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Researching Identities: Impact of the Performance-Base Research Fund on the Subject(s) of Education

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Introduction

As a field of intellectual inquiry, Education¹ is strongly reflexive, its objects of study including the very systems, institutions and ideas within which its protagonists (Educationists) work and think. It is hardly surprising, then, that academics located in faculties, schools, colleges or departments of Education have conceptualised research assessment exercises (e.g. New Zealand's Performance-Based Research Fund (PBRF) and Britain's Research Assessment Exercise (RAE)) as objects for theoretical engagement and empirical research. New Zealand Educationists have written conference papers and journal articles and edited a book (Smith and Jesson, 2005) on the PBRF. They have critiqued its theoretical base (Codd, 2005), contributed to media debates (Gerritson, 2004) and described institutional strategies with respect to it (Hall et al., 2005). This volume offers an opportunity to put this work to practical use.

Drawing on the sociology of education, this chapter applies Bernstein's (2000) model to qualitative interviews with 36 of the staff who submitted evidence portfolios (EPs) to the Education Panel in the 2003 quality evaluation round (Middleton, 2005a). Was Education's low subject ranking in PBRF's league tables simply a result of its 'backwardness' in research productivity? Is the answer to 'catch up' with subjects such as physics or philosophy? Or was discrimination against subjects with practicum or clinical components (such as the professional credentialling of school-teachers) inherent in the quality evaluation system itself? Was there a 'bias against particular research types or topics'? If there was such a bias, how might this be corrected? And would such a correction result in 'benefits to New Zealand'? (For more information on the PBRF intervention logic, see chapter 4.)

My point of departure is what educational evaluation experts describe as the "significant formative dimension to what was largely a summative exercise" (Hall et al., 2005, p. 133). Not only a data-gathering exercise, the

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PBRF was *designed* to be formative, to “increase the quality of research by 2007” (Associate Minister of Education, 2002, p. 55). To effect change, it allocates funding according to the measured quality and quantity of institutions’ research outputs, rewarding high-rated institutions and subjects and reducing the resources of low-rated ones. British sociologists have explored the effects of this with respect to the RAE, arguing that it has resulted in a “restructuring not merely of the external conditions of academic and professional practice, but even more fundamentally of the core elements of academic and professional *identity*” (Beck and Young, 2005, p. 184) – the collective identities of subjects or disciplines, and the identity constructions of individual researchers. While the identity ‘researcher’ is appropriate for many of Education’s staff, other individual identifications are equally important in the subject’s *collective* work in the preparation and credentialling of practitioners.

Professional identity formation is “a continuous and reflexive process, a synthesis of (internal) self definition and the (external) definition of oneself offered by others” (Henkel, 2005, p. 157). The PBRF’s ratings and rankings of institutions and subjects externally define their collective identities, and the grades allocated to researchers externally define them as individuals. In Britain, quality scores are not awarded to individuals: the RAE’s units of assessment (UoAs) are entirely collective – departments and institutions. The UoAs’ managers choose whose research to submit, and there is “no assumption that all academic staff engage in research” (Morgan, 2004, p. 463). Even so, the (internal) self-definitions of individuals have been shown to be substantially affected in their UoA processes of selection of whose work to submit, and in fallout from the collective ranking of their UoAs (Croll, 2003; Henkel, 2005). In the first round of the PBRF (2003), all individuals who taught degree courses were required to submit EPs, each received a personal score, and the PBRF’s “consequences for academic identity are likely to be greater than is the case with the RAE” (Codd, 2005, p. 63).

My argument begins by introducing key conceptual tools, applying them to the formative years of Education as a university subject. Second, I sketch a brief history of the subject in New Zealand in the 1980s and 1990s, emphasising its contradictory mandates as both academic and professional/clinical discipline. Third, I explore interviewees’ experiences and perspectives during and immediately after the quality evaluation process (Middleton, 2005a). The conclusion suggests ways the evaluation model might change to support (not penalise) Education’s *dual* mandate to enhance research capacity and outputs and to produce good practitioners for the teaching professions.

PBRF as pedagogical device: Bernsteinian concepts

British sociologists have used Bernstein's model to study the impact of the RAE across a range of subjects (Henkel, 2005) and on Education specifically (Sikes, 2005). It enables a "sociological analysis of identity within institutional levels ... and the analysis of projected official identities at the level of the state" (Bernstein, 2000, p. 205). The definitions and criteria for research and researchers in official PBRF documents exemplify "official identities at the level of the state" (Bernstein, 2000, p. 205). These externally constructed identities are projected onto individuals and disciplines in the form of numerical scores, rankings, tables and reports. Were the internal self-definitions of Education's participating researchers affected by the PBRF's external definitions – its individual, institutional and subject-wide gradings and rankings? Is the PBRF enabling or constraining the production of particular 'researcher' identities? And is this consistent with Education's dual (academic and clinical or practical) collective mission as a subject?

