Research Assessment as a pedagogical device: A Bernsteinian exploration of its impact on New Zealand’s subject/s of Education.

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1 A capital E is used when referring to Education as a field of study in order to avoid confusion with education as a system or process.
As in Britain and Australia, recent restructuring of research funding for New Zealand’s higher education institutions is based on “outputs-driven” models. The inclusion of a research component in equivalent full-time student (EFTS) enrolment funding is being progressively replaced by a contestable Performance-Based Research Fund (PBRF) intended to increase “the quality of research through peer assessment and performance indicators” (Ministry of Education, 2002, p.17). Charged with responsibility for PBRF’s design, implementation and oversight, the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) designed:

A mixed model combining both peer review and performance indicators preferable to the prevailing alternatives, namely a model based solely on peer review, like the British Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), or a model based solely on performance indicators, such as the Australian Research Quantum (Boston, 2004, p.1).

Research funding would be allocated on the basis of three, differentially weighted, “elements” of each TEO’s measured research performance over a six year period: 25% for its external research income, 25% for its research degree completions, and 60% for “the research quality of its staff, based on peer review” by 12 panels of experts in a subject, or group of subjects (Tertiary Education Commission, 2003, p. 11). Units of assessment of research quality would not be departments, but individuals.

Accordingly, in 2002, every degree-level teacher had to submit a personal Evidence Portfolio (EP) listing all quality assured research outputs, evidence of peer esteem, contributions to the research environment, and brief descriptions of four nominated best research “outputs”. Institutions awarded each EP a provisional grade, confidentially communicating these to staff. Provisionally graded EPs were sent to the TEC’s 12 subject panels for final evaluation. Months later, participants received their confidential personal grades – a “mark” of A, B or C (if deemed “research active”) or ‘R’ (“Research Inactive”). Collective grades and rankings of subjects and institutions were made public (Performance Based Research Fund, 2004). Despite its relatively high number of A and B rated individuals, as a subject Education’s collective ranking was amongst the lowest. Institutions and media berated Education’s “huge research inactive tail” urging remedial action to help it catch up with high scoring subjects like philosophy or physics (Middleton, 2005).

As Foucault observed, policy-makers often “know what they do; they frequently know why they do what they do; but what they don’t know is what they do does” (cited in Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982, p.187). What is it that this quality evaluation process does to Education as a field of inquiry, and to its individual participants? I interviewed 36 of the
Education staff involved and drew on Bernstein’s final book (2000) for analytical tools. Bernstein’s work had already proved useful in studies of the impact of Britain’s RAE on “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 & Young, 2005, p. 184; see also Croll, 2003; Henkel, 2005). Under RAE, institutions chose whose research to submit, and there was “no assumption that all academic staff engage in research” (Morgan, 2004, p. 463). The individualisation, and compulsion, of the PBRF suggest that its “consequences for academic identity are likely to be greater than is the case with the RAE” (Codd, 2006, p.226).

Bernstein encouraged “sociological analysis of identity within institutional levels ... and the analysis of projected official identities at the level of the state” (Bernstein, 2000, p.204). “Official identities” are projected via authoritative texts - statutes, regulations, handbooks, pro-forma, templates, etc. 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). After a brief introduction to Bernsteinian concepts (1), I outline Education’s history of changing official (projected external) identities (2) and illustrate how these enabled and constrained participants’ (internal) self-definitions before, during, and immediately after, the 2003 quality evaluation (3). I argue that the requirement for all degree teaching staff to “be researchers” could undermine Education’s “other” mandate to produce intellectually independent professional practitioners (4).

1. Bernsteinian concepts.

A sociologist of knowledge, Bernstein studied the social organisation and status hierarchies of subjects or disciplines and their participants (students, teachers, researchers, etc.). His foundational 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 twelve panels of subject experts to examine individuals’ Evidence Portfolios (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 (Education Panel, 2004, p. 10). The quality evaluation process projected new classifications within and across disciplinary boundaries, inscribing new collective (institutional and subject-wide) and personal identities: “research active/ 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 evaluator" (Bernstein, 2000, p.78). As teachers, supervisors, reviewers, examiners etc, academics are "providers and evaluators." When we write theses, submit articles for review, learn new technologies, or submit Evidence Portfolios 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 and weak when the locus of control is toward the acquirer. The PBRF requirement that individuals produce and submit an Evidence Portfolio 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 (Hall et al., 2005), the PBRF can usefully be seen in Bernstein’s sense of a pedagogic device.

