

The Managed University: the PBRF, its impacts and staff attitudes

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Abstract

This article analyses impacts of the Performance-Based Research Fund that was established in 2003. The fund encourages the entrepreneurial or “managed” university (Becher and Trowler, 2001). Of particular concern to academics is the character of ‘the HR challenge’ (Walsh, 2004). The article also assesses a survey of academics in the humanities and social sciences. Although the survey is part of on-going research in this area, the results suggest that while staff support traditional forms of academic work they are not well placed to resist ongoing erosion of their professional control (Abbott, 1991).

Introduction

It has been argued that the managed university and state initiatives, such as the PBRF, undermine forms of professional control (Abbott, 1991). Such downgrading is bemoaned as the end of “donnish” dominion (Halsey, 1992) and as proletarianisation (Harvie, 2000). These changes have also been documented by a range of authors in the international literature and are typically linked with the introduction of managerialist performance indicators (Talib, 2003). Although such developments predate the PBRF in New Zealand (Chalmers, 1998; Scott and Scott, 2004), Tipples and Krivokapic-Skoko (1997) emphasise the psychological components of managerialism in New Zealand from the mid-1990s.

This article, therefore, analyses likely impacts of the Performance-Based Research Fund (PBRF) on academics, and staff attitudes during its evaluation stage in 2003. Analysis of the PBRF provides confirmation of a new managerialism in higher education in general, and in universities in particular. Indeed, the PBRF epitomises state concern with efficiency and economy, and the consequent twinning of declining funding for, and increasing intervention in the institutions of higher education (Scott & Scott, 2004). In this respect, local developments parallel those in Australia, Europe and the US (Guená & Martin, 2003; Sporn, 2003; 1999; Talib, 2003). The PBRF is a powerful driver for the managed university (Becher & Trowler, 2001: 1-22) and, specifically, its ‘entrepreneurial’ variant (Clark, 1998; Slaughter and Leslie, 1997). This typically entails an emphasis on research as a form of revenue generation, the downgrading of academic autonomy, the

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This research is in part funded by the University of Auckland Research Fund for the project ‘Opportunities and Anxieties in a New Research Culture’.

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separation of teaching and research, and the demotion of the former.

The article reports on a survey of academics in the humanities and social sciences was undertaken to gauge attitudes to the PBRF and other developments. The first phase of the research involved a mail-out survey to all academic staff located in the humanities and social sciences at the eight New Zealand universities: 1779 questionnaires were sent out and 617 were completed and returned. The questionnaire asked academics:

- (1) to rate 56 statements in terms of a Likert scale (Strongly Agree =5, Agree =4, Neutral =3, Disagree =2, Strongly Disagree =1);
- (2) to answer opened-ended questions about the most worrying and encouraging developments for the tertiary sector;
- (3) to provide some biographical material (age, gender, ethnicity) and a career profile (years in job, institution, academic rank, discipline, degree).

The survey was completed during the evaluation stage of the PBRF – the Quality Evaluation – in late 2003. The second phase of the research is ongoing and involves analysis of survey data, and interviews with academics, university management, union representatives and staff of various ministries and sector organisations.

Evaluation and the PBRF

The stated goal of the PBRF is: “To ensure that excellent research in the tertiary education sector is encouraged and rewarded. This entails assessing the research performance of TEOs [tertiary education organisations] and then funding them on the basis of their performances” (Tertiary Education Commission, 2004a: 3). The PBRF allocates funding on the basis of research quality (Tertiary Education Commission, 2004b: 74-81).

Established in 2003, the PBRF is managed by the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) and is the first assessment of research quality in higher education, including universities. This assessment was designated the 2003 Quality Evaluation. The PBRF was worth \$18.2 million in 2004 and is scheduled to increase to \$194 million by 2009 (Mallard, 2005). By 2007, the PBRF will provide one-fifth of government funding to universities (Scott and Scott, 2004). The fund was established from the transfer of monies allocated to teaching enrolments.

The initial fund was created from 10% of the research component of the existing EFTS [equivalent full-time student] funding to TEOs. In this respect, the PBRF has not increased the pool of funding but makes a percentage of it follow an assessment of research rather than student enrolments. The research component of EFTS funding will be partly replaced by the PBRF in stages: 10% in 2004, 20% in 2005, 50% in 2006 and 100% in 2007. This will increase the size of the PBRF. From 2007, the ratio between PBRF and EFTS-based funding will be approximately 20:80 (Mallard, 2005).

