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Globalising research accountabilities

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ABSTRACT
This paper reflects upon the collected papers in this special volume of ACCESS. It also draws on the author's personal experience of the RAE in the UK at two "elite" Russell Group universities and his experience of research accountability in Australia at a comprehensive research intensive "elite" university. The paper also positions national research accountability systems within an emergent global higher education field utilising Bourdieu's "thinking tools", while acknowledging their vernacular expression within nations and individual universities. There is also a discussion of the complex concept of "impact" in relation to research. The paper argues that academic and professional measures of impact would be helpful in defining his field of educational research, while recognising the potential for impact concerns to narrow the definition of the field. It concludes by locating research accountability systems in the context of a new form of educational governance and the related need for a new social imaginary.

Introduction

This concluding article in *ACCESS* reflects on the papers in the collection and on my own personal experience with research assessment exercises in the UK and in Australia. The paper is also underpinned by my thinking about the ways in which globalisation has affected policies and policy making in higher education. This is a recontextualisation evidenced in the move from a Westphalian to post-Westphalian political reality, where the national and the post-national now work together in hierarchical and networked ways. These changes have been accompanied by a rescaling of statehood (Brenner, 2004). This rescaling of statehood, involving the imbrications of the national in the regional and global (through individuals, institutions, multilateral agreements and discourses), has affected policy focus and goals, policy processes and the production rules of higher education policy, witnessed in the global convergence in policy discourses in higher education and enhanced policy borrowing (Rizvi & Lingard, forthcoming). The papers in this *ACCESS,* demonstrate unequivocally that research accountabilities in higher education are a global phenomenon, a reality particularly well illustrated in Chris Coryn's paper, and in Jan Currie's paper on research accountability systems in Hong Kong, New Zealand and the UK.

The papers collected in this special double issue also illustrate the centrality now of research accountabilities as public policy steering mechanisms of universities and as the basis for funding of research. Additionally, taken together the papers also show unequivocally the impact of varying forms of research accountability introduced in different societies across the globe. This stretches from the individual academic focus of New Zealand's Performance-Based Research Fund (PBRF) to the UK Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), which targets schools/departments, but which will be

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replaced it seems in its next iteration by a cheaper, more metric-based system. The articles demonstrate effects on disciplines, institutions, research and publications, the work of individual academics and on the global market of higher education students and academics. Systems of research accountability also have impact in relation to the balance of teaching and research in academic work with the descriptor "research active" central to inclusion of academics' work in university submissions in the British RAE, with the implication of lesser academics as presumably "research inactive". Craig Ashcroft and Richard Smith's paper in this *ACCESS* demonstrates clearly the effects of the PBRF in New Zealand on academic identity as well as on workloads and its "privileging ethos", while Brian Findsen's paper, drawing on both his New Zealand and UK experience, shows both positive and negative effects on individual academics. Stephen Ball (2006) has illustrated the extremely negative effects in English schooling of a culture of "performativity" linked to testing and accountability, where being seen to perform becomes more significant than authentic practices, suggesting that this ethos actually disaffects the very soul of the teacher. One might speculate on the impact of research assessment and related culture of performativity on the souls of university academics.

However, what is very clear is that such research accountability systems have effects in particular systems in vernacular ways. A good case in point here is demonstrated in the Sara Delamont, Gareth Rees and Sally Power analysis of the idiosyncratic effects of the UK's RAE on educational research in Wales, which, following devolution and the creation of the Welsh Assembly government, has seen a strengthening of an institutionalised "dual labour market" in education between teacher educators and education researchers. Sally Brown's paper on Scotland does likewise, as well as demonstrating the mediation of RAE effects there via the approaches of the Scottish Funding Council and, I would add, the research demands of the Scottish government, which together create a particular political economy of research funding and assessment in Scotland. Indeed all the papers on specific national approaches demonstrate their national character framed by global discourses and global positioning of universities. This is evident in Rui Yang's interesting paper on the changing character of university ranking systems in China, and in the paper by Colin Evers and Kokila Katyal on the Hong Kong approach, which they suggest will have implications for dual language academics.

