

***The Impact of New Public Management and
External Quality Assurance Systems on
Education: A Foucauldian Analysis***

Patricia French

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The Co-ordinator, Working Papers Advisory Panel
The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand
Private Bag 31 914
Lower Hutt
Email: WorkingPapers@topnz.ac.nz

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Abstract

This paper examines the key underpinning ideologies controlling competition in tertiary education in New Zealand since the Education Act 1989. Specifically, these ideologies are considered in terms of the impact of managerialism and quality assurance systems, which are critiqued against Foucault's concepts of power/knowledge control and surveillance. The impact of the competitive environment on education is important to evaluate. It is often presented in terms of better choice for students, a more student-focused system, transparent learning outcomes, or in terms of the financial costs involved, such as increased spending on advertising or the development of transparent quality assurance systems. This paper seeks to raise the awareness of educators to the principles underpinning the competitive environment in order to provide tools to debate improvements or alternatives. Understanding the framework for the changes identifies why it sometimes seems impossible to argue against their logic. While the paper considers specific policy developments, such as quality assurance, it does so in order to focus on the impact of these issues on educators and on concepts such as collegiality and professionalism.

Keywords

New public management, quality assurance, Foucault, power/knowledge, control surveillance, educators

Contents

Acknowledgements vii

The Impact of New Public Management and External Quality Assurance Systems on Education: A Foucauldian Analysis

Introduction

The basis for reform

The impact of public choice theory, agency theory, new public management

The impact of managerialism on educators

External quality assurance agencies and educators

The language of control

Conclusion

Bibliography

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The Impact of New Public Management and External Quality Assurance Systems on Education: A Foucauldian Analysis

Introduction

At a time when the principles of deregulation and minimal intervention have been the professed position of successive governments, and when private providers in education are part of an integrated education package, it may seem contradictory to talk about politics and education in terms of power and control. This paper suggests, however, that politics are more than ever in control of education, and that all the change of the past ten years has resulted merely in a remodelling, and not removal, of that power and control.

We are all aware that the past ten years have seen a radical change to the New Zealand education sector as part of the public sector reforms. This paper reviews the changes and the ways they have influenced and controlled tertiary education in particular. I use the concepts of *power/knowledge*, *control* and *surveillance* as proposed by Michel Foucault, to critique these developments and discuss the impact of the associated dominant discourse. Foucault used the term *power/knowledge* as a device for studying the social and scientific practices that underlie and condition the formation of beliefs within society. He saw power and knowledge as inextricably linked. 'It is not possible for power to be exercised without knowledge and it is impossible for knowledge not to engender power.' (quoted in Gordon, (1980 p.52). Foucault considered power/knowledge to be manifest in broad terms as government 'structuring the field for the eventual actions of others' (quoted in Hoy, (1986, p.135), and in more specific terms as disciplinary power and knowledge where 'individuals circulate between the threads of power always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power.' (quoted in Gordon, 1980, p.98). Foucault considered control and surveillance concepts to be linked to the exercise of power/knowledge through three main techniques: observation, examination and judgement. I suggest these techniques are manifest in external quality assurance mechanisms.

The basis for reform

The 1980s saw the triumph of economic rationalism, which meant that efficiency became a sacred goal, with increased competition and the unlocking of market forces the key means to obtaining it. (Whitwell, 1990). The market based ideology provided, and continues to provide, the environment for the restructuring of the public sector which largely arose out of the Treasury briefing paper presented to the incoming 1987 Labour government. The Treasury paper, *Government Management*, proposed a fundamental review of the way the public service (including the education service) operated and a review of the premises upon which government made decisions. It suggested that:

People do not have rights like they have noses. Rights are relative, they are grounded on the need for mutual observance and accommodation. Rights are things we give to each other. Given the essential role of the state as enforcer of rights and the inability to establish any natural rights, it is clear that rights definitions are a matter of public choice and ultimately of politics (The Treasury, 1987, pp.25–26).

