

## **Critiquing the Tertiary Education Commission's Role in New Zealand's Tertiary Education System: Policy, practice and panopticism**

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This paper uses Bentham's panopticon, as proposed by Foucault (1977), as a metaphorical representation of the role of the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) established in New Zealand in 2003, and considers its likely impact in the tertiary education sector. The argument conceptualises a process of 'managerial panopticism' to suggest that the reforms initiated by the 1999 Labour/Alliance Coalition Government, and imposed upon New Zealand's tertiary education sector by the TEC, employ techniques of coercion that provide individuals with a sense of opportunism when and if they comply. Furthermore, this sense of opportunism is actually an illusion used by the government to stifle any possible resistance to the reform process. We propose that if academics want to access opportunities for a career that provides secure employment, a regular income and continued scholarly esteem, they are more likely to comply with, rather than oppose, the policies administered by the Tertiary Education Commission.

### **Introduction**

As New Zealand entered the twenty-first century with aspirations to prosper as a knowledge society, the problems that had plagued its tertiary education sector at the end of the previous century remained. The analyses, reiterated by four Tertiary Education Advisory Commission (TEAC) reports within two years (TEAC, 2000, 2001a, 2001b, and 2001c) focused upon the so-called 'quality' and 'competitiveness' of a tertiary education sector within a national and global context. Between 1999 and 2002 the Labour/Alliance Coalition Government attempted to address the issues of burgeoning costs and higher participatory demands that impacted on New Zealand's tertiary education sector as part of its own 'Third Way' agenda of rebuilding the nation, strengthening community partnerships and creating a knowledge society (see Codd, 2001). This included introducing new systems of monitoring, inspection and review that could evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of the tertiary education sector in terms of its overall performance relative to national and global markets. This form of monitoring, first introduced in New Zealand in 1987 by the New Zealand Treasury Brief *Government Management*, and maintained throughout the 1990s by a succession of neo-liberal governments, incorporated both a Managerial Monetarist approach to economy and Public Choice Theory (Boston, Martin, Pallot & Walsh, 1991; Olssen, 2001). These were the tools and mechanisms inherent within a redefined neo-liberal platform most commonly referred to in New Zealand as New Public Management, or NPM (Thrupp, 1997; see also Jones and May, 1999; Peters and Roberts, 1999).

Within the contemporary New Zealand context, NPM systems and strategies advocate that an educated society is an essential human resource that promotes nation state status and participation within an implied 'homogeneous' global knowledge society. Ashcroft (2002, 2003) used Bentham's panopticon as a metaphorical representation of the coercive influence of New Public Management on New Zealand's universities and academics by examining the recent TEAC led reforms and the implementation of Performance-Based Research Funding (PBRF). The comparison of Bentham's panopticon, drawn primarily from Michel Foucault's (1977, 1978) philosophical analysis of the relations of power, is useful in identifying and mapping the complexity of the gaze matrix being created within New Zealand's tertiary education sector under a process that we have called 'managerial panopticism'.

This paper uses Bentham's panopticon, as proposed by Foucault (1977), as a metaphorical representation of the role and likely impact of the recently established Tertiary Education Commission (TEC). In particular, we examine the possible effects that this new centralised model of bureaucratic surveillance could have upon teachers and researchers within New Zealand's universities. We argue that the TEC is likely to become the panopticon 'tower' of New Zealand's tertiary education sector. Beneath its gaze the liberal traditions of institutional autonomy and academic freedom are effectively replaced by systems of 'performance' auditing where the funding of the tertiary education system is tied to individual performances rather than institutional performances (as was the case in the 1990s). We also argue that the reforms initiated by the 1999 Labour/Alliance Coalition Government, imposed on a tertiary education environment defined and characterised by two decades of neo-liberalism, have particular coercive effects.

The argument is presented in four parts. Firstly, the political environment that was created by New Zealand's Labour/Alliance Coalition Government between 1999 and 2002 is outlined. Next the theoretical underpinnings of the panopticon and 'managerial panopticism' are addressed. We then make the case for a critical reading of the TEC as the panopticon 'tower' of New Zealand's tertiary education system. This concludes with a focus on the implications of 'managerial panopticism' for academics' roles, in researching and teaching, as critic and conscience of society.