We also see that these systems are located within constructions of the knowledge economy as the social imaginary of the desired economic future with greater dependence on higher levels of education (quality and quantity of human capital), research capacity and the perception that knowledge, including research and research dispositions, are central to the productive forces of the economy (Peters & Besley, 2006). The papers also demonstrate that there is an emergent global field of research assessment, always mediated however by the vernacular specificities of given nations and their approaches and connected to them in somewhat indirect ways. This field is evident in the use of the Thomson ISI in some national systems of research accountability and the emergence of international comparative league tables of university standing such as the Shang Jaio Tong University global ranking of universities and those of *The Times Higher Education Supplement* in the UK and its US counterpart, *US News and World Report*, which emphasise research in their rankings. These latter developments sit in a complementary relationship to national systems of research assessment and link as well to the changes affected by globalisation alluded to earlier. So, for example, the RAE in the UK could be seen as a way of driving a focus on research quality, productivity and accountability and to ensure internationally competitive universities. The latter policy goal links to the construction of the knowledge economy, the role of research and research capacity within that economy, and also the international market in students and academics. The articles in this special number also demonstrate that central concepts within these systems such as "quality" and "impact" when attached to concepts such as "research", "research accountability" and so on, are contested concepts, open to varying meanings and situated within different discourses.

Before briefly adumbrating the structure of the remainder of this paper, I need to point out that I am a sociologist of education whose research work focuses on education policy and school reform.

In this work, I understand what I do as utilising social science theories and methodologies for understanding both education policy and school reform. In my approach then, education research is implicitly the application of the social sciences to particular institutional and professional practices called educational. Globalisation has also proffered some challenges to these theories and methodologies, particularly challenging the assumed homology between nation and society in social theory. These changes also have methodological implications and require us to challenge an implicit "methodological nationalism" (Beck, 2000). Additionally, I would add that the institutions and practices that are the focus of education research are not as clearly defined as they once were, given the emergence of what Bernstein (2001) has called the "totally pedagogised society", where many professions, jobs and institutions now have educative functions. My use of the descriptor "educational research" rather than "education research" implies, as well, that the other distinguishing feature of education research is its normative, educational or perhaps educative character; that is, educational research seeks to improve both policy and practice, underpinned by a particular social imaginary critical of the neo-liberal one, which undergirds many of the moves to introduce research accountability systems and related (global and national) league tables of research performance.

The article proceeds firstly through a personal reflection, then by consideration of the global research accountability field. I next consider the complex concept of "impact" and how it has been defined in research assessment exercises, drawing on my experience as an educational researcher. The concluding section of the paper briefly seeks to locate all of the matters, so ably dealt with in the papers in this collection on research accountability, within a sociological analysis of the context of these changes, while recognising the complexity of context taken to explain milieu, today stretched to include the global, matrix for action (structuration) and a textual construction of policies on research accountability (Seddon, 1994; Stevenson, 2009). The latter is the point about policies, here in higher education and in research accountability, articulating or rather constructing their context in a particular way.Today such textual construction by policies emphasises the centrality of higher quality university research and research capacity to the positioning of the national economy in a competitive way within the global knowledge economy. It is this textual construction of context which links national research accountability and quality assurance systems to the global field.

Personal experience

I have experienced both the RAE in the UK and the hitherto Australian approach for funding research via block grants to the universities (Institution Grants Scheme, the Research Training Scheme, the Research Infrastructure Block Grant), which considers amongst other indicators, research publications as largely a quantitative measure, as well as research income from competitive grants, research student completions and number of research higher degree students, in determining the size of grants to individual universities. The current move in Australia under the Rudd Labour government to introduce a new research accountability approach, the ERA (Excellence in Research for Australia), has been motivated by a desire to strengthen the focus on quality, rather than quantity as in the present arrangement, all articulated within an argument about the centrality of research excellence to Australia's economic future.

