Foucault, Governmentality and the Performance Management of Academics: A Case Study at a South African University

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Abstract

This article examines the power dynamics underpinning performance management at a selected South African university. It specifically employs Michel Foucault's (1977) ideas on Governmentality to interpret the envisioning of performance management in this context at the level of Policy. The study employed a qualitative research methodology to address the questions at hand. Data were generated from one primary source: a discourse analysis of the Performance Management Policy (2013) at a selected university in South Africa. Using Michel Foucault's (1991) theories on governmentality, a discourse analysis of Performance Management Policy documents was conducted with the goal of critically interrogating the kinds of new academic subjectivities being created in South African higher education. The findings show that the Policy on Performance Management at the university in question works towards creating academic subjects which conform with the university's expectations and are consistently self- regulated. Findings also show that management of academics is constantly controlled and regulated by a powerful matrix of governance, comprising the university and the wider global community. This paper recommends that performance management discourses should take into stronger cognizance the matter of academic freedom and autonomy. We further recommend that Policy developers and management teams at universities be conscious of the complex forces of power that shape academic identities so that their policies move away from oppressive discourses. We argue that there is much we can learn from governmentality theory if we hope to build more just and equitable societies going forward.

Keywords: performance management, higher education, foucault, governmentality, academic subjectivity.

Introduction

This article provides an interpretation of the envisioning of performance management at the level of policy, at a selected South African university. To achieve this goal, the paper specifically employs Michel Foucault's (1977) ideas on Governmentality.

Global literature on performance management in higher education reflects that extensive research energy has been directed towards an understanding of this phenomenon. While some research has given focus to the systems involved in implementing performance management, others have looked at its impact on faculty and staff (Dasanayaka et al., 2021). Yet other studies centralise the challenges faced by higher education institutions in implementing performance management practices and recommend strategies to overcome them (Asif et al., 2013).

While invaluable insights have emerged from this body of research, a clear gap exists in the body of knowledge in the sense that very little research has investigated the impact of performance management on academic identity. In the literature review presented below, an attempt is first made to highlight the problems and concerns various writers raise regarding the academic identity that is likely to emerge when neoliberal strategies are used to evaluate the performance of institutions within higher education. We then justify the need to address this gap in the body of knowledge and go on to highlight the value of the theory of Governmentality (Foucault, 1991) as a theoretical framework.

Over the past decade, management teams at universities across the globe have endeavoured to evaluate academic achievement and have come up with new conceptions of the academic identity (Drennan et al., 2020). Alongside this movement, inquiry into general university life has shown ways in which neoliberal policies have been more and more institutionalized (Morrissey, 2013). These critiques show that the notion of "neoliberalism" has been used to loosely describe the current higher education landscape because it embodies the idea of openness and global competitiveness (Kandiko, 2010). As cited in Morrissey (2013) highlights the extent to which increased productivity, competitiveness and accountability

to the open neoliberal market has prompted universities to facilitate processes of performance evaluation to become more favourably positioned in terms of global academic and institutional standards. Trends in South Africa also indicate support of this global inclination. Performance evaluation has shown a heavy leaning towards neoliberal approaches and there appears to be more focus given recently to the ranking of universities both on national and international platforms (Hlatshwayo, 2022).

Despite their popularity, serious concerns have been raised about the neoliberal strategies used to evaluate the performance of higher education institutions. Scholars who have written in this tradition, employ Foucault's (1991) ideas on Governmentality and disciplinary power to show how neoliberal strategies regulate behaviour and control individuals. Morrissey (2013) cites Foucault's (2007, p. 801) ideas on the "science of management," arguing that such an approach to academic productivity places heavy emphasis on efficiency, giving priority to measurable outputs rather than advanced knowledge and contribution to society through rigorous inquiry and critical reflection. While effective management is critical to any organization, the "science of management" approach undermines the complexity and multifaceted nature of academic work, reducing it to a set of metrics and targets. Foucault (2007) opposes our unquestioning acceptance of the rhetoric of "management science," encouraging us to question its assumptions so that we may envision a more holistic idea of academic work - one that values intellectual diversity, collaboration, and innovation.