### **The Labour/Alliance Coalition 1999-2002**

Leading up to the 1999 general election in New Zealand, the Labour Party promoted a 'Third Way' philosophy as part of its pre-election campaign (Maharey, 2001). The Party represented itself as a new direction that would seek to rebuild a nation ravaged by fifteen years of right-wing marketisation. It also promised to forge new community partnerships and create new opportunities that, according to Labour's campaign, would support every single New Zealand citizen in becoming a member of a new and vibrant 'knowledge society'. In critiquing Labour's campaign, Jane Kelsey (2002a, 2002b) argued that where the party had promised to forge new community partnerships, these were generally superficial with economic considerations always taking precedence, and that such partnerships actually served to depoliticise the communities rather than strengthen them. Kelsey also criticised the so-called 'knowledge society'. She suggested the nation's capacity to develop a knowledge society was limited by the government's continued commitments to the reduction of expenditure on education and training, as well as to globalisation and free trade, which effectively undermined the innovative potential of the economy (Kelsey, 2002a). However, unlike Codd (2001, 2003) who argued that there was a close political relationship between Labour's 'Third Way' vision and the neo-liberal agendas of successive New Zealand governments during the 1990s, Kelsey (2002a) suggested that while there was indeed a relationship between the two, it had become more of a managerial relationship than a political one. Although the distinction between the two may seem obscure (it could be argued that managerial practices are always constituted within political spaces), Kelsey believed that Labour's 'Third Way' approach was an unprincipled agenda that lacked any coherent political strategy and survived solely upon crisis management and charismatic inertia. For example, the 1999 Coalition Government (formed by Labour with the minor Alliance Party) relied heavily on populist rhetoric, spin doctoring and the façade of a loving parent (see Kelsey 2002a; Peters, 2002). There were also a number of cases of Ministerial absenteeism during problematic portfolio issues between 2000 and 2002 (Ashcroft, 2002) along with heavy-handed responses to negative media coverage. An example of the latter involved an incident where a television news programme was censored after exposing a government mistake over the release of genetically modified organisms (locally referred to as 'corngate') (see *The National Business Review*, 2004).

During the first year of its tenure the Labour/Alliance Coalition Government did remain committed to neo-liberal notions of individualism and choice by supporting economic policies promoted by

transnational bodies such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Trade Organisation (WTO) (Kelsey, 2002a; see also Olssen, 2001; Peters and Roberts, 1999). But unlike the devolutionary governments in New Zealand during the 1980s and 1990s, the Labour/Alliance Coalition supported greater state intervention, generating higher levels of surveillance and management over both the public and private sectors of society.

This new-found desire to intervene in no way resembled the 'grand-fatherly' role of successive governments of the pre-1984 Keynesian era. During the late 1980s and 1990s neo-liberalism promoted economic prioritisation with an emphasis given to free-market principles and individual agency through the notion of 'choice' (Olssen, 2001). Fitzsimons, Peters and Roberts (1999) argued that neo-liberalism had become a form of government rationality that depended on the façade of a minimalist state infrastructure and the mechanisms of the market to regulate society. This served to promote individuals as autonomous and rational economic agents whose success, according to neo-liberalism, existed in their capacity to compete against other autonomous and rational economic agents within this minimalist market-based infrastructure (Ashcroft, 2003; Miller, 2002).

According to Fitzsimons *et al.* (1999) this emphasis on economic prioritisation became the meta-narrative that defined all aspects of New Zealand's public policy by the end of the 1990s, effectively silencing alternative discourses along with those who espoused them. Peters and Roberts (1999) demonstrated this last point by referring to the market-driven 1991 Employment Contracts Act. They argued that the Act served to disenfranchise large sections of the workforce by depleting their collective bargaining capabilities, and to redefine the nature of employment by creating a new 'casualised' workforce for whom job security and protection from exploitation had been seriously eroded. By depleting collective bargaining and undermining a sense of job security, the Employment Contracts Act effectively silenced one of its two intended beneficiaries: the New Zealand workforce.