I have worked as professor at The University of Edinburgh in Scotland (2006–2008) and at the University of Sheffield (2004–2006), both elite Russell Group Universities, but in my experience with vastly different institutional habitus. The University of Edinburgh is an ancient university, high status and with a particular positioning in the culture and political economy of Scotland, whereas Edinburgh has long been the site of elite Scottish political and cultural power. The University of Edinburgh self-represents as a leading European university, almost denying its British location, a factor linked to Scotland's both enigmatic and ambivalent relationship to England and its membership of the United Kingdom. While Sheffield is similarly an elite Russell Group university,

Sheffield has a very different politics with the city once the home of the industrial revolution and now seeking to reinvigorate as a post-industrial city – a troubling transition well signified in the film *The Full Monty*, with the University playing a central role in this reconstruction. Sheffield University does not possess the cultural capital of Edinburgh, yet has an impressive research focus on engineering and to a lesser extent medicine. Organisationally the University of Edinburgh is much more loosely coupled between the centre of institutional leadership and the Colleges, whereas there is a tighter top-down relationship in Sheffield, perhaps representing their different provenance.

My experience of the 2008 RAE in each of these Universities was very different. It should be noted as well that the RAE has developed and changed over time as a form of accountability – as argued in Alis Oancea's paper in this *ACCESS*. I am dealing with the 2008 RAE here. Sheffield's School of Education had done very well on all previous RAEs, but was disadvantaged in the most recent exercise by a huge movement of professors and emerging researchers head-hunted by other UK universities, an acknowledged effect of the RAE and the implications of RAE ranking for subsequent research funding and thus the nature of academic work. The RAE it seemed to me was ever present at Sheffield. The Vice-Chancellor (now retired) even held discussions with some senior education academics about the characteristics of the leading research schools of education on previous RAEs with some possibility of a hiving off of a research-focused graduate school of education from a school of teacher education, which would not have been RAE eligible. This is an exemplary example of the effects of research assessment exercises at institutional level. Indeed, in the UK we know that most teacher education is conducted in universities which do not receive research funding through the RAE mechanism. This is an unacceptable state of affairs for the profession and one which the British Education Research Association (BERA) has continually brought to the notice of the relevant policy makers and which belies other government policy goals of creating teaching as a research-based and subsequently research-informed profession. Relevant here is the reality that the funding for research, which flows from the RAE does not offer a strategy for improvement or development; rather at one level at least it could be seen as a reward for institutional status and provenance. We can see here the oppositional effects of different policies. The Economic and Social Science Research Council (ESRC) in creating the Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP) recognised this policy reality.

My experience of the RAE at Edinburgh was very different. While the requirement for reporting at School level had impact in terms of staff work focus, workloads and so on, it seemed to me that the exercise did not have the pressing impact it appeared to have at Sheffield at all times. Further, there a more sympathetic recognition of the dual labour market in the School of Education. I think this mediated impact can be accounted for by what could be seen as the "sub-national" (or perhaps "national" as seen by Scots), political economy of education research in Scotland. With devolution to the Scottish parliament of education following the election of the Blair UK government in 1997, there has almost been a Scottish RAE league table as a subset of the UK one. The failure of any education school in the previous RAE to get higher than a 4 on a 5 point scale saw the funding by the Scottish government of the Applied Educational Research Scheme (AERS), which sought to strengthen research capacity building in education in Scotland and which was quite generously funded over five years (2004–2008). AERs worked collaboratively across universities and with policy makers and school-based professionals. This collaborative approach can be distinguished from the competitive effects of the RAE and the situation in English universities. Further, the University of Edinburgh's School of Education has been well-placed to access research monies available from the Scottish government for policy and practice relevant research, another feature of the political economy of research for Edinburgh. The University's self-representation as a "great European university" also sees increasingly more research applications going to European based funding sources as well, rather than simply the ESRC. Further, the University of Edinburgh has historically played an important role in the production of the elites for the professions in Scotland, including the legal, medical, architectural and teaching professions. This remains the case and is recognised

as such by the University's leadership, so the RAE ranking for education at Edinburgh, while a focus of attention, has been ameliorated to some extent by these other features. However, there is still a divide, perhaps strengthening, between teacher educators and educational researchers (the dual labour market in academic work in education), reflected in the appointment of seconded teaching fellows as teaching-only academics to the teacher education program. There are also historical residues to this divide, with a long history of educational research at the University, disconnected from teacher education.

