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Paper 1.1 An investigation into the possible effects of New Performance Management may have on academic identity and culture within Business Schools in Post 1992 Universities.

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Abstract

The purpose of this scoping study is to consider New Performance Management (NPM) in relation to academic identity, culture within business schools taking into consideration job satisfaction and stress and its possible impact upon academic identity. To this end, this paper focuses on one aspect of that study, NPM compared against gender and age range. A critical realism approach is adopted where we can look at how different mechanisms (for example policies and power influences via the UK Government), may impact upon academic identity and the culture the individual works within. The study found that participants identified that their school was driven by targets, and as such had an audit culture. Nevertheless, we found this was not always the case amongst those who were inexperienced at teaching in HE, and/or were relatively new to the school.

Introduction

The purpose of this scoping study is to understand if ‘New Performance Management’ (NPM) practices are having a positive or negative effect upon academic identity via the changing higher education culture (Barnett 2000), in Post 1992 universities. Post 1992 universities (often referred to as ‘New Universities’) are the old Poly-Technical Colleges that took up the mantle of ‘University’ after the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 was brought into force (UK Government 1992).

The research question is two-fold: “How does NPM impact upon academic identity, the culture of HE, and job satisfaction?” Plus, “Do lecturers in Business Schools see themselves more as ‘Academinisters’ or academics?”

This study aims to abduce how whether NPM is having a serious impact upon universities as a whole, that is, is it becoming difficult for lecturers to still identify themselves as academics, or instead are they viewing themselves more as practitioners (Gravani 2008). Further, from our readings, little appears to have focused specifically on lecturers' "life-views" (Kroeber and Kluckhohn 1952), who work in business schools in post 1992 universities; although Feather (2010) did undertake a study of lecturers views on this subject within business schools/departments situated in College Based Higher Education (CBHE). Additionally, these new practices are described as having an effect upon both job satisfaction and the culture within the individual institutions and schools (Parker 2014), and as such, is seen to be deconstructing academic identity (Strike 2010).

The knowledge that the study will provide, is a unique look through the lenses of those lecturers working in business schools in post 1992 universities as to how they interpret the environment that they work in, on a daily basis; whether NPM (for the lecturers) has affected their identity as academics, to such an extent, that they may now see themselves more as academicians rather than academics.

The findings from this research may be of interest to other researchers, academics, senior management (Heads and Deans of Schools), Human Resource Departments, and the Vice Chancellors' Office at various institutions.

Scope:

The scope of our study will be built around the conceptual model (See Fig.1), of how academic identity may have been deconstructed via NPM and replaced with a modern identity of ‘academinister’; where academics are not only expected to undertake the roles of research and teaching, but also the various administrative (inclusive of support roles) roles now expected by management, which in government would carry the title of ‘Minister’.

Fig. 1 – Conceptual Model of shift from Academic Identity to one of Academinister



Review of Literature:

Here we will structure the review around each of the points raised with the conceptual model and identify what the literati are discussing based on these subjects.

New Performance Management

New Performance Management (NPM) although a relatively new terminology today, it has in fact been around since the 1970's (Graham 2015), and was said to have played a large part in influencing political thinking in relation to how universities were managed and performance measured (Graham 2015). However, Graham (2015) argues that performance management in higher education and value for money first came about via the Jarrott Report in 1985. Graham (2015, 3) highlights that "An 'audit explosion (Power 1994) occurred in the 1990s with the term 'audit', once reserved exclusively for the financial sector, being used in all sectors of society." Subsequently, it could be said that this was one of the first moves to manage and audit the output of academics, via their workloads (Graham 2015). On auditing academics, Barnett (2003, 77) once argued that the culture of HE was one where 'if it moved audit it, if it does not, audit it anyway'. This is far from the yesteryear culture of HE, where autonomy was not only given to, but also expected by academics (McInnis 2010); where they could undertake research and have freedom of speech without fear or favour (McInnis 2010). McInnis (2010) goes on to argue that it is through government intervention and NPM that academic identity is now fragmented, and that there is greater pressure towards generating income. Henkel (2010) may concur, she argues that universities have become 'axial structures' where she writes:

The boundaries and distinctions between universities and other organizations have loosened, sometimes to the extent encapsulated in the 'triple helix' metaphor for relationships in which universities, industries, and governments each take "the role of the other, with universities creating an industrial penumbra or performing a quasi-governmental role as local [or regional] innovation organiser" (Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff, 1997), (Henkel 2010, 6).