Professional identities are constructed by us and for us. Academics locate or position our work and ourselves in relation to 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, inter-personal and psychological processes of identification (Green & Lee, 1999). We identify as educational psychologists, science educators, etc. Such personal affinities intersect in complex, and sometimes contradictory, ways with the financial and administrative categories whereby institutions allocate students to programs, distribute resources to departments, and locate bodies in buildings. Bernstein refers to identifications as sacred or profane – sacred describing inward (introjected) relations to knowledge, and profane an outward (projected) orientation towards economic, political or institutional imperatives.

As an academic subject, Education did not emerge until the twentieth century. However, the earlier social sciences and humanities disciplines (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 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" (Bernstein, 2000, p.9). 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, 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 disciplines requires mastery of “three interrelated rules: distributive rules, recontextualising rules and evaluative rules” (Bernstein, 2000, p.114). 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, who qualifies for degrees, which articles are relevant to 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 the discipline’s teachers – those who constitute its Pedagogic Recontextualising Field (PRF). The pedagogic recontextualising field produces textbooks, curricula, examination criteria and standards. The knowledge produced by researchers and theorists “passes through ideological screens as it becomes its new form, pedagogic discourse” (Bernstein, 2000, p.115). Recontextualising knowledge for teaching involves selection, translation, and filtering: emerging as a syllabus for “physics 101” or “sociology 300” etc. In the late nineteenth century, the establishment of state funded and regulated education systems established Official Pedagogic Recontextualising Fields (ORF) “created and dominated by the state for the construction and surveillance of state pedagogic discourse” (Bernstein, 2000, p.115). Emanating from the ORF, the PBRF rewards contributions to the knowledge base (laboratory science, field work, theoretical writing), but not the production of its teaching texts, especially those used in schools. 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, 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.xiv). The production of legitimate texts is a hallmark of academic life – essays, theses, journal
articles, curriculum vitae, or promotion applications require mastery of recognition, realisation and evaluation rules. Recognition rules help identify contexts – a sociology class, faculty meeting, psychology journal, Evidence Portfolio, etc. Realisation rules enable textual production – written, spoken, visual etc. It is possible to recognise a context, but lack the realisation rule needed to speak or write its texts.

Bernstein 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” (Bernstein, 2000, p.203). From the mid to late twentieth century, Educationists experienced continual shifts in the classification and framing of their subject/s, and these reconfigured the constraints and possibilities for collective and individual identity formation.

### 2. The subject/s of Education: A brief history.

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. In its formative years as a university subject, Education exemplified 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, 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 officials (official pedagogic recontextualising field) (McCulloch, 2002; Richardson, 2002). In British universities there were to be four core Education disciplines: philosophy, history and 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 in Britain, “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 (sub-disciplines) 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 professional 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). The epistemological split between academic (discipline-based) and applied (professional/practicum) components was configured by a segmentation of courses taught in university Education departments and courses developed for teaching diplomas in colleges. College curriculum departments focussed 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 & 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, 2007).