Acknowledging Foucault's (2007) argument, this study addresses the gap mentioned earlier, by examining the way in which performance management in higher education impacts academic freedom. This is achieved by examining the principles and assumptions underpinning a selected university's performance management system for its academic staff, specifically focusing on the attempts made by this institution to measure, model and normalise individual subjectivity and performance. Essentially, the study examines the enactment of a specific university's performance management policy to demonstrate itself as an institution which performs, is accountable and responsive to the current "more competitive and globalised higher education landscape" (Morrissey, 2013, p. 798). Such a study is significant because it observes the ways in which neoliberal performance management approaches impact on academic freedom, social justice and the

university's culture and values.

The aim of this paper is both analytical and critical. It works towards sharing understanding of strategic power relations used by the university to manage academic performance. It highlights potential areas of concern and possibilities of challenging existing power structures within the institution.

Research Questions

This study is framed by two key questions:
1. How does power play out within performance management at the level of policy?
2. What kinds of academic identities and subjectivities are produced within the discourses of performance management?

Literature Review

Foucault (1977) wrote extensively about the technique of Governmentality–a governmental strategy which works to shape and secure specific subjectivities within populations. In Foucault's (1991, p. 109) view, governmentality allows "*the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power, which has as its target population, as its principal form of knowledge political economy, and as its essential technical means apparatuses of security*". Foucault's (1977) conceptualisation of governing moves us away from conventional understandings of the term 'government,' where individuals may be controlled from a macro-political level rather than seeing power as "forced" on a society. Foucault (1997a) sees governing as an "art" where power is de-centred by members of a society in their active governing of themselves. Foucault depicts Governmentality as "power which strategically does not force compliance, nor deny them choice, but facilitates individual's willingness to adopt certain technologies and ultimately engages them actively in processes of normalization, eventually rendering them as docile" (Foucault, 1997c, p. 292). He wrote at length on the notion of docility, portraying it as a technique of power which facilitates control over another, to the extent that they do things that others wish of them.

Foucault (1977) goes on to explain that docility is also achieved as an outcome of the "control of activity" (p. 149). In this case, the discipline involves

prescribing the movements of individuals so that a "time of good quality" is ultimately produced. This technique, as Foucault (1997) argues, is related to investing the human body in "routines" and "rigor." Another strategy regarding docility that Foucault (1977, p. 157) believed is one that ensures "organization of geneses." This involves the division of time into segments, organizing it according to a set of activities designed to "suit individuals in terms of level, seniority and rank" (Foucault, 1977, p. 157-158). Discipline in this sense "composes a set of forces" to achieve an efficient machine (Foucault, 1977, p. 164). Foucault theorised that ultimately, disciplinary power serves the purpose of training and managing the actions of a workforce to ensure that they are productive and efficient (Foucault, 1977).

There are three critical instruments that Foucault (1977, p. 170) saw as fundamental to the functioning of disciplinary power: "hierarchical observation, normalizing judgement and examination." The first instrument, *hierarchical observation* serves to discipline or coerce individuals/groups through observation or "a planned gaze" (Foucault, 1977, p. 170-171). *Normalising judgement* is a strategy which is aimed at normalizing people to the extent of making them homogeneous. It encompasses actions such as defining suitable and unsuitable behaviour; establishing standards of suitable conduct; imposing penalties to reduce non-compliance and rewarding the acceptance of the norms set out (Foucault, 1977). The technique of *examination* involves a "normalising gaze, a surveillance that makes it possible to qualify, to classify and to punish" (Foucault, 1977, p. 184). Foucault (1977) believed that examination of the centralized visibility and using it to discipline individuals into subjection, demonstrates that they are always being watched. Foucault (1977) added that it is through the documentary techniques of the examination, that further discipline occurs. The person becomes, in Foucault's (1977, p. 191) words a "*case that is described, judged, measured, compared with others, in his individuality; trained, corrected, classified, normalised, excluded, ….*" Portrayed as such, the examination serves as an instrument to constitute individuals as both objects of power, and objects of knowledge (Foucault, 1977).

