

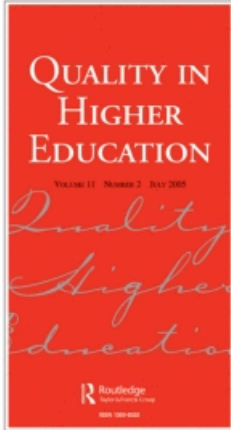
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Quality in Higher Education

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t713443244>

Beyond Codes of Practice: dilemmas in supervising postgraduate research students

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To cite this Article Cryer, Pat(1998) 'Beyond Codes of Practice: dilemmas in supervising postgraduate research students', *Quality in Higher Education*, 4: 3, 229 – 234

To link to this Article: DOI: 10.1080/1353832980040303

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1353832980040303>

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Professional Development is Quality Assurance: now *and* Zen

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ABSTRACT *The focus is the teaching professionalism of academic staff. Quality assurance is discussed in terms of the effectiveness of institutional processes. Quality can also be considered as 'fitness for (stated) purposes'; its obverse is noted as 'caring'—linked to concepts of being care-full and care-less. Policy issues are discussed.*

For Hong Kong, two major, quality-related exercises are examined. The first is the comprehensive review of higher education by the University Grants Committee (UGC) in 1996. The second is the UGC's Teaching & Learning Quality Process Review (TLQPR) completed in 1997, for which six universities and a college were reviewed (audited). The outcomes are discussed with reference to the particular emphasis of TLQPR on the work of teaching development units.

During the last decade, external interventions have had considerable influence on university accountability and management. For added value, professional development for staff is quality assurance for teaching and, therefore, the educational experience of each individual student. External intervention will continue to lead policy in such matters.

Introduction

Professional development is preferred as a descriptor to staff (or instructional, or educational) development so that the focus is on the professionalism of staff in discharging their various higher education responsibilities. The particular professional responsibilities of academic staff for teaching, including assessment [1] of students and evaluation are explored.

Historically, professional development has not been a strong point of higher education. For example, the Hale Committee (1964) in the United Kingdom noted:

... there are certainly factors in university life which are unfavourable to the study of teaching methods. A person who adopts the career of university teacher does not do so in most cases because his main object is to teach. A more usual motive is to pursue research in a subject which had engaged his attention as a student, teaching being regarded as a duty incidental to a life of scholarship.

A point echoed a decade later by Sagen *et al.* (1972):

No profession appears to prepare its future members so poorly, or devotes as little effort to continuing in-service development, as does higher education.

Similar comments continued to be made in the 1990s (Elton, 1995) and Warren Piper (1991) used the concept of the 'Janus-faced academic' when he referred to the university's two sources of professional identity: the occupation of teaching and the occupation for which

students are being prepared. In short, despite some indications of change, the situation has not fundamentally changed since the 1960s.

... the university professor finds that (s)he is required to select students without having been offered any training in selection techniques, to lecture to them without having been trained in methods of teaching, and to examine them without having been instructed in the techniques of examination. (Furneau, 1961)

Training might now be *offered* but a recent article in the Times Higher Education Supplement (28 July 1996) headed 'Couldn't teach a dog to sit' prompted correspondence under the caption 'A rich vein of discontent with the quality of teaching—Case for lessons in teaching'. One correspondent (Colling, 1996) strongly agreed and reported from the 21st International Conference on Improving University Teaching (1996) that 'A number of countries are introducing mandatory teacher-training schemes for all newly appointed university academics who do not have teaching experience'. But 'mandatory' (and even 'training') can be anathema to many academics (professors) who will argue that they are not teachers—also noted by Elton (1995). In the 1990s, concepts are being reconsidered—perhaps none more so than that of 'scholarship': 'in general the work of academics can be thought of as having four separate, yet overlapping functions in terms of the scholarship of discovery, integration, application, and teaching' (Boyer, 1990; Glassick *et al.*, 1997). The shifts in 'priorities' are often the result of pressure of public opinion (USA) or government requirements (UK, Australia, Hong Kong).

