

The Dance of Compliance

Performance Management in Australian

Universities

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor
of Philosophy (Management)

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Declaration

I declare that except where due acknowledgement has been made, this work is mine alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; and that the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program.

Ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

An earlier version of the thesis was proof read by freelance editor, Gillian Fulcher.

Signature

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List of Abbreviations

AAUP	American Association of University Professors
AHRI	Australian Human Resources Institute
APS	Australian Public Service
AUQA	The Australian Universities Quality Agency
BARS	Behaviourally Anchored Rating Scales
BOS	Behavioural Observation Scales
BSC	Balanced Scorecard
CAE	College of Advanced Education
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CCH	Commerce Clearing House
DE&T	Department of Education and Training
DEET	Department of Employment, Education and Training
DETYA	Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs
EDWA	Education Department of Western Australia
EBA	Enterprise Bargaining Agreement
FE	Further Education
GSM	Graduate School of Management
HECS	Higher Education Contribution Scheme
HE	Higher Education
HMI	Her Majesty's Inspector
HOS	Head of School
HR	Human Resource
HRM	Human Resource Management

INTASC	Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium
LEA	Local Education Authorities
MBO	Management by Objectives
NBPTS	National Board for Professional Teaching Standards
NPM	New Public Management
NSSTA	National Scheme of School Teacher Appraisal
NTEU	National Tertiary Education Union
PA	Performance Appraisal
PM	Performance Management
PMF	Performance Management Framework
PMS	Performance Management System
PRP	Performance-Related Pay
PTR	Post-tenure Review
RQF	Research Quality Framework
UNS	Unified National System
UTAS	University of Tasmania
VPRP	Victorian Professional Recognition Program

Abstract

This qualitative study focuses on identifying the formal and informal performance management (PM) practices currently in use in Australian public universities for academic staff Levels A, B and C. It asks the following research questions.

- What PM practices are currently in use in these universities?
- What are the similarities in approach and what issues does PM raise?
- How do academic staff who take part in these practices (as either staff or management) experience them?
- What cultural and contextual factors (if any) contribute to this experience?
- What are the perceived effects of these practices on the performance of individuals, teams and the organisation?
- Which system elements do academic staff and academic managers perceive to be most effective in academic cultures and why?

The thesis outlines the context of substantive and ongoing change within Australian universities and draws on the literature pertaining to the field of PM in general, as well as the more specific context of educational organisations, as a framework to present and discuss the data.

Telephone interviews were conducted with Heads of Schools of Management or their equivalent across the total population of Australian public universities, followed by in-depth interviews with reviewers and staff members at a number of sites.

The research identifies data on the existence, structure, espoused purposes and other factual details of formal PM systems in universities, although the bulk of information concerns the opinions, perceptions and attitudes of the respondents.

The overall findings suggest that current performance management practice in Australian public universities does little to meet the needs of any of the key stakeholders and remains fundamentally unsatisfying to all concerned.

Improved accountability, the professional and career development of staff and processes for effectively differentiating levels of performance all exert conflicting expectations of PM systems and result in formal systems that do little to address any one of these elements.

Failure to clearly articulate the purposes and to consider the real implementation and ongoing costs of a formal PM system typically results in widespread cynicism and a ritual dance of compliance that demonstrates palpably low engagement with these systems.

Formal PM systems may help to clarify objectives and workload allocation for some staff, but are poorly linked to organisational planning processes, poor at differentiating high or low levels of performance, are not valued by academic staff as a vehicle for meaningful feedback, fail to follow through on development outcomes and thus do little to build team, individual or organisational capability.

Academic managers describe themselves as lacking expertise in the feedback skills required to effectively support PM and lacking support in managing issues of under-performance.

It is not enough, therefore, to continue to ‘fiddle around the edges’ by re-packaging the same types of systems and processes that have existed in the corporate world for decades and been increasingly imported into higher education environments in recent times. Nor is it sufficient to continue to posit which systemic elements should be included, without a thorough investigation of how they are actually perceived and valued by those who must use them.

This study’s findings suggest that, to date, much of the PM endeavour in higher education environments remains uninspiring, unengaging and more importantly, unsuccessful in producing its desired outcomes. If Australian universities continue to invest in PM systems for academic staff, they must clearly articulate the purposes to be achieved.

The study's recommendations suggest that developmental models are most appropriate and more acceptable than the existing systems and that considerable work would be required to incorporate evaluative links such as performance-related pay successfully.

Developmental feedback should be separated from discussions of workload allocation and a range of alternative models and approaches should be investigated, including the use of modular PM systems that cater for the different stages of an academic career, as well as the devolution of PM responsibilities to individuals other than the Head of School, who may have an interest and expertise in developing staff. This would additionally reduce reliance on the Head of School, a position with frequent turnover.

More rigorous internal evaluations and consultation processes regarding user preferences must be undertaken, and alternative forms of PM piloted, prior to full implementation. Comprehensive change management strategies will be necessary for success in the process of overcoming historical resistance to PM.

In order to have any credibility, adequate and dedicated resources for the PM function and its key outcomes (such as professional development of staff) are needed, including skills training for all participating staff and development approaches that are less didactic and more challenging than standard workshops.

The study's findings show that most academic managers do not have expertise in the feedback skills required to effectively support PM (both formally and informally). A thorough capability analysis of the people management skills for the position of Head of School and above should be seen as a priority, given that this is consistently identified as a problematic area. This is pertinent also to the area of managing under-performance where Heads of School should be fully authorised with the delegation and intensive skills acquisition training (such as accredited assessment centre training) to deal with such issues. The substantial costs of under-performance warrant this expenditure.

A comprehensive national evaluation study of PM practice in higher education should be undertaken to assess the real outcomes, costs and benefits. The system-wide costs and benefits

must be weighed against the commitment of resources, including the time and financial costs involved, to determine whether in fact continued investment in PM systems is actually merited.

In its absence, alternative practices such as the use of promotion portfolios, reflective practice or peer learning groups that enable academic staff and managers to focus on core job components, discuss and share their collective wisdom and professional knowledge, may be more successful in enhancing the accountability and performance of academic staff than mandated hierarchical PM.

Chapter One—Introduction

This study emerged from the researcher's professional interest in performance management (PM). As a consultant working in the fields of human resource development and management, she is often involved in the design of, and training to support, PM systems, and was keen to explore a continuing interest in the area.

During twenty years of practical experience as an adjunct and sessional academic staff member teaching in similar areas within the Australian academic sector, the researcher has yet to personally see, hear of, or experience a university environment where academics perceive their PM system as having much merit. It is her consistent observation from continuous contact with academic practitioners in a number of universities that widespread disenchantment, cynicism and suspicion about PM practices exist.

The researcher has strong personal beliefs about the power of well-constructed feedback to enable individuals to continue to grow and develop both personally and professionally. A PM system is an organisation's formalised process for providing feedback about their ongoing performance, growth and development and this process has thus been of continuing interest to her.

By undertaking this research the researcher hoped to make a contribution to knowledge as well as a practical contribution to PM practices in Australian universities and perhaps even other industries that rely on knowledge workers for their continued success.

This chapter describes the research topic and the purpose and rationale of the study. It defines key terms and outlines the context of significant and ongoing public sector reform and higher education reform in Australia, within which the research was conducted. It examines the concept of strategic human resource management in the knowledge economy and the dichotomy between instrumental and humanistic approaches and raises the issue of 'managerialism' in particular.

The chapter also articulates the objectives of the research and the specific research questions. It briefly outlines the study's methodology and describes the significance of the research findings in terms of their potential contribution to knowledge and practice.

The chapter concludes by outlining the structure in which the thesis is presented and by providing a brief overview of each of the chapters.

Brief Description of the Research Topic

The research described in this report was conducted in Australia during 1999 to 2003. It focused on identifying the formal and informal PM practices currently in use for academic staff Levels A, B and C across the Australian public university sector and, in particular, the current practices in Schools of Management (or their equivalent). Staff at these levels constitute just under 72% of the university academic community (Department of Education, Science and Training 2004) and are the ones most likely to be subject to PM systems. Academic staff responsible for administering these systems were also studied.

For the purposes of this study the term ‘performance management’ follows Lonsdale’s (1996) interpretation in that it incorporates appraisal and goal setting and emphasises the work performance and development of individual staff, teams, and management’s ability to enhance institutional performance. It also draws upon Lansbury’s definition (1988, p. 46) to refer to

the process of identifying, evaluating and developing the work performance of employees in the organisation, so that organisational goals and objectives are more effectively achieved, while at the same time benefiting employees in terms of recognition, receiving feedback, catering for work needs and offering career guidance.

The Research Problem

There appears to be a good deal of ambivalence and confusion about the purposes and the role of PM in universities (Dickensen 1997; Khoury & Analoui 2004; Marshall 1995; Paget, Baldwin, Hore & Kermond 1992; Sharrock 1998). This ambivalence echoes that found in the broader organisational domain (King 1984; Lansbury 1988; O’Neill 1995; Roberts 1998; Stavretis 1991; Timmreck 1998).

The Report of the Review Committee on Higher Education Management recommended that every Australian university should ‘phase in a comprehensive performance management system for both

academic and general staff' (Higher Education Management Review 1995, p. 86) but by September 1996 only eight of 28 universities represented in a forum on this topic indicated any system had been implemented (Dickensen 1997). Forum discussions amongst academic staff and managers revealed significant obstacles to the implementation of PM systems, such as 'endemic mistrust of management agendas, leadership concerns, a lack of commitment and resources to the process and whether the purpose of systems was to measure and evaluate performance or enable genuine staff and career development' (Dickensen 1997, pp. 89-92). Despite considerable interest across the sector, there was a lack of knowledge of what *was* actually happening, and the way forward was not clear (Dickensen 1997, p. 21).

This study is a contribution to the development of knowledge, which may help fill that gap.

As Lonsdale points out, the rate and magnitude of change affecting the Australian university sector is significant and the performance of academic staff is critical to institutional success.

Changing government, community and employer expectations, the digital revolution, rapidly growing competition among existing and new local and international providers, and government demands for increased institutional flexibility, diversity and efficiency characterise the substantial influences and irreversible changes currently sweeping Australian higher education (1998, p. 307).

In such an environment there is increased competition for resources (including high calibre people) and far greater pressure on universities to examine their culture(s), structures, policies, procedures and human resource management strategies for ways of streamlining performance and enhancing productivity. The literature suggests that effective PM can be a powerful tool for potentially enhancing productivity through attention to these factors and organisational, individual and team goals (Ainsworth & Smith 1993; Armstrong 1994; Stone 2002).

Managing Knowledge Workers

If it is accepted that a significant degree of any university's effectiveness and productivity derives directly from the personal effectiveness of its academic staff, then the effective management of their performance is amongst the most critical of responsibilities for universities.

Academic staff in universities have traditionally been given considerable autonomy and viewed as professionals who can be relied on to deliver the performance needed because of their personal interest in and commitment to their subject (Jackson 1999, p. 147). They epitomise the new 'knowledge worker' 'characterized by being paid not to create, produce or manage a tangible product and/or service, but rather to gather, develop, process and apply information that generates profitably to the enterprise' (Smith & Rupp 2004, p. 146).

A range of writers have suggested that successfully harnessing the hard to imitate 'intellectual capital' of an organisation's knowledge workers – the unique competency, commitment and innovation that resides in its people and is not able to be replicated in the same way of other organisational resources (Iles, Yolles & Altman 2000; Mayo 2000; Petty & Guthrie 2000) is likely to be the only sustainable source of long-term competitive advantage. Amar posits that it is their very uniqueness that makes knowledge workers extremely difficult to manage through uniform systems for encouraging and rewarding creativity (Amar 2002).

In a similar vein Argyris (1991, p. 5) notes that 'the nuts and bolts of management increasingly consists of guiding and integrating the autonomous but interconnected work of highly skilled people,' which presents a very different PM challenge than has traditionally been the case. He has highlighted the proclivity of PM and evaluation to provoke defensive reactions from professional 'knowledge workers' that actually de-motivates them and stops effective learning.

This study looked at the impact on staff of PM systems in Australian universities.

