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## **Changing mechanisms of governmentality? Academic development in New Zealand and student evaluations of teaching**

### **Abstract**

Academic (or educational) development is a relatively recent project in universities. In Aotearoa New Zealand, there were two waves of foundation for academic development, separated by almost 20 years, during which time much in national and international higher education had changed. This article draws on empirical and archival data to propose that shifts between the two waves give insight into the changing mechanisms of governmentality at work for academic staff in higher education. In a particular case, the emergence and consolidation of a culture of student evaluation of teaching is used to illustrate how academic development has been implicated in those shifts. In the earlier period, from a marginal location, a more pastoral mode of power relations between the academic developer as an institutional change agent and the academic staff they worked with is evident, with an emphasis on voluntary participation from the latter. By contrast, in the later period, academic development has moved closer to the institutional centre, and is participating in more disciplinary forms of power relations in its efforts to shape academic conduct towards certain ends. In this shift, a technology that was initially created and implemented by academic development for one purpose was ultimately taken up by the institution for quite another: it became part of the audit machine. While our data come from a particular case of practice within local national context, the cautionary tale offered here has salience for other academic development practices and other countries where academic development has had a similar story. Keywords: academic development, governmentality, student evaluations of teaching, university teaching

## **Introduction**

Academic (or educational) development is a relatively recent project in universities. The emergence of this new form of academic practice was a response to the challenges occasioned by several significant changes in higher education in Western societies: the second half of the twentieth century saw a population explosion in the system, often explained as a move from elite to mass provision. New and different universities emerged and there was an increase in the numbers and diversity making up the student body. As the century progressed and post-World War II economies faltered, governments became concerned at the increasing costs of providing higher education and with ‘wastage’ in the system (Brailsford, 2011). One institutional reaction was the appointment of a new type of university employee – the academic developer.<sup>1</sup>

In this article, we explore the ways in which the modes of academic development in Aotearoa New Zealand (NZ) shifted across two waves of emergence in later years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. We use an analytical framework informed by the work of Michel Foucault (1983; 1991b) and Nicholas Rose (1999) as we attempt to trace some of the changing mechanisms of governmentality in which the academic development was implicated. To begin, we briefly explore the evolving political context of the university sector in NZ and the institutional contexts in which academic developers were working. Then, after a brief theoretical exegesis, we narrow our focus to examine the development and implementation of techniques to gather student feedback on (later ‘evaluations of’) university teaching. In choosing this focus, we are mindful of Foucault’s attention to the role of the examination in combining “the techniques of an observing hierarchy and those of a normalizing judgment” (Foucault 1991a, p. 184) . Over time, we suggest, student evaluations of teaching (SET) have come to function as just such an “examination”: they are a “small penal mechanism” (Foucault 1991a, p. 177), with considerable force in the lives and careers of academic staff.

### **From one university to seven: Four decades of change**

Prior to the 1960s, NZ’s university system looked very different from today’s. Just four semi-independent colleges operated under the auspices of the University of New Zealand.

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<sup>1</sup> There are many different names attached to this class of workers: for example, they might be called staff or educational developers, or (in the US) faculty developers. They are also variously referred to as advisors, officers, consultants and so on. We use the term ‘academic development’ to describe the general field of practice, ‘academic developers’ for the personnel involved, and ‘academic development directors’ for those appointed to oversee the practice in particular institutions. We note, though, that none our interviewees were referred to as ‘academic development directors’ or ‘academic developers’ in the beginning.

Following the adoption of recommendations from the government-commissioned Hughes Parry Report (1959), the colleges were transformed into four independent universities: the Universities of Auckland, Canterbury and Otago, and Victoria University of Wellington. A period of growth in student numbers ensued: the experience of World War II and the general prosperity of 1950s New Zealand had provoked a sea-change to attitudes about knowledge (Butterworth & Tarling, 1994), whereby a discourse of knowledge – especially scientific knowledge – as the engine of progress became established. To develop as a nation and to compete in a globalized world, it was argued, NZ needed to put a premium on the development of technology and services (Malcolm & Tarling, 2007). In response to these changes and the growing population, two new universities were established in the 1960s. One (the University of Waikato) was an entirely new venture based in the agricultural Waikato region; the second (Massey University) resulted from the renaming of a former agricultural college and was given a then-unique mandate to develop extramural programmes. The growth of universities had general support – and state support, without state control, was largely the order of the day (Butterworth & Tarling, 1994).

