

Policy Futures in Education

ISSN 1478-2103

Volume 11 Number 6 2013

Becoming an Academic for the Twenty-first Century: what will count as teaching quality in higher education

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pages 660-670

<http://dx.doi.org/10.2304/pfie.2013.11.6.660>

This article explores quality in university teaching using a 'futures' perspective. In a recent article by Blass and colleagues, a number of scenarios were developed to explore the type of higher education workforce that might be needed within the UK by 2035. In discussion of these scenarios - leading knowledge creation, responsive knowledge creation, regional conglomerates, no government funding and total government funding - the team were mindful of how these scenarios would impact on academic work and the workforce needed to undertake different and perhaps a more differentiated set of work roles, responsibilities and ways of working. However, the issue of what counts as quality within these possible scenarios was not considered. In this article the definitions and differentiation of teacher and teaching quality are explored. Recent trends in Australian and English higher education policy in relation to teaching quality are also discussed. Teaching quality is then considered in relation to the underlying values and assumptions that might operate within each of these scenarios about teaching. The authors then speculate on the impact this would have on what might count as quality in teaching in 2020, and what academics may have to face within each of these scenarios in relation to their work roles, ways of working and opportunities for career progression. In conclusion, the authors suggest that the concept of 'teaching' in higher education may need to be radically reconsidered to match the needs of students whatever scenario may develop in higher education.

To cite this article

ANNE JASMAN, EDDIE BLASS, STEVE SHELLEY (2013)
Becoming an Academic for the Twenty-first Century: what will count as teaching quality in higher education, *Policy Futures in Education*, 11(6), 660-670.

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