Because Bernstein was a sociologist of knowledge, his central concerns were the social organisation and status hierarchies of subjects or disciplines and their participants (students, teachers, researchers etc.) (2000, p. 205). Two key concepts are *classification* and *framing*. *Classification* refers to the boundaries between, and within, disciplines or subjects, encompassing "relations between categories, whether these categories are between agencies, between discourses, between practices" (Bernstein, 2000, p. 6). The PBRF delineated subjects, or groups of subjects, and appointed 12 panels of subject experts to examine individuals' EPs. Education had its own panel. Identifying with subjects 'other' than Education, some staff located administratively in Education schools chose to send their EPs to panels in other subjects. The panels also referred EPs elsewhere: "[17] EPs were transferred out of the Education Panel; 19 EPs were transferred in" (Education Panel, 2004, p. 10). In the course of its evaluation processes, the PBRF projected *new* classifications within and across disciplinary boundaries, inscribing new collective (institutional and subject-wide) and personal identities: 'research active or inactive', and 'A-, B- or C-rated' research activity.

Framing refers to "the locus of control over pedagogic communication and its context" (Bernstein, 2000, p. 6). Pedagogic communication is any "sustained process whereby somebody(s) acquires new forms or develops existing forms of conduct, knowledge, practice and criteria from somebody(s) or something deemed to be an appropriate provider and

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evaluator” (Bernstein, 2000, p. 78). As teachers, supervisors, reviewers, examiners and so on, academics are “providers and evaluators”. When we write theses, submit articles for review, learn new technologies or submit EPs to a PBRF panel we are also acquirers of new “forms of conduct, knowledge, practice and criteria”. Framing is strong when “the locus of control is towards the transmitter” (Bernstein, 2000, p. 6) and weak when the locus of control is toward the acquirer. The PBRF requirement that individuals produce and submit an EP is an example of strong framing, its format, content, length and style being strictly prescribed by the transmitter. Designed to be *formative* in the sense of raising institutional (and personal) levels of research productivity, the PBRF can usefully be seen in Bernsteinian terms as a *pedagogic device*.

To understand how this pedagogic device is affecting collective and individual identities in Education, it is necessarily to map the subject’s terrain before the introduction of the PBRF. First, I introduce analytical tools and apply them to the formative years of university disciplines. Second, I review Education’s beginnings in the early to mid twentieth century. And third, I chart identity shifts brought about as a result of its restructuring in the 1980s to 1990s.

Conceptual tools: Classification and framing of knowledge

Professional or epistemological identities are constructed *by* us and *for* us. As academics we locate or position our work and ourselves in relation to the epistemological classifications of disciplines or fields. A sense of belonging is nurtured in allegiances to learned societies, conferences and journals: professional identity formation involves intellectual, interpersonal and psychological processes of identification (Green and Lee, 1999). We *identify* as educational psychologists, science educators and so on. Such personal affinities intersect in complex, and sometimes contradictory, ways with the financial and administrative categories whereby institutions allocate students to programmes, distribute resources to departments, and locate ‘bodies’ in buildings. Bernstein refers to these as *sacred or profane* – sacred describing an inward (introjected) relation to knowledge and profane an outwards (projected) orientation towards economic, political or institutional imperatives.

As an academic subject, Education did not emerge until the twentieth century. However, the earlier evolution of the social sciences and humanities (particularly history, philosophy, psychology and, later, sociology) would later form its foundations. In the Western world, the

nineteenth century saw the development and classification of knowledge into distinct scientific or humanities subjects, and their organisation into self-regulating communities. Bernstein (2000, p. 9) termed these *singulars*:

A discourse as a singular is a discourse which has appropriated a space to give itself a unique name ... And the structure of knowledge in the 19th century was, in fact, the birth and development of singulars.

The epistemological, professional, administrative and social cohesion of singulars was tight (strong classification), “Organisationally and politically, singulars construct strong boundary maintenance” (Bernstein, 2000, p. 54). Culturally (in professional associations, networks and writing) and psychologically (in students, teachers and researchers), “singulars develop strong autonomous self-sealing and narcissistic identities. These identities are constructed by procedures of *introjection*” (Bernstein, 2000, p. 54). Each *singular* (physics, history, psychology etc.) functioned as a *pedagogic device*, regulating the transmission, and criteria for access to, and evaluation of, its knowledge base.

Membership of each discipline required mastery of its “three interrelated rules: distributive rules, recontextualising rules and evaluative rules”. The *distributive rules* “specialise access to *fields* where the production of new knowledge may legitimately take place” (Bernstein, 2000, p. 114). Distributive rules determine whose, or what, research counts as legitimate in the discipline, who qualifies for its degrees, and which articles are relevant to its journals. They also “mark and distribute who may transmit what to whom and under what conditions” (Bernstein, 2000, p. 31) – who may supervise or examine, review, edit or be on a panel. In short, distributive rules “specialise forms of knowledge, forms of consciousness and forms of practice to social groups” (Bernstein, 2000, p. 28).

