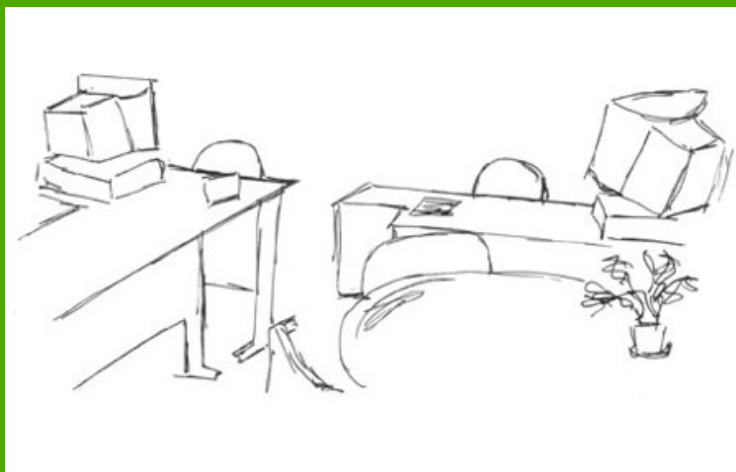


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**RESEARCH IN HIGHER EDUCATION:
THE ROLE OF TEACHING AND STUDENT
LEARNING**

Ana Paula Cabral & Isabel Huet





Objectives

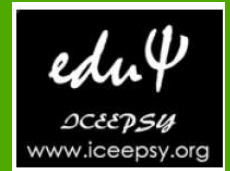
Contribute to a broader understanding of the role of research for the quality of teaching and student learning



collection of good practices and recommendations



argue for the integration of these indicators in research quality assessment tools and reference frameworks.



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Scope

Experiences of researchers from the educational field involved in the UK's Research Assessment Exercise (RAE)

regarding the

influence and impact of such a system on:

teaching and student learning.



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Background

Analysis of the extent, nature and characteristics of the teaching/learning and research relationship has been approached from the following perspectives:

- academics (Elton 2001; Deem & Lucas 2007)
- disciplines (Colbeck 1998)
- departments (Durning & Jenkins 2005; Coate, Barnett & Williams, 2001)
- institutions (Zamorski 2002; Hattie & Marsh 2004))
- national systems (Boyer1990; Harley 2002)
- students (Lindsay, Breen & Jenkins 2002).



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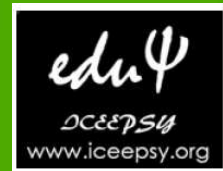


Background

Several studies about the *impact* of the RAE assessment system in the quality of research point out its relevant effect on decisions about the types of research to be pursued and methodological approaches to be adopted.

In the educational field, many have claimed positive effects for research management, although *the impact on teaching and student learning has generally been seen as negative*

(McNay 2007; Jenkins 2005).



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Setting the scene

UK context

There is an explicit *separation between the quality assessment of teaching*

The assessment of research and *neither of the processes informs the other.*

Research/ teaching connections are questioned by funding regimes attempting to separate the two activities



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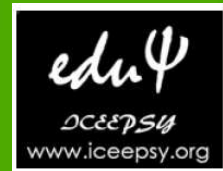




Methodology

Case study - using semi-directed interviews conducted with:

- two members from the UK RAE panels (2008) (Cases A and B)
- two institutional representatives
 - a world-leading research-intensive/led teaching approach institution (education/soc. sciences) - case C
 - a teaching-led/research informed institution) (Case D)
- two senior researchers (experts in the area of educational research)(Cases E and F).



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Methodology

The respondents were invited to present their perceptions in the context of the research assessment experience (RAE) following a SWOT-style approach:

Strengths

Weaknesses

Threats

Opportunities



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Data analysis and results

UK's research assessment system:

- *“negative impact on the concern for teaching”* (Case F)
- *“cultural prejudice concerning teaching because doesn't give power and prestige”* (Case F)
- *“judgement of research is done in isolation and even from teaching”* (Case E).

The system itself has impacted significantly on the performance of institutions and academics and on the way they face their financial and reputational success associated with a shared alignment of interests and rewards.



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Data analysis and results

- *“lack of recognition/ reward to the scholarship of teaching and pedagogy research”* (Case F)
 - *“detachment from reality/ teaching caused by integration in research centres”* (Case E).
- “loss in terms of numbers of active researchers and of research capacity removing any expectation of significant research from many universities and individual academics”*
(McNay 2007, p.211).



