

International Perspectives on Teaching Excellence in Higher Education

Improving knowledge and practice

Edited by
Alan Skelton

International Perspectives on Teaching Excellence in Higher Education

Improving knowledge and practice

Edited by Alan Skelton

First published 2007

by Routledge

2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 4RN

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada

by Routledge

270 Madison Ave, New York NY 10016

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

Transferred to Digital Printing 2008

© 2007 selection and editorial matter, Alan Skelton; individual chapters, the contributors

Typeset in Times by Wearset Ltd, Boldon, Tyne and Wear

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilized in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

A catalog record for this book has been requested

ISBN10: 0-415-40362-6 (hbk)

ISBN10: 0-203-93937-9 (ebk)

ISBN13: 978-0-415-40362-7 (hbk)

ISBN13: 978-0-203-93937-6 (ebk)

7 0 8 6 1 8 2 0

Contributors

Angela Brew is Associate Professor in the Institute for Teaching and Learning at the University of Sydney. She is internationally renowned as a researcher and speaker and has worked in the UK and in Australia in the area of higher education. Her research on the nature of research and human knowing and its relationship to teaching has been published widely. Her books include: *The Nature of Research: Inquiry in Academic Contexts* and, most recently, *Research and Teaching: Beyond the Divide*, published by Palgrave Macmillan (June 2006). From 1999–2003 she was President of the Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia (HERDSA) and she is co-editor of the *International Journal for Academic Development*.

Sue Clegg is Professor of Higher Educational Research at Leeds Metropolitan University. Her publications span close-to-practice research, often in collaboration with practitioners, to theoretical interventions for example in her work on the social and pedagogical significance of the gendering of information technology and her critique of the debate about the nature of ‘evidence-based’ practice. She has written about the importance of critical distance and work which scrutinises higher education as well as serving it. In her recent work she has taken seemingly mundane pedagogical practices, such as those involved in personal development planning, and explored how these are understood by staff and students and the ways in which they are reframed in policy discourse. She has also taken a critical look at institutional practices designed to improve teaching, analysing the rhetorical repertoire of learning and teaching strategies and exploring how these strategies are mediated in practice. She is editor of *Teaching in Higher Education* and is a regular contributor at higher education conferences.

Vaneeta-marie D’Andrea is currently Director of Academic Affairs and Operations and Professor of Sociology of Education at Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design, University of the Arts London. In addition, at this time she is involved with carrying out consultancy projects in the Gulf States, Russia and Northern Ireland for the British Council on a variety of topics related to higher education policy developments. She has received numerous

awards for her work as an educator, and in 2000 she was selected as a Carnegie Scholar. Her primary research and teaching interests include: quality enhancement of teaching and learning, scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL), higher education policy, educational development and issues of gender and ethnicity.

Hugo Dobson is Senior Lecturer in Japan's international relations in the National Institute of Japanese Studies and School of East Asian Studies, University of Sheffield. His teaching and research interests are in Japan's role in the world, global governance and the G8. He is the author of *Japan and the G7/8, 1975–2002* (RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), *The Group of 7/8* (Routledge, 2007) and co-author of *Japan's International Relations: Politics, Economics and Security* (RoutledgeCurzon, 2005, 2nd edition).

Joëlle Fanghanel is Acting Director of the Educational Development Centre at City University, London. She is involved in educational development at national and international level. She has published on teaching in higher education, educational development, higher education policy and professional practice.

Richard A. Gale is a Senior Scholar at The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, a centre for educational research and policy studies in Stanford, California, where he serves as Director for The Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (CASTL) Higher Education Program.

David Gosling taught philosophy and education before becoming Head of Educational Development at the University of East London. He is now an independent consultant and Visiting Research Fellow at the University of Plymouth. His publications include work in applied philosophy, higher education policy and educational development. Current research projects include the Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning and an international study of academic development centres.

Andrew Hannan is Professor of Education at the University of Plymouth. His recent research has been concerned with such topics as innovating in higher education (including the impact of the CETL initiative), external examining, the student experience of widening participation and comparing the undergraduate student experience in the UK and China.