Strike (2010) moves the debate on when arguing that due to management endeavouring to compartmentalise the process of academic work, and therefore an academic's identity, have succeeded via the adoption of Taylorist philosophies to fractionalise academic identity. As he

argues “This process of specialization may represent the systematic deconstruction, or demystification, of the craft of academia by managers.” (Strike 2010, 77).

Research Methodology

This scoping study was conducted at a Post-1992 university in the North of England, focusing on individuals within four departments of a Business School. It was decided that the study would focus on those individuals that were not ‘Principal Lecturers’ (PL), as these individuals had reduced teaching loads and subsequently time allowed for the more complex administrative duties they have to perform. Therefore, we focused on those academics that had full teaching loads, administrative duties, and research responsibilities amongst other roles. We did not include hourly paid part-time lecturers at this point, as again, they are only expected to teach, and do not have any administrative or research responsibilities. However, we did include those lecturers that were on ‘point-five’ contracts, but still had to fulfil the activities listed in the previous sentence. This gave us a target sample of 112 academics to who we could distribute the questionnaire.

The paradigm we have adopted is that of critical realism, as it allows for us to gain an epistemological/ontological/axiological perspective of how the lecturers in this study construct their life-views in relation to their working environment. As Bhaskar and Lawson (1998, 5) identifies

...how the intelligibility of experiments presupposed that reality is constituted not only by experiences and the course of actual events, but also by structures, powers, mechanisms and tendencies – by aspects of reality that underpin, generate or facilitate the actual phenomena that we may (or may not) experience, but are physically out of phase with them.

Therefore, given that we are looking at how the course of actual events (New Performance Management) by the powers that be (the UK government, industry, and University Management that underpin the current phenomena of NPM), are out of phase with academic identity and the social norms of higher education and experiences therein. As Blalock JR. (1961, 7) also quoted in Williams (2014, 283) argues

Reality, or at least our perception of reality, admittedly consists of ongoing processes. No two events are ever exactly repeated, nor does any object or organism remain precisely the same from one moment to the next. And [sic] yet, if we are ever to understand the nature of the real world, we must act and think as though events are repeated and as if objects do have properties that remain constant for some period of time, however short.

Questionnaire design and sample

As stated earlier in this section, the sample comprised of 112 full-time academics across four departments. As we had a list of names, we could have employed probability sampling, but given the sample size was small, we decided to send the questionnaire to the entire target sample. The questionnaire was semi-structured, comprising of open-ended questions, which were used to ask people to clarify their answers to a given question; for example to identify job roles, and to ascertain if participants wished to further take part in the study when the qualitative follow-up study will take place; sometime in the future.

As this is a scoping study, we wish to establish if there is feasibility in the study, with a view to taking it national, and then international. This will be determined by the result gained from the study, and any feedback obtained from the Association of Research in Post-Compulsory Education (ARPCE) Conference, which will be held in July 2016 where the studies preliminary findings will be presented

The questionnaire comprised of 62 questions such as: yes/no questions, scaling questions, opinion questions (Oppenheim 2001), and was split into a number of different sections for aesthetics and ease of use. Originally the ‘Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire’ (MSQ) (Weiss et al. 1967) was considered for adoption, as this particular survey is used substantially when looking at job satisfaction within the workplace, and thus has offered both reliability and validity over time (Eyupoglu and Saner 2009). However, the costs involved in terms of obtaining the manual for scoring the test, and the price per response (charged by the University of Minnesota, given that the project is self-funded), made the use of the MSQ unviable. To this end, using the MSQ questionnaire has a benchmark (and given that we did not require the use of all the questions), we developed our own questions to *fit* [our emphasis] with our own research and its approach (Quinlan 2011). The questionnaire was designed in ‘Google Docs’ which facilitated the use of online facilities (emails), by being able to send a link to the different academics on staff list.

