

Tertiary Teaching Matters: A critical examination of the evolution of tertiary education policy on ‘quality’ tertiary teaching over two years¹.

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Abstract: This paper outlines a critical view of the work and the processes of the Aotearoa/New Zealand *Teaching Matters Forum*. Documentary analysis is used to critically unpack the ‘official’ documentation and consultation responses to highlight the supposed ‘apolitical’ and democratic education policy process whereby a Government appointed body came to a agreed position to produce a report for Cabinet on Teaching Excellence. The primary objective of the Forum, as set out in its initial Terms of Reference was to provide advice on the setting up of a National Centre on Tertiary Teaching Excellence, however, it was also required to engage with the wider education sector on options for supporting effective teaching and learning. The Forum was established at the end of 2004 as a government appointed body of individuals (rather than representatives) with interest in ‘Teaching Excellence’ and a range of expertise from across the tertiary sector. The Forum, ‘nominally’ independent of Government, was supported by a project team from the MoE, the (TEC), and with some involvement from the NZQA.

The politics and processes behind the establishment of a New Zealand Centre for tertiary teaching, *Ako*³ *Aotearoa: Tertiary Teaching for Learning Centre* are investigated in this paper. The politics of the establishment of the Centre is bound up in various ongoing attempts of various governments since 1987 to establish an effective tertiary education sector that collaborated together, and provided the whole population with greater participation and access to tertiary education. We argue that there is competing interests underpinning this project, on the one side championing quality teaching in the tertiary sector, encouraging collegiality rather than competition between TEOs and creating a sense of parity of esteem for teaching as opposed to a focus on research engendered by the PBRF. On the other side creating further work for tertiary academics by potentially auditing their teaching and generating further accountability and regulation over their work as professionals.

Keywords: Education policy, tertiary teaching, quality

Introduction

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This paper addresses *some* issues of the major theme of this conference ‘*Educational research, policy, and practice in an era of globalization: The Asia Pacific perspectives and beyond*’. In particular, it addresses the theme Expansion and restructuring of higher education.

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³ In the Māori language (Māori are the Tangata Whenua/people of the land or Indigenous people in Aotearoa/NZ) and the term *Ako* means both learning and teaching.

This paper outlines a critical view of the work and the processes of the Aotearoa/New Zealand *Teaching Matters Forum*. The paper utilises documentary analysis to critically unpack the ‘official’ documentation and consultation responses of the tertiary sector to highlight the supposed ‘apolitical’ and democratic education policy process. However, we argue the Government appointed body came to an agreed position to produce a report for Cabinet on Teaching Excellence. The primary objective of the Forum, as set out in its initial Terms of Reference, was to provide advice on the setting up of a National Centre on Tertiary Teaching Excellence, however, it was also required to engage with the wider education sector on options for supporting effective teaching and learning. The Forum was established at the end of 2004 as a government appointed body of individuals (rather than representatives) with interest in ‘Teaching Excellence’ and a range of expertise from across the tertiary sector. The Forum, ‘nominally’ independent of Government, was supported by a project team from the Ministry of Education (MoE), the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC), and with some involvement from the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA).

Following the development of an initial discussion document *Teaching for Learning: Proposals for a National Centre for Tertiary Teaching Excellence* (Teaching Matters Forum, hereafter TMR, 2005a), the Forum held a series of consultation meetings in an attempt to engage democratically with the whole New Zealand Tertiary sector: universities, institutes of technology and polytechnics (ITPs), wānanga (Māori tertiary education institutions or as the wānanga had earlier contestably labelled themselves Māori universities), private training establishments (PTEs), industry training organisations (ITOs) and institutions of adult and community education (ACE). The diversity of the perspectives around the concept of Tertiary Excellence of executives, managers, teachers, academics, and learners of these different organisations, created a difficulty with dissimilar parts of sector potentially promoting their own sector and perspectives on the contested notion of ‘quality’. Despite the laudable aim of creating a Centre, many of those outside the universities felt it was primarily promoted by the universities as opposed to the other types of tertiary providers.

For many in the sector unpacking the concept of ‘Teaching Excellence’ was an attempt to unravel cooked spaghetti, while others were convinced that what was really going on was another plan trying to get academics/tertiary teachers tied down to relentless ‘performativity’ through creating ‘standards’, this time in teaching rather than just in research. In the battle over purpose, location, and name for the centre (and hence funding), what seems lost in the final report are any real concepts of what might count as Tertiary Teaching Excellence.

Furthermore, the politics and processes behind the establishment of a New Zealand Centre for tertiary teaching, *Ako Aotearoa: Tertiary Teaching for Learning Centre* are outlined in this paper. The politics of the establishment of the Centre is bound up in various ongoing attempts of different and various governments since 1987 to establish an effective tertiary education sector that collaborated together, and provided the whole population with greater participation and access to tertiary education.

In another paper (see Jesson & Smith, forthcoming) we provided a brief background/historical section on the reforms to the tertiary education sector to contextualise the discussion on the establishment of the tertiary teaching centre (however, we consider this only partially necessary for this current paper). What we do outline next though is a generalised account of quality issues in tertiary education in the last two decades and a very brief and somewhat cursory, yet selective traversing of some of the literature on the contested topic of tertiary teaching.