The amount of PBRF funding that each TEO receives is determined by its performance across three components: a Quality Evaluation (QE), in which multidisciplinary panels assess the quality of research of academics who are engaged in teaching and who are employed at the census date for more than a year and at least 0.20 full time equivalents;¹ a measure of research degree completions (RDC); and a measure of external research income (ERI) The ratio of funding for TEOs across the three components QE/ RDC/ ERI is 60:25:15.

Reifying hierarchies: Institutions, subjects, nominated output units and individuals

The component of the PBRF exercise given the greatest coverage was the 2003 Quality Exercise. This made possible comparisons between tertiary education organisations, subjects and individual academics. Much of the material generated by the exercise has been published (Tertiary Education Commission, 2004b) but a wealth of further information is yet to be mined.

The most publicised aspect of the Quality Exercise was the ranking of TEOs. This brought few surprises. Forty-five TEOs were held eligible by the Tertiary Education Commission to complete the exercise. Twenty-two TEOs participated and 23 opted-out (itself no surprise as these institutions were likely to receive no funding benefits from the exercise). Of the twenty-two that participated there were eight universities (i.e. all New Zealand universities), two polytechnics, four colleges of education, one waananga, and seven private training establishments.

The results were predictable: the seven established universities were all ranked higher than the other TEOs, the newly promoted Auckland University of Technology was ranked 11th (behind 3 Bible colleges with a combined academic complement of 28.5 FTE), and the colleges of education were ranked last (Tertiary Education Commission, 2004a: 4-11).

Table 1: University Ranking

| Rank | Name | FTE-weighted quality scores |
|------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 | University of Auckland | 3.96 |
| 2 | University of Canterbury | 3.83 |
| 3 | Victoria University of Wellington | 3.39 |
| 4 | University of Otago | 3.23 |
| 5 | University of Waikato | 2.98 |
| 6 | Lincoln University | 2.56 |
| 7 | Massey University | 2.11 |
| 11 | Auckland University of Technology | 0.77 |

(Tertiary Education Commission, 2004a: 11)

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With hindsight, the University of Canterbury perhaps did better than expected and the University of Otago a little worse. Nonetheless, the ratings confirmed what was generally understood to be the academic pecking order: first Auckland, as part of a cohort made up of the 4 main colleges of the former University of New Zealand (Auckland, Canterbury, Wellington, Otago); then Waikato (established 1964) and the former agricultural colleges (Massey and Lincoln); last – and still looking like a polytechnic – the recently promoted Auckland University of Technology (established as a university in 2000).

As noted, just over half of the PBRF-eligible TEOs constituting a majority of polytechnics, waananga and private training establishments opted out of the exercise, while all of the universities participated. This reflects the reifying aspect of the 2003 Quality Exercise and the vested interests in the process. Insofar as the performance-based research fund reallocates funding to TEOs with the highest ratings, it is likely to reinforce existing divisions in resourcing. Indeed, a reallocation towards the universities and away from other TEOs was undoubtedly the main reason why the New Zealand Vice Chancellors Committee (NZVCC) played a leading role in developing and implementing the 2003 Quality Exercise (see Barnes, 2004).

Similarly, the potential to reallocate resources towards universities (and away from other tertiary education organisations) accounts for the support of the union, the Association of University Staff (AUS), which has coverage over academic and general staff in the universities. (The significant exception is Auckland University of Technology, where staff remain covered by the Association of Staff in Tertiary Education. The Association provides coverage for polytechnics. Arguably the funding cuts resulting from AUT's poor PBRF performance do not pose a problem for the AUS.) Thus, critical support by AUS for the PBRF was based on the following considerations:

- The PBRF assessment should clearly distinguish the performance of universities as research-led institutions, and distribute funding accordingly;
- It should also address the long-standing anomaly of the EFTS-funding system whereby all providers receive the same funding per student, with no recognition of the extra research obligations of universities (Association of University Staff, 2002).

