Researching Research: Research Resources in Polytechnics and Institutes of Technology

Onawe Burgess
Whitireia Community Polytechnic
Porirua City, New Zealand
o.burgess@whitireia.ac.nz

The latest TEAC report 'Shaping the System' identified six key problems with the current (tertiary education) policy arrangements; two of which apply to research: (1) an excessive reliance on a demand-driven funding system and competition between providers; and (2) inadequate resources or under-resourced research communities[1].

This report is a snapshot of the current status of research resources in New Zealand Polytechnics and Institutes of Technology. Of particular interest is how institutions are resourcing, and supporting, researchers in the areas of Computing, Information Technology and Information Systems. All Heads of computing and related departments were contacted, of which, 16 of 24 responded.

Developing a research culture has been a key feature for most Polytechnics and Institutes of Technology. Increasingly more institutions are offering Degree programmes, and with that, face the issue of resourcing a research culture. The focus here is on what research support, or human resources, are provided to help assist and support that research culture.

Essentially, this report looks at the support provided within departments/schools or faculty and across the institution in general. Many institutions have an overall research resource, whether that be a Research Co-ordinator, Research Manager or Research Committee. The Research Co-ordinator position can incorporate a number of roles, ranging from funding applications to critiquing draft articles. At the school or department level, there appears to be more of a discrepancy. A significant number have no research support or human resources at all. Other institutions stated that they had access to either (or a combination of) Research Assistants, Faculty Research Co-ordinator, or staff who can negotiate research time by reducing teaching hours.

In general, polytechnics offering degree programmes have at least an institutional research position, and other research facilities and resources. The discrepancies at the departmental level, are most likely due to EFT-driven funding. Institutions identified gaps in support and research expertise and many indicated a need for a research position within their department. The differing provision of research resources between Polytechnics and Institutes of Technology, generally reflect the government funding system and the success of supporting a research culture.

References

TEAC, (2001) "Shaping the System: Second report of the Tertiary Education Advisory Commission", Wellington