Brief lessons from the UK

In the UK Rowland, Byron, Furedi, Padfield and Smyth (1998) provided a provocative contribution to the debate on the practice and profession of university teaching development as practice claiming it to be inadequately theorised. In a reply from Australia Andresen (2000) argued that unlike the case in the UK at this time in the Australian context there had been and continued to be active attempts by the managerialist culture to co-opt teaching developers. However, he noted that unlike the UK where the practice of academic development and developers had been seen as ‘allies’ to managerialism, in the case of Australia Andresen (2000, p. 27) claimed ‘To date, I believe, that has been only minimally successful and there mercifully remains a robust ethos within teaching development that strongly sides with *anti*-managerialism’.

Young (2006, p. 191) maintains that ‘One of the few areas of consensus in the literature of higher education concerns the status of teaching. Unanimously, writers report the low status which higher education institutions give to teaching as an activity’. Supporting this notion and drawing on a host of other literature Greenbank (2006, p. 107) argues that in Britain, discipline-based research has taken precedence over teaching because academic careers are more likely to be linked to research achievement. Drawing on the work of Hannan and Silver (2000), Greenbank maintains undertaking research that meets the requirements of the research assessment exercise (RAE) remains the most important factor influencing promotion in higher education (Hannan & Silver, 2000, cited in Greenbank, 2006, p. 107). Furthermore, Greenbank notes that the dominant role of research therefore remains, this is despite the increased attention given to raising the status of teaching in higher education.

Pickering (2006) welcomes the fact that the UK political agenda has foregrounded the need for universities to examine the quality of their teaching provision in response to the changing needs of the ‘learning society’ (DfEE, 1998a, b, cited in Pickering, 2006, p. 319). Furthermore, Pickering applauds the establishment of infrastructures in the UK to promote best practice in university teaching development and suggests it is a significant innovation. He maintains:

Bodies such as the Staff and Education Development Association and the Higher Education Academy are active in this field, with the latter working to develop a national framework for professional standards in continuing professional development (Universities UK *et al.*, 2004, cited in Pickering, 2006, p. 319).

Pickering (2006) furthermore suggests that the dominant role of research therefore remains, in spite of the increased attention given to raising the status of teaching in higher education. One of the initiatives to achieve increasing the profile of teaching and learning and to promote ‘teaching excellence’ has been has been the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) introduction of the National Teaching Fellowship Scheme⁴ (see Skelton, 2003 for details, and also Skelton, 2005). In an article on this same topic Gosling (2004, p. 136) cautiously argues that there is evidence of increased attention being paid to teaching in

⁴ The National Teaching Fellowship Scheme (NTFS) was launched in 2000 (see Skelton, 2003; Young, 2006). By comparison the Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund (TQEF) was ‘officially’ established as a state-sponsored project in 1999, but it had incorporated a number of funded activities dating back to 1995 according to Gosling (2004, pp. 136-137).

higher education in England, in part, as a consequence of this funded initiative, however, Gosling notes that the evidence for wholesale cultural change remains difficult to interpret.

Young (2006: 201) reported that in January 2004 the HEFCE invited bid for Centres of Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETLs) and that the successful centres were revealed in 2005. In addition, Young noted that the National Teaching Fellowship scheme had been extended and 50 fellowships will provide £50,000.

Barnett and Coate (2005, p. 17) argue that the:

Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund, a phrase in which they suggest term ‘quality’ is technically redundant (since it is difficult to see how teaching could be enhanced without its quality being improved). The inclusion of the term quality, however, resonates with the more managerial discourse of explicit standards; in other words, management for accountability *and* enhancement in the one phase. The new Higher Education Academy (in replacing the ILTHE) may also be judged to be the outcome of a confluence between accountability and developmental influences. On the one hand, we have the state at work, in driving forward the establishment of the Academy, on the other hand, we see, within the new Academy, indications of collaborative working across the academic community. The Higher Education Academy, accordingly, is a kind of *hybrid agency*.

Thus in the last decade in the UK there has been significant policy changes in trying to promote the value of tertiary teaching and in particular qualifications in this area. In this respect since 2001, it has been a statutory requirement for all new entrants to teaching in the post -16 sector to be teacher trained and complete a professional teaching qualification. Lecturers employed before this date are encouraged to obtain relevant teaching qualifications through a process of continual professional development. (For recent studies in this area see Barnett, 2005 and contributions/chapters in this book by Scott; Healey; Naidoo; and Dill).

Some data from Australia

One of the most useful text in this area is from Ramsden (2003) who maintains in the past decade or so that there has been a great expansion in the number of educational development specialists, courses in higher education teaching, national learning and teaching support units and associations and university centres for academic development. These developments reflect a government agenda of quality, value for money and enhanced participation.