The positive, as far I could ascertain (in both locations), of the RAE was the way in which it did hone attention to research strengths and focus, and to considerations of how to organise research programs and research training and how to mentor young researchers into being "research active". The RAE also provoked discussions about research quality, its definition and measurement and about the specificities of quality in different research domains. This was thoughtful and productive with positive cultural effects and linked to the peer review aspect at the RAE assessment level. The negative as far as I could see, and this will be the case as well with ERA in Australia, is the valorising of the individually authored paper in the high status journals, which is not to deny their significance and value at all, but rather to reflect on the effects of such valorisation. This denies the usefulness in the social sciences of collaborative work and also the significant capacity building functions of such collaborative work. AERS in Scotland recognised this reality. The valorising of the individual articles also seems to deny the significance of the individual authored book, which has been a central measure of achievement (and for appointment to professorships) in the social sciences and humanities. This approach also denies the professional focus of Schools of Education and relevance of education research to policy and practice.

While there have been research impact concerns in the RAE, this was largely confined to impact as defined academically through citation indices, journal impact scores and the like, rather than impact in relation to education policy and professional practice. End-users of educational research, however, were included on RAE panels. We can see education as both a field of professional practice and as a field of research. The RAE in my experience worked quite well in relation to education as a field of research, but tended to strengthen rather than transgress the borders between the two, institutionalising the dual labour market Sara Delamont and her colleagues speak about. This approach also did not encourage practice based research produced for a practitioner readership in non-refereed journals.

Interestingly, when the current British Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, was still Chancellor of the Exchequer, he opined that perhaps it was time after the 2008 RAE to move away from the peer-review approach with its heavy cost, to a more cost-effective metric-based scheme. Interestingly, almost to a person the academic community rejected this suggestion, instead lauding the positives of the peer-review character of the RAE. This voiced opposition was, at one level, recognition of the complexity of the concept of quality when apportioned to research in different disciplines or fields, and the shortcomings of single number metric approaches in this respect. But we can also see here differing policy intentions: Gordon Brown argued that the RAE had achieved its policy goals of focusing universities and academics on research quality and that it was now too costly. Thus, he argued it was the time for a less costly approach to research assessment and accountability, suggesting metrics might be the way forward.

As an aside, in a research project I worked on at Edinburgh, chaired by Professor Jenny Ozga, and funded by the European Science Foundation (ESF), "Fabricating Quality in European Education" (see Grek et al., 2009), interviews with national-level English policy makers in respect of international comparative school student performance data indicated that these policy makers were not enamoured of such data because they believed that England was the leader in such data usage at the national level and indeed generated more useful data at that level. Indeed, they saw England as world leader. Other national policy makers (in Scotland, Finland and Sweden) on the other hand, saw significant policy effects of these emergent supranational comparative performance measures

and their usefulness. Here English exceptionality could be noted, as well as a perception by other policy makers that England was more of a warning than a model. It is interesting then to see the amount of interest that the UK's RAE model of research assessment has generated and the possibility of a move away from its peer-review character towards a metric-based approach.

While the Howard conservative government in Australia sought to introduce a *Research Quality Framework* (RQF), their defeat by Rudd Labour in late 2007, has seen that approach replaced by Labour's *Excellence in Research for Australia* (ERA). In their papers in this *ACCESS*, Jill Blackmore and Trevor Gale and Jan Wright deal with flaws in the proposed RQF and in its replacement, the ERA. Both approaches emphasised quality and paid particular attention to quality of research publications. This was deemed to be necessary because, so the argument went, the extant model of research productivity in Australia emphasised quantity over quality. As already noted, hitherto block funding grants for research to the universities were derived according to a measure calculated from a formula including research income from competitive grants, research higher degree completions, number of higher degree student places and research publications. The latter measure was a numbers approach taking account of type of publication, publication outlet, number of authors and so on. While the emphasis was on quantity, the classification of publications (e.g. journal type, nature of book publisher) implicitly included quality criteria. My sense of the effect on practice of this approach was that it was not as intrusive into institutions and academic work as the RAE (particularly in the time leading up to the deadline for the RAE submission). It did, though, have the effect of some journals changing their genre from a professional character to being fully refereed so that they "counted". In the UK I became very aware that what really counted (and as we know what is counted is what counts) were single authored, research-based papers in high status journals. In education, this meant that impact was regarded as "academic impact" in relation to citations. Educational researchers were no different from other researchers in the social sciences in this respect, a situation which appears to deny the professional element of education and education academics. My sense in Australia was that the extant measure of research output had limited effects except for exhortations to publish three good journal articles a year, and that the relationship of educational researchers to policy and practice was probably closer than in the UK for the bulk of education academics. I would also note that this was a feature of Scottish educational research as well. My experience was of a closer relationship with policy makers and schools than was the case in most Schools of Education in England with a research focus. However, the Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP), funded by the ESRC, has sought, of course, to rectify that situation in the UK and recognise the specific character of education research. The ESRC has also recognised the specific character of educational research and educational researchers. However, the RAE did not.