From the early 1960s, the introduction of Bachelor of Education degrees in universities involved some college staff in degree programmes. College and university staff taught in teams; college staff enrolled in qualifications supervised by university colleagues. Joint research projects emerged. It was usually staff in colleges’ Education departments (rather than their 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 college-based teacher education encouraged porous boundaries between its sub-disciplines: “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.115). This reorientation became increasingly evident during the political and social unrest of the 1970s when new social movements challenged dominant classifications of knowledge and the emergence of trans-disciplinary fields:
curriculum theory, educational administration, comparative education, Māori education, women’s and gender studies, etc. National associations for educational research, with generic journals and conferences, were established in Britain (BERA) (Furlong, 2004), Australia (AARE) (Yates, 2005) and New Zealand (NZARE). 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, government zeal for market-driven tertiary education (Devine, 2005; Peters, 1997) saw degrees introduced in polytechnics, colleges of education and the new Māori institutions, wananga. The 1989 Education Act (New Zealand Government, 1989) defined the characteristics of the various types of TEO and established a New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) responsible for approval and monitoring of degrees outside the university sector. Colleges of education and polytechnics, quick to take this opportunity, set up three-year Bachelor of Teaching degrees, which undercut the more expensive four-year university –approved qualifications taught jointly by university and college staff. With government now refusing to fund a fourth year, universities shortened their qualifications. Teacher education’s theoretical components were drastically reduced and falling enrolments in social science and humanities faculties threatened the viability of Education as a major for these students. The dominance of the “disciplines of education” classification (regions) was over.

The Education Act ruled that NZQA could award degree status only to qualifications “taught mainly by people engaged in research” (section 254(3)(a)). College and polytechnic degree teachers, not previously required to be research-active, were pressured to re-invent themselves as researchers (Fergusson, 1999); “NZQA pointed their finger at me at the degree approval process and said, ‘you have to get a doctorate’.” The same Act defined colleges 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 service roles” (section 162(4)(b)(ii)). College staff’s service roles included contributions to pedagogic recontextualising fields in the teaching profession – writing national curricula or textbooks for schools. Would these “count” as research? Many “felt vulnerable in the presence of people who already had their masters or their doctorates and wanted to validate their classroom experience.” The reclassification of college staff as researchers challenged Education’s 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” (2000, p.115). As with its Australian counterpart (AARE), the NZARE “focussed more on processes of support and development … than on setting hurdles and sanctions for
who can be an education researcher and what can count as education research” (Yates, 2005, p. 3).

From the 1990s, amalgamations of teachers’ colleges with universities intensified pressures towards research activity. Unlike the college degrees, university degrees were not subject to NZQA’s authority. The Education Act characterised universities as “primarily concerned with more advanced learning, the principal aim being to develop intellectual independence” (Section 162(4)(a)(i)). Universities’ academic freedom was mandatory: they “accept a role as critic and conscience of society” (Section 162(4)(a)(v)). Universities’ “research and teaching are closely interdependent and most of their teaching is done by people who are active in advancing knowledge”(Part xiv, section 162, para. 4aii). Once a former college was amalgamated into a university to form a School/ Faculty of Education, would “advancing knowledge” include the former college service roles?

Amalgamations required geographical shifts of staff – across, between, and around campuses. University Education department staff moved out of social science or humanities blocks in their universities and into former college buildings and organisational units. For both groups, these physical, organisational, and interpersonal changes provoked insecurity and anxiety: “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 [university] Education Department had.” A curriculum specialist said: “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”. Another had been employed as “a good curriculum practitioner” and experienced “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.” Conversely, a lecturer with a doctorate was marginalised by her new curriculum department's lack research culture: “research was something that was done by certain august persons, but the people on the ground floor just taught.”

As a pedagogical device, the PBRF’s research assessment exercise is a site of “struggle to produce and institutionalise particular identities” (Bernstein, 2000, p.66). Before its introduction, some self-identified as “researchers”, but others chose: “curriculum leader”, “intellectual”, “activist-writer”, “poet and literary critic”, “musical director/ conductor” etc., 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” (Bernstein, 2000, p.52). Interviewees’ “internal” professional identities fell into three main categories. “The academics” were familiar with, and comfortable in, a university research culture.
“Curriculum staff” were former college of education staff whose employment contracts had not previously required research and who had prioritised “service roles” to the teaching profession. “Researching professionals” were those whose identities bridged boundaries between academic and curriculum. They had usually worked in college Education departments, and regarded new imperatives to research as an opportunity to upgrade qualifications, teach degree courses, and identify as researchers. The academics, the curriculum staff and the researching professionals were affected by the PBRF in different ways, as explored in the following sections.