Emden (1998, cited in McGrail, Rickard & Jones, 2006, p. 19) notes that the inadequacy of excellent teaching and professional activities – even when combined with a PhD – when applying for academic promotion, if these are not combined with a strong track record of research publications. Other data from Blackmore and Sachs (2000) and Marginson and Considine (2000) and Yates (2004) supports these claims (and these are more fully explored later in this paper).

Recent literature in Aotearoa/New Zealand: A case of policy borrowing from the UK?

Smith, Baston, Bockock and Scott (2002, p. 449) in discussing policy processes and policy transfer argue that:

There is a growing literature, particularly within political science and comparative social policy, concerned to describe and analyse the process involved when policies,

programmes, institutional and administrative arrangements, developed in one political system are used to influence the development of policy ideas and programmes in another political system (Dolowitz and Marsh 2000: 5). Various, described as lesson drawing or policy learning, emulation, borrowing or transfer, studies in this literature share a common focus essentially on the decision-making processes by which policies and practices moved between political jurisdictions.

The nature of ‘policy borrowing’ is not new and there have been a number of instances where Aotearoa/New Zealand has imported albeit in a modified form elements of UK educational policy (see for example: Dale & Ozga, 1993; Gordon & Whitty, 1997; Thrupp, 1998, 2005; Ozga, 2000).

However, policy making is rarely neat and tidy. Instead, as Ball (1998) reminds us, it should be seen as:

A process of bricolage: a matter of borrowing and copying bits and pieces of ideas from elsewhere, drawing upon and amending locally tried and tested approaches, cannibalising theirs, research, trends and fashions and not infrequently flailing around for anything at all that looks as though it might work (Ball, 1998, p. 126).

That is not to say that this country has not followed the recent trends of its Anglophone counterparts in promoting tertiary teaching (but as yet unlike the UK, not mandatory).

Some of the most interesting recent work on tertiary teaching has come from collaborations between Otago and Massey education academics (see for example: Kane, Sandretto, & Heath, 2002, 2004 and Sandretto, Kane & Heath, 2002). More recent literature in the context of Aotearoa/New Zealand education academics from Massey (and now Victoria) universities drawing on work from Kerr (1975) claimed that:

Nearly 30 years ago, Kerr (1975) noted that “Society hopes that [university] teachers will not neglect their teaching responsibilities but rewards them almost entirely for research and publications ... Consequently it is rational for university teachers to concentrate on research, even to the detriment of teaching and at the expense of their students”

(Kerr, 1975, p. 773; emphasis in original, cited in Houston, Meyer & Paewai, 2006, p. 18)

Furthermore, Houston, Meyer and Paewai (2006) noted that many academics believe this contradiction remains three decades later.

In a recent paper in which the central research focus and question was on ‘Has the PBRF altered the emphasis given to teaching?’ Morris Matthews and Hall (2006) reported that in a questionnaire completed by 263 Victoria University of Wellington academic staff that:

Theme 1: the research-teaching balance

Over half of the staff identified the major change in teaching emphasis as a reduction associated with the time or effort put they into different aspects of teaching, such as preparation of lectures, course design, course changes, student advice, fewer assignments, and less marking, less quality feedback to students, and greater encouragement of student responsibility for their own learning. Most of these staff associated the change with efforts to increase research productivity.

(Morris Matthews and Hall, 2006, p. 22)

In a media statement (21 September 2004) Hon Steve Maharey the then Minister for the Tertiary Education Commission stated, 'tertiary education is now something that the majority of New Zealanders are involved in and they need to be taught by tertiary teachers who have a high level of teaching skills...the challenge is to lift the quality of tertiary teaching across the whole sector'. Is this to be the forerunner to promoting the idea of compulsory 'tertiary teaching' qualifications for staff in TEOs in New Zealand?

This very brief foray into international dimensions of tertiary teaching quality was provided to contextualise the introduction of a Centre for Tertiary Teaching in New Zealand, to provide a background and to foreshadow later discussion. However, what the UK, Australian and New Zealand examples have shown is that for governments/the state the issue quality is paramount. However, as we argue elsewhere (Jesson & Smith, forthcoming, 2006): quality is a very easy idea to claim but it is much harder to tie down what exactly you mean. Quality is a mixture of perception, emotion and behaviour all blended with some physical facts. It is thus a highly context dependent concept (see Skelton, 2005; 2007/forthcoming). In the manufacturing industry the quality of some output can be specified as meeting a particular pre-specified plan. When a machine is broken or it is making flawed products there is a problem which can be identified and replaced. However, in totally human systems, the specification of quality becomes much more difficult - especially in identifying its context dependent nature. Hence the first thing many tertiary teachers experienced of the reforms, in 1991-1995, was the development of simplistic and expensive quality assurance systems requiring hours of their own mainly unpaid time to document. Obviously the whole country wanted quality education and the new standard monitor was the NZQA. In order to gain accreditation for the newly established degrees - and the funding - complex quality assurance systems were required in all NZQA accredited institutions. These showed on paper just how the institution claimed to assure the quality of its programmes, their curriculum, and their delivery.