By 1999 two decades of neo-liberalism had successfully broken down community structures in New Zealand on the premise of advancing the economic agency of the individual. At the outset of the new millennium a number of western governments, including New Zealand's Labour/Alliance Coalition, began to promote bureaucratic intervention as part of a 'Third Way' commitment to managing their country's participation in the construction of an all-encompassing 'global knowledge society'. A consequence of this re-imposition of bureaucracy was that it enabled governments to better regulate and control the activities and practices of individuals: Their agency was undermined in a redefined world driven by performance and accountability. It is within this political context that a metaphorical comparison of Bentham's panopticon can be useful in identifying and explaining the effects of re-imposed bureaucratic interventionism on individuals engaged in teaching and research within New Zealand's tertiary education sector. An example of such interventionism is the establishment and application of the Tertiary Education Commission.

### **Panopticism**

The panopticon, designed by Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832), was a unique piece of penal architecture that consisted of a ring-shaped building of prison cells that encircled an open area dominated by a central tower. The design created the effect of a perpetual gaze where the occupants of the outer cells were always exposed while the tower's observer remained invisible (see Foucault, 1977).

Foucault (1982a) examined the way people became subjected through various historical applications of knowledge and power, and how they then became objects of various discourses and practices. McHoul and Grace (1998: 22) defined *subjection* as the "processes of the construction of subjects" within relations

of power that “run through the whole of a particular social body”. According to Foucault (1982b), an individual's actions and behaviour could define their identity. For example, people could be subjected as a consequence of their sexual practices and orientations, their particular moral or religious principles, or by comparing their intellectual and social preferences with widespread accepted ‘norms’ of appropriate mental functioning (Foucault, 1977, 1978, 1982a). Any limitations imposed upon the individual as a consequence of their subjection were not solely imposed by external institutions and social bodies, but were also self-imposed through confessional revelations and self-surveillance (Foucault, 1977, 1978).

Foucault was therefore also interested in how individuals constituted themselves as subjects and, in effect, ‘disciplined’ themselves via particular ‘technologies of the self’ (Foucault, 1984). As a form of governmentality, for example, academics’ self-disciplined regimes for completing published work may be interpreted as a ‘technology of the self’ and part of the discursive constitution of what it means to be an academic in the Performance-Based Research Funding (PBRF) climate. According to Foucault (1977, 1982a; see also Semple, 1993), individuals soon become agents of their own ongoing subjection.

Foucault (1977) argued that a continuous gaze as a covert act of surveillance was perhaps one of the most effective ways to exercise power. Its anonymity allowed it to be perceived as a multiplicity: A single gaze, hidden but eternal, became thousands of monitoring eyes watching, assessing and classifying. This gaze existed everywhere and, for Foucault (1977; see also Danaher, Schirato, and Webb, 2000), panoptic techniques of surveillance and coercion became an integral part of the economic, social and political environments of the western world during the latter part of the twentieth century. They relied not only on the illusion of a continuous act of surveillance but, also, on the docility created within the observed by this illusion (Foucault, 1977).

Peters and Roberts (1999) suggested that New Zealand's contemporary tertiary education sector was constituted within a discourse of westernised capitalism where New Public Managerial modes of inspection, monitoring and review governed the activities and behaviour of individuals. They argued that “societies of control” [panopticon societies] allowed people to be constantly watched beneath the microscope of new and highly sophisticated technologies, scrutinised in a subtle way so as to perpetuate an illusion of individual freedom beneath a ceaseless gaze (89). This, according to Foucault, was the legacy of western capitalism: the creation of the seemingly ‘free’ individual subject within a society of surveillance (Foucault, 1977; Star, 1999).

### **Managerial Panopticism**

Within an environment encompassed by panopticism individuals are placed under the perpetual superintendence of delegated authorities such as the TEC and its various bureaucratic layers. As a consequence, they may begin to act in such a way that indicated they sensed a continuity of supervision (Star, 1999). Therefore the perpetual gaze of panopticism, once established, does not require constant regulation imposed by a dominant social structure or organisation. Nor does its authority need mutual consent (Star, 1999). It exists and functions by its own inertia. The panoptic gaze is not simply an act of surveillance imposed upon the individual by others; it operates to include the individual as part of its own *modus operandi*. It slowly embraces the individual, influencing them in such a way that they begin to monitor their own thinking, acting and behaviour. As Peters and Roberts (1999) show, the panopticon society slowly encompasses the management of tertiary education in contemporary New Zealand, as academics are increasingly required to account for their activities and practices in specific ways that do not necessarily assess their multi-layered contributions to the tertiary education sector.