In his discussions of disciplinary power, Foucault (1977) foregrounded the idea of panoptic schemes of power which, in his view, enabled the processes of observation and examination. Through the panopticon, Foucault (1977, p. 164) shows how power is "everywhere," creating an "all embracing" and "totalizing"

state, contributing pointedly to the creation of docile bodies. Foucault's illustration of the concepts of governmentality and disciplinary power, using the panopticon, helps us to see how human behaviour could be regulated by external sources with the goal of producing a sense of self-regulation. Most importantly, highlighting the fundamental principle of governing, Foucault states that who are subjected to it, take it for granted and conform.

Foucault's (1997b, p. 74) notion of "neoliberal governmentality," gains significant relevance in this context. Foucault wrote that "*Neo-liberalism is a mentality of rule because it represents a method of rationalising the exercise of government, a rationalisation that obeys the internal rule of maximum economy.*" In support of Foucault's point, Feges (2006) cites Galvin's (2020, p. 118), argument that neoliberalism is compelling in current times because it emerges as the new form of governance, which re-envisions and reconceptualises freedom and choice.) There is agreement that it comes across as appealing because its liberalist principles suggest a movement away from governance through society as was the case in the past, but through choices made by members of a society who independently strive to achieve freedom through self-realization (Fraser, 2020). Thus, it is clear how Foucault's idea of neoliberal governmentality comes into play in modern societies: individuals appreciate the freedom they are supposedly given to choose their own course in society. At the same time, the responsibility they take for their choices serves as a critical strategy in creating self-directed governance. Undoubtedly, Foucault's theory of governmentality offers a rich and critical theoretical framework to explore how language and discourse influence power.

Foucault's (1991) theory on governmentality has significance in the current climate of South African higher education because of its relevance to the country's decolonisation goals. One of the key drives in this movement is to dismantle the autocratic power relationships of the past and move towards building greater democracy (Le-Grange, 2016). Post-apartheid research in South Africa increasingly opposes actions which create power imbalances that restrain academic development and argues for implementing socially just practices (Hlatshwayo et al., 2020). Foucault's theory on governmentality is compelling and well situated to examine those discourses at the level of performance management policy which could be preventing academics from acting freely and independently.

Despite the usefulness of Foucault's ideas on governmentality, these have been heavily critiqued for offering an overly broad and somewhat unclear understanding of power (Rossi, 2017). Further critiques of governmentality claim that Foucault relies excessively on a genealogical history and his work is incomplete in terms of providing significant answers for measuring of power. Yet other critics contend then that we are left with an extremely abstract conception of power, which is challenging to operationalize practically (Lemke, 2019). Regardless of its limitations, Foucault's governmentality theory (1991) is seen in this paper as a vital resource for providing insight into the mechanisms of power in performance management. It offers a perspective which takes into consideration the complexities and nuances of human interaction and helps us engage more critically with the subtle ways in which power shapes the modern world. It also presents a way to problematize the taken-for granted practices of governing that underpin the performance management of university academics. Having said that, the current study conducts an analysis of performance management policy discourses, calling into question possible principles of governing and attempts of university authorities to control academics' conduct and shape their subjectivities.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative approach on account of its potential for providing in-depth understanding of the power relations underpinning performance management (Ezzy, 2013). The site of the study was the University AA (pseudonym), in South Africa. University AA has a student population of approximately 55000 and an academic staff totalling an approximate number of 3000.

Qualitative data were generated from one primary source: a discourse analysis of the Bao et al. (2013) at University AA. The main rationale for using discourse analysis is that it is an approach Foucault (1977c) promoted to understand power as not simply held by individuals, but as embedded in social institutions and discourse. Foucault (2005) argued that power/knowledge networks create patterns in discourse that shape how people talk about and understand the world. Foucault (1984) saw discourse analysis as a means to explore the idea of the self as shaped by discourse and power, and the influence of cultural and social context on this. (Anderson & Holloway, 2020) particularly argue for discourse analysis in examining education policy documents because it permits an in-depth investigation of how language relates to various social processes. The centrality of these concepts

and ideas compelled the use of discourse analysis in this study to critically analyse patterns of language used in the performance management Policy document of University AA.