Mick Healey is Professor of Geography at University of Gloucestershire. He is the Director of the Geography Discipline Network (GDN) and Senior Adviser for Geography to the Higher Education Academy's Subject Centre for Geography Earth and Environmental Sciences. He is Co-Director of the Centre for Active Learning in Geography Environment and Related Disciplines. In 2000 he was awarded a National Teaching Fellowship. He has written and presented extensively about the research-teaching linkage and has

advised The Higher Education Academy, HEFCE and the Canadian Federal Government about enhancing the linkage. He co-wrote with Alan Jenkins *Institutional Strategies to Link Teaching and Research* (York: The Higher Education Academy, 2005).

Alan Jenkins long taught and researched geography and was founding co-editor of the *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*. He is now an educational developer, researcher and Emeritus Professor at Oxford Brookes University UK, a Reinvention Fellow for the Reinvention Centre for Undergraduate Research at Oxford Brookes and Warwick, consultant on teaching/research relations for the Higher Education Academy and visiting Professor at Staffordshire University.

Joce Jesson is a Principal Lecturer in Social and Policy Studies at the University of Auckland in New Zealand. Her research interests are in the fields of educational policy, sociology of education and the sociology of unions. She is a member of the editorial board of the *New Zealand Journal of Teachers' Work* and has published in a number of national and international journals including the *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies*, *ACCESS: Critical Perspectives on Communication, Cultural and Policy Studies* and the *Journal of Education Policy*. She recently co-edited a book on the Performance-Based Research Fund with Richard Smith (2005).

Carolyn Kreber is Professor of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education and the Director of the Centre for Teaching, Learning and Assessment at the University of Edinburgh as well as Adjunct Professor at the University of Alberta, Canada, where she was associate professor of higher education from 1997–2005. From 1993 to 1996 she was an educational development consultant and lecturer at Brock University in Ontario. Her PhD is from the University of Toronto.

Philippa Levy is Academic Director of CILASS, the Centre for Inquiry-based Learning in the Arts and Social Sciences, and Senior Lecturer in the Department of Information Studies, at the University of Sheffield. She holds a University of Sheffield Senate Award for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (2002). Her research is in the areas of inquiry-based learning, networked learning and networked learner support, and she has a special interest in participatory and practitioner-led forms of educational inquiry. She is the co-editor of a recent book entitled *Developing the New Learning Environment: The Changing Role of the Academic Librarian* (Facet, 2005).

Bruce Macfarlane is Professor of Education and Director of the Centre for Research in Tertiary Education at Thames Valley University, UK. The nature of academic ethics and professional identity form the main focus of his research interests. His most recent publications include: *Teaching with Integrity* (RoutledgeFalmer, 2004); and *The Academic Citizen* (Routledge, 2006).

Sioux McKenna will shortly become Senior Lecturer in Higher Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. In her doctoral research study Sioux considered the ways in which academic literacies are constructed in higher education and the implications of this for a transforming society. She has published on a variety of policy and practice issues related to higher education teaching and learning.

Janice Malcolm is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Kent. She has researched and written extensively on the ways in which pedagogic identity in further and higher education is constructed through workplace practices, disciplinary communities and policy discourses, as well as through formal teacher education practices.

Yukako Mori was a Research Associate working at Nagoya University in Japan until March 2007. Through her former experience as an administrator, she became interested in national policies of higher education. After graduating with an MA in Education Policy and Practice at the University of Sheffield, she assumed her aforementioned position which involved promoting the internationalisation of universities. Her research concentrates on higher education policy, staff development and standards of professionalism within both academic and administrative university departments.

Jon Nixon, Professor of Educational Studies, University of Sheffield, has previously held chairs at Canterbury Christ Church University and at the University of Stirling. Until recently he was Head of the School of Education at Sheffield. He now plays a central role in the development of home and overseas research degree programmes. His recent research has focused on the institutional management of education, the values underpinning academic practice and the role of the public educator. The central theme of his work is the democratic renewal of educational institutions through a reorientation of professional practice and purpose. He has worked closely with Stewart Ranson on a number of projects relating to this theme.

Ruth Searle is currently Director for the Centre for Higher Education Studies at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. As a member of the Centre she and her colleagues are responsible for both formal and non-formal academic professional development. Her areas of interest are in teaching and learning, institutional development and postgraduate supervision.

