Compliance and control:

How performance measures make and unmake universities

Abstract

The power of performance measures and metrics can be seen as a key concern in management and organization. How individuals comply with and react to these measures, and how they effect change is a crucial issue in the field. We address this theme within a specific area: the introduction of measures and controls to improve PhD completion times in a research intensive UK university. Our findings show that despite concerns about the reductionist nature of the target, the 'one size fits all' approach and the consequences for quality and innovation, academics complied with the measure and through their reactions, reinforced it. We show how a PhD completion policy changed the very thing it was trying to measure and although the target became corrupted through some forms of compliance, it nonetheless was self-fulfilling in terms of its effects on the academics. The paper develops the literature on the power effects of measures by suggesting compliance as a type of practice which may simultaneously change and reinforce the power of measures. We argue that the different forms compliance takes determines how academics react to measures. Our findings have important implications for understanding how measures relate to power and resistance in organizations.

I think of a PhD as a complete and finished piece of work and that, I think, is not possible within the limited time frame we now have to work within. That's not to say that I don't conform, I have no choice, but I don't agree with it, and I make that clear to my students and to the Head of the Department (Professor 2, Humanities).

Introduction

How do academics react to the measurement of their work? How do they resist such measures? How do these reactions play out and what are their effects? Measures and how people react to them touches upon core themes in organizational studies, particularly power, control and resistance. In this article, we address these themes within a specific context: the introduction of a new performance metric around PhD completion times in a research intensive UK university. Universities have traditionally placed value in ideas around collegiality, trust and sharing good practice, have enjoyed a comparatively large degree of autonomy and, until relatively recently, have not faced demands to produce quantifiable performance outputs (Engwall, 2007; Willmott, 2011). Since the 1970s, universities have been confronted with calls for public accountability, transparency and value for money (Engwall, 2007; Power, Scheytt, Soin, & Sahlin, 2009; Willmott, 2011). In line with demands in a 'performance society' (P. Scott, 2016) universities now face pressures from multiple stakeholders to demonstrate good governance (Hood, James, Peters, & Scott, 2004), do well in rankings (Espeland & Sauder, 2007; Sauder & Espeland, 2009), use money responsibly and manage their risks (Power, 2007). What unites these pressures is that they 'turn the organization inside out' (Power et al., 2009) which means that organizations need to appear transparent and accountable in the eyes of external stakeholders.

Several commentators have argued that universities and the academics therein, are not simply passive recipients of substantial organizational changes but to some degree, willingly participate in the change of contemporary higher education institutions (Alvesson & Spicer, 2016; Willmott, 2011). Attempts have been made to explain how and why universities

participate in changing their internal workings – despite academics frequently raising concerns about how meaningful such changes are (Knights & Clarke, 2014). Alvesson & Spicer (2016) draw on power relations to explain why academics participate in publishing practices based on journal rankings which are perceived to effectively crowd out the actual content of research. Espeland & Sauder (2007; 2009) have suggested that despite the protests from academics, quantitative indicators such as university rankings shape organizational behaviour in a way that attempts to score highly in whatever these indicators measure.

This paper is concerned with the relation between the power exerted through measures and the effects of compliance as a type of reaction to these measures. Studies which have scrutinized the power-effects of measures have, so far, mostly focussed on the intended and unintended effects of measures while neglecting the influence and forms different reactions to measures take. Building on this, our first question is: how do academics react to being observed, evaluated and managed through performance monitoring systems and targets? Empirically and theoretically, we connect studying the power-effects of measures to the recent debate about compliance which leads to our second and third question: How does compliance shape the effects of performance measures and, what is the relation of power and resistance to compliance?

To answer these questions, we analyse the findings of a longitudinal case study undertaken at *Elite*, a pseudonym, for a research-intensive UK University. Driven by the concerns of UK research funding bodies, the University had set up a four-year completion policy for PhD-theses. Based on a series of interviews (conducted in two stages during three years), documentary analysis and on-site research, we investigate the reactions to the introduction of the four-year completion policy.

Our findings show, how, despite concerns and objections about the reductionist and simplified nature of the target supervisors changed their behaviour in ways that legitimized and reinforced the four-year policy. We start by outlining the context in which new measures are introduced, then detail these measures and present some of the early counter discourses. Our analysis shows that although there was largely compliance with the formal side of the

policy, compliance took four forms: pragmatic, responsibility-driven, disciplinary and compliance. Finally, we show how the four-year PhD completion policy changed the very thing it was trying to measure and although the target became corrupted through some forms of compliance, it nonetheless was self-fulfilling in terms of its effects on the academics.

We make three principal contributions with this paper. First, we offer insights into how academics were compliant in the managerialization of PhD-supervision. We show how a policy designed to improve the quality of PhD research training and ensure accountability in the use of public funds, was translated into a number of different organizational and individual concerns, impacting PhD-supervision in intended and unintended ways. Second, we advance the literature on the power effects of measures (Espeland & Sauder, 2007) by suggesting compliance as a type of practice which may simultaneously change and reinforce the power of measures. We argue that the different forms compliance takes determines how academics react to measures. Finally, we contribute to the emerging debate on the relation of compliance to power, control and resistance (Bristow, Robinson, & Ratle, 2017; Kamoche, Kannan, & Siebers, 2014; Sandholtz, 2012) by moving beyond the dichotomous understanding of compliance as either acquiescence or resistance. We propose a model of mechanisms related to concerns about identity and accountability which explain how different forms are positioned on a continuum from acquiescence to resistance. We argue that such an advanced understanding of compliance with measures helps better explain the important effects of power, control and resistance in contemporary higher education institutions and other organizations under public scrutiny.

Power, Compliance, and Resistance When Reacting to Measures

In this section we provide a review of the literature on how measures and controls impact on those subject to them and how they react to them. We start by outlining the disciplinary power of measures before exploring compliance as an important, yet conceptually blurred type of reaction to measures. Lastly, we detail the ambiguities of compliance in relation to power and resistance.

In the past 40 years, the focus on reducing public spending has impacted universities in specific ways. Concepts like value for money (Townley, Cooper, & Oakes, 2003) have subjected universities to demands for the accountable and transparent use of public funds. Universities have responded by formalizing their management structures and increasing administrative capacities (Lodge & Wegrich, 2014). Power et al. (2009, p. 306f) highlight the emergence of "a broader set of transformations of universities from being ungovernable and idiosyncratic collections of individuals to being accountable organizations with clear missions, formal structures, [and] professional management". A key aspect of this has been the introduction of quantitative measurement tools which have featured heavily in the way universities have changed to become more managed or complete organizations (Brunsson & Sahlin-Andersson, 2000). Critics have argued that such attempts at quantification are reductionist and have substantial unintended consequences such as hampering creative research in favour of research which is easily measurable (Willmott, 2011).