In 1997, the lack of professionalism of teaching in higher education considerations was acknowledged in the Report of the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education (NCIHE, 1997) in the UK. When noting that 'research is currently the main basis for professional reward and advancement', the Committee concluded that there must be a 'radical change in attitudes to teaching'. The related recommendation (p. 14) was to establish a 'professional Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education' with one of its functions being to accredit programmes of training for higher education teachers. In clear recognition of the professionalism required, the Committee summarised its thinking thus:

To achieve world class higher education teaching, it should become the norm for all permanent staff with teaching responsibilities to be trained on accredited programmes. (paragraph 70)

In summary, the scholarship of teaching with its responsibilities for learning and student assessment requires standards of professionalism consonant with acceptable levels of quality. Accordingly, quality principles (policy), quality assurance and quality control are now part of the international culture of universities. Definitions are straightforward and collegial in their development and agreement. What is much more difficult is policy implementation *beyond* compliance, and *with* commitment by heads and deans to professional development for teaching, by managing staff motivation, priorities and time. Policy-making must remain collegial but policy implementation is an executive action (Elton, 1995). Recent experience has demonstrated that it is much better for universities to be proactive with quality management rather than be subjected to imposed polices. A rose-tinted view of the past will not compensate lack of foresight. History will not repeat itself.

Quality

There are various 'quality' definitions and now a substantial literature (Green, 1993; Harvey & Knight, 1996). For this discussion, quality is 'doing the right thing right the first time'—particularly with student assessment; also 'fitness for purpose' (Ball, 1985). The 'Zen' connection in the title is from Pirsig (1977), who considers that 'Quality itself ... is the inverse side of caring. That is what caring really is, a feeling of identification with what one's doing'. The relationship of quality with caring is crucial and leads to the importance of being *care-full* as distinct from *care-less* (Imrie, 1991). A more mundane definition of quality for learning and for teaching is, 'evident capability of performance or function with reference to desired standards and criteria'.

From a practical point of view, it is not always the experience that 'doing the right thing right' happens the first time (or even subsequently). Conceptually, then, quality can be considered as a vector (having magnitude as well as direction). On the basis of mainly quantitative considerations related to fitness for stated purpose, professional *informed* judgement identifies direction for improvement or enhancement. This quantitative/qualitative relationship is a basis for quality-related planning and decision-making. In some important respects it relates to a well known hygiene/satisfaction model for management. Indeed 'satisfaction' and 'importance' are key concepts for the robust model and methodology described by Harvey & Knight (1996).

Then there is the pragmatism associated with the experience of implementing quality enhancement ('enhancement' seems to be preferred to 'improvement'). If a university decides collectively(?) that there should be quality-related policies then implementation, monitoring and accountability are management responsibilities involving issues of freedom and control. Two outcomes can be readily identified (and predicted). Regardless of how much prior consultation has taken place, once the decision has been made the policy and its related procedures have to be communicated. This process should, if successful, result in comprehension and commitment.

A *negative* outcome can be characterised as:

communication → compliance → care-less → diminished quality

A *positive* outcome:

communication → concurrence → compliance → commitment → care-full → enhanced quality

The head of an academic department has a crucial (professional) responsibility for quality-related policy implementation. The related processes can also be made explicit by the model represented by the experiential taxonomy (Steinaker & Bell, 1979). This theory of experiential learning can be applied to the organisation, the unit or the individual. For policy implementation, the academic community is *exposed* to the policy and 'invited' to *participate*; the next stage is for the faculty (especially the heads) to *identify* (with) the key/issues, *internalise* the concepts and *disseminate* their commitment and understanding. These affective considerations underpin effective action for enhancement and development. Professional development policy and its implementation for the teaching responsibilities of staff is quality assurance if the university community accepts that there should be minimum standards which should be maintained by any self-regulating professional body. Assuming that academics accept that they do have professional responsibilities for teaching then a minimum standards' policy should set out, as mandatory, experiential programmes (not courses) for:

- newly appointed staff who have not held full-time university appointments;

- research students/assistants who have teaching responsibilities;
- part-time staff;
- continuing professional development for all staff who teach.