Recontextualising rules regulate the work of those of the discipline’s members who are also its teachers – those who constitute its pedagogic recontextualising field. The pedagogic recontextualising field produces the subject’s textbooks, curricula, examination criteria or standards. The knowledge base of the discipline’s field-researchers, laboratory scientists, intellectuals and writers “passes through ideological screens as it becomes its new form, pedagogic discourse” (Bernstein, 2000, p. 115). The process of recontextualising knowledge for teaching purposes involves selection, translation and filtering: emerging as a syllabus for ‘physics 101’ or ‘sociology 300’ and so on. In the late nineteenth century, the establishment of publicly funded and government-regulated education systems established official pedagogic recontextualising fields “created and dominated by the

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state for the construction and surveillance of state pedagogic discourse” (Bernstein, 2000, p.115). Emanating from the official pedagogic recontextualising fields, the PBRF rewards contributions to the knowledge base (laboratory science, field work, intellectual writing), but not the production of its teaching texts. The recontextualising activities needed to reproduce and advance a discipline are devalued.

As a pedagogic device, the PBRF recontextualises government policies: they are summarised, translated and operationalised in handbooks, manuals, pro forma and seminars. Like “any pedagogic practice”, these are “there for one purpose: to transmit criteria” (Bernstein, 2000, p. 28). They define the system’s evaluative rules and:

provide for acquirers the principles for the production of what counts as the legitimate text. The legitimate text is *any* realisation on the part of the acquirer which attracts evaluation. (Bernstein, 2000, p. xvi)

The production of legitimate texts is a hallmark of academic life – essays, theses, journal articles, curricula vitae or promotion applications require mastery of recognition rules and realisation rules. *Recognition rules* help identify contexts (e.g. a sociology class, a faculty meeting, a psychology journal or an EP). *Realisation rules* enable textual production – written, spoken or visual and so on. It is possible to recognise a context, but lack the realisation rule needed to speak or write its texts.

Bernstein (2000, p. 203) argues that those working in a field of knowledge may feel “threatened by a change in its classificatory relation, or by an unfavourable change in the economic context”. From the mid to late twentieth century, knowledge workers had experienced a succession of shifts in the classification and framing of their subjects, and these had reconfigured the constraints and possibilities for collective and individual identity formation.

Education: 1920s–1970s

The twentieth century saw the formation of interdisciplinary, or applied, fields situated at “the interface between the field of the production of knowledge and any field of practice” (Bernstein, 2000, p. 9). Bernstein termed these *regions*. As a university subject, Education exemplifies a region. A region “is created by a recontextualising of singulars” according to a “recontextualising principle as to which singulars are to be selected, what knowledge within the singular is to be introduced and related” (Bernstein, 2000, p. 9). Culturally (in professional associations, networks and writing) and psychologically (in students, teachers and researchers):

identities produced by the new regions are more likely to face outwards to fields of practice and thus their contents are likely to be dependent on the requirements of those fields. (Bernstein, 2000, p. 54)

The classification and framing of Education as a region in New Zealand was influenced by American and British trends and, well into the 1970s and 1980s, Education staff often gained higher degrees in those countries (Middleton, 1989; Philips et al., 1989). By the 1960s and 1970s, Education in universities was strongly influenced by the British pattern. There the nature of Education as a subject had been negotiated by a group of senior Education professors (the pedagogic recontextualising field) and Ministry of Education officials (the official pedagogic recontextualising field) (McCulloch, 2002; Richardson, 2002). In British universities there were to be four core Education disciplines (philosophy, history, sociology of education and educational psychology), each rooted in its 'parent' discipline (singular), establishing its own journals, conferences and networks (McCulloch, 2002). Staff and students sometimes identified with the parent discipline, writing for its conferences and journals rather than for its educational derivative. This encouraged 'inward-looking', narcissistic or introjected collective and personal identities.

Education's story is one of ambiguity as a (sometimes low-status) university subject and as part of a non-degree teachers' college qualification. As a British writer explained, "two types of mud would stick: university teacher training is too academic and it is not academic enough" (Richardson, 2002, p. 40). Education's academic components (subdisciplines) were intended as complementary components of "a pluralist vision of educational studies that sought to draw on a wide range of human knowledge and experience" (McCulloch, 2002, p.103). While the foundation Education disciplines were taught in universities, teacher education's practicum (pedagogical) dimensions were relegated to the 'methods' components taught in teachers' colleges. The opportunity was lost to:

bridge the academic concerns of the universities and professional concerns of the colleges as well as to diminish the artificial separation of 'theory' and 'practice', widespread in the outlook of teachers. (Richardson, 2002, p. 19)

It is this historical split that the PBRF's quality evaluation regime might, if unmodified, reinforce.

