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Teaching and Research in higher education: glimpsing a better relationship

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The focus of this session

- Can institutional management systems balance teaching and research? Should they try to do so?
 - Are T&R quite different or similar projects? Or part of a single larger project?
 - Do they pose quite different management challenges?
- In any event, their *inter-relationship* itself poses management problems
 - resources, audit, staffing.
- Underneath these issues lies the matter as to the very idea of the university: just what might be meant by the term ‘university’?

Background

- An assumption across the world is that universities are and should be places that both conduct research and teaching
- And which integrate the two functions (it being claimed that they are complimentary to each other)
- However, of the 15,000 universities in the world, most are teaching institutions, conducting little or no research
- So research-intensive universities constitute only a tiny fraction of universities
- (In the UK, of its 140 universities, only around 25% are research-intensive)
- And the global league tables are built almost entirely around and in the interests of research-intensive universities
- All 'world-class' universities are research-intensive
- In turn, although it constitutes a minority of university activity across the world, research attracts high status and teaching a relatively lowly status (even though the major of university income, *even among the research-intensives*, is generated through teaching).

Initial questions – institutional level

- Should research and teaching be separated within institutions? Should they have their own clearly articulated resource allocation mechanisms?
- Should they be evaluated separately?
- How are they to be managed? Should they have their own pro-vice-chancellors? (And if so, should they ever talk to each other?!)
- In multi-faculty universities, with strong departments, different relationships between research and teaching spring up across departments – with both positive and antipathetic relationships. Is this acceptable?
- What exposure should students have to research or to a research environment?
- Should staff who are ‘teaching-only’ receive relatively poor salaries and conditions of work?

Question for discussion

- *Should* teaching and research be closely related to each other?
- If so, why?
- If so, what would that mean?

Alternative views: R&T are *different*

- ***T&R are different:***
 - We have to ensure a common threshold of Q in T but not in R
 - Institutions need to do (some) T; they don't need to do R.
 - There is an uncertainty in the pedagogical process that doesn't obtain in the same way for R.
 - T needs R; R doesn't need T
 - Their effective conduct calls for different kinds of skills and aptitudes.
 - Until recently, R was public; T was 'private'.
 - Worldwide, R enjoys higher status than T – and career advancement depends largely (tho not entirely) on an individual's R
 - In higher education, R is prior to T in that T draws on R; needs R; depends on R
 - There is now in T, esp in England, a direct accountability to a customer (students) that has no equivalent in R

R and T are *similar*

- Both are processes of inquiry, learning, and scholarship
- In both, there is a public interest – if not public resources
- Both expend considerable resources of IHES and need effective management disciplines (for efficiency and productivity)
- Both need to pay their way
- Increasingly, interdisciplinarity needs to be encouraged in both.
- Both can be – and are – subject to external evaluation
- Both offer sites of potential risk, if they go badly for the institution
- In understanding R&T, both can be located in the context of the knowledge economy and the debate over the end of the university as a site of culture
- In being interlinked, each can stimulate the other.

3rd view

- That research and teaching are distinctive but overlap considerably – both conceptually and practically
- If I have a thought ...
- Students may be better off if their experience has some research elements in it
- And the close juxtaposition of R&T therefore brings greater efficiency and effectiveness
- Their separation, accordingly, may be harming universities, higher education and research

The harmonious myth

- Whether R & T are similar or different is immaterial since they are complementary to each other. Both are excellent and both are necessary to each other; and [in our university] both work to support each other.
- The reality
 - Hierarchy
 - Tensions
 - Hidden cross-subsidies
 - Increasing separateness (within institutions, within departments)
 - Differences in the rel not only across the sector but even within a single institution

Staffing issues

- In many universities, staff are being divided into groups:
- Those who both research and teach
- Those who research
- Those who teach
- Those who just teach and (sometimes) those who just research have low status and poor salaries and conditions of employment and career prospects
- Issue of title of 'professor'
- Emphasises low status of teaching

Taking stock – distinguishing the issues

- Issues as to the distinctiveness or similarity of T&R
 - Issues as to their relationship
 - Issues as to the student experience
 - These are significantly different issues
 - And in turn raise separate issues
- 1 How is the relationship between T&R to be organized?
 - 2 How might research come into the curriculum?

Improving the T&R 'nexus'

- A view that they should be supportive of each other
- - & that that inter-relationship is constitutive of a 'university'
- But why?
- Does it matter?
- To what extent?
- Patterns of the T&R nexus
- - and the T/R nexus is complicated by 3rd stream activities (3 interlocking circles, varying across departments)
- Development of 'pedagogical research' (esp in T-oriented universities)

Further questions

When it is said that research and teaching should be integrated, does it mean that:

- *All* staff should conduct research
- A major of staff should conduct research
 - And for either of these, does it mean that staff should produce papers published in (world-leading) journals (how many?) &/or generate research income
 - As well as engaging in 'excellent' teaching
- Staff should bring the research of others into their teaching
- Staff should bring their own research into their teaching
- Students should be exposed to the best research papers
- Students should begin to take on research tasks & begin to become researchers.
- *ie a spectrum of possibilities between a direct and an indirect relationship*

Practical problems in curriculum design: eg Problem-based learning

- Some institutions are building their whole enterprise around problem-based learning
- Not simply a technical matter
- What counts as a problem in physics is quite different from what counts as a problem in sociology
- Ie, there is an intimate relationship between R&T here. PBL cannot be properly introduced without a sensitivity to the character of R in the disciplines.
- Has profound institutional and resourcing implications.

2 Students as global citizens

- A curriculum for global citizenship
- Wide spaces, beyond single disciplines
- Students as persons
- Experiential dimensions
- Ethical dimensions
- How does the R&T debate get a grip here?

ie, there is a danger in a research-led approach to curriculum design becoming dominant. Other worthwhile ends can be neglected.

Research-led teaching

- Research-led teaching – an obvious bridge between T&R
- But it is controversial
- Not just issues over ‘research-informed’ v ‘research-led’
- - but again the bringing in of research perspectives into T will vary enormously, depending on the nature of R and enquiry/ scholarship in each discipline.

A possible reunification of T&R

- Meta-ideas in the literature, seeing connections between T&R
- Inquiry/ learning/ scholarship/ criticality
- And, at their best, T&R can and do inform each other
- Idea of a university as being a uni-versity – ie, a single entity, at least with criss-crossing links, sentiments, possibilities of communication and recognition
- (The problems of this world are transdisciplinary)

Conclusions

- T&R have been seen as posing separate management challenges – and not without justification
- But the consequent separation of T&R is corrosive of the university’s efficiency, effectiveness and potential
- So the challenge is that of re-uniting T&R
 - - of doing justice to the VC’s rhetoric on graduation days
 - - of enabling the PVCs for R & T genuinely to collaborate
 - - if indeed such separate posts should be retained.
- Only through a genuine re-unification of the management of T&R will the potential of universities in their societal and world roles be realized.



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