Developments in Hong Kong

As a colonial territory, higher education in Hong Kong was strongly influenced by developments in England and, recently, by the USA model of degree programme structure. For example, Hong Kong, like England, has a three-year, full-time honours degree; Hong Kong universities are now moving towards introduction of the USA-style of credit unit/transfer systems but, as in the UK, there is no 'national' credit framework.

In Hong Kong, two major quality-related exercises reached completion in 1997 and these are discussed briefly. The first is the comprehensive review of higher education conducted by the University Grants Committee (UGC, 1996); the second is the UGC's Teaching & Learning Quality Process Review (TLQPR).

The review of higher education has far-reaching recommendations, particularly in view of the transfer of sovereignty at the end of June 1997. The review addresses a range of quality issues related to rapid expansion of the higher education system to provide first year, first-degree places for 18% of the age cohort, and about 7% for higher diploma (sub-degree) places.

Having noted that the 'enrichment of the understanding of the student' is the most important task, the report concludes that 'the provision of high quality teaching must be the first function of every institution' (UGC, 1996, p. 167). There is a gesture to student rights in the statement that every student has a right to expect good teaching which 'depends upon dedication, a great deal of hard work in preparation, and enthusiasm' (UGC, 1996, p. 108).

Arguably these are necessary but not sufficient; professionalism in terms of scholarship of teaching should have been emphasised and related to the professional development of the teaching capabilities required of academic staff in contemporary higher education. The report seems to consider teaching as different from scholarship, for example 'evaluation of teaching, scholarship, and service' (UGC, 1996, p. 212).

The report addresses 'Present and Future Teaching Methodologies' and assumes that technology will lead to improvement of teaching and learning but 'will leverage the human element in education, not replace it' (UGC, 1996, p. 100). The strategic plan of City University of Hong Kong (CityU, 1996a, p. 43) reflects this: 'the time and creativity of teachers will be levered by the use of good pedagogical technique and the use of new technologies'. The UGC report also provides a preview of university education with the clear statement that 'Institutions will cease to consider instructors as "lecturers", but rather will see them as designers and managers of student-oriented learning processes as well as direct purveyors of content' (UGC, 1996, p. 26.18).

This focus on student-oriented learning processes supported by technology will also require professional development for the evolving role of the teacher in higher education. At City University of Hong Kong (CityU), the teaching development unit (PDQS), which also manages a multimedia development laboratory, was asked to prepare a draft policy document on 'Flexible Learning Technology' (FLT). Not surprisingly, the document emphasises both pedagogical considerations for the learning processes and professional development for the 'designers and managers'. The proposed FLT policy includes all of the UGC (1996) considerations and also emphasises '... technology-mediated learning experi-

ences tailored to individual student needs'. A related consideration is systematic student development for being an effective student—learning to learn (Imrie, 1997).

The UGC report is occasionally blunt: 'There is no such thing as an excellent university'; also 'departments which fail to produce good research outputs should be pitied; departments which fail to provide good teaching should be closed' (UGC, 1996, p. 108). It might be added that staff who fail to produce good research do no damage but staff damage students if they fail to provide good teaching (including assessment). The report also notes that the main instrument of quality assurance will be process review (Massy & French, 1997).

Teaching & Learning Quality Process Review (TLQPR)

The framework used in conducting the first round of Teaching & Learning Quality Process Reviews is set out in an appendix of the UGC (1996) report. In regard to the statement noted earlier that 'the provision of high quality teaching must be the first function of every institution', it is worth emphasising that before the TLQPR began, the UGC Chairman (Leung, 1995) reiterated that 'the UGC considers teaching to be of paramount importance in the higher education sector in Hong Kong'. Some four months later, a UGC (1995) delegation report concluded that UGC was on the right track in focusing on process, and also that 'we are right in stressing improvement as well'. In 1997, Professor Kenneth Young, Chair of the UGC's Quality Sub-Committee, gave the Opening Address at the Evaluation of the Student Experience Conference (ESEP, 1997) and emphasised:

By focusing attention on teaching and learning as a primary mission of our institutions, it is certain that the educational experience of our students will be enhanced.

These comments about improvement have particular significance in regard to the point noted by Brown (1997) that audit and enhancement are two functions that are the responsibility of the UK Higher Education Quality Council (HEQC). As the Chief Executive of the HEQC, Brown also believes that the 'external quality assurance of teaching and learning should fulfil *three fundamental purposes*': standards for student attainment; provision of learning opportunities and support for the students; students are fully informed about those standards and learning opportunities (Brown, 1997). At this stage, the TLQPR is external quality assurance that does emphasise improvement but does not address standards. Also in contrast to the TLQPR, Brown's 'purposes' are focused on students.

The TLQPR took place over an 18-month period (September 1995 to April 1997) during which six universities and a college were reviewed (audited) in regard to their quality assurance processes. TLQPR is different from quality assessment and a brief account of its development is appropriate so that the benefits of collaboration and partnership between the higher education institutions and the UGC can be appreciated.

In May 1993, UGC (then the UPGC) obtained government approval for periodic process audits. In March 1994, following the earlier introduction of a research assessment exercise, UGC sent out a draft consultation paper on their proposed teaching and learning quality assessment exercise (TLQAE). Consultation and reflection resulted in modification of the proposed TLQAE in the form of process audits.

This decision ensured that there would not be separate quality assessment and quality audit as in the UK. Accordingly, the name was changed to Teaching and Learning Quality Process Audit (TLQPA). In 1996, 'audit' was changed to 'review' (without consultation), resulting finally in TLQPR.

The original consultation paper was recast in the form of an information paper to be distributed to all academic staff. The paper, *Assessment of Teaching and Learning Quality* (UPGC, 1994) set out expectations of a 'quality institution' in the form of principles and also addressed the question, 'How to measure teaching and learning quality?'. The following 'answers' are noted for the emphasis on staff and staff development:

- as a factor essential to achieving high quality teaching and learning—staff (teaching strategies and methods, organizational commitment to continuous review and improvement of teaching) (paragraph 8);
- for overall teaching quality ... the extent of junior staff training and of staff development (paragraph 10).

For comparison, in *Guidelines on Quality Assurance* (HEQC, 1996, p. 70), one of the principles is:

Staff development and training is an integral part of ensuring, delivering and enhancing quality, and adequate opportunities for development should be available throughout employment to all staff who are engaged in, or supporting, teaching, research and scholarship.

Note that, despite *integral*, there is no suggestion of mandatory continuing professional development for the teaching responsibility; also there is the implication that teaching, research, and scholarship are separate matters.

TLQPR Dimensions

Earlier reference was made to the UGC's framework document (UGC, 1996, p. 203). This framework 'provides a way of thinking about teaching and learning quality' and was the common basis for the different higher education institutions in their preparation for the TLQPR. In effect, each institution was asked two questions as preparation for the visit of the TLQPR Panel (Massy & French, 1997):

1. Has careful thought been given to both the teaching and learning quality dimensions/perspectives? That is:
 - teaching and learning processes (five sub-processes);
 - methods to assure and continuously improve teaching quality.
2. Can staff articulate and defend the choices made in response to the above questions ... and deal with the implications for quality assurance and teaching quality?

The framework also described teaching and learning processes in terms of the following five sub-processes (elements) and institutions were expected to organise their documentation accordingly: curricular design; pedagogical design; implementation quality; outcomes assessment; and resource provision. In its TLQPR submission, CityU (1996b) added a sixth 'missing' sub-process: 'enhancement of the student experience', on the basis that this should be explicit. In this regard, 'assessment for student learning; assessment of performance' should be added or made explicit. To contrast quality assurance with quality assessment and to note overlap, it is worth recalling that a UK report evaluating quality assessment in England and Wales (Barnett *et al.*, 1994) recommended five key areas: '(i) aims and curricula; (ii) learning and teaching; (iii) staff development; (iv) resources; (v) academic management and quality control'.

For individual ownership of quality assurance, ethical principles (Murray *et al.*, 1996) have a role to play in university teaching. A set of ethical principles has been developed

by the Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (Canada) and the first two deal with *Content Competence* and *Pedagogical Competence*. Principle 2:

A pedagogically competent teacher communicates the objectives of the course to students, is aware of alternative instructional methods or strategies, and selects methods of instruction that, according to research evidence (including personal or self-reflective research) are effective in helping students to achieve the core objectives.