Yet, there are significant issues around resource allocation *within* the university sector. The funding mechanisms introduced by the PBRF will significantly advantage some universities over others. In 2004 alone, the PBRF will deliver 2.15% more funding to the University of Canterbury and 4.47% less to Auckland University of Technology (Tertiary Education Commission, 2004a: 80). This difference will increase as the PBRF delivers a larger share of funding, until 2007 when the scheme will be fully implemented. In this respect, the PBRF is likely to reify the existing hierarchy of universities and other TEOs. This differentiation is an intended consequence:

“The PBRF rewards research activities of national and international excellence. It therefore introduces a powerful new incentive for TEOs to concentrate their research around areas of excellence. They are encouraged to aim for depth rather than breadth in their research capacity” (Tertiary Education Commission, 2004a: 1).

From the perspective of academics, and of professional control, the differences likely to be reinforced at the institutional (TEO) level by the PBRF are of a second order. Any hierarchy of universities *per se* does not constitute a threat to academic control. Indeed, it is possible the opposite applies: academic careers typically involve promotions associated with movements between more and less prestigious universities. Of greater concern to academics as a profession, is the extent to which the institutional differentiation reinforced by the PBRF reduces the total options available to them. Academic labour markets are typically constituted as core and periphery (Connell & Wood, 2002). In this respect, a widening gap between the ‘core’ (Auckland, Canterbury, Otago, Victoria) and the ‘periphery’ (the rest of the universities) is of little concern (cf Morgan, 2004). Academics should be less sanguine, however, where the process of differentiation reduces the *overall* pay and conditions in the sector as a whole, and where some (i.e., low rated, poorly resourced) universities use performance measures, like the PBRF, to lever reductions in pay and conditions.

Thus, the separation of teaching and research is a significant concern for academics, and places downward pressure on the overall pay and conditions for the sector. For example, Auckland University of Technology has introduced elements of this division in the wake of the PBRF (although research-track academics still undertake more teaching than counterparts in established universities). More worryingly, the separation of teaching and research is a viable response to the PBRF methodology only if it also involves the casualisation of this teaching (i.e., senior tutors on permanent contracts were assessed in the 2003 Quality Evaluation). The move to fixed term contracts in teaching and in research has been a central feature of academic work in Britain following the RAE (Collinson, 2002) and seems likely to be used here both for reasons of cost efficiencies and for institutional gaming in readying for future Quality Evaluations. Senior tutors on fixed term contracts of less than 12 months would not be assessed under the current PBRF methodology.

The 2003 Quality Evaluation also generated considerable material on the subjects that comprised of academia. The Tertiary Education Commission constituted twelve expert panels to assess the quality of research of individual academics across forty one ‘subject areas’. The twelve multidisciplinary panels typically involved around 20 professoriate academics and included at least one senior academic employed outside New Zealand and one expert in Maori knowledge. The main task of these panels was to evaluate the Evidence Portfolios of *individual* academics and to assign a numeric and letter grade (R, less than 200; C 200-399; B, 400-599, A 600-700).²

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Three panels covered the range of subjects associated with the Arts: Social Sciences & Other Cultural/Social Studies (6 subjects), Humanities and Law (6 subjects) and Education (1 subject) (see Tertiary Education Commission, 2004b: 18):

Table 2: Social Sciences & Other Cultural/Social Studies; Humanities and Law; Education Panels

| Subject | Quality Score (rank) | FTE Staff in Subject (rank) | Members on Panel/ FTE Staff (rank) |
|--|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|---|
| Philosophy | 4.74 (1) | 64.2 (9) | 64.2 (11) |
| Anthropology & Archaeology | 4.55 (2) | 59.2 (10) | 29.6 (2) |
| Psychology | 3.97 (3) | 217.5 (3) | 43.5 (4) |
| Human Geography | 3.96 (4) | 58.2 (11) | 58.2 (9) |
| History, History of Art, Classics & Curatorial Studies | 3.75 (5) | 188.3 (5) | 23.5 (1) |
| Political Science, International Relations & Public Policy | 3.40 (6) | 94.1 (8) | 47.5 (5) |
| Law | 2.97 (7) | 221.7 (2) | 55.4 (8) |
| English Language & Literature | 2.75 (8) | 117.9 (6) | 58.9 (10) |
| Foreign Language & Linguistics | 2.46 (9) | 202.2 (4) | 50.5 (6) |
| Religious Studies and Theology | 2.46 (9) | 51.3 (12) | 51.3 (7) |
| Sociology, Social Policy, Social Work, Criminology, Gender Studies | 2.40 (11) | 233.3 (1) | 77.7 (12) |
| Communications, Journalism & Media Studies | 1.59 (12) | 97.5 (7) | 32.5 (3) |
| Education | 1.02 | 994.8 | NA |