An emergent global higher education field

I want to change register now and move to a brief consideration of the global aspect of these developments in research accountability. Following Bourdieu (2003), I would argue that we are seeing the emergence of a global education policy field, and especially so in relation to higher education (Lingard, Rawolle & Taylor, 2005). Jill Blackmore recognises this in her talk of a globalising research quality agenda in her contribution to this *ACCESS*. Bourdieu has a set of theoretical tools and concepts, including field, habitus, practice and capitals, which he has developed as thinking tools for theorising and researching the social world. I believe that Bourdieu's thinking tools can provide us with a way to understand and research what is going on in higher education. I briefly begin to outline some of the contours of such a field analysis here, on the basis that understanding is necessary to effective strategic and tactical policy interventions.

Bourdieu sees the social world as consisting of numerous fields with their own logics of practice, which provoke certain habitus (the social and the cultural embodied) in individuals and institutions and which in turn invoke certain practices. This is a particularly productive way of considering the structure/agency relationship central to social theory and for dealing with the complexity of both

structure and practice. Instead of institutions Bourdieu speaks of fields, so instead of art for example, he speaks of the field of cultural production. In relation to higher education, he would speak of the field of higher education (see Rawolle & Lingard, 2008). Now, there are hierarchies within fields and between them. Bourdieu sees the field of the economy, that of power, as well as that of gender, overarching all other fields. Capitals (economic, social, cultural, national) are the resources traded and competed over in fields, with some (possessing multiple and valued capitals) seeking to conserve the field and others seeking to change it. Any given field is also affected by its intersections with other fields, what we might call "cross-field" effects (Lingard & Rawolle, 2004). This includes cross global/national field effects. As Jan Currie observes in her paper in this volume, "Education ministers and university policy makers in many parts of the world have decided that research assessment exercises are necessary to force their tertiary institutions to compete more effectively in international ranking exercises". This is recognition of cross global/national field effects in higher education.

In his later more directly political work, Bourdieu (2003) spoke of an emergent global economic field. He also recognised that today with the concepts of space, place, the social, we need to be careful not to simply assume a necessary homology between these concepts and nation. His field theory actually allows for the concept of field to take in global and regional relations. In a sense, these concepts need to be stretched out to take account of the global. In a way analogous to Bourdieu's talk of a global economic field, we can speak of the emergence of a global higher education field (see Lingard et al., 2005), which works across national fields and reframes them in some ways, as an element of Brenner's rescaling of nations and nation-states. So as to avoid reifying globalisation, we need to empirically determine the individuals, networks, institutions, multi and bi-lateral agreements and discourses which constitute the global higher education field and how this has effects in national fields and at institutional levels.

