



National Performance Based Research Evaluation
Systems – what do they mean for academic
researchers and research work?

URGE WP 5 Research Workshop: Impacts: Character of
academic research and conduct of researchers

A Literature Review

- ▶ Lucas, L. (in preparation) Performance-Based Research Assessment in Higher Education, Oxford Bibliographies.
 - ▶ An Overview of International Comparisons of Systems of Performance-Based Research Assessment
 - ▶ National Systems of Performance-Based Research Assessment.
 - ▶ Performance-Based Research Assessment, Metrics, Peer Review and Systems of Judgment
 - ▶ Performance-Based Research Assessment, League Tables and Research Outcomes
 - ▶ Performance-Based Research Assessment, Neo-liberalism, New Managerialism and Performativity
 - ▶ Performance-Based Research Assessment and the Production of Disciplinary Knowledge
 - ▶ Performance-Based Research Assessment and Academic Work and Identity
 - ▶ The Future of Performance-Based Research Assessment in Higher Education



Key Aims

- ▶ International comparisons of Performance-Based Research Assessment (PBRA) Systems in Higher Education
- ▶ Evidence on Academic Research Work and Identities in light of these PBRA Systems



International Comparison Reviews of PBRA Systems

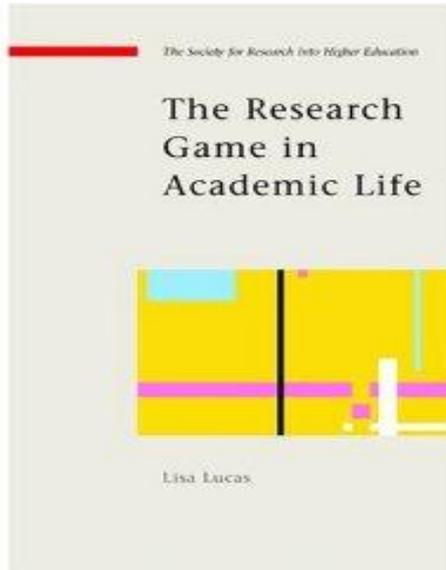
- ▶ Besley, Tina (eds) (2012) *Assessing the quality of educational research in higher education: international perspectives*, pp. 225-242, Sense Publishers, Rotterdam, The Netherlands.
- ▶ European Commission (2010) *Assessing Europe's University-Based Research*. EUR 24187 EN, *Science in Society 2008 Capacities*, 1.4.1. European Commission, Brussels.
- ▶ Hicks, D. (2012) *Performance-based university research funding systems*, *Research Policy*, 41: 251-261.
- ▶ OECD (2010) *Performance-based Funding for Public Research in Tertiary Education Institutions: Workshop Proceedings*, OECD Publishing.



National Performance-Based Research Funding Systems for Universities (Hicks, 2012)

Country	System	Year
UK	RAE/REF	1986, current
Spain	Sexenio	1989
Hong Kong	RAE	1993
Australia	Compsite, RQF, ERA	1995
Poland	Parametric Evaluation	1991/1998-99
Portugal	Research Unit Eval	1996
Italy	VTR, VQR	2001-03, 2004-08
New Zealand	PBRF	2003, current
Belgium (Flemish)	BOF-key	2003, 2008
Norway	Norwegian Model	2006
Sweden	New Model	2009
Denmark	Norwegian Model	Current
Finland	Funding Formula	1998, 2010

The Research Game in Academic Life (Lucas, 2006)



Mediation of research policies with institutional processes: management of research, academic work and identity

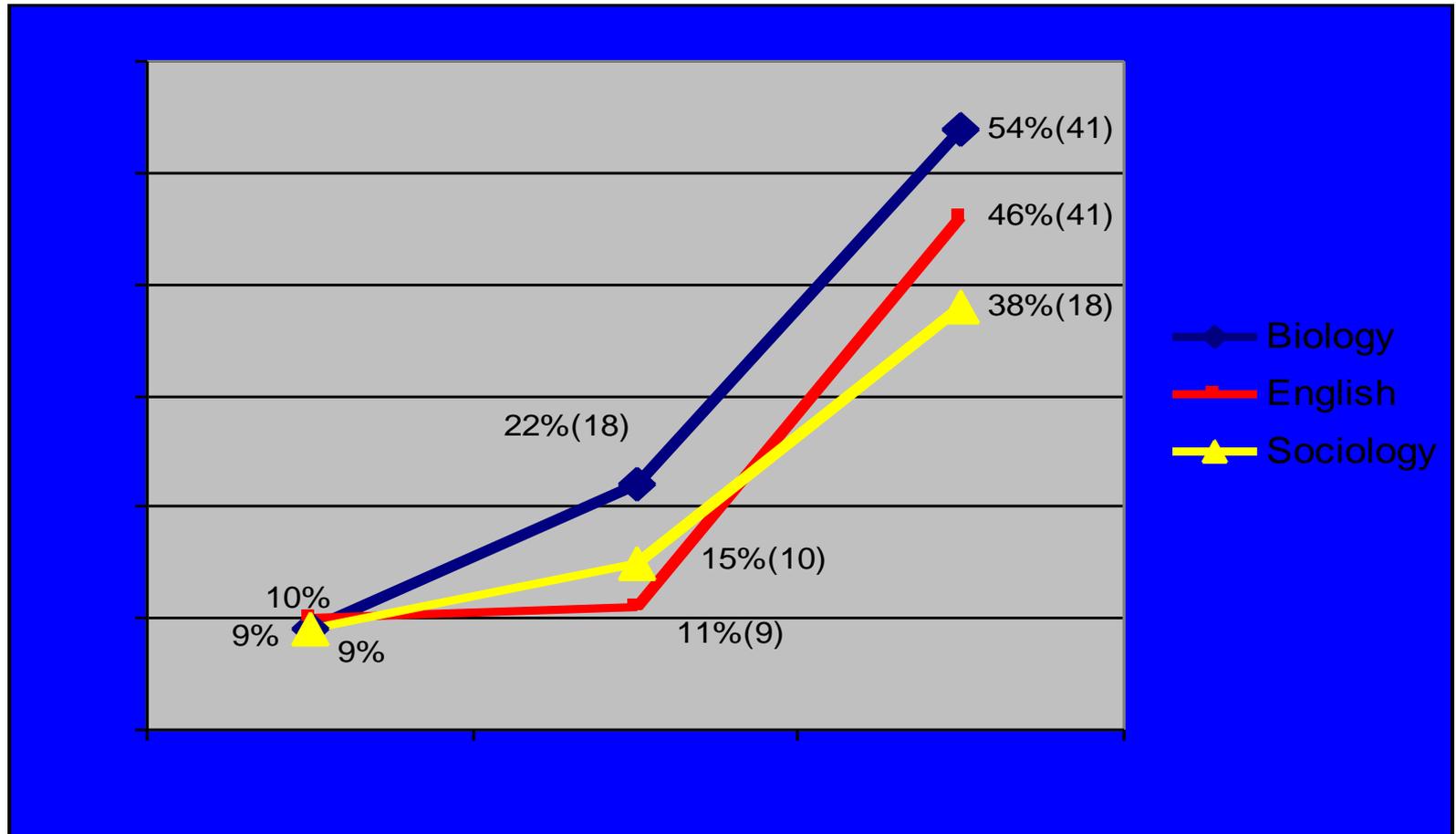
Bourdieu (1988)

- Forms of capital (symbolic, cultural, social and material)
- Sites of struggle over meaning and value attached to academic work
 - Submission to RAE
 - Research active/Non-research active



Change in RAE gradings (Lucas, 2006)

% of top grades (5 & 5*) from 1992 to 2001 by subject area



The Research Game in Academic Life (Lucas, 2006)

- ▶ Intensification of the management and organisation of research activities
- ▶ Differentiation of academics within departments over status/workloads
- ▶ Struggles over classification of research active/research inactive
- ▶ Lack of value perceived for teaching and associated work
- ▶ Prioritising of research areas that can attract high levels of research funding and would be worthy of submission to high ranking journals



PBRA Systems and Academic Research Work and Identity

- ▶ 'Academics Divided' and 'The Divided Self' (Harley, 2002)
- ▶ "In this sense, universities have become sites of contested identity, where, for example, research professors and the 'research-active' become the other in relation to whom the less research-active defend their previously constituted selves in terms of now devalued criteria" (Harley, 2002)



Theorising PBRA Systems and Academic Research Work and Identity

- ▶ “Research Assessment as a Pedagogical Device – A Bernsteinian Analysis: Projected official identities are internalised as career aspirations: ‘I can aspire towards the A research category. It is personal ambition. It has become something I can aim for’. Numerical scores signify, or reify, identity: ‘Getting the Cs to Bs’ or ‘I’m an A’. (Middleton, 2006)
- ▶ A Foucauldian analysis: “...argues that the PBRF has all the hallmark characteristics of a Foucauldian instrument of ‘governmentality’ because it positions academics in a new hierarchy of status and reputation whereby practices of audit and accountability enable new rules of conduct to decide academics’ subjection” (Ashcroft and Smith, 2008)



Embodiment, academics and the audit culture (Sparkes, 2007)

- ▶ RAE-ification and the consciousness of the academic – “we have built ourselves into the body-walls of the system that now encloses us” (Loftus, 2006)
- ▶ Embodied struggles of an academic at a university that is permeated by an audit culture.
- ▶ Fictional ethnography of an account given from the perspective of Jim – a Director of Research.