Very quickly, all six universities were dealing with the pressures of increasing class sizes, increasing numbers of full-time students and signs of increased diversity within the student body. Their teaching departments struggled to get a balance between experienced academic staff and new recruits hired to meet increased teaching requirements. By the early 1970s, a discourse of student underachievement, concern at the quality of teaching and lack of accountability of the universities had become well established (see Barrow & Grant, 2011; Barrow, Grant, & Brailsford, 2010; Brailsford, 2011). More students, and more diversity amongst them, ever-increasing scientific knowledge and more sophisticated teaching technologies led Layton to suggest that a “new student” confronted a “new teacher” (Layton, 1968, pp. v-vii, cited in Brailsford, 2011). The pressures created by these changes led to a first wave of appointments of academic developers in the four oldest universities in the late 1960s and early 1970s: the first was appointed in 1969 (at the University of Canterbury) and the last at the University of Otago in 1976. The genesis of these appointments paralleled similarly timed developments in other Western universities facing similar challenges, with the most notable influences on NZ coming from the UK and Australia (Gosling, 2009; Lee, Manathunga, & Kandlbinder, 2008).

Between 1987 to 1995, in a second wave of appointments, the now three<sup>2</sup> newer universities recruited academic development directors. The wider political environment into which the new appointments arrived (and in which the first four were also now working) was

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<sup>2</sup> Lincoln University, originally an autonomous college governed by the University of Canterbury, became a stand-alone institution in 1990, making the national total of universities seven.

significantly different to that of the first wave's. By the mid-80s, a neo-liberal, 'new-right' ideology – characterised by a belief in small government, reduced state intervention in civil society and a trust in market forces as a superior mechanism for the allocation of resources (Peters, 1996) – was rapidly on the rise. This ideological shift turned the period from 1984 to 1990 into one of intense reform of the core public service in NZ and of radical change to the entire education sector. This period saw a resurgence of interest in the idea of knowledge as a key to economic and social progress. The idea of a 'knowledge society' was promulgated globally by organisations like the OECD, which argued that a metamorphosis of society was underway with the development, accumulation and communication of knowledge at the heart of national prosperity (Peters, 1997). Perhaps the most overt manifestation of this discourse in NZ took place in 2001 when the country's Prime Minister and the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Auckland jointly hosted a 'Catching the Knowledge Wave' conference, which was attended by high-level representatives of business, universities, governments and civil society. The message of the conference was clear: 'knowledge organisations' such as universities had a vital role to play in their societies. However, they were (and continued to be) seen by government as still too unresponsive and unaccountable, and as needing to both increase their efficiency and become more productive (Malcolm & Tarling, 2007).

While NZ's post-War II universities had been almost wholly state funded, by the late 1980s, the state no longer saw itself as the sole (or even main) provider. Higher education was reconceived as an individual rather than public good, with students now required to pay substantial tuition fees on the basis that they were making an 'investment' in their future employment and earning potential. A quasi-market was created, making services contestable with existing state and new private providers competing to attract students (Butterworth & Tarling, 1994). Educational institutions were charged with publishing mission and vision statements with associated output measurements and to market themselves in order to attract increasing numbers of career-oriented students. A structural manifestation of the changing environment was the foundation, in 1993, of the NZ Universities Academic Audit Unit (AAU), which was set up to consider and review universities' "mechanisms for monitoring and enhancing the academic quality and standards which are necessary for achieving their stated aims and objectives, and to comment on the extent to which procedures in place are applied effectively and reflect good practice in maintaining quality" (New Zealand Universities Academic Audit Unit, 2004, p. iii). AAU was established as, and is still, a wholly owned entity of the Committee of NZ Vice-Chancellors (now Universities New Zealand) and governed by an independent board.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The NZ case is notably different to the situation in other jurisdictions (e.g. Australia and the UK) where the equivalent agencies are government bodies.