The international ranking system of universities referred to earlier, e.g. Shang Jaio Tong ranking, and the increased usage of global (read here American) citation indices and the like (e.g. Thomson ISI) are helping to re-constitute the field in higher education globally by creating a commensurate global space of measurement of university "quality", including research quality and productivity. National based systems, with all their national idiosyncrasies, are positioned by and within this global field and certainly affected by it. Most national policy makers want some of their universities to be regarded as world leading institutions, to be ranked highly on such league tables. Calls in Australia by the Group of Eight (elite research intensive) universities for a concentration of government research funding are sometimes justified on the grounds of the need for Australia to have some world class research universities. The emergent global field begins to position national universities and systems within it in particular ways. For example, while there is much discussion about the veracity and usefulness of such measures and the papers by Charles Crothers and Chris Coryn in this *ACCESS* seek to deconstruct some of this, as with all measures, eventually they begin to constitute that which they seek to measure. As Nikolas Rose (1999: 198) puts it, numbers, like any inscription device, constitute what they appear to represent. Further, a single ranking on these global league tables demonstrates the power of a single number, which Rose further argues (1999: 208) is a "rhetorical technique for 'black boxing' – that is to say, rendering invisible and hence incontestable – the complex array of judgements and decisions that go into a measurement, a scale, a number". What results in some ways is a decontextualisation of the specificities of national cultures, traditions and histories, the constitution of calculable or "irreal" (global) space, as Rose (1999: 212–213) insightfully puts it. It is interesting how leaders of universities often decry such global rankings and their flawed methodologies, but then adopt a stance which accepts their veracity and validity. This is most often the case when their institution has improved in the rankings! The rankings help create that which they measure.

Now, I have raised Bourdieu here as a way of considering the global character of research accountability and quality agendas and as a way of trying to understand what is going on. This is not only an arcane discussion, however; rather, the development of an emergent global higher

education field has real effects. For example, consider whether or not such a global field is the same as Americanisation of the field? Certainly Thomson ISI, for example, gives priority to US based journals and to framings of research fields, in both methodological and theoretical terms, dominant within the US. Furthermore, such framings privilege the English language and almost demand that for example, European scholars publish in English language journals with consequent effects on national focus and research agendas and the national field. There are broader cultural effects as well, with all academics being encouraged to publish in ISI journals. (In Iceland, for instance, publication in an ISI journal results in a pay bonus!) We need to recognise the asymmetrical relationships between different national fields and this global field and contemplate the effects of this on national research cultures and particular research fields.

There are deeper epistemological effects as well. Arjun Appadurai (2001) has written about how globalisation with its enhanced flows of students (and academics) has strengthened internationalisation of higher education in the humanities and social sciences, but in what he sees as a "weak" rather than "strong" way. What we are witnessing, he avers, are more students and academics involved in theoretical, methodological and academic conversations, but ones nonetheless still dominated by the West or rather still dominated by theories and methodologies developed in the high status universities of the most powerful nations of the West. Traditionally, theory was seen to be the preserve of theorists located in high status universities in the West (which of course also needs to be deconstructed), while the rest of the globe was seen simply as sites for the empirical application and use of these theories and methodologies. Appadurai demonstrates how the "systematicity" of research, the acknowledgement of "prior citational context", and the assumed readership contain and restrain both theoretical and methodological developments. This also might be seen as an effect of the emergent global field in higher education and an expression of contemporary neo-colonialism giving rise to epistemological exclusion. Certainly a university's positioning on the global league tables, as well as their ranking on research assessments, are factors in the global higher education student (and academic) market. Appadurai (2001) argues though for a "deparochialisation" of research in the humanities and social sciences as the way to a "strong" internationalisation of higher education. By this he means that the global flows of students and academics associated with globalisation and which help constitute the global higher education field, should result in more two-way, dialogic conversations, where theory (and methodology) developed in sites other than the intellectual powerhouses of the West enters academic conversations. This would result in the deparochialisation of research. Such deparochialisation, according to Appadurai, demands a new research imagination. (See Lingard, 2006, for an application of Appadurai's argument to educational research.) Many of the features associated with research assessment exercises and research accountability, which have been outlined to this point and in detail in the papers collected in this *ACCESS*, inhibit such deparochialisation, ensuring convergence rather than hybridity and diversity, of approaches to research assessment and accountability, with consequent effects for theories and methodologies in research.