Embodiment, academics and the audit culture (Sparkes, 2007)

- ▶ “My suggestion is that we go back now and discuss each of these (members of staff) in detail. Let’s begin with Alan Jarvis who at the moment only has two papers published. One a 2 star, the other a 3 star. Tell us about him.’... ‘That’s encouraging to hear,’ intervened Professor Thompson. ‘However, I must say that despite what you have told us, I find two papers produced in over 3 years to be a weak profile. I’d expect a junior member of my staff to produce much more than that. When you give him feedback on his profile, you will certainly have to include the words ‘vulnerable’ and ‘at risk’. And, given this weak profile, I have to ask whether or not you can *guarantee* Dr Jarvis will have two more publications by the RAE submission date?’ Jim steadied himself and said slowly but surely. ‘Yes, I can guarantee it.’ The VC looked him directly in the eyes as he repeated what Jim had heard him say in other meetings. ‘I hope you can Jim, as any member of your School who is not submitted to the RAE will either have their contract terminated or be put on a teaching-only contract.’ Jim stared back and stated flatly. ‘Thank you for reminding me of that fact Vice Chancellor.’”



“Giving an account of oneself”

- ▶ “The PBRF process in a quite different context, is also one of subject formation that demands that we give an account of ourselves in categories that have been negotiated earlier without our choice or consent. These categories also give us place within our professions, enabling us to be professionally identifiable, and if we are successful, they might generate substantial and very satisfying professional rewards, but the terms by which we gain that recognition might also constrain and subordinate us.”
- ▶ “Workplace collegiality and responsibility are threatened by the way in which the top-down surveillance of the PBRF is matched by lateral surveillance as we begin to not only responsibly monitor ourselves but also our peers and colleagues.”
- ▶ “If we are not to succumb to the TINA mentality...then we must also consider whether the PBRF contains more enabling dimensions for our academic practice.” (Cupples & Pawson, 2012)



Individualisation... and PBRA Systems

- ▶ “Our identities as academics from our particular backgrounds are realised, revitalised and affirmed in community. Collective Support is a part of indigenous values, expressed in the Maori language as *whanaungatanga*. Feminism espouses non-hierarchical, non-individualised ways of working and the working class ethic affirms solidarity. Early career academics require mentoring and support to understand the research process... Our stories exemplify the core value of community within academia, which should be preserved at all cost from the abrasive and destructive impact of the PBRF” (Waitere et al, 2011)



Dr Martin (Biologist)



“I would rather see all the vice chancellors lined up for a hundred yards dash and just assign money on that basis, because that exercise would take at the most two minutes. Even the weakest vice chancellor could do a hundred yards in two minutes and then get on with life. It is about as rational as that. At least you could train your vice chancellor and pick a healthy one. At least you would have a use for a vice chancellor at long last, you’d be able to select on a rational basis. It might televise well and you might get money from the rights on watching it. And you might get rid of a few each time.”



References

- ▶ Ashcroft, C. & Smith, R. (2008) "Give me your best research papers": the privileging ethos of research accountability systems from an Aotearoa/New Zealand perspective, *Critical Perspectives on Communication, Cultural and Policy Studies*, 27, 1&2: 49-60.
- ▶ Bourdieu, P. (1988) *Homo Academicus*, Cambridge, Polity Press.
- ▶ Brew, A. & Lucas, L. (2009) *Academic Research and Researchers*, Maidenhead, McGraw-Hill/Open University Press.
- ▶ Cupples, J. & Pawson, E. (2012) Giving an account of oneself: the PBRF and the neoliberal university, *New Zealand Geographer*, 68: 14-23.
- ▶ Harley, S. (2002). "The Impact of Research Selectivity on Academic Work and Identity in UK Universities." *Studies in Higher Education*, 27(2).
- ▶ Loftus, A. (2006) Rae-ification and the Consciousness of the Academic, *Area*, 38, 1: 110-112.
- ▶ Lucas, L. (2006) *The Research Game in Academic Life*, Maidenhead, McGraw-Hill/Open University Press.
- ▶ Middleton, S. (2008): Research assessment as a pedagogical device: Bernstein, professional identity and Education in New Zealand, *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 29:2, 125-136.
- ▶ Sparkes, A. (2007) Embodiment, academics, and the audit culture: a story seeking consideration, *Qualitative Research*, 7, 4: 521-550.
- ▶ Waitere, H.J. (2011) Choosing whether to resist or reinforce the new managerialism: the impact of performance-based research funding on academic identity, *Higher Education Research and Development*, 30, 2: 205-217.