Every aspect of the higher education process thus became subject to theoretical specification and measurement with every nook and cranny of the system becoming rendered capable of being inspected. It is as if education was a giant engineering system. Scientific measurement and objective reasoning invaded all aspects of the organisation. The courses are specified for learning outcomes, assessment is projected to measure these specified outcomes and the resources of time, space, people required to meet these outcomes can be quantified and costed. The organisation is thus illuminated by the cold light of science, (usually the science of economics) in an engineering model of production. Within this model, student evaluation became a key indicator of course quality. Performativity became the mode operationalising staff 'performing' to the 'customers', the students through constant evaluation. And the various parts of the tertiary sector from informal education to post-doctoral work became similarly evaluated (Jesson, 2005a).

The quality assurance system established by NZQA claimed to provide assurance to the 'customer/student' in making choices over which course/programme/degree/institution they wished to study continue their relationship. Items were quantified and counted as numbers of bodies, hours of contact, numbers of assessment, levels of achievement, ratio of teaching quality. Statistical relationships are used as if they are real numbers and measures performance are all seriously reported annually as part of the high cost glossy annual reports to Parliament. The presentation of the institution became much like the public company

reporting to its shareholders. Image is now everything, much like the marketing of schools and early childhood centres, through glossy prospectuses, and through ‘advertorials’ in newspapers and popular magazines and other media including in particular television advertisements.

At the same time the increased competition between various institutions rapidly reduced overall the traditional tertiary sector co-operation and collaboration. By 2000, ten years later, while there was considerable individual institutional autonomy of institutions across the whole sector there was also increased pressures on funding accompanied by more accountability pressures through measurement and student demand (Peters, 1997; Peters & Roberts, 1998; and for a critical examination of tertiary education policy, see Codd, 2002 and of the agency governing the tertiary sector the Tertiary Education Commission, see Ashcroft & Nairn, 2004).

However, the new competitive environment did not end the original bifurcation. The universities continued very much as they had previously under their claim of academic freedom, and continued to be very concerned that their share of the funding system had become eaten up by the polytechnic or PTE ‘invaders’. Under the auspices of the New Zealand Vice-Chancellors Committee (NZVCC), they had quickly set up their own parallel systems for course audit and monitoring: the Committee on University Academic Programmes (CUAP), in a way that were separate but aligned to the NZQA model. The universities were perceived as the leading providers in the sector and did not want to be ‘controlled’ by outside body – thus maintaining their traditional independence. What transpired however, in terms of the new complex funding arrangements the universities were forced to agree to have increased research funding separated out of the student based funding formula (based on numbers of students to teach – or as it is colloquially referred to in New Zealand, ‘bums on seats’). The mechanism imposed to achieve this was implemented in 2002 as the new funding regime of research auditing (somewhat akin to the UK’s RAE in principle but quite different in reality). The development of this new system the performance-based funding formula was called the Performance-Based Research Fund (or more commonly, PBRF) (Hall, Morris Matthews & Sawicka, 2004; Smith and Jesson, 2005b; Ashcroft, 2005). Nevertheless the pressure on them to be able to identify the elements of quality teaching and to improve access and participation by disadvantaged groups persisted.

By 2000 a number of other problems had emerged with the initially established quality monitoring systems. They did not stop institutions having ‘shonky’ or ‘poor’ practices or financial difficulties. Once a programme had been accredited that was all the NZQA or CUAP needed to know. Māori had established wānanga (premised on Māori pedagogies) as a separate system that mainly was outside the state, and thus had mainly removed their pressure for change from many traditional institutions – because a large number of Māori students (often traditionally marginalised within the Pakeha-dominated education system) enrolled in these new institutions, and the wānanga also managed to ‘lure’ both a number of Māori, Pasifika and Pakeha from both the university and polytechnic institutions too. Thereby, with the reduction in the number of Māori attending these well established institutions and more ‘traditional’ and did not have to adapt too much to accommodate to the needs of the Māori tertiary student population.

Quality assurance systems had in effect became an arm of a marketing system. If a student chose one institution on what they said about their own quality - what did that infer about the others? There was thus very little critical distance between assessment, learning

outcomes and marketing. So student perceptions of lecturers became *the* defacto measure of the quality of the teaching, the course and the programme. While the validity of student perception evaluation scales used across different courses, different lecturers, ranges of levels or classes of students was recognised as dubious, it was given recognition through university promotion systems and in the external auditing systems (see also Sullivan, 1997).

What has become more insidious however is the way that performativity of teaching through student evaluation undermined any intellectual version of teaching quality, pressurising teachers to see student perception as the received version of good teaching. What was also being shaped at the same time was the unintended consequences of a funding environment in which only university research – not teaching - was being monetarily valued (Smith and Jesson, 2005b). While research quality became measurable by output in the PBRF, quality tertiary teaching remained somewhat a mystery, measurable only through inputs like teaching hours, or the indirect notion of learners' perceptions. In spite of Government talk about quality of teaching being a factor in funding, tertiary education providers continued to annually report only the required teaching quality of ratios of students/academic staff member as EFTS: FTE (equivalent full-time students: full-time [academic/teaching staff]).