Research Objectives

The research objectives of this study were to:

1. identify the types of PM processes currently being used in public Australian universities;
2. develop a rich description of the academics' experience of them, from the perspective of both the academics being managed and those doing the managing; and

3. critically examine how effective PM is with these staff groups in Australian universities so that strategies for improving current practice may be identified.

Research Questions

The research was designed to address the above objectives through answering the following research questions:

1. What PM practices are currently in use in Australian public universities?
2. What are the similarities in approach and what issues does PM raise?
3. How do academic staff who take part in these practices (as either staff or management) experience them?
4. What cultural and contextual factors (if any) contribute to this experience?
5. What are the perceived effects of these practices on the performance of individuals, teams and the organisation?
6. Which system elements do academic staff and academic managers perceive to be most effective in academic cultures and why?

The initial phase of the research involved all 37 public universities in Australia. The second phase focused on a number of sites based on the approaches and issues that arose from data analysis in Phase One.

The Research Design

Policy documentation was gathered from across the whole university sector, although the primary data generation was through interviews conducted with individuals from Schools and Departments of Management or their equivalent. This focus was chosen for three main reasons. The researcher has a particular interest and experience in this discipline, having worked both as an academic, teaching human resource and PM in a range of Australian universities, and as a consultant to organisations in these areas. She therefore brought to the research a good understanding of the

context in which these people work. Management was also chosen because it is an increasingly important growth area for both local and offshore education, and PM issues are particularly critical at times of growth and change (Armstrong 1994).

Because many management academics teach and research about PM, it was felt that they would have a well developed understanding of the issues of concern for staff and organisations regarding such practices and be uniquely placed to reflect upon their experience from both an individual and institutional perspective. In that sense they constituted an 'expert witness' group (Stoney & Winstanley 2001) able to offer additional insights and perspectives on the issue of PM. The need to share experiences and learn from others to determine the effects of PM activities would seem critical.

The researcher's interest in exploring which models and elements of PM systems are perceived to be most effective in academic cultures was guided by the intuition and hope that there are ways of constructing formal feedback systems that are valued by academics as a way of receiving useful information related to their performance and career growth. In this sense the research aims to empower the academic staff member by synthesising information from across the sector about models and methods that are positively experienced.

The researcher's intent was to investigate extant PM models and gather information, both factual and attitudinal, about their operation and perceived utility for their purposes.

This then led to the development of a set of propositions about PM practices and systems describing what would be effective with, and acceptable or suitable to, academic staff in the Australian university environment.

The Research Setting

Public sector reform and higher education

The Australian higher education system is publicly owned and largely dependent on government funding, although most universities also carry out commercial activities, export their products and compete for business in domestic and international markets (Higher Education Management Review 1995).

As part of a broader public sector reform agenda in many OECD countries, higher education institutions have been under unremitting pressure to develop results-oriented and efficient policies and practices that demonstrate accountability, value for money and contributions towards higher productivity (Boyne 2003; Gibbons 1998; Hood 2001; Pollitt 2000). In Australia this is rooted in reform processes dating back to 1975 but accelerated since the election of a Liberal-National Party Coalition government in 1996.

Anderson, Griffin and Teicher refer to the New Public Management (NPM) emerging in many liberal democracies, including Australia, as an approach 'which posits the need to recast the management of public bureaucracies on the lines of business enterprises' (Anderson et al. 2002, p. 13). Key elements of NPM include a move towards private sector style of management and a performance-based culture that encompasses an emphasis on explicit standards and PM (2002, p. 14). Allied to this has been a heightened interest in 'objective' measurement of performance and the development of indicators and means to achieve this purpose (Meek & Wood 1997, p. 21).

Several researchers assert that the inculcation of business practices into academia has embedded new criteria for measuring and assessing academic work and given rise to a view of higher education as a packaged commodity which is directly related to employability rather than an 'apprenticeship in the community of scholars' (Locke 1990; Zemsky 1993). Locke coined the term 'edubis' to describe this fusion of business practices into educational environments. He defined it as an approach that,

assesses the value of a university to society in figures of a balance sheet, where efficiency, accountability and productivity are directly linked to defined and targeted markets for academic courses, with the short term objective of feeding graduates into the job market (1990, p. 8).

A recent study estimated that tertiary education provided a net benefit to the Australian Federal Budget of about \$9.6b in 2001-02 and this was estimated to rise to over \$12 billion by 2010-11 (Johnson & Wilkins 2003, p. 11). It is certainly true that the contribution of universities to the Australian economy is now framed in economic terms as much as intellectual or knowledge outcomes. Higher education is viewed as a key export industry,

producing major spill-over benefits to the nation as a whole with \$3.7 billion, national income from the export of education (of which higher education provides the largest part) exceeding national export income from wool, beef and veal, alumina and aluminium (Group of Eight Ltd. 2001, p. 14).

The new corporate style of management in the public sector, based upon the classic top-down, line management approach is often pejoratively labelled as managerialism. Although the term has no settled definition (Sharrock 2000, p. 156), it has generally come to represent a negative over-control and transactionalism, where the value of activity is reduced solely to its financial outcomes (Bessant 1995; Considine & Painter 1997; Joyce 2000; Marginson 1993; Savoie 1998; Trow 1994).

In higher education, as in much of the public sector, the utility and cultural appropriateness of private sector management techniques (such as formal PM schemes) has been hotly debated (Considine & Painter 1997; Marginson 1993; Meek & Wood 1997; Morris 2005; Moses 1995). Many have perceived it as a threat to academic freedom and institutional autonomy (for example Anderson et al. 2002; Encel 1990; Meek, 1991; Williams 1990) and described it as based upon economic rationalist ideology and ‘colonising’ all in its sway (Marginson 1993, pp. 63–64).

Strategic Human Resource Management

Traditionally the focus of strategic human resource management (HRM) is on managing people within the employer–employee relationship so that they gain satisfaction of their individual needs whilst contributing to the organisation’s strategic business objectives (Stone 2002, p. 4). The importance of recognising people as an organisation's greatest asset and harnessing their effort towards the achievement of organisational productivity has long been seen as axiomatic (Compton 2005; Dunphy & Hackman 1988; Lansbury 1980; Lonsdale 1996; McDonald & Smith 1995; Schneider, Shaw & Beatty 1991).

An organisation’s HRM strategy and activities may, however, vary considerably in their theoretical orientation and underpinning philosophy.

Sisson summarises two strands of HRM theory as a ‘hard’/instrumental approach or ‘soft’/humanistic approach. The ‘hard’ version involves quantitative and business–strategic aspects of managing people and admits anything that fits the business strategy, including very low pay or substantial employment insecurity. By contrast, ‘soft’ version HRM involves the engagement of people and emphasises employee development, communication, motivation and leadership (Sisson 1994).

In the tertiary education sector, where concepts of academic freedom and security of tenure have traditionally been highly valued, unions (and many academic staff) have decried instrumental models of HRM, which have come to be associated with managerialism. Hort’s view is representative when she describes managerialism as ‘conceptualising people as just another economic commodity in the service of the organisation, so that they become ‘resources’ which are ‘investments’ just as other plant, technology and finances are’ (1997, p. 1).

Trow further contends that hard managerialists,

are resolved to reshape and redirect the activities of the academic community through funding formulas and other mechanisms of accountability imposed from outside the

academic community, and management mechanisms created and largely shaped for application to large commercial enterprises (Trow 1994, p. 12).

Clearly these activities are seen as culturally inappropriate and externally imposed upon the sector.

Stone notes that, although 'soft' or humanistic HRM still involves the integration of human resource policies and practices with strategic business objectives, 'employees are seen as pro-active contributors rather than as passive units to be allocated rationally along with other factors of production' (Stone 2002, p. 10). Trow concurs when he states that 'the 'soft' managerialists still see higher education as an autonomous activity, governed by its own norms and traditions, with a more effective and rationalised management still serving functions defined by the academic community itself' (Trow 1994, p. 11).

It seems that an important difference between these views centres on the issues of institutional autonomy, managerial control and academic independence.

Shelley suggests that the concepts of academic professionalism and independence or freedom are arguably in transition from the 'liberal professional' or archetypal professor identified by Schwartzmann (1994) to that of a public servant who is held accountable for performing a 'professional job'. Shelley argues that in the former conceptualisation academics are seen to value and are able to exercise considerable autonomy over macro issues such as governance and institutional direction. They are motivated intrinsically. The latter conceptualisation connotes explicit, external methods of PM, applied through HRM practices such as appraisal and performance-related pay, which are managerially controlled (1999, p. 440).

An organisation's formal PM practices are recognised as pivotal to strategic HRM where system outputs are integrated and aligned with other core HRM activities and systems (Patterson, West & Wall 2000; Stone 2002) such as job analysis and design, recruitment and selection, staff development, career planning and development, and rewards, including compensation, bonuses and benefits.

A recent survey of PM practices in Australian and New Zealand found several features that differentiated the higher performing organisations from their counterparts. These included a more strategic use of performance appraisal interviews to communicate organisational strategy; tight integration of the corporate and business level strategies and plans with other HR systems; and demonstrable procedural and distributive justice through more explicit links to organisational consequences, such as rewards, development, exits and promotions (Commerce Clearing House 2000, pp. 15–16).

Such claims are consistent with other research: that organisations with innovative and integrated HRM strategies reap the rewards in higher productivity (Huselid 1995; Iles et al. 2000; Pfeffer & Veiga 1999; Pfeffer, Veiga, Hatano & Santalainen 1995). Whilst they add considerable weight to the argument for a formal PM system it is not the intent of this study to evaluate the veracity of the claims. What is clear, however, is that the ‘benefits of managing people and their performance are now beyond doubt and challenge’ (Commerce Clearing House 2000, p. 16).

Whether an instrumental or humanistic model of HRM is implemented, PM potentially offers a process for translating the organisation's corporate objectives, performance indicators and strategies into individual job objectives, performance standards and the specific behaviours that support them. This is a key reason commonly identified in the literature and organisational policy documents for the adoption of a PM system (Cascio 1996; Compton 2005; Department of Human Services 2004; Higher Education Management Review 1995).

Similarly, the literature relating to academic environments (Power 2000; Wisniewski & Stewart 2004) and examples of Australian university policy documentation (Deakin University 2005, p. 1; Monash University 1998, p. 31) suggest that academic staff are now expected to achieve goals and objectives aligned with the broader corporate focus and to demonstrate improved performance.

A primary vehicle for achieving (or at least demonstrating effort towards) increased accountability is a PM system and many universities have adopted formal systems based upon commercial business models (Dickensen 1997).

Australian Higher Education Reform

Over the last two decades, Australian universities have experienced significant and rapid change in their working environment and practices. The context is one of an increasingly complex regulatory and financial situation, structural change, advances in learning technologies and heightened competition from local and international counterparts (Coaldrake & Stedman 1998). Tensions between the role of research and teaching, industrial unrest over pay, loss of tenure, changed working conditions and workload expectations have all contributed to significant uncertainty in the sector (Healy & Crossweller 1999; Meek & Wood 1997; Taylor, Gough, Bundrock & Winter 1998). This is further complicated by the over-arching context of public sector reform, and expectations that academic staff will generate revenue and be more accountable towards an increased number of stakeholders (Dickensen 1997, p. 21). Some of these issues are described in more detail below.

Since 1988 the Australian higher education environment has been characterised by ongoing transformational change that began with reforms initiated by the then Labor Government's Minister for the Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET), John Dawkins (Dawkins 1988).

The Dawkins reforms changed Australian higher education from an elite (binary) to a mass (unitary) system and included:

- the creation of a unified national system (UNS) of higher education that removed distinctions between universities and colleges of advanced education (CAEs) with respect to roles and funding. Some CAEs were known as Institutes of Technology, although the status of CAEs and Institutes was similar, as was the strong teaching and vocational emphasis;
- the setting of minimum enrolment levels for institutions, both to enter the new system and to be eligible for certain types of funding;

- a major consolidation of institutions through amalgamation that saw the creation of the 37 Australian universities, (Morris 2005, p. 389) each striving to build up research activity and research enrolments;
- increased emphasis on vocational discipline fields;
- the strengthening of management of universities and colleges; and
- the reintroduction of tuition fees (Anderson et al. 2002, pp. 1–2) under a scheme where students met part of the cost of their education through the higher education contribution scheme (HECS) (Aitkin 1996; Meek 1991; Taylor et al. 1998, p. 256).