3. Producing the legitimate text: The PBRF experience.
As a pedagogic device, research assessment acts as: “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). Citing the Education Act’s requirement that NZQA-authorised degrees be taught mainly by those engaged in research (Boston, 2006), it projected the identity “researcher.” It classified research (by subjects) and researchers (as research active or inactive; and as of A, B or C quality) and ranked collective performances of subjects and institutions. It transmitted criteria for the production of the legitimate text (Evidence Portfolio, or EP). 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 outputs in the mandated format, positioning themselves in “internal command economies of disciplinary repute, professional prestige, and administrative allocation” (Luke, 1997, p.54).

Internal self-definitions of academics rated “A” or “B” were consistent with the projected external (official) identity “researcher.” Having published in high status journals, supervised and examined theses, and been cited in the works of peers, they experienced PBRF’s requirements as affirming existing internal identities: “I felt fairly relaxed about what they were asking. I had more than fifty publications. I didn’t have a problem selecting my best four pieces and writing about my influences on the field”. A ‘B-rated” researcher, whose publications received little departmental acknowledgement, “was 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 used the exercise as 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 an EP helped them acquire recognition and realisation rules: "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 on where I might project myself in future." Reporting "contributions to the research environment" (CRE) and "evidence of peer esteem" (PE) was reassuring:

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

The experience helped them decode 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." It offered: “an abstract set of benchmarks … something that had been agreed nationally to think about”. A former college Education department lecturer found 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.

It helped some participants identify the recognition rules for the quality categories and to pitch EPs accordingly: “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” offered another informant an indication of “what professors actually do.”

But those who had not "done research", but may have proud records of advancing knowledge through “service roles”, inevitably fared poorly. A 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. I felt I was bringing down the grades of the School of Education through no fault of my own.” She grasped 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, which "did not count".
Through no fault of her own, she was unable to “speak the required legitimate text” (Bernstein, 2000, p.17).

The quality evaluation classified, ranked and ordered individuals’ “research outputs” on a scale that “echoes everyone’s experiences of schooling” (Web Research, 2004, p. 203). One academic said: “The way it's scaled A, B, C 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”. A 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 senior lecturer with a record of successful Ministry curriculum contracts resented the fact that: “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 that 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 & Young, 2005, p. 184). Changing classifications of knowledge, and knowledge-workers, have psychological consequences for the formation and maintenance of professional identities. Maintaining one’s self-identification might involve 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 (Bernstein, 2000, p.17).

Some older ex-college staff were emotionally unaffected by their new labels. A curriculum leader completed his doctorate just before retirement and held on to his self-identification as a researcher despite PBRF’s rating of him as Research Inactive: “it didn't matter whether they thought I was a researcher or not. I was a researcher.” Others continued to prioritise teacher-education’s “social and service roles”:
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. They're big jobs. And it just doesn't count, but it's *what we do* in professional education.

Personal (internal), as well as official (external), professional identities are highly volatile: these “identifications are never fully made; they are incessantly reconstituted and, as such, are subject to the volatile logic of iterability” (Butler, 1993, p.105). Waiting to see if the provisional scores allocated by employing TEOs would be confirmed by the PBRF panel was worrying: “I became very anxious as to whether I was going to retain the C that I’d gone in as, so there was a period of anxiety wondering whether my EP was good enough.” Some experienced a raise in grade. One former college staff member, whose provisional C was raised to a B, said: “Because I got a good result, it's boosted my confidence, made me feel, ‘Yes I can do this’. “ Another expressed “anger that my own University had underestimated me and that it had taken outsiders to fix it up”. Some experienced downgrading. Identifying herself as a “curriculum leader”, one teacher-educator’s “service roles” had included chief examiner of a senior high school examination, writer of a national curriculum, and editor of a professional journal for teachers. Her TEO rated her: “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.”

Interviews were done at a time when Education’s low subject ranking was attracting negative publicity, and institutional and individual identities and priorities realigned. In historically teaching-only institutions, novice researchers found themselves charged with research leadership: "I am a C, but I am seen as a person that's going to assist in driving a research culture". In another TEO:

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.