Education and the state: 1980s–1990s

The pedagogical device is a site of “struggle to produce and institutionalise particular identities” (Bernstein, 2000, p. 66). The autonomy of Education’s community of practitioners (its pedagogic recontextualising field) is reduced by government requirements for course structure and content (the official pedagogic recontextualising field). The PBRF superimposes a further layer of compliance processes over an already highly regulated subject. In my research, when asked to describe their professional identities before the introduction of the PBRF, some interviewees used the word “researcher”, but many chose terms such as “curriculum leader”, “intellectual”, “activist-writer”, “poet and literary critic” and “musical director/conductor” (Middleton, 2005a, 2005a), illustrating Bernstein’s claim that “the analysis of identity within institutional levels” may conflict with “the analysis of projected official identities at the level of the state” (2000, p. 203).

As in Britain, teacher education in New Zealand was configured around academic (discipline based) and applied (professional or practicum) components (Middleton and May, 1997) – an epistemological split mapped in the segmentation of courses taught in university Education departments and courses developed for teaching diplomas in colleges. Relations between college and university departments varied over time, and between cities. College curriculum departments focused on the learning and teaching of specific school curriculum subjects. Colleges also had their own Education departments. College students were not always qualified to take university Education courses, but those who were often did degree units in Education concurrently with college diploma courses (Middleton and May, 1997). While research was a requirement for university Education staff, it was not for those in colleges of Education, although a few college staff voluntarily engaged in such activities (Middleton, 2001).

From the early 1960s, the introduction of bachelor of education degrees in some universities brought some college staff into degree teaching (Middleton and May, 1997). College and university staff often taught in teams; and college staff enrolled in qualifications supervised by university colleagues. Joint research projects sometimes emerged (Middleton, 2001, 2005a). Because of the degree’s split between Education and curriculum courses, it was usually staff in college Education departments (rather than curriculum departments) who were in such close relationships. As one interviewee noted, “That still persists. The Education people have more contact with the university”.

The interface of university-based Education with teacher education encouraged porous boundaries between its subdisciplines:

a weakening of the strength of the classification of discourses and their entailed narcissistic identities and so a change or orientation of identity towards greater external dependency: a change from introjected to projected identities. (Bernstein, 2000, p. 52)

This reorientation became increasingly evident during the political and social unrest of the 1970s when new social movements challenged dominant forms of knowledge and transdisciplinary fields emerged (e.g. curriculum theory, educational administration, comparative education, Maori education, and women's and gender studies). National associations for *educational* research, each with generic journals and conferences, were established in Britain (the British Educational Research Association) (Furlong, 2004), Australia (the Australian Association for Research in Education) (Yates, 2005) and New Zealand (the New Zealand Association for Research in Education). Encouraged by funding opportunities from governments, "educational research was increasingly advanced as a unitary and autonomous kind of study in its own right" (McCulloch, 2002, p. 101).

During the 1990s, successive governments' zeal for a market-driven tertiary education sector (Devine, 2005; Peters, 1997) saw degree qualifications introduced in institutions outside the university sector – polytechnics, colleges of education, and the new Maori institutions, wananga. The Education Act 1989, in its definition of the characteristics of universities, mandated that "most of their teaching is done by people who are active in advancing knowledge" (section 162(4)(a)(ii)). It is important to note that the Education Act did not say that all individuals teaching degree courses must be researchers. Before the PBRF, the activities of many teacher educators in advancing knowledge were contributions to the pedagogic recontextualising field – writing textbooks or electronic resources for schools, designing syllabi, evaluating programmes, or doing professional development work. The Education Act defines a college of education as "characterised by teaching and research required for the pre-school, compulsory and post-compulsory sectors of education, and for associated social and educational service roles" (section 162(4)(b)(ii)).

This Act preceded the amalgamations between teachers' colleges and universities, which began in the early 1990s. In the new degree programmes taught in colleges and polytechnics, advancing knowledge could be interpreted as including these service roles.

The new New Zealand Qualifications Authority degrees for teachers (e.g. the Bachelor of Teaching) were three-year, rather than four-year,

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qualifications. University-based four-year degrees (those taught jointly by university and college staff) were quickly dropped for fear of losing students to the shorter, cheaper courses in the former colleges. The four-year university degrees had been taken alongside the three-year professional teachers' diplomas (the credential to teach) and students wishing to complete their degrees often did so part time while employed in schools. When the dual qualifications were abolished, the three-year diplomas were effectively upgraded to degree status, and the discipline-based theoretical components (Education majors) of the four-year qualifications drastically reduced. Falling enrolments in the social science and humanities programmes in universities threatened the viability of Education as a major for these students as well. The dominance of a 'disciplines of education' classification was over.

The New Zealand Qualifications Authority interpreted the statutory definition of universities (advancing knowledge, promoting intellectual independence), extending it to degrees outside universities, requiring that all their teachers be researchers. Degrees had previously been the province of universities. College and polytechnic degree teachers, who had not previously been expected to be research active, had to reinvent themselves as researchers (Fergusson, 1999). There was pressure to upgrade qualifications, as described by one of my interviewees, "[the New Zealand Qualifications Authority] pointed [its] finger at me at the approval process and said, 'you have to get a doctorate'". A college lecturer explained how his colleagues "felt very vulnerable in the presence of people who had already their masters or their doctorates. And they wanted to validate their classroom experience".