The effects of these reforms and a continuing reform agenda since have been far-reaching.

Apart from creating a number of much larger and more complex institutions, some with multiple campuses spread over large distances and offshore, the amalgamation of the university and college sectors brought together two systems with different cultures, expectations and emphases about the value of teaching and research. This has had a dramatic impact upon the traditional roles, responsibilities and workloads of academic staff and managers.

Academic Staff Roles and Responsibilities

The academic staff structure of the Australian university is typically based upon a five-level classification structure which includes, in ascending order of seniority, staff at Level A (Associate Lecturer), Level B (Lecturer), Level C, (Senior Lecturer), Level D (Associate Professor) and Level E (Professor).

Generally it is the case that the more junior staff (Levels A and B) undertake the majority of teaching and senior staff are responsible for more research and management responsibilities, although this is contingent upon position descriptions for each role, and increasingly there are research only positions at all levels.

Key responsibility areas of an academic role in Australian universities include:

1. *teaching* – at undergraduate and postgraduate levels within Australia and at offshore satellite campuses - including course and subject development, formal classroom and tutorial contact, resource production and maintenance (including online material), assessment of students and review of teaching practices;
2. *research and original achievement* – including application for grants, published work, consultancy, contract research, conference presentations, professional development in research, and progress towards higher degrees; and
3. *university administration and leadership* – including the coordination of subjects, courses or programs; staff management, support and supervision; institution building; service on internal committees within the school or faculty; and leadership roles that people may play such as Associate Dean.

Aside from full-time tenured staff, ‘more than one-third of all higher education employees are hourly-paid (on one-hour’s notice) and more than one-fifth are on fixed-term contracts (usually between one and three years in length). Part time employment is also widely used’ (National Tertiary Education Industry Union 2003, p. 57). The idea of tenure itself seems to be increasingly moribund, given that a number of universities have recently made tenured staff redundant.

The Psychological Contract

Shelley’s studies of higher education reform in the UK (1999, 2000) have led him to suggest that pressures for increased accountability may be fuelling a shift to the traditional conception of the academic role and psychological contract that aligns with this. A psychological contract is an implicit agreement between parties concerning what each party gives and gets in a relationship. ‘It embodies the parties’ assumptions regarding the ‘rules of the game’ by which they will fulfil obligations to one another’ (Bowen, Gilliland & Folger 1999, p. 21).

Anecdotal evidence from Australian academic staff, and some reports, show that many Australian academics also believe that the rules of the game have changed and that the psychological contract with their institution is being compromised and eroded as:

- higher research output is demanded, often from staff who signed on as teaching staff (particularly in CAEs preceding the Dawkins amalgamations of 1987–88) without any formal research expectation;
- staff student ratios increase; and
- students pay more and get correspondingly more demanding and more vocal about the quality of their university experience (Dickensen 1997; Dollery, Murray & Crase 2006).

It would seem axiomatic that, when people feel that the rules of the game have altered around them and that this is beyond their control, they will also feel that what they signed on for as an employee is also compromised and their level of cooperation and satisfaction will decline. Such perceptions of changed expectations may give rise to a sense that the psychological contract is damaged and that this constitutes an unreasonable or unfair set of actions on the part of the organisation.

The psychology of fair process or procedural justice builds trust and commitment, trust and commitment produce voluntary cooperation, and voluntary cooperation drives performance, leading people to go beyond the call of duty by sharing their knowledge and applying their creativity. Fair process may sound like a soft issue, but understanding its value is crucial for managers trying to adapt their companies to the demands of the knowledge-based economy (Chan Kim & Mauborgne 1997, p. 71).

Increasing Administrative Roles - A New Class of Managers

The strengthening of executive and management roles in Australian universities, that began with the Dawkins' reforms and has continued since, is consistent with trends reflected in other nations' higher education institutions, for example Canada and the UK (Buchbinder & Newson 1992; Shelley 2000). This is not purely attributable to public sector reform, as institutional leaders have been shown to 'favour measures designed to strengthen executive authority and to streamline decision making within universities' (Meek & Goedegebuure 1989).

Bessant asserts that the most significant changes in academic management have been the creation of an elite group of academic administrators and reorganisation of university management structures to conform to top-down management styles (1995, p. 60). The number of executive and managerial positions in Australian universities, post Dawkins, has significantly increased (Meek & Wood 1997), supporting the view that there is now a cadre of 'professional managers'. Studies are increasingly beginning to highlight the pivotal role that departmental heads (or their equivalent) must play in articulating and implementing change processes and in managing staff (Lonsdale 1998; Seagren, Cresswell, Wheeler & Tapper 1993).

Researchers have discussed the emergence of a 'new class of academic managers who are regarded as a class apart from academics' (Miller 1996) in that they have forsaken their disciplinary roots and their academic culture for university administration (Taylor et al. 1998, p. 265). According to Scott, 'the 'collegial' university governed by the academic guild assisted by low-profile administrators has been succeeded by the 'managerial' university dominated by an increasingly expert cadre of senior managers' capable of managing a business on a corporate scale (1993, p. 47).

The impact on relationships within the academic system has been described as one of increased separation and disconnection between the new breed of academic bureaucrat and their academic staff, and a resultant very low morale among academic staff (Meek 1991; Taylor et al. 1998).

Academic Staff Workloads

As a consequence of increased organisational size and minimum enrolment levels, academic staff now manage larger volumes of work and administrative activities and deal with far larger student cohorts, particularly at undergraduate level. Research supports the anecdotal claims of academic staff regarding escalating workload expectations and that 'academic staff morale is alarmingly low' (Meek & Wood 1997). Between 1994 and 2002, 'there has been an increase of 44% in the ratio of students to teaching staff in Australian universities' (National Tertiary Education Industry Union 2003, p. 59) with 55% of staff reporting increased workloads over the last five years and 40% of academics working more than 50 hours, per week (McInnis 2000).

Academic staff in Australian universities are now expected to regularly perform additional revenue-raising tasks, such as teaching summer semester courses, short teaching assignments at offshore campuses, and additional postgraduate supervision, as a part of their routine workload and with little or no additional financial reward (Dollery et al. 2006, p. 93).

In a study of stress levels in Australian universities involving 17 universities, and a total of 8732 responses, Winefield, Gillespie, Stough, Dua and Hapuararchchi additionally found that psychological strain was highest and job satisfaction was lowest among Level B and C academics and that trust in senior management and perceptions of procedural fairness were both low (2002, pp. 102-103).

It is perhaps in the area of expected research activity that the most profound changes have occurred for many staff, with higher expectations of research in the context of far more competition for research partners and funding. 'Rather than profit from the teaching expertise available from former CAEs, concerted efforts are being made to acculturate former college academics into research, both to increase the incidence of higher degrees and to raise publication output' (Taylor et al. 1998, p. 266).

Concerns about both teaching and research quality are beginning to emerge as staff resources are stretched more thinly and the competition for research funds intensifies. A review of teaching at the undergraduate level within 12 Australian universities found evidence that,

the quality of teaching and learning in undergraduate studies has been affected by the decline in unit resources and by the higher priority given by many academic staff to research over teaching (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development 1997, p. 11).

Overall the expectations of Australian academic staff are significantly more diverse than was traditionally the case and these expectations (of the need to raise research output) have clearly contributed to significantly heavier workload demands.

The Climate of Continuing Reform

In 1999 the Federal Government introduced its Workplace Reform Program in which it outlined 14 conditions universities needed to meet in order to receive salary increases of 2%.

The \$259 million workplace relations program compensated universities deemed by the Department of Education, Science and Training to have ‘demonstrated satisfactory progress in implementing genuine workplace reforms’ (Illing & Thorp 1999, p. 42). Universities were required to meet nine of the fourteen criteria, to access the discretionary funding under this program. Adoption of formal PM arrangements was included amongst the criteria, thus placing the issue firmly on the map of organisational life for the higher education sector.

Subsequent higher education reviews and policy initiatives have continued to increase the pressure for universities to operate more efficiently (Department of Education, Science and Training 2002c, p. 27) and be more publicly accountable (Department of Education, Science and Training 2002c, p. 8). The establishment of The Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) in 2000 introduced another set of reporting requirements by which universities are meant to provide the government and the public with information on quality in higher education through quality audits, and thereby assist in improving academic quality (Australian Universities Quality Agency 2004b).

Quality has diverse meanings, however, contingent on the stakeholder’s perspective as Taylor and colleagues point out. Universities may frame it in terms of student evaluations of staff or use it as a ‘status and marketing tool, advertising their “quality” programs and boasting of their “quality assurance” mechanisms’ and to government as a way of assessing value for money’ (Taylor et al. 1998, p. 257).

From the perspective of the academic staff member, Moses argues that the quality movement has been perceived as largely irrelevant to increasing their accountability or performance.

In Australia as elsewhere, most academic staff still do not relate to concepts like performance indicators, quality assurance, total quality management, international standards, stakeholder, customer or client, input and output. The quality movement has

built a superstructure of concepts and jargon, which is derived from business and industry and dismissed by academic staff as such (Moses 1995, p. 12).

It has, however, contributed to additional administrative workloads for academic staff and managers, who must collect statistical information and prove that quality checks are in place and being used, whether they are valued or not (Meek & Wood 1997, p. 130).

This additional scrutiny, and need to administer systems that are largely driven by external demands for increased accountability, arguably exacerbates the divide and disconnections between academic managers and their staff. As Bessant points out,

it has not been an easy road for these new members of SES [executive] class because they are often torn between the collegial tradition which they know so well and have much sympathy for, and their new roles which are reinforced by the succession of advice (directions) from the Department of Employment and Education which they have to administer (1995, p. 60).

Under the current Liberal–National Party Coalition Government there have been further significant changes in tertiary education policy initiated by the then Education Minister, Brendan Nelson as a part of the ‘Backing Australia’s Future’ package, and passed by the Senate in December 2003.

The ‘Backing Australia's Future’ package proposed the direct linking of \$404 million of additional funding under a new Commonwealth Grants Scheme to institutions complying with the Government’s industrial relations policies. Amongst its high priorities were the increased use of individual employment agreements with performance-based pay (Department of Education, Science and Training 2005a, p. 35) and far greater ability to restrict industrial action. Critics of the legislation were vociferous in decrying its ‘unprecedented, intrusive and unwanted interference in the internal management and decision making of what are supposed to be autonomous institutions’ (National Tertiary Education Industry Union 2003, p. 53).

The Nelson legislation had a contentious passage through the Senate, with the Government agenda of tying funding to institutional compliance with industrial relations policies significantly diluted (Nette 2004, p. 15), although not removed.

From 2005 onwards, each university was required to enter into a new funding agreement with the Minister. They can exercise the discretion to charge their students HECS fees to a maximum of 25% above current rates and also accept Australian fee-paying students to a maximum of 35% of total course admission once all HECS places have been filled (Nelson 2003a). Current HECS contributions may be as much as \$6000 per annum per student and it is clear that the higher personal fee burden will clearly contribute to increased expectation of academic staff accountability and performance from students and from institutional managers.

In addition, the Government is in the process of developing a Research Quality Framework (RQF) intended to provide a more consistent and comprehensive approach for assessing the quality and impact of publicly funded research in universities and research agencies.

Currently research conducted in universities by individuals or teams of researchers is supported by the Australian Government through a dual funding system comprising direct funding from agencies (including the Australian Research Council and the National Health and Medical Research Council) determined on the basis of competitive peer review and university block grants, which are performance-based (Department of Education, Science and Training 2005a, p. 9).

Although the precise assessment mechanisms have yet to be determined, and there is much debate about how effectively they will operate, the RQF ratings of quality and impact will almost certainly form the basis for redistributing a significant proportion of the block funding. This places even greater pressure on academic staff to be active in research, thus bringing in the dollars for their employing institution.

The Government's continued practice of tying discretionary funding amounts to productivity and structural reforms (Nelson 2003b) means universities must find ways to demonstrate progress in these areas. In corporate environments managers have looked to PM activities to achieve these

accountability aims, and recent policy reforms have certainly steered the higher education sector towards this direction.