Research Ethics

The questionnaire was first sent for approval to the research ethics committee within the target school of the Northern University participating in the study, and received consent from both the ethics research committee and the Dean of that School. The questionnaire carried a paragraph identifying what the research was looking at; that it had received ethical approval, and complied with the research guidelines as stipulated by the university involved, and those of ‘The British Education Research Association’ (BERA 2011). It also outlined the respondents’ rights to anonymity and the protection of their data, as directed by the Data Protection Act (1998) (UK Government 1998). As the sample was small to begin with, we piloted the questionnaire to ten people in the target audience and asked for feedback on how

to improve the questionnaire, and if they deemed anything to be missing, needed adding, or if the questions were obfuscating or leading (Oppenheim 2001, Robson 2002). Out of the ten participants identified for the pilot study, only five replied – despite reminders. Those individuals who did respond, offered some suggestions in terms of clarity for some questions, and in identifying that a question of distance learning teaching be included; these suggestions were taken on board, and included in the amended questionnaire. In theory, this left us with 107 possible target respondents for the questionnaire. To maintain rigor, validity and reliability of the study, we only targeted those who were not part of the original pilot study, as we wished to gain an unbiased view. We accept that we may have introduced researcher bias here (Torgerson and Torgerson 2003), but we felt it would have introduced more bias if we had allowed people who had seen, and was still in possession of the questionnaire, to participate, more so having had time to think and possibly research their answers; especially in relation to the number of teaching hours they currently undertake.

Out of the 102 questionnaires distributed, we received only 23 responses; we reminded individuals on three separate occasions over a six week period to complete the questionnaire; thanking those who had already done so, as we could not identify who had answered and who had not. This give us a final average response rate of 22.55%, this is substantially lower than the average response rate of between 32-42% for an online questionnaire (Fill 2005, Nulty 2008). In fact, Nulty (2008) argues that atypically a paper-based questionnaire is likely to draw a higher average response rate; 56% for paper-based, compared with 33% for online questionnaires, thus providing an improved average response rate of 23% in total.

Analysis

Analysis of the primary data will be undertaken by using the SPSS v22 software package, from which, using descriptive statistics, and Person's test of significance, we will produce tables and graphs depicting some of the preliminary results. The results of the primary data will be presented first, and then the discussion will weave the secondary and primary data together to provide an holistic picture of the data we have collected.

Findings

In this section we will evidence some of the preliminary data that has been collected. However, the caveat is, that the sample is small due to the lack of responses out of a target sample of 102; this is well below the average response rate of approximately 30% (Nulty 2008) for an online questionnaire. Having said this, with this being a scoping study, we wish to test the research to ascertain if there is latitude to take the study to the next stage, which will be based on the findings presented and the feedback received from the delegates at the 'Association in Research in Post-Compulsory Education Conference'; held on the 5-8th of July 2016 at Harris Manchester College Oxford. Finally, although we have undertaken some cross tabulations, we have not tested for significance given the size of the sample; this will be undertaken when we expand the study.

Gender

Table 1. Gender

		Gender			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	12	63.2	63.2	63.2
	Female	7	36.8	36.8	100.0
	Total	19	100.0	100.0	

It can be seen from table 1 that there are 12 males and 7 females that make up the sample; there were no missing data. From this, one must be cautious with the readings as the skew is towards the male gender, which may have an impact upon further analysis of the findings.

Age

Table 2. Age range

		Age			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	26-30	1	5.3	5.3	5.3
	31-35	5	26.3	26.3	31.6
	36-40	3	15.8	15.8	47.4
	41-45	4	21.1	21.1	68.4
	46-50	1	5.3	5.3	73.7
	51-55	3	15.8	15.8	89.5
	56-60	2	10.5	10.5	100.0
	Total	19	100.0	100.0	

In Table 2, it can be seen that there is within this particular school at the participating university, that the staff are relatively young; with 26.3% being in the 31-35 age range, and 15.8% in 36-40 age range.