The ranking of subjects also largely confirmed the commonly accepted hierarchy. As TEC put it: "In general, the best results were achieved by long-established disciplines

with strong research cultures...” (Tertiary Education Commission, 2004b: 9). However, the assessment of subjects was made more contentious because of the decisions concerning the grouping/creating subject areas. Thus, in the Arts at least, the extent to which a discipline stood alone in a ‘subject area’ was a good predictor of its Quality Score. For example, Philosophy and Psychology were obvious beneficiaries in this delineation, while the subject area of Human Geography also benefited from its separation from the general field of geography. Conversely, disciplines like Sociology suffered from being bundled with Social Work.

More significantly, the problematic grouping of disciplines into subject areas, the constitution of multidisciplinary panels, and the methodology for assessing and reporting on Evidence Portfolios points to the decidedly minor influence of academics/disciplinary practitioners in the development of the PBRF methodology (Peters, 2001a, 2001b). As a result, the 2003 Quality Evaluation provides considerable information for policymakers and for senior management of universities, but the benefits to disciplinary associations and academic practitioners is by no means clear. While the planning offices of individual universities are no doubt engaged in the analysis of the PBRF results and strategising accordingly, the future role of individual academics and their associations are problematic.

Clearly, the PBRF must have an institutional focus and should measure the extent of the obligations laid out by the Education Act (1989), section 254(3)(a) that degrees must be ‘taught mainly by people engaged in research’. However, the focus of the PBRF on *individual* academics as the unit of analysis (Boston, 2004; Web Research, 2004) also provides a powerful reinforcement of the new managerial imperatives. It must be noted that while each TEO gains an overall quality score, it is the prerogative of senior management at each institution to determine the ‘nominated output units’ by which these scores can be subdivided. The University of Waikato reported its entire Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences as a single nominated output unit. In contrast, the University of Auckland designated nominated output units with as few as 4 academic staff.

Professor Jonathan Boston (2004), the principal architect of the PBRF methodology, has provided a rationale for the decision to mandate individual assessment and reporting. He argued that the benefits of individual ratings included reduced compliance costs, congruence with research practice, enhanced self-assessment, consistency with multidisciplinary panels, more powerful incentives, more honesty and more transparency (Author’s notes from the plenary session, 21-5- 2004). Boston (2004) has subsequently indicated that – with hindsight – the decision to include individual ratings did not provide these benefits. Indeed, it is difficult to find much support for individual ratings outside of management and HR. In this regard, the *Phase I Evaluation of the implementation of the PBRF and the conduct of the 2003 Quality Evaluation* rather wanly recommends: “That the individual staff member be retained as the unit of assessment in the Quality Evaluation” (Web Research, 2004: 13).

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Individual ratings may not provide the benefits hoped for by Professor Boston, but they do deliver a powerful resource to the senior managers of universities and to human resource practitioners. Extensive interviewing shows that the potential for the PBRF Quality Evaluation in 2003 to provide a comparative rating of individual staff proved an irresistible opportunity for the senior management of universities and consequently shaped the input of the NZVCC to the PBRF methodology. The results of such bundling of a HR component with the assessment of research are not yet worked through, and will be uneven across the sector, but seem likely to be to the detriment of academic professional control. For example, AUT has moved somewhat to separate research and teaching. Similarly, forms of gaming open to institutions in future Quality Evaluations (scheduled for 2006 and 2012) are constrained by TEC mandates that all eligible staff participate and by the individualistic character of that evaluation. Yet senior management can determine the pattern of nominated output units. It can be expected that institutional gaming will seek to maximise PBRF results across institutions but will also attempt to align the assessment of research with effort to 'rationalise' teaching, etc. (in effect, picking winners in the form of nominated output units).