According to Ball (1999: 4), power is exercised within the contemporary institutional environment through the construction and administration of intricate data-bases, various institutional appraisal

processes, ongoing reports, applications for promotion or research funding, audited inspections and peer reviews. With many of these processes having perceived benefits for the individuals over whom they are administered (such as a successful job promotion, publication or research grants) it is the continuity of acting, watching, performing, responding, and the way individuals participate within their environment that produces the effect we call 'managerial panopticism'.

A recording and reporting ethos has become a significant part of the New Public Managerial systems of monitoring and surveillance that have been introduced to New Zealand's tertiary education sector since 1987. Academics are required to constantly review their role as 'teacher' and analyse their performance in terms of their research 'output'. In the case of their role as a teacher, an academic's performance could be rewarded or sanctioned through such acts as promotion or supervision. However, the evaluative mechanisms used to assess the level of an academic's teaching performance will often be based upon non-educational indicators such as 'bums on seats', per-capita pass rates or government preferences for vocational relevancy. For example, the 1999-2002 Labour/Alliance Coalition's Minister of Finance, Dr. Michael Cullen, introduced a performance-related element to the funding of tuition as part of the 2002 Budget. Cullen (2002) argued that a new 'Student Component' would ensure limits on tuition costs through a 'fee maximum system' and that this economic limitation would, according to Cullen, improve the quality and relevancy of tertiary-level teaching.

In terms of their research, an academic's 'output' could be assessed in a number of ways. They could be monitored for the way they operated within funding guidelines (pre-determined by governments and/or bureaucrats without consultation) and they could be 'graded' for the 'valuable' outcomes they produced where that 'value' was determined by economic-based criteria. The assessment could include estimating the immediate marketable potential of the research product, or evaluating the charismatic capacity of the researcher and the research in attracting public and media attention and, as a consequence, generating the image of a 'winning' research culture. In *Investing in Excellence* (Ministry of Education, 2002a), the Performance-Based Research Fund Working Group described a potential for researchers to be definitively measured and valued in accordance with the Ministry of Education's stated goals and priorities. According to the Working Group (Ministry of Education, 2002c) researchers resided within a system where everything they did could be monitored for its outcome and usefulness, and where their research existed as an activity of production that could be perpetually increased.

Within this environment the panoptic gaze could be maintained without the need of an external authority to continually enact it. As the 'tower' the TEC could remain empty, and in the absence of an inspector we argue that academics are still likely to go about their daily routine in anticipation of the various rewards and/or sanctions they felt might be imposed upon them by the management systems that governed their practice. A Foucauldian perspective suggests that they could become subjected by their own self-regulation (Ball, 1999). We propose that they could produce 'virtual' representations of themselves, crafting curriculum vitae based upon their performances and their outputs (such as publications in the 'preferred' journals or course popularity determined by student numbers) and not necessarily upon their actual teaching and research (perceived as their ability to disseminate relevant lecture, tutorial and course-related material to students or contribute to existing bodies of knowledge through an active process of inquiry and discovery). They could also measure themselves in terms of rewards and sanctions (such as a promotion 'here' or a loss of research funding 'there'). In doing so, they could risk becoming active participants in their own superintendence based upon their own perceptions and assumptions of what those management systems required of them. It is from within this context that we suggest that a system of 'managerial panopticism' evolves, gains ground, and becomes institutionally and individually normalised.

'Managerial panopticism' is a process whereby New Public Managerial technologies are used to establish and impose systems of monitoring, inspection and review that seem beneficial to the participatory 'stakeholder' status of individuals. This promotes and instills a sense of opportunity and can become a means of gaining an individual's compliance. The opportunity is usually conceptualised as an interest or investment in a particular enterprise, where the individual has a stake in that enterprise, or is dependent upon certain outcomes in relation to that enterprise. Because they are constituted within policy discourse as tertiary education 'stakeholders', academics undergo a process of depoliticisation by being required to participate in decisions that affect the funding and management of their tertiary education institution under the illusion that their collaboration with other tertiary education stakeholders (such as government and industry) is likely to produce greater opportunities for themselves.