The imperative to research for all degree teachers was described as counter-productive for teacher education: “My appraisals were reinforcing initially the service component to go out to schools and 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.” 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’.” Some spoke of a new self-consciousness, “which occasionally takes the form of self parody like, ‘Gee, that could earn you a few brownie points’. Taking on institutional service roles (head of department etc.) might get in the way of research productivity (Ministry of Education, 2005); “The PBRF creates quite selfish careers. If you're going to be successful in that exercise then it's for yourself - not having a commitment to the department.” There was 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.” A young academic, aspiring for an A, would longer 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.’” Although confidentiality of individuals’ scores is protected in policy it was not always in “fact” (Web Research, 2004). Positioning recipients as commodities of economic value, good scores are being used in promotion, job and grant applications (Ashcroft, 2005); as currency in the “accumulation of a symbolic capital of external renown” (Bourdieu, 1988, p.98).

4. What PBRF “does” to Education.
At the time of writing (November 2006), research assessment in Britain and Australia are under review (Adams & Smith, 2006; Sheehan, 2006) and New Zealand’s PBRF concluding its second (but partial) round (allowing exemption for those who scored well in 2003 and who wish to retain their grade until its regular 6 year cycle completes in 2012). A new category for beginning researchers has been added. All degree staff are still required to participate and this will perpetuate the systemic bias against Education and similar professional credentialing subjects (nursing, social work, etc.). As with Britain’s RAE, it “preserves structural relations between social groups but changes structural relations between individuals” (Bernstein, 2000, p.xxiv). A formal review (Bakker et al., 2006) offers the opportunity to show policy-makers what it is that the PBRF's quality evaluation process “does” to the subject/s of Education.

I have argued that historically, university Education staff identified “inwards” to foundation disciplines (e.g. sociology or history of education), to interdisciplinary curriculum subject communities (science education, etc.), or, later, as educational researchers more generically. The classification and framing of the four-year degrees jointly taught by university and college staff (but granted by universities) in the 1960s-90s was based on
epistemological, administrative and institutional divisions of labour between Education, curriculum and practicum staff, encouraging advancement of knowledge in multiple forms - theoretical, empirical, professional and practical. Policy-makers’ enthusiasm for market-forces in the 1990s led to a proliferation of shorter, cheaper NZQA-accredited teaching degrees outside universities, the reduction of theoretical/ disciplinary Education studies, dispersion of the research funding “top-up” that accompanied degree enrolments under the EFTs model, and attempts to reclassify polytechnic and college staff as researchers. Policy-makers, and university managers hoped that the PBRF would offer “a means of securing additional public resources for New Zealand’s universities and in a manner that would help protect, if not increase, the degree of institutional and sectoral differentiation” (Boston, 2006, p.6).

This drives a wedge through professional subjects previously spread across different types of TEO, but now university degree programmes in their own right. Education’s dissonance between the identities “teacher-educator” and “researcher”, evident before the PBRF, remains and may be intensifying. The PBRF projects onto all degree staff the external identity “researcher,” citing the Education Act’s benchmark for NZQA-approved degrees (section 254(3)(a); see also Boston, 2006) . However, the Act also contains a broader definition of university teachers as “active in advancing knowledge”(Section 162(4)(a)(ii)), a description that can better accommodate the “service roles” mandated for colleges of education (section 162(4)(b)(ii)), and now a requirement for University based teacher education. If the system allowed honourable exemptions for clinical/ practicum teachers (alternative identities), and if these were reported as “exempt” (rather than “failures”) in league tables, Education’s status would be raised.

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). The peer review systems of pedagogic recontextualising fields are harnessed to the state’s official recontextualising field: “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). Official recontextualising fields are “arenas for the construction, distribution, reproduction and change of pedagogic identities... A pedagogic identity, then, is the embedding of a career in a social base” (Bernstein, 2000, p.62). Projected official identities are internalised as career aspirations: “I can aspire towards the A research category. It is personal ambition. It has become something I can aim for”. Numerical scores signify, or reify, identity: “Getting the Cs to Bs” or “I'm an A.”
This has implications for academic freedom. New Zealand’s 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, Beck and Young (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.’

And this is what the first quality evaluation round of New Zealand’s PBRF “did” to the subject/s of Education.
REFERENCES