'The HR challenge'

The methodology for assessing the research performance of universities and individual academics is complex and ramifications of the results will take time to work through (see Tertiary Education Commission, 2004b for an extensive discussion of the methodology and results). Nevertheless, Professor Pat Walsh, leading industrial relations expert and new Vice Chancellor at Victoria University of Wellington, notes the PBRF strengthens and justifies the activities of human resources practitioners in universities:

"Now under the previous funding system universities could afford – they might not have liked it – but they could afford to take a tolerant view of those whose research performance was inadequate. Under the PBRF this will become more difficult. The fundamental – and I'm tempted to say unique – aspect of the PBRF is the one-to-one relationship it establishes between the research performance of individual academic staff and the reputation and revenue of the institution. Our principal funder has decided that our revenue will rise and fall directly with the assessed research performance of each academic... The challenge for universities under the current PBRF regime will be establish performance management systems which fairly assess the contribution made by academic staff, including those whose research performance is demonstrably unsatisfactory. ... This means that all universities face the fundamental HR challenge of developing performance management systems which properly recognise both the collective nature of research production and the variable nature of individual contribution to the collective effort" (Walsh, 2004).

The less 'tolerant' HR and its move into the realms of academic work, is likely to be uneven across universities but has powerful drivers in the PBRF. There are at least four critical ratios in the methodology of the PBRF, around which universities (and other TEOs) will probably strategise and which constitute the performance element of 'the HR challenge'.

It must be acknowledged that 20:80 ratio between PBRF and EFTS means that while the emphasis on maximising student numbers will reduce it will remain central. However, high ratings under the PBRF also bring reputational benefits and possible multiplier effects for the top-ranked universities. It seems to be assumed by senior management in universities that EFTS will also follow PBRF success. This assumption explains the (successful) effort on the part of the New Zealand Vice Chancellor's Committee (NZVCC) to ban publication of the part of the PBRF report (e.g., Tertiary Education Commission, 2004b) that made comparison between New Zealand and foreign universities. It might also be argued that the NZVCC considered that the performance of its members should be exempt from the kind of comparisons made on academic staff in the 2003 Quality Evaluation.

Certainly, the resources made available through the PBRF – at least formally disconnected from EFTS – provide opportunities for senior management in universities to strategise and pick winners. In this respect, it is significant that while staff participation in the 2003 Quality Evaluation was mandated by TEC and line management in universities, no agreements were secured by staff at any university as to how any windfall from the PBRF might be spent. Other key ratios in the PBRF methodology provide insights into the strategies and gaming that senior management/HR are likely to prefer.

As noted, the ratio for the components of PBRF funding is 60:25:15 between Quality Evaluation/ research degree completion/external research income. This means that the greatest proportion of funding comes from the assessment of the quality of research of individual academics. Arguably, the greatest gains can come from improving quality scores of institutions and their nominated output units, although it should be noted that research degree completions (i.e., of Doctorates and Masters) is likely to attract resources.

In the realm of quality scores the key ratio is the rating of staff in terms of A/B/C/R quality scores with the calculation of funding, which is 10:6:2:0. Thus, a B academic is worth three times as much as his C counterpart; an A academic is worth five of her C colleagues; and, an R academic is worth nothing at all. The HR drive is clear: to maximise A's, to identify and raise high B's and C's, to minimise R's. How this is worked through on an institutional basis is unclear. One Vice Chancellor has proposed and subsequently retracted the payment of bonuses to A and B rated staff. The most immediate and likely result is in the area of staff hiring, where senior management and HoDs are extremely reluctant to hire junior staff who may accrue R's (the next census date is 21-12-2005). This is also

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the realm of unintended consequences insofar as disciplines and institutions that have experienced growth in recent years are likely to have more junior staff and subsequently R's and C's than those that were stable or in decline. Possibly the good result of the University of Canterbury *vis a vis* the University of Otago reflects this pattern.