Age compared with HE teaching Experience

Table 3. Age compared with Number of Years HE Teaching Experience

Age ^ HE Experience Crosstabulation

Count		HE Experience				Total
		1-4	5-9	10-14	15-19	
Age	26-30	0	1	0	0	1
	31-35	3	2	0	0	5
	36-40	2	1	0	0	3
	41-45	3	0	1	0	4
	46-50	1	0	0	0	1
	51-55	0	1	1	1	3
	56-60	0	1	0	1	2
Total		9	6	2	2	19

When comparing age with teaching experience, it can be seen that the age groups of 31-35 and 36-40 only have 3 (15.79%) and 2 (10.52%) individuals respectively in these categories. Across the age range spectrum, the evidence shows that, 9 (47.37%) of the 19 respondents only had 1- 4 years teaching experience at the Higher Education (HE) level. In relation to the respondent who indicated that they were in the age range of 26-30 with 5-9 years teaching experience the median would be age 28 and years teaching HE experience 7. If we remove 7 years from their age this would mean they commenced teaching at the age of 21 in HE. Given that this university asks for individuals to have a Doctorate or be near completion, suggest some caution is needed here concerning the validity of the data that has been provided.

This then further evidences, that not only are some staff relatively young, but also inexperienced. In terms of this latter point, 3 out of the four respondents in the 41-45 age range only have 1-4 years teaching experience at the HE level. To qualify this further, Table 4 shows the number of years teaching experience compared with the number of years teaching at the HE level.

Table 4. Years Teaching Experience Compared with HE Teaching Experience

Years Teaching * HE Experience Crosstabulation

Count

		HE Experience				Total
		1-4	5-9	10-14	15-19	
Years Teaching	1-4	8	0	0	0	8
	5-9	1	6	0	0	7
	10-14	0	0	2	0	2
	15-19	0	0	0	1	1
	25-29	0	0	0	1	1
Total		9	6	2	2	19

Table 4 further qualifies the point that not only do the respondents have limited teaching experience in HE, but in teaching as whole. The question here is: if students are being taught by inexperienced teachers, what are these young lecturers benchmarking the way they teach students against? It is accepted that some of these lecturers may have undertaken some teaching whilst working on their PhD, but the hours would not be comparable to those lecturers who were on a full-time contract with full contact hours.

Annual Contracted Contact Hours

When we asked respondents to identify what their contracted contact hours were, it became evident by the results obtained that lecturers within this particular institution appeared to be

unaware of what their contracted hours were for face-to-face contact time for teaching – see Table 5.

Table 5. Contact Hours

Contact Hours					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	160	1	5.3	5.6	5.6
	162	1	5.3	5.6	11.1
	168	1	5.3	5.6	16.7
	216	1	5.3	5.6	22.2
	225	2	10.5	11.1	33.3
	238	1	5.3	5.6	38.9
	280	1	5.3	5.6	44.4
	356	1	5.3	5.6	50.0
	400	2	10.5	11.1	61.1
	401	1	5.3	5.6	66.7
	413	1	5.3	5.6	72.2
	420	1	5.3	5.6	77.8
	480	1	5.3	5.6	83.3
	500	1	5.3	5.6	88.9
	550	1	5.3	5.6	94.4
	860	1	5.3	5.6	100.0
	Total	18	94.7	100.0	
Missing	System	1	5.3		
Total		19	100.0		

Table 5, identifies that only eighteen respondents answered this question; again, was this due to the view that perhaps they did not know their annual contact hours? If we look at Figure 2, here we have shown the data via a histogram, which depicts the mean and standard deviation. However, too much should not be read into this at this point as we did not remove the outliers due to the effects it would have on the mean.

