

From: Michael Humphreys [<mailto:mh@psy.uq.edu.au>]
Sent: Thursday, 16 December 2010 11:05 AM
To: NationalBoards
Subject: limited registration

Dear Professor Grenyer

In the early 1980s the newly formed Psychology Registration Board of Queensland initiated a campaign to require academics employed in university psychology departments to register. This proposal caused serious concern amongst many academics. An account of the issues raised at the time can be found in (Humphreys & Siegal, 1983; Siegal & Humphreys, 1983; Smith, 1983). Briefly the academics felt that they gained nothing by registration as they did not need to use the title "psychologist" and did not consider themselves as health practitioners. Registration was also seen as expensive and burdensome. More seriously registration was regarded as a threat to university autonomy as it would restrict who could be hired by university psychology departments. A restriction on hiring was regarded as a threat to the research mission of universities. I must acknowledge that at the time nobody contemplated the possibility that short term visitors and higher degree research students would also be required to register. This would have been seen as a direct and serious threat to the research mission of universities.

Because no reasons were advanced as to why the compulsory registration of academics was needed rumours abounded and the whole enterprise was questioned. What was the board's real motivation? Was it simply a money raising exercise? Was it an attempt to make registration look more respectable by mixing highly trained but not clinically trained staff in with practising psychologists who had inadequate training? Was registration really going to help to protect the public or was it simply a move by practitioners to restrict competition? Was the fee for service model right for psychology and/or for the public? There was also concern that a board that was primarily set up to register psychologists in the mental health field was not competent to regulate academics. The campaign by the Psychology Board ended when an opinion was obtained from the Queensland Attorney General. Briefly the opinion stated that the use of an academic title (e.g., Lecturer in Psychology) would not be seen as a claim to be competent to practice psychology.

As far as I can see the same lack of justification of the need for academic and research higher degree student registration applies to the current discussion paper that you have released. There is no evidence of a cost benefit analysis which formed a major part of your discussion paper on psychological testing. Furthermore there is no argument as to how compulsory registration of academics and higher degree research students will protect the public or accomplish any other legitimate aim. Under these conditions I am sure that many of the reactions to the campaign by the Queensland Board in the 1980s will be repeated.

Sincerely,

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Humphreys, M.S., & Siegal, M. (1983). A reply to Smith. *Australian Psychologist*, 18, 221-223.

Siegal, M. & Humphreys, M.S. (1983). Academic psychology and the registration of psychologists. *Australian Psychologist*, 18, 205-211.

Smith, R. L. (1983). Academic psychology and the registration of psychologists-Reply. *Australian Psychologist*, 18, 213-219.