



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

Teaching & Learning Conference

Melbourne Centre for the Study of Higher Education

Tuesday 4 – Wednesday 5 June 2019





What's not to like about teaching excellence?

Some critical questions

Professor William Locke

Director, Melbourne Centre for the Study of Higher Education

Excellence in learning: literature and Education

Centre for High
The Open Unive

July 2007

HIGHER EDUCATION R

Questioning Excellence in Higher Education

Policies, Experiences and Challenges in a Comparative Perspective

Michele Rostan



SensePublishing

April 2008/14

Free

April 2008/14

Issues paper

This report is for information only

Counting words or measuring quality?

League tables and the quality of higher education in the UK

Report to HEFCE by the Centre for Research and Information (CHERI), C

The Changing Academy –
in International Comparison

Jung Cheol Shin
Robert K. Toutkoff
Ulrich Teichler

University Rankings

Theoretical Basis and Impacts on Global Higher Education

THE GLOBAL ACADEMIC RANKINGS GAME

Changing Institutional Policy, Practice, and Academic Life

Edited by Maria Yudkevich, Philip G. Altbach, and Laura E. Rumbley







Teaching Excellence in Policy Discourse – Main Argument 1

- I will argue that the way ‘teaching excellence’ has come to be interpreted in policy discourses is open to question.
- It reinforces the separation of teaching from research and focuses attention on teaching and teachers, rather than on students and their learning.
- It assumes that everyone knows and agrees what excellent teaching looks like, regardless of context. And it implies that all teachers can attain excellence every time, all of the time.
- It’s often more about government policies and priorities than actually measuring the quality of teaching.



Teaching Excellence in Policy Discourse – Main Argument 2

- It privileges outputs and outcomes at the expense of processes, and latch onto existing metrics. In doing this, it offers us an oversimplified version of the educational processes within universities.
- It encourages us to chase the metrics and begin to distort how we think about teaching and its connection with research and, ultimately, diminish rather than expand our conceptions of university education.
- We should move on from ‘teaching excellence’ to enhancing the learning opportunities we might provide for our students. Rather, I think we should see University education as transformation and empowerment.

MAY IS
TEACHING
EXCELLENCE
MONTH



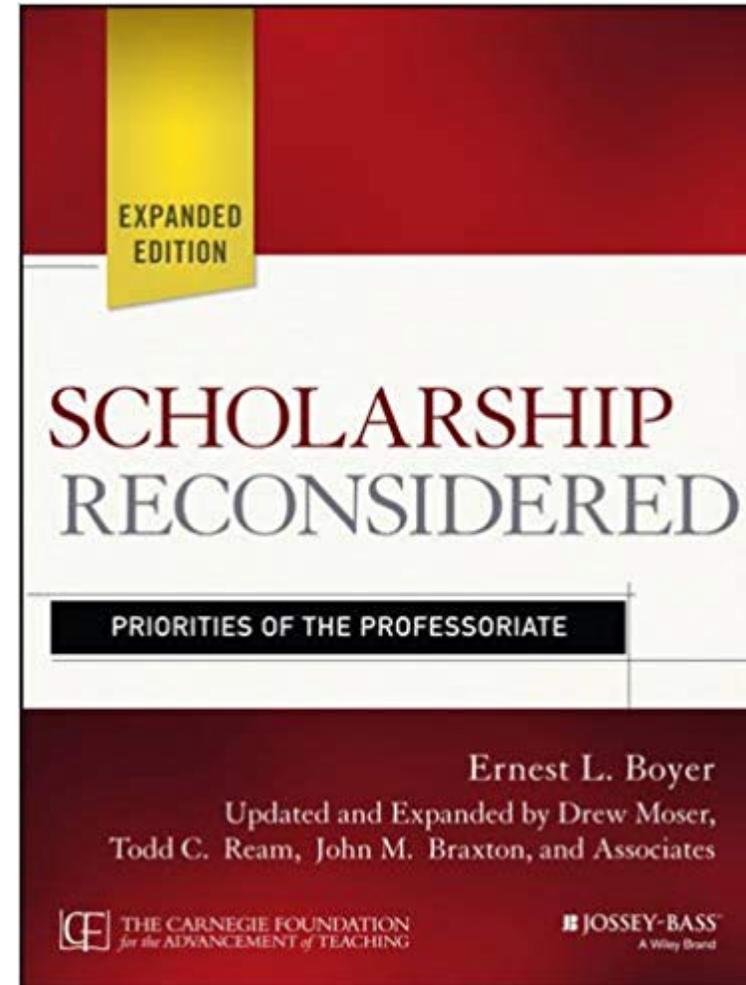




Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate

Ernest L. Boyer

Scholarship of *discovery*
integration
application
teaching





***Counting what is measured or
measuring what counts***
(Locke *et al* 2008)

April 2008/14

April 2008/14

Issues paper

This report is for information only

This report was commissioned by HEFCE to investigate league tables and their impact on higher education institutions in England. It presents findings from an analysis of five league tables, and an investigation of how higher education institutions respond to league tables generally and the extent to which they influence institutional decision-making and actions.