The inclusion of these new members in Education's research community challenged its distribution rules:

after individuals outside the field of production create new knowledge, the field's principles will operate as to whether such knowledge is incorporated into the field. (Bernstein, 2000, p. 115)

Would, for example, professional consultancy work count for the research requirement? Would small action research projects carried out with classroom teachers be seen as research? What about curriculum design and trials for the Ministry of Education? Such activities had previously been seen as part of the core business, or collective identity, of Education as a professional or clinical subject. These service roles were part of its legislative mandate, as well as its historical, collective identity. National educational research associations:

focused more on processes of support and development to produce better research ... than on setting hurdles and sanctions for who can be an education researcher and what can count as education research. (Yates, 2005, p. 3)

New classifications and framings of professional knowledge dissolved the theory/practicum split (Gibbons et al., 1994), influencing the introduction of professional doctorates such as the Doctor of Education (Green et al., 2001).

From the 1990s amalgamations between universities and colleges of education or polytechnics intensified demands on staff to become research active. Amalgamations often involved geographical shifts of staff – across, between and around campuses. University Education department staff described being moved out of the social science or humanities blocks in their universities and into the former college buildings and organisational units. For both groups, these physical, organisational and interpersonal changes provoked insecurity and anxiety. As a college curriculum staff member explained:

Status or lack of status became an extremely important personal feeling. We would feel like we didn't have the status that the people from the Education Department had.

A curriculum specialist described how:

It was very fraught. The academics who had to come across, I didn't know who they were. They didn't resonate with my department in any way. I think there was a certain positioning. I was always aware that I was not one of the academics.

One lecturer, who already had a doctorate on joining a curriculum department, felt its lack of a research culture:

it seemed clear to me that research was something that was done by certain august persons, but the people on the ground floor just taught.

Another described having been employed as “a good curriculum practitioner”, but experienced the changing emphasis on research as:

[generating] a big tension between who I am and what I do as a good subject specialist and the other profile we have to have in the university, which is to publish.

In the decades before the PBRF's introduction, successive restructurings collapsed older boundaries between practice-based teacher education (e.g. curriculum) courses and theoretical (e.g. Education) courses. College staff (teacher educators) were reclassified as university staff (research active), and university staff as teacher educators. Interviewees'

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accounts suggested three analytical groups: ‘academics’ were those familiar with, and comfortable in, a university research culture; ‘curriculum staff’ were former college of education staff whose expertise was working in practical situations and whose employment contracts had not previously required research; and ‘researching professionals’ were those whose identities bridged the boundaries between academic and curriculum. They had often begun their careers in college Education departments, and regarded the pressures towards research as an opportunity to upgrade qualifications, teach degree courses and identify as researchers. The academics, curriculum staff and researching professionals were affected by the PBRF in different ways, as explored in the following sections.

Producing the legitimate text: The PBRF experience

As a pedagogic device, the PBRF’s quality assurance process is “a symbolic ruler, ruling consciousness, in the sense of having power over it, and ruling in the sense of measuring the legitimacy of the realisations of consciousness” (Bernstein, 2000, p. 114). It classifies research (by subjects) and researchers (as research active or inactive and as of A, B or C quality) and ranks the collective performances of subjects and institutions. It transmits criteria for the production of the legitimate text (e.g. EPs). To produce a legitimate EP ‘acquirers’ must internalise the category’s recognition rules (what counts as research) and realisation rules (to have carried out the research and published the results). They must recontextualise their outputs in the mandated EP format by listing publications, evidence of peer esteem and contributions to the research environment, thereby positioning themselves in the “internal command economies of disciplinary repute, professional prestige, and administrative allocation” (Luke, 1997, p. 54).

Those who had published in high-status academic journals, supervised and examined theses, and been cited in the works of peers found the PBRF’s requirements consistent with other aspects of academic life, affirming existing internal identities:

I felt fairly relaxed about what they were asking. I had more than fifty publications, which was your limit, and I didn’t have any particular problem with selecting my best four pieces and writing about my influences on the field.

Another high performer, who had been publishing with little accolade from colleagues, said:

I was very, very pleased they did the PBRF because that was the first time that people focused on that aspect of my work and valued it.

Some of those who were at earlier stages of their careers used the exercise as a guide in identity formation. It provided a career scaffold:

I've begun to realise what you had to do to get through the hoops and this exercise makes it even more transparent. They have laid out in three categories the sorts of things you should be doing in research, which is what's being valued in terms of promotion.

Compiling the EP could be a strategy for acquiring the recognition and realisation rules for what would count as 'excellence':

I was aware that there were agreed benchmarks or categories in terms of which I could reflect on my own progress. So I found it a valuable exercise in terms of just trying to get a take of where I was in terms of where I'd come from and where I might project myself in future.