Aotearoa/New Zealand's policy 'fiat' to promote 'quality' in tertiary teaching

The next section of this paper looks at the specific initiative put in place to award quality tertiary teaching. Whilst we both applaud the initiative as countering the primary academic focus on research as opposed to teaching, we contend that compared to the monetary rewards and esteem given to research the incentives offered by the initiative are small and likely to be devalued. The notion of changing academic identity and 'performativity' has been well covered in the recent literature. For example Ball (2003) argues that performativity can be seen as a mode of state regulation in which professional and institutional 'output' becomes more important than beliefs or values underpinning professional work (see also Harris, 2005).

The traditional culture of intellectual debate and contemplation has been replaced with a positivist culture of performativity, evidenced by the emergence of strategic planning, performance indicators, quality assurance measures and research audits such as the RAE and the PBRF in Aotearoa/New Zealand (Codd, 2005; Smith & Jesson, 2005a). Modern universities in Britain, North America and Australasia have entered the global market-place and become entrepreneurial institutions (Codd, 2005). Under neoliberalism, universities have been reconstructed to become providers of services to individual clients, consumers or customers (Delanty, 2001). They have been reconstructed as businesses to be run by managers who are expected simultaneously to be both accountable and enterprising (Codd, 2005).

Both Usher and Soloman (1998) in Australia and Stronach and MacLure (1997) in the UK argue that there is that performativity is gradually changing the very nature of educational research. The consequence is that the spaces of educational research have been 'compressed' and more obviously politically influenced in the sense that educational research is now less autonomous or less answerable to its own research paradigms and communities - research ceases to be 'disinterested'. Similarly, using the performativity argument Blackmore and Sachs (2000) have suggested:

For academics, there are now a range of performativities required - teaching, research, consultancy, development and community service, measured largely in dollar terms - in terms of internal measures of academic performance.

The performative university is increasingly about responding to exterior demands. The new disciplinary technologies of management and market now operating in universities - performance appraisal, quality assurance, teaching and learning management plans, instructional design of new learning technologies, student evaluations and demand determining curriculum-which lead to different practices and understandings that have 'remade' the academic self.

Thus, as Barnett points out 'Through the insertion into the academy of this performativity, what it is to know is being transformed from knowing as contemplation to knowing as performance' (Barnett, 2000, p. 42). Furthermore, Middleton draws upon Foucault's work to make sense of the question of academic identity. Drawing on a range of literature Middleton (2005a: 31-33) argues that:

Academic work and professional practice are enabled and constrained through processes and systems of surveillance, monitoring, and regulation: "internal command economies of disciplinary repute, professional prestige, and administrative allocation" (Luke, 1997, p. 54). ... The subjection of academics, teachers and other professionals to bureaucratic monitoring, surveillance and regulation has usefully been explored in Michel Foucault's histories of what he termed 'power-knowledges'(Foucault, 1977, p. 222).

(See also Middleton, 2005b; Smith & Jesson, 2005a, 2005b; and various chapters of Ronald Barnett's recently edited publication, 2005.)

Instituting teaching awards

Initially in 2001 Government did try and counter criticism of the hollowing out of practice through performativity and established a series of annual awards for excellence in tertiary teaching through the NZQA. The aim of these awards was to recognise and encourage excellence in tertiary teaching and provide an opportunity for teachers to further their careers and share good practice with others (NZQA, 2001). Furthermore, the awards are based on the following premises:

that excellent teachers have commitment to their subject, knowledge, enthusiasm and the ability to stimulate learners' thought and interest. Their portfolios will show that they are organised and well prepared, with aims, outcomes and assessment criteria. Above all, it must be evident that the nominee(s) are student focused and committed to advancing understanding of the subject they teach, and to lifelong learning.

(NZQA, 2001)

In spite of universities regarding the NZQA as their *bête noir*, the university sector is a small, yet powerful ensemble compared with other sectors with the entire tertiary sector. The universities have fewer tertiary teachers overall than their counterparts in polytechnics and other TEOS. However, despite the university sectors small size in a comparative sense an elaborate system was set up to assess these portfolios of teaching based largely on the traditional university model of preparation of a portfolio for promotion. The tertiary teaching portfolios which are far more common in the university than other parts of the tertiary system, principally because of the longer history of these types of institutions than their newer polytechnic and institute of technology counterparts. Various discourses of the practices for example teaching assessments were required to be documented which thereby privileged the

practices of university teachers over their colleagues employed in polytechnics (ITPs) or in PTEs. The time and support required to assemble the portfolio to submit are more readily available in universities normative in the culture of university, compared to the more managerial and individual environment of the polytechnic or PTE sector. Moreover most of the university centres of professional development have run programmes and workshops specifically to assist portfolio preparation. Whilst we do not have any empirically based evidence to support this point, it is something we both know from personal experience in this domain.

The stated purposes of the teaching awards were to:

1. recognise and encourage excellence in tertiary teaching
2. encourage and promote good practice
3. enhance career development for teachers by valuing and rewarding excellent teaching practice.