**Counting what is measured
or measuring what counts?**

League tables and their impact on
higher education institutions in England

*Report to HEFCE by the Centre for Higher Education Research
and Information (CHERI), Open University, and Hobsons Research*

Free



Features of the ‘Best’ Universities

According to the national league tables, the ‘best’ universities:

- have high entry standards and low drop out rates
- spend a lot on facilities
- undertake extensive research in a wide range of disciplines
- have low students-to-staff ratios
- award a high proportion of ‘good’ degrees
- have a good reputation among academics from other universities, graduate employers and head teachers
- achieve good results in student surveys
- produce graduates with high employment rates and salaries.

The logo for the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) is presented within a dark blue rounded rectangular border. On the left side, the letters 'TEF' are displayed in a bold, dark blue, sans-serif font against a white background. To the right of this, the full name 'Teaching Excellence Framework' is written in a white, sans-serif font, stacked across three lines.

TEF

**Teaching
Excellence
Framework**



Key Metrics in the TEF

There are three key metrics:

- The results from the National Student Survey on teaching, assessment and academic support
- Student attrition rates
- Graduate destinations, including in highly skilled employment and further study

TEF Ratings by the Department for Education



Gold: "provision is consistently outstanding and of the highest quality found in the UK Higher Education sector"



Silver: "provision is of high quality, and significantly and consistently exceeds the baseline quality threshold expected of UK Higher Education"



Bronze: "provision is of satisfactory quality"



TEF Ratings by the Department of Education

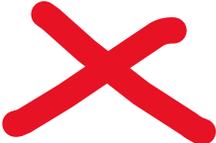
The UK Government's stated aims of the TEF are to:

- better inform students' choices about what and where to study
- raise esteem for teaching
- recognise and reward excellent teaching
- better meet the needs of employers, business, industry and the professions.



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Australian Government
Department of Education and Training

Performance-based funding for the Commonwealth Grant Scheme

Discussion paper



Performance-based funding and performance agreements in fourteen higher education systems

Report for the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science

Harry de Boer
Ben Jongbloed
Paul Benneworth
Leon Cremonini
Renze Kolster
Andrea Kottmann
Katharina Lemmens-Krug
Hans Vossensteyn

March 2015

Center for Higher Education Policy Studies
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Reference: C15HdB014

“there is no compelling evidence about a direct relationship between performance agreements (or performance-based funding) and quality, productivity and efficiency in higher education.”

(de Boer et al, 2015: 15)



Critique of System-wide Notions of ‘Teaching Excellence’

- Present an oversimplified and distorted version of the educational processes within universities
- Reduce university education to the metrics selected
- Assume it is the same everywhere, and that everyone knows what it looks like
- Ignore the diversity of students
- Imply that all teachers can (or should) attain excellence every time, all of the time
- Reinforce the separation of teaching from research
- Focus attention on teaching and teachers, rather than on students and their learning
- Hollow out university education, focusing on **how** teaching is carried out rather than **what** is taught
- More about government policies and priorities
- Reinforce marketisation, competition, rankings and deficit models



University Education as Transformation and Empowerment

- Transforming students and their understanding of their subject
- Transforming their understanding of themselves and how they can change the world
- Transforming how we educate our students and our own understanding of this
- Transforming ourselves as professional university educators
- Through this active engagement, students and graduates can be empowered.



Paul Ashwin: Transforming University Teaching

“This approach positions teaching in higher education as about designing ways in which particular students can develop an understanding of particular bodies of disciplinary and/or professional knowledge. This approach highlights that the transformational potential of undergraduate degrees lies in changes in students’ sense of self through their engagement with disciplinary and professional knowledge. This involves students relating their identities to their disciplines/professions and the world and seeing themselves implicated in knowledge. It is important to be clear that this does not always happen. It requires students to be intellectually engaged with their courses and to see it as an educational experience. This is dependent on both students and the quality of their educational experience”

(Paul Ashwin, *Transforming University Teaching*, 2019: 5)



The Melbourne Way

Five core educational objectives	The curricula & approaches to teaching & learning needed to achieve the objectives
Challenge Graduates who embrace and engage deeply with complex ideas, issues and problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clear expectations of learning goals and outcomes• Coherent curricula with clear connections among different elements of subjects and courses• Curriculum and learning experiences that are intellectually stimulating and relevant to students' future goals• Expert guidance and feedback to facilitate development of in-depth knowledge
Inquiry Graduates skilled in reasoning, research and discovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A learning environment that encourages questioning and exploration• Curriculum and teaching approaches that emphasise active student involvement and practical application• Curriculum and learning experiences that foster experimentation and discovery
Application Graduates skilled in using knowledge and information to solve practical problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learning tasks designed to build practical experiences• Curriculum and learning experiences relevant to students' current and future goals• Ongoing opportunities for practice and consolidation
Collaboration Graduates skilled in communication and working cooperatively with others	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A learning environment conducive to peer-interaction• Teaching approaches that provide structured opportunities for peer-led learning and feedback• Curriculum and learning experiences that emphasise shared goals among diverse students
Self-direction Graduates who are self-aware, reflective and able to set goals, manage tasks and evaluate progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Curriculum and teaching approaches that encourage autonomous learning and decision-making• Learning experiences that enable ongoing practice in critical reflection and self-assessment• Learning tasks designed to provide structures opportunities to develop metacognitive skills



