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# **Rewarding excellent teaching: the translation of a policy initiative in the United Kingdom**

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## **Abstract**

The need to provide more significant rewards for ‘teaching excellence’ in order to provide parity of status with research in higher education has often been asserted. This paper examines ways in which the idea of rewarding excellent teaching has been understood and translated within a large teaching and learning initiative that was overtly based on rewarding and recognising excellent teaching. The initiative studied here, was the formation of 74 Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, established by the Higher Education Funding Council for England in 2004. The findings are based on research that traced the ‘translation’ of this policy aim in 15 institutions. The research found that the process of translation resulted in multiple interpretations of this agenda, including some that rejected the notion completely, raising some pertinent questions about policy formation in relation in teaching and learning.

## **Introduction**

Systems of reward are a common feature of the private sector, used to engender change and motivate employees to adopt desired behaviours (Chen, 2010). Often centred on practices of extrinsic reward their success is determined by the extent to which they align with the values

of employees (Chen, 2010). Increasingly governments use performance measurement, demonstrations of quality and the celebration of success to lead change. This paper examines a change initiative that was based overtly on the idea of rewarding ‘excellent’ performance both of institutions and individuals. This was the largest single funding programme in English higher education designed to support the development teaching and learning, the Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) initiative. The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) (2004) presented a vision for CETLs that saw their purpose to *reward* excellent teaching and to invest in that practice to increase and deepen its impact.

After a competitive, two-stage, bidding process 74 CETLs were awarded in 2005. Each CETL received recurrent funding, up to £500,000 per annum for five years and a capital sum up to £2 million. By the end of the funding period HEFCE anticipated they would leave a legacy of high quality learning environments, a culture of innovation and institutional change in practices of reward and recognition (HEFCE, 2004).

This paper examines ways in which a sample of CETL directors and managers interpreted HEFCE’s policy intentions with respect to reward and recognition. Latour’s (1987) concept of translation, to be elaborated later, is used as a conceptual framework to illuminate the process of ‘refraction and domestication’ (Trowler, 2008, p. 153). This case study illustrates the shortcomings of policy rhetoric and demonstrates the importance of locality and agency in policy realisation (Ball, 1997).

### **Reward and recognition of teaching: the background**

That universities have a reward system that very strongly favours publication is a well-established claim (Hannan and Silver, 2000; D’Andrea and Gosling, 2005; Young, 2006; McLean, 2001). Rhoades and Mauksch (1977) argued that in the USA ‘career mobility depends not on teaching excellence but on research’ (Rhoades and Mauksch, 1977, p. 9),

while in Australia, in the 1980's, Boud reflected on the challenges those interested in teaching experienced in gaining promotion (Boud, 2008). In the United Kingdom (UK), Gibbs and Openshaw (1983, p. 1) argued that there was 'a pressing need to create reward mechanism to encourage excellence in teaching'.

Boyer was influential when he argued that 'scholarship of teaching' must be rewarded alongside the 'scholarship of discovery' (Boyer, 1990). This led to the 'Scholarship of Teaching and Learning' movement as one form of recognition and reward (Chalmers, 2011). North America has a long history of awards for teaching, indeed, Chism *et al.* (1996, p. 25) noted that, 'teaching awards and recognition have long been features of most institutional reward systems' and in Australia, it was reported that 62% of universities had schemes to reward excellent teaching (Ramsden *et al.*, 1995). In the UK, the Dearing Report (NCIHE, 1997, paragraph 8.14) asserted that, for teaching staff, there was a 'lack of incentive to develop teaching'. Following Dearing, HEFCE explicitly adopted the language of reward with the first principle of its Learning and Teaching Strategy being to 'encourage and reward high-quality learning and teaching' (HEFCE, 1998, p. XX p1).

Most UK universities have subsequently established a number of reward mechanisms relating to teaching including awards and promotions. The majority of these rewards recognise past performance (Warren and Plumb, 1999) but it has been argued that rewards should be 'prospective' to encourage innovation (Gibbs and Habeshaw, 2002). Gibbs & Habeshaw (2002) also emphasised the need for reward systems to be embedded within institutional cultures if they are to succeed in raising the profile of teaching and learning.