(NZQA, 2001)

However, since their inception the resulting awards have not encouraged a more unified sector nor have they met the unstated (or at least implied) goal of providing models of good practice for the whole sector. They have been successful in colonising institutes of technology and polytechnics (ITP), with university-based models for documenting good teaching. In fact of the 10 awards worth \$210,000 annually allocated, the university sector of the by now eight universities (AUT University was granted its university status in January 2000) has received 80 per cent of the awards.⁵ This, in our opinion, reflects the resource-rich status of universities who are able to actively encourage and support staff participation, more than the quality of teaching within these institutions.

One of the early casualties of the 1990 reforms and the competitive environment had been the tutor training or academic development units originally established to serve a regional group of polytechnics. These units had been very effective at spreading new ideas quickly across the sector, building a sense of the role of the academic as pedagogue, and supporting reflective practice as a legitimate model for teaching improvement. They had also served to validate good adult education practices in their organisations, as they helped the identity shift of the new academics from that of disciplinary expert to pedagogue. Once the squeeze went on through funding and competition, only those units in bigger or merged organisations survived mainly through seeking to interest staff in the ITPs and PTEs in the creation of higher qualifications. They too became subject to the marketing machine. However, many of those working in those units still persisted in their calls for more recognition of teaching, although they were moved out of the political space for a while.

⁵ These awards first began in 2002 and there has never been an overall winner gaining the \$30,000 Prime Minister's Supreme Award for Tertiary Teaching from outside the university sector. In fact of the 40 awards presented between 2002-2005 there have been only eight recipients in other tertiary institutions than the eight universities, two by college of education staff, two from wānanga, and four from polytechnics or institutes of technology. However, as if to undermine the case we are presenting, or by chance (or perhaps given that the Centre for Tertiary Teaching is being established in 2006), or alternatively, because the 2006 recipient was an excellent teacher for the first time a lecturer outside of the university sector won the Supreme award Excellence in Tertiary Teaching. In 2006 however, there was only one other (polytechnic) lecturer receiving an award and nine others from universities.

The final section outlines the creation and development to date of the National Centre for Tertiary Teaching Excellence.

Creating a National Centre for Tertiary Teaching Excellence

In its *Statement of Tertiary Education Priorities* (STEP) for 2005–2007, the Government clearly signaled their continuing commitment to improve the quality of teaching as well as the quality of research:

This STEP reinforces the key message of the Tertiary Education Strategy – it is essential for New Zealand’s economic and social development goals that the quality of teaching and research improves and is better connected to business and communities. To secure best value from the public investment in New Zealand’s tertiary education, we are emphasising the quality and relevance of tertiary education provision. This STEP is about making participation count by improving learner achievement and progression to higher levels of study. We will [be] increasingly focusing on raising the performance of the tertiary system.

This requires increased commitment by tertiary education organisations to: take responsibility for, and actively work to improve, the quality of their teaching to ensure that all students and learners gain the best value possible from their participation in tertiary education; ensure that students and learners access excellent education and training that is relevant to their needs, to those of employers and community groups and to New Zealand’s broad national goals, and that students and learners increasingly progress to higher levels of learning and qualifications; and enable their knowledge, teaching, and research activities to better support innovation in all aspects of New Zealand life and the social, economic and intellectual development of New Zealand.

(Tertiary Education Commission, 2005)

Following on from this, research funding for literature reviews on what constitutes ‘good tertiary teaching’ was made available by the Ministry of Education, as part of the programme to investigate improving tertiary teaching practices across the higher education sector and to find evidence of best practice(s). One review undertaken by Prebble, Hargraves, Leach, Naidoo, Suddaby and Zepke (2004, reported in edited/summary form in Rivers, 2005, on the MoE website, and cited Tertiary Matters Forum, 2005b) identified the following attributes of good tertiary teaching: Effective teachers are those who:

- * are knowledgeable about their subject
- * adopt an organised and systematic approach to their teaching
- * are enthusiastic and interesting
- * respect their students
- * have high expectations of their students' performance.

These precepts have informed the work of academic developers since the early days of the profession. The authors further concluded that:

- * good teaching has positive effects on student outcomes
- * through a variety of academic development interventions, teachers can be assisted to

improve the quality of their teaching.

(Prebble, et.al. 2004/05, cited in Tertiary Matters Forum, 2005b, p. 59)

None of these findings were very surprising, but they created more pressure within the sector towards identifying good teaching practices. However, at the end of 2004 the government had appointed a body of individuals (rather than representatives) whose job was to consult with the broader tertiary sector on the development of a National Centre for Tertiary Teaching Excellence. This body called the *Teaching Matters Forum*, was formed from people who had previously expressed interest in 'Tertiary Teaching Excellence', and had a range of expertise from across the tertiary sector, including universities, ITPs and PTEs. The Forum, nominally independent of Government, was however supported by a project team from the Ministry of Education, the recently established Tertiary Education Commission, and also had some involvement from the New Zealand Qualifications Authority.

