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Beyond Disciplinarity in Strategic Pedagogical Research

Who Do We Think We Are?

Dr Catherine Hayes, NTF, PFHEA
Visiting Professor of Higher Education

LIVERPOOL HOPE UNIVERSITY
Who am I?  What’s the Day Job?  Bit of a Bio?

- Lecturer at Durham School of Podiatric Medicine
- Principal Lecturer in Learning & Teaching
- Reader in Health Professions Pedagogic Practice
- Founding Fellow of the Faculty of Podiatric Medicine (Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons, Glasgow)
- Fellow of the College of Podiatry and General Practice
- Principal Fellow of the Higher Education Academy
- National Teaching Fellow
- Certified LEGO Serious Play Facilitator
- Chartered Manager
- Chartered Scientist
- Honorary Member of the UK Faculty of Public Health
What Does the Evidence from Practice in Higher Education Tell Us?

‘...there are ongoing tensions between research and teaching, with **prevailing perceptions** that research is more valued than teaching, and disciplinary research is more valued than teaching and learning research...’

‘...perceived **systemic exclusion** from the wider research community, exploration and contestation of dominant university culture and values, and perceptions that teaching and **Scholarship of Teaching and Learning** are **undervalued** within the university setting...’

Dzidic et al (2017)
What Else Does the Evidence from Practice in Higher Education From Years Ago Tell Us..?

‘The word **scholarship** has become linked to teaching as a means of raising the status and credibility of the programmes that are run or accredited – **gives it greater symbolic capital**.’

‘Scholarship can be an **abstract term** when used **without context**. Generally associated with research and intellectual activity. **Not necessarily linked with the enhancement of learning and teaching**.’

Nicholls (2004)
What Does Our Collective Experience Tell Us...?

Purist Research?

REF RATING

REF 2021 Research Excellence Framework

Pedagogy

TEF RATING

TEF Gold TEF Silver TEF Bronze TEF Provisional

Scholarly Activity?
The Notion of Scholarship as a Valuable Intellectual Pursuit...

The Notion of Research as a Valuable Institutional Commodity...
Academic versus Polemic Scholarship

**Academic scholarship** - is relatively neutral and has no aim other than *establishing truth values*

**VERSUS**

**Polemic scholarship** - promotes a particular position, with a specific agenda or in relation to *advancing a specific cause*
What about Research Informed Teaching at an Institutional Level?

*Do we need to be Research Led?*

*Do we need to be Research Fed?*

*Do we need to disentangle pedagogical and disciplinary research?*

*Why do the discourses of disciplinarity or pedagogy matter so much?*
A Discourse of Credible Activity? Confused Yet?

- Institutionally needs led pedagogic research?
- Institutionally needs led disciplinary research?
- Disciplinary pedagogic research?
- Pedagogic disciplinary research?
- Scholarship of pedagogic praxis?
- Educational policy and practice?
- Disciplinary policy and practice?
- Polemic Scholarship?
- Academic Scholarship?
Textbooks

Professional Practice for Podiatric Medicine

Textbook of Podiatric Medicine

Studying Postgraduate Healthcare: A pre-reader

(Edited by Catherine Hayes & John Fulton)
Discipline Specific Journal Articles

THE THOMSON REUTERS IMPACT FACTOR
Educational Journal Articles

THOMSON REUTERS IMPACT FACTOR

SUCCESS
Ultimately What Matters to us as Dual Educators and Researchers?
Developing Social Capital and Communities of Practice

Aim to support and extend the reach of academic and support staff wishing to undertake pedagogic research into Higher Education.

Use cross faculty initiatives and aim to encourage as many staff as possible to become active contributors to local, regional, national and global networks in critical discourse and research projects pertaining to their pedagogic as well as disciplinary practice.
Linking to Institutional Initiatives

Institutional Recognition Schemes
Achievement of HEA Fellowships at D1, D2, D3 and D4
Academic Staff Development Opportunities
Institutional Research Repository Deposits
Individual Faculty Niches
Remember Strategic Direction for You and Your Institution...

- Know what your institutional strategic aims are and align your RSA to them.
- Align your professional goals to your personal goals for development and progression.
- Ensure regular outputs of a consistently high quality.
- Know your value and aim to be recognised for it.
Encompassing the transformation and extension of knowledge bases & Valuing Important reciprocal relationships that exist between theory and practice.
TEF as Corollary to REF?