It is against this background that HEFCE set about 'recognising and rewarding existing excellence' in teaching and learning (HEFCE, 2004, p. 6). Obtaining CETL status was not simply an institutional reward for existing excellence. HEFCE expected reward and recognition to be central to a CETL's working, serving to 'recognise, celebrate and promote

excellence, by rewarding teachers who have made a demonstrable impact on students learning and who enthuse and motivate others to do the same' (HEFCE, 2004, p. 4). Institutions were required to demonstrate strategies for rewarding 'excellent practitioners through financial or promotional schemes or in other ways, including by giving more time and opportunity to teach and reflect on teaching, provision for staff visits, better facilities for teaching and increased opportunities for improved staff-student interaction' (HEFCE, 2004, p. 10). It was envisioned that the existing excellent staff would 'form the core of a CETL' (HEFCE, 2004, p. 10). Despite the assertion that 'the purpose of CETLs is to reward excellent teaching practice' (HEFCE, 2004, p. 1) reward and recognition were not distinguished or defined. Rather HEFCE invited CETL teams to explore their own interpretation and mechanisms for the reward and recognition of excellent teaching. Despite this lack of definition, **FOUR OVERLAPPING CATEGORIES OF REWARD AND RECOGNITION IN RELATION TO THE AWARD OF A CETL WERE DISTINISHED DURING THIS RESEARCH:**

1. Recognition and reward bestowed on the institution: ways the institution was rewarded for being awarded a CETL, for example, additional funding and improved status.
2. Recognition and reward bestowed by the institution: ways institutional processes were redesigned to increase the status of teaching as a result of the CETL award.
3. Individual rewards: rewards such as promotion and salary increments received by individuals as a result of the CETL award.
4. Individual recognition: recognition of individuals for their contribution to the CETL through symbolic acts that bestowed status as indicators of value by the

institution, for example, titles, ceremonies, awards or informal gestures of appreciation.

## **Research methodology**

The research was formulated in 2004 after HEFCE's invitation to bid for CETL status was announced. Initially, respondents were recruited through the professional networks and contacts of the researchers with institutions preparing bids. As the research progressed, additional respondents were recruited from those institutions awarded CETLs. This enabled longitudinal collection of data at each of the different stages of the CETL initiative from those who were significant witnesses to the experience of implementing a CETL and to the impact of the CETL on their institution (Gosling and Hannan, 2007a). Over the course of the study 49 participants representing a mix of bid writers, senior managers and CETL directors and staff from 24 institutions were interviewed.

In this phase, 16 in-depth, structured interviews were conducted with CETL staff who were either directors or in strategic roles from 15 CETLs based in 13 universities. 10 respondents had participated in earlier stages of this research. Original interview data were reviewed and self-evaluation documents CETLs produced for HEFCE analysed; although this project is independent of the HEFCE final evaluation.

Data were thematically coded based on topics from the previous stages of the research and emergent themes from this phase. Interviewees were coded by their institution type (N for post-1992, O for pre-1992, N/O for a partnership between old and new universities) and their role (B for bid writer, D for director and S for those in supporting positions).

The 74 funded CETLs were based in 54 different institutions, the majority of which were universities (HEFCE, 2005), with 16 of these hosting multiple CETLs. Additionally, 19 were collaborative, working across a range of institutions/professional organisations. The

2010 respondents represented 12 single institution CETLs and three collaborations between two or more higher education institutions. HEFCE identified the funded CETLs as representing 19 subject categories and addressing 17 pedagogic themes (for example, assessment, employability) (HEFCE, 2005). In this study eight represented thematic areas with the rest drawn from specific disciplines. Seven in the sample were in pre-1992 institutions and six in post-1992, while two included both pre and post-1992. The sample also reflected the proportion of pre-1992 and post-1992 universities, therefore, in all important respects, was representative of the CETL initiative as a whole.

### **Translation of policy**

Respondents were faced with the task of interpreting HEFCE policy within their own institutional and disciplinary context. The meaning and implications of the policy were constructed through inter-subjective processes influenced by past experience, personal preferences and institutional power dynamics (Wenger, 1998). As with all top-down policy initiatives, individual agents enacted and transformed the strategic objectives of the funding council's policy in response to their local circumstances, institutional culture, interests and goals (Trowler, 2008; Ball, 2009; Ball, 1997).