But not all subject areas are treated equally by the PBRF, and this affects the worth of individual quality scores. All of the subject areas assessed by the Social Sciences & Other Cultural/Social Studies; Humanities and Law; and Education Panels were assigned a weighting of 1 with the exception of Psychology (with a weighting of 2). Similarly, the subject areas in the Creative and Performing Arts Panels were assigned a weighting of 2. (The laboratory-based sciences were weighted 2.5.) This has obvious consequences at the margins for the constitution of academic departments and nominated output units (albeit only at the margins), insofar as a social psychologist assessed as a sociologist is worth half the value of one assessed as a psychologist, etc. The overall effect on funding for the Arts in comparison with other groupings (e.g., Science, Medicine) is likely to be negative. Further bad news for Arts can be found in a recent speech by the Minister of Finance:

“The recent analysis for the Performance-Based Research Fund showed that New Zealand academics are world-class in areas such as philosophy and criminology; but we need to ensure that we are world class in biotechnology and the other disciplines that, in the medium to long-term, will pay the bills. It is time to shift the balance of our tertiary system towards more of an explicit industry-led approach” (Cullen, 2004).

The Minister sends a clear message to the senior managers of universities. Thus, Professor Walsh is undoubtedly correct in his estimation of a new challenge for HR. The PBRF has provided both resourcing and a rationale for a greater involvement of HR practitioners, new managerialism and performance measures in research (and in teaching).

Staff attitudes: Unity and division

As outlined above, a self-complete survey of academics in the humanities and social sciences was undertaken to gauge attitudes to the PBRF and other developments in late 2003. The questionnaire asked academics to rate 56 statements in terms of a Likert scale: Strongly Agree =5, Agree =4, Neutral =3, Disagree =2, Strongly Disagree =1. The timing of the survey coincided with the 2003 Quality Evaluation, during which individual staff were required to complete Evidence Portfolios for the PBRF. The survey confirmed previous studies showing academics are overworked and stressed. Similarly, initial results suggest that the conditions enjoyed by academics may have been in decline for some time. This supports the contention that increases in student numbers in the 1980s and 1990s, coupled with funding cuts and an increase in the staff-student ratio

has considerably undermined the practices of what was considered “traditional academic work” (Chalmers, 1998, Scott and Scott, 2004). Chalmers has identified that academics spend the bulk of their time teaching and bemoan increasing administration duties and reduced time for research. The survey reiterates these concerns.

Arguably, the clearest theme to emerge is that *academic work should combine research and teaching*:

| Rank / 56 | Statement | Mean |
|-----------|---|------|
| 1 | Academic positions should combine teaching and research | 4.49 |
| 43 | The main function of the tertiary sector should be teaching | 2.56 |
| 44 | The main function of the tertiary sector should be research | 2.56 |
| 49 | There should be greater use of contract teaching | 2.27 |
| 51 | Most academics should focus exclusively on teaching | 1.86 |
| 52 | Most academics should focus exclusively on research | 1.85 |

The respondents not only ranked as 1 the statement ‘Academic positions should combine teaching and research’ (i.e., agreed with it most strongly), but also statements about exclusive teaching and research ranked lowly, at 51 and 52, respectively. Similarly, respondents provided rankings that show support for a traditional (possibly a nostalgic) constitution of academic work:

| Rank / 56 | Statement | Mean |
|-----------|--|------|
| 1 | Academic positions should combine teaching and research | 4.49 |
| 2 | Sabbaticals are important for good teaching and research | 4.45 |
| 4 | The funding of conference attendance is crucial for good teaching and research | 4.29 |
| 6 | Administrative work has become an unreasonable burden | 4.12 |
| 46 | The tertiary sector should focus on meeting the demands of the knowledge economy | 2.35 |
| 49 | There should be greater use of contract teaching | 2.27 |
| 50 | There should be a greater focus on wealth generating aspects of research | 1.86 |
| 54 | The tertiary sector should be run like a business | 1.70 |

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Recent 'policy-speak' from government and business interests that emphasised the knowledge economy, wealth generation and business models for universities were ranked lowly (i.e., disagreed with). At the same time, respondents were confident about the quality of New Zealand higher education:

| Rank / 56 | Statement | Mean |
|-----------|---|------|
| 5 | NZ academics have much to contribute internationally | 4.20 |
| 20 | New Zealand delivers world-class tertiary education | 3.37 |
| 21 | The esteem in which NZ research is held internationally has increased | 3.28 |
| 53 | Research and teaching in NZ is usually just reinventing the wheel | 1.84 |
| 56 | NZ academics have little to contribute internationally | 1.58 |

Their assessment is at odds with the methodology and results of the PBRF, wherein the percentage of A-graded academics in New Zealand was about half that of the UK RAE. This reflects both the deadening effects of the 'peer esteem' and 'contribution to the research environment' components of Evidence Portfolios and an unreasonable definition of the criteria for an 'A' (Dalziel, 2004).