Figure 2. Contact Hours

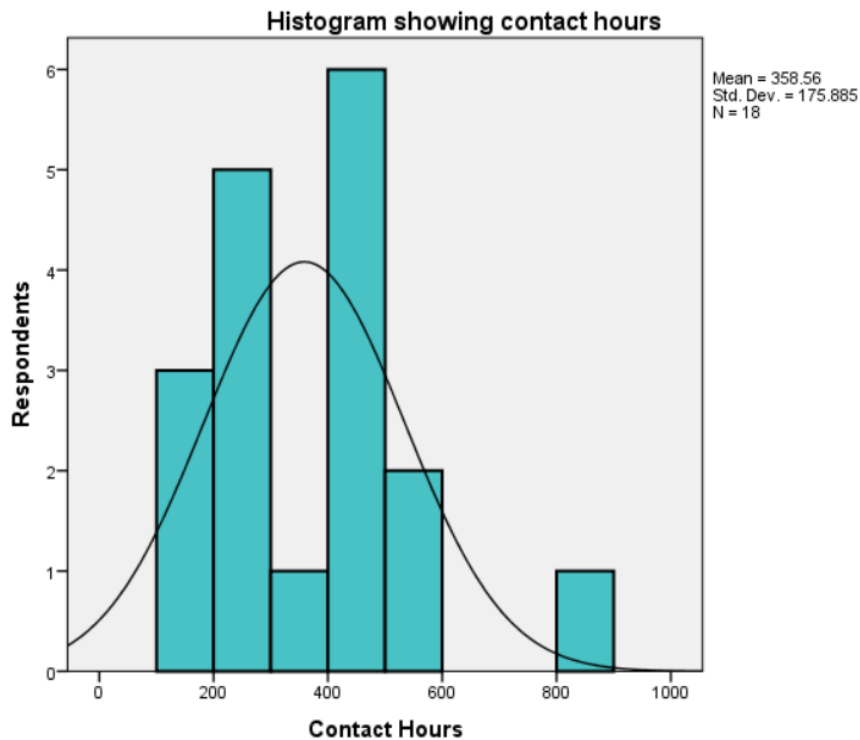


Figure 2 shows the mean is calculated at 358.56, if we divide that by 24 (the normal annual academic calendar in weeks), we obtain a figure of:

$$\Sigma = \frac{358.56}{24} = 14.92$$

From this then the average hours per week would come out at 14.92 contact time; this is well within the 18 hours stipulated in the contracts of the individuals at this particular institution. However, if we were to remove the outlier of 860 hours, which may be skewing the mean, we would arrive at “h=hour’s contact/n=number of respondents/y=weeks per academic year”:

$$\bar{X} = \frac{\sum h}{n}$$

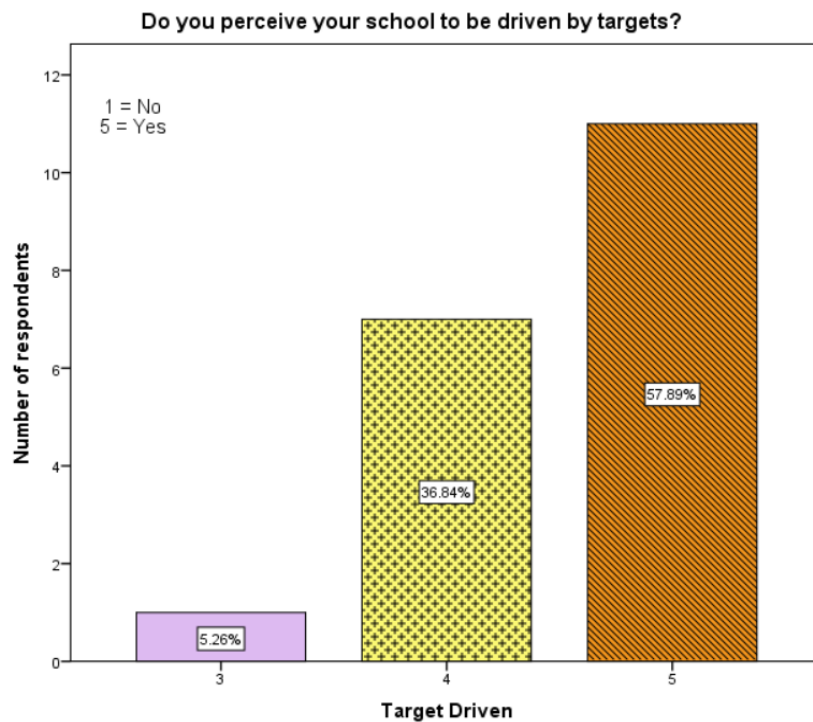
$$\bar{X} = \frac{\left(\frac{4,969}{17}\right)}{24} = \frac{292.29}{24} = 12.18$$

From this calculation, it can be seen that the ‘clean’ mean of 12.18 is 2.74 hours less than the original mean; when the outlier of 860 is removed and still taking into account the one missing data.