There is a considerable literature on the management of change in education and on diffusion, dissemination and implementation of innovations (Elton, 2003; Hannan and Silver, 2000; McKenzie *et al.*, 2005). Studies have identified a myriad of factors that influence whether and how an innovation is taken-up (Greenhalgh *et al.*, 2004). In this paper Latour's (1987) concept of translation is employed because it enables us to focus on how policy intentions become accepted, modified or abandoned by agents responsible for implementing that policy. Latour argues that people are willing to accept a claim or innovation as true or workable if it aligns with their interests. He developed this concept through an

anthropological study of scientific laboratories in which he considered how scientific claims become accepted into wider society as ‘facts’. ‘Translation’ is defined as ‘the interpretation given by fact-builders of their interests and that of the people they enrol’ (Latour, 1987, p. 108). Therefore through translation new or alternate interpretations can be offered that direct people in different directions to which they may have travelled originally (Latour, 1987).

According to Latour (1987) translation could take a number of avenues, depending on whether the claim can appeal directly to agents’ explicit interests, or whether it is necessary to persuade them that their interests can be aligned through some intermediary process. Successful translation ultimately relies on actors having or believing they have shared goals and interests, which can be slowly aligned in specific directions. This study considers the ways in which the concept of ‘reward and recognition’ was ‘translated’.

### **Reception of the idea of reward and recognition**

CETLs were about rewarding staff. I think that was one of the hardest bits to do.

(C10, O, D)

[...] that was one of the parts of the bid that I always thought was a bit problematic.

(C3, N, S)

From the outset, CETL teams modified HEFCE’s intentions for the initiative (Gosling and Hannan, 2007b). Identifying a core of excellent staff became contentious; those writing bids were not necessarily those who would be directly involved in the CETL and, even when they were, human resources policy required advertisement of posts. Immediate financial rewards were also thought to be contrary to human resources policy. There was tension



between the discourse of reward and more traditional understanding of professionalism (Stronach *et al.*, 2002, Taylor, 2007). Six respondents felt rewarding already successful departments could be perceived to be divisive, undermining attempts to create a sense that all staff could have a stake in the CETL. There was unease with the ‘performance culture’ promoted by UK governments (Taylor, 2007, Stronach *et al.*, 2002); particular CETLs rejected the assumption that competition between individuals and institutions is an important motivator to improve performance. This difficulty also pointed to a more fundamental contradiction between retrospective rewards for past excellence and using rewards prospectively to motivate staff to collaborate with the CETL; an issue that shall be returned to.

In translating the reward agenda bid writers concentrated upon what was achievable, reducing the ambition to achieve change from the institutional to the local. This had consequences for the longer-term sustainability of CETL reward and recognition strategies, since CETLs’ own local practices could run counter to, or alongside, institutional reward systems, a concern highlighted by three respondents.

The CETL was laid over an existing system rather than made to articulate with that.

So when it came to rewarding there was a kind of rivalry, not explicitly but implicitly.

(C1, N, D)

### **Translating the reward and recognition agenda**

A distinctive aspect of the initiative was that successful institutions were rewarded by up to £2m toward new teaching spaces or equipment. HEFCE required capital developments to be completed in the first two years (HEFCE, 2004), absorbing a considerable proportion of time during the set-up period. This was remembered as a challenging and sometimes frustrating

time as the directors negotiated institutional systems to establish the CETLs as recognised centres and create new teaching and learning spaces.

For eight respondents, the space they were able to create, and inhabit for the duration of the funding, was a reward in itself and regarded as one of the successes of the initiative:

[...] the actual physical facilities will be a definite lasting legacy. (C10, O, D)

[...] but everyone who walks in to the university goes in to that space and goes wow, whatever happened here, or, this is the best kept secret in the universe. (C8, O, D)

The new physical spaces created a highly visible reward that managers could appropriate and celebrate publicly (Gosling & Hannan, 2007b). In this aspect there was no need to ‘translate’ the concept of reward because new buildings and facilities appealed directly to the recipients’ explicit interests (Latour, 1987).

However, reward and recognition of CETL teams and affiliated university staff was less visible. It is not uncommon for personal rewards to be privately celebrated (Legge, 1994); nevertheless in the context of this initiative it reflects the extent to which CETLs buried this agenda within their working. Only two CETLs considered reward to be central to their work, nevertheless all but one used their funds to reward selected staff. In addition, staff contributing to the achievement of the CETL’s goals were given various forms of recognition. There is evidence that it was more important to individuals to be recognised for their contribution to the CETL than to receive a relatively small financial reward:

I was surprised about the real kudos that people got from getting an [name of CETL] fellowship, they really thought this was something to have and felt it was a real reward for work they had put in. (C6, N, D)

And the fact that people get something unapplied for—they've been tremendously appreciative. (C9, O, D)

One entrepreneurially orientated CETL was clear that financial rewards must be earned for something achieved or produced.

