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Teaching - intensive appointments in law schools. Is this the way to recognise and value excellence in teaching?

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Abstract

The intense focus by government and universities on research has been pressed most often at the expense of quality learning and teaching in universities. There is some irony here. The core purpose of universities is the provision of both research and education, such purpose being identified in all the universities' statutes. For example s6 of the University of New South Wales Act 1989 (NSW), the objects section, provides that both education and research are principal functions. Nowhere in this objects provision (or in any of the other university statutes) is there any suggestion of subservience of one function to another. Further, one only has to ask graduates what they remember and value from their years at law school to realise that it is the teaching which informs their view – both the excellent and the abysmal. Research, on the other hand, is often equated with a closed door and sign indicating that the occupant is on leave. The suggestion, therefore, of the appointment of certain staff to teaching-intensive, or teaching-only, positions is somewhat curious. If the objective of the exercise is to recognise and value excellence in teaching, then the models proposed do not satisfy that objective. This paper examines the ways in which universities value education and whether excellence in legal education can be advanced by the appointment of teaching-intensive academic staff.

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