The process of reporting their 'contributions to the research environment' and 'evidence of peer esteem' offered reassurance to some of those beginning to craft a research career, as in this account of the peer-esteem section of the EP:

When I first looked at it I thought, "My God, what goes in there? What on earth does that mean?" Not having ever won any medals or anything like that. And then I started to say, "Well, I could put this in it and I could put that in." And by the time I had finished I had quite a list in there. That was quite satisfying.

Some who had been reclassified as research staff, but who had formerly been employed as curriculum teachers, found the exercise a means of decoding the mysteries of academic culture, as in a department "where there weren't a lot of conversations going on about where we stood in respect to one another. We often just don't know where we stand." The PBRF provided "an abstract set of benchmarks ... something that had been agreed nationally to think about". A former member of a college Education department found the compilation of her EP:

quite affirming because the funny thing about where we work is you don't really know how you are getting on. It is individualistic; it is competitive. We might work in research teams, but our promotions are individual and you don't know how you match up with anyone else. You're just guessing the entire time.

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Those who viewed, and intentionally used, the process as formative, or pedagogical, tried to detect the recognition rules for each category and to pitch the portfolio to the highest possible level:

Because they had the descriptors of the C and B and A there, I actually kept those in mind, and I tried to write it above what it was.

The criteria for ‘A-ness’ indicated to one informant an indication of “what professors actually do”.

But those whose outputs were located primarily in unrefereed teachers’ journals, professional or other news media, or teacher development fared poorly in the evaluations. A secondary curriculum specialist:

felt that we shouldn’t have been involved. I felt bad about the time I spent doing it when I knew I wasn’t going to have any effect at all and when I knew there was no research as part of my contract. So I felt I was bringing down the grades of the School of Education through no fault of my own.

She had some grasp of the recognition rule and knew that, to continue working in what had been reclassified as a university, no longer a college, position, she needed to develop research expertise. Accordingly, she had completed her masters degree, which “did not count”. Her situation did not enable her to “speak the required legitimate text” (Bernstein, 2000, p. 17).

The quality evaluation’s classification ranked and ordered individuals’ ‘outputs’ on a scale that “echoes everyone’s experiences of schooling” (WEB Research, 2004, p. 203). One academic said:

The way it’s scaled with the A, B, C thing means that most people are going to come out looking mediocre, even though they may be very active researchers.

A curriculum expert felt:

very belittled by that whole process. I feel I came in as a good banana and now I am a half-pie apple ... I’ve had a lot of depression to do with feeling not good enough anymore for this place.

Another curriculum leader said:

When you’ve got a score like ‘research inactive,’ it suggests that you’re not doing anything. And you’ve been socialised to have a strong work ethic.

A staff member, with a record of completed curriculum contracts for the Ministry of Education, explained how “that’s not counted as research, all the masses of writing and stuff in the exemplars I’ve put together!”

The workforce in Education is largely middle-aged (Crothers, 2005). The reclassification of experienced and successful practitioners as ‘inactive’ meant:

[many] experienced what is, to some a sense of crisis and loss. Cherished identities and commitments have been undermined and, for some, this has been experienced as an assault on their professionalism. (Beck and Young, 2005, p. 184)

Changing classifications of knowledge, and knowledge workers, have psychological consequences for the formation and maintenance of professional identities. Bernstein (2000, p. 7) described how maintaining the integrity of self-identification might entail resisting official reclassification:

Within the individual, the insulation becomes a system of psychic defences against the possibility of the weakening of the insulation, which would then reveal the suppressed contradictions, cleavages and dilemmas. So the internal reality of insulation is a system of psychic defences, to maintain the integrity of the category.

Older former college staff sometimes described feeling unaffected emotionally by their new labels. One, completing his doctorate just before retirement, held on to his self-constructed researcher identity despite the PBRF rating of him as research inactive:

it didn’t matter whether they thought I was a researcher or not.
I was a researcher.

Others, emotionally conflicted, experienced intolerable tension:

In curriculum, many of us regard the national network as the people we need to reach in our research. And that’s who we write articles for, and that’s who we do workshops with, and that’s why we ‘be the University moderator’ for bursary exams or whatever. And they’re big jobs. And it just doesn’t count, but it’s *what we do* in professional education.

Yet the Education Act *requires* staff at a college of education to perform such roles. The merging of the colleges with universities charges the amalgamated institution with a dual mandate – academic (research) and the enhancement of professional practice (service). Both are means of advancing knowledge.

Personal (internal), as well as official (external), professional identities are highly volatile: these “identifications are never fully made; they are

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incessantly reconstituted and, as such, are subject to the volatile logic of iterability” (Butler, 1993, p. 105). The grading of individuals’ portfolios took place in two stages: a provisional grade was given by the employing institution and months later the official one was awarded by the PBRF panels. Waiting to see if their institutional assessments would be confirmed by the PBRF panel could be worrying:

I became very anxious as to whether I was actually going to retain the C that I’d gone in as, so there was a period of anxiety wondering whether it was good enough or not.