Overall, academics were somewhat pessimistic about the tertiary sector:

| Rank / 56 | Statement | Mean |
|-----------|--|------|
| 17 | Collegiality is in decline | 3.49 |
| 25 | I am pessimistic about the future of the tertiary sector | 3.23 |
| 36 | I am optimistic about the future of the tertiary sector | 2.72 |
| 39 | Now is a good time to be an academic | 2.65 |

But, were marginally optimistic about their own careers:

| Rank / 56 | Statement | Mean |
|-----------|----------------------------------|------|
| 27 | I am optimistic about my career | 3.15 |
| 38 | I am pessimistic about my career | 2.69 |

However, these assessments of pessimism and optimism were highly variable by subject and university, as was the middling assessment of the PBRF:

| Rank / 56 | Statement | Mean |
|-----------|---|------|
| 33 | The Performance Based Research Funding initiative is beneficial | 2.90 |

Indeed, the variance of ranking statements on pessimism, optimism and the PBRF when other factors are introduced to the analysis (these results will be published in the near future), suggests significant divisions in academic ranks. Thus -in late 2003 at least- there appeared both a binomial distribution of rankings in terms of pessimistic and optimistic clustering, and a strong locational determinism. It is perhaps unsurprising that the relationship between these two elements linked pessimist and poor PBRF results, and optimism and good PBRF results. This should worry proponents of traditional academic work (or whatever can best be salvaged from two decades of systematic under-funding) because it suggests that new managerialist arguments about picking winners and other strategic punts are likely to find support from some academics.

Conclusion

The initial results of the survey are surprisingly mixed, but suggest that academics consider themselves overworked and stressed (cf Chalmers, 1998). The responses also demonstrate a commitment to traditional forms of academic work. However, the extent to which academics are willing and able to resist managerialist erosion of their professional control over research, teaching and other conditions of work seems more problematic. The pursuit by senior management of universities for new performance measures and other elements of 'the HR challenge' is likely to be advantaged by very real divisions within academic ranks. What remains unclear is the extent to which academics (particularly those advantaged by PBRF and similar arrangements) within the humanities and social sciences pursue strategies that undercut existing forms of professional control or collegiality.

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Appendix 1: Ranking of statements

In late 2003, a mail-out self-complete survey was sent to all academic staff at the eight New Zealand universities located in the humanities and social sciences. 1779 questionnaires were sent out. 617 completed questionnaires were returned, along with 44 uncompleted ones. The questionnaire asked academics to rate 56 statements in terms of a Likert scale (Strongly Agree =5, Agree =4, Neutral =3, Disagree =2, Strongly Disagree =1). Below the statements are ranked in descending order of agreement.

| Statement | N | Mean | SD |
|--|-----|------|-------|
| Academic positions should combine teaching and research | 610 | 4.49 | .681 |
| Sabbaticals are important for good teaching and research | 611 | 4.45 | .742 |
| Academics deserve better pay and conditions | 609 | 4.30 | .827 |
| The funding of conference attendance is crucial for good teaching and research | 609 | 4.29 | .823 |
| NZ academics have much to contribute internationally | 608 | 4.20 | .676 |
| Administrative work has become an unreasonable burden | 610 | 4.12 | .870 |
| Students should be asked to rate the effectiveness of teaching | 603 | 4.06 | .864 |
| Teaching is under valued | 610 | 4.05 | .978 |
| Tenure is crucial for good teaching and research | 605 | 3.79 | 1.040 |
| Greater inter-disciplinarity is a positive development | 610 | 3.78 | .769 |
| The number of students I teach and supervise has increased | 592 | 3.77 | 1.107 |
| There should be greater inter-disciplinarity | 600 | 3.73 | .920 |
| There should be a greater appreciation of multiculturalism | 604 | 3.67 | .898 |
| Academics are highly productive | 597 | 3.60 | .775 |
| Secondary students are poorly prepared for the tertiary sector | 608 | 3.59 | .980 |
| Socio-economic disadvantage is the most important equity issue | 604 | 3.51 | .952 |
| Collegiality is in decline | 609 | 3.49 | 1.040 |
| Tertiary education should be free | 606 | 3.45 | 1.197 |
| Academic freedom is under attack | 609 | 3.40 | .980 |
| New Zealand delivers world-class tertiary education | 606 | 3.37 | .943 |
| The esteem in which NZ research is held internationally has increased | 593 | 3.28 | .679 |

