

## **Governance and Power through Indicators: The UK Higher Education Teaching Excellence Framework**

**Professor Roger King**

**19<sup>th</sup> October 2017 11.00 to 13.00 – The Edge 1.1**

### **Abstract**

The Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) was recently introduced by the UK Government for universities and colleges. The TEF may be regarded as an extension of the performance measure culture that has enveloped UK public service organizations. A performance culture in English higher education has already become well-established for research through the Research Excellence Framework. However, an increasing governmental focus on students as fee-paying consumers has meant that raising the performance and standing of teaching and learning has become a policy imperative. This presentation will analyse how indicators such as the TEF respond to demands for numerical, rank-ordered, and comparable data – that is, to the desire to make visible that which is difficult to ‘know’ so it can be evaluated. The presentation focusses on the aims, operation and outcomes of the TEF. Benefits as well as controversies will be discussed. For example, successful indicators that become institutionalized produce what Espeland and Sauder (2012: 86) describe as ‘powerful and unanticipated effects: they can change how people think about what they do’, including how excellence is to be defined. Those being evaluated thus ‘often respond to the act of being measured in ways that subvert the intentions that first motivated the assessment process.’ Notwithstanding these criticisms, the presentation concludes that the TEF is likely to dominate developments in learning and teaching in England, As such it will have considerable authority and will require careful scrutiny and operationalisation.

### **Biography**

Professor Roger King is former Vice Chancellor. Alongside Lord Norton, he was co-chair of the Higher Education Commission’s inquiry into the regulation of the new higher education landscape. He is a Visiting Professor at the Higher Education Policy Unit at the University of Queensland, Australia and a Research Associate at the Centre for the Analysis of Risk and Regulation at the London School of Economics and Political Science and Visiting Research Fellow at the Association of Commonwealth Universities. He was the founding Chair of what is now the Higher Education Academy. He is Series Co-Editor of Palgrave Macmillan’s ‘Universities into the Twenty First Century’ and ‘Global Higher Education’ and is co-convenor of the Higher Education Policy Group for the Political Studies Association. Recent books include: *The State, Democracy and Globalization* (2003); *The University in the Global Age* (2004); *The Regulatory State in an Age of Governance* (2007); *Governing Universities Globally* (2009); the *Handbook on Globalization and Higher Education* (with Simon Marginson and Rajani Naidoo, 2011); and *The Globalization of Higher Education: Research Collection* (with Simon Marginson and Rajani Naidoo