Academic unions and staff have resisted much of this reform although both the previous Labor and current Liberal-Coalition governments have introduced new industrial legislation based upon negotiated Enterprise Agreements that provide employers with far more flexibility in their employment policies.

Several universities (for example University of Sydney, University of New South Wales, Australian National University, The University of Melbourne) have negotiated Enterprise Agreements with conditions for pay rises, job security and working conditions including performance-based pay models that have contributed to significant industrial unrest including academic staff strikes (Healy & Crossweller 1999, p. 34; Madden 2002; Thorp 1999).

The greater flexibility afforded by Enterprise Agreements 'has allowed vice-chancellors to reduce the percentage of tenured staff members, increase staff redundancy (more than 2,000 staff have been shed from Australian universities in the last four years), and differentiate among staff in terms of salaries and bonuses' (Meek & Wood 1997, p. 1).

Collectively all of these changes have had a profound effect on the ways in which universities manage their internal staffing issues and introduced significant impetus to adopt appraisal and PM systems based upon commercial business models as a means of increasing visible accountability (and improving performance) (Dickensen 1997).

Despite significant changes across the higher education sector many still argue that PM arrangements remain ineffective. As recently as 2005, submissions from a number of universities to proposed government policy reforms argued that PM arrangements in Enterprise Agreements are not effective and that procedures in cases of unsatisfactory performance are still overly complex and lengthy (Department of Education, Science and Training 2005a).

The management of under-performance in universities, as with most organisations, is a critical management responsibility. In the teaching environment where academic staff often work unobserved and solo with a class (and have the ability therefore to influence any evaluation

students may be requested to submit) it is an extraordinarily complex issue. PM that involves regular feedback and appraisal arguably assists employers to identify performance problems at an early stage before they escalate to more serious dimensions that may impede organisational outcomes (Margrave & Gordon 2001). 'Given shrinking resources, colleagues are less prepared to tolerate inadequate contributions from low performers and departments cannot afford them' (Lonsdale 1998, p. 308).

It is perhaps overdue to debate how the whole environment for appraisal and PM must change as institutions grapple with amalgamations, mass education, deregulation, quality audits and the like, that provoke a fundamental rethinking of their purposes, strategic reorientations and a redefinition of the responsibilities of an academic role and the parameters of academic freedom.

Summary

In a sector characterised by substantial and ongoing change, it would seem a critical necessity for academic staff to have clear information about performance expectations and standards, feedback about how they are going and information that enables them to continue to grow and develop in their role and careers.

Equally, it is essential that Australian universities are able to attract and retain highly skilled knowledge workers and manage them in such a way that their motivation and contribution to the organisation remains high. The creation of organisational policies and procedures that engender this level of commitment is central (Rowley 1996) and a robust combination of informal and formal PM practices may serve to fulfil all of these needs.

Australian universities are grappling with amalgamations, mass education, deregulation, quality audits and demands for increased accountability that provoke a fundamental rethinking of their purposes, strategic reorientations and internal staffing issues. The role responsibilities of individual academic staff and managers have undergone corresponding redefinition as they continuously adapt to the reform agenda.

Consideration of whether PM activities and processes are assisting universities and individual academic staff to meet these changes is critical.

The Study's Contributions

This study planned to expand the knowledge base concerning the types of PM practices in use for, and their impact upon, academic staff in Australian public universities.

The need to share experiences and learn from others to determine the effects of PM activities and what might constitute effective practice is critical. A rich description of this experience and critical examination of the effectiveness of current practices enables more informed choices about what type of systems and approaches may be more effective for these staff groups in academic cultures.

The study provides significant insight from the perspective of those directly affected by such practices and it constitutes an important source of information for those involved with the design, implementation and ongoing responsibility for the conduct of PM practices for academics. As this is currently an area of substantial interest and activity in the Australian university sector a number of additional research possibilities have also been identified from the outcomes of the project.

The benefits from this knowledge for organisations, individuals and teams lie in the potential improvements and changes it may suggest for PM system designers, implementers, managers and participants. More broadly one can argue that the Australian community benefits from this knowledge, if it enhances or contributes to the commitment, capability and higher performance of our academics.

Structure of the Thesis

- Chapter Two presents a comprehensive research of the literature relating to PM in the broader organisational domain as well as within educational environments.
- Chapter Three describes the research design and methodology, the group of respondents and how they were selected for both Phase One and Two, the tools and procedures used for generating and analysing the data, and some of the possible methodological limitations.
- Chapter Four provides a summary of the Phase One study results, focusing largely upon the verbatim reports of study participants.
- Chapter Five provides a summary of the Phase Two case studies conducted at three selected sites and identifies themes from the data.
- Chapter Six presents a discussion of the study's main findings and an overview and summary of the various approaches to PM currently in use in Australian public universities. Each of the specific research questions is addressed and used as an organising framework within which the findings are discussed.
- Chapter Seven summarises the most critical implications of the findings for PM in higher education environments, and presents conclusions and recommendations.

Chapter Two–Literature Review

Introduction

In this chapter ‘performance appraisal’ and ‘performance management’ are defined and the key differences are described. Various PM methods and techniques are discussed as are a number of issues, including the responsibility for appraisals, formal versus informal practice and an overview of the diverse purposes for which systems may be designed. Critical perspectives from the literature suggest that many PM systems are more renowned for their failure to engage people rather than their success. The issues that may enhance engagement are identified and discussed. The chapter also outlines the role of line management in establishing a PM culture, together with the particular difficulties this presents in educational environments.

Although studies of PM and appraisal in Australian higher education environments are not extensive, there is much to be learned from the literature pertaining to primary and secondary school environments. Findings from studies that provide insight into contemporary PM in educational environments, particularly from the US, UK and Australia, are a key focus of the review.

Performance Management and Performance Appraisal

Contemporary HRM conceptualises performance appraisal/review/assessment or evaluation as subsets of a broader PM system (Armstrong 1992; Stone 2002) and often these terms are used interchangeably. The relationship between a PM system and performance appraisal processes is a central and critical one, with any effective appraisal process ideally being used to create and reinforce a supportive and developmental PM (PM) culture (Bhanthumnavin 2003; Management Advisory Committee 2001). This does not preclude it from also being used to identify under-performance and design development plans to redress this.

Performance Appraisal

Performance appraisal has been described as the process of reviewing and evaluating how well employees are performing their tasks relative to the required work performance standards (Khoury & Analoui 2004, p. 56), identifying the barriers to performing at the optimal level (Gilchrist 2003), providing feedback with the aim of eliminating performance deficiencies (Mondy, Noe & Premeaux 1999; Stone 1998) and motivating employees to improve and develop their potential for the benefit of the organisation (Fisher, Schoenfeldt & Shaw 1999) and their own career path (Grensing-Pophal 2002).

It is furthermore seen as a means of articulating levels of individual performance and contribution, so that strong performers are encouraged to maintain their high performance levels and poor performers to do better (Scott 2001). It is a key mechanism by which an organisation defends against individuals who legally challenge the validity of management decisions relating to promotions, transfers, salary changes and termination (Stone 2002, p. 264).

It is common organisational practice to hold performance appraisal discussions at interviews conducted on an annual basis, with 84% of respondents in a recent Australian survey typifying this trend. 'Face to face meetings with employees are also now almost universal with 95% of organisations describing this as a key system factor' (Commerce Clearing House 2000, pp. 15–16).

Of all the activities in HRM, performance appraisal is arguably the most contentious and least popular among those who are involved. 'Managers do not appear to like doing it, employees see no point in it and personnel and human resource managers as guardians of the organisation's appraisal policy and procedures have to stand by and watch their work fall into disrepute' (Bratton & Gold 1999, p. 214). Some of the less positive descriptions of appraisal are summarised below.

W. Edwards Deming, the founder of Total Quality Management described appraisal as 'nourishing short-term performance, annihilating long-term planning, building fear, demolishing teamwork and encouraging rivalry and politics—at best unnecessary and worst damaging' (Deming 1986, p. 102). Others have described it as a management tool that promises much but delivers little, a

policy that acts to reduce staff morale, job security, professionalism and career development, undermining mutual trust and the social contract between employee and employer and increasing occupational stress; an overall counterproductive exercise for those attempting to build organisational performance and individual commitment (Grint 1993; Scholtes 1999; Soldon 1995).

Some of the most trenchant criticisms of performance appraisal originate from organisations that have historically based collegial and collaborative norms (for example schools, universities, human services and public sector organisations) and highly unionised environments. In such cultures 'performance appraisal and pay for performance are seen as focusing on the individual, thus creating a competitive culture, coercing higher output and promoting management by control' (Stone 2002, p. 265).

Townley argues that performance appraisal plays a key role in communicating organisational norms, values and culture and is just a thinly veiled scientific management technique for handling Labor relations, with the real intent of monitoring and controlling today's more sophisticated employee by emphasising trait rating rather than job-based criteria (Townley 1992).

A recent study based on 100 interviews with Hong Kong Chinese line managers examined attitudes to performance appraisal in their organisation. Alarming, line managers felt that performance appraisals did not add value or help to achieve business objectives. Additionally they thought that the forms, guidelines and standards used to evaluate performance were inadequate. In particular, appraisal training was seen as having no impact (Wright 2001).

Performance Management

The Report of the Management Advisory Committee on PM practices across the Australian Public Service defines PM as 'the use of interrelated strategies and activities to improve the performance of individuals, teams and organizations' and locates it as an essential tool for all levels of management (Management Advisory Committee 2001, p. 7). It specifically refers to the need to assess both means and ends when it comes to performance and gives an excellent summary

of the key features of modern PM systems reflected in the broader body of literature on this topic.

According to this report PM can involve:

- clarifying performance objectives (this could include tasks, outcomes, behaviours and values based systems or a combination of these) and linking these with organisational business plans;
- periodic performance appraisal of individuals or teams against the achievement of these objectives;
- feedback from this appraisal;
- recognition or reward for performance, including performance pay, salary progression guided by performance or non-pay reward systems;
- team and individual development to build capabilities;
- counselling, or other action to deal with poor performance;
- establishing a link between the development of capabilities with organisational and business planning (i.e. not only cascading down from corporate and business planning outcomes but also having a system that feeds back up; and
- evaluating the contribution of individual, team and organisational performance
(Management Advisory Committee 2001, p. 7).

Armstrong (1996) suggests that PM systems, as opposed to performance appraisal systems, provide stronger emphasis on collaborative communication including giving and getting feedback to forge agreements on accountabilities, expectations and development plans.

Other authors also draw this distinction and view the provision of ongoing feedback and performance dialogue as a major factor in establishing robust PM processes as opposed to the annual appraisal interview that is often experienced and perceived as an administrative chore (Autry 2001; Bacal 1999; Conroy 2004; Mondy et al. 1999; Painter 2003; Roberts 2002).

In order for PM to be more than just a 'cosmetic' process, management commitment is vital (Regal & Hollman 1987). One tangible sign of commitment is when senior managers implement a new PM process by undertaking their own reviews first with their manager. The practice of running parallel yet separate systems for managerial and non-managerial staff is a common organisational practice, although it is often perceived by staff as elitist and divisive that large corporations do so (Commerce Clearing House 2000; Management Advisory Committee 2001).

Additionally, studies have shown that the amount of time dedicated to PM activities, the status managers accord it and the attitude they model towards it, all have an impact (McAdam, Hazlett & Casey 2005).

A recent review of PM practices found that when senior management adopt an advocacy role for a system this acts as a key shaper that influences both speed and success of system introduction.

There needs to be an acceptance that performance management (encompassing appropriate assessment and feedback) is more than a faddish mantra that will, in practice, be abandoned in the pursuit of day-to-day tasks. A key is to ensure that senior and middle managers see themselves as part of a leadership team, that they accept their management roles and responsibilities and are equipped to carry them out (Management Advisory Committee 2001, p. 26).