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|--|-----|------|-------|
| Inter-disciplinarity is an increasing feature of the tertiary sector | 607 | 3.27 | .881 |
| Rulings requiring minimum class sizes stifle creativity and innovation in teaching | 602 | 3.27 | 1.060 |
| There should be a greater emphasis on traditional scholarship | 578 | 3.27 | .978 |
| I am pessimistic about the future of the tertiary sector | 608 | 3.23 | 1.022 |
| Academics are ably represented by their union | 602 | 3.19 | 1.001 |
| I am optimistic about my career | 602 | 3.15 | 1.116 |
| My research endeavours are well supported | 607 | 3.08 | 1.078 |
| My institution fosters my career development | 604 | 3.06 | 1.069 |
| Attracting full fee paying students is vital for the future of the tertiary sector | 603 | 3.04 | 1.004 |
| Research is under valued | 609 | 3.00 | 1.095 |
| The integration of Treaty issues into the curriculum should be given priority | 610 | 2.93 | 1.122 |
| The Performance Based Research Funding initiative is beneficial | 593 | 2.90 | 1.127 |
| It is very difficult to publish NZ research internationally | 604 | 2.83 | .989 |
| Student feedback and surveys on effective teaching are just popularity polls | 607 | 2.76 | 1.067 |
| I am optimistic about the future of the tertiary sector | 607 | 2.72 | 1.032 |
| The integration of Treaty issues into the curriculum should be downplayed | 609 | 2.69 | 1.196 |
| I am pessimistic about my career | 601 | 2.69 | 1.196 |
| Now is a good time to be an academic | 610 | 2.65 | 1.002 |
| Equity initiatives come at the expense of quality | 605 | 2.62 | 1.085 |
| There should be minimum class sizes at the postgraduate level | 607 | 2.58 | 1.152 |
| New Zealanders should have preference in gaining academic jobs | 608 | 2.58 | 1.119 |
| The main function of the tertiary sector should be teaching | 608 | 2.56 | 1.031 |
| The main function of the tertiary sector should be research | 603 | 2.56 | .992 |
| The funding and other support of teaching and research is improving | 602 | 2.49 | .962 |

| | | | |
|--|-----|------|-------|
| The tertiary sector should focus on meeting the demands of the knowledge economy | 602 | 2.35 | 1.018 |
| Women should have preference in gaining academic jobs | 604 | 2.33 | .867 |
| Maori should have preference in gaining academic jobs | 602 | 2.32 | 1.008 |
| There should be greater use of contract teaching | 605 | 2.27 | 1.044 |
| There should be a greater focus on wealth generating aspects of research | 609 | 1.86 | .858 |
| Most academics should focus exclusively on teaching | 606 | 1.86 | .708 |
| Most academics should focus exclusively on research | 610 | 1.85 | .720 |
| Research and teaching in NZ is usually just reinventing the wheel | 605 | 1.84 | .780 |
| The tertiary sector should be run like a business | 607 | 1.70 | .903 |
| Academics are an overpaid profession | 610 | 1.60 | .732 |
| NZ academics have little to contribute internationally | 608 | 1.58 | .885 |

Footnotes

- 1 While the goal of the PBRF is research focused, its origins in EFTS-based funding of teaching created at least one major inconsistency: staff employed on 'research only' contracts were not assessed in the 2003 Quality Evaluation while many (mainly senior tutors) on 'teaching only' contracts were. A number of respondents have argued that the inclusion of teaching in the assessment of research was necessary in order to prevent the non-university TEOs from 'gaming'. That is, the universities would be less adversely affected by the inclusion of teaching only staff than the polytechnics, colleges of education, waananga, and private training establishments.
- 2 Professor Paul Dalziel (2004) has noted that the sections on contribution to research environment and peer esteem were more likely to reduce the quality score of potential A academics.