A systematic discourse analysis was conducted to provide an in-depth understanding of how language constructs social reality in performance management. The unit of analysis was primarily the text contained in the Performance Management Policy document at University AA. Guided by the suggestions of Graham (2011, p. 5), an attempt was made to determine the probable "*enunciations that could be made on a particular subject, why it is that certain statements emerged to the exclusion of all others and what function they serve.*" A critical analysis of patterns of language used in the Performance Management Policy text was then conducted. An attempt was next made to detect recurring themes to identify the power relations at play. Once the power relation was identified, a deeper analysis was conducted of the specific way the technique of power was enacted, its potential consequences in terms of the kinds of subjects it produces. Subsequently, inferences were drawn from structural and linguistic features. The discourses which seem to shape social practices around the respective research questions were interpreted and are presented as themes in the findings.

The basic ethical principles of scientific research were strictly observed in this research. Following the guidelines offered by Blanche et al. (2006), methods were applied with rigour and openness, ensuring that all practices were consistent with the methodological approach chosen for the study. Although we did not involve any human subjects as participants, we treated the principles of reduction of bias with seriousness. To safeguard the accuracy of findings, we remained consistent and made every effort to manage the analytical processes with integrity (Torrance, 2012).

Results and Discussion

Using a framework adapted from Cormack's (2003) work, three themes are used to frame this section.

1. The academic as a subject in the discourses of the Performance Management Policy

The Conforming Academic

The university (Bao et al., 2013) employs several strategies to ensure that academics accept the principles of its policy. The policy opens by presenting a set of important goals to its employees stating its intention of "*fostering Global Excellence and Stature*" and the specific objective of sustaining "*a high performing culture*" (PPM, 2013, p. 4). It is also stated in the "Preface" that the University Performance Management Policy "*fosters performance excellence in support of UJ's Global Excellence and Stature (GES) initiatives and operationalises UJ's institutional strategy*" (PPM, 2013, p. 4). As stated below, the document also presents the goal of developing a sense of completeness or unification with the institution: "*promotes a holistic approach to Performance Management by incorporating all aspects of performance management within a single integrated framework*" (PPM, 2013, p. 4). Subsequently, there is mention of collegiality and the promotion of individuality: "*The collegial environment of a university environment justifies individual and team-based goals, measures and rewards*" (PPM, 2013, p. 4).

The explicit presentation of strategic principles is considerably tactful. It immediately gears towards earning the trust of the academics, in the sense that it appeals to their need to come across as principled academics in support of the academic mission of their institution. The language used to ensure the support and trust of its academics, also comes across as carefully planned. For example, the emphasis on "collegiality" is critically positioned: it lays out a sense of the university's honourable intentions of fostering unity and a sense of community among academics. Undoubtedly, such qualities are beneficial to the optimum functioning of any working environment. In fact, it is vital for academics to collaborate, show mutual respect, and share responsibility as they work towards the university's goals. The choice of words that open the policy document suggest a sense of academic staff being supported by the institution and an intention to work collaboratively towards the goal of advancing knowledge.

One can understand why the university's policy on performance management would gain the support of its academics: its mission reflects an array of noble principles which are in line with the goals of a competitive, globalised society. A sincere attempt is made to create a culture of excellence which would advance its reputation internationally, contributing in an impactful way to societal and economic development. On the surface one cannot easily find fault with any

of the goals set out by the institution to manage the performance of its academics. In a productive way, the institution seems to present a reasonable framework to its employees, for smooth and efficient running. Any unsuspecting academic may see these as goals as reasonable and fair. However, on deeper scrutiny, one finds the presence of strong contradictions and concealed technologies, implying a more obscured set of intentions by the institution.

For the opening, the policy document connects an authority, the "*MEC*", a body which compiled the performance plan, to its "*Institutional Strategy*" and "*core ideology*" (PPM, 2013, p. 3). Mentioning such terms at the very early stages in the policy strategically work to create a sense of importance around the document. A further reference to an authority is found under the heading "*LEGAL AUTHORITY,*" presented in capital letters as a sub-section of the policy (PPM, 2013, p. 3). At face value, the use of such language and the way in which it is formatted, may evoke a response of respect for the policy from the academics. On deeper scrutiny it could be argued that academics are the recipients of a covert form of coercion and compulsion to comply with its rules. The academics may find themselves in a situation where there is no choice but to be compliant.