The extant literature has stressed that measures do not simply mirror reality but shape it, because those who are measured react to the measures. Espeland & Sauder (2007) coined the term reactivity in their study of the effects of rankings on law schools. Reactivity refers to "the idea that people change their behaviour in reaction to being evaluated, observed, or measured" (p. 1). Espeland & Sauder's (2007; 2009) findings indicate that the power exerted by rankings is an inescapable force which is irrepressible. Their explanation is explicitly motivated by Foucauldian thought, especially on disciplinary power and normalization. In his reflections on panoptic power, Foucault (1995/1975) shows how discourses around performance and behaviour – from the prison to the school – produces docile subjects. Among the many mechanisms which are part of the complex social practice of shaping and imposing a subjectivity, measures and controls are part of what Foucault called the normalizing gaze. Measures create a kind of visibility through which specific knowledge about someone can be produced which in turn creates a subjectivity which is amenable to be acted upon. Since measures allow categorizations around who or what performs well or badly, they normalize

behaviour around the standards deemed good because those who deviate can be made visible and punished.

Another version of the argument that reactions to measures and controls reinforces existing power structures has been put forward in the literature on accountability (Butler, 2005; Roberts, 2009). Making one accountable means creating organized forms of responsibility and also forces individuals to give an account of themselves (Butler, 2005). Such an account is necessarily personal, affects identity and forces the self to assume a specific relation to others through the lens of measures. The notion of responsibilization (Shamir, 2008) has been put forward to capture the dynamic inherent in regimes of accountability: being accountable forces those who are accountable to assume a specific relation to the world. While authors such as Butler (Butler, 2005) and Roberts (Roberts, 2009) use the debates around accountability to discuss the limits of accountability, they also highlight the strong coercive power of measures. However, this view of the disciplinary effects on reactions to measures has been challenged in recent years by those scholars concerned with compliance and resistance.

Traditionally, theoretical approaches have positioned compliance at the opposite end of resistance and various attempts have been made to explore the psychological factors that make people conform, yield or acquiesce to rules (Carr, 1998; Domstein, 1976). More recent accounts have explored the connections between compliance, control and resistance by incorporating theoretical constructs such as identity, decoupling and functional stupidity. Overall, there is a growing awareness that compliance is not just yielding to power but has also a degree of resistance in it (Ybema & Horvers, 2017). Compliance is seen as an ambiguous social phenomenon.

One area in the study of compliance is on professionals who are usually regarded as difficult to control. Despite their professional expertise, which in theory provides them with some freedom from organizational control, knowledge-intensive workers such as scientists, medical professionals or academics are often found to comply. Kamoche et al. (2014) present a study of R&D scientists who "channelled resistance by reconstituting compliance in line with their sense of identity as creators of knowledge" (p. 989). In their case, compliance assumed

a form of resistance whereby professionals manage to shape compliance in their own terms. Despite the potential of compliance to facilitate resistance, Kamoche et al. (2014) argue compliance may also play a significant part in control strategies. The specific form of compliance emerging in their case is a form of compromise between management's demands for control and the upholding of professionals' identities. In their study of the spread of English as the academic language in French business schools, Boussebaa and Brown (2016) also see compliance as a form of willing engagement with external demands, supplementing traditional control mechanisms of discipline and surveillance. They argue that "power and resistance are interpenetrating and mutually constitutive, so individuals may respond to discipline with creative identity work: unreflexive compliance is less likely than 'gaming'" (p. 4) and other strategies. Through identity concerns, compliance may become reflexive and enter the complex relation between resistance and control (Raffnsøe, Gudmand-Høyer, & Thaning, 2014, p. 11). In a similar vein, Sandholtz (2012) shows that compliance with standards, directives and norms can take either tightly coupled or decoupled forms. Decoupled compliance refers to a consciousness discrepancy between talk and action, while maintaining the appearance of complying with rules. In these studies, compliance is multifaceted in that it offers the possibility of resistance, if defined in accordance with identity requirements and linked to acts of gaming. Simultaneously, compliance has a tenacious component of willingly surrendering professional autonomy, hollowing out its potential for resistance. Bristow et al. (2017) summarize this ambiguity as dialectics of resistance and compliance. While their dialectical approach overcomes the binary opposition of resistance and compliance, it conflates the two concepts to the point where it becomes difficult to study the role and effects of compliance as a social practice in its own right. Generally speaking, although resistance has been well-developed as a concept (Courpasson, 2016), much less is known about what compliance actually is and how its dialectics with resistance and power play out.

Paulsen (2016) further clarifies the relation between compliance and control by explicating the difference between reflective and unreflective compliance. Linking this distinction to the emerging debate about functional stupidity (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012), he

argues that professionals are engaging in willing compliance with rules to their own disadvantage, despite being aware of the resulting problems and communicating them well. Paulsen explains this conundrum by exploring individual discourses and psychological factors such as defeatism, machismo, fun and work ethic. In their study of compliance by management consultants engaged in knowledge work, Karreman and Alvesson (2009) highlight the multidimensional nature of resistance. The environment in their study was characterised by a strong corporate culture and tight control mechanisms. Their analysis shows how the impulse to resist the managerial division of labour and extreme work conditions (such as long hours), was countered and neutralized through the discourses of ambition and autonomy.

In the final part of this section we return to the literature on power and resistance in order to understand the ambiguous relation between compliance and resistance. The various literatures focusing on measures and controls rarely deal with outright resistance, such as uprisings or revolts. Accounts of resistance are usually more subtle and nuanced, with the core of the debate revolving around the perceived effectiveness of such subtle resistant reactions to measures.

One school of thought suggests that subtle and mundane forms of resistance should not be confused with real resistance (Contu, 2008; Fleming & Spicer, 2003). Influenced by thinkers such as Žižek, they suggest that such practices only create a false consciousness of resistance and actual reinforce existing power structures. Scott (J. C. Scott, 1990) summarizes them as safety valve theories of resistance where apparently divergent behaviour is seen as a type of safety valve for tensions in existing power structures and, by venting tensions, this resistant behaviour actually plays into the hands of power.

Scott (1990) suggests that subtle forms of resistance are the foundations for more fundamental change. They are powerful because they help materialize an alternate social order which is usually hidden from the view of power. In an argument echoed in Ybema & Horvers (2017), compliance can then take on the role of "real" resistance by fuelling the rise of an alternate interpretation of events where 'tricksters' are preconditioning more substantial

forms of resistance. Whether the alternate social order actually overtakes the existing one is contingent on many developments. Yet, the very act of resistance *qua* compliance opens up spaces for the potentiality of stronger forms of resistance. Scott suggests that any outright, organized resistance cannot happen *ex nihilo* and will always need more subtle forms of resistance to build on first.