Conversely, when junior managers observe those above them in the organisational hierarchy fail to complete performance reviews, frequently change appointment times for meetings in favour of other operational tasks and abrogate their responsibility to provide ongoing feedback, the value placed upon the PM system is clearly communicated, whatever the organisational rhetoric. It is the author's direct experience that these behaviours are all too common amongst Australian managers. Other research suggests that this is not a national characteristic distinctive of Australian managers (Thomas & Bretz 1994). Thomas and Bretz found that American managers spent as little time as four hours per employee per year on feedback and appraisal activities, even in companies that purportedly valued performance appraisal. 'Basic motivational theory as well as common sense suggests that managers will devote little effort to a somewhat unpleasant chore for

which they are not held accountable' (1994, p. 31). The necessity of holding line managers directly accountable for how well they conduct the performance appraisals of their subordinates and 'basing the determination of managerial rewards and recognition on the system's outputs, and the involvement of managers in its implementation' (Commerce Clearing House 2000, p. 17) has been highlighted.

Compton further argues that senior managers fail to recognise or understand the power and strategic importance of PM practice and continue to model this in the low organisational status they accord the HRM function and its key processes such as appraisal (Compton 2005, p. 46). Considerable anecdotal industry evidence and the author's direct experience suggest that many organisations and their senior managers view the management of staff performance as the responsibility of HR managers. Alternatively they regard it as an onerous but necessary evil imposed by the HR department (for reasons of legal defensibility) that has little relevance to their everyday business activities, relationships or eventual bottom line.

Lonsdale describes the leadership role of management as pivotal to both the creation and reinforcement of a PM culture that enables optimal staff performance and engagement and enhanced institutional performance—a 'fourth phase or generation of performance management' (1996, p. 8). He suggests that it is essential to actively involve the leaders who will implement the process (deans, heads, directors and other senior staff in departments) in the early phases of system development so they have a hand in defining the philosophy, purposes, principles and guidelines, and subsequently model appropriate ownership (1998, p. 317). This theme is echoed in much of the literature and seen as pivotal in differentiating between organisations that have a performance appraisal system versus those that have a PM culture

Performance Management Definition

For the purposes of this study the term ‘performance management’ draws upon the above tenets and the definitions provided by Lonsdale (1996) and Lansbury (1988). Whilst many definitions exist, these perspectives encapsulate all of the critical elements of interest to this researcher and thus provide the basis for a useful working definition.

Lonsdale defines PM as ‘incorporating appraisal and goal setting and as emphasising the work, performance and development of individual staff, but also of teams, and of management’s ability to enhance institutional performance’ (1996, p. 6).

Lansbury’s definition includes a greater emphasis upon the purposes of PM, which is pertinent given its importance to the success of such systems. He refers to it as ‘the process of identifying, evaluating and developing the work performance of employees in the organisation, so that organisational goals and objectives are more effectively achieved, while at the same time benefiting employees in terms of recognition, receiving feedback, catering for work needs and offering career guidance’ (1988, p. 46). The first half of this definition focuses on the evaluation of work performance so that organisational goals can be effectively achieved. The second focuses on the individual and on giving recognition, feedback, meeting individual needs and providing career guidance.

The working definition of PM for this study includes both the formal and informal communication mechanisms through which employees receive clear direction, ongoing feedback and guidance about the work they are required to perform, the standards they must meet and the significance of their achievements. Feedback received as a part of this process (including the formal appraisal interview) should assist employees to understand what work they do well, where their development needs are, and how they can improve their skill and knowledge.

An effective PM system enables employees and teams to understand organisational goals and to identify how their individual and team outputs contribute to their achievement (Department of Human Services 2004; Martey 2002). It articulates the linkage between individual and organisational goal achievement and can thus be described as providing a ‘line of sight’ between

the individual's contributions and the broader organisational endeavour. It can also thus enable 'alignment' of individual, team and organisational effort, with the synergistic implications for organisational productivity this implies.

In summary then, a PM system, as defined in this study, is the broader set of integrated components and approaches that includes all of the formal and informal processes by which individuals in organisations receive information about what they are supposed to be doing, why this is strategically important for the organisation, how well they are doing it, what will assist them to do better and what they will gain from their achievements. It is a highly interdependent sequence of processes that begins with the 'positioning' of the system by the organisational executive and senior management, preparation of managers and organisational members and the negotiation of job accountabilities and performance indicators (Bacal 1999; Commerce Clearing House 2000; Tahvanainen 1998).

Formal systems include elements of performance planning, ongoing performance communication and feedback, data gathering, observation and documentation, the appraisal interview, performance development, performance review, assessment, diagnosis and coaching.

For ease of reference the term 'performance management' will generally be used throughout the literature review to incorporate performance appraisal practice.

The first research question in this study sought information about PM practices and systems across the Australian public university sector. Of particular interest, therefore, were the formal practices as well as the informal practices that paralleled or supported formal systems, the purposes for which organisations used their formal system and key design system characteristics and elements they included.

Formal Versus Informal Practice

A robust PM culture will include a variety of interlocking formal and informal feedback processes. Thus many organisations recognise the necessity of ongoing dialogue between managers and staff about work performance and the benefits of providing feedback and recognition more immediately

than is possible through an annual performance appraisal interview. The motivational potential of ongoing feedback and 'in-kind' rewards to guide and coach staff seems to be universally under-rated by managers, as is the significance employees place upon it. A recent study of PM practices across the Australian Public Service (APS) incorporated data from staff climate surveys and interviews with key personnel. It concluded that informal rewards and recognition are very effective and often one of the things that employees seek most. In the APS,

these types of rewards include timely praise, thanks and recognition of achievements to individuals and teams, small presentations or gestures of appreciation from managers, provision of in-kind rewards such as time off in lieu, job-sharing, part time work, family rooms, work based childcare facilities, home-based work, provision of carer's leave and health programs, external awards, and recognition and additional recreation leave to employees who have been required to work long hours in order to meet performance targets (Management Advisory Committee 2001, pp. 46–47).

As well as the high value that staff place upon informal feedback and recognition practices, the use of small but visible rewards of this nature may make a substantial contribution towards the reinforcement of desired behaviours, clarification of work expectations and building healthy, functioning work relationships.

Organisations may choose to forego the expense of a formal system for the immediacy and flexibility of ongoing dialogue and feedback but the inherent problems of informal processes remain the same as those Lansbury described nearly two decades ago.

In the absence of a formal system many managers fail to provide any performance feedback, praise, recognition or guidance to employees regarding what is required of them or why they are being rewarded or punished for performance. This leads to a lack of clarity and transparency for individuals as well as organisational difficulty in monitoring performance and making legally defensible personnel decisions. Ultimately an organisation may find itself vulnerable to discrimination claims from disgruntled individuals, which represents an unacceptable risk management factor (1988, p. 48).

Formal systems of managing these relationships and rewards will often therefore assume equal or more importance due to the weakness or absence of the informal processes.

Most organisations use a formal appraisal interview as the cornerstone of their PM system, which may or may not be supplemented by other informal processes. It seems that even when performance appraisals fall short of their original intentions, they are still seen to serve the major purposes of providing employees with feedback and determining individual merit (Smith & Rupp 2004, p. 155).

Over the last ten years the proportion of Australian organisations that report usage of a formal performance appraisal system has increased, ‘from 85–86% in 1990 and 1995 (Nankervis & Penrose 1990, Nankervis & Leece 1997) compared with 96% in 2000’ (Compton 2005, p. 51). Possible reasons for this increase in usage include the need for organisations to improve employee productivity, a consequent rise in performance-based employment contracts facilitated by more flexible industrial relations conditions, and/or a more ‘strategic’ approach to PM by HR professionals and their senior managers (Compton 2005, p. 53). These are all factors referred to in the introductory chapter, as part of the changing landscape of Australian organisations, particularly those in the public sector.

Responsibility for Appraisals

Generally it is the employee’s direct supervisor or line manager who evaluates performance, as well as providing feedback to engender motivation and improve productivity (Bacal 1999; Bernardin 2003; Gilchrist 2003; Martey 2002).

Line management’s role in the appraisal process is extensively discussed in the literature although the concept of ‘line management’ in academia is a contentious and relatively new one resulting from ongoing reforms in higher education sectors. This is an issue that will be further discussed in subsequent sections on ‘performance management in higher educational environments.’

The line manager is usually the immediate manager of the employee, who maintains an ongoing supervisory relationship with the individual and possesses firsthand knowledge of the individual’s

performance (Compton 2005; Nankervis & Leece 1997), although other sources of relevant input may be obtained.

In large organisations, research from the US shows that it is the employee's immediate supervisor whose 'opinion provides one-half to three-fourths of the weight that determines the final appraisal' and who is thus the key evaluator of performance (Thomas & Bretz 1994, p. 31).

The greatest disadvantages of line manager appraisal lie in the potential for subjective ratings and discrimination if there is a personality (or other) conflict, or if the manager is unskilled in the appraisal and assessment process (Austin, Villanova, Kane & Bernardin 1991; Bernardin & Pence 1980; Stone 2002). Organisations generally attempt to ameliorate these problems by training managers, ensuring the employee has a right of appeal against any ratings made and/or requiring ratings to be reviewed by a third party, such as the manager's manager (Robbins 2000, p. 492).

Armstrong and Applebaum argue that human dynamics will inevitably affect the objectivity of on-the-job performance appraisals, so that they 'will inescapably be a mix of subjective judgements, reactions, emotions, flashbacks to experiences that reinforce or dispel, and all the expectations and anxieties that frame the appraisal session itself' (2003, p. 10).

Anyone with sufficient knowledge and understanding of the job responsibilities as well as sufficient opportunity to observe the employee in the performance of their duties may, however, be able to competently appraise performance, or contribute valuable perspectives to that appraisal. Team appraisal models and peer evaluation have been found to be particularly suited to organisations with flatter hierarchies and team-based or quality based cultures. Peer pressure can act as a powerful motivator to improve performance, and collegial familiarity with each other's performance may produce more accurate, reliable and valid feedback, thus increasing team members' commitment and productivity. McKirchy (1998) referred to the capacity for peer evaluation to build accountability amongst peers if problems around commitment to the appraisal process and the veracity of ratings could be managed.

Research indicates, however, that effective team and peer appraisals require a high level of trust among team members, a non-competitive reward system and frequent opportunities for colleagues to observe each other's performance (Stone 2002, p. 275).

Edwards and Ewen (1996) suggest that multi-source assessments can create stronger accountability and service to all stakeholders, as opposed to more traditional appraisal systems that tend to reinforce service to a single source (typically the employee's manager). So-called '360-degree' appraisal (McCarthy & Garavan 2001) and techniques such as the Balanced Scorecard approach (Kaplan & Norton 1992) broaden the focus and number of sources consulted for input in assessing individual performance. Their intent is to provide a more rounded set of perspectives on the individual's performance than can be achieved from a single source and to more comprehensively reflect the range of qualitative and quantitative dimensions that affect organisational outcomes (Kaplan & Norton 1996). By reducing the reliance on a single source or focus, such approaches may ameliorate the effects of possible idiosyncratic biases or personality clashes between manager and employee on performance ratings and provide a stronger bridge between organisational and individual employee goals.

Recent studies present conflicting views regarding the use of multiple data sources in evaluating employee performance, with some reporting a trend towards increased incidence (Bracken 1994; Commerce Clearing House 2000; Compton 2005; Yammarino & Atwater 1997) but others finding little evidence that it is used to any significant extent, nor that it significantly influences performance rating (Nankervis & Leece 1997; Thomas & Bretz 1994, p. 31). There is however a marked increase in the usage of self-assessment as a component of performance appraisal (Compton 2005; Thomas 1997, p. 52).

Purposes of Performance Management

The literature consistently indicates that the practice of combining too many objectives in the one PM scheme is contra-indicated and potentially 'sub-optimises functionality' (Bratton & Gold 1999; Commerce Clearing House 2000; Hendry, Woodward & Bradley 2000). The reliance upon one or two annual interviews to simultaneously achieve multiple purposes is problematic. 'It is

akin to asking carpenters to build a house with one tool that is concurrently a hammer, drill, screwdriver and saw' (Commerce Clearing House 2000, p. 3).

Simplicity and clarity around purpose are major factors influencing the credibility of a PM system and obtaining engagement or 'buy-in' from both the managers who must administer the system as well as staff members who participate in it. Complex systems, which cover too wide a range of issues, have been found to be unsuccessful during initial implementation (Management Advisory Committee 2001; University of Tasmania 2001). The danger is that in trying to do too much, nothing is done well. The clear message is that simpler systems equal success.