Impact

Brief mention has been made to this point of the concept of "impact" in relation to research and research productivity. I have alluded to a distinction within education, both as a research field and as a field of professional practice, between impact as measured in academic terms through citation indices and journal impact scores, and policy and practice impact, which need to be conceptualised and measured in very different ways. It seems to me that impact is a most complex concept and that some thinking about it in relation to education research would be useful in terms of productive academic conversations about how best to define the field of educational research (Lingard, 2001; Whitty, 2006), beyond its definition as an academic field involving the application of social science approaches (both theoretical and methodological) to educational institutions and practices. I have also earlier referred to the challenges to all aspects of that definition, given contemporary social and

global changes. Impact in educational research in the policy and practice sense demands as well consideration of the dissemination of research in publications beyond high status journals and consideration of the ways in which educational research actually reaches policy makers and practitioners.

Now, writing explicitly about the Howard governments' proposed RQF in Australia, Trevor Gale and Jan Wright in their insightful paper in this *ACCESS,* express deep concern about the RQF's focus on impact because of its potential to narrowly define in education what would be considered as education research. Drawing on Maton's (2005) account of changes in the character of university autonomy in the UK, which utilised Bourdieu's concept of the different forms of field autonomy, they suggest this impact emphasis would potentially mean that education research would be conceptualised as applied research only, and that "blue skies" research in education, where both the research problem and the methodological and theoretical frameworks, were decided by the researcher, might be under threat. I have sympathy for their position, but we also need to recognise that through national research priorities and the like, national governments have been seeking to direct and influence research agendas anyway. Further, the new public management associated with the restructured state has also seen a clarion call for evidence-based policy to ensure greater efficiency and effectiveness in public policy outcomes (Head, 2008). This has potential as well to frame research agendas in education. Jenny Ozga and her colleagues (2006) have demonstrated the multiple ways in which public policy today is seeking to set research agendas in education. In the context of neo-liberalism, Allan Luke and David Hogan (2006: 170) argue that "current debates over what counts as evidence in state policy formation are indeed debates over what counts as educational research". So, in this policy and political context, Gale and Wright are no doubt correct to express such concerns about the potential narrowing impact of impact measures as part of research accountability systems on the very definition of education research.

However, and despite these dangers and this *realpolitik*, I would still maintain that, given the dual character of education within universities, as a field of research and a field of professional practice, that consideration of what impact might mean in relation to policy and practice would assist in defining the nature of education research. We need to work at two levels here simultaneously, at the tactical level of being vigilant about specific policy changes and their potential effects, and strategically to clarify a defensible definition of educational research. I have argued elsewhere that we should define education research as broadly as possible, with quality being developed as a concept across all research endeavours in education. Geoff Whitty (2006) has also argued a similar position, and Gale and Wright also take a similar stance in their *ACCESS* paper. We also must see Gale and Wright's argument in a specific national political context, that is, that of the conservative Howard government, which demonstrated little sympathy for universities in either policy or funding terms, and in terms of the "culture wars" condemned most academics as constituting inner city latte drinking elites out of touch with the thinking and aspirations of ordinary Australians.

Gale and Wright (this volume) quote a press release from the Howard Minister for Education concerning the RQF:

> The Research Quality Framework: Assessing the quality and impact of research in Australia issues paper provided a detailed examination of research excellence and the impact of research, including its broader implications for society through economic, environmental and social effects. (Nelson, 2005)

They also note that end-users were to be included on the peer-review panels and that the proposed RQF model was a hybrid across peer review and a metrics approach. They also note that in the change of government the new Minister was critical of the RQF because its impact measure was "unverifiable and ill-defined". In my view, and in the context of my overall argument presented throughout this paper, I believe a discussion amongst educational researchers (and indeed research) about how we might productively define impact in relation to educational research could

be a useful one. It might be as well that impact can only effectively be measured qualitatively and that a sophisticated temporal frame needs to be developed. At least the RQF accepted that a different suite of indicators were necessary to measure the quality and utility of different types of research.

Louise Watson (2008) has argued a similar case to the one I am putting here about the need to consider impact in a policy sense as well as academically, so as to reflect and protect the actual character of education research. She does so, while recognising the complexity of the concept of impact in educational research. Watson tends to focus on the impact of educational research on policy in education. I would also want to see thinking and research about the impact of education research to include impact on practitioners as well (including, but not reducible to, practitioner research). The research of Figgis et al. (2000) and McMeniman et al. (2000) has advanced our understanding of the complexity of the impact of educational research on practitioners.

