



Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education

Vol. 3, No. 1.

ISSN: 1473-8376

www.hlst.ltsn.ac.uk/johlste

EDITORIAL

The 4Ps of Research: Practice, Policy, Principles and Positioning

John Tribe (john.tribe@bcuc.ac.uk)

Chair of the Editorial Board

DOI:10.3794/johlste.31.ed

© Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism Education

This issue of JoHLSTE gives space to several articles which exemplify the practice of pedagogical research in Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism (HLS&T). Indeed, the fact that the HLS&T fields are able to support a pedagogical journal and generate pedagogical research is surely evidence of their growing maturity.

In this issue, academic articles include Rachel I'Anson and Karen Smith's *Undergraduate Research Projects and Dissertations: issues of topic selection, access and data collection amongst tourism management students* and Kathryn Black's *Review of Factors which Contribute to the Internationalisation of a Programme of Study*. Peter Jones adds to the long-running comments around the theme of *Finding Hospitality*, prompted by an earlier article by Paul Slattery. Practice papers offer interesting and useful insights into issues that confront us at the whiteboard- (or cyber-) face. Crispin Dale and Andrew Lane encourage us to *Carry on Talking* by sharing their experiences in developing ways to enhance students' use of online discussion forums. John Buswell and Nic Matthews give us *Feedback on feedback!* Through their exposition of a University of Gloucestershire case study they demonstrate ways of encouraging students to read feedback.

But there are three contributions to this issue of JoHLSTE that I wish to use as a point of departure into a discussion of what is referred to in the title of this editorial as the 4Ps of Research: Practice, Policy, Principles and Positioning. These are Martin Johnes's article on the *Teaching-Research Nexus in a Sports History Module*, Peter Jones's article titled *Finding the Hospitality Industry? Or Finding Hospitality Schools of Thought?* and my own Perspective, *The ATHE Response to RAE 02/2004 Panel Configuration and Recruitment*. All of the articles in this edition are relevant to the case of HLS&T research, but these contributions offer particular inroads into discussion of UK government policy in this area.

In his paper, Johnes states that:

...it is important not to see research and teaching as separate activities, and for teachers to also be researchers. Teaching, reading recently published work or conducting my own primary research all feed into one another. The products of both my primary and secondary research are employed in my teaching, whilst the discussions in my classes can influence my research. It is this

seamless relationship between research and teaching that should differentiate higher and further education.

Johnes guides us through his own personal practices and offers a convincing account of the importance of maintaining and developing this important relationship. I take Johnes's paper as the departure point for this editorial because, in the UK, it is another crucial time for the development of research in HLS&T. In February of this year (2004), the UK funding bodies published their initial decisions on the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) for 2008 (<http://www.rae.ac.uk/pubs/2004/01>). The significance of this is, of course, that the results of RAE 2008 will determine much of the funding of public research in the UK post-2008. In practical terms, it will determine the extent to which Johnes's understanding and practice of the teaching-research nexus can be maintained. The proposals for RAE 2008 turn out to be quite similar to the exercise carried out in 2001. Submissions will typically focus on four outputs for each named researcher and will be assessed by a number of sub-panels or units of assessment (UoAs).

The constitution of the sub-panels has been the subject of a consultation exercise (<http://www.rae.ac.uk/pubs/2004/02>). The proposed sub-panels offer different prospects for the constituent subjects of the HLS&T community. Sports-related studies are located as a discrete assessment panel. However, there is a significant change here. The UoA number has changed from 69 to 13. Perhaps not significant in itself, but UoA 13 sits in main panel C whose other occupants are Nursing and Midwifery (UoA 11) and UoA 12 - Allied Health Professions (incorporating Pharmacy). This would appear to suggest a strong science/health emphasis and therefore, preclude some aspects of sports studies and certainly most of the leisure and tourism research that were previously submitted under UoA 69. Researchers in Leisure, Hospitality and Tourism (HL&T) will search in vain for an explicit mention of their fields of study in the RAE 2008 proposals. They are not to be found in the titles of any of the proposed UoAs.

Now this in itself may give rise to some serious academic soul-searching. On the one hand HL&T researchers may ask whether these fields deserve a presence in a UoA title. Are they sufficiently mature and do they generate sufficient research of the requisite quality? Peter Jones, in his article *Finding the Hospitality Industry? Or Finding Hospitality Schools of Thought?* reaches the conclusion that 'UK hospitality research, both qualitatively and quantitatively, is at best static or even in decline'. In terms of the relationship between teaching and research, Jones notes that:

At worst, students may be taught as 'facts' - results from research studies that are erroneous. At best, research fragmentation means that research makes little or no impact on the curriculum. Large parts of the hospitality curriculum have remained unchanged over the last thirty years, except for updating content, usually on the basis of contemporary industry practice.

Hospitality is a significant industry in the UK. On these grounds alone it appears to me that there is a strong case for a policy push to reinvigorate research in this area.