The first initial flurry of scepticism from the sector came when an initial document on the Centre for Tertiary Teaching was released in April 2004. For example fears were expressed from institutional managers, academic developers and staff through their unions and professional associations. Those working in this sector were concerned that even more and tighter controls would be put on teaching quality. We were apprehensive this would occur through increased compliance, and a movement of funds from teaching to support. However, those making these decisions (e.g. the government and large and increasing educational bureaucracy) were doing so without the recognition of the complexity of the task of teaching across the sector. Furthermore, much of this was done without increased funding across all of the sector from postgraduate to foundation skills.

The response from the Teaching Matters Forum was that the model suggested for the creation of Centre for Tertiary Teaching Excellence required wide consultation in order to create the necessary sector buy in (Forum, 2005a, Forum, 2005b, 2005c)

The Teaching Matters Forum, in undertaking its task, identified that sector consultation on the issues was needed in order to develop recommendations which were robust, well considered and in line with the views and opinions from the sector participants, including diverse learners across a wide range of learning settings.

(Teaching Matters Forum, hereafter, Forum, 2005a, p. 3)

In order to reassure the range and the number of stakeholders the Forum sought extensive written and verbal feedback and also ran a series of very well attended workshops seeking input from across the whole sector and the following statement was repeatedly made that:

As with all good education, the learner will remain the focus, and the vision for the centre will be to achieve the best possible educational outcomes for learners in the tertiary sector. The centre will support all tertiary education organisations (TEOs) and groups who work with teachers and learners, including existing networks and professional bodies, while remaining relevant and accessible to individual teachers. Its roles will include building and maintaining networks to spread individuals' and organisations' best practice right through the sector.

(Forum, 2005a)

Specific sessions were also held for staff involved with Māori learners, as well as other learner representatives, staff developers and foundation learners. Discussions were also held with those involved with Pasifika learner interests.

Overall there was broad support for a national organisation which would support teaching and learning, and promote the importance of effective teaching and learner focused cultures. There was also general support for the idea that the centre would help provide more research evidence about tertiary teaching and learning, that was New Zealand-based or at least, applicable to New Zealand. There was also general support for raising the status of teaching, improving teacher ‘training’, and general support for the idea of developing flexible learning styles which cater for the diversity of learners needs and situations across all TEOs.

There was however, less support for the idea that the Centre itself would be funded by the institutions themselves. Somewhat surprisingly no other any alternatives put forward by either the Forum, not it would seam the sector.

A very strong and vigorous push for the centre to be Maori-focused in order be able to adequately meet the needs of Māori learners was mounted through an organization called AMPTEE (Aotearoa Māori Providers of Training, Education and Employment) and through a large group of Māori academics, many stressing the need for a self –determined solution for Māori by Māori. Similarly there was a strong call from those in the Adult and Community sector to recognise their particular pedagogical approaches.

A somewhat different message came through from the consultation focus groups held with Pasifika people. While there was a general support for the idea of the centre, what they sought was a say in its governance. As one person was reported to have said:

unless Pasifika are represented at the highest level of the national centre then we will as a sector have more of the same. There is not a lack of good will to see Pasifika achieve. There is a lack of capacity”.

(Forum, 2005a, p. 20)

While the name of the Centre was something about which there was some debate - solved easily by re-naming it *Ako Aotearoa* - overall the big issues were over the funding of the centre, its location and the management. These were to be worked out later. The meaning of teaching ‘excellence’ did not appear to be an issue which was hotly contested. It would seem given the difficulty of coming to an agreed definition of what is meant by this somewhat nebulous term meant it was confined to the too hard basket.

While the sector consultation suggested a stand alone centre, the final model agreed with Government was for a centre that was based in one institution but to be able to meet the needs of improving teaching across the whole sector. The questions around the funding and governance of the centre was responded to by Cabinet and the sector group was recalled for a while (Teaching Matters Working Group, 2005). The government in 2005 announced that it would be making available \$4 million per year available for a National Centre for Tertiary Teaching Excellence to promote and support effective teaching and learning across the entire tertiary sector in New Zealand.

There was no way that the final Centre for Teaching Excellence could risk being captured by one group at the expense of any other. The message of the formal invitation to submit a proposal was clear:

It is intended that the Centre shall operate as a collaborative, cross-sector entity. Therefore this invitation applies to groups of TEOs, or consortia of TEOs and sector peak bodies

working together. While an individual TEO may apply, it would need to clearly demonstrate the ability to build and have TEO involvement from across the tertiary sector. (Forum, 2005c; Tertiary Education Commission, 2006)

Although the consideration of the proposals was to have occurred by May 2006, somehow the complexity of the task to be done seemed enormous and there had been no official response by the middle of June 2006. There were two competing bids from some unlikely alliances in the sector, led by universities with a loose amalgam of wānanga and polytechnics/institutes of technology.

We have recently been informed that neither of these bids was entirely successful in securing being the establishment body for the fledgling Centre. One was dismissed, and the other consortia asked to revise and resubmit their proposal. Both bids we understand were rejected for focusing too much on research and not enough on the pedagogy of tertiary teaching.