Alan Skelton is a Senior Lecturer at the School of Education, University of Sheffield, Director of the M.Ed in Teaching and Learning for University Lecturers course and a member of the Research Centre for Higher Education and Lifelong Learning. He conducted an Economic and Social Research Council-funded study of the National Teaching Fellowship Scheme between 2002–2003 which formed the empirical basis of a recent book entitled *Understanding Teaching Excellence in Higher Education: Towards a Critical*

Approach, published by Routledge. Alan is a member of the Executive Board of the journal *Teaching in Higher Education* and publishes within the field of higher education pedagogy.

Richard Smith is a Senior Lecturer at the School of Education, AUT University, in Auckland, New Zealand. His research interests are in the fields of educational policy, sociology of education and educational leadership. He is a member of the editorial boards of the *New Zealand Journal of Educational Leadership*, *ACCESS: Critical Perspectives on Communication, Cultural and Policy Studies* and *Policy Futures in Education* and, more recently, *Teaching in Higher Education*. He has written for a number of national publications including the *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies*, *New Zealand Journal of Educational Leadership*, *New Zealand Journal of Teachers' Work* and *SET: Information for Teachers*. Richard is currently the Vice President of the New Zealand Association for Research in Education.

Miriam Zukas is Professor of Adult Education and Director of the Lifelong Learning Institute at the University of Leeds. She is also the current editor of *Studies in the Education of Adults*. Her research interests include pedagogic and disciplinary identities and pedagogic learning in adult, further, higher and workplace contexts.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all the contributors to this book who have devoted considerable time and energy to this shared enterprise; I have gained great insights from working with you and from your different perspectives on teaching excellence.

I would also like to thank Jon Nixon, Bruce Macfarlane and Elizabeth Kovacs in particular for offering support and comments on specific chapters; and Kirsty Smy at Routledge for dealing with my practical concerns and questions. Finally, I would like to acknowledge a conference paper that informs Chapter 9 of this book: Jesson, J. and Smith, R. (2006) 'Tertiary teaching matters: yeah right! The evolution of TE policy on "quality" tertiary teaching', paper presented to the annual conference of the New Zealand Association for Research in Education, December, Rotorua, New Zealand.

International Perspectives on Teaching Excellence in Higher Education

What makes a university teacher 'excellent'? How might we best promote the growth of teaching excellence in higher education? And is current policy supporting such growth? These are some of the questions considered in this first international collection on teaching excellence in higher education.

With contributions from leading writers in the field, *International Perspectives on Teaching Excellence in Higher Education* adopts a critical approach in analysing pedagogical policy and practice. It explores conceptual, practical and strategic challenges faced by the 'worldwide excellence movement' and examines recent developments in a range of different countries such as Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, South Africa, the UK and the US.

Split into three parts: conceptual challenges; policy and discourse; and development initiatives, *International Perspectives on Teaching Excellence in Higher Education*:

- challenges the myth that the excellence movement is a monolithic enterprise;
- offers perspectives that critically engage with current orthodoxies;
- suggests that international learning about teaching excellence can only take place through learning from difference and contemplating a range of alternative future possibilities;
- considers how we can move beyond elitist and relativist notions of teaching excellence;
- interrogates a range of recent high-profile initiatives such as the Centres of Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) programme in the UK.

This innovative book provides a guide for all those supporting, promoting and trying to achieve teaching excellence in higher education, and sets the scene for teaching excellence as a field for serious investigation and critical enquiry.

Alan Skelton is Senior Lecturer in the School of Education, University of Sheffield, UK. He undertakes critical research investigations into higher education pedagogy and is the author of *Understanding Teaching Excellence in Higher Education*, published by Routledge in 2005.

This book makes a very valuable contribution to extending people's understanding of the concept of teaching excellence in higher education. I warmly recommend it to anyone who is in the least bit interested in thinking seriously about this important topic.

Professor Roger Murphy, Director, Institute for Research into Learning and Teaching, University of Nottingham

What, if anything does 'teaching excellence' mean? Alan Skelton challenges common sense notions of excellence, but rejects the view that we should simply ignore it and hope it will go away. Instead he opens up a much needed and more sustained critique. The book draws upon research from a wide range of contributors who really care about the ways in which the changing context of higher education is shaping our understanding of teaching and learning. Through their writing ideas of excellence in teaching are given substance which is founded upon educational insight rather than bureaucratic rhetoric.

Professor Stephen Rowland, Centre for the Advancement of Learning and Teaching, UCL

Contents

<i>Contributors</i>	viii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xiii

Introduction	1
ALAN SKELTON	

PART I	
Conceptual challenges	13
1 Excellence and the good society	15
JON NIXON	
2 Braided practice: the place of scholarly inquiry in teaching excellence	32
RICHARD A. GALE	
3 Beyond performance in teaching excellence	48
BRUCE MACFARLANE	
4 Teaching, discipline, net-work	60
MIRIAM ZUKAS AND JANICE MALCOLM	
5 Integrating research and teaching: understanding excellence	74
ANGELA BREW	

PART II	
Policy and discourse	89
6 The demotic turn – excellence by fiat	91
SUE CLEGG	
7 Policy discourses about teaching excellence in a transforming South Africa	103
RUTH SEARLE AND SIOUX McKENNA	
8 Critiquing excellence: undergraduate research for all students	117
ALAN JENKINS AND MICK HEALEY	
9 Tertiary teaching matters: political economy of a New Zealand centre for tertiary teaching excellence	133
JOCE JESSON AND RICHARD SMITH	
10 Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning in England: recognising, celebrating and promoting excellence?	147
DAVID GOSLING AND ANDREW HANNAN	
PART III	
Developmental initiatives	167
11 National strategies for promoting excellence in teaching: a critical review	169
VANEETA-MARIE D'ANDREA	
12 Teaching excellence in higher education in Japan: an evolving agenda	183
HUGO DOBSON AND YUKAKO MORI	
13 Teaching excellence in context: drawing from a socio-cultural approach	197
JOËLLE FANGHANEL	
14 The National Teaching Fellowship Scheme 2000–2006: Rest In Peace?	213
ALAN SKELTON	

15 Exploring teaching excellence in Canada: an interrogation of common practices and policies	226
CAROLIN KREBER	
16 Exploring and developing excellence: towards a community of praxis	241
PHILIPPA LEVY	
Conclusion	257
ALAN SKELTON	
<i>Bibliography</i>	269
<i>Index</i>	298

Introduction

Alan Skelton

(University of Sheffield, UK)

The need for new understandings of teaching excellence

The ‘worldwide excellence movement’ marches on – affecting education in not only developed countries but also in nations with different forms of government and economic circumstances (Iannaccone, 1989; McDonald, 1990; Fritzberg, 2000). This movement is closely associated with educational reform processes sweeping the globe, informed by managerialist, market-driven and performative policies and discourses (Ball, 2003). Excellence is so potent because it brings together a range of neo-conservative and neo-liberal interests. It offers a way in which the seemingly contradictory goals of expansion, efficiency, choice, the maintenance of standards, economic relevance and meeting individual needs through specialization can all be brought together under a common banner. It also provides a way in which the move to mass and ‘universal’ systems of higher education can be managed under conditions of reduced funding, since excellence shifts responsibility away from the state to enthusiastic and self-regulating individuals, teams and institutions.

Within this context ‘teaching excellence’ has taken on particular meanings and become part of the everyday language and practice of higher education. It is now a significant object of policy reform and mechanisms to promote it have proliferated and intensified, operating at different levels (e.g. individual, institution and subject discipline) to create ‘synergistic’ impact. Avoiding teaching excellence is therefore becoming increasingly difficult – it regularly features as part of institutional rhetoric and self-presentation, and academics are frequently invited to take part in and contribute to teaching excellence initiatives. Those involved in teaching increasingly have to monitor performance and provide evidence of excellence to satisfy managers and external stakeholders. Whilst there is a possibility that over time such performative processes may change the way academics think about teaching and what they hold to be of educational value, a more sophisticated understanding of different ways we might talk about teaching to different audiences may be taking root. As Deem (2004: 291) notes, in commenting on the impact of globalization on higher education more generally:

Public service workers may thus retain their existing values about the importance of the services they provide, whilst accepting the necessity of talking about markets, performance indicators and other business metaphors in certain settings.