The second wave of academic directors was appointed into a different discursive environment shaped by a newly prevailing neo-liberal agenda where, over time, demands for competition, efficiency, responsiveness and accountability were increasingly felt by academic staff. In changes that spanned the period of academic development's establishment (and indeed reaching into today's institutions), universities responded to these demands with increasing bureaucratisation and the appointment of staff to monitor and measure academic performance (Peters, 2013; Shore 2008). In the space of 30 years, New Zealand had moved from a country with one federal university to one where seven (now eight) independent institutions sought to differentiate themselves from one another in order to compete for resources, particularly for students and the funding associated with them. To compete, universities were expected to describe themselves in terms of numerical measures making it possible for consumers (and policy makers) to make inter-institutional comparisons. Such moves led to universities being compared with each other, both nationally and internationally (Larner & Le Heron, 2005), resulting in publicly available university rankings and league tables. The mechanisms to generate such data inevitably resulted in greater surveillance of the work of academics, making a range of intra-institutional comparisons possible, even down to the level of individuals.

### **Theorising academic development via governmentality**

The methodology of our work is, broadly speaking, a “history of the present”, an approach that tries to “expand the boundaries of possible approaches to contemporary problems by using historical investigations to permit a thinking of those problems in different ways” (Tyler & Johnson, 1991, p. 1). Here our attention turns to the idea of governmentality, a set of “tactics and techniques” (Foucault, 1991b, p. 100) for regulating populations. Governmentality provides a “contact point” (Foucault, cited in Burchell, 1996, p. 20) between technologies of domination and technologies of the self, which are modes of modern power entailing a significant level of freedom on the part of their subjects. Technologies of domination are the systematic disciplinary practices by which modern institutions work over bodies, their powers and capacities, aiming for “the subjugation of people as subjects to lead useful, docile and practical lives” (Marshall, 1995, p. 31). In contrast, technologies of the self are the ways in which individuals take care of and shape their own conduct towards an institution's ends. Through governmentality, the technologies of domination and those of the self inter-penetrate each other's logic and force, so that the former work through actions of the individuals upon themselves and the latter become coercive (Burchell, 1996, p. 20). Universities, like other social institutions, are sites of governmentality, where “the workings or deliberate policies of governments” (Usher & Edwards, 1995, p. 15) enter the inner lives and conduct of individuals, turning them into subjects: “subject to someone else by control

and dependence; and tied to his [sic] own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge” (Foucault, 1983, p. 212).

In his 1983 essay, *The subject and power*, Foucault describes two paradigms that establish the micro-physics of power relations in the major institutions of democratic western societies: the pastorate and the disciplines. Of these, the paradigm of the pastorate has been particularly characteristic of universities because they are more interested in the improvement of their subjects than their containment, they wield normative rather than carceral powers towards those subjects and, predominantly, they seek voluntary rather than involuntary compliance (Howley & Hartnett, 1992, p. 271). Pastoral power is premised on – and works through – a ‘personal’ relationship, in which the pastor cares for others not just as anonymous members of the flock but also by knowing them as individuals, through knowing their minds and souls. Pastoral care is concerned most of all with salvation: formerly for students, in the university, through the acquisition of knowledge and social standing; latterly, through the acquisition of credentials and transferable skills for employment. In universities, pastoral power relations work primarily through the technologies of the self by dint of which academic subjects willingly work to improve themselves in line with institutional expectations in return for the (saving) success that will follow. At the same time, technologies of domination in the form of various regulations and mandatory practices are interwoven with pastoral power, but they are less *felt* on a daily basis by students and academics than they are, say, in schooling. Academics have been largely able to remove themselves from being implicated in such practices towards students: we have relied on the academic disciplines themselves, or the university administration, to impose their norms, rules, standards. Students, however, are not the only targets of such power.

In contrast, the paradigm of disciplinary power – more characteristic of the hospital, the prison, the school – more actively and noticeably mobilises the technologies of domination. These technologies coerce their subjects through individualising, normalising and totalising practices of observation, classification and ranking: for students, through coursework and examinations for example; for academics, through promotions processes, excellence awards, and student evaluations of teaching. Although the technologies of domination have always been an integral part of academic power relations, their *proliferation* in the relationship between the institution and its academic subjects – academic staff in particular – is more recent, as we shall show.

In the ensuing analysis, we show how the academic spaces of freedom and constraint (in the form of a changing interplay between the technologies of domination and the self) have

shifted from a paradigm of pastoral power towards a more disciplinary one, using academic development and the practice of student evaluations of teaching (SET) as an illustrative case.