Thus, at this point we still wait the outcome, still somewhat sceptical of whether there will be a genuinely innovative centre, a re-creation of what was cut back in 1989, or a struggling centre trying to please every one within a very small budget and managing to please no one.

Conclusion

In all of the hot air around the structure and its funding, the concepts of effective or excellent tertiary teaching and its context specific nature seems to have once again disappeared. We consider this to be both unfortunate and disappointing. As committed tertiary educators we want all students to be taught by quality tertiary staff in all institutions, however, we are unsure of whether the proposed National Centre will be able to promote, let alone deliver upon such lofty ideals. We are left with several unresolved issues and questions for consideration and debate:

1. We predict that despite the claims in the documentation that the proposed Centre will represent the interests of the whole sector the universities will take a lead position and perhaps colonise it with their vested interests and particular practices – this will mean that the Centre will help to maintain their privileged position. There is evidence that this has previously happened when universities have taken advantage of their greater resources and standing to support staff applying for the tertiary teaching awards and subsequently being successful. There is also considerable evidence that the university sector has benefited most under the PBRF research funding redistribution (see Smith & Jesson, 2005b).
2. Furthermore, and aligned to the issue above Hall, et al (2004) observed that a critical concern of many academics is that the PBRF will impact negatively on the quality of teaching provided by tertiary institutions – staff time will be directed to research at the expense of maintaining or enhancing the quality of teaching. However, as one of the authors noted ‘this claim remains to be tested’ (Smith, 2005, p. 51). Moreover, in relation to the investing of resources into research rather than teaching Smith (2005, p. 52) notes that in reality the majority of funding (approximately 70 per cent) into higher education institutions in New Zealand will remain sourced from teaching and not research. An institution would be clearly unwise to jeopardise the quality of its teaching programme which provides the largest proportion of its revenue, to pursue more research which provides a smaller proportion of revenue.

3. However, despite the specific vagaries of funding allocations to teaching and research in higher education in Aotearoa/New Zealand an equity concern remains and that is the parity of esteem for teaching and research. The Government through its educational ministries (principally the TEC) has allocated merely \$4 million to the establishment of a National Centre for Tertiary Teaching Excellence which is a very small budget in relation to the investment into the PBRF research auditing regime which allocated \$18.2 million in the first year (2004).
4. We share a concern that despite claims by both the Government and members of the Tertiary Teaching Forum that the following are roles/activities that National Centre should not do:
 - Quality assurance
 - Regulation (such as teacher registration) or quasi-regulatory activities
 - Significant focus on fee for service activity
 - Major fund allocator
 - Competing for research funds with other sector researchers

If the National Centre had a role as a standard setter or sector monitoring agency, then this could conflict with its focus on collaboration and support to the sector.

It is clear that the National Centre is not intended to be a regulatory agency. In addition, we feel that the Centre should not take on quasi-regulatory roles such as the application and monitoring of standards and or qualifications. Such roles could conflict with the Centre's operating style as a catalyst and a leader.

However, this does not preclude the Centre having a role in exploring the need for the development of standards/competencies for tertiary teachers. Inevitably, there is a fine line for the National Centre between developing knowledge and information, and being seen as setting standards.

(Forum, 2005a, pp. 24-25)

We are concerned the National Centre might be encouraged in the future to take both a regulatory function and become a standards setting body – much in the way the PBRF monitors and evaluates our research (see Jesson, 2005). We ask is it a forerunner to a policy change which might 'audit' the teaching dimension of our professional lives as tertiary educators? We hope this will not be the case – yet because the centre is yet to be established this may become one of its roles in the future – creating additional performativity for teaching personnel.

5. Another concern centres on the prediction that the new tertiary teaching regime may be setting grounds for further differentiation in the sector and a greater concern for a return to bifurcation in the tertiary sector much in the way this has occurred through the imposition of the PBRF (Smith & Jesson, 2005b).
6. Our final unease with the new system is that it might pave the way for 'compulsory' qualifications in tertiary teaching for those engaged in higher education teaching (as is occurring in other geographical domains such as the UK and Sweden, see Trowler & Bamber, 2005). Neither of us is against the notion of staff voluntarily engaging in

professional development to improve their own tertiary teaching and undertaking postgraduate qualifications in tertiary teaching – which we both see as highly desirable – for creating that elusive ‘quality’ in higher education teaching. We do vehemently oppose it being a mandatory requirement of ones employment and we see it as adding to the already spiralling credential-inflation of our higher education institutions and as adding to the already high workloads of professional staff. Whilst it may be the aim in a competitive environment of CEOs and staff in professional development units to increase enrolments in further tertiary teaching qualifications – there is a need for creditable evidence that this is necessary on more than just financial grounds.

What becomes of this brave initiative to create *Ako Aotearoa* remains a mystery at the time of writing this chapter – as it is still in the process of being conceptualised before it can be actualised. However, as both supporters and critical commentators of the proposal to date, we believe there are still some interesting political and pedagogical skirmishes ahead and that its development will make an interesting project to research for some time to come.

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