PM systems should evolve and mature over time, with the input and acceptance of participants. A common result of system reviews in the APS between successive cycles has been the introduction of modifications, with 63% of agencies simplifying assessment or rating systems 'as a result of feedback from managers and staff and operational experience from first to second agreements' (Management Advisory Committee 2001, p. 25).

It is often not so much that organisations use their systems for multiple purposes, but that they fail to explicitly specify what these purposes are, or that some purposes are antithetical to others. Here, Stone's (2002, pp. 269–274) grouping of the major purposes of PM systems is useful. His typology distinguishes between discrimination, reward, development and feedback.

Drawing on Stone's typology and the work of others, these groupings can be described as follows.

- **Discrimination:** Enabling managers to objectively differentiate between those who are contributing to the achievement of the organisation's strategic business objectives and those who are not and thus to deal with inadequate performance as well as differentially reward exemplars;
- **Reward:** Determining performance-based rewards that may include piecework payments, commissions, incentives, bonuses or other forms of merit pay plans and are 'at risk' rewards, based on the continual achievement of job goals (Bruce 1997, p. 6).

- Stone notes that linking employee contributions and rewards encourages performance-oriented behaviour and a performance-oriented culture whilst also ensuring that the organisation gets maximum value for its compensation dollar;
- **Development:** Fulfilling the manager's role responsibility to help each employee to continue to grow and develop by removing blocks to performance, building on employee strengths and over-coming weaknesses; and
- **Feedback:** Communicating clear, specific expectations and giving both positive and negative feedback that enables employees to know how they are doing (Tyler 1997, p. 57) although research evidence demonstrates that feedback norms are heavily influenced by national culture (Chow 1994; Whitehall 1992).

These four groupings reflect one of the most intractable divisions that are debated in the literature, between appraisal for formative or staff development purposes (development and feedback) and appraisal for summative, judgemental or administrative and evaluative purposes (discrimination and reward). This is an age-old dilemma that is seldom managed well by organisations. Thus many organisations whose mission statements emphasise the development and empowerment of their staff implement a PM system heavily based upon judgemental appraisal centred in an instrumental or 'hard' HRM philosophy. This signals an ambiguous message for staff regarding the way in which their contributions are recognised and the way in which they are valued by the organisation. It is relevant then to consider these antithetical purposes in more detail.

Formative Versus Summative Systems

Formative Appraisal for Development and Feedback

The primary purposes of 'formative' performance appraisal systems are the development of individual employees and the provision of feedback that enables them to continue to grow and advance personally and in their careers. Historically, formative appraisal has been more characteristic of professional and knowledge-based organisations where it is more acceptable to

individuals who largely manage their own performance (Chadbourne & Ingvarson 1998, p. 18; Lonsdale 1996).

Employees are encouraged to learn through setting 'stretch objectives,' taking on new areas of work or acquiring new capabilities that enable them to demonstrate additional skill or knowledge for the organisation's advantage. Research indicates that the use of 'stretch' goals—if they are accepted by the employee as constituting an achievable challenge within areas for which they are directly responsible—tends to result in better performance than if goals are perceived as 'soft' or too easy (Tully 1994). This is also seen to be mutually advantageous (enhancing an employee's personal competence and thus expanding their employability and career advancement) (Roberts 2002), although many employees in the writer's direct experience are cynical about this.

Most valuable, perhaps, is that developmentally oriented PM creates opportunities for dialogue between a manager and his or her staff about both individual and organisational objectives and needs.

All PM systems exist to provide feedback—whether it is predominantly about development and growth (formative) or about negotiating and assessing achievement of performance-based objectives—and thus are largely reliant upon the quality of skill in giving and receiving feedback.

The ability to listen to people, to interpret their responses accurately and sensitively and to react appropriately to their needs and demands is vital.

The importance of line management's role in providing ongoing feedback as an instrument to engender motivation and improve productivity is often discussed. 'A well integrated and aligned performance management system can still face major credibility problems if the process of feedback is not handled well by the immediate manager' (Management Advisory Committee 2001, p. 38). Thus, an international study of more than 8000 respondents found that nearly half felt their manager 'was not clear, frank or complete in telling them what they thought of their work performance' (Pickett 2000, p. 29). The researcher's observation and experience is that the 'average' manager's commitment to, and competence in providing direction and feedback to their staff in Australian organisations leaves considerable room for improvement. These aspects of a

PM system concerned with development and feedback are at odds with the purposes of discrimination and rewards.

Summative Appraisal for Discrimination and Reward

‘Summative’ or ‘administrative performance appraisal’ (Fisher et al. 1999) is based upon the rational business model of organisations and associated with judgemental appraisals. Proponents of summative systems argue that PM should measure and reward behaviours which support the organisation’s strategic objectives, (Armstrong & Baron 2000; Dunphy & Hackman 1988; McAfee & Champagne 1993) and that companies that link rewards and remuneration through their PM practices witness substantial gains. Typically this involves the negotiation of individual performance objectives aligned to organisational objectives or macro performance parameters that provide guidance about how to apply work efforts for the organisation’s benefit (Storey & Sisson 1993). The individual is assessed against these on an annual cycle basis.

Assessment decisions made during summative performance appraisals commonly cross-inform other key administrative decisions such as salary increases or bonuses, access to training, success in promotion, transfers, discipline, or termination of employment (Longenecker & Gioia 1988, p. 41) and are more typical of ‘hard’ HRM cultures. Summative PM systems thus serve as a major vehicle for employee acculturation and control (Townley 1992), assessing who has performed well and distributing valued organisational rewards (especially money) for employees who comply with desired behaviours.

However, many practitioners and researchers argue that it is naïve to expect individuals to be candid about their failure to reach specified objectives or results, and about the areas in which they require development when there are salary or advancement opportunities in the balance or where the potential for dismissal exists (Dunphy 1987; Lansbury 1988; Leung & Lonsdale 1996; Lonsdale & Varley 1995). Under these circumstances Anderson states that,

Appraisees will feel apprehensive about being appraised, and will behave defensively, appraisers will devote little time and effort to performance appraisal reducing it to a

meaningless ritualistic exercise, and top management in the organisation will fail to show enthusiasm for it, and to give it their whole hearted support (1993, p. 19).

Lewis points out that under these circumstances the relationship between appraisees and appraisers is fraught. Formative appraisal rests upon the 'presumption of joint determination to negotiate the personal, development-driven aspect of appraisal, and is qualitatively different from the contentious bargaining nature of the pay-related appraisal' (1993, p. 13). It seems evident that developmental feedback would be better facilitated where a relationship of mutual trust, negotiation and a problem solving orientation exists.

For this reason it is often argued that performance appraisals and pay discussions should be separate, so that employees can focus on the appraisal feedback that identifies what they have done well or need to improve, rather than on any monetary amount for which they may be eligible (Lansbury 1988). Splitting the two conversations is common organisational practice so that appraisal discussions are held at an initial meeting followed up by a shorter meeting to discuss pay at a later date.

Practice, however, indicates that very few organisations are prepared to introduce a PM system minus a performance-related pay link. In fact, survey evidence indicates that an increasing number of Australian companies use their systems for determining bonus and merit-based pay decisions (Commerce Clearing House 2000). One of the greatest problems for management practitioners seems to lie in their using PM systems to distinguish levels of employee performance so that they can equitably distribute differential rewards or apply sanctions.

Inadequate recognition of good performance is often a cause of concern and when 'employees feel that their companies are too lenient with poorly performing employees this acts as a disincentive to strive for high performance' (Austin et al. 1991; Lawson 1996). In an analysis of the performance ratings that managers provide,

what quickly becomes evident in the 80% of companies that have a scale with five or more levels, is that only the highest three levels are actually used. Clearly the norm has a

leniency bias where employees are rated at the top end of the scale, even in organizations that use forced distributions (Thomas & Bretz 1994, p. 32).

Inaccuracy of ratings has long been a dilemma identified in the appraisal literature (Austin et al. 1991; Bernardin, Hagan, Kane & Villanova 1998; Borman 1994) and the inability of an organisation to manage poor performance creates strong resentment amongst employees (Lawson 1996; Management Advisory Committee 2001). It is the author's direct experience that failure to address under-performance in workplaces across all sectors is one of the most persistent factors undermining the credibility of PM systems.

Corporate bureaucracies have historically adopted summative forms of appraisal. While evidence indicates that the link between pay and performance is complex, there are significant implementation problems with systems that combine summative and formative appraisal and often significant negative outcomes (Kessler 2000; Kohn 1993) with regard to internal competition amongst individuals and de-motivation of those who miss out on valued rewards.

Juggling the organisational goals of control, compliance and equitable access to merit-based rewards on the one hand, with employee expectations of professional development and personal aspirations on the other, has always been recognised as a difficult task, the possibility of which has been questioned by many writers (Bratton & Gold 1999; Hendry et al. 2000; Lansbury 1988; Simmons 2002). It has not, however, altered the inexorable move towards integrated PM systems. National survey evidence from the UK (Low 1995), the US (Thomas & Bretz 1994) and Australia (Commerce Clearing House 2000; Compton 2005) shows a variety of different approaches in performance appraisal schemes—some emphasising staff development, some emphasising accountability and performance with most including both. This raises the question of the training of appraisers.

Training

Pfeffer (1998) argues that many organisations do not have robust feedback processes and assessment criteria in place to support performance-related pay initiatives, nor do they adequately

train those to be involved, making performance-related pay fraught with serious problems and frequently ineffective.

In this respect, training is critical if managers are to develop the confidence and ability to provide feedback to staff that is candid and constructive, and if staff are genuinely empowered to question, challenge and contribute to the negotiation of the performance standards and individual objectives to which they will be held accountable.

Given the importance of effective feedback in PM there is an ongoing need for training to achieve high levels of competency. Skills to support summative appraisals should also include goal setting, communicating performance standards, observation of staff performance, coaching, giving feedback, negotiating system documentation, and conducting reviews.

In a recent Australian study of training for appraisers, 77% per cent of responding organisations indicated that they provided formal training for all their appraisers, predominantly using skill development workshops, although it was common for training to occur at system implementation with little or no follow up. Interactive methods, focused on conducting the interview and providing formal and ongoing informal feedback, using the appraisal forms, setting performance standards, and avoiding rating errors, have increased (Commerce Clearing House 2000); this is in line with overseas research (Mathis 2004; Thomas 1997). Didactic training (for example lectures and videos) received decreasing support (59% which is down from 84% five years ago) (Commerce Clearing House 2000). Typically the topics covered in appraiser training will also include an overview of system processes and timing, ongoing documentation of performance, when and how to discuss training and development goals, and practice in conducting the compensation review where there is a link to pay (Mathis 2004, p. 38).

Preparation of staff generally receives less attention in terms of the time allowed to provide training although the number of organisations training employees has increased (Commerce Clearing House 2000, p. 3). Given the inherent power imbalance between managers and staff that exists in any hierarchical workplace (which most still are), training for staff is critical if they are to receive feedback positively and provide constructive upward feedback. Training can also be used

to build managers' conceptual understanding and commitment to an overall PM framework.

Without this, 'managers may feel that performance appraisals take too long, are too complicated and do not serve any real purpose' (Management Advisory Committee 2001, p. 33).

Performance Management Lessons from History–Subjectivity to Objectivity?

The plethora of literature on performance appraisal and PM practice rivals that of the literature in the area of leadership although much of it focuses on the reliability and validity of performance instruments and ratings (Coens & Jenkins 2000; Margrave & Gordon 2001), rather than what makes a system acceptable to those who must use it.

A vast amount of literature has thus been generated but have we actually learnt anything about what works best? These are issues of fundamental interest to this researcher. Have systems become better designed for their purpose(s)? Are they more acceptable to their constituents?