New Performance Management (NPM)

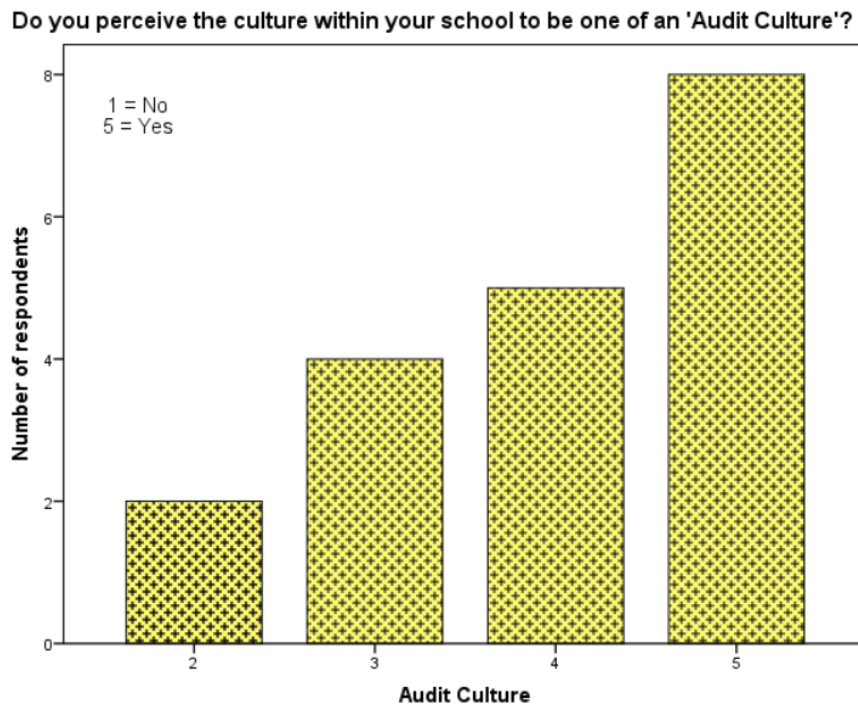
Here we will now consider NPM in comparison with the variables of gender and age range discussed earlier.

Figure 3. Is the School Driven by Targets?



From figure 3, one can see that 11 (57.89%) perceived their school (on a Likert scale of 1-5, where 1 = No and 5 =Yes), was highly target driven. Whereas, 7 (36.84%) indicated a scale of 4, which was the next highest outcome. Alternatively, only 1(5.26%) offered a mid-range outcome. This in itself supports the notion for not offering a ‘mid-point’ option when dealing with scaling questions (Ankur et al. 2015). The overall mean response was 4.53. When we add the scale of 4 and 5 outcomes together, this presents a total of 18 (94.73%) respondents believing that their school was highly target driven.

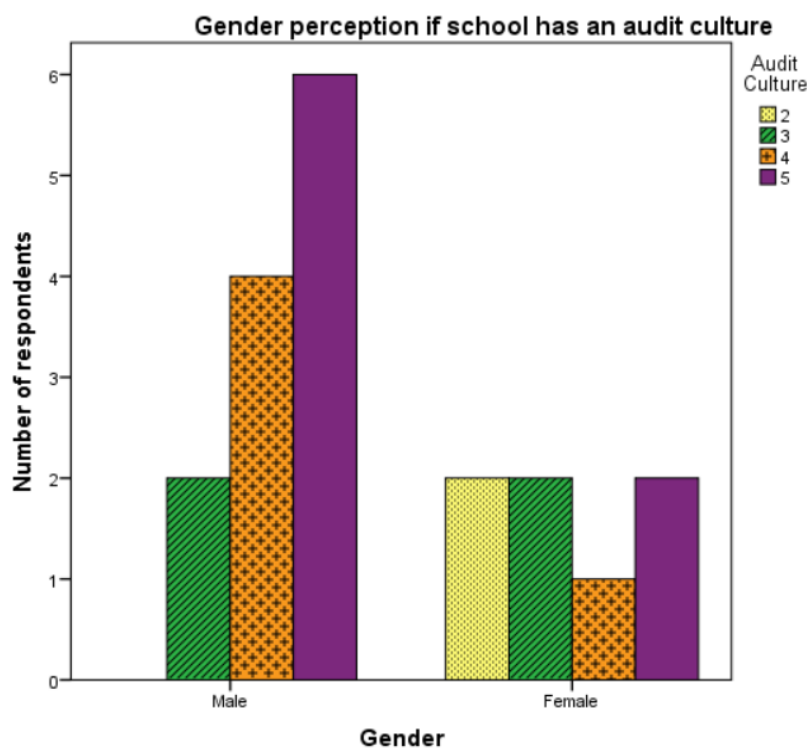
Figure 4. Is the culture of the school perceived as an audit culture?