The persistent use of the verb "*must*," which is evident throughout the document concretises the pressure on academics to comply. In some instances, such as those highlighted below, a bolded font is used: "*All employees **must** have a standardised accepted and signed individual Performance Contract and Personal Development Plan (PDP) which **must** be compiled annually*" (PPM, 2013, p. 4). In some cases, such as stated below, the word "must" be stated twice in the single sentence: "*4.2 All employees **must** have a standardised accepted and signed individual Performance Contract and Personal Development Plan (PDP) which **must** be compiled annually*." Such examples of behaviourist language are often combined with a reference to a certain authority. In the case below, both the line manager and employee are mentioned: "*The performance contract must be agreed, signed and dated by both the line manager and the employee.*" The repetition and bolded type font of "**must**" seems to work in conjunction with the totality of its effect. As it appears, there seems to be no way out. Such use of language tends to infuse the policy with a behaviourist tone, suggesting a hold over the academics' which ensures their absolute compliance. This point gives weight to the argument we make that the university's PPM is constituted by a discourse which is officious and bureaucratic.

Conformity is thus a strong expectation embodied within the PPM. This comes across both overtly and covertly in terms of internal and external expectations of competence and accountability. By virtue of the extreme forms of conformity imposed on academics within the discourses of the PPM (2013), a compelling argument is provided of a metaphorical "policing" of academics by the university. It appears that macro-forces constitute academics' identities, envisioning them as performers of the university's policies of governance. There are clearly subtle yet powerful tactics that the university utilises to compel academics to conform to its policy (Foucault, 1977).

The Performing Academic

It is apparent that the PPM (2013) conceptualizes all employees (academics as is our focus) as competent performers who will be rewarded for their consistent and dedicated performance. The document offers a performance reward of a financial nature to academics and other stakeholders. As it states, "*A financial reward granted to an employee in recognition of sustained performance that is significantly above expectations and is rated as such in terms of the rating scale*" (PPM, 2013, p. 3). Underperformance is also taken seriously, and the document spells out a "*Performance Improvement Plan*" that involves "*a managed process with a plan*" (PPM, 2013, p. 3). A sensible level of support planned for improving productivity is reasonable within any organisation. However, the wording of it as a "managed process" appears to bear a deeper undertone suggestive of it being a form of punishment or corrective procedure. The idea of underperformance being punished gains weight in the following statement: "*It is used for employees who are regularly falling short of meeting performance expectations and whose performance may necessitate the beginning of a progressive disciplinary process regarding the performance level*" (PPM, 2013, p. 3). The idea of the "*start*" of a "*progressive disciplinary process*" is suggestive of an ongoing or lengthy set of disciplinary procedures which the academic must endure as a form of punishment.

While there are discourses in the text which subtly suggest an expectation of compliance from academics, there are also explicit and overt declarations of the expectation of total obedience. As stated in section 14.1, "*All employees are to comply with the provisions of this policy and non-compliance will be dealt with in line with the UJ Disciplinary PPM*" (PPM, 2013, p. 3). The repeated use of the word "*comply*," significantly adds weight to the demand made on academics to

obey. As stated in point 8.6: "*The policy on Managing Incapacity and Guidelines for Managing Poor Performance must be followed*" (PPM, 2013, p. 4). The frequent use of the words "*if you do not comply,*" suggest a complete submission to the Policy, and the distinctive idea of employees as submissive recipients of the content. What is implicitly conveyed, is the type of control the university adopts, and more so, the totality of its control. The PPM (2013) seemingly controls every aspect of university life in terms of what academics may and may not do, leaving academics with no option but to submit.