Historically, the development of PM traces a path from essentially subjective judgments, made by managers about their employees' work contributions, to increasing efforts to introduce objective measures that employees participate in negotiating. Much of the early research focuses upon the accuracy of a supervisor's judgements that may affect validity and reliability of ratings. A number of the earlier and more subjective techniques for appraising the performance of employees include trait-based, rating and ranking systems that depend upon the individual manager's judgement and ability to separate performance assessments from his or her personal likes and dislikes. Because they are relatively simple to design and administer, trait-based, rating and ranking systems continue to be used, although their credibility is low and they provide only a crude mechanism for ensuring alignment and integration given the lack of measurement individuation and sophistication.

Nankervis and Leece (1997, p. 83) found that subjectivity continues to be one of the most commonly reported difficulties with performance appraisals, although a more recent survey of PM practice in Australian organisations reported 'little support for trait-based appraisals and a large decrease in the use of ranking and rating systems over the last ten to fifteen years' (Compton 2005, p. 52).

The dominant format for performance appraisal systems has long been an objective-based approach such as management by objectives (MBO), based upon one-to-one interviews between managers and their direct reports. MBO signalled a shift towards using appraisal to further key organisational goals whereby a number of key job objectives that the individual had to achieve were identified—sometimes unilaterally, sometimes by negotiation between manager and subordinate. Such systems are valued for their improved objectivity and focus on ‘measurable’ performance objectives that enable stronger alignment and integration with overall corporate goals than did preceding methods. Compton reports that contemporary PM practice in Australian organisations continues to incorporate core elements of MBO (2005, p. 52).

Issues of credibility continue to be problematic however, given the often cumbersome and extensive paperwork involved, the focus on a limited number of key objectives and the emphasis on managerial work only. Failure to take a broader organisational approach that focuses upon results *and* the means by which they are achieved gives rise to situations of managerial self-interest ‘where staff efforts are directed exclusively towards the managers’ performance objectives (and the rewards that this entailed for those managers) rather than what is necessarily of benefit for the whole business’ (Yager 2000, p. 13).

Results oriented performance appraisal systems were popularised in Australia during the 1980s and 1990s and introduced far greater focus on whole organisational outcomes and the means as well as the results achieved. Appraisal systems that included behaviourally anchored rating scales (BARS) or behavioural observation scales (BOS) became popular (Philpott & Sheppard 1992).

Performance was judged against scales that defined typical instances of behaviour (or behavioural ‘anchors’), developed for key dimensions of jobs. Such attempts were applauded for their extended emphasis on objectively rating performance, but the resulting systems were only as good as the committees of experts (appraising managers, job occupants and external industry experts) who developed the behavioural anchors and those who trained managers in their use. The author’s direct experience with these types of systems is that they were cost intensive and complex to design, and commonly seen as the domain of large organisations that could afford the cost overheads of a substantial HR Department. Line managers usually dismissed them as bureaucratic

systems owned and imposed by HR departments and of limited benefit to those left to implement them (Armstrong 1996). Despite this, 46% of Australian organisations continue to use formal or informal behaviourally based measures, and 20% employ BARS (Compton 2005, p. 49).

International trends towards economic rationalism during the late 80s and into the 90s saw an increase in the number of organisations that introduced a linkage between the outcomes of their annual appraisal processes and the allocation of organisational rewards, specifically pay. Evolving systems increasingly included a multiplicity of objectives and purposes and combined (or customised) more traditional appraisal techniques such as MBO and competencies: what Compton describes as 'hybridised' systems (2005, p. 50).

The increasing reliance on competencies (most commonly defined as knowledge, skills and attitudes) in PM systems, aims to broaden and strengthen the criteria for planning, reviewing and appraising individual performance. It has the less desirable effect of taking us full circle back to the difficulty of measurability when personality traits such as integrity, initiative or flexibility are introduced.

Several authors have highlighted the need for PM systems to demonstrate both procedural fairness (so that employees perceive the overall process as equitable), and distributive justice (so that employees perceive the allocation of associated rewards and recognition outcomes as equitable), if they are to be successful (Bryman, Haslam & Webb 1994; Gabris & Ihrke 2000). If staff are confident that a PM system is fair and equitable it can be a powerful tool for engaging their commitment towards individual objectives that contribute to enhanced organisational productivity.

The main points of the discussion thus far show that the experience of performance appraisal, and PM as the broader set of practices, has a chequered history in organisations.

Clarity of purpose remains a significant issue affecting the credibility of systems and their acceptability to both managers and staff. The commitment managers display in providing ongoing feedback and conducting regular reviews is identified as a key factor in successfully establishing a PM culture.

The most common type of system is still a version of the MBO approach based upon interviews between line managers and employees.

Managerial skill in providing feedback and managing performance is critical and training in these areas is an important requirement. Proponents of PM refer to its capacity to increase individual and organisational productivity and differentially reward performance but the issues of perceived subjectivity in ratings and inequity continue to be problematic.

It is relevant now to examine recent studies of PM in Australian organisations and the extent to which these answer the first two research questions.

Performance Management in Australian Organisations

Three recent studies of PM practice in Australian organisations provide a context for answering the first two questions in this research study.

- *What PM practices are currently in use in Australian public universities?*
- *What are the similarities in approach and what issues does PM raise?*

Two of the studies utilise mail (or e-mail survey instruments), cover a diverse range of industries and sectors and canvass opinion and feedback from both line managers and HR specialists. The third study uses a broader range of data generation techniques and provides a snapshot of current practices across the broad spectrum of the Australian public service (APS) as well as private companies. The latter study provides insights into how people in public sector environments experience and react to PM and is therefore of particular interest to this researcher. As noted previously, Australian universities still receive significant amounts of public funding and thus share many of the constraints and characteristics of government public sector organisations.

Information from each of the studies will be presented and discussed.

The first study by Commerce Clearing House (2000) involves ongoing research, conducted at five-year intervals, into the PM practices used in Australian and New Zealand organisations. Whilst a mail survey delimits the ability to probe or clarify responses, the survey results do provide a

longitudinal overview of system objectives, utilisation, design parameters and implementation issues in the cross-section of organisations surveyed. Respondents were asked to report the major purposes for which they used their PM systems. Table 2.1 outlines the survey findings for the 15 years from 1985 to 2000.

Table 2.1 Objectives of Performance Management Systems in Australian and New Zealand organisations, 1985–2000

Objective	Expressed as percentages			
	1985 N=473	1990 N=485	1995 N=556	2000 N=480
Determination of bonus /merit payment	59	64	60	66
Promotion decisions	59	57	42	42
Setting work objectives	55	55	77	72
Transfer decisions	31	29	18	17
Providing employees with self development information	84	80	78	86
Workforce, succession planning	50	40	43	47
Career planning	56	61	61	62
Identification of training needs	84	83	89	92
Legal purposes	21	27	30	37
Reviewing, updating job descriptions	29	27	34	39
Validation of human resources practices (such as selection, training effectiveness)	23	23	21	16
Communicating organisational objectives and values	n/a	n/a	n/a	10

Source: Commerce Clearing House (2000, p. 2).

Trends in the data gathered between 1985 and 2000 include the increasing reliance on systems to determine bonus and merit-based pay decisions, set work objectives, identify training and development needs, and provide legal data to support the organisational treatment of employees. There is a decreasing reliance on systems to determine promotions and transfers, and to validate

other human resource systems (for example, the effectiveness of selection decisions and training and development programs). Of overall interest here is the trend towards models that combine both summative and formative appraisal and are tailored for the specific organisational environment.

Data from a second Australian study of PM systems across industry and government organisations of all sizes and types strongly reinforces these trends (Compton 2005). The study was conducted by Curtin University and the Australian Catholic University in, association with the Australian Human Resources Institute (AHRI) with 992 AHRI members completing an e-survey posted on the AHRI website in mid 2003. Compton's survey included a large percentage (44%) of public sector, not-for-profit, education, health and community service agencies, although over half (53%) of the respondents came from non-unionised organisations, unlike most public universities in Australia, which are unionised. Collective bargaining techniques and union involvement heavily influence the resultant systems that universities achieve. Despite a significant difference in the way in which PM systems would be negotiated in the organisations Compton studied, compared with those in the present study, his findings are of interest. The survey instrument covered very similar areas to the CCH study. It included,

the aims of performance management, system type and design, strategic focus, and use of the Balanced Scorecard (BSC), performance requirements and communication methods, review techniques, associated HRM functions (for example salary review, promotions), and disclosure aspects, present and future trends in performance management, and appraisal training (Compton 2005, p. 46).

Particular focus was placed upon the use of the BSC to investigate whether an increasing sophistication in PM practice was emerging in Australian organisations.

Members of the AHRI are generally HR specialists, so survey respondents may not represent the views of line managers or affected employees. Nor is it possible to validate, challenge or explore the results obtained from a survey instrument. Survey findings and the practice trends identified do, however, provide useful information for this study.

Similar to the earlier CCH findings (2000), this survey found the most common purposes of PM systems were the identification of training and development needs (85%), and the retrospective appraisal of performance. It also confirmed a broad repertoire of aims and similar trends, including increased reliance on systems to determine salary decisions, align individual and organisational objectives, develop individual competencies, consider multiple data sources in evaluating employee performance (as evidenced by a growing use of the Balanced Score Card), and identify training and development needs (Compton 2005, p. 51).

The comparative figures between the two studies are remarkably similar regarding the use of PM to assist with career planning decisions (56% here versus 62% in the CCH survey) and to assess future potential/promotion prospects (47.9% here versus 42% in the CCH survey). On the possibility of PM being used as an agent of cultural change, Compton noted ‘the limited proportion of organisations using PM as a cultural change agent (28%) or as a device to retain high calibre staff (27.5%) which suggests that progress towards strategic performance management may be patchy’ (2005, p. 52).

Public Sector Performance Management

A third study was conducted by a panel of Public Sector Secretaries, Agency Heads and CEOs from the private sector, commissioned by the Federal Government. Their report presents a comprehensive report of PM practices in the Australian public service which sought to assess the overall effectiveness of approaches to managing and rewarding performance in APS agencies and to identify better practice principles (Management Advisory Committee 2001).

Panel members used a variety of data sources and methods including a literature review on best practice PM, a review of documentation, case study interviews and evidence from staff attitude surveys gathered directly from agencies. Interviews were undertaken, using a semi-structured interview format, with 20 public sector, 6 Government Business Enterprises or statutory authorities and 6 private sector executives (mostly CEOs) about their experience and reflections on PM. The interviews provide good insights from the leadership perspective about elements that seem to be effective and those that clearly are not.

Although not as rich a source of data as individual or group staff interviews, the research does access a large-scale cross-section of opinion and feedback from APS employees via the anonymous staff surveys; these may have the advantage of canvassing more candid views than those that would be given in a personal interview (Management Advisory Committee 2001). Overall the findings indicate that, whilst a diversity of appraisal methods has been used in the past, there is increasing convergence towards integrated PM practices that combine both formative and summative approaches.

Research consistently notes that performance-related pay (PRP) is an even more problematic link in the public sector than it is in the private sector, and is ‘widely reported as inequitable, divisive and destructive to team effort...requiring unrealistic precision in appraisal ratings’ (Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration 1993; Stone 2002; Taylor & Pierce 1999).

Comprehensive studies of the nature and scope of PRP introduced in Australian public sectors reveals that the design and implementation of these schemes is often poor, despite their growing popularity (Marshall 1998; O'Donnell 1998). This is line with UK based findings in a range of organisations. Questionnaire-based research with the UK Inland Revenue Service, local government, the National Health Service, the Employment Service and schools (for head teachers) elicited very similar conclusions regarding PRP. According to the respondents, it ‘had an extremely limited impact on employee motivation and a number of negative impacts, such as deleterious effects on co-operation and team-working and engendering divisiveness.’ Farrell and Morris (2001, p. 28) cite a number of authors who note that these effects were confirmed not only by employees who were appraised but also by appraising managers (see Dowling & Richardson 1997; Heery 1988; Marsden & French 1998; Marsden and Richardson 1994.).

International research (Brown, Deakin, Hudson, Pratten & Ryan 1998; Guest & Hoque 1996; Heery 1997a; Kessler & Purcell 1995; Metcalf, Hansen & Charlwood 2000) highlights additional reasons for traditional union resistance to PRP, such as work intensification and managerial control, erosion of collectivism, union exclusion and the rise of individual contracts (Hanley & Nguyen 2005, p. 145).