From Figure 4 it can be seen (when compared with Figure 3), that a fourth category is present, in that 2 respondents perceive that the culture within their school is not one of an audit culture; with 4 participants of the 19 respondents electing the mid-point. However, 13 respondents still perceive that their school culture is an audit culture, where everything is measured in one way or another (Barnett 2003).

There is a significant change between Figures 3 and 4 in that, in Figure 3, 18 respondents (adding categories 5 and 4 together), perceived their school to be target driven, but when compared to Figure 4, it is transparent that 16 respondents still perceive that their school is one of an audit culture. The expectancy here would be that these two figures would be similar.

Figure 5. Gender perception on school and audit culture.



If we break down the views on whether the respondents perceive their school to be one of an audit culture, it would afford us a better view from a gender perspective. Therefore, from Figure 5 it can be seen that it is the male gender that perceives the culture of the school has an audit culture. However, it must be remembered that this category is much larger (63.20% male compared to 36.80% female), and as such may skew the data. As can be seen from Figure 5 the female gender as representation across the four categories, with the exception of the category 4, where only one female ticked this option.

Figure 6. Age Range and Audit Culture

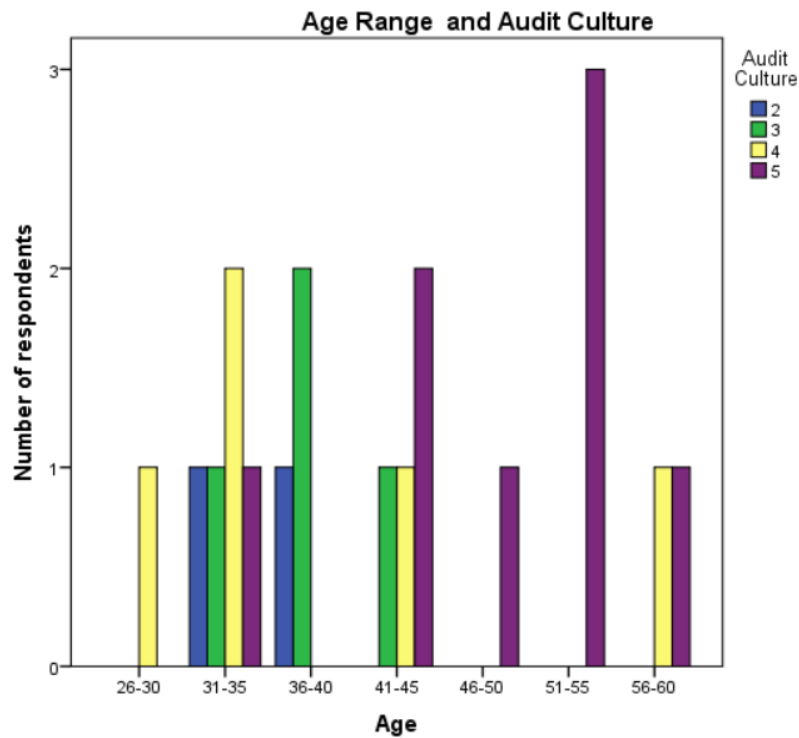


Figure 6 highlights some interesting points. The first is that it can be immediately seen that the 5 category of the scale is heavily skewed toward the older end of the age range, with just one respondent in the category of 31-35. Again, category 4 is depicted across the age ranges, but the other interesting point is that those respondents who perceived the school culture to be one of an audit culture are the younger lecturers, most of whom are relatively new to the school.

Discussion

Here again, we draw you to the point that this is a scoping study, and as such, can only tentatively infer that what is being shown, might be similar to the findings when the full study is undertaken.