Some experienced a raise in grade, as in this account from a former college Education department member, whose C grade was raised to a B:

Because I got a good result, it’s boosted my confidence, made me feel, “Yes I can do this,” even if I had remained at a C, which is what my university gave me. When I got the C, I thought, “Well that’s probably fair,” even though I’d written it for a B and I felt I’d met the criteria. I thought, “Well, I don’t know how to interpret these criteria, so probably, having just finished my Ph D, I probably am a C”.

Another reacted with “anger that my own University had underestimated me and that it had taken outsiders to fix it up”. Others experienced a downgrading. Naming herself as a ‘curriculum leader’, one interviewee had been a chief examiner, a curriculum writer and an editor of a teachers’ journal, and had held other national responsibilities (Middleton, 2005b). Her institution’s rating of her:

was a C, ‘research active’. I was very happy with that ‘cause I thought, “I’m on the continuum, coming along quite nicely”. And then, when I found that I was adjudged ‘research inactive’, I was very hurt and I felt very disempowered.

The dissonance between the identities ‘teacher–educator’ and ‘academic’ or ‘researcher’, evident before the PBRF, remains and may be intensifying. As has been described in the case of Britain’s RAE, the PBRF “preserves structural relations between social groups but changes structural relations between individuals” (Bernstein, 2000, p. xxiv).

Consequences: ‘Education’, reproduction and change

The publication of the PBRF’s quality evaluations (TEC, 2004) was followed by media coverage, which emphasised Education’s relatively low

subject ranking. The fact that, in university settings, Education had one of the highest number of A- and B-rated researchers was largely overlooked and Education's historically low status compared with 'other' subjects confirmed (Middleton, 2005b). In the PBRF's second round, amalgamating institutions may report scores of staff in former university Education departments and colleges separately, to ensure "the average score for the university will not be dragged down" (Gerritsen, 2004a, p. 3).

The assumption is that Education must 'catch up': become more research oriented, and behave like a 'proper' academic subject. When my interviews were carried out shortly after results were published, individual and institutional priorities were already being realigned. In institutions with little research capacity, early career researchers were being charged with leadership responsibilities:

I am a C, but I am seen as a person that's going to assist in driving a research culture.

Some felt blamed:

There were all these meetings. People were beaten around the head to "get yourself started on research!" There were these people at the front just telling everybody to "Go out and be researchers!" But the people who are giving the message themselves aren't researchers necessarily.

The imperative to research for *all* degree teachers was viewed by some as counterproductive for teacher education:

My appraisals here in the School were reinforcing initially the service component – towards professional development out in schools and presentations at teachers' conferences. They are now very clearly saying, "Stop doing that, start doing more formal work with what you're thinking and writing". It's a big change and partly that's PBRF driven.

But teaching (and other professional) degrees *must* include practical curriculum courses to gain accreditation as qualifications, and to be credible with student teachers and their employers. A professional degree's practicum or clinical components are intrinsic parts of the degree qualification and to maintain professional credibility they and their teachers must be given status. The requirement that all individuals teaching these practicum components also "be researchers" can be challenged. The Education Act states that *most* of a university's teaching be done by staff *active in advancing knowledge* (section 162(4)(a)(ii)). In a professional school, advancing knowledge for some might legitimately include consultancy or development projects. Professional schools need a different

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formula for eligibility for the PBRF – a ratio of academic to practicum staff that does not prejudice the subject's 'appearance' in statistical reports. The eligibility criteria for evaluation need amending to allow say 10%, or 20%, of the teaching staff in such qualifications honourable exemption from the process. The category 'exempt' would not appear in league tables, so Education (nursing, social work etc.) would not be compared unfairly with traditional 'singulars' such as physics or philosophy. One size does not fit all.

Designed as it is to change institutional outputs through redistribution of funds, the PBRF was described as:

an uncomfortable sort of reminder at the back of most things now, around the university. There's pressure to do things that are 'PBRF-able'.

There was a new self-consciousness:

which occasionally takes the form of self-parody like, 'Gee, that could earn you a few brownie points'.

This was evident in a more calculating attitude to publication:

it has sharpened my focus to be smart and strategic about both where I publish, how I choose, and who I choose to publish with.

Some were afraid that local publications would be less valued than overseas ones (Cochrane et al., 2006). A young academic, aspiring for an A, was no longer willing to consider local journals:

I went to the Web of Science, looked up the journals that had the highest rating or ranking in terms of Education, and thought, "Right. The next article that I submit, I am going to submit it to this highest ranking journal."

Good scores were seen as currency in the "accumulation of a symbolic capital of external renown" (Bourdieu, 1988, p.98). Although confidentiality of scores is protected in policy (TEC, 2003), it was not always in 'fact' (WEB Research, 2004). Positioning recipients as commodities of economic value, good scores can be, and are already being, used in applications for promotion and jobs (Ashcroft, 2005; Cochrane et al., 2006). Some described the system as encouraging a competitive, individualistic organisational culture:

The PBRF creates quite selfish careers. If you're going to be successful in that exercise then it's for yourself. One of the big difficulties we have here is not having a commitment to the department.

Research productivity was affected by management responsibilities (Smart, 2005).