Watson in her argument draws on the classic work of Carol Weiss (1979) on the policy impact of social science research. Weiss outlined seven models of research utilisation in public policy (knowledge-driven, problem-solving, interactive, political, tactical, enlightenment (percolation), intellectual enterprise) and Watson applies these to educational research and education policy. The enlightenment or percolation impact of educational research (Weiss is dealing with social science research more broadly) is the most common way that research affects practices of policy, but this has quite an extended time frame (and often will not be recognised by policy practitioners).

With Peter Renshaw (Lingard & Renshaw, forthcoming), I have also developed the McMeniman et al. model of practitioner utilisation of educational research so as to extend understanding of the ways that research reaches and has impact on practitioners. I mention all of this simply to make the point that we need two measures of impact in relation to education research and that conversations about this concept, along with conceptual and research-based clarification of the concept of impact, would assist in our more effectively defining the field of education research. Otherwise, we fall back on an academic measure of impact alone (e.g. citations, journal impact scores) and potentially narrow the definition of educational research and widen the researcher/practitioner divide more broadly in the education community, but also within university Schools of Education. While I have dealt here with the potential usefulness of contemplation and clarification of the meaning of impact in respect of education research, I am certain that this discussion also applies in other research fields also linked to professional practice and policy.

Conclusion

I have sought to contextualise developments in relation to research accountability systems, particularly taking cognisance of an emergent global higher education field. These systems of research accountability are also linked to the restructured state along new public management lines (Newmann & Clarke, 1997). The state now steers at a distance. This has resulted in new relationships between the policy producing centre and practice focused "peripheries", which are steered though new outcomes accountability measures within a new audit culture (Power, 1997). Research accountability systems are just one public policy manifestation of these new policy steering mechanisms and of the audit culture. We also need to recognise that this audit culture has been stretched globally with international and institutional comparative measures of performance becoming part of the new form of educational governance. As Novoa and Yariv-Mashal (2003) have suggested, the "global eye" and the "national eye" work together through such outcome measures and help constitute a new form of educational governance. Indicators of various kinds are central to both the new public management, which has switched the accountability focus of public policy from inputs to outcomes, and to the new form of governance. The nation and the globe are both made legible for governing through the development of these indicators and outcome measures. We have seen the creation of an emergent commensurate space of global performance measures

and indicators. Research accountability systems are part of this new form of educational governance, which works at the intersection of global/national effects.

This new form of governance is also linked to the hegemonic neo-liberal social imaginary, which seeks the production of self-sufficient, self-governing and self-responsibilising individuals (Rhodes, 1997; Rose, 1999). The valorisation of individual papers in high status journals within some systems of research accountability can, at one level, be seen as part of the construction of the neo-liberal subject. At the broadest political level, I would suggest we desperately need a new social imaginary, as evidenced by the global financial crisis of neo-liberal global capitalism, one which is committed to equality, community and social justice. Such a social imaginary would suggest other systems of research accountability.

In conclusion, the intention of this *ACCESS* collection on research accountability systems was to document, analyse and understand what has been happening globally, document specific national policies and their effects, and offer critiques of these developments and enhance our understanding of them. The essays in this special issue have achieved this admirably. This concluding essay has also sought to make a contribution as a complement to the other essays, drawing on my personal experiences in the UK and at an elite Group of Eight university (The University of Queensland) in Australia. I thus recognise the significance of my own positionality to my account. I also have tried to theorise national and global developments in respect of research, research accountability and research quality, utilising Bourdieu's field theory. Further research is required to empirically enhance my sketching of the contours of a field of higher education and cross global/national field effects. I have alluded to some of these effects, especially the potential for globalisation to lead towards an Americanisation of higher education across the globe and the hegemony of English as the universal language of research. We can learn much from Appadurai's call for the deparochialisation of the research ethos and call for a new research imagination, developments inhibited by dominant approaches to research accountability and quality, nationally and globally. My position is that we need to participate in debates around these matters at the level of tactics in respect of specific developments, and more strategically in relation to broader considerations of the definition of specific research fields, measures of quality within them, along with defensible and productive measures of impact. We also need a new social imaginary.

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