This publication raised the possibility of changing the belief that New Zealanders had a right of lifelong access to a publicly funded education, health and social security system: that this right was, in fact, a political choice that would not necessarily continue to receive political support. It also raised the prospect of change to the structures and policies that had been associated with supporting that right. Once promulgated, these changes were undertaken with much the same speed as previous reforms in the economic arena. Speed was seen as an essential tool to achieve the desired outcomes. Its importance to the reforms is highlighted in the advice given to an Australian Education Council Conference by Roger Douglas in 1990¹.

Implement reform by quantum leaps. Moving step by step lets vested interests mobilise. Big packages neutralise them. Speed is essential. It is impossible to move too fast. Delay will drag you down before you can achieve your success. Once you start the momentum rolling never let it stop. Set your own goals and deadlines. Within that framework consult in the community to improve detailed implementation (quoted in Neyland, 1998, p.64).

Thus we saw a rapid and fundamental review of what had been the generally accepted basis of the education, health and social security system since the first Labour Government. Schick (1996), in reviewing the reforms, suggested *Government Management* drew on ideas from the frontiers of economics,

¹ Roger Douglas was the Minister of Finance when the New Zealand Labour Government introduced the New Right economic reforms in the mid 1980s. Roger Douglas was seen as the architect of these reforms, the operation of which were subsequently referred to as Rogernomics.

including Public Choice Theory and Agency Theory to which was added an emphasis on outputs. In addition, the literature on management contributed the managerial doctrine of giving freedom to the managers to manage, which was adopted in the reforms and became known as New Public Management (NPM).

Overall state sector reform laid out in *Government Management* was based on these three conceptions of the truth and, according to Boston, Martin, Pallot, Walsh (1991), suggested the following:

- the separation of policy, service and regulatory functions within government departments in order to overcome what Treasury saw as policy capture by service providers
- the remodelling of the public sector more on the private sector
- the surrender of public sector activities in areas which were already been undertaken by the private sector
- the application of private sector principles of management to the public sector
- the operation of market forces (competition) within the public sector as these market forces were seen to discipline decision makers in the private sector and ensure better management practices.

Easton (1997) suggests that, at that stage, Treasury was operating from first principles. This meant that, rather than checking its conclusions against the collective memory of senior officials and files, Treasury checked them against an analytical framework based on economics. This analytical approach to policy making involved a major difference from previous precedent-set bureaucratic processes in that it squeezed out debate and dissent. Even questions about whether the implementation of policy had been successful needed to overcome the convenient distancing of policy from operations. This distancing meant that the operational failure of concepts or ideology could be explained by environmental constraints, lack of efficiency or lack of commitment to the identified policy goals. This left the principles sounding rational and defensible and kept them inviolate from arguments supporting other ideas, such as those based on experience or other economic models. Easton (1997) suggests that the methodology adopted by Treasury was almost invulnerable to challenge by empirical evidence because auxiliary hypotheses were added to the core theory to protect it from any anomalies or inconsistencies. This has meant that proponents basically first defined the problem within narrow parameters, and then presented a solution of competition and visible accountability which fitted those narrow parameters. These parameters also enabled consistency of policy decisions. The result was an approach based on an extreme and narrow version of economics.

This exercise of power/knowledge by those who held this new economic and political viewpoint became evident through the changes to legislation and the homage paid to the disciplinary expertise. This is in accordance with Foucault's finding that the power/knowledge of experts could be captured in a discipline, and shape individuals and their activities, and how both the law and disciplines work to create a situation that is gradually accepted as the 'norm':

...these discourses, to which the disciplines give rise, invade the area of right so that the procedures of normalisation come to be ever more constantly engaged in the colonisation of those of law. I believe that all this can explain the global functioning of what I would call a society of normalisation (quoted in Gordon, 1980, p.106).

If Foucault's ideas are applied to the discipline of economics, and normalisation is interpreted as the creation of behaviour patterns consistent with required principles, then the statement can be seen to apply readily to the restructuring of the New Zealand public sector. Within this restructuring, sovereignty or 'laws' were created to facilitate a mode of operation or behaviours consistent with the discipline's discourse. As a result we found the discourse becoming entrenched via changes in legislation, and the commitment to new policies consistent with a market-driven model of the economy entered the operations of education, health and social welfare. As previously indicated, it is generally agreed these policies, articulated in *Government Management*, were founded on the combination of Public Choice Theory, Agency Theory and New Public Management.²

² This point is covered by a variety of sources including Whitwell, 1990; Easton, 1997; Shick, 1996., Boston, Martin, Pallot & Walsh, 1991.