Principle 8, *Valid Assessment of Students*, reinforces 'the importance of assessment of student performance in university teaching and in students' lives and careers' and the related responsibility of teachers.

Quality Improvement and Assurance

It is evident that the TLQPR Panel believes that responsibility for teaching quality cannot be imposed from outside (for example by the UGC). The Panel also believes that teaching quality is an individual *and* a collective responsibility. With responsibility there is accountability and the latter can be vigorously resisted by academic staff who misunderstand the contemporary concept of 'academic freedom'. Misunderstanding of 'freedom and control' (Imrie, 1981) needs to be taken seriously since, 'Accountability and quality assurance and improvement programs will become more important over time, as UGC observes the seriousness of institutional process-improvement efforts' (UGC, 1995). The Panel has identified the following broad areas or methods for successful quality assurance:

- quality programme framework (*mission, vision, policy statements*);
- direct quality programme activities (*curriculum, pedagogy, implementation assessment and resources*);
- quality programme support (*quality assurance committees; educational development units*);
- values and incentives (*teaching and learning quality motivation—intrinsic/extrinsic rewards*).

Finally, the institutions were provided with a matrix showing how these four 'methods' could be applied to the five sub-processes (UGC, 1996).

Outcomes

By UGC invitation, each TLQPR report has been published (by the higher education institution) for dissemination of good practice. The report is to be read carefully by the institution concerned, for action as indicated and for report or progress to the UGC during 1998 [2].

Based on frequency of mention, one salient consideration is the tension between research and teaching and other professional responsibilities of the modern academic. As with Dearing (NCIHE, 1997), but preceding the Dearing Report, Massy and French (1997) state that: 'Academic staff in most institutions perceive that the main rewards are associated with research'. In the experience of the author working in staff development for teaching in five countries over nearly three decades, this is certainly true. It is reinforced in Hong Kong by the UGC linking significant funding to institutional research output. To offset this, and 'to emphasise the importance of teaching and learning, the UGC has announced that the TLQPR results may be used to inform funding' (Massy & French, 1997). This is too

little, too late, and it is the author's belief that neither the UGC nor the HEIs want funding linked to teaching *assessment*. And why is it that pedagogical research and publications are not valued as much as discipline research?

A second consideration noted is the contentious question of student evaluation of teaching (teachers). As with assessment of student performance, evaluation should be used for formative and for summative purposes and should *not* depend solely on student response to a simplified instrument. Unfortunately, in Hong Kong there are instances of staff being judged 'punitively' on this basis. There is also clear indication that a significant proportion of students do not understand fully the purpose of such questionnaires, suffer from 'questionnaire fatigue', get no feedback, see no improvement, and therefore do not take them seriously. Under such conditions the evaluations are not 'safe'. The teaching portfolio is one answer to evaluating the complexity of teaching but requires care-full interpretation. Educational development units have an important role to play in all aspects of the evaluation of teaching and of the courses that provide context for the student educational experience.

The role of the external examiner is a third matter for concern, noting that 'very few staff are trained either for external examining or in assessment practice *per se*' (Crispin, 1996); also 'external examining can be discounted unless it is put on a professional basis' (HEQC, 1996). This problem is underlined by NICHE (1997), 'It (the external examiner system) is inadequate to meet the needs of the much expanded and more diverse system of higher education that we now have'. The fourth issue noted is teaching development and its linkage with pedagogy. Quality learning is an intended outcome of arrangements made for students to access learning, be guided in their learning and have confirmation of their learning. Accordingly, these arrangements need to be made by people who have pedagogical as well as field-of-study capabilities. The issue is represented by this comment from a TLQPR report, 'T&L should remain a gentleman's pursuit', which is indicative of the non-professional attitude towards pedagogy of many staff in universities. In this regard, assessment of student learning and performance is a particularly important area for professional development and competence. Training is required; *also* continuing professional development.

