

TENSIONS BETWEEN RESEARCH AND TEACHING IN HIGHER EDUCATION.

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Higher education in the UK has undergone dramatic and far-reaching change over the last four and, particularly, the last two, decades. The 1963 Robbins Report on higher education proposed, inter alia, more than doubling full-time student numbers, (to 560,000), by 1980. This marked the beginning of rapid expansion of higher education. The current labour government is calling for further expansion in higher education with an aim to have 50% of 18 – 30 year olds enrolled in higher education by 2010. For the past fifteen years, research in UK universities has been assessed, for funding purposes, through successive Research Assessment Exercises, (RAE's). The '86 and '89 exercises were limited to the then universities, i.e. before the abolition of the binary divide between polytechnics and universities. The first quasi-universal exercise took place in 1992 when the polytechnics and some colleges of HE joined the university sector and became eligible for research funding. Elton, (2000, P275) reports that 'Not a single institution failed to obtain research funds in the 1992 exercise for some of its departments...', i.e. a greater number of institutions were now competing for research funding and research funding was now distributed amongst a greater number of institutions. The requirements for the 2008 RAE focus the rating on the contribution of individual staff rather than rating a department. The November 1993 'Autumn Statement' on funding introduced the imposition of financial penalties on Universities for under- or over- recruiting students in an effort to stabilise student numbers and escalating costs. 1997 saw the publication of the 1997 Dearing report which recommend, inter alia:

- the expansion of Higher Education
- greater selectivity in research
- the professionalism of teaching

Throughout this period and within the legislation, was an underlying push towards increasing managerialism in higher education. One of the consequences of these factors, along with the separation of funding for teaching and research, is a perceived separation of the two processes of teaching and research which, to provide quality education, should actually complement each other. This separation of the processes and the separation of their funding could lead to a tension between research and teaching and many academics argue both informally and formally (Elton, 2000), (McNay, 1997a), (McNay, 1997b) that this state of tension has, in fact, existed for some time. It has become increasingly common to refer to 'research active' academics as a term for those undertaking mainly research and contributing to the RAE, with a counter-reference to 'non-research active' academics, a negative term, for those who mainly pursue those activities directly associated with the education of the bulk of students. It is within this context that this paper will examine the effects of the division and tension between teaching and research amongst the academic community of practice and the resultant impact on student learning.