[...] we're prepared to reward you if you deliver and you do something. For [colleague's name], when he sells an online tool there is an element of performance-related pay for him, sell five and we will give you a certain amount of money. (C5, N, D)

However, even in this example, the greater reward was thought to be professional recognition by colleagues for the tool that had been created.

Where the aim of the CETL was broad, for example to encourage engagement in developing or researching teaching and learning, it was possible to provide opportunities for staff to pursue their own interests:

[...] our approach to rewarding in a sense, [has been] if you want to do something there is now no reason why you can't do it, we will give you the resource to do it. (C5, N, D)

Such funding was not necessarily based on any judgement of excellence rather it related to the perceived benefits for teaching and learning within the context of the CETL's goals. In some cases the idea of 'excellence' was rejected.

I think it changes depending on circumstances, it changes locally, I don't think you can have an excellence in teaching and learning. (C2, N, D)

In other cases rewarding existing excellence was rejected because it did not promote change. Within the five CETLs where there was an ambition to achieve significant cross-institutional change there was a decisive shift away from project funding in which 'they had to demonstrate excellence, and we'd give the money' (C4, N/O, D) to projects that were intended to bring about embedded change within the institution'. This reconceptualisation of the way 'reward' money could be most usefully awarded was 'one of the significant changes' (C4, N, D) made by two CETLs as they progressed.

Prospective awards led to invitations for proposals that were grassroots in origin, emerging from the concerns of everyday practice by academics who did not necessarily have previous experience of pedagogic research or development.

A woman who teaches [names subject], she's taught that for years on her own and she's long had this idea about creating [names resource] to teach it and she put in a bid, [she] doesn't know how to make [names resource] so we partnered her with a web developer. (C5, N, D)

Respondents perceived supporting such grassroots-level work as important in engendering goodwill and extending their CETL's influence. In Latour's (1987) terms,

rewarding existing excellence was ‘translated’ by CETL directors into a concept that would appeal to a shared interest with those they wanted to enrol into their aspirations for the CETL. Consequently, teams moved away from HEFCE’s original conception of reward for existing excellence and it frequently came to be perceived as financing educational development and pedagogic research.

As Latour (1987) cautioned, this mode of translation is risky, open to interpretation and vulnerable to being taken off in directions related to individual rather than collective interests. In this case, the award of funding removed barriers to innovation in teaching and learning, in particular lack of resources (Hannan and Silver, 2000), but it had unanticipated consequences that CETL teams had to negotiate, because, as Morris and Fry (2006, p. 54) noted, ‘moving into the field of education turned international researchers into research novices in need of support and advice’.

[...] the people that came needed so much support because they weren’t pedagogic researchers. (C6, N, D)

Providing incentives for individuals to change their career trajectories through their involvement in a teaching and learning project also came with some risks for the staff members recruited:

Much though some of them are interested in that [pedagogical research], for a few of them can it become a kind of sensible future career option. They probably need to keep going with their own discipline-based research. (C13, O, D)

Furthermore, the effectiveness of such mechanisms in enhancing teaching practice and achieving change has been widely critiqued (Chalmers, 2001; Macfarlane, 2011; Morris & Fry, 2006; Skelton, 2005; Warren & Plumb, 1999).

### **Intrinsic reward: ‘doing it for the students’**

Seven respondents felt those who became involved in the work of the CETL did not do so in order to gain reward and recognition. Rather it was individuals’ belief in the goals of the CETL and the opportunities the funding provided that motivated their commitment.

Frequently the CETLs involved:

[...] self-selected people who are enthusiastic. (C10, O, D)

Some enthusiasts had mixed feelings about rewards that created ‘an additional burden that created more work’ (Clifford *et al.*, 2009, p6) but they were central to CETLs achieving their goals:

I mean they’re obviously committed to what they’re doing, you know they wanted to do it for their students so if they’re getting that then they are rewarded. (C3, N, D)

These sentiments were echoed across the sample and show the continuing loyalty to a more traditional conception of professional work as having its own intrinsic reward (Stronach *et al.*, 2002). According to respondents, staff worked for their CETLs because they believed in the value of what they were doing, not because there were incentives offered through reward schemes. However, the CETL funding made possible an opportunity for enthusiasts to pursue their interest in teaching and learning:

There is that reward in that they've had time to work on something that they've found very interesting. (C3, N, D)

Most CETLs used their financial power to buy-out staff to engage in CETL projects recognising that this was only a temporary solution and would not lead to sustainable changes in institutional practices. Where staff could not be bought out from their teaching duties their efforts could be recognised by other means such as travel, conference attendance, away days, better facilities and a higher standard of catering!