In sum, measures and controls have a complex relation to power and resistance. Their disciplinary effects have strong impacts on the identities of those who are subject to measures and controls. Similarly, the production of accountability and acts of responsibilization shape identities and makes the power effects of measures difficult to escape. The study of measures has recently turned to how those subject to them react and compliance has emerged as a theme which relates to the ambiguity of reactions to measures. The research on compliance has been suggested as suffering from a bifurcation (Ybema & Horvers, 2017) between those who understand it as mechanism of power, where subtle forms of resistance are seen as fooling oneself and those who argue that compliance can contain the nucleus for an alternate social order. These debates point towards the importance of studying the reactions to measures because they greatly influence the power effects of measures. In particular, those practices which happen beyond the either/or-distinction of yielding to or resisting power, are worthy of scholarly attention. It is against this theoretical background that we ask: how do academics react to being observed, evaluated and managed through performance monitoring systems and targets? How does compliance shape reactivity to performance measures and, what is the relation of power and resistance to compliance?

Methods

Setting

The setting for this study was a large research intensive institution (*Elite* University) based in the UK. In 2005 *Elite* set up a programme to see how risk was being managed across the university, to look at ways to develop and improve the risk management process and to identify ways to embed the risk management system. A project team was established that consisted

of two academics who undertook research in the area of risk management and two doctoral students. Three of the authors of this paper were part of this team and had access to all academic and administrative areas across the University and was overseen by a Steering Committee that consisted of senior managers (both academic and administrative) and reported to an Academic Council via the Internal Audit function. Ethical approval was given by the university for both stages of the research and conducted along the principles of non-harm to research participants, including: informed consent, confidentiality and sight / approval for those that requested it of the transcripts for participants. The findings are reported in a manner that preserves participants' anonymity.

Research Design

The objective of this paper is to analyse how academics react to being observed, evaluated and managed through performance measures and targets. Our research design was therefore concerned with understanding how academics comply with attempts to control their work. The aim was to: "(A)articulate a well designed phenomenon of interest and research question(s) […] framed in "how" terms aimed at surfacing concepts and their relationships" (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2012, p. 26). In order to gather thick insightful descriptions of organizational life, we drew on the narrative approach, previously used in research on how employee react to measures. McGivern and Fischer (2012, p. 291) suggest that "[R]ather than attempting to establish a 'true' account of interviewees experiences, a narrative analysis treats accounts as interpretive devices that simultaneously reveal emotional reactions and sensemaking, whilst also constructing reality". This enabled us to give voice to our interviewees as "'knowledgeable agents' who know what they are trying to do and can explain their thoughts, intentions and actions" (Gioia et al., 2012, p. 17).

An important feature of the research design was the role of the researchers in this study. In common with other studies, this paper is "not an a-subjective […] writing up of results" (Chua, 1995, p. 113). It is an account of multiple realities of the organizational actors concerned with doctoral education at *Elite*. The researchers were both 'insiders and outsiders'

(Jönsson & Lukka, 2006) who did not seek to impose their views and understandings on the interviewees, but asked open ended questions around the experience, perceptions and feelings around the concepts of risk, uncertainty, performance measures, controls and the objectives of the university. Furthermore, while aspects of the project could be seen as a piece of interventionist research (Jönsson & Lukka, 2006), for example, through risk training in relation to operational risk assessment, no direct interventions were made as a result of the research undertaken for this paper. The accusation of researcher bias, frequently aimed at interpretivist research, or researchers as 'natives' i.e. both supervisors and PhD students, was ameliorated with the introduction of another researcher, who was never part of the case organization, that acted as a "devil's advocate", critiquing and challenging interpretations that might have been somewhat ingenuous (Gioia et al., 2012). This was reflected in the iterative nature of the data analysis.

Data Collection

The research was undertaken in two phases: phase one (March – June 2005), was an exploratory study that sought to map the perceptions of risk management amongst senior managers, both academic and administrators, as well as examine existing risk management procedures as they were carried out within the University. Twenty interviews were conducted with nine Heads of Schools/Deans and eleven senior administrators in functional departments. The interviews were semi-structured, each lasting around one hour, recorded and transcribed verbatim.

These findings then informed phase two of the study (January – May 2007), in which two key areas were explored: Operational risk assessment (phase 2a), how are risks identified and assessed and the link between operational risk and organisational aims. The second aspect, which is the primary focus of this paper, looked at how internal control was implemented in a higher education institution (phase 2b), with a particular focus on accountability and responsibility for risk management in the chosen areas. Three contrasting areas were looked at PhD regulations, Health and Safety and Archive and Record Keeping.

The topic of PhD regulations, and in particular, the four-year PhD completions policy was an area that had been cited as a potential risk by a number of phase one interviewees.

Data collection in phase 2b (implementing internal control measures) consisted of twenty-three semi-structured interviews (ranging from 1-1.5 hours), conducted with administrators, academics and individuals responsible for developing and implementing the policies in three academic departments within the Schools of Humanities and Sciences. Eighteen of these related to individuals involved with the PhD process. The other five were roles specific to Health and Safety and legal compliance.

We employed multiple data sources beyond interviews. Several informal inquires continued until 2011 to further trace the effects we had encountered in 2007. This also allowed us to raise questions with prior informants (from both phases) that had arisen in data analysis (Gioia et al., 2012, p. 26), and provided a further understanding beyond formal interviews. We observed and experienced a number of activities of both academic and administrative staff. These included: attendance at formal meetings (for example, PhD progress review / upgrades; student induction meetings; School and Departmental Research Committee meetings and Graduate School Committee meetings) and attended courses on PhD supervisor training. For ethical reasons, we asked for permission from individuals involved in these conversations to incorporate these discussions into our research. In addition, we accessed *Elite's* internal documents: the risk management and PhD policies, web based policy statements and guidance on policy implementation and internal emails communicating the various policies. We also analysed publicly accessible material (Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE)[1] regulator guidance, circular letters etc., and guidance from Research Councils UK, who funded PhDs).

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[1] In England, HEFCE distributes public money to universities and colleges that provide higher education. HEFCE has a dual role, firstly as a partial provider of university funding[1] and additionally, as regulator of higher education institutions.

Data Analysis

Analysis of the empirical data in phase one of the study focused on gaining understandings of how senior managers at *Elite* make sense of risk management. We organised the empirical material around emerging themes. The risk of not meeting the four-year completion target of PhD degrees was a major theme in the first phase interviews, so we specifically focused on this topic in the second phase (2b) of the research. The PhD regulatory framework was an area in which significant changes like the introduction of new monitoring mechanisms were already underway and where the university had seemingly succeeded in enforcing new regulatory rules and regulations.

We analysed both phases of the empirical material using the Gioia et al. (2012) approach. The data was analysed in an iterative process, in which all authors analysed interview transcripts and documentation in order to identify themes that emerged around the PhD regulatory framework. Our first order analysis was 'informant centric' (Gioia et al., 2012, p. 26), in so much as we maintained the integrity of the language used by the informants, faithfully recording informants terms. We then went back to the transcripts to further make sense of the data – in Gioia et al.'s (2012) terms: "2nd order theoretical order of themes" (p. 20), which enabled us make sense of our findings. Finally, we distilled two aggregate dimensions, namely counter discourses and forms of compliance, which serve as the basic structure for the empirical findings presented in the following section. Figure 1 summarizes the data structure of our empirical analysis.