## **Two waves of academic development**

We now turn to explore data from two sources: transcripts of lengthy semi-structured interviews conducted with the foundation directors of all seven original<sup>4</sup> universities and archival material from one. The interviews explored the directors' career history, institutional contexts, day-to-day activities and ways of working in the nascent field of academic development in their institution. Archival data from one university includes early policy documents related to SET, the director's annual reports to the University Council, and four AAU audit reports.<sup>5</sup>

We analyse these data, first, to describe the changing institutional contexts in which the directors were working: their academic backgrounds, the organisation of their work (in terms of structural location, reporting lines and so on), and the modes of working with academic staff available to them. As part of this analysis, we draw some comparisons between the early and later waves of appointment. Second, we explore the roles taken by academic developers in the design and implementation of SET. We treat the appearance and progression of SET as an example of the emergence of a rationalised institutional scheme, a *technology*, in which we can see “practices of government [that] are deliberate attempts to shape conduct in certain ways in relation to certain objectives” (Rose, 1999, p. 4) and we discuss the ways in which the institutionalisation of SET illustrates a shift from pastoral to disciplinary power relations between universities and their academic staff subjects.

### *The changing institutional context*

The early academic developers were pioneering individuals who, for the first several years following their appointments, worked largely on their own with minimal oversight, to a programme of work of their own devising, in order to provide “academic service under the oversight of Senate” (Otago interview). Generally, they achieved their work programmes by making informal alliances with individual academic enthusiasts, academic departments and other central units that supported teaching, such as audio-visual support units. In the case of the latter, academic staff who were keen to maximise the utility of overhead projectors (for

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<sup>4</sup> An eighth university (Auckland University of Technology) was created in 2000 out of what had previously been NZ's largest institute of technology and with long-established academic development structures in place.

<sup>5</sup> Since its inception, AAU (now the Academic Quality Agency for New Zealand Universities) has completed four audit cycles of all NZ universities. Reports of four University of Auckland audits – either whole of institution (conducted in 1997 and 2009) or of teaching quality (2004, 2014) – are considered.



example) were happy to attend workshops on such matters and those events provided opportunities for the academic developer to provide pedagogical input alongside the technical.

In contrast, later appointees were charged, from the beginning, with heading or forming academic development units that included other staff. In all seven universities, the early lone-operator was becoming a thing of the past as academic development expanded functions with the resultant appointments of more staff and, in some cases, mergers with other existing groups (such as student learning centres). The later directors typically entered an existing institutional structure with more or less clear reporting lines to identifiable superiors who were charged with overseeing the academic development work programme. By this time, the older universities were also devising such structures and the early directors had become considerably more integrated within, and answerable to, their institution's centre.

In terms of academic background, the first appointees were natural scientists who had already worked for some years within universities in NZ or overseas. Of the four, three were physicists and the fourth a zoologist-cum-psychologist. This profile contrasts with the three later directors: an educationalist, historian and geographer. Additionally, the last two appointees had not been university academics prior to taking on their new roles. In their interviews, the early directors discussed the importance of their 'hard science' backgrounds for providing credibility and acceptability amongst their academic peers in institutions. They also expressed a strong desire that Education *not* be the disciplinary or institutional home for academic development for fear of marginalising their activities. In contrast, the later appointees do not have this concern: indeed the historian was worried by her lack of background in Education and sought to remedy this lack by appointing a staff member with Education qualifications.

The kinds of practices available to the first and second-wave academic developers were to some extent different. The early directors were pragmatists in a patchily receptive environment, making gains where they could, forming collegial relationships with academic colleagues interested in improving their teaching. By and large, there was little formal apparatus for such improvement. Instead, the pioneers sought to create 'hooks' to attract staff involvement in academic development activities. These included piggybacking on the work of other groups (as in AV support described above), offering teaching workshops to new academics (a practice that in many cases pre-dated the first appointees), designing instruments for an academic to gather feedback on his/her teaching and encouraging enthusiasts to use them. Through such activities, increasing numbers of academics came into the orbit of the developers. By the time the second-wave directors arrived, most of the practices described above had become firmly embedded in the culture of institution. For

example, most of the universities had moved to substantial, often mandatory, teacher training programmes for new-to-teaching academic staff and sessional academics; in many cases, academic developers had begun to take an active role in the writing of plans and policies to govern aspects of teaching such as student assessment and the evaluation of teaching.

### *Student evaluation of teaching (SET)*

The 1998 AAU report of its visit to the University of Auckland in the previous year notes:

The first course evaluations in UA were conducted in the Department of Physics in the 1960s and they became more generally used in the 1970s. Their original purpose was to provide information from the students to the individual staff member to assist in improving the teaching activity, but as they were streamlined, systematised and centralised, it became possible to provide comparisons between any individual and the average. Also, staff increasingly submitted the results of these evaluations in support of promotion applications. As UA has increased the emphasis on the need for good teaching, and evidence thereof, the use of evaluations has increased. As UA has increased the expectations of HoDs to be accountable for the performance of their staff, HoDs are commissioning increasing numbers of these evaluations (New Zealand Universities Academic Audit Unit, 1998, p. 19).

The auditors' summary traces a trajectory of SET implementation mirrored in the international SET literature. In 1979, for example, McMartin and Rich noted a shift on college campuses away from evaluations as a means of "self-diagnosis" to a tool allowing for making "normative judgements about a professor's teaching effectiveness" in order to decide questions of tenure and promotion (1979, p. 137). Other literature from the 1970s and 1980s reprises similar roles for SET (see for example, Clift & Imrie, 1980; Derry, 1979; Perlberg, 1979; Wotruba & Wright, 1975), sometimes noting that such evaluations might also serve as a guide for students when choosing classes. The later literature on SET makes a shift in discourse apparent (as well as a shift in geography – much of the early literature is US-based). While accountability (to the public and professions) is occasionally referenced in earlier literature (for example, Jones, 1983), by the 2000s neo-liberal discourse has become prevalent: SET is increasingly linked with the accountability and marketability of institutions rather than teaching improvement (Blackmore, 2009). Others have noted the shift to SET as a measure of student (customer) satisfaction linked to the quality agenda (Bedggood & Donovan, 2011), where "statements around teaching and learning outcomes are a matter of importance for organizational success" (Drew & Klopper, 2014, p. 349) particularly in an increasingly competitive international and domestic market (Bedggood & Donovan, 2011).

The University of Auckland appointed its first academic development director (a physicist) in the 1970s. Early in his tenure, “some people were doing it [having their teaching evaluated]), some people weren’t”. He describes a culture in which the administration of such evaluations was personalised so that when lecturers got “feedback that is critical, they can then come back and talk with somebody who’s not going to beat them with [it, but instead] say ‘look okay how can you change?’ ... I think we did that pretty effectively in terms of helping people cope with not very good feedback, and helping people move past it and say, ‘look what can I do?’. And people ... change what they do as a result of you ... talking with them and it’s good, very good, to see people come back later on and say, ‘it worked and I’m doing much better’” (Auckland interview).

In his 1977 annual report to the University Council, the Auckland director noted the demand for research and development into course evaluation mechanisms “as an additional function [the office] could perform which has not been possible within the resources available” (Jones, 1977, p. 1). Four years later, he noted that “course/teaching evaluations taken together with other teaching development now account for a major portion of [the office’s] time” (Jones, 1981, p. 3). By 1986, he notes that “course and teaching evaluations are becoming a common activity on campus” and that the office had assisted with “some 40 evaluations involving a similar number of academic staff” (Jones, 1986, p. 2). The university-wide Teaching and Learning Advisory Committee (TLAC), established in 1977, provided a mechanism to embed such systems over time and, as “that committee gradually found its muscle and knew what it was supposed to be doing” (Auckland interview), teaching evaluations became mandatory.

Other early directors report a similar pattern. For example, Otago’s director notes that “the other major thing<sup>6</sup> that happened through the 1980s was the establishment of the evaluation of teaching systems” (Otago interview). The director drew on research conducted during a leave period in 1979/80 to develop “about 25 questions that people might want to ask about [their teaching]” and, in the early 1980s, offered staff the opportunity to use the evaluation instruments that were developed “for teacher development purposes and course development purposes” (Otago interview). By 1987, SET was embedded and mandatory at the University of Otago. Like the implementations at Auckland, Otago and Canterbury, the development and implementation of SET was championed and overseen by the director at Victoria University of Wellington. There again the director drew on overseas experience to develop mechanisms for student input into course evaluation. He noted, though, that Victoria wanted “a summative evaluation form, which wasn’t attempting to be formative in developing the course. It was purely there to rate the course”. Considerable effort was put into establishing a

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<sup>6</sup> The other was the establishment of the first student learning centre.

psychometrically sound instrument: to move it from a mere “face validity ... we did factorial analysis and developed the scale” (Victoria interview).