TLQPR Seminar, 8 April 1997

The Seminar, with 183 participants, was funded by the UGC to provide a forum for higher education institutions to meet and reflect on their experiences of the TLQPR. The Seminar Report (UGC, 1997a) includes the institutional presentations and an 'exposure draft' of a paper by Massy and French (1997), which presents their own appraisal of the TLQPR policy, outcomes and future development. The purpose of the seminar was to reflect and obtain feedback on the following:

1. the extent to which the TLQPR exercise has achieved its stated aims;
2. impact of TLQPR on institutions (including unintended outcomes);
3. outcomes in terms of identification of good practices for dissemination; and
4. improvements to be made for future TLQPR exercises.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the outcomes of the seminar but it is worth noting the clear consensus that TLQPR had been a useful exercise and that it had achieved its stated aims. There is a clear inference that much of the change would not have taken place if there had not been an external intervention—as is the case elsewhere.

From their reading (and writing) of the TLQPR reports, Massy and French (1997, p. 4.2) have produced a useful composite checklist of 'best practices' which may be construed as prerequisites for a 'culture of quality'. The list includes the need for 'a competent and well-funded Educational Development Unit ... with appropriate incentives for academic staff to make use of the services provided'. This is also identified as an area 'where quality-process improvement is needed'.

Educational Development Units—Professional Development & Quality Services (PDQS)

In practice TLQPR has emphasised the role of educational development units by including such units in the 12 departments selected for each institutional visit; and also by specifically allocating one or two pages in the subsequent (published) report. At City University of Hong Kong (CityU), the teaching development unit is PDQS. In its pre-visit TLQPR-submission, under the heading 'Creating a quality culture', CityU noted that PDQS had been formed (in 1995) to enlarge the responsibilities of the existing Professional Development Unit.

PDQS has broad responsibilities to assist staff in their role as teachers and to support the work of the Quality Assurance Committee, thus bringing the work of staff development into a clearer relationship with quality assurance. (CityU, 1996b)

This is the fundamental principle represented by the title of this paper. Under 'self-appraisal' CityU indicated that, 'programmes for professional development are available, but staff are reluctant to attend formal training sessions'. As noted previously, there are issues of staff motivation, priorities and time; also the quality of the sessions and their availability.

At CityU, 'Performance Planning, Appraisal and Development' (PPAD) was designed to be a comprehensive policy framework for professional development as quality assurance for all staff and for all principal professional responsibilities. Introduced in 1995 as a pilot scheme, a related scheme has also been developed for all other staff. Such a policy provides for both freedom and control (Imrie, 1981). The PPAD scheme is based on the appraisal scheme introduced at Glasgow University but strengthened by introducing 'front end' performance planning (Imrie, 1996). In essence, the agreed performance plan is an annual job specification setting out what the member of staff can do for the department; the staff development plan is what the department can do for individual staff.

Each member of staff should have, therefore, a personal development plan for their particular professional responsibilities. Discipline-related development would be the responsibility of the department; pedagogical and other development responsibilities would be provided by a unit such as PDQS.

As always, the crucial issues are those of implementation and the effectiveness of deans and heads as managers (of human resources). Management (including administration) is also an area which requires professional development for quality outcomes.

Concluding Comments

In Hong Kong, the UGC has implemented a Teaching and Learning Process Review (TLQPR), which has been described and reviewed by Massy and French (1997). A reflective

TLQPR seminar was held at which a draft of the Massy and French paper was discussed. At the seminar, there was a strong consensus among the seven participating higher education institutions that the TLQPR had been successful; also that it should continue and be improved in the light of experience. As well as consensus there was also concern regarding the implications of UGC's oft-repeated statement that 'the outcomes of TLQPR would inform funding'.

As the UGC well knows, mention of funding does focus the attention of the UGC-funded institutions, especially when they have been advised that the Administration (Government) has recommended adoption of the UGC's recommendation of a target reduction in student unit costs of 10% for the period 1998-99 to 2000-01. It is intended that half of these annual savings will be 'ploughed back' selectively.

As has been the experience in other countries with similar exercises, TLQPR has had an impact *because* it has been an external intervention by a funding body. The TLQPR model also benefited from experiences elsewhere. Professor Bill Massy's leadership of the TLQPR Panel demonstrated a high level of professionalism, as did the support provided by Mr Nigel French and his UGC Secretariat. There was considerable transparency in the process, which benefited from the setting up of a TLQPR Consultative Committee to provide a channel for dialogue with the UGC and the TLQPR Panel. However, the Consultative Committee has unfulfilled potential but is beginning to respond to exhortations to be more proactive. This collaboration will continue through the next phases of the TLQPR including:

- progress reports from higher education institutions in response to issues raised in the TLQPR reports;
- evaluation (as distinct from review) of the TLQPR process; and
- the anticipated announcement from the UGC regarding the linkage between TLQPR outcomes and funding.

In short, TLQPR has been a successful and major intervention. It has the potential to develop into a strong partnership between the UGC and the institutions. This should be developed on the outcomes of the seminar and, in particular, by the forthcoming evaluation scheduled to begin in 1998. As indicated in this paper, it is the belief of the author that the development of the TLQPR model should incorporate a focus on assessment and standards; also a focus on the student experience. There should be more student involvement in the TLQPR.

From the outset, when it became apparent that the TLQPR Panel would visit the educational development unit in each institution, it was clear that the work of such units would be an important focus. Indeed, as previously noted, in the TLQPR reports these units are the only ones named (out of the 12 selected) and at least a page is allocated for comment. While Massy and French (1997) have noted that such units are included in their checklist of 'exemplary policies and practices' it would be interesting and informative if some indication could be given of what might constitute a model for such units. For example, should a unit be an academic department (as at the University of Hong Kong) or part of a service department such as an educational technology centre (for example the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, Lingnan College). Should a unit be independent, part of a faculty, or part of a human resources office? At what level should the line manager be? Above all, what should institutional policy require of such units? Given appropriate capability, an educational development unit can operate effectively only if there is a strong framework of policy and strong commitment to implementation.

All the evidence from the TLQPR reports, the seminar, and from the Massy and French paper indicate that there is much still to be done to realise the unfulfilled potential of professional or educational development units in higher education institutions in Hong Kong. One important issue is that it is very difficult in some of the institutions for academics to get due recognition or encouragement for engaging in pedagogical research and publication. Surely such activity should be a vital element of the scholarship and professional responsibility of academic staff who are paid to work in organisations whose primary responsibility is teaching?

As the Chairman of the UGC has said on many occasions, 'the UGC considers teaching to be of paramount importance in the higher education sector in Hong Kong'. No doubt thousands of university students would agree. Such students are paying more and need more. Their paramount interest (and right) is for good teaching provided in a student-friendly manner by teachers who are capable and who care about the student experience. Such capability and caring are not likely to be the products of research training and research targets for academic staff who have few incentives to continue their development as teaching professionals. It is time for universities and their academic staff to espouse professional standards for teaching similar to those for research with both being considered as scholarship.

No doubt the current debate in the UK on the formal training or 'compulsory licensing' (THES, 1997) for academics as teachers, taken up by NCIHE (1997) will be considered by the new Quality Assurance Agency. This is another example of the likelihood of an external intervention prompting university action.

The author's submission to the UP(G)C's Information Paper on 'Assessment of Teaching and Learning Quality' (May 1994) concluded that development and recognition of professionalism in teaching (learning and assessment) is of vital importance for the development of an 'ethos and culture' based on caring. Our caring as well as our capability must be evident to our students as part of our stewardship (not ownership) of quality in higher education (Imrie, 1993). With strong institutional policy and capable implementation, professional development is quality assurance for teaching and, therefore, the educational experience of each individual student.

Notes

[1] Assessment—derivation and communication of information and judgements about student learning and performance, for the purpose of guiding learning and reporting on student progress and achievement in a course of study (CityU, 1997a).

Evaluation—*formative* is used to describe evaluations that take place during a programme and are primarily concerned with improvement to teaching, while *summative* is used to describe evaluations that take place at the end of a programme and are primarily concerned with judgement about a teacher's practice (CityU, 1997b).

Teaching—the initiation and management of student learning by a teacher; it must be responsive to student needs (Warnock, 1990).

Learning—the complete definition of learning emphasises the notion of a relatively permanent change in behaviour as a function of practice or experience (Davis *et al.*, 1974).

[2] These reports can be read on the UGC's homepage at <http://www.ugc.edu.hk/>.

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