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Research Context: Measurement Through Enhanced Monitoring and Control

Organizations respond to demands for transparency and accountability from stakeholders with increased monitoring and control of internal processes (Power, 2007). In the UK doctoral environment, these changes were driven by the regulator, HEFCE and the Research Councils who, in order to demonstrate value-for-money in the use of public funds for doctoral training,

came up with a set of performance measures and criteria to measure it. (HEFCE, M14/96)[2].

One key performance measure was the monitoring of completion rates (HEFCE, 2002; Joint

Funding Councils, 2002), which was then extended to include completion time (QAA, 2004)[3]

i.e. the number of funded research students who complete their PhD within four-years. This

was considered an effective measure of whether the student's research training has been

satisfactorily completed. As a response to these external demands for accountability, changes

were made at the organizational level within *Elite*. This included the introduction of new

procedures, policies and measures. In 2004, following the revised guidance on four-year PhD

completions, new regulations and policies were introduced, mandating that the timescale for

all PhD submission was to be within four-years of study for full-time students, and seven years

of study for part-time student*s*. Two inter-linked monitoring and control systems were

introduced: the PhD upgrade and the six-month progress review*.* Students would initially be

registered for an MPhil / PhD and then be transferred to full PhD status at a later stage in the

PhD process[4]. The objective of the upgrade was to determine whether the student had the

ability and had made sufficient progress to be upgraded to PhD registration. The key principle

for upgrading was that the student was on course to produce research of the required standard

within the permitted timeframe. There were three possible outcomes of the review: 1) upgrade

of the student, 2) to defer the decision for a defined period and 3) a refusal to upgrade the

student's registration. If a student didn't look like they were on track to meet the completion

target, they could be ejected from the programme at the upgrade stage and crucially, before

it impacted the overall percentage of four-year completions. A number of supervisors

commented on how upgrades were gradually taken a lot more seriously.

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[2] This review set in train a further series of reviews and consultations (HEFCE, 2000, 2002, 2003a, 2003b, 2005) aimed at improving standards in post-graduate degree programmes.

[3] The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) had also published a draft revised code of practice for postgraduate research programmes in which it proposed that institutions monitor the success of their postgraduate research degree programmes. The measures suggested for this monitoring included completion times and rates (QAA, 2004).

[4] Students were required to upgrade between 12-18 months into their studies for full-time students and 24-36 months for part-time students.

A Graduate School was created in 2006 to oversee doctoral activity across the whole university and, as time went on, there was increased monitoring of progress related activities. Tighter process monitoring and control systems around PhD completion targets were heavily endorsed by a number of senior managers:

> "You have to select only those students who you know can complete. We realised … that we should be doing better, and that if it was taking students more than three years, plus a year to write up, we were failing them. So we began taking submission rates very seriously at senior management level." (Head of School (HoS), Humanities)

Findings

In the following, we present the findings of our case study. Following the Gioia et al. (2012) methodology our findings are organised around emerging themes (figure 1). The findings fall into two principal themes, which correspond with two types of reactions to measures and targets: counter discourses against the measure and four forms of compliance.

Counter Discourses

Concerns, or counter discourses about the policy, were articulated by a number of interviewees. Comments ranged from the perceived lack of usefulness of the policy, to the 'one size fits all' effect and the focus on meeting the target versus the effect on quality. Some academics stated that although they were aware that they had to conduct upgrades, they had not seen any formal guidance around this procedure at departmental level and they were unaware that any formal supervisor training was available. Others commented that they had just "picked things up as they went along" and that some informal mentoring from experienced supervisors would be more helpful than formal training. Many supervisors commented that these additional monitoring procedures were perceived as time-consuming systems that had

few consequences and did little more than increase workload, resulting in a procedural "box ticking exercise", that was seen as maintaining the status quo. Others were blunter in their views and doubts were raised about whether the process had any effect:

> "We have noticed academic staff are better at ensuring the forms are filled in, that has certainly improved in the last year or so, whether it is actually having any effect on the product is a debatable point". (Administrator 1, Science)

There were also dissenting voices in both Humanities and Science Schools, with one senior academic stating:

> "…if they (the students) are willing to pay their fees, whether they are full time or part-time, if they want to take seven years then why not?"
> (HoS 3, Science).

Some interviewees spoke of the problems with the "one size fits all" approach, highlighting the differences between disciplines and the practical requirements of doing a PhD:

> "the only problem is, with a University as diverse as this, I sometimes think that having the same regulations across the University, the uniformity, I understand from a university point of view that it might seem the easier way of doing it, but it seems to me that research in the sciences are fundamentally different from research in the humanities, where it is all about how many pages can I read in one day, in one week, so the four-year rule might be easier applied there, whereas in the sciences if equipment breaks down it is a whole different story".
> (Senior Lecturer (SL) 2, Humanities)

The four-year completion policy was seen by some supervisors (across all disciplines), as a reductionist measure that boiled things down to a highly simplified form that standardized sameness and differences across PhDs in different disciplines and was seen as decontextualizing knowledge. We also heard concerns about the impact on the quality of PhDs which included accounts of their experiences as external examiners, one of whom stated: "Some of the recent external examining I've done the PhDs have been crap." (HoS 2, Humanities). Other quality concerns related to inhibiting innovation and creating risk aversion. Counter discourses also emerged in relation to situations where the consequences for supervisor reputation within the wider academic field took precedence:

> "…in extreme cases we allow somebody to submit [the PhD-thesis] after four-years, but that's really an exception. On the other hand it is important for the student to submit the thesis within four-years and the thesis being of good quality, because it is not good for somebody to submit within four-years and then the examiners find that this is not good work, because this is detrimental, this is catastrophic for the supervisor. So it is much better for somebody to exceed a little the four-years and submit a good quality thesis, rather than examiners to say that this is rubbish, because this really destroys the reputation of the individual lecturer, and the morale of the student plummets also."
> (SL 3, Science)

Having explored the counter discourse that were in play, we now examine the different forms of compliance in our study.

Four Forms of Compliance

We found four forms of compliance that show how people reacted to the PhD performance measures, which in turn impacted behavior: pragmatic, responsibility-driven, disciplinary and

compliance through gaming. Pragmatic compliance was rooted in the idea that there were benefits attached to the four-year completion target in terms of producing successful PhDs and a more supportive and positive learning environment. Responsibility-driven compliance relates to both organizational and individual responsibility for meeting the target. In relation to disciplinary compliance, supervisor responded largely based around the increased surveillance and monitoring, the threat of sanctions – and the possible consequences for individual supervisors, rather than the actuality of sanctions. Compliance through gaming illustrates the strategies around gaming and manipulation to comply with the target.