The generous funding available for professional development (in seven CETLs) principally benefitted the individuals involved rather than achieving the large-scale cultural change in both old and new universities that HEFCE had envisioned.

What we did do is enable people to attend conferences. I can think of one person in particular who I was astonished had never been to a conference until [the] CETL paid for them. (C10, O3, D)

A lot of the staff have travelled, [name] who works in the team, he's been to Singapore, America, Eastern Europe, South Africa, so he's been all over the world paid for by us. (C5, N5, D)

### **Reward through existing institutional processes**

In six cases reward and recognition within the CETL was downplayed in the latter part of their funding, because allocating financial rewards was seen as incompatible with the professional culture of the institution:

[...] too divisive, that some people would be singled out, and given that teaching wasn't their main thing anyway, [...] but we reacted quite strongly against the idea of individual rewards and we never did that. (C11, O4, S)

In Latour's terms, the perceived interests of staff conforming to existing definitions of academic identity was seen to be in conflict with the model of professionalism based on reward. Because the gulf between the two ideals was too great to allow any translation, the reward agenda was rejected.

Three respondents explicitly considered that it was the institution's responsibility to reward and recognise individuals' achievements in their teaching and learning through the existing promotion routes. However, across all 16 respondents examples were cited of the CETL activities enhancing individuals' *curricula vitae* and profiles in teaching and learning, contributing considerably to the success of those who put themselves forward for institutional promotion:

[...] there have been quite a few promotions on the back of work they're doing with [the CETL] and obviously it's definitely helped. (C10, O, D)

there's a lot of people in the university [...] who have been successfully promoted, have got that promotion, partly on the back of work they've been doing with us.  
(C13,O,D)



I got my Professorship this year, I'd like to believe I'd have got it anyway but certainly the work with the CETL didn't do it any harm. (C4, N, D)

Recognition has also been given nationally through the National Teaching Fellows:

We've got four National Teaching Fellows; three of them are very strongly clearly associated with the Centre for Excellence. (C7, N, D)

CETL activities resulted in invited keynotes and publications for core workers, which were interpreted as enhancing their status in external communities. As a result respondents felt they had an enhanced internal status and were more likely to be consulted by senior management. In four cases CETL teams had also been recognised by winning internal awards.

An important point here is that, staff were enabled to meet established, institutional criteria for promotion by the work undertaken for the CETL, for example by generating income and publishing research. Instead of challenging the criteria for promotion, the CETLs facilitated promotion within their institution's existing processes. So, although CETL teams, and individuals within the teams, may have received institutional recognition, generally CETLs had limited impact on reward systems, which remained resolutely grounded in the recognition of research. Ambitions to shift the wider culture of the community with respect to reward and recognition were largely abandoned. Only one respondent identified a change in institutional reward practices:

[...] and Uni X now has a learning route for—you can be a senior teacher instead of senior lecturer if your main focus is learning and teaching. (C9, O, D)

Rather respondents expressed frustration at the lack of progress made:

I don't think that we've really made any great strides in terms of career routes based on teaching. I don't know whether that's changed at all, I don't think it has. (C7, N, D)

We certainly have found it hard to convince the university about its recognition and reward of teaching and learning. I sit on the promotions thing [...] I don't feel I've really moved hearts and minds there. (C8, O, D)

This illustrates the relative powerlessness of short-term projects, even when generously funded, to fundamentally challenge existing institutional cultures. Local identity and convictions proved to be less amenable to change than government agencies allow (Ball, 1997).