The impact of public choice theory, agency theory, new public management

Public Choice Theory is based on the assumption that all human behaviour is dominated by self interest. This assumption gives rise to distrust of politicians, bureaucrats and the political process and leads to limitations being placed on the role of the state and a reduction in discretionary power of political decision makers. It also leads to the belief that powerful interest groups enjoy a disproportionate share of influence and income and, as a consequence, individual liberty is undermined and economic growth disrupted. As a result, according to Easton, (1997), Boston et al (1991), recommendations from public choice theorists are right wing and aim to minimise the role of the state and limit discretionary power of politicians, reduce public monopolies, curb the functions of government agencies, and increase individual liberty. The government's role is reduced as a consequence to one that allows the free market system to operate efficiently.

The government introduced the Education Amendment Act 1990 and the Industry Training Act 1992 to allow the free market system to operate in education. This deregulatory move ironically created controls and accountabilities that were previously captured in professional expectations and associated actions but which have now been formally imposed on educators and education. Public Choice Theory underpinned the Education Department's restructuring into a Ministry. This resulted in some of the functions of the old Education Department being relocated in agencies, while others, such as gathering statistical data and manpower planning, ceased. Still others were uncoupled, such as regulatory, evaluation and advisory functions. This was intended to avoid capture by service providers. Policy advice was also obtained from outside the Ministry in the spirit of contestability. Public Choice Theory was also the basis for restructuring the tertiary education sector into more autonomous operating units and for the appointment of Chief Executives rather than Principals or Vice-Chancellors, thus reinforcing the use of language to divorce academia from the management role.

Agency Theory rests on the idea that social and political life is a series of contracts (or agreed relationships) where one party is the principal and the other the agent. The agent performs tasks on behalf of the principal for an agreed reward. Agency Theory also rests on the premise that individuals are self-interested and opportunistic, and that the relationship between a principal and an agent is one of equals, in which either party may seek to implement the bargain in ways that disadvantage the other. *Government Management* was

particularly concerned about the capture of policy making apparatus by service providers. Agency Theory is also linked to an emphasis on outcomes. Outcomes are specified as performance criteria, inserted into contracts and measured in service and performance agreements. In consequence, Agency Theory probably underpinned the separation of funding from provision of services. Thus, the Ministry of Education provides funds, or Skill New Zealand is used as a funding agency, and delivery is controlled by the providers. This is thought to reduce the likelihood of control of funding by vested interests. Agency Theory also accounts for competitive tendering for services with industry training organisations (ITOs), and, finally, for the encouragement of private training organisations, in other words, privatisation. This is consistent with the tenet that, where public sector activities are done in the private sector, then the public sector should surrender such activities. Agency Theory is the basis for contracts with students and contracts with Work and Income New Zealand (WINZ), contracts with the Ministry of Education, contracts with ITOs, the creation of external quality assurance agencies and, perhaps the area that impacts most directly on educators, employment contracts between education professionals and their employing institution.

The other area of great influence came from the literature on management, with the concepts of New Public Management (NPM) being integrated into the new structures after the Education Amendment Act 1990. NPM is essentially about how to remove controls on public sector employment relations so as to let the managers manage. It resulted in greater autonomy for Chief Executives, changes to the accountability mechanisms and performance-based salary packages. According to Shick (1996), it entails centralised control and top-down implementation. It includes increasing the discretion of managers to recruit, retain, train and motivate staff in order to achieve their organisation's objectives. It stresses responsiveness to customers. The rationale for this is that it is impossible in principle and in practice to specify all future contingencies in a contract and that, therefore, the executives must necessarily be given powers so that they can fulfil the performance required in their relational contract. A formal review of the changes in the state sector, including the education area, revealed a perception that '75 percent of the benefits had arisen through the application of NPM' (Shick,1996, p.23).