Pragmatic Compliance

For many senior academics (who had also taken on senior management responsibilities), the four-year completions policy was generally seen as manageable and viewed quite positively. It was seen as being in line with the primary academic goals of high quality research and teaching, also that increasing submission rates was a good thing. Compliance with the policy was not just about meeting the target, but was seen as contributing to a better learning environment (i.e. an educational concern).

> "Although in a sense it was driven by, what was seen as external pressures, like the need to hit Research Council targets, and so on, I think, it's a wholly positive direction, it's mechanistically a good idea in terms of producing what we want to, which is successful PhDs, but you know, what we've just been saying, I think is true, it is a better learning environment, and more supportive, and positive." (HoS 4, Science)

There was also some enthusiasm for the upgrade policy where supervisors saw the intellectual benefits around them and how thy informed part of the learning process for students. As one academic told us:

"I see them as being a very useful process. In particular, the upgrades, I think they are not just about making sure the student will complete in a certain number of years, it is also a useful intellectual exercise. I think for students to have responses to their work at this point in the process is useful…" (SL 4, Humanities)

Responsibility-Driven Compliance

Responsibility-driven compliance focused on responsibility for meeting the target. Responsibility shifting was a big theme: Responsibility for meeting the target was shifted from senior management (Vice-Chancellors Executive Group) to Deans and Heads of Schools, to departments, to supervisors and to students. Supervisor responsibility was highlighted as key to ensuring that targets were met:

"We had to make sure that supervisors understood their responsibilities to students and that progress was monitored carefully at all times". (Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research)

Making supervisors responsible was closely linked to holding them to account individually. Concerns around personal responsibilities led to a focus on meeting the target. As one academic put it:

"The supervisory experience must be based on the understanding, both by the supervisor and the supervisee that the clock is ticking now, and how are you going to go from zero to four-years and completion". (HoS 1, Humanities)

Strategies were employed around blame shifting and blame avoidance. Supervisors spoke of disowning responsibility by passing it down to students. We heard many accounts where supervisors reacted by explicitly making students aware of their responsibilities:

"Students are made aware of their responsibilities in an induction yes, and then I encourage all the students to read the core code of practice because there is a section, at the very end, that gives a breakdown of the responsibilities of the supervisors, the responsibility of the student, the responsibility of the department etc. So all is there, collected so there is no excuse for not knowing anything because it is all there …" (SL 3, Science)

Student responsibility was also equated with sharing the 'guilt' by the same supervisor:

"There is more responsibility on the supervisor and also the student knows what is expected of them, so they know that they have to submit a good quality thesis by then and that's it. If they don't do that then we get penalised, so students feel part of the guilt as well because it is his or her job… …the student knows what is expected of them, it makes them more adult, more responsible for their work". (SL 3, Science)

Blame avoidance was evident in the production of evidence in order to field any concerns around supervision. In some cases, progress review meetings were used as a means to make sure that individuals could not be blamed for something later on and seen as a formal record of what had been agreed in supervisory meetings. In addition, phrases like 'covering your back' and 'passing the buck' came up quite frequently amongst our interviewees. As one academic put it:

"I'd prefer a more relaxed style of supervision, but we have to do this to cover our back, so if anything happens and the student complains, we can go back and see how we did things and say this is what my supervision was and you signed, we effectively sign the responsibility over to the student." (SL 3, Science)

Some supervisors talked about taking precautions around the project and the type of student they would supervise which again, alluded to their personal responsibility:

"I guess I am taking more precautions as to who I supervise and what kind of work this involves … Personally, I refuse to supervise any other work because there is no guarantee that it will finish in four-years. You need to make sure that it is a project that is doable within the timeframe". (SL 2, Humanities)

Some academics said that they would only choose topics that could be undertaken in four-years:

"So high risk studies are being avoided, you want to find a route where you know someone will finish in four-years". (SL 3, Science)

Responsibility-driven compliance also led to a shift in the role of the supervisor from something that was negotiated and dependent on supervisory style and type of student, to one more akin to a project manager:

"Always there's a deadline and a timetable to be followed, I suppose I'm not taking any risks with my student, my job is to make sure they

design a plan that is doable in four-years and then the student is

responsible for carrying it out, with my help". (SL 2, Humanities)

By taking on the role of project manager, supervisors were changing their behaviour and being more interventionist, for example by undertaking more rigorous quality control of students in the admissions process, being fastidious about the topic and more directional about the content:

"Despite the pressure to take on PhDs, I'm being very, very careful

about who I take on. In some respects it's good, because I am really

focusing on the potentially good Masters students that I teach, so I

have some sort of personal quality control of the process. Also, I'm a

bit more prescriptive about the topics, a bit more heavy-handed and

more directional about reading. It's a sort of micro-management,

nothing like when I did my PhD – but I feel like I have no choice…" (SL

5, Humanities)

While supervisors were complying with the policy and the basic PhD supervisory process remained the same – PhD supervisors were still meeting with students and engaging in academic interaction, supervisors started to change their behaviour through responsibility-driven compliance which involved shifting responsibility to the student, 'passing the buck' and 'covering their back' through the production of evidence and focusing on low risk studies.

Disciplinary Compliance

The process controls and procedures (six-month progress review and upgrade) can be interpreted as how ideas around enhanced surveillance entered the world of PhD supervision. There were changes in discourse and more reports (for example, progress review reports) and formalized procedures (upgrade and progress monitoring). No one escaped the

"normalizing gaze" of these procedures, which were seen as key performance areas for Heads of Departments. A number of respondents commented on how the year one progress monitoring was invoked as a disciplinary device. With an eye to the performance metric, one supervisor commented:

> "The general feeling now is to get the student out before one year has
> passed, because then it doesn't count in the statistics, after that it gets
> harder." (SL 6, Science).

If timelines around upgrades or meeting completion targets were revised, supervisors were required to provide an explanation or account for their (lack of) performance and how the situation was being rectified. Academics made sense of this in different ways. As shown above, supervisors were acutely aware of their responsibilities in relation to meeting the target and changed their behaviour to reflect this. Discussions in meetings were focused on the risk of non-compliance with the target – with a particular emphasis on the (potential) internal institutional sanctions. For one admissions tutor, recruitment was a tricky issue: compliance was related to the risk of failure of ensuring that right quality of student was admitted.

> "According to the regulations we have to accept students with a
> minimum of [a grade of] 2.1, I just recently had a student who
> interrupted because he wasn't up for it, despite having a 2.1, and this
> is a risk, for me personally, because I'm doing the admissions, it is a
> difficult judgement, there is the potential risk of not getting the right
> student. You know, sometimes the student has re-sit exams time and
> time again to get the required grade and we have no way of knowing."
> (SL 2, Humanities)

This illustrates the interconnected nature of responsibility-driven and disciplinary compliance whereby the four-year completion policy had become a personal issue and was being reconstructed as an individual risk around recruitment choices (i.e. not getting the right student), where that responsibility lay and the fear of punishment.

