

**THE POLITICS OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH:
INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON
RESEARCH ACCOUNTABILITY AND AUDIT SYSTEMS**

PREFACE

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Research accountability and audit systems are carving out a university landscape with increasing external demands and escalating pressures of governmentality. The effects on academic lives and actions are felt globally as research funding is tied to research audits, and academic performance is measured in increasingly public ways. This double issue of *ACCESS* journal investigates the terrain of research accountability and audit systems. Guest Editors, Richard Smith and Bob Lingard set out to scan and interrogate the ranking processes in a range of universities and geographic locations bringing together these findings and analyses in one enlarged volume (containing two issues) for 2008. Extending invitations to a wide church of well-esteemed academics they selected fourteen scholarly submissions to form this timely collection.

As quickly as research assessment systems are introduced there are shifts and changes to the models: the British RAE is in its last year in the current form; and RQF almost appeared in Australia in 2007, only to disappear and be replaced with the new model ERA. Extraordinary levels of resources go into the establishment and disestablishment of these nation-wide systems, the implementation of which requires significant investments of time, energy and resources from academics and politicians alike. The profession of education changes, as whole careers are built on the back of these systems and their functionary power bases. Academics need to know what is going on, how and why such systems are devised and restructured, and what impacts these measures are having on universities, on academics and on knowledge itself. Guest Editor Richard Smith, in his introductory article, mentions the impacts of these systems of accountability and other auditing systems on academic labour. There are also significant effects on the governmentality of the academic subject who is conditioned to respond to knowledge generation and transfer as expediently and efficiently as possible, to publish in high ranking journals, to secure large external grants, and to perform in ways that can be ranked, marked, measured and externally validated. Such efficiencies in the economies of knowledge have become benchmarks for success and academic progression, and also for the valuing and legitimating of knowledge as a quantifiable mode of economic production in the global labour market.

Academics in education and other fields of the humanities have long mourned the passing of criticality in educational fields such as teacher-education and university education more broadly; and *ACCESS* journal has addressed these concerns in previous issues. This collection

reminds us all that the time for criticality is not over; that we must stay alert, responsive and critically engaged with the politics of university work in general and of research systems in particular. The aim of *ACCESS* journal is to advance critical perspectives in cultural policy and practice, issues of communication and philosophy, and the politics of knowledge in local and global conditions. The application of these enquiries is through the field of education broadly conceived.

As Executive Editor I am pleased to bring this volume of articles by highly esteemed scholars to a wide international audience and thank Richard Smith and Bob Lingard for their determination to gather this collection together, exposing this field of knowledge to further question and analysis, and for their energy and commitment to this publication. Thanks are due to the contributors for their critically engaged texts and to the many international referees who have done a thorough and exacting job of ensuring quality articles for publication. I welcome new readers, contributors and subscribers to *ACCESS* journal, and trust you will find much of value in this present volume.

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