But there are other grounds for the explicit inclusion of the HL&T fields in the RAE. However, in building this case one is immediately struck by a procedural problem: for there is a fundamental flaw in the proposals for UoA/Panel constitution for RAE 2008. The previous RAE prided itself on its transparency. But it is difficult to locate transparency in the RAE 2008 UoA/Panel proposals, as there do not appear to be published criteria which establish the rules for constituting a UoA. What are the grounds for inclusion and exclusion? Without clear criteria it is not possible to ensure that the case for HLS&T subjects is made most effectively.

We can only make progress here by making a number of assumptions about the implicit rules for the establishment of a discrete UoA. In practice the system is likely to fall back upon the 2Ps of Power and Precedent. In other words, subjects that have established power (in terms of their advocates having the ear of policymakers) are likely to be successful. Precedent means that the system has an

inbuilt tendency for conservatism. If a subject was included as a UoA in the last round, it is likely to retain its position.

But if one were to start the RAE panel building process from first principles surely there would be different criteria. In the absence of clear criteria from the funding councils, I am going to offer the following as a starting point for debate and suggest that the criteria for qualification as an RAE unit of assessment should include:

- Quality
- Quantity
- Coherence
- Community
- Infrastructure
- Value
- Esteem
- Trend

Since the RAE is essentially an exercise in measuring research quality, quality must necessarily be the most important criterion. Here, the RAE process itself is able to provide evidence. Metrics here could be derived from quality ratings generated by the last RAE. To this we might add other indicators such as the number of PhD completions. Quantity metrics are also readily available from the previous RAE. Coherence refers to the territorial boundaries of a field. Does a field have an internal logic? Does it support a specialist research agenda? Is it secure within its own epistemology? Does it have clear territorial borders that distinguish it from other fields? Are these borders important to maintain in order to guard against the dangers of subsuming it within other fields or disciplines?

Community and infrastructure can be measured by some quantitative and some more qualitative measures. In terms of community, a key question may be the number of research active academics in a proposed UoA. The size of the professoriate is another useful indicator, as is the number of registered PhD students. Other indicators here might include the number of journals supported by a field of study and the ratings of those journals. But there is another aspect of community. This is that the research community that represents a particular field must be able to agree on and articulate a case for earning a unique UoA.

What of value, esteem and trend? Well value is clearly the most difficult area. If we start from the premise that all knowledge is useful then we are left without any grounds for choice in competing claims for UoA titles. So we may need to add some other aspects of value, but clearly we need to tread carefully here if we are to avoid the performativity trap. But some starting points might include consideration of the value of a field's activities to the economy, the size of undergraduate programmes that are dependent upon knowledge creation in a field and the wider significance of a field's practices to people's lives and the environment. Esteem can be measured by more straightforward metrics which are part of the established RAE process, such as membership of expert panels. Finally, trend seems to be an important issue. The RAE has the sensitivity of steer of a super tanker. Decisions made in 2003 about RAE 2008 will determine funding until 2013. So it is incumbent upon RAE planners to give serious thought to trends. Which are rising areas of research significance and which are declining areas? Life, research, knowledge, understanding, work, leisure and economies are in a state of unparalleled flux, transition and turbulence. RAE UoAs seem barely fit to represent the world of the 1950s. They do not appear to reflect the needs of the present or prepare for the near future.

So where does all this discussion leave HLS&T? The answer is that collectively, they are able to make a very good case of their significance under most, if not all, of the criteria discussed above. There are well-founded grounds for the funding councils to offer HLS&T research a more significant place in RAE 2008. If we care to make any comparative studies (e.g. against Celtic Studies: UoA 51, or Italian Studies: UoA 56) then the case for HLS&T becomes more compelling. As an example, the Perspective offered in this issue is based upon the case made for tourism by the Association for Tourism in Higher Education (ATHE) in response to the funding councils' consultation on the

constitution of panels of assessment. It offers a detailed case against many of the criteria outlined in this editorial.

But given a free hand how would the HLS&T community ideally wish to see itself in RAE 2008? It seems to me that there are five possible positions:

1. Cock and Cuckoos: Sport retains its separate UoA and HL&T place themselves within other existing UoAs (e.g. Business and Management Studies or Geography)
2. Strategic Partnerships: HL&T seek to position themselves as partners in existing titles (e.g. Geography *and* Tourism)
3. One plus One: Sport retains its separate UoA and HL&T lay claim a separate UoA
4. Fragmented Fight: HLS&T each battle individually for separate UoAs
5. United Front: HLS&T seek a common but separate UoA

Interestingly, I do not think that the HLS&T academic community are yet in a position to press for 3 or 5. The reasons for this are two-fold. First a major stumbling block occurs when we come to unpack the coherence and community aspects of the commonality of HLS&T. Second, there are practical and logistical issues of joint action and lobbying across the HLS&T subject communities. However, I do suggest that had the funding councils offered sufficient time or encouragement, the HLS&T communities could have given position 3 some real thought.