For example, a major aim of the TEC is to identify and fund the 'highest quality' research being undertaken by New Zealand's academics (TEC, 2003a). This is achieved through a process called Performance-Based Research Funding (PBRF), introduced in 2003. The TEC requires academics throughout New Zealand to participate on PBRF panels in a centralised peer review of portfolios submitted by other academics within their various disciplines. Together with international assessors, they are asked to scrutinise the quality and quantity of outputs and assign quantifiable scores. Sixty per cent of the government's research funding is then to be distributed by the TEC on the basis of the evaluations of individual evidence portfolios (TEC, 2003a). In the 2004 funding year, the money allocated as a consequence of the 2003 PBRF assessment exercise, based on current forecasts, is expected to be around \$18.2 million (TEC, 2004: 6). However, by the time PBRF is fully implemented in 2007, the money allocated by the contestable research fund is anticipated to be beyond \$134 million (see also New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee, 2003).

With sixty per cent of the Performance-Based Research Funding allocated as a consequence of evaluating individual research 'outputs', academics are conceptualised as having an investment in the success and 'output' of their university institution and academic department. As a consequence of this investment, academics who make a "significant contribution to research activity and/or degree teaching" (TEC, 2003b: 23) are encouraged to comply with the requirements of Performance-Based Research Funding, believing that it is in their interest to secure the best possible result for their institution, their department and themselves. Thus, the system positions academics to impose a self-surveillance on their professional conduct.

Another example that demonstrates how academics can co-operate in their own subjection through acts of compliance appeared in the October (2002) edition of the *AUS Bulletin*. In referring to Performance-Based Research Funding, President of the Association of University Staff (AUS), Grant Duncan, offered strong criticism of the new government funding model for the way it purported to measure research 'performance'. He was also critical of the way Performance-Based Research Funding enabled the Ministry of Education to rate the various universities and their individual departments in terms of their research 'output'. Clearly from a purely academic position, Duncan was opposed to Performance-Based Research Funding. Nevertheless, in voicing his concerns Duncan (2002: 2) recommended that the AUS membership accept and comply with Performance-Based Research Funding with minimal resistance by stating that:

Government is committed to performance-based funding, and probably the best we can do is help to design and execute a system that gives the best basis for comparing performance across research units and ultimately gets the best funding results for research-active universities (Duncan, 2002).

These examples serve to reveal how academics can be co-opted, depoliticised and disenfranchised in a regime of power that we call 'managerial panopticism'. Within its realm, resistance can sometimes appear to support the illusion of opportunity and freedom because the individual's capacity to oppose the system can be referred to as evidence of the apparent acceptability of opposition. But this illusion of freedom could simply serve to further mask underlying acts of coercion and, as such, support its ultimate requirement, that of compliance. On 18 November 2003, the Associate Minister of Tertiary Education, Steve Maharey, told Parliament that he did not know of a single person in New Zealand who opposed Performance-Based Research Funding (AUS Tertiary Update, 2003). Although public criticisms of the funding model do exist, and Duncan (2002) is evidence of that, any opposition can be re-constituted as part of the government's consultation process with other tertiary education stakeholders. Therefore government is able to covertly claim stakeholder compliance under the illusion that the funding model was designed by 'consent'.

Nevertheless, there are those working within the tertiary education sector who understand fully that their environment has become one that is designed to coerce them into compliance. For these individuals one possibility of resistance may exist within their role as the 'critic and conscience' of society as defined in the New Zealand Education Act (1989). This role enables academics to reposition themselves where they can use their own narrative to create opportunities for individual action (Luberda, 2000). By using their 'critical' voice, academics are able to exercise their agency through the authority of their discourse and as such, create possible spaces for resistance and change (Davies, 1991, 2003; Davies and Harre, 1990).

Although academics are expected to act as the 'critic and conscience' of society, there are limitations to this role. In being society's 'critic and conscience', academics are presented with an opportunity to voice their discontent at ongoing changes to the tertiary education sector and this may well include various criticisms directed at the TEC itself. But the role of academics within their universities also includes expectations of professionalism and associated compliance with government directives, which may confound motivations towards resistance. Added to this, there is a tension between academics' need to try and generate external revenue and income (such as funding available from sources like the Ministry of Education and the TEC) and their role in critiquing policies enacted and implemented by those funding authorities.