In some Schools not meeting the target was seen as a representation of "poor supervision" that resulted in punishment and sanctions. As one senior research administrator in the Graduate School remarked:

> "Some Schools actually stop supervisors from supervising if their students don't finish on time. I don't think [X] and [Y] have that sort of punitive approach, but maybe they should" (Administrator 2, Graduate School).

As a result of the introduction of these controls around accountability and in particular, the associated perceptions of responsibility, academics started to feel wary about not meeting the completion target. Supervisors talked of anxieties around punishment and sanctions. For example, when asked if they saw it as a problem if a student took six years to complete, one academic simply stated: "I would, simply because you get punished." (SL 6, Science) The fear of sanctions rather than the actuality of sanctions also acted as a disciplining device. Some supervisors said although they didn't know what the punishment would be, there were still fears associated with it:

> "For example, if the student doesn't submit within four-years, then somehow the lecturer, it is difficult to quantify exactly what would happen, but it is not good if it happens" (SL 3, Science)

Increased surveillance was evident in the activities of the Graduate School which had responsibility for monitoring the performance around PhD completion targets across the whole

university. This body introduced stricter oversight of progression monitoring procedures – for example by producing comparative information on completion rates across the university to 'name and shame' underperforming Schools. Completion rates were scrutinised and Schools were expected to account for their performance. This enhanced scrutiny was seen by some as a form of increased surveillance that had subjectified supervisors:

> "I have been post-graduate tutor for four-years now, and in the beginning when I started it was more laid-back, but now it is getting more and more serious, and they look in the microscope on cases where they are not doing well, and it has put extra efforts, extra workload on the supervisor. So there has definitely been a culture change" (SL 3, Science)

In one particular department, being blacklisted by the Research Council did work as a disciplining device as it had an effect on applications:

> "…things have started to tighten up, I mean our department was affected specifically by this because we were blacklisted by RC [Research Council] fairly recently, so I think our department as a result has become much more conscious of this … I think it certainly did affect us in terms of our PhD applications for those two years that we were blacklisted so, and at the same time it did shake things up a bit in the department and in terms of our own internal monitoring of PhD completion." (SL 4, Humanities)

Compliance Through Gaming

The perceptions of changed responsibilities for supervisors and the dangers of not meeting the four-year completion target led to the emergence of strategies based on manipulating or gaming the target.

Manipulation was evident where supervisors were concerned about their responsibility, which in some cases led to a more interventionist style of supervision. Driven by a fear of not being allowed to supervise, (some) supervisors were actively intervening in the PhD process and adjusted their behaviour to meet the target. One supervisor stated:

> "The thing is if my students don't complete on time, then my reputation
> as a supervisor will be damaged. I might not be allowed to supervise,
> and my chances of promotion will go down the toilet. In one case, I
> restructured the entire thesis and practically re-wrote parts for the
> student." (SL 5, Humanities)

Concerns about the focus on meeting the four-year completion target, rather than on other indicators of quality were rife. There were concerns that quality was being sacrificed to satisfy the target, which in turn, laid the foundations for the compliance through gaming that emerged. One supervisor observed:

> One thing I can say for certain is that we are all the time cutting
> corners, in terms of the quality of the thesis, the work being done etc.,
> because the student is on a very specific timetable … And this poses
> a problem in that more and more low-risk, computer based work is
> being done. (SL 3, Science)

Aspects of gaming and disciplinary compliance were entangled in that the disciplinary effects (the fear of sanctions), enabled the gaming techniques to spread. Some supervisors said that

they were engaged in activities around 'playing' the system, or 'taking a gamble', by letting their students submit an incomplete piece of work i.e. something that was of a good enough standard to warrant corrections. From the supervisors' perspective, this was seen as a less risky strategy than not submitting on time – and having to face the consequences that might range from professional embarrassment or feelings of inadequacy, to more tangible sanctions such as not being able to supervise in the future. As one academic explained, this was taking the 'riskiness' out of not meeting the target:

> "One of my students needed more time. It was all there, but he had simply run out of time. We couldn't get an extension, and so we had no choice but to submit – it was in both our interests, and I pinned my hopes on a strong performance in the viva [oral examination] and that he was asked to do corrections within one year. It worked out. Thank God! The final thesis was very good. It was quite stressful though. But I tell you what, at least I know that I can 'buy some more time' - if I have to…" (SL 4, Humanities)

Summary

Our findings show how the organization responded to the introduction of a new performance measure for PhD completions, and how individual supervisors altered their behaviour in response to being observed, evaluated and managed. In terms of what "good supervision" or a "high quality research training programme" looks like (as identified by the regulator), it appears that the four-year policy induced behaviour which was in line with the intended aims of the policy, but this was not the whole story. Our analysis illustrates that while there was largely compliance with the formal side of the policy, it occurred in a variety of ways and which in turn laid the foundations for the corruption of the four-year completion policy (for example, the focus on meeting the target versus quality) and as a self-fulfilling prophecy. In the following

section, we outline the contribution of our study to the debate on reactions to measures and the growing literature on compliance.

Concluding Discussion

Our inquiry was motivated by the observation that contemporary universities face significant pressures to conform to ideals of accountability and transparency through the introduction of measures, targets and controls. We started our study by asking how academics react to being observed, evaluated and managed through performance measures and targets. Our analysis indicates that despite concerns about the reductionist and simplified nature of the four-year completion target, the 'one size fits all' approach and the perceived consequences for quality and innovation, academics complied with the measure and through their reactivity (Espeland & Sauders, 2007), reinforced the four-year PhD policy. In this final section, we explore the theoretical significance of our findings on the role of compliance with measures in the dynamics of power, resistance and control. We conclude the paper by discussing the implications of our study on universities more broadly.

Compliance and the Role of Measures in the Dynamics of Power, Control and Resistance

In terms of reactions to the measure, our findings direct attention towards the multifaceted nature of compliance. We observed supervisors engaging in a variety of interrelated compliance practices – playing out between acquiescence and resistance that legitimized and reinforced the measure. Our findings show that there was neither total acquiescence nor full blown resistance. Instead, compliance took different forms which were connected to the measure and resulted in reactions which redefined what good PhD-supervision was at *Elite*. In order to understand this phenomena, we return to the theoretical concepts of power, identity and accountability.

By connecting to the emerging debate on the role of compliance in the dynamic between power and resistance (Bristow et al., 2017; Ybema & Horvers, 2017), our findings show that compliance has an inherent ambiguity, as it has potential for both resistance and

hegemonic power. The compliance related practices we observed engendered both acquiescence with the target and resistance to the target. This understanding of compliance allows us to theorise how measures affect the interplay between power, resistance and control by creating accountability, enabling responsibilization structures and offering identity stabilizations. Figure two details the relations between the key empirical observations and theoretical concepts.

insert figure 2 around here

The four-year completion measure, and the different organizational controls attached to it, led to the emergence of counter discourses and compliance, where the counter discourses can be understood as a mild form of discursive resistance. Although we did not find much overt resistance to the measure and associated controls, actors did voice concerns. To some extent these discourses acted as a safety valve (J. C. Scott, 1990) in that they allowed actors to vent their concerns without taking action (Fleming & Spicer, 2003). As Scott notes, however, safety valve-theories of resistance usually neglect that such discourses may be tame but sow the seed for deviant behaviour. Indeed, the counter discourses we found were connected to all but pragmatic practices of compliance. These compliance practices drew on critical questions about the measure's reductionism, but they were not fully preserving academic freedom – as the rule-bending we found was also at odds with a professional academic ethos.