A striking aspect of the reforms has been the connections made between Agency Theory, measurement of outcomes and New Public Management. Managerial reform is dependent on the behaviour of managers. To overcome opportunistic behaviour on the part of the managers, Agency Theory and measurement of outcomes ensured that muscle was added to the accountability arrangements. This included requirements for the explicit specification of outputs, a clear chain of accountability and measurable outcomes. It has been

these particular connections which has made it possible to operationalise the reforms completely throughout the public system. As a result, a series of political and economic changes have transformed New Zealand organisations.

Agency theory and public choice theory, which underpin market competition, have been accompanied by the need for monitoring. This has been done by a variety of monitoring agencies, including Audit New Zealand, CCMAU, and New Zealand Qualifications Authority³. It has become particularly apparent through the surveillance, examination and judgement inherent in both the document approval and auditing processes associated with the cumbersome external approval requirements that have accompanied the industry of quality assurance. The creation of the external standards measured by performance criteria based on the economic model have swept through education both at the institutional and programme levels. Premised on distrust, the new systems created mechanisms which reinforce lack of trust.

External monitoring and reporting are visible accountability mechanisms and imply that the preexisting professional standards and practices were not good enough. Yet this is not so, as the professional organisations or regulatory bodies still exercise their approval rights and that approval is critical for the students to be able to practise. In many ways it is hard to see the increased benefit of involving an additional approval authority such as NZQA or NZPPC for programmes where such regulatory organisations exist, for example, teacher registration programmes, nursing registration programmes, chartered accountant programmes.

³ NZQA was known as the National Education Qualifications Authority prior to the Education Amendment Act 1990.

The impact of managerialism on educators

Management continues to be presented as an objective technically neutral mechanism dedicated only to greater efficiency. Managers continue to operate within the framework of Agency Theory, which assumes that all workers have vested interests and are opportunistic. The idea of public servant goodwill and a desire to do a good job for people, and professional ethics as an underpinning assurance of quality, have been displaced by performance appraisals and measurable outcomes. Educators have found themselves a party within the Agency Theory process, controlled by the techniques of management and market competition.

One lynchpin of current management practice is a preference for loose networks that are more open to reinvention than pyramidal hierarchies. While pyramidal hierarchies can stultify, they also offer a myriad of informal networks built over long periods which affect productivity, morale and the general climate in an organisation. How many restructures, how much re-engineering and downsizing has your organisation been through? How many new team networks have you worked within over the last ten years? These all create a climate with no long-term focus, which disorients and loosens bonds of trust and commitment. Sennett (1998) suggests that this emphasis on flexibility, lack of long-term focus and lack of commitment to individuals and careers, reduces the meaningfulness of working lives. As we become interchangeable resources, our sense of being needed is removed and our individual contribution less recognised, and so satisfaction is reduced.

Anecdotal evidence and the writer's experience suggest that achieving greater efficiency (doing more for less) and measures of effectiveness and accountability have been directly associated with intensification of tasks and closer monitoring and appraisal. For educators, this has also been accompanied by loss of autonomy and non-participation in decision making as management layers have been created which operate from new public management principles. For some educators, movement into management has sometimes been the only way of attaining promotion, and the prerequisite for such promotion (and certainly the basis for staff being overtly valued) is their ability to cope with change, and willingness to adapt to new goals and take on the competitive orientation of the marketplace, rather than their subject knowledge or teaching expertise.

Foucault suggests five headings under which relationships of power/ knowledge could be analysed in an organisation. Educators can use these to gain insight into the degree to which academics or managers exercise power and control in any educational setting. These are

1. Look at the status accorded to the different groups — what are the positions of authority and which positions are paid the most?
2. Whose objectives are pursued by others and what type of objectives are these?
3. What is the means of bringing power relations into play, is it consent, compliance, surveillance, reward? For example, are the meeting of job performance objectives linked to receiving a bonus?
4. What does the organisational chart look like? Which titles are noted?
5. What kind of knowledge is authorised and created as the 'norm' and subsequently valued through patterns of resource allocation and career prospects? (Marshall, 1990).