Saliently, the labels and metaphors that constitute the policy, spell out a set of compounding risks academics face, for non-compliance. At this point, Lyotard's (1984, p. 63–64) cautionary ideas have relevance: he argues that when academics experience coercion in the institution, (both overtly and covertly) they have no choice but to negotiate their way into certain "safe" positions. These "safe" positions may involve the production of false responses to the university's demands. Lyotard (1984, p. 46) argues that society is "obsessed" with competency and efficacy which operates in terms of an "input/output ratio". His point is that universities, like businesses, become open to judgement in terms of their outcomes and performance: "*…the goal is no longer truth, but performativity - that is, the best possible input/output equation*". Through Lyotard's (1984) ideas we can see how academics may negotiate themselves into safe spaces by producing 'evidence' of their efficiency to meet with the institutions' expectations. Such false productions undoubtedly have dangerous consequences for both the academic and the institution.

2. Grids of specification are used to identify the academic as a subject in the discourses of the performance management policy

The Productive Academic

The PPM provides details of the appropriate use of time, as well as the consequences of using time inappropriately. As the extract below indicates, rigorous timelines align the PPM to the "financial period," providing precise days and months for the completion of specific activities: "*The Individual Contracts are agreed upon in January/February, Mid-Year Reviews conducted in June and the Final Performance Evaluation concluded in October on an annual basis*" (PPM, 2013, p. 4-5). The Policy also details expectations regarding how and what aspects of performance should be rated: "*5.7.4. The rating scale should be maintained at a*

5-point rating scale and no ratings other than these will be allowed" (PPM, 2013, p. 4-5). As stated below, inappropriate use of time is apparently subject to disciplinary procedures: "*Should the employee not respond to reasonable and continuous attempts to improve performance and the overall performance evaluation does not reveal appreciable progress, the UJ's Disciplinary PPM and Grievance Procedure will apply*" (PPM, 2013, p. 4-5).

The Policy stresses the corrective action that will be taken in the case of non-compliance. Point 8.3 mentions "*poor performance*" classifying academics in this situation as incompetent and worthy of dismissal: "*8.3. ...there is a possibility that the poor performance may not always be corrected and that there may be possible termination of the employment contract*" (PPM, 2013, p. 4-5). It would seem then, that non-compliance, as per the policy, is not an option for any academic. The tone comes across as reprimanding and penalising, implying that academics should be fearful of the consequences of non-compliance. The policy conveys a distinctive authoritarian and behaviourist tone, compelling academics into a productive role. Thus, it is indicated to academics that there is no room for non-productivity. In support of Foucault's (1977) ideas, we may argue that academics' activities are aligned with the manner in which time is controlled in the PPM. One could conceive of this as controlling to the point of possible entrapment.

The ideas highlighted above resonate with what Foucault (1977) writes about the notion of well used quality time in *Discipline and Punish*. He suggested that it is a form of control which regulates educational environments by disciplining inappropriate uses of time. We can see how the PPM regulates the academic's activities at exact points and for precise durations as a disciplinary mechanism to ensure that the institutional processes continue without disruption. The PPM (2013, p. 5-6) in question conveys a strong sense that power is generated through "*the control of activity*," reflecting how Foucault's notions of disciplinary systems work upon and within educational subjects.

Respectful of Hierarchies

The PPM makes a very specific hierarchical relationship apparent to the academic with regards to the evaluation and management of performance. For example, 4.6. states that, "*Only a direct line manager is authorised to enter into a performance contract with an employee on behalf of the University.*" Furthermore,

the PPM (2013, p. 5-6) spells out a set of expectations for a line-manager who is seemingly the "representative" of the University: "4.7…*line managers must recognise exceptional performance; identify opportunities to develop and grow employees; develop capacity and to effectively deal with poor performance*". Point 8.5 is a further example of how the PPM establishes distinctive relationships and hierarchies: "*Corrective action is the manager's responsibility with the Human Resource Division as facilitator*" (PPM, 2013, p. 5-6). The demarcation of hierarchies seems to serve as a disciplinary strategy of safeguarding the principles of the PPM (2013). A distinct sense is conveyed of how power marks the everyday life of the academic in the institution. This practice echoes what Foucault (1977, p. 156) wrote regarding the concept of "the organization of genesis." Thus, the analysis shows how performance management as a social system works to segregate and classify academics, establishing specific relationships and hierarchies of control.

Developing an Institutional Mindset

Additionally, the analysis conveys a distinct sense of the academic being monitored and examined in an ongoing and continuous manner. Both overt and covert forms of surveillance permeate the discourses of the text. Overt observation and examination of academics was frequently detected in the language of the PPM. For example, the words "automated administration" and "seamless performance monitoring" as represented below are suggestive of an invisible form of control: "*An automated administration of the performance management system is of importance and ensures a seamless performance monitoring and evaluation process*" (PPM, 2013, p. 4). In a covert way, a strong surveillance signage appears to be absorbed into the landscape of the discourse/text. The following extracts from the above document illustrate how surveillance filters covertly through the discourses of the text. The policy makes continual references to "ongoing" performance management meetings. For example, there is a "consistency meeting" and a mid-year "health check": "*The Consistency meeting plays a critical role in ensuring standardization, consistency, transparency and fairness of the performance management process and this policy*" (PPM, 2013, p. 5-6). The discourses underpinning the text below also suggest that external gazes are deeply in play: "*The Executive Leadership Group of the University is responsible for championing the performance management process.*" The subtle presence of an external gaze seemingly represents the University as an authority. This point suggests a strong enmeshing of the discourse of accountability with the discourse of surveillance. Evidently, the university puts

into place a subtle almost invisible monitoring system which is continually engaged. The policy markedly employs surveillance principles that sanction self-monitoring.

The points raised about strategies of surveillance that are built into the performance evaluation system ring true with the ideas Foucault (1977) shared about surveillance in institutions. Foucault spoke of living in the panoptic society where the individual is subjected to constant surveillance. In such a society, lifestyles and standards are not natural, but the product of choices made for them by those in power. For him, what was striking in education was the construction of the disciplinary subject (Foucault, 1977, p. 308) writes about *"[T]he notions of institutions of repression, rejection, exclusion, marginalisation"* are key to permitting *"the fabrication of the disciplinary individual."* In support of Foucault's ideas, this analysis has shown how the university aims to watch and 'know' academics through a gaze which is considered as "natural." It has shown how academics are rendered as docile beings. We have thus seen the "dangerous" ways that academic identities are constructed within the university and how such a manifestation of power may ultimately serve to create a disciplinary society (Foucault, 1977).

Foucault (1977) wrote at length about a strategy of power which moves individualistic thinking to a more institutional mindset. We have seen suggestions within the PPM of how members within the system are formed and moulded to the institution's desire. A salient point which emerges from this analysis is the comprehensive hold those in power (the university) has over individual bodies (academics). Academics are expected to be "efficient," systematic, and cautious about how they go about fulfilling their contractual obligations. We have seen how the academic's involvement in the system is controlled by constant surveillance by the institution. Thus, for the academic, there is no real way to escape from disciplinary power. It seems that academics need to comply with rigorous and vigorous procedures to remain valid in the university. While we appreciate the accountability measures for optimal functioning, we are also cognizant that they could take precedence over the real work academics should be doing.

3. Invitations and practices made available to the academic for making themselves subject to the discourses of the Performance Management Policy

A strong sense of respect for the privacy and personal space of the academic is conveyed in the policy discourse. Meetings between the line manager and the

next level line managers and the relevant Executive Dean/Director/Registrar are "confidential" and mention is made of ensuring the "*fair implementation of the performance management system and rating scale*" (PPM, 2013, p. 3). References are also made to "guiding" (PPM, 2013, p. 3) the academic and "*identifying and developing potential.*" The point below is suggestive of an openness being established: "*Line managers to encourage constructive and open relationships with employees through continuous dialogue on performance*" (PPM, 2013, p. 3). Evidently, a sense of trust is being built between the manager and academic and there are genuine intentions to uplift and empower academics through the performance management process. While the policy conveys a sense of guardianship for the academic, there is an over-powering incongruity that permeates the discourses, suggesting otherwise.