Despite these findings, evidence from the Australian survey indicates a high correlation with the findings of Compton and CCH and shows that ‘virtually all agencies link performance to remuneration, consistent with the Government policy that performance should guide salary movement’ (Management Advisory Committee 2001, p. 41).

In line with contingent approaches to HRM (and PM as a subset of this) the report finds that what works best in a particular organisation will depend on a range of factors, described as leadership, nature of the business and culture, organisational history, the maturity of systems and the workplace relation’s climate (Management Advisory Committee 2001, p. 9). It also notes that staff surveys in public sector agencies consistently show that,

staff become cynical and resentful when poor performance is not dealt with. One issue, which APS CEOs are now confronting, is the issue of managers who are high achievers in relation to delivery of outputs but poor at dealing with their colleagues or staff in behavioural terms (2001, p. 28).

The survey additionally identified a number of factors that can work against the effective, management of poor performance, including managerial reluctance to take the issue on, often due to the overly cumbersome procedures for handling under-performance established through agency enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA).

Industrial Climate may influence both the nature of the performance management system and the pace of implementation. Collective agreements, particularly those negotiated with the unions, tend to be more prescriptive, wary of performance pay and strong in grievance procedures. Agreements with individuals are more likely to incorporate recognition of performance in salary increases or bonuses (2001, p. 24).

Creating a system of shared values, expectations and beliefs is essential to the success of any appraisal processes and unions have consistently identified consistency, transparency and mutuality as the overarching principles required to ensure the effectiveness of a PM system (Creelman 1995). If employees are to embrace PM as a useful activity they must value the

proposed rewards it offers and understand the link between their daily work and their impact on the bottom line (Smith & Rupp 2004, pp. 154).

Summary

Recent research with Australian organisations indicates an increasing convergence towards integrated models of PM that combine both formative and summative approaches. Organisations most commonly use their formal systems to set work objectives, identify training and development needs, retrospectively appraise performance and assist with decisions regarding career planning, promotion and salary or bonus determinations.

This is consistent with international research findings and is also reflected in the practices of public sector organisations, despite the unpopularity of performance-related pay. Traditional union resistance to PRP is a continuing factor in the public sector where issues of system design and ‘cultural fit’ are often highlighted as contributing to poor engagement with formal systems.

Performance Management in Educational Environments

Literature regarding performance appraisal and PM in higher education environments is not extensive considering the amount of recent activity in this area in the tertiary sector.

The role of the academic staff member is, however, highly comparable to the school teacher’s in that both have primary responsibilities for teaching, administration, leadership and community service.

A significant body of research into performance appraisal and teacher evaluation practices for teachers in both primary and secondary school systems has come from studies in the US, UK and Australia (Ballou & Podgursky 1993; Barber, Evans & Johnson 1995; Forrester, Forrester & Hassard 2000; Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools 1996; Kleinhenz, Ingvarson & Chadbourne 2002; Lokan & McKenzie 1989; Neill 1999; Wragg, Wikeley, Wragg & Haynes 1996). This research forms the basis for this section of the literature review.

Performance Management in School Environments

Like all organisations, schools have faced significant changes that have forced transition to greater accountability and scrutiny of their internal operating environments, with concomitant emphasis on teachers to deliver quality educational services.

Although the difficulty of transposing one organisation's PM practices to another organisation is commonly noted (Anderson et al. 2002; Management Advisory Committee 2001; Rees & Rodley 1995; Townley 1992), systems and policies in educational environments have increasingly borrowed the terminology and processes deployed in corporate environments.

If the basic prerequisite of a school's PM system is improved teacher skill and quality, contemporary studies question how well systems that replicate corporate models serve the school community. PM systems that model hierarchical, bureaucratic and managerial control ignore the findings from a substantial body of literature into teacher evaluation that suggests these do not work (Kleinhenz et al. 2002, p. 9).

Informal Performance Management Practice

Very little literature on informal PM practice in school environments is available although norms around peer review in the teaching profession suggest that these may be highly valued (Clandinin, Kennedy & LaRoque 1996; Down, Chadbourne & Hogan 2000; Smith & Piele 1997; Smyth 1996).

Opportunity to provide meaningful feedback—acknowledged as one of the most powerful and valued informal rewards—on an ongoing basis is largely restricted by the amount of time teachers spend working solo in a classroom with students. Where team teaching arrangements exist it is logical to assume that the source of feedback is more likely to be from the teaching colleague or peer than from a senior teacher or principal.

System Design

A diversity of terminology is used in school environments for formal PM systems, although the actual processes follow a fairly standard format similar to those in corporate environments. They focus upon preparatory self-reflection by the appraisee, a one-to-one performance planning meeting between the teacher and a ‘manager’, ongoing feedback and support (which usually includes a formal mid-cycle review), and an end of cycle review meeting to discuss performance achievements and further development (Ingvarson & Chadbourne 1997; Kleinhenz et al. 2002; Wragg et al. 1996).

Line Management in Schools

‘Line management’ is a problematic concept in schools, which are characterised by relatively flat structures, collegial and team-based norms and affiliation of staff to professional codes of practice as much as to affiliation with an employer. Research studies consistently show that hierarchically based models of appraisal are unpopular with teachers, who report,

a strong sense of apprehension about the consequences of line management in the performance management process and a lack of trust that their principal has the skill and good intentions to conduct an honest assessment of their performance for developmental as opposed to self-aggrandisement or political reasons (Down, Hogan & Chadbourne 1999, pp. 21-22).

Marshall’s (1995) review of studies into the effectiveness of teacher appraisal surmised that the adoption of hierarchical models resulted in compliance rather than effectiveness becoming the standard for performance. Rather than improving communication between different levels in the organisational hierarchy, he suggested that such approaches had little impact on the quality of teaching.

Empirical research from the US into the area of principal evaluation of teacher performance and overall merit illustrates a poor track record where lack of rating accuracy, skill, or respect for the outcomes leads experienced teachers to discount the practice as something to be endured rather

than assisting them to improve their effectiveness (Johnson 1990; Peterson 2000; Wise, Darling-Hammond, McLaughlin & Bernstein 1984).

Much of the push for summative appraisal and moves towards more rigorous and integrated systems of PM in schools has come from exogenous government reforms that have stipulated higher 'accountability' and 'improved quality of teaching' as an agenda.

Comprehensive PM systems that are hierarchically based and combine both formative and summative purposes are a relatively recent development in schools.

Purposes

The tension between PM systems for formative versus summative purposes discussed earlier in this chapter – and the dilemmas that accompany it – is acutely evident in educational organisations. Most contemporary PM models in schools espouse both purposes arguing that formative appraisal provides opportunity for self-reflection and review of teaching practice, leading to professional development, enhanced classroom competence and career development. On the other hand summative appraisal and evaluation 'serves the functions of making teachers accountable for achieving high standards, enhancing quality, and providing an equitable system for allocating rewards, including performance-based pay' (Ingvarson & Chadbourne 1994, pp. 12-13).

Findings from the literature consistently show, however, that current PM practice in schools does little to articulate the link between the annual review process and improved quality of teachers' work and is therefore not valued by teachers (Ingvarson 1987; Ingvarson & Chadbourne 1994; Kleinhenz et al. 2002; Peterson 2000).

Peterson argues that 70 years of well-designed empirical research on teacher evaluation show that current practices do not improve teachers' performance or accurately assess what happens in classrooms. Administrator reports do not

increase good teachers' confidence or reassure the public about teacher quality, identify innovative teaching so that it can be adopted by other teachers and used in teacher education programs, or reward exemplary teachers (2000, p. 19).

Failure to adequately address this question of purpose is a major stumbling block to teachers' engagement with PM practices and is thematic throughout the literature on PM in educational environments.

US Experience

In the US teacher appraisal has long been the norm with teachers 'accustomed to pencil and paper tests of their competence and (unpopular and ineffective) classroom visitations by principals' (Kleinhenz et al. 2002, p. 4). Following the broader practice trend, more recent PM systems in educational organisations increasingly utilise multiple data sources such as portfolios, and peer evaluation (Mannatt 1997; Stronge 1997).

US researchers have shown that teachers regularly highlight deficiencies in due process as a significant failing of PM systems. Elements such as compliance with statutes and collective bargaining agreements, and the clear articulation of job-related performance standards and rating scales as the basis for differentiating levels of performance, have been identified as critical (Frase 1993; Tucker & Kindred 1997).

Despite evidence from the US that peer appraisal and feedback against well-articulated standards more than fulfill the above due process requirements and are highly valued and acceptable to teachers (Peterson 2000, p. 122), alternatives to hierarchical appraisal systems remain uncommon in schools in Western education systems.

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), for example, utilises peer assessors in an assessment centre approach to process applications for national certification as a 'highly accomplished' teacher (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards 1989).

If the expressed aim of teacher appraisal is to 'improve the quality of teaching,' then it is axiomatic that some way of clearly defining the elements of teaching and the required levels of professional performance must be articulated. Aspects of measurement have already been highlighted in the general literature review as problematic, especially where more qualitative types of work tasks are concerned. Central to the issue of system credibility is that those using the PM

system must perceive it as defining, measuring and rewarding meaningful aspects of individual performance.

Comprehensive frameworks of teaching standards have been researched, developed and are widely used in the US, such as the standards of the NBPTS (1989), INTASC (Interstate New Teacher Assessment And Support Consortium 1992) and Praxis III (Dwyer 1994). In each case, these standards are focused on the actual tasks and practice of classroom teaching—what Elmore defines as the ‘technical core’ of teaching—such as knowledge of subjects, knowledge of students and knowledge of how to facilitate students’ learning (Elmore 2002). Furthermore, the precise evidence requirements, by which teachers and assessors judge achievement against different levels of performance, are explained, so that the standards become practical tools for improvement, as opposed to theoretical statements only. Not only do these standards provide a systematic basis upon which to assess current teacher performance but also a basis by which targeted professional development can be identified, thus directly contributing to improved teaching quality.

Most states in the US now base their local standards for teacher licensure on the INTASC or Praxis models. Standards are research-based and were extensively field-tested before being adopted. Teachers are required to demonstrate, through a range of task-based evidence, that they meet the standards. The tasks they perform are examples of normal aspects of teachers’ work, not artificial ‘add ons.’ As such, they provide a ‘natural harvest’ of evidence such as students’ work samples and teaching artefacts that can be used for assessing teacher performance (Kleinhenz et al. 2002, p. 8).

The issue of appraiser training is again noted as critical if there is to be confidence in the skill and intent of those making performance assessments as well as confidence that the PM system is capable of delivering equitable rewards to participants.

It is vitally important to adequately train evaluators to foster a climate of fairness, equity and confidence in evaluator reliability. Not only does this protect an organisation from potential litigation but competent evaluators should provide a strong basis for inter-rater

reliability—which is the first step toward changing teacher attitudes and perceptions vis-à-vis administrator skills (De Sander 2000, p. 312).

Public demand for educational reform aimed at increasing the productivity and accountability of teachers has seen increased impetus towards summative forms of appraisal, including merit-based pay.

Drawing on a survey of schools and staffing Ballou and Podgursky concluded that US school experience with such systems suggests that teachers view them as ‘unfair and divisive’ (1993, p. 52), setting up competition in previously collegial systems and de-motivating those who are unsuccessful in receiving additional pay. Teacher opposition was identified as a fundamental reason for the failure of merit pay plans in educational organisations (Ballou & Podgursky 1993, p. 50).

Empirical evidence shows that administrators, responsible for the implementation and oversight of merit pay plans in education, find such summative forms of PM, resource intensive, time consuming and burdensome (Alexander & Mannatt 1992; Sadowski & Miller 1996; Spillane 1992), particularly where meeting the legal prerequisites of fairness and equity in evaluation procedures, standards and criteria are concerned (De Sander 2000, p. 307). For the most part, teachers’ unions in the US have resisted efforts to institute merit pay systems viewing them as ‘an unravelling of job protection and unproven and incapable of fairly judging which teachers should earn raises’ (Drevitch 2006, p. 21).

UK Experience

In the UK, appraisal was part of a larger push for public accountability in the 1980s and 1990s and became a statutory requirement in 1986 when England's National Scheme of School Teacher Appraisal (NSSTA) became policy. