate providers have seen numbers cut and even teacher training courses withdrawn from an Education department's portfolio due to dropping a grade. Many would suggest that Ofsted is driven by data collection and extra administrative burden rather than considering the true essence of what makes excellent teaching and learning in our schools and HEIs.

Resultant to this, we have seen more staff involved in more meetings, writing impact and best practice statements, creating additional documents and policies and a data set that tells us very little about teaching. There is a real danger here in focussing on strategies to improve the data, rather than strategies to improve teaching. In a recent study examining postgraduate medical training, Lancaster (2015) concludes that outcome-based metrics are more difficult to define for these university courses and suggest that caution is required in using NSS results as a proxy measure of university course quality.

Another growing and valuable element of postgraduate courses is the expansion of distance and blended learning. Such activity does not sit easily with the transmissionist, traditional view of teaching, with observation of teaching excellence through evaluation of individual lecturers' 'performance' in lectures. We need to consider how to add value, and how to measure teaching enhancement activities that have student-centred learning at the heart of the activity. Indeed, David Palfreyman, director of the Oxford Centre for Higher Education Policy Studies, captures the essence of these challenges in stating that 'the big problem is that there is so much fuzziness around defining 'quality' in higher education, let alone measuring it' (quoted in Grove, 2015). Plowden suggests quite rightly that the TEF is merely one articulation of teaching excellence and notes that it will inevitably draw on performance data which may be limited in scope, or intended for a different purpose (Plowden, 2015).

Another challenge is in preventing a rigid division of teaching and research contractual duties within our universities. Many are still struggling to find career routes that give the same prominence to teaching excellence as they always have done to outstanding research. We must ensure, especially in postgraduate courses, that research-informed teaching maintains its prominence. Schemes such as the well regarded National Teaching Fellowships have gone some way to raising the profile of teaching. These should be extended and a community of such fellows has much to offer in supporting the development of the TEF. Institutions will want to engage with the TEF as a way of providing some form of external verification of its claims to excellence. Where there is also the threat of loss of funding this verification will be particularly high profile. We need therefore to grasp the opportunity to engage in purposeful debate about true teaching excellence.

The TEF is important, but does not have to be definitive. In defining teaching quality, particularly in those Russell Group Universities where research excellence has been under the spotlight for many years, we must seize the opportunity to think more widely about how we develop strategies to develop, audit, monitor, report and reward teaching excellence, moving away from a simplistic metrics approach. A strong case for this is also made by Plowden (2015) who argues that only by being ready to exchange our ideas can we hope to give teaching the high profile it deserves. ■

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Quality in Higher Education

By David Palfreyman,
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The Law sees (and in English common law jurisdictions has long seen) the student-university relationship as contractual, as simply the delivery of a service (teaching and assessment leading to the opportunity of a degree being awarded) by a business as the supplier or trader (the university) to the consumer (the student) (Farrington & Palfreyman, 2012, Chapter 12).

This fits with the shift over recent decades of HE from being seen as a free public good to being viewed as a valuable private employability benefit for the graduate, a process of commodification and marketization greatly resented by many HE pundits or hugely welcomed by a few others (Palfreyman & Tapper, 2014). During 2015 the Competition and Markets Authority – egged on by the powerful consumer body, Which? – has issued firm and challenging guidance to the HE industry on the consumer rights of its customers now paying £9,000 pa for the occasionally rather shoddy and somewhat poor value-for-money services of some university traders – see Paper 56 ('Send for the Director of Compliance', 2015) at the Papers page of the OxCHEPS website (www.oxcheps.new.ox.ac.uk).

And at the same time the industry rejects calls by Which? to reveal the actual real cost of undergraduate teaching – the truth would be embarrassing in that barely £5,000 of the £9,000 reaches the chalk face in over-crowded lectures and over-sized seminars, as almost £1,000 disappears to meet the access demands of OFFA (Office for Fair Access) and the rest leaks away via a wicked combination of: administrative bloat (including fat-cat management salaries), poor cost-control, the debt charges for borrowing to build glitzy campus infrastructure, and in perhaps 25 or so of the 150 universities a hefty subsidy of research activity and productivity (which metric alone determines their position in the global rankings and hence their brand-value, thereby enhancing the employability of their graduates even if an excessive focus on research has led to neglect of their undergraduate teaching). At least the leanly-managed for-profits HEPs charge only £6,000 pa for their skills and competencies vocational degrees.

At least the leanly-managed for-profits HEPs charge only £6,000 pa for their skills and competencies vocational degrees.

These league-tables do not try to measure the immeasurable – teaching quality – partly because the HE industry finds it hard to define quality in teaching, let alone to measure it; although that will not prevent our soon embarking on a hugely expensive and wasteful bureaucratic attempt to do so via a much-heralded TEF to match the REF, thereby creating employment for yet more administrators as well as a fresh cascade of pseudo-academic journal articles on the teaching and learning process. In among this, HEFCE will be jostling to retain a role for itself as a vast quango whose original purpose of dishing out taxpayer dosh (there is a clue in the use of the word 'Funding' in its title) has been replaced almost entirely by the £9,000 tuition fee – fussing over a TEF to be run alongside the REF and also snatching away QAA's function should help safeguard jobs at the Bristol HQ.

SO, HOW TO DELIVER, MAINTAIN, AND EVEN ENHANCE QUALITY IN UNIVERSITY TEACHING?

Option 1, rely on the Integrity of the Academic Profession? Well, not really since it is a rather feeble sort of profession compared with medics or lawyers; and some bits of it are very easily pushed around by management while other bits are compromised in wanting to maximise research time at the expense of teaching given that only the former counts in an academic career.

Option 2, rely on Internal Quality Policing through the management in the form of all those well-paid posts as 'Director of Student Learning' or 'Director of the Student Experience'? Again, not wise since these folk know little of what goes on (or indeed does not go on) at the chalk face, and anyway management is either busy spending money on new buildings or pushing research at the expense of properly resourcing teaching since strategically either or both count for more in, respectively, pulling in the student punters and in the prestige-seeking rankings game.

Option 3, rely on 'soft' External Quality Policing (Version I) through the QAA or whatever entity soon replaces it? Still no solution – such agencies rarely are allowed to ask the awkward questions ('Please detail: the size of seminars across subject areas; the quantum of summative and also (if any) formative work done by undergraduates; the feedback processes relating to such work; and the proportion of teaching undertaken by the use of casual adjunct staff?'). They generally have to operate on a Pollyanna basis, seeing Excellence all around them – think of the high official ratings awarded to Stafford General before it was exposed as the hospital that killed off its patients!

Option 4, rely on 'hard' External Quality Policing (Version II) through some form of Ofsted for HE? Perhaps, but unlike maintained schools, universities are not public bodies and hence the State (short of new legislation) is not able to set up the sort of inspection regimes it has for prisons, policing, schools. And anyway there are too few 'good' university teachers to staff an inspectorate!

Option 5, rely on third-party agencies such as the Professional Bodies to which certain degree courses (such as nursing, medicine, engineering, surveying, law, pharmacy, accountancy) are linked? The best bet so far in that at least the quantum of teaching in these areas tends not to have been egregiously short-changed in the way that the HEPI annual surveys (as so studiously ignored by UK!) repeatedly reveal to be the case for academic areas that just nobody cares about – history, sociology, politics, and the rest.

Another Option, of course, is to chill out – as long as the doctors and the engineers are properly trained, who cares what quantum of or quality of academic activity has been encountered by the average humanities and social studies graduate? The student-consumer may be happy to have partied through uni as mass HE becomes in effect rite of passage tertiary education. Or the employer may simply be taking as the convenient signal of employability the research rankings brand-value of certain universities which indicates they take customers from the higher socio-economic groups with all the cultural capital needed to progress in most workplaces: that is elite universities as machines to perpetuate social-economic elites (Palfreyman & Tapper, 2009). ■

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The National 'Surface' Survey and Questions of 'Excellence'

By Jo Frankham,
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This year has seen the tenth anniversary of the National Student Survey (NSS). The survey (amongst other aims) sets out to provide data to allow universities to "enhance the student learning experience" (Ipsos MORI).

In the year it was announced that the NSS is likely to be replaced or augmented by the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) this research[1] set out to gather academics' views of the NSS. A green paper on the TEF has just been published, on which we are invited to comment.

What, then, are some of the barriers to the NSS promoting excellence in teaching and learning in higher education? I focus here on issues associated with the tendency of the survey to amplify surface issues, and how institutions encourage surface responses to those issues.

Sabri (2013) seems to be alone in having interviewed students about their experiences of the NSS. This research corroborated her work: academics believe the survey is used to express short-term dissatisfactions and frustrations and that students' responses are heavily coloured by assessment pressures. Students also reported that they resented being 'chased' to complete the survey. Academics believe the survey encourages negativity and a punitive attitude "what didn't you get, what didn't you like". The generality of the questions, the anonymity of the process, and the way in which the survey is constructed "what we're delivering or not delivering . . . I think it encourages an idea of students as recipients of education and learning".

An economistic register has been reinforced by the introduction of the £9,000 fee where students increasingly consider whether they are getting 'value for money'. Institutional responses to feedback ("you said: we did") are also regarded as encouraging students to behave as consumers with a utilitarian view of their degree courses.

Academics believe, then, that problematic scores may not represent a significant problem. Certainly this research suggested a series of mediations and approximations are represented in the scores, resulting in a distinctly muddy picture in respect of possible improvements. Low scores can originate in a very small number of students, expressing something outside the remit of the survey. Changes that academics made one year might come back to 'bite them' the next; sometimes a long-standing gripe would disappear, with no changes being made. Academics believed cohort characteristics were much more likely to affect scores than changes they were making. Where academics set out to explore a problematic score, face to face, it was noticeable that some students who had been 'satisfied' then became 'dissatisfied' (and vice versa). And on some occasions, an apparent problem was closer to a university agenda than it was to a student agenda "they use the scores when it suits them, ignore them when it suits them". It is also ironic, in this context, that real

[1] Funded by the British Academy/Leverhulme: For a copy of the full report contact j.frankham@ljmu.ac.uk.

problems sometimes went unaddressed in order that individual staff and students are not ‘exposed’.

Nevertheless, individual staff have to respond, and quickly, to the scores that are distributed. When scores are made public, there is a good deal of anxiety amongst staff – would good scores stay that way? What ‘fallout’ would there be from poor scores? Multiple comparisons are made between scores in some institutions, and in others academics described forms of ritual humiliation associated with ‘poor scores’. Figures typically arrive in the form of a graph showing the trajectory of results. This visual marker of the ‘direction of travel’ is underlined by the expectation that scores will improve each year. This is quite ubiquitous across institutions. “It’s expected [that scores would improve] year on year. Yes, of course.” “It’s the way it’s laid out, basically tells you – you need to be going up. Plus you’re told as much by your superior in the faculty. You get, I’ve noticed that score has fallen, what’s going on. How are you going to do something about it . . .” This institutional pressure encourages a performative attitude amongst staff – what can we be seen to be doing in response to the scores? “We have to come up with a quick fix to take us up a level” - “a knee-jerk reaction”.

The culture of university meetings militates against academics airing open disagreement in the face of bureaucratic definitions of ‘quality’ issues. It is also difficult for academics to ‘argue back’ in relation to the scores that are passed down “because there’s a surface at which it’s really hard for people to reject it. Because how can you reject . . . this is student feedback.” Academics also need, and want, to do well

in these league tables; this is partly a consequence of their public nature and partly about the ways in which they are used by managers. And, as this research found , ‘problematic’ scores come back onto the table “again and again and again” funneling the impact of those scores on the people concerned (Hey, 2011), and increasing their visibility. In these, and other ways, neoliberalism comes to ‘inhabit’ us – it is ‘out there’ and ‘in here’ in Peck and Tickell’s (2002) terms. In contrast to students’ attitudes, academics reported a keen awareness and preoccupation with the survey, despite the fact that many believed the results lacked validity.

The NSS has, nevertheless, become the ‘public face’ of judging quality in higher education. It motivates new layers of management, resolutely focused on an economy of appearances. As Lorenz (2012) has described, New Public Management employs a discourse that parasitizes the concept of ‘quality’ and perverts its meaning. The definition of education that is implied by the NSS ignores the most important aspects of the education process and poses threats to it through a focus on surface issues and responses.

Given the challenges associated with individuals contesting these (and other) metrics, how might we use the opportunity of the TEF Green Paper to draw on expertise in educational research to give more than a surface response to the proposals? Obvious examples include: expertise in the field of educational evaluation, in respect of the complexity of engaging students in the co-construction of learning spaces, and expertise in the distorting effects of audit on the public sector. Of course, there is the further challenge of how we might disrupt the relationship between policy makers and universities, characterized by Kavanagh (2009) as the ‘sovereign’ and his ‘fool’ (or ‘jester’). Thus far, the joke has been on us. ■

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The Best Teaching in the World (Probably)

By Ian Scott,
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It is without doubt that the Higher Education Green Paper has caught universities off-guard, and has started to raise concern amongst academics.

This concern is well placed, given that in reality, we have a poor construct of what is to be measured as 'excellence in teaching and learning' or how it will be measured. The irony of this situation is that many UK HEIs have claimed for some time that their teaching standards are very high; it now seems apparently and somewhat un-academically that they did so without any real idea of what this meant or how it was measured. Did someone tell Jo Johnson that the emperor was a little immodestly dressed, or perhaps we should have taken lessons from possibly the best beer makers in the world (see www.carlsberg.com)?

Ironies aside, in July 2015 it was apparent the Minister for Higher Education wanted a Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) incorporated into a Green Paper to be put before Parliament in the Autumn and that neither the Sector, Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) nor HEFCE knew what the TEF was or what should be in it. There was also lack of clarity with regard to the purpose of TEF. Suggestions have been: to legitimise the charging of fees; to make UK HE teaching as globally competitive as UK research; as a tool to drive inclusive practice; and latterly as a means to qualify an institution to increase fees above £9,000. During July, BIS and HEFCE commenced consultation on the TEF and as a means to inform this consultation the Association of National Teaching Fellows (ANTF) organised a TEF workshop, the purpose of which was to give National Teaching Fellows (NTFs) opportunity to inform the early thinking around the TEF.

NTFs are individuals that have been recognised, through a competitive national (England and Wales) process (managed by the HEA) as demonstrating excellent learning and teaching practice. At the workshop we asked NTFs four questions: why they were considered 'excellent'; the utility of a TEF; what aspects should be considered in evaluating teaching excellence; and lastly what metrics could be used to measure this excellence.

The dominant discourse amongst NTFs as to why they were nominated concerned: successful innovation, engaging with students, developing colleagues, scholarship and having impact across the HE sector. Many recognised themselves as being maverick and willing to take risks. Whilst this list provides a useful starting point, it is important to note that the NTF selection process has, following selection by their home institution, been largely peer-led. Also, that excellence within an individual does not necessarily mean an excellent education system is in place, and vice-versa.

Stemming from the discussion of individual excellence, the notion of what aspects of teaching excellence the TEF includes follows. As to be expected, NTFs were diverse in their views, but their considerations fell into distinct categories (see Table 1).

Table 1: Aspects of Teaching Excellence that NTFs present at the workshop would include in the TEF.

Investment	Enquiring, open, sharing culture	Innovative disposition	Student engagement	Inclusive
Investment in professional development in relation to teaching Investment in resources related to learning and teaching Extent and reach of student support services Investment in new pedagogies	Use of evidence to enhance scholarship of pedagogy Commitment to dissemination Peer development a normal activity Lecturers link to the wider community of subject pedagogic networks Seeing students as Researchers and enquirers from the start of their course	New practices allowed to emerge, thrive and where necessary die (without repercussion) The institute engages with the outside community to seek out new practices	Establishing rapport with learners Motivating learners Students as partners in producing change within the institution Student and staff feedback actively discussed and utilized for enhancement Appropriate, current, relevant, viable and vibrant teaching methods Deep learning occurring High quality teaching/facilitation with appropriate level of quality interaction time	Recognition of differing students' needs (and meeting them) Equivalency of outcomes across student groups Enabling all students to succeed at what they want to do next

Of course, knowing what aspects of excellent 'teaching' you may want to include in the TEF is some distance from knowing how to measure it, particularly given that the sector has been promised an assessment process that is bureaucratically light.

Particular measures that NTFs considered could be broadly divided into four non-exclusive categories of process, culture, investment and impact.

Culture

- Proportion of those promoted to professor via a teaching and learning route,
- Evidence of pedagogic research and scholarship,
- Proportion of NTFs,
- Case studies demonstrating Impact on the way the discipline is taught in the sector.

Process

- Average class size,
- Well-developed staff CPD framework relating to learning and teaching,
- Student / teaching staff ratios,
- Evidence-based learning and teaching methods,
- Evidence of transformative curricula,
- Levels of student collaboration with the community and industry,
- Evidence of inclusive extra and co-curricular activities.

Impact

- Peer-reviewed case studies to demonstrate excellent teaching and its impact,
- Measures of outcomes inclusive practice,
- Measurements of learning gain,
- Employment and social contribution of students 5 years post-graduation,
- Student engagement survey.

Investment

- Spend per FTE on learning environment,
- Levels of student support (for example investment in welfare).

For NTFs at the workshop, the discussion of measures proved the most problematic, leaving many disconcerted, as they could see that many of the metrics did not truly measure excellent teaching and could be manipulated. There were concerns relating to scale: should the focus be on the individual, programme or institution. There was recognition that excellence needs to be judged in context and that this would almost certainly require qualitative measures dependent on expert subjective judgement, which would require a more significant investment and bureaucracy than the Government has in mind or universities have appetite for.

TEF may become about how good you are at playing the numbers game rather than genuine excellence. Our current lack of a 'construct' of excellent learning and teaching suggest there is much research to be done; however, there are some of us who feel, that although TEF will not be perfect, and it will not be comfortable, it may offer the best chance we have to elevate the status of teaching across the HE sector. ■

Excellence in Teaching: Can it be achieved through educational research?


By Tim Cain, Edge Hill University and
Louise Hayward, University of Glasgow, BERA CAP SIG co-convenors

Around the world, attempts are being made to associate excellence in teaching with being research-informed. To this end, governments are funding initiatives to bring teachers into contact with educational research.

These initiatives are emerging in different ways in different contexts but all are attempting to achieve what is described in European educational policy as, 'Optimal circulation, access to and transfer of scientific knowledge' (European Commission, 2013). In France and Norway, national clearinghouses for educational research have been established. In Romania, the 2011 Education Law highlighted the role of educational research in the creation of a knowledge-based society. In Austria, the national educational research center develops policies to foster transfer from educational research to practice. In the USA, the *What Works Clearinghouse* has been in operation since 2002.

Although similar attempts have been made previously, to ensure that educational practice is 'research-informed' (for example, Hargreaves, 1996), several additional factors suggest that this new drive may have potential to enhance the relationship between research and teaching:

1. The Government in England has committed to funding the 'What Works Centre' for Education with £135 million over 10 years to evaluate the impact of educational interventions and there is also a major 'What Works' initiative in Scotland (http://whatworksscotland.ac.uk).

2. Key educational players are opening up research to teachers, some by developing user-friendly accounts of research findings, to promote research that is more accessible to teachers (for example BERA's Insights and briefings, the EEF's Toolkit, the Institute of Education's Evidence Library and the MESH guides.) Others are opening up access to journals; for example, in Scotland, the General Teaching Council has made access to journals available to all teachers.

3. Governments are funding projects to support the development of more iterative policy processes where research findings are as likely to lead to policy change as to changes in practice (for example, Hayward, 2015).

4. Professional associations and networks are working with teachers to support stronger connections between research and practice, through conferences and professional development activities. For example, networks include The Coalition for Evidence-based Education, the Evidence Based Teachers Network, CamSTAR and ResearchEd. They are supported by organizations including the Centre for the Use of Research Evidence in Education (CUREE) and the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER).

5. The 'Impact' agenda encourages UK universities to ensure that their research has tangible benefits for society.

6 'Open Access' policies ensure that research is available online (RCUK, 2013).

7 Increasing numbers of teachers are showing enthusiasm for research. Teaching Schools have research and development among their priorities and the ResearchEd conferences are frequently sold out. Because of this success, they have been exported to the USA and Australia.

Unsurprisingly, BERA members have broadly welcomed the direction of these policies (for example, Allen, 2013; James, 2013; Whitty, 2013), although with caveats. Among other matters, it was pointed out that evidence-informed teaching was unlikely to resemble evidence-based medicine, which is often presented as the supposedly exemplary model (Whitty, 2013; see also Hammersley, 1997). Specifically, the suggestion that Randomised Control Trials (RCTs) were the best means of research was criticized (for example, Allen, 2013). James (2013) cautioned against unwarranted assumptions that 'impact will simply follow from the dissemination and clear communication of results' and argued that this is not the case because, 'It is often not knowledge that we lack; it is implementation' (n.p.). Behind these criticisms lurks a fear perhaps, that government interest in educational research can easily turn into government control of educational research. Nevertheless, speakers at the 2015 BERA Conference, including Teresa Bracho Gonzalez and Cynthia Coburn, attested that research-informed teaching is an idea whose time has come.

Yet, among scholars who have thought seriously about research-informed teaching, several questions have been raised. Are the research methods that are most often cited by enthusiasts – chiefly RCTs – either necessary or sufficient? What motivates educators to engage with research? Who is best placed to work with teachers to explore the potential of research findings for practice? What are the roles of research producers, users and intermediary organizations? Can research-generated knowledge, in principle, be useful and usable in practice?

These questions have been raised before the current enthusiasm for research-informed teaching. There are other questions. What is the relationship between educational research (however conceived) and curriculum? Assessment? Pedagogy? What, if anything, does research have to say about the inter-connectedness of these three major message systems? If 'impact' is one of the aims of educational research, what are the implications of 'impact' for research methodologies? Can, or should, teaching become research-informed through research-informed programmes, resources or other technologies (when the research is embedded in these technologies and is therefore invisible to the teachers)? Can teaching become more research-informed if teachers engage with educational research by reading and discussing it? Is research-informed teaching better developed through practitioner research? How might educational research be married with practitioner research?

These questions lie at the heart of the work of the Curriculum, Assessment and Pedagogy Special Interest Group (SIG). During 2015-16, the Curriculum, Assessment and Pedagogy SIG intends to hold a one-day seminar to discuss these matters. A call for abstracts will be sent via the BERA office and we expect to generate a lively and stimulating debate. Ultimately, by developing and communicating a fuller and deeper understanding of research-informed teaching than currently exists, we hope to provide a framework that might be used to inform strategies for researchers to impact on educational practice, and for practitioners, including teachers, to engage with research. ■

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BERA 2015 Masters Dissertation Award

MISSION IMPOSSIBLE: THE COMPARTMENTALISATION OF NATIONAL AND CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION IN POST-COLONIAL HONG KONG

By Alvin Leung,
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Education for citizenship and that for nationhood are commonly seen as complementary. However, this conceptual nexus may not always be the case. In some East Asian countries, such as Japan, Thailand and Singapore, the concept of citizenship is different from the Western understanding, with 'civic' education commonly considered as moral and patriotic education with a diminished political aspect. While the closeness between education for nationhood and that for citizenship is embraced in post-colonial Hong Kong educational policies, the situation is particularly complex. The precarious balance of the two divergent concepts – national and citizenship education – that the Hong Kong government seeks to pursue can hardly be achieved.

In 1996, one year prior to the handover of sovereignty, an official document affirming the teaching of human values such as equality and justice was published, spelling out the need to revamp the civic education. It proclaimed the need to ground civic education in a local context, extending incrementally to regional, national and international communities. The document also supports the teaching of critical thinking and political participation. Despite the departing colonial government's intention to develop a distinctive civic identity alongside other decolonisation measures, no radical change was initiated in the education system due partly to a need to promote stability. Since the handover in 1997, the weak national identity recognition was repeatedly presented as a problem by the new government; there have been increasingly pervasive and explicit efforts to strengthen national identity education in the ensuing decade. In 2001, the government proposed a curriculum document, wherein the political aspect of civic education was seriously downplayed. Civic education was combined with sex education and religious education – an integration rejected by the colonial government just six years earlier. The important values to be taught were 'national identity, positive spirit, perseverance, respect for others and commitment to society and nation'. This depoliticised curriculum steadfastly placed prominence on re-creating the 'Chinese values' of pupils who were considered by the government to be loyal to China and its 'people'.