Another avenue for resistance may lie within the realisation that panopticism did not always produce docile compliance (Foucault, 1977). Trow (1996) argued that demanding greater accountability from academics signified an element of distrust towards academics. Codd (1999: 45) supported this by claiming that centralised surveillance, such as that directed by authorities like the TEC, fostered a "culture of distrust" within tertiary education institutions, directly affecting the ethical conduct of those employed within those institutions. Hazledine (1998) suggested that when individuals were employed within an environment devoid of trust, they often responded by becoming untrustworthy. For example, an individual might say; "you want me to work for you and you want me to be loyal to your interests but you will not trust me. I will show you how untrustworthy I can be. I will undermine your managerial impositions at every opportunity". In other words, those employed in an environment of compliance might respond by being non-compliant. Therefore the conditions that provide the possibility for the constitution of a compliant subject are also the conditions for resistance to that particular constitution.

However, although academics might choose non-compliance, Foucault (1982b: 331) described the coercive capacity of panopticism as a technique of power that could control the way people behaved by constituting their identity within a particular context. In order for these academics to create spaces of resistance they must constitute their role as an 'academic' through the various discourses and practices

that serve to objectify what an 'academic' actually is and does. If the various discourses and practices that society and government use to subject academics have included acts of compliance as part of that subjection, then to be an 'academic' will mean 'to comply'. Because there are various tensions between the different constituted roles of academics, the 'managerial panopticism' of the TEC represents a real threat to the long standing and legislated (Education Act 1989) tradition of academics as 'critic and conscience' of society.

### **The Tertiary Education Commission as a Panopticon 'Tower'**

In 1998 the Ministry of Education's *Tertiary White Paper* recommended the establishment of a new centralised bureaucracy to regulate and monitor the activities of New Zealand's tertiary education sector. Calling it the Quality Assurance Authority of New Zealand (QAANZ), the *Tertiary White Paper* described it as a singular regulatory authority that would continually inspect the sector on behalf of the Minister of Education. In the second Tertiary Education Advisory Commission report *Shaping the System* (TEAC, 2001a) this proposed regulatory authority was given a new name, the Tertiary Education Commission. According to TEAC (2001a) the new Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) would exist to strengthen tertiary education by providing a more integrated and strategic approach to the governance and leadership of the tertiary education sector.

The Tertiary Education Commission was officially established on 13 February 2003 under the provisions of E(TR)A, the Education (Tertiary Reform) Amendment Act 2002. The Commission is responsible for the funding of all post-compulsory education institutions, including the universities (TEC, 2002). Because the TEC exists as a Crown Entity it is accountable to government under its own legislation, the Education (Tertiary Reform) Amendment Act 2002, as well as the Public Finance Act 1989 (Schedules four, five, six and seven) and the State Services Commission. The Minister of Education directly appoints the TEC's Commissioners without consultation (except, where required, with the Minister of Māori Affairs). In short, the TEC is a government bureaucracy that is answerable solely to a Minister of the Crown and is required to continually operate within the political/managerial context that encompasses it at any given time. The TEC exists to monitor the tertiary education sector under the assumption that such monitoring assists in ensuring that the sector continues to contribute to the growth and innovative potential of New Zealand's knowledge society (Maharey, 2002).

The current New Zealand Labour Government (elected in July 2002) remains convinced that economic and social development will be the key factors needed for New Zealand to be able to become a knowledge society. In the Ministry of Education's (2002b) document *The 2002 Briefing for the Incoming Minister of Education*, the same line of argument that accompanied the reform process for the previous three years (and, to a varying degree, the decade prior to that) continued. According to the Ministry of Education (2002b), New Zealand universities will have to continue to forge business, community and stakeholder partnerships. The institutions will also need to achieve the right balance between cost and participation and develop an institutional culture that produces relevancy and efficiency in its teaching and research outcomes. In its *Tertiary Education Strategy* for 2002-2007, the Ministry of Education (2002c) has indicated that academics, as stakeholders, need to feel a sense of opportunity and 'belonging' within the tertiary education sector. This sense of opportunity and belonging, according to the Ministry of Education (2002c: 9), will enable academics to access the necessary tools that they need to monitor, evaluate and self-regulate their own activities and practices in accordance with the tertiary education goals and priorities set by government.

