

A Submission to the Higher Education Review

This note addresses the issue of whether the Australian higher education system should diversify, to enable some universities to focus mainly on research and others mainly on teaching. It assumes that such diversification is necessary and over-due because the research efforts of the newer and/or weaker universities lag significantly behind the stronger and more established institutions. This reality is unlikely to change in the foreseeable future.

The idea that some universities should focus almost (but not entirely) on teaching is resisted in many quarters for four broad reasons:

- It is perceived to be anti-egalitarian (hence, to some extent, un-Australian)
- Some academics in institutions designated as mainly teaching are nonetheless successful researchers and their research richly informs their teaching. The fear here is that their research activities will be curtailed or even halted altogether
- It is feared that diversification will financially and politically privilege those universities designated primarily as research institutes
- The hierarchy of higher education institutions that it will create will reinforce the reproduction of socio-economic inequalities in Australian society

A way of addressing the resistance to diversifying the Australian higher education system may be to enable staff in teaching-designated institutions to also be affiliated with the research-designated institutions if they wish to be recognized as active researchers while remaining in their teaching-designated institutions. Thus they could be described as, say, 'Lecturer in Nursing at the University of Canberra and Research Fellow in Health Sciences at the Australian National University.'

Of course, measurable research performance would need to be the basis for this sort of cross-institutional affiliating. At the same time the mainly research-designated institutions would need to be given the resources to properly facilitate such affiliations (e.g., offices, IT support, access to laboratories, etc.). And the research-designated institutions would need to be regulated to ensure that they are genuinely welcoming to proven researchers from mainly teacher-designated institutions.

At the same time, if institutions want to be designated as mainly research institutions, they should be obliged to surrender, to those institutions designated as mainly teaching institutions, many of their undergraduate teaching programs and the resources they presently attract.

Professor Allan Patience
Faculty of Foreign Studies
Sophia University
7-1 Kioi-cho, Chiyoda-ku
TOKYO, 102-8554
J A P A N

patience-a@sophia.ac.jp