To illustrate this incongruence, we refer to point 4.10 of the PPM which presents the institution's noble goals of being "*consultative*" and "*supportive.*" However, the same sentence also flags to the academic his/her "*accountability*" to "*organisational efficiency and effectiveness*" (PPM, 2013, p. 4). There is much to suggest that the PPM moves individualistic thinking to a more institutional mindset. In a complex way, the academic seems to be trapped between these powerful discourses with the result that they are made subject to the forces prioritized by the institution. An important question that remains is: what about the academics' individual needs? While it may seem that the freedom of academics is key, the "double-speak" underpinning the document suggests the existence of a deeply concealed force of control. Regarding this, Foucault's (1977, p. 217) point rings true: "*We are neither in the amphitheatre, nor on the stage, but in the panoptic machine, invested by its effects of power, which we bring to ourselves since we are part of its mechanism.*"

The analysis therefore suggests that the University's PPM is instrumental in creating the subjectivity of the academic on a micro level. The desired subjectivity appears to take the form of an individual who self-regulates and conforms. We also acknowledge by way of specific statements made in the policy document that performance management is an outcome of a global competitive drive. This implies that the desired academic subjectivity is indirectly determined from a global perspective. Hence, in a subtle and complex way, the academic is deeply ensnared in a matrix of governance comprising the university and the wider global

community. The complex interplay of power governance of the university and additional entities facilitates the engagement of the academic as an individual in self-management.

The current analysis portrays the standpoint of Doherty (2007, p. 196) in *Why Foucault* regarding the Foucauldian concept of governmentality serving as an effective "prism" to illustrate governing as: *"...a deliberate, purposeful, technicised activity, directed at the subject, the society, or some consciously categorized subdivision of the social body.*" The perspectives offered by Foucault (1978), show how embedded forms of authorization in the discourses of the policy can regulate academics. Foucault's (1977) ideas illuminate multiple ways in which academics function as a body within the machine of disciplinary power. In agreement with Foucault, the analysis shows that governmentality tactically portrays a variety of faces, sometimes existing directly and overtly, at other times subtly and undetectably. Through the work of Foucault (1991) we are alerted to the danger of concealed forces within discourses of performance management which come across as invisible and unrecognised. Foucault's ideas have helped us to see how the disciplinary mechanisms that serve to control and manage are diffused and embodied in various practices, institutions and relationships. From Foucault's perspective, academics may accept the ideas about performance management, believing that these may be for their own interests, yet the existence of concealed strategies suggests a hidden effort by the university to control academics. Analysis of the document shows that the way power plays out is dangerous because its focus is directed almost entirely on producing conforming academics.

Apart from the university's panoptic hold over individuals, the analysis provides evidence regarding the university's covert attempts at normalizing its academics. The normalizing inclinations, which emanated both externally and internally, are channelled tactically through the discourse of Policy documents, appearing almost neutral, yet impacting in complex ways on academics. In such situations the academic feels that it is natural and "normal" to meet the expectations of the university without suspicions of being subjected to the forces of governing. The interests of the university are therefore prioritised over those of the academic. Agreement is found here with Foucault that normalizing strategies work to create academic subjects who are useful and docile citizens.

Conclusion & Recommendations

The picture of power relations underpinning performance management is seemingly that which exists within a matrix of relationships. Findings of this study indicate that performance management policies at University AA are underpinned by neoliberal ideas of global competitiveness and are primarily focused on framing expectations for academics as subjects who conform, self-regulate and perform optimally. Findings are also in agreement with Doherty (2007, p. 196), that the central purpose underpinning the formation of the matrix forms is its direction towards the "*constitution of the self, the configuration of the subject under the action of government.*" This paper affirms the working of power as theorised by Foucault in his work on "governmentality." Foucault (1926-1984) raised a salient point that "*power may not be controlled by one's intentions: any specific discourse will generate resistance as it meets competing discourses.*" In cognisance, this paper does not propose any "right" use of power that may serve to resist the effects of discipline and normalization. Rather, it acknowledges that we cannot prevent the performance management policy discourses from producing power, but what we can do is energetically promote knowledge of the dangers implicated therein.

This paper recommends that policy developers and management teams at universities be conscious of the complex forces of power that shape academic identities. This awareness will guide their policy-making process and steer them away from presenting oppressive discourses which undermine the complexity and multifaceted nature of academic work. We further recommend that performance management policy developers and management teams at universities be mindful of the way in which academic freedom and autonomy is negatively impacted within policy discourses. We argue that there is much that senior management teams at universities can learn from the theory of governmentality if they hope to build more just and equitable academic communities going forward.

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