In an effort to make teaching excellence explicit and to subject it to public scrutiny, I recently outlined four 'ideal type' understandings, calling these: traditional; performative; psychologized and critical (see Skelton, 2005: 21–37). Empirical research that informed this work showed that performative and psychologized understandings currently dominate the way we think about teaching excellence whereas traditional understandings are under attack and critical understandings banished to the margins. A performative teaching excellence is attractive to policymakers and institutional managers given its emphasis on the three 'E's of economy, efficiency and effectiveness (see Morley, 1997). Performative understandings emphasize a type of teaching that is relevant to commerce and industry; one that is successful in attracting students on to courses which compete globally; and one which allows teaching itself to be regulated by the state to maximize individual, institutional and system performance. It is becoming increasingly clear that this view of teaching excellence is limited for three main reasons. First, 'to be relevant to the economy' is not a sufficient ontological project for the university. This is merely a defensive reaction to contemporary economic pressures rather than a proactive expression of its identity and potential contribution to society. Second, there is a fundamental conflict between the principles of education (and a teaching excellence that flows from this) and market models of provision. Put simply education cannot be reduced to a problem-free object of consumption (McMurtry, 1991). Finally, academic staff are becoming increasingly disillusioned by an excellence that is obsessed with monitoring and measurement. An exclusive focus on technical-practical matters and an overemphasis on operational concerns does not sit easily with the intellectual culture of higher education (Rowland, 2000).

A psychologized understanding of teaching excellence concentrates on the transaction between individual teacher and student. It is underpinned by psychological constructions of the teacher/learner and seeks to establish universal procedures for teaching and learning, their successful implementation in practice and the achievement of specified outcomes. One of the attractions of viewing teaching excellence in this way is that it appears to offer a means of predicting and controlling what will be learnt and how. Psychology's scientific paradigm – which suggests that it is possible to undertake objective and reliable studies of teaching techniques and processes of learning – provides an approach which allows behaviour to be understood and categorized, and for practice to be subsequently improved (Malcolm and Zukas, 2001: 35). The problem with this view of teaching excellence is that it fails to recognize the complexity and context-specificity of learning situations. It also assumes that teaching takes place in a

social vacuum – that transactions between individuals are not mediated by the social and political circumstances of the time.

For the reasons expressed above, it is now becoming apparent that performative and psychologized understandings of teaching excellence are neither adequate nor desirable. If teaching excellence is to become a meaningful concept in our lives it has to look beyond current preoccupations with the economy, efficiency and effectiveness – in common parlance ‘what works’. It also has to look beyond interpersonal relations to examine the broader purposes it might serve as higher education seeks to make a full and valued contribution to wider society. We need to put teaching excellence on to firmer ground in order to do this – to treat it as a matter of serious intellectual investigation. This book offers a range of international perspectives on teaching excellence in order to provoke debate and encourage future action.

Taken-for-granted assumptions

In one sense the normalization of teaching excellence in the academy has had a positive impact in terms of raising the status of teaching relative to research. It has put teaching on the agenda and ensured that some academics put more time and energy into thinking about pedagogical processes. As high quality teaching becomes an expectation within our working lives, the efforts of people who wish to concentrate on this aspect of their practice has also been affirmed, even within ‘research-intensive’ institutions (Skelton, 2004). A variety of awards for teaching have supported this process, comprising traditional prizes, teaching fellowship schemes, educational development grants and promotion/bonus initiatives (see Warren and Plumb, 1999: 246–249). Having won awards for teaching excellence, some academic staff are giving up their substantive research interests and actively pursuing new identities as educational specialists within a particular discipline (see Leon, 2002). This is consistent with the vision of Ernest Boyer, who identified the ‘scholarship of teaching’ as a legitimate pursuit for academics carrying equal value to research or the ‘scholarship of discovery’ (see Boyer, 1990). Teaching excellence therefore has the potential to raise fundamental questions about the teaching–research relationship and to support an academic professionalism that unifies high quality research, teaching and scholarship. Looked at in this way teaching excellence can be a progressive force, something which clearly has the potential to enhance the student experience.

On the other hand, a teaching excellence that has become part of our everyday language and practice also runs the risk of becoming taken for granted. With the rush to put teaching excellence on the agenda and to embed it within institutions through a variety of development mechanisms, a range of ‘common sense’ and problematic understandings about it have emerged. With the intensification of higher education work and the constant calls for information (some of which are to do with teaching), there is little time to question these understandings. We are encouraged to enter into performative and psychologized discourses and