‘The TEF has been marketed as a corollary to the REF – a policy mechanism to drive standards which in themselves will signal mechanisms of excellent teaching…’

‘There is a distinct danger that the education market sets key mechanisms of control over pedagogical possibility…’

‘It shifts the potential for the co-construction and building of knowledge with students…’

Heaney and Mackenzie, 2017
In Practice... a Hidden Beast?

- Neoliberalism?
- Marketisation?
- Commodification of Education?
- Control / Supervision?
- Metrification of Human Experience?
How is a Buyer’s Market Shaping Best Educational Practice?

At the core of neoliberalist marketisation of education is competition...

Does it incentivise institutions to provide:

✓ Greater choice?
✓ Innovation & Creativity?
✓ Better Quality?
✓ Lower Cost?

Or is it moving us away from the concept of a true education that impacts on society for life... to training for specific roles?
The TEF will ...

• Provide information for the competitive market about which institutions have been most compliant with regulation/incentive structures

• The real **beast** is where pedagogic practice will be reduced to a singular measurable metric

• Metrics alone tell us one part of the story
Goodbye HEFCE and Hello OfS...

Office for Students (OfS) is a single market regulator

✓ Pro-competition
✓ Pro-choice

What will it mean to us in HE practice?

✓ More regulation
✓ More intensive reviews

Core Indicators?

✓ NSS
✓ TEF Ratings
✓ DHLE Data

Posited as epistemological tools

But actually being used:
✓ to justify and enable higher levels of individual institutional intervention
✓ To enforce compliance with market demand
Remember this about the NSS...

The NSS tells us nothing about what students *actually experience*....

It only tells us about their *perceptions of quality* and what they ‘feel’ when they are at University....

Always consider the *human experience* versus the *student experience*
Where We Can Impact on REF and TEF at Liverpool...

- Recognise the Value of Benchmarking not Metrification
- Contextualise with Wider Narratives of Professional Practice in Discipline and Pedagogy
- Establish your Case for Excellence with Evidence of Impact beyond Purist Research
Humbled to Play Just a Small Part in Transformative Learning ... 

- No fairy stories - real societal impact
- Transformative learning at its best
- Real students with transferable skill sets
- Changing society with civic impact

Dr Lisa Alcorn
Dr Attahiro Bello
Dr Lindsey McShea
Mr Joojo Kei-Sarpong
Introducing Dr Lisa Alcorn...

Real World Impact? AUTISM
Original Profession? Business & Management
Now? Cabinet Advisor and CEO
Introducing Dr Attahiro Bello...

Real World Impact? Rebuilding Lives after Terrorism
Original Profession? Medic
Now? Healing Through Arts
Introducing Dr Lindsey McShea…

Real World Impact? People Living with Down syndrome
Original Profession? Audiologist
Now? Audiology National Leader for Learning Disabilities
Introducing JooJo Kyei-Sarpong...

Real World Impact? People Living with Addiction & Substance Misuse

Original Profession? Biochemist

Now? Recovery Co-ordinator in Carlisle
‘We are preparing students for jobs that don’t even exist yet....’
‘Using technology....

that hasn’t yet been invented ...’
‘To solve problems that haven’t yet been identified...’
Education is a Social Science
Pedagogic Research is Educational Research
We are therefore researching the social dimensions of life.

More than just a framework of understanding
‘No Facts, only interpretations – Nietzschean
We are therefore researching the social dimensions of life (Bhattachacharya, 2008)

Understanding and Meaning Making NOT Explaining and Finding Purpose
The Heart of Impact in Higher Education Institutions
We’re in This Together – We’re ALL Educators

Regardless of Our Disciplinarity /Signature Pedagogies
Key Take Home Messages...?

- Don’t be the tail that wags the dog with the REF and the TEF - use them to drive authenticity and meaning making for students....these drive transformative learning in practice...
- Swap the student experience for human experience...
- Focus on building lives for society of which employability is an integral part but not the only issue at stake...
- Be proud of your role in Higher Education...don’t make pedagogic research needlessly complex – look at what matters to people at the front line of what we do...
References & Bibliography


Thanks for Listening...

Catherine.hayes@sunderland.ac.uk