The Foucault-inspired literature on control emphasizes the significance of disciplinary mechanisms and the normalizing gaze they exert. Owing to the external and internal pressure to be accountable for tangible results, academics face great insecurity concerning their work, (Knights & Clarke, 2014). In such an environment, measures offer an evaluative framework within which good supervision can be identified relatively easily. However, the perceived security that objectified measures offer, makes subjects dependent on them. Meeting or not meeting the target carried high stakes, namely on professional identity. Providing objectively bad supervision would question a supervisor's professional identity as a good supervisor,

which provided the foundations for the reactions through disciplinary compliance we observed. Since each supervision is a new test for one's performance, being a good supervisor needs to be continuously re-affirmed with each new supervision. While the measure ostensibly offers a more stable identity, such an identity is fragile because it depends on continuous reaffirmation through measurable performance.

We observed that some compliance-practices were based around the notion of responsibility. Practices of "passing the buck" for the responsibility of (potentially) not meeting the four-year completion target, led to a dissemination of the policy throughout the organization from senior management through to students. The practices of making others responsible for their performance is a form of creating accountability which has been called responsibilization. Shamir (2008) elaborates on the notion of responsibilization and its role in the relation between ethics and business. For him, responsibilization refers to "a call for action; an interpellation which constructs and assumes a moral agency and certain dispositions to social action that necessarily follow" (p. 4). In our case, responsibilization meant constructing a link between organizational concerns and individual accountability. The four-year completion goal which was, from senior management's perspective, something for which entire Schools were responsible and was largely translated into something for which individual supervisors or students were held to account. Differentiating between those who meet the performance target and those who do not, once again, enabled a moral judgement about good or bad supervision. The policy created an opportunity for moral judgement without considering the idiosyncratic context of single cases. Butler (2005) elaborated on the connections between accountability, power and identity and suggested that individual accountability is a necessarily incomplete, yet deeply ethical phenomenon. Being made to give an account of oneself makes the subject construct itself, which – since language cannot portray the full complexity of social life – is impossible and forces the self to assume a certain subjectivity. In this sense, performance measures are especially reductionist language games. Complying, by responsibilizing others, forces them to adapt their subjectivity as a good/bad supervisor and leaves little room for alternative identities as supervisor.

Prior literature identifies a number of ways in which compliance relates to power, with arguments ranging from compliance as a form of intentional or unintentional acquiescence, to compliance as a (mild) form of resistance. In order to understand how individual academics react to performance measures, our findings point towards compliance as a hypernym, constituting a category into which practices with more specific meanings fall. Our case shows practices on a continuum from acquiescence to resistance. This conceptualization of compliance can help to shed light on the ambiguous effects that practices of compliance produce and relate them to better understood concepts in the study of power, such as identity and accountability.

A key theme underlying how measures, controls and the counter discourses impacted the different compliance-related practices – through identity stabilisation, accountability and responsibilization, is the interplay between the different forms of compliance. As outlined in figure two, pragmatic and disciplinary forms of compliance leaned towards acquiescence and were connected to each other. While we found limited enthusiasm for the performance measures, some supervisors chose to focus on the bright side, while others felt coerced by the perceived threat of sanctions. The aforementioned sanctions were often more stories about sanctions than actual policies in place. In line with Foucauldian thought, the threat alone could alter behaviour. Sometimes those talking about potential sanctions also pointed out the possible benefits of the policy – pointing towards some degree of internalisation of the controls because of the identity stabilization it offers. We thus argue that acquiescent forms of compliance work through internalization and concerns for academic professional identity.

The practices of compliance most closely associated with traditional conceptualizations of resistance were in the category we termed compliance through gaming. Most closely connected and driven by counter discourses, these creative and sometimes Švejkian forms of compliance were influenced by disciplinary and responsibility-driven forms of compliance. Disciplinary compliance was sometimes portrayed as driving compliance through gaming, by virtue of fear. Responsibility-driven compliance was, however, more strongly connected to compliance through gaming. Rather than stating any pedagogic

reasons, our respondents were quite clear that they used responsibilization to shift potential blame away from them. Here, we see a tension between compliance and resistance emerging which goes beyond those accounts which see superficial compliance as a form of resistance (J. C. Scott, 1990; Ybema & Horvers, 2017). Making others accountable did not fully direct responsibility away from supervisors, as the focus was on meeting completion targets. And, once again, making others give an account of themselves forced them to adopt the binary good/bad distinction the measure epitomized. This limited the professional identity of a successful supervisor to one about being 'on time', ruling out other qualitative judgements and alternative identities.

While our analysis shows that compliance is neither total acquiescence nor full-blown resistance, it does have a discernible relation to power structures. Unsurprisingly, pragmatic and disciplinary forms of compliance strengthened the grip of controls on individual behaviour. This is in line with the views on compliance which see it as intentional or unintentional surrender to hegemonic order. Among those arguing for the potential for resistance in compliant behaviour, Kamoche et al. (2014) found compliance as a way to preserve autonomy when actors managed to align compliant behaviour and their professional identities. In our study, identity helped internalize the measure and professional identities became shaped by the policy, rather than the other way around. However, we found some forms of small scale, individualized resistance when actors used gaming to play the measure. While they could not connect those practices to orchestrated forms of resistance, actors found ways to preserve their individual interests. We could not find anything in our study in which a counter narrative secured a stable alternate identity, as Scott (1990) suggested, but we saw some weapons of the weak (J. C. Scott, 1985) through which actors managed to avoid the consequences of controls. Finally, responsibility-driven forms of compliance had ambiguous effects on the power exerted by measures and controls. Again, identity was at the core of the dynamics resulting from compliance. Making others give an account gave preference to some normative identities over others, namely being a good supervisor. At the same time, passing the buck could offer some individualized temporary protection from the controls associated with the

measure and thereby contributed to small pockets of resistance. In all forms of compliance, the questions around what is good supervision, a good PhD, and a good university was at stake and compliance impacted ambiguously on the power structures of the managed university.

The making and unmaking of the university

To conclude, the mega trend of the managed university has been around for a while now. Our analysis sheds further light on this topic at a more general level. First, it provides insights into the effects of a performance measure that determines what is good and bad supervision. Second, it contributes to our understanding of the role and effects of compliance with measures. Third, it illustrates how the normativity of the measure shapes behaviour through links to identity and accountability. Furthermore, the normativity of the measure can be seen here as part of a larger trend in which the managed university is completely controlled through such measures, marginalizing intellectual debates about what constitutes good academic behaviour.

Our findings suggest that reaction to performance measures is compliance driven – and that compliance is on a continuum between acquiescence with the measures and resistance to them. Power, identity and accountability affect the continually shifting positioning of acquiescence and resistance on the compliance continuum. In all forms of compliance, the questions around what is good supervision, a good PhD, and a good university (for example, in terms of reputation with funders), was at stake and compliance impacted ambiguously on the power structures of the managed university. By measuring what is good and bad, the academics in our case aligned their behaviour and their professional identities. We identified four effects of compliance with measures: the first is around the notion of responsibility and responsibilization. The second was on the identity of the supervisor. In our case, the style of supervision where supervisors reacted by taking on a more prescriptive and interventionist role that was likened to a that of a 'project manager', as opposed to the more traditional role as a mentor or 'sparring partner' (Grove, 2015). Third, were the changes to the choice of topic

(low risk) and choice of student. Fourth, there were (sometimes) negative effects on the overall quality of the PhD. In the case of PhD completions, external demands for greater transparency and accountability in the use of public funding had unintended effects that fundamentally changed the nature of the PhD. We found four changes to the 'traditional' PhD process: the choice of topic (from innovate to safe, low risk, desk based work); the choice of student, the style of supervision and the submission of incomplete thesis. Although this was a target that supervisors aimed to hit, the policy was corrupted during the course of its implementation.

Like Espeland and Sauder (2007), we found that measures are performative. However, by drilling down to the organizational level and analysing the actions and interactions of different actors and organizational structures, we flesh out how performativity plays out in the organization. The different forms of compliance and the existence of counter discourses illustrate that multiple structures within the organization are affected by reactions to performance measures in different ways. In short: one size does not fit all and the same measure can result in different kinds of behaviour that in our case, altered the distribution and relevance in PhD education. Our findings question the sensibility of technocratic rules and suggest that in this metrics driven environment, we need to understand the effects of measures, how it might change the terms under which academics make decisions, how it might make things more opaque and potentially change what is rendered transparent.

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Figure 1: *Data structure*

First order categories

- Box ticking exercise
- Superficial engagement
- Paying fees buys time

- Disciplinary differences
- Altering relevance of PhD education

- Substituting the target for quality
- Quality justifies missing the target

- Better learning environment
- "a very useful process"
- In line with high quality research

- Blame shifting/Covering one's back
- Role of supervisor (project manager)
- Choice of student
- Choice of topic

- Personal risks
- Changes in culture
- Punishments & blacklisting
- "they look in the microscope on cases"

- Concerns for professional reputation
- Strong interventions
- Gaming the system

Second order themes

Perceived usefulness

Reductionism

Quality issues

Pragmatic compliance

Responsibility-driven compliance

Disciplinary compliance

Compliance through gaming

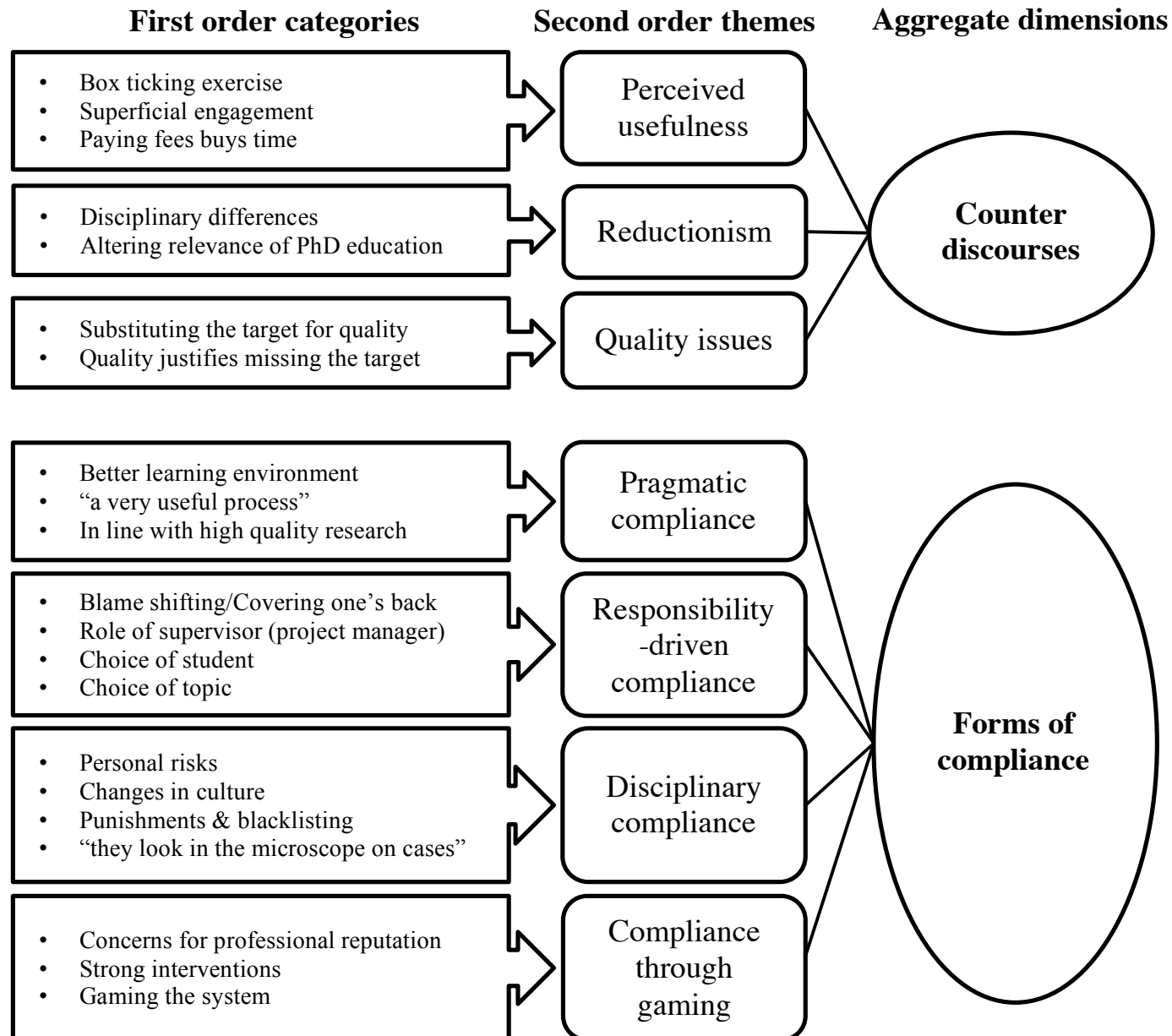**Aggregate dimensions**

Counter discourses

Forms of compliance

Figure 2: *Relations between empirical and theoretical concepts*