This approach of promoting nationalistic sentiments in Hong Kong can be conceptualised as 'pan-Chinese nationalism' proposed by He and Guo (2000), describing the mainland Chinese government-led nationalism as an attempt to defend the unity of the Chinese nation-state that was seen as at risk, by way of the 'invention' of a pan-Chinese national identity covering the Mainland and its peripheries. This approach appeals to common tradition, history and culture as the foundation of the 'nation'. In the case of Hong Kong, pan-Chinese nationalism mainly counts on ethnicity and Chinese culture because more than 94% of Hongkongers are Han Chinese. Pan-Chinese nationalism has similarities with the cultural nationalism noted by Hutchinson and Smith (1994), who explain that cultural nationalists perceive the state as an accidental yet glorious product of its unique history, culture and geographic profile. In contrast to political nationalists who want to achieve a representative national state that guarantees its members uniform citizenship rights, cultural nationalists are eager to regenerate and re-create the nation's distinctive national character. In the process, in spite of significant differences between pre-modern and modern societies, long established cultural myths, symbols and memories are carried into the modern era by powerful institutions and are then revived and redeveloped. Such features could be clearly seen in the mentality of the new government – the creation of a unified 'Chinese cultural identity' valorised by virtues informing the formulation of a civic education promoting nationalistic sentiments.

The nature of the national identity to be re-created in Hong Kong was indeed at odds with that in Mainland China, wherein the essential building block was loyalty to the party-state institutions. Such a concept could hardly be promoted in Hong Kong owing to the vibrant civil society and democracy. Therefore, national education had to count on cultural and ethnical traits and leave out the political participation regarding affairs in mainland China. This 'civic-free' nationalism was chosen because the opposite would only expose the breach and promote Hongkongers' self-awareness of their local identity. Since the education system simultaneously sought to uphold civic and political participation in local contexts, this form of nationalism was at the root of the idiosyncrasies of Hong Kong's education system and thus created a mission impossible – the teaching of multi-dimensional citizens.

The national identity to be taught in Hong Kong is incomplete as a consequence of the exclusion of the political dimension. The situation challenged a common belief that nationalistic education and citizenship education could go hand in hand. National education is commonly seen as a scaffold for citizenship education in Western scholarship; for instance, Heater (2004) proclaims that love of home country is an important part of education for citizenship and that fostering national loyalty and pride and the teaching of national history are ubiquitous in inculcating good citizenship. Janowitz (1983) shared the same opinion: citizenship involves nationalism and patriotism and that effective civic education would, in return, result in increased national identification.

The connexion acknowledged above is, I argue, severed in Hong Kong's education on the national identity level. Firstly, the apolitical and coercive nature of nationalism in Hong Kong is different from other contexts such as those mentioned by Heater and Janowitz. The nationalism they identified, which is commonly adopted in the West, is civic-nationalism whereby the state derives political legitimacy from the active participation of its citizenry and hence its capability to unite diverse ethnic and cultural groups. Undoubtedly, in contrast to this understanding, the official nationalism in Hong Kong is ethno-cultural and civic-free by nature in national contexts. As a result, citizenship education, including the teaching of political rights, is only encouraged in local contexts due to the colonial legacy, whilst education for nationhood excludes political participation. The bond between nationhood and citizenship education is therefore annulled. In the circumstance of Hong Kong wherein education for nationhood and that for citizenship were compartmentalised, I contend that the former, unchecked by the liberal and critical characteristics of the latter, is ideologically dangerous. The former, acclaimed and financially supported by the government, foists an unrestrained, spontaneous and top-down Chinese identity on students; national identity in this circumstance is hardly founded on a fluid and diverse understanding of individuals' free will. Albeit utilising the ethnical homogeneity of the population to promote nationalism may achieve the goal of absorbing Hong Kong into the greater China completely, this approach could marginalise the non-ethnic Chinese in Hong Kong and severely erode Hong Kong's cosmopolitan values

> Education for nationhood can arguably engender social cohesion, yet its design and implementation must be critically examined.

The flawed compartmentalisation of education for nationhood and that for citizenship continued regardless of the opposition. The tension between the two reached an apogee in 2012 when the government proposed adding a compulsory subject 'Moral and National Education' within the 'Moral and Civic Education' framework. The strong reaction of the civil society, eventually forced the government to rescind the proposal. Despite this, civic participation as expressed in confronting the government has continued to gain momentum.

The above case of Hong Kong challenges the connexion between education for nationhood and education for citizenship that is widely perceived in Western contexts. Education for nationhood can arguably engender social cohesion, yet its design and implementation must be critically examined. The nationalistic education in post-colonial Hong Kong is unarguably feeble because of its incompatibility with citizenship education at the local level, and the very nature of its ethnic-cultural, government-led and undemocratic origins. This idiosyncratic case should remind educators of the political motivations that may sometimes lie behind ostensibly reasonable arguments for promoting nationalistic and patriotic educational projects. ■

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