For every academic involved in the act of teaching, research or further study, the gaze administered by the TEC will be widespread and continuous. The gaze will come from 'above', that is from the TEC, the hierarchical structures of the institutions and from the tertiary education system itself. It will come



from 'below', via the students and consumers of the service being provided. It will come from 'outside' as an expression of business interests and industry expectations, along with national and global economic priorities. It will come from 'within' by way of departmental evaluations, ongoing practice appraisals, peer reviews and self-examination. Within this context academics are monitored, managed, measured and evaluated as though there is no distinction between one academic and the next. In that sense, they are 'treated like sheep', shepherded within their institution and throughout their careers so that they learn to think, act and behave in accordance with systems and processes that are imposed upon them.

The Tertiary Education Commission has been shaped by various New Public Management discourses and has imposed a form of governmentality on an institutional environment where individuals have already been subjected under neo-liberal policies and practices and then had their activities and practices objectified via the audit process of credentialising that has become commonplace with Third Way politics. As a consequence, we argue that a new discourse of Managerial panopticism is more firmly entrenched.

In 2001, Codd critiqued the earlier TEAC recommendations for establishing the TEC and its associated regulatory mechanisms and argued that any increased control imposed upon higher level teaching and research threatened to undermine the validity of that teaching and research. Codd's argument was based upon his concerns over the link between the notion of centralisation and decisions involving tertiary level funding. According to Codd (2001: 49), a centralised bureaucracy such as the TEC would impact on the teaching and research undertaken within the tertiary education sector: What could be taught and researched would largely depend on what the TEC (and government) chose to legitimate via resource allocations. In other words, Codd believed that under a centralised body such as the TEC, political and economic considerations were likely to privilege certain kinds of teaching and research and disadvantage others.

While the criticisms raised by Codd are certainly not unique (see also Olssen, 2001; and Roberts, 2003) there is another aspect of this 'privileging' process that is often overlooked: There is a coercive element inherent in the political and economic decisions made by the TEC (and, indeed, by the government) about the funding of tertiary level teaching and research. If, through funding, certain kinds of teaching and research are 'privileged' over others, then it is highly likely that many academics, either consciously or unconsciously, will reinforce this 'privileging' as a consequence of their career choices. To access opportunities of secure employment, regular income and continued scholarly esteem, academics may demonstrate compliance by adapting their teaching and research to fit with the models preferentially resourced by the TEC (and government) rather than try to advocate for those fields that are not privileged.

## **Conclusion**

We have argued that under the recent and ongoing tertiary education reforms academics are exposed to a form of panopticism where they are constantly monitored and assessed through ongoing peer evaluations, departmental reviews, annual performance appraisals, student endorsements and by their success or failure in accessing external research funding. As a consequence of this endless scrutiny, academics begin to monitor their own activities to ensure that they constantly comply with management's various expectations of them.

A system of 'managerial panopticism' is sustained in an environment where accountable partnerships are created between academics and interests of business, industry, community and other stakeholders, and where investment flow is monitored, and relevant research and quality teaching are measured and rewarded against government-based goals and priorities. Within this climate the persistent 'red tape' and the endless cycles of evaluations all serve as the 'bitter pill' offered to reputedly improve the health

of the institution and the workplace. By accepting the New Public Managerial medicine, academics within the various universities are likely to feel increasingly pressured to comply with the TEC's prescription for New Zealand's tertiary education sector. Rather than providing the voice of 'critic and conscience', academics are likely to demonstrate 'voluntary' compliance to the TEC in order to secure a career that provides scholarly esteem, a regular income and a future within their chosen institution and profession. They are then likely to speak with the 'depoliticised voice' of a tertiary education stakeholder as they demonstrate 'voluntary' compliance to the TEC.

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## Acronyms

|        |   |
|--------|---|
| AUS    | Association of University Staff.            |
| E(TR)A | Education (Tertiary Reform) Amendment Act   |
| NPM    | New Public Management.                      |
| PBRF   | Performance-Based Research Funding.         |
| QAANZ  | Quality Assurance Authority of New Zealand. |
| TEAC   | Tertiary Education Advisory Commission.     |
| TEC    | Tertiary Education Commission.              |

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