As effectiveness measures become geared to market values, people are steered into compliant patterns of behaviour. Staff who have opposed or resisted the reforms or the methods of efficiency have sometimes been treated with the discourse of derision. This discourse depicts the problems as belonging to that person rather than to the system. It dismisses or deconstructs collective interests, apart from those of the system. Typically individuals are referred to as inflexible or dead wood, or dinosaurs, implying they are living with outdated ideas that can no longer be sustained, and the collective voice of a union is labelled as holding vested interests in the old system. The discourse of derision is particularly applied to unions, with their arguments of opposition still not being answered. Instead, the credibility of the source is attacked. Jones (2001) describes union members as those of obvious limited intellect and capability who call the shots by mindless noise and blackmail. The language of survival is not the language of education: it is 'management speak'. The rhetoric from politicians and business leaders has been aimed at painting the education profession as self-serving, incompetent and misdirected and at placing the previous system under the suspicion of being inefficient, ineffective and lacking standards. There is no evidence that the current system is rated better by the students. The reason is that comparisons are not available. The new system was introduced without any research about the old system that could be replicated by research in the new system. The discourse continues to imply doubt about the old by creating measures that imply improvements. The doubt over standards is played upon right through education. For example, we have been

told that, despite national resistance to the concept, the government is proceeding with a pilot national system of assessment at the primary school level on the premise that the government needs more evidence of schools' effectiveness (again, effectiveness measured against very narrow assessment terms).

According to Barrow (1999), the economic world of rational calculation and management has been extended into higher education with the assumption that these systems and their scientific rationality are neutral. The system is not neutral: it institutionalises the lack of democratic control and restricts access to resources. Foucault suggests power is exercised in the effect of one action on another action.

Power can be explained only by understanding the field of possible actions in which the action occurs. The description of the field would include an account not only of the ways that action inhibits other possible actions but also of the manner in which that action increases the probability of other actions. (Hoy, 1986, p.135).

So, as a result, we have the work of professional educators measured against outputs such as research and sometimes outcomes such as number of course completions, by their managers, who are in turn measured against their outputs such as business objectives and sometimes outcomes such as specific targets. Effectiveness and accountability are defined in terms of the possibilities of measurement. The norm is established, the norm is given a value. It then becomes a constraint of conformity that must be achieved. Unfortunately, although we presumably value everything we measure, not everything we value can be measured by criteria based on an economic model. Sometimes, it is possible to recognise a standard but not define it precisely because the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. What is not measurable in this way starts to become invisible. If it is invisible, it is not acknowledged, and it starts to become less valued. In this way education as a process as well as an outcome, education as a transformational experience, education as an exciting journey, or a co-creative partnership, or as something exceptional becomes less and less discussed, less valued, less resourced, and the terms *outcome*, *product* and *services* start to become the way in which education is discussed, financed and measured.

External quality assurance agencies and educators

The major players in quality assurance for polytechnics has been the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) and the New Zealand Polytechnics Programmes Committee (NZPPC) (delegated agents of NZQA for polytechnics). NZQA was created as a result of the passage of the Education Amendment Act 1990. NZQA was given wide and encompassing powers in relation to approval of programmes, courses and accreditation of institutions.

The power/knowledge base for the development of NZQA was consistent with the dominant discourse of reducing interest group capture, improving accountability to the consumer and incorporating Agency Theory into the newly competitive education environment. One way this occurred was by opening up to the approval panels for programmes input from wider membership. NZQA also, of course, developed the National Qualifications Framework, based on unit standards which measure competencies. This national framework and the Industry Training Act 1992 have empowered industry to determine for education a much more task-focused, learning-outcome based framework with detailed performance criteria. It has, in effect, wrested the building blocks of curricula away from the teaching institutions and academics, who are now required to deliver unit-standards-based education if they wish to offer a 'national' qualification. In this regard, the Education and Industry Training Acts may be interpreted as reducing academic interest group capture and objectifying the knowledge required to a national level. By improving consumer accountability via industry training organisations and by creating competition among providers, the concepts of Agency Theory have been embedded into the system.