Pedagogic identities are undergoing reorientation. Historically, Education staff identified 'inwards' to foundation disciplines (e.g. sociology or history of education), school curriculum subject communities (science education, etc.), or as educational researchers more generically. Education's pedagogic recontextualising field was *relatively autonomous*. The introduction of the PBRF marked a further extension of the state:

[its] official recontextualising fields are arenas for the construction, distribution, reproduction and change of pedagogic identities. Pedagogic identities have a social base and a career. The social base is the principles of social order and desires, institutionalised by the state in its education system. The career is moral, knowledged and locational. A pedagogic identity, then, is the embedding of a career in a social base. (Bernstein, 2000, p. 62)

Emanating from the official pedagogic recontextualising field, new projected identities are internalised as career aspirations:

I can aspire towards the A research category. It is just personal ambition. It has become something I can aim for.

This shift from introjected to projected identify has implications for academic freedom. The Education Act requires universities, and their staff, to develop intellectual independence and to "accept a role as critic and conscience of society" (section 162(4)(a)(v)). Determining academic priorities according to an external agenda, in order to 'get an A' or 'be classified as research active' marks a shift away from intellectual autonomy. Summarising, Bernstein et al. (2005, p. 184) write:

For generations, such identities had centred, he suggested, in a particular kind of humane relationship to *knowledge* – a relationship that was centred in what he termed 'inwardness' and 'inner dedication.' And it was this that was now most profoundly threatened by the rising tide of marketisation, external regulation, and an 'audit culture'.

The relative autonomy of the various disciplines' pedagogic recontextualising fields is experiencing an encroachment of the official recontextualising field (i.e. state control):

Today the state is attempting to weaken the PRF through its ORF, and thus attempting to reduce relative autonomy over the construction of pedagogic discourse and over its social contexts. (Bernstein, 2000, p. 33)

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It is instructive here to look at the effects of the RAE. At the level of subjects and institutions, Britain's "national research policy is increasingly concentrating research capacity in a more limited number of centres" (Furlong, 2004, p. 346). In the first two rounds of the RAE, 'new' universities (former colleges and polytechnics) successfully increased and improved their research productivity and funding (Furlong, 2004; Morgan, 2004). However, subsequent reforms of the RAE raised the eligibility threshold of its funding formula. Many Education departments, which had worked hard to reach the middle ranges of the rankings, lost research funding, staff and standing. This accentuated the division of labour between research and teacher education institutions and staff. Institutions at the top of this hierarchy could maintain their position "by attracting and holding key academic stars" (Bernstein, 2000, p. 60). But:

those institutions which are much less fortunate in their position in the stratification are usually in no position to attract stars, and so will be more concerned with the marketing possibilities of their pedagogical discourse. Thus these institutions are likely to develop projected identities. What they are is a function of the exigencies of the market context which signifies the resources out of which their particular identity is constructed. (Bernstein, 2000, p. 60)

The "exigencies of the market context" have been described as circumscribing research topics, methods and theoretical possibilities. American Educationists have experienced "governmental incursion into legislating scientific method in the realm of educational research" (Lather, 2004, p. 759). In Britain, institutions that lost RAE funding must appeal to a market that prioritises "Random Control Trials (RCTs) as the gold standard in research methodologies" (Furlong, 2004, p. 346). Could this happen in New Zealand? Individuals' PBRF EPs are already being used by consultants employed to map the capacity of the nation's social scientists "to carry out research of a variety of types including government goals" (Crothers, 2005, p. 141). In this project, Education was described as offering "little that might count as 'hard core' research (and even then it is likely that not much of this meets 'gold plate' standards)" (Crothers, 2005, p. 154). The similarities between this language of 'hard core' or 'gold plate standards' with Britain's and America's 'gold standard' (random control trials, the medical research model) are hard to ignore.

As a pedagogical device, the PBRF is politically charged, and "the group who appropriates the device has access to a ruler and distributor of consciousness, identity and desire" (Bernstein, 2000, p. 202). Research communities (disciplines) do not determine the structure of the system as a whole, although the subject panels are made up of each discipline's top

researchers, affording them access to, and potential power within, the official recontextualising field. However, Education's 'other half', its professional and clinical dimension, is excluded, devalued, diminished and discouraged by the PBRF's requirement that all degree teachers be researchers and their 'outputs' subject to its surveillance and judgment. Education is charged with the advancement of knowledge and the development of intellectual independence in two spheres – research and professional practice. If it, and other, professional subjects are to perform this dual mandate, changes to the PBRF's eligibility requirements, as suggested in this paper, are necessary. In its present form, the process has an inherent 'bias against particular research types or topics'. The system must accommodate tertiary education's clinicians without prejudice if it is to result in 'benefits to New Zealand'. (For more information on the PBRF intervention logic, see chapter 4 in this volume.)

Notes

- 1 To avoid ambiguity, I use a capital 'E' when writing of Education as an academic subject and a lower case 'e' when speaking of education as a process or system.

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