## **Conclusion**

Young (2006) repeated the concerns of many researchers and policy makers by arguing that too great an emphasis was placed on achievements in research rather than teaching. In 2011, following five years of investment, this issue still has resonance. The Higher Education Academy in its survey of academics' experiences of recognition for teaching and learning and institutional promotion criteria, concluded that with respect to promotion for teaching 'changes were overdue and continued to be slow in materialising' (HEA, 2009, p. 31)

The categories introduced earlier indicate there is evidence that the managers considered the award of a CETL as a form of collective reward but there is insufficient evidence to conclude whether or not institutions have achieved any significant recognition across the sector through the award of one or more CETL. The CETLs featured in this research, have had a limited impact in motivating behaviour change at institutional level but, in most cases, have reinforced an existing divide between a minority with an interest in teaching and learning from the majority who pursued more traditional academic careers. On this evidence, providing funding to create a new (and temporary) professional context for a minority of staff in a minority of institutions cannot erode well-established discipline identities and career progression routes linked to research output rather than to teaching competence, or (in the preferred discourse of the policy makers) teaching ‘excellence’. These conclusions are not a surprise and were predicted from the outset when the cetl initiative was established back in 2004. And later this reported (10 July 2008) “...the report for the Higher Education Funding Council for England says that although the centres have had an impact in "pockets", many have had "little or no effect on institutional practice outside the immediate Cetl beneficiaries". Only a minority of centres have had "profound" effects on institutions' policies and practices and have begun to influence the wider community. Forty-two per cent of centre directors said they had only some or no support from senior managers at their institution; and 39 per cent said they discussed progress only through steering groups or stated that senior managers had little knowledge of the activities of their Cetls.”

With regards to reward and recognition for staff, the evidence from this sample suggests that limited progress was made. The process of translation resulted in multiple interpretations of this agenda, including some that rejected the notion completely despite its centrality in HEFCE’s vision. As short-term funded projects, CETLs were structurally too

divorced from their home institutions to change institutional culture to any significant extent. All but two respondents rejected the ‘economy of performance’ (Taylor, 2007) now associated with a reward-based culture. Respondents used CETL reward systems to fund innovative practice, pedagogic research and professional development. The findings of the independent evaluation commissioned by HEFCE suggest that this was the case across the CETL initiative. They concluded:

While some CETL staff and participants have benefited from enhanced recognition and reward, this has not always had a wider institutional impact in relation to the recognition of teaching and learning excellence more generally. (HEFCE, 2011, p. 27)

Individually and collectively the CETLs have been identified as contributing to the development of teaching and learning in the English higher education sector (HEFCE, 2011). The data from the sample of CETLs demonstrates that they developed new technologies, explored new spaces and enhanced practice. The funding provided those with an interest in teaching and learning unprecedented opportunities and resources. The CETLs were an opportunity for those with existing interests in teaching and learning to have their commitment validated and to receive resources to develop their teaching. As one bid-writer predicted, is a kind of reward:

[...] they will now be able to do it well because they will have the resources to do it, so there is that kind of reward, professional satisfaction by being able to do it properly. (C11, O, B)

Respondents indicate that HEFCE’s expectation that CETL reward systems would be integral to extending the scope of their work and building influence within their host institution was overstated. A central team or those with an established interest in teaching and

learning undertook the majority of each CETL's work. A wider network of university staff did participate in CETLs but, for most, pursuing teaching development projects afforded limited and short-term recognition and could lead to individuals becoming distanced from the networks that had a formative impact on their professional identity (Henkel, 2005).

Nationally, and internationally, debate continues about the efficacy of strategies to reward and recognise teaching and learning (Chalmers, 2011). Higher education is facing a very different economic climate to the one in which the CETL initiative was launched. At the time of interviewing, respondents were concerned with the sustainability of their work, maintaining the momentum created by the CETL and retaining staff. Given the resource-intensive nature of many CETLs' reward systems, they could not be maintained beyond the end of the funding. Although not unanticipated, this was a cause of considerable frustration for those CETLs who had built reward into the core of their activities.

The scope of this study has been one well-funded initiative in England but the implications have a wider relevance for funded initiatives in any country. Top-down policies imposed on the higher education sector will not be achievable if they are removed from the daily practices of universities and the academics expected to enact these changes (Trowler & Bamber, 2005). The rhetoric of policymakers has to be translated into a social reality within institutional contexts and individuals' agentic capacities. Well-resourced initiatives have a limited potential for real change if they are poorly conceptualised and lack a basis in a sound theory of change (Ball, 1997). This research demonstrated that the CETLs' agenda for reward and recognition was another example where the rhetoric of policymakers could not be fully 'translated' into the values and practices of the sector and those working within it, significantly limiting the achievement of the initiative's aims.

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