External quality assurance agencies not only rise from an ideological base; they also contribute to the power/knowledge control and surveillance picture of that base. They are a direct result of the application of Agency Theory into the education area. They have been presented and developed as the answer to the government's needs for quality in higher education, but they are really a mechanism for government control of funding. They provide a measure of transparency and accountability now required because the basis of trust in professions has been eroded by the adoption of Public Choice Theory and Agency Theory views. Quality assurance agencies are an ultimate tool of disciplinary power, an excellent example of the dominated and dominating being part of the same social matrix caught up in a web of control and surveillance. They are the result of the government 'structuring the field for the actions of others'. Their existence has shifted the ground from the basis of professional trust and integrity of individual educators and their employing organisations to the need for explicit standards which are measurable and which are reductive in their approach to education.

While quality has not been defined by NZQA or agreed upon by providers, it is being measured and decisions are being made on the basis of those expert measurements. Harvey identified four ways of defining quality, thereby highlighting the difficulty of measuring such a concept in any one meaningful way. The definitions are summarised as

1. Quality as exceptional, something distinctive and elitist, often associated with excellence.
2. Quality as transformational, something which deals with the empowerment and enhancement of the student and their learning
3. Quality as value for money where the outcome is seen as being achieved at the lowest possible cost.
4. Quality as fitness for purpose where the 'product' meets the needs of the 'consumer'. (quoted in Barrow, 1999, p.30)

Clearly, some aspects of quality as outlined above are more readily measurable than others. Barrow (1999) suggests this has led to dramaturgical compliance where a quality assurance system is developed and complied with, and the existence and compliance with that quality assurance system is equated with the achievement of quality outcomes. Yet other important perspectives on quality are ignored. For example, what positive differences have the external requirements (and an internal quality assurance system) made to the transformational and excellence areas of the structured learning experience? What positive differences have they made to actual teaching interactions with students? As educators, we are fully aware of the complexity of trying to capture and measure the dynamic nature of the teaching/learning partnership. We know that even results of 'measurable outcomes' are questionable because they are affected not only by the purpose and structure of the tool used but also by the inherent diversity involved in some of the constituent variables. Some examples of diversity which can affect measurable outcomes include the backgrounds of students, students' academic standards, the institution involved and staff qualifications, subject mix and teaching modes. Karmel (1999) suggests that the interpretation of some quality indicators is not straightforward. For example, the case of the proportion of students completing a course is influenced by such variables as the type of student and their life situation, the academic ability of the students attracted, the quality of the teaching, the difficulty of the course, the standard of the examining. Tools such as student evaluations of teaching and overall satisfaction, need to be treated with caution, as student's judgements may reflect merely their lack of understanding. This is supported by research, for example, by Perry (1972),

who identified a change in the nature of student evaluations as they developed their critical thinking abilities. Therefore, a student's unsatisfactory rating of a course may reflect a legitimate issue about the course, or it may say more about that student's development and their lack of ability to take on pluralist viewpoints and adopt a relativist position in order to make an informed critical appraisal.

With some critical aspects of quality being very subjective and therefore not quantitatively measurable, inevitably the emphasis for measurement is on those areas which are more readily reductive. Barrow (1999) suggests that energy is being spent performing normative behaviours amid warnings of audit and intervention, which constrain action and behaviours in a range of areas of daily activity. Paper records increase in order to provide evidence. In this way, the requirements of the external agencies are increasingly driving the quality systems of the individual institutions. While this is often a pragmatic response to avoid duplication of documentation, nevertheless the power and control over quality standards is ever more being removed from the individual educator and the provider organisation. As external quality assurance fits within a broader ideological picture of competition and free trade, the practice of education is increasingly being measured against business foci and developed within educational theories that fit requirements for reductive measurement, such as neobehaviourist-driven prescribed measurable outcomes. The latter requirement creates a view of education that appeals to many because it creates an illusion of control.