From Figure 1, it can be seen that we have decided to focus on ‘New Performance Management’, and to compare with this aspect of the model, the variables of gender, age range, contact hours, and whether the participants perceive their school to be one that is target driven, and thus might be viewed as having an audit culture (Feather 2011, Stiles 2004, Barnett 2003). This further evidenced when Cannizzo (2016, 6) discussing Australian universities identified how “Performance evaluation technologies have been enacted...to align the performance of individuals with the strategic directions of the university.” Due to this being a scoping study we did not have the breadth of word count to discuss the full findings, but wished to share with you some of the key findings based around the title of the study to gain your insights on the day of the conference, where these preliminary findings are discussed.

From the data presented it can be seen that the gender split was heavily in favour of the male gender (see Table 1), where there was 12 males and 7 females of those who elected to take part in the study by completing the online questionnaire. In addition to this, there is an inference that the faculty are relatively young within the school that was surveyed (see Table 2). Further, from Table 3 one can see that within these younger ‘age’ ranges, that there is little teaching experience at the HE level, which infers that maybe these lecturers were engaged to undertake research, predominantly due to the ever increasing audit measures undertaken by the UK government, for example with ‘key performance indicators’ such as

the 'Research Excellence Framework' and the new 'Teaching Excellence Framework' (Johnson November 2015).

When considering the data in relation to whether the school was driven by targets (see Figure 3), compared with whether the participants thought the school culture was one that could be depicted as an audit culture (see Figure 4); it can be seen that there is some discrepancy in the participants' perceptions. In Figure 3, 18 individuals identified that their school is target driven, with only one choosing 'option 3', which could be said to be taking the middle ground. To be self-critical, we should have ensured that we chose a scale that did not offer the middle ground and instead took an 'ipsative' approach to these types of questioning.

When comparing Figure 3 with Figure 4, it can be seen that 13 respondents perceive the school culture to be one of an audit culture. Yet 2 individuals indicated that the school did not have an audit culture, and 3 were possibly undecided and elected to choose the middle option. Why did this occur? Perhaps it was that some individuals did not understand the term audit culture, and how this linked to a school that was perceived to be driven by targets; thus, this is a paradox. Obviously, there is also the point that the respondents, despite seeing the school as target driven, did not view the school as one of an audit culture, of which HE is depicted by Strathern (1996) as a place which is dominated by an audit culture, and where Barnett (2003, 77) argues that if it moves one should audit it, even if it does not move, one should audit it anyway.

It can be seen that when we break the views on audit culture down by Gender (Figure 5), it can be seen that it is the male gender that views the school culture as one of an audit culture; where the female gender is a more even split across the categories, with one exception, where

only one female saw the culture being more audit (category 4), than not. Figure 6 gives us a different perspective, from this figure it can be seen that it is the age ranges between 41-60 view the culture as more audit driven, where the younger academics tend to view the culture as not audit driven. One reason for this could be their lack of time and experience within the school, and working in HE as a whole. Especially, as many of the younger academics have only recently entered into the school; either from just passing their PhD, or are near to completion of their PhD.

Conclusion

What needs to be made explicitly clear to the reader here is that this is a scoping study which in itself only attracted a small number (19) of respondents out of 112 full-time academics; hence the response rate was far lower than what was expected. As such, no generalisations can be made from this scoping study, and the inferences are at present tentative. Therefore, the aim is, from the feedback gained from the conference this paper is presented at (The ARPCE conference 8th – 10th of July 2016, at the Harris Manchester College Oxford), that the study be taken nationally to gain more in-depth data to see if the same is true at other HEIs.

It has been shown that that the majority of the respondents felt that the school in which they were employed was both target driven and comprised of an audit culture. However, it was also found that some of the respondents, who felt that the school was target driven, did not see the culture of their school as one of an audit culture. Further, it was found that those respondents who fell into this latter category (discussed earlier), were both relatively inexperienced in teaching at the HE level, and are relatively new to the school.

Obviously we have only given a 'snap shot' of our research, but the picture may be different when we introduce the other categories (academic identity, culture, stress, job satisfaction), into a homogenous picture of the research undertaken and of which we will expand depending on the feedback from audience attending this conference.

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