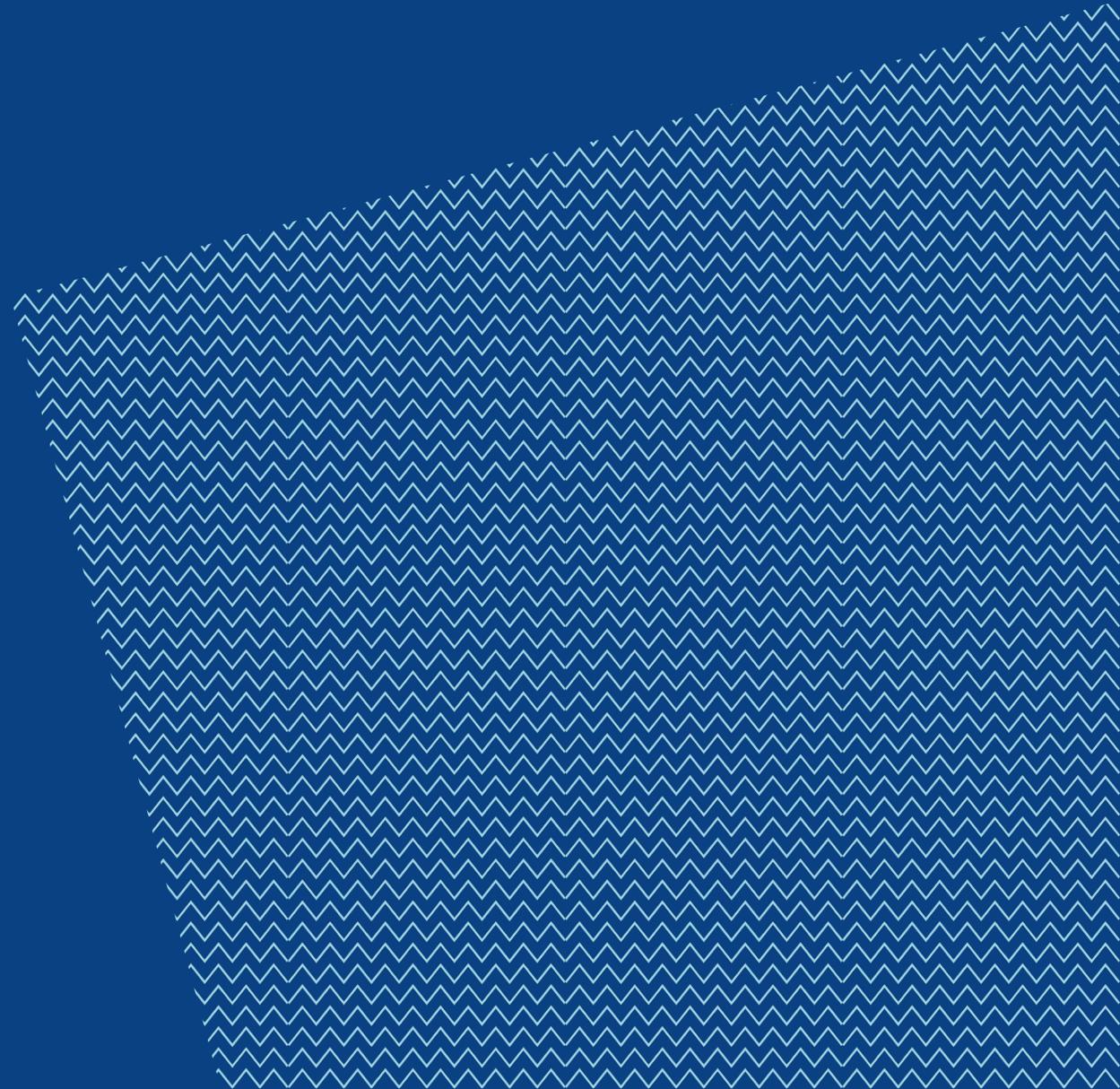
Evaluating University Education

- Does the curriculum actively engage students in disciplinary and professional knowledge?
- Do students 'own' this knowledge and see ways in which they can transform themselves and change the world?
- Does assessment and feedback to students lead to improvements in students' approaches to learning and their learning strategies?
- Is there a positive relationship between teaching and research and, for example, are students learning to be researchers in their discipline?
- Is the teaching and learning based on evidence of success, and do teachers have the opportunity to learn from this as educators and scholars?
- Can teachers develop their careers as university educators and progress as far as those focusing on research and/or engagement?



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Thank you





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Questions and comments