Finally, there is an assumption that quality assurance agencies in New Zealand protect the student, yet all recently publicised cases of student complaints were where students actually enrolled in externally approved courses. What has changed since the application of user pays is that students are more inclined to be litigious. The more litigious the students become, the more insistent quality management becomes about documenting decision trails, and the more cautious they become about approving innovative or different approaches. The move toward safe content can result in less challenging material. The more compliant we are to these documentation processes and systems, the more time is spent covering our decisions with paperwork and the less time is spent in research and teaching and learning activities.

A Foucauldian perspective suggests that the changes which have occurred are dressed up and purported to be in the consumer interest but actually have been made because they are consistent with an ideological position. In reality, the only control consumers have is what course they undertake and in which institution they enrol. This has not changed as a result of the reforms. What has changed is market competition that determines which courses are available and

how much they will cost. In relation to consumer choice, I have observed that the impact of market forces means that courses which do not attract sufficient enrolments to make a profit often are withdrawn, resulting in that particular area of knowledge becoming no longer part of the educational options available. Perhaps in the future, market forces will see even less access choice for students as institutions close. It would seem that the dominant discourse is controlling knowledge covertly by creating an environment where, ultimately, only courses which can make a profit are available.

The language of control

According to Foucault, the dominant discourse is

...an approach and viewpoint consisting of a particular conception of truth about the condition of the world which happens to prevail over competing versions because of the peculiarities of time, space and social conditions that provide the rules and specify truth and the economic and political role it plays (quoted in Knight, Smith, Sachs, 1990, p.133).

The dominant discourse embodying the principles identified above has played, and is playing, a key role in educational changes. Foucault suggests that the effect of a dominant discourse is to disempower other discursive practices that might equally explain or be used to structure operations should they reach transcendence. So it is important to hear what, identify how, and consider why, something is said or left unsaid. According to Knight et al (1990), discourses use scientific methodologies and social science theory in order to create a reality that is rational, objective, seamless and taps into the sensibilities of national popular consciousness. A Foucauldian perspective suggests that the official state policies need to be viewed with this in mind, as such policies attempt to represent the world in factual terms so that certain kinds of practices appear to flow naturally from them.

According to Grace (1991), exposure to this discourse results in a subtle manipulation of perceptions.

An ideological position makes constant use of a particular form of language which it attempts to naturalise in a common sense way. If that language is accepted, taken up and used without question an important part of that ideological position is already assimilated. The language of inputs, outputs and production functions in education is being introduced to us as an analytically more robust way of thinking about education (Grace, 1991, pp 265–275).

As educators, we need to ask ourselves how readily we accept such terms as *providing educational products and services, downsizing, rationalisation, market share, customer focus, consumer, human resources, user pays, outputs, outcomes, efficiency, effectiveness and accountability*. While there is nothing intrinsically wrong with these words, a problem exists when they are seen as the preferred, best or only way to describe the situation. This is when the process of normalisation has occurred and the words have taken on the meanings of the discourse. This is consistent with the suggestion from Kenway (1990), that the very organisation of the discourse can be an exercise of power, controlling and restraining what can be said as well as the right to speak. Foucault asserts that the statements and claims of a discourse pronounced as 'truth' are constructed through the interplay of power and knowledge by systems of administration and classification which fix people within their gaze (surveillance).

According to Papps (1995), discourses involve the subjugation of some truths to others, and in this process, individuals are defined according to the needs of the dominant regime. Words and concepts, like those identified above, are generic management terms. They objectify the topics discussed, and their constant use and acceptance by educators removes control about the way key areas of our work are expressed. In this way, education is subjugated to another discourse. We are in danger of losing control over the very language which describes the culture of education. We see business plans full of words like *products and services*. Staff members are now described as *human resources*, implying they are an item to be used, moved and replaced, like a whiteboard. The management emphasis on measurement diminishes the importance of the process of education involving teaching and learning in favour of emphasising assessment of outcomes, so that lecturers become more like technicians. Some important aspects of education (which are less easily measured) become less visible because they are not captured in the discourse. There is a danger that they will also become less valued and less resourced. As stated earlier, they start to become invisible. Discourses constrain the possibilities of thought, and they order and combine words in particular ways excluding or displacing other combinations. We need to be aware of the connection between speaking the language of the dominant discourse and the implicit acceptance of the power and control of it, for example, the effect it can have on collegiality. In the past, there was an opportunity to discuss with colleagues across institutions the research and discipline developments that could benefit education. Nowadays, ideas are seen not only as intellectual property but increasingly property only to be shared via contract. The language of competition has become normalised and has infused itself so deeply into the psyche that requests for assistance are viewed in terms of 'Will this affect our market share?' 'What is in it for us?' Requests for joint ventures are viewed primarily as revenue opportunities and assessed against risks to accreditation, rather than as opportunities to share knowledge, teaching and learning strategies or to improve the overall knowledge base of a qualification. The outcome is certainly not better development of knowledge. The pursuit of truth, which should be a concern of educators, is constrained.

The first step in assisting us, as educators, to evaluate the extent to which the dominant discourse has become controlling, is to build our own awareness of who exercises power and control and who speaks the language of power and control, and thus who demonstrates acceptance of the discourse. This can range from ourselves, and our managers, to those accorded expert status, such as management consultants. Shumway suggests that experts

...all command our attention and respect and thus have power over us because they claim some kind of exclusive expertise. We listen and are likely to accept their advice on the grounds of specialised expertise. But in each case a form of disciplinary power is being exercised over us that we cannot resist unless we recognise that it is power and not truth that is spoken in each case (Shumway, 1989, p.162).

We need to be aware of the constraints which accompany the dominant discourse and how they are operating on ourselves and our environment and impacting on education. We also need to know how to resist the impact of the dominant discourse and what responses to expect when promoting alternative views. Hoy (1986) suggests that change in Foucauldian terms can only come about by individual actions:

For Foucault neither comprehending the work nor changing it depends on grasping the concept of totality. Rather his microphysics of power depend on comprehending power by first studying the everyday practices where individuals continually experience micropowers and the particular confrontations with and resistances to impositions of power. Change does not occur by transforming the whole at once but only by resisting injustices at the particular points where they manifest themselves.... The battle can only be won by the continued efforts of the individual combatants (Hoy, 1986, pp 142–143).

Conclusion

The moves toward so-called deregulation and minimal intervention have not flowed down to individual educators for whom there has been a change to the model of control, perhaps even more evident control, but certainly not a reduction of control. Rather than set educators free, the alternative structures which accompanied the power/knowledge basis of the education reforms have increased our experience of surveillance and control. The language employed has begun its insidious tapping into not only the national consciousness but also the understanding of educators. As educators, we need to ensure we take back control of the language of education by exerting the power/knowledge of the discipline of education. In this way, we can begin the process of reversing the control and restraint over education practice and over what can be said, as well as the right to speak about and within education. Fortunately, according to Hubscher (2001), there is growing consensus that senior managers must know the industry in which they operate inside out. Senior managers cannot move as easily between industries as lower-level managers can, he insists, 'Leaders need a great deal of industry knowledge about what's possible. They must fully understand the fundamentals, the key drivers of an operation, because if they don't, they cannot lead'. (quoted in Jackson and Parry, 2001, p.128). We need to ensure that this growing realisation is transferred into action through our collective strength. This will allow for the hegemony of managerialism to be challenged through the re-establishment of academic positions of influence in organisations. It could also result in mechanisms for salary increases in recognition of the importance of education, research and teaching and learning.

In New Zealand, the review of the Education Act, the creation of NZQA, and the principles underpinning the external quality assurance policies and practices, fit within state sector reform and are all in keeping with Public Choice Theory, Agency Theory and New Public Management. In essence, this means they have common threads of apparently improving individual consumer welfare and choice and consequently involving less state intervention and more market responsiveness. Educators need to be aware of the basis for power/knowledge that is being exercised over education within the quality assurance systems and processes and to keep constantly in the view of managers and government the areas of education that are not identified and measured in the economic world of rational calculation. This will enable us to achieve better control of the language used to describe and control the culture of education. It may also keep alive the real goal of education, that is, the pursuit of truth.

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