In interviews with later directors, it was clear that over time SET and its surrounding technologies took on a more scientised cast. The director at Massey University, appointed in 1994, commented: “when I got there, there was a big thrust [to develop and implement a system for evaluation of teaching]. They were already working with a big group ... and it had representation from the union, from the students association, from whoever. They were struggling to come up with an agreed student evaluation system”. She says the matter was so contentious that the best the committee could do was recommend a number of parameters for a SET system to the relevant Associate Vice-Chancellor, along the lines of “it’s got to be comprehensive, it’s got to be able to be done in two minutes, actually a whole lot of contradictory things! ... That was actually as far as that committee was ever going to get.” (Massey interview). In order to progress the system, a small working group was set up and directed to consult an expert in the development of psychometric testing as well as the experience of overseas universities that were seen to have implemented successful system (see Fraser & Carroll, 1994). A comprehensive report of the SET system to be implemented at Massey sets out its proposed features: it was to be compulsory, with all academic staff required to undergo at least two evaluations each year; it would provide staff with the opportunity to “compare their results with others at departmental, faculty and university-wide level” (Fraser and Carroll, 1994, p. 6); it would identify the core elements of teaching to be applied university-wide “irrespective of teaching environment, style or subject” (p. 12).

Over 20 years, the nature of SET changed considerably. No longer was it a voluntary, small-scale, ad hoc strategy for individual improvement. The interviewees (and the University of Auckland’s Audit Report) describe increasingly bureaucratised SET systems, often initially under the academic development director’s control but augmented by specific policy documents and the appointment of administrators to oversee the gathering and processing of increasingly standardised SET forms, and the generation of reports for a range of institutional players. A report produced by a working party on a draft SET policy at the University of Auckland attests to a desire to systematically monitor teaching on order to provide heads of departments with “reliable, ethical and effective methods of evaluation” with which they could confidently assess an individual’s teaching performance (SECAT Working Party, 1997, p. 7). The university also wanted to be able to “both value and measure” teaching with tools that could “provide for the vigorous measurement and improvement of teaching” and “enable legitimate and provisional comparisons to be made” (p. 4) and allow the academic development unit to “gain sophisticated feedback on staff development needs” (p. 7). The report contended the university would be following international best practice in assuming

“that students are one of the most appropriate sources of judgment concerning the quality of teaching” (p. 6). Notably, three of the 14 members of the working party were academic developers, which supports the assessment of one early director that “[academic development] units are now more a tool of the system ... [we] have a much more direct line in the academic accountability of individual staff. We’ve got [teaching] surveys which, when we set them up first, they were very much a supportive complementary thing. They were there to try and help people with their own particular issue. They weren’t part of the system but then they’ve now become much more of an accountability line, so that’s affected the way [AD] units look” (Canterbury interview).

At the same time, the interview data indicate the directors sought to maintain the developmental role of SET, using the mandatory surveys composed of common items to open up different possibilities for action. For example, one director described “sending letters [to high-scoring academics] saying, ‘you topped the whole university for this question and you’re clearly doing wonderful things’”, followed by an invitation to “tell us what you do that gets you there” so others might be helped to achieve such results (Lincoln interview). Practices of this kind were quite widespread.

Nevertheless, by 1997, the auditors of the University of Auckland were able to report that “over a twenty-year period, the emphasis of student evaluation of teaching has shifted from selective information for improvement of the individual academic’s performance, to a summative purpose, linked to institutional procedures.” (New Zealand Universities Academic Audit Unit, 1998, p. 19)<sup>7</sup>

### **SET as governmentality: From pastoral to disciplinary power relations**

The trajectory in the development, implementation and use of SET, alongside the embedding of academic development as a central function of universities, illustrates a shift in mechanisms of governmentality in universities. In its early phase, SET involved academic developers and lecturers in power relations of a primarily pastoral nature, based on a personal relationship between the academic developer ‘expert’ and an individual academic. Such a connection encourages voluntary self-disclosure, self-inspection and self-regulation (Foucault, 1997; Rose 1996). The first-wave directors all described the personal nature of their relationships with colleagues. The early use of SET provided a mechanism to incite introspection by a university lecturer whose personal interaction with the academic developer

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<sup>7</sup> Over time national systems of SET have emerged (for example, the Australian Course Experience Questionnaire, and the Australian Survey of Student Engagement, the UK National Student Satisfaction Survey), which have enabled comparisons among teaching institutions within, and across, national borders.

helped both know gain insight into the lecturer's intentions and practices as a teacher. With this knowledge of the lecturer's 'conscience', the academic developer was able to guide colleagues to achieve their desired ends, taking care of the individual lecturer and his/her wants while at the same time looking after the good of the university and student body more generally. In this sense, then, the early iterations of SET were primarily individualising, inciting academics to know themselves – and shape themselves – more deeply as 'teachers'.

In contrast, later iterations of SET are totalising as well as individualising. The near-universal surveying of students about all courses and teachers along with the use of survey instruments fine-tuned through the application of psychometric principles cleared the way for the norming and ranking of teaching staff. In this new era, each teacher is able to consider his or her own performance in relation to previous years and also alongside the performance of the institution's teaching population at large. Simultaneously, each individual's place in the population is established and their individuality is defined. The large-scale collection of such data enables an individual's performance to be compared to emergent norms and allows conformity to – or deviance from – those norms to be quantified and described.

In this respect, the contemporary application of SET has become a technology of domination. The central power mechanism has become that of the examination rather than the confessional. Moreover, as well as providing a mechanism amenable to answering calls for accountability and the needs of auditors, SET has become deeply enmeshed in how academics understand themselves as teachers, both individually and collectively: to be a good teacher, an individual must apply SET and must find themselves in the ranks of the best. Resisting SET's requirements, even from a principled position of critique (and there *are* criticisms to be made of its use and interpretation) would put an individual academic in a suspect and risky (in terms of ongoing employment) position. As these developments have taken place, however, the link between SET and academic development has largely been broken: the standardization and enormity of the exercise has typically meant that the process of administering and analysing the reports has become a routinized, often almost entirely on-line, function of a branch of university management. While the potential for the personal and formative relationship between academic developer and university lecturer (characteristic of the pastoral paradigm) still exists, it is more likely that individuals will come for assistance at the behest of a senior third party and because their course or teaching is falling below their institution's norm of an acceptable score.

### **A cautionary tale for academic development?**

Comparing two waves of academic development's emergence in NZ universities provides an opportunity to explore some of the adaptations made within this conflicted institutional practice. Over time, academic developers established themselves more securely as teaching experts in universities and, in leading the development of SET systems, they were able to define 'good' teaching practices and establish mechanisms to produce them. Ultimately, though, their desire for institutional authority – expressed through their contributions to the scientisation of SET and policy formalisation associated with its practices, which in turn led to its widespread, then mandatory, uptake – meant that SET slipped from their grasp and entered the auditing machinery of universities. The primary formative relationship that SET occasioned between academic developer and lecturer (and the private relationship between lecturer and SET data) was displaced by a relationship of surveillance and discipline between institution and lecturer.

The changing mechanisms of SET illustrate shifts in the ways in which universities have sought to govern the conduct of their teaching staff. In its earliest iterations, academic development problematized teaching through personal interactions with academic staff members. Such practices were associated with a period of government and public trust in universities; in turn, universities trusted their academic staff to be responsible for their own teaching. Initially, SET was offered as a powerful and formative way for an individual to enact this responsibility. New discourses associated with the neo-liberal reforms of 1980s and 1990s altered the relationship between universities and the community. Governments sought to reduce their role as funders of university education while simultaneously calling for greater accountability from institutions. Students were reframed as consumers and required to bear increased costs for their education. The new environment refashioned institutional practices associated with the government of teaching: the collection of student views of teaching and courses was scientised and massified, producing data that was both totalising (describing institutional expectations and norms) and individualising (inciting teachers to compare themselves and their teaching to these expectations and norms).

There is a cautionary tale for academic development here: in promoting particular approaches to the 'improvement' (governmentality) of university teaching, what do we unleash upon our academic colleagues for the near future? And what might we lose control of – to other institutional players and to other purposes? Academic development has been a notably unstable practice, difficult to judge the impact of and subject to regular, irrational, and devastating restructures, if not dissolutions. Through becoming more embedded in the policy-generating and audit-appeasing activities directed towards teaching, academic development has been able to consolidate its authority and importance to institutional purposes.

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