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Data analysis and results

- *questions about the real ‘impact’ of research on professional practice, specially when the “focus of academics is set on research writing rather than teaching or service” (Case A).*
- *“work related to daily occupations may have an impression of low intensity with no rigour or originality“ (Case E).*
- *need to be “establish a wider conception of research” (Case F)*

Feedback from panels call for more large-scale, quantitative, longitudinal studies a whole set of setbacks for those working, for example, at the level of teaching-learning interfaces

**Negative impacts in practice or informing teaching, and on the way academic autonomy is, therefore, conditioned by the degree of dependency on funding
(McNay 2003)**



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Data analysis and results

- *“restriction on the open pursuit of 'blue skies' research” (Case C)*
- *“preference for pure research and dismissal of applied and 'near market' research” (Case E)*
- *“mitigation against some forms of research to publish quickly and preferably in top journals” (Case C)*
- *“threats to those who do not publish orthodox research or outlets” in a context where “researchers may be deterred from entering their work departments “(Case F)*

Assessment of quality in applied and practice-based educational research and proposing a multi-layered, and multi-dimensional framework based on several dimensions of quality Furlong & Oancea (2005)



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Data analysis and results

- *“research work can be done at low cost and closely related to daily occupations” (Case E) in an environment where “research is set in context and link to purpose” (Case E) and where the “research agenda is informed by professional experience and for research findings to feed back in to practice” (Case E).*
- *“introduction of the validation of courses/ research projects contribution to practice as criterions (specially) if Research-led teaching is claimed.” (Case E).*

Recommendations implemented in a context-based knowledge production environment and in an area situated between academia-led theoretical pursuits and research-informed practice, and consisting of a multitude of models of research explicitly conducted in, with, and/or for practice (Furlong & Oancea 2005, p.9).



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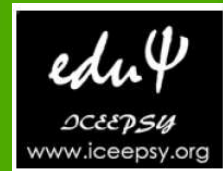


Data analysis and results

- *“lack of value attributed to some sorts of publication that are relevant in the education research field (eg Textbooks, e-learning materials ...).” (Case F)*
- *dangers and damages of “using the same criteria for very different departments and different types of research”. (Case C)*

Most research production is not real-world relevant and directly transferable into improved pedagogic practice or policy making.

Change must be done from a discourse of quality assurance and quality assessment to one that ‘resists *instrumentalisation*’ and that promotes diversity, hybridisation and versatility in research.



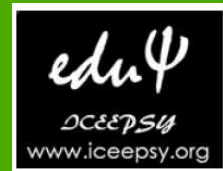
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Data analysis and results

- a change in paradigm is needed and the research community must “*understand how research in Education very often takes 20 years to have an impact and mostly an indirect one and “how quality in Education is about changing people’s questions rather than giving them narrow answers”* (Case B).
- “*unintended consequences*” is the “*damage to teaching and learning*” when “*the assessment system has no reference to the impact on students, no measurement of the key impact of the graduate/ postgraduate student learning*” (Case F).
- These remarks stress the idea of a “*lack of support to graduate and postgraduate students by their teachers*” as a “*result of the assessment needs and demands*” (Case F).



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Data analysis and results

- RAE system has “*brought together more people associated with the Scholarship of teaching and pedagogy research*” (Case F), a emerging research field, in a common effort to overcome some of the constraints against interdisciplinary and applied work, and trying to reach a shared balance in terms of research autonomy.
- Recommendations - need to “*provide active support at departmental level (for example, writing for publication), encourage new researchers to become involved in high quality research, develop a collegial and inclusive culture for the development of high quality research and identify key areas of strength that will support this culture*” (Case D).



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Data analysis and results

Some points are also raised about how the research assessment *systems can include data about teaching and students learning through research* and how this link can be developed at a departmental level with the support institutional leadership, planning and culture by

- *“having assessment procedures and measures to value teaching”* (Case F),
- *“to value research on teaching and learning in the disciplines”* (Case F)
- *“articulate the impact of research on learning”* (Case E).



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Conclusions

Debate about the “**impact**” that research assessment systems may have on teaching, research and student learning.

UK’s experience in a setting where research and teaching quality are **assessed separately** having the educational field as a reference.

The data helped us explore how such a **separation can be damaging** and have **unintended consequences** in the quality of both teaching and learning in higher education.

We have noted how the respondents had a very **critical approach** to the topic mainly stressing its **difficulties and threats**.



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Conclusions

Further analysis

- on the roles of the respondents in their institutions
- different types of institutions involved and their approach to teaching and research
- on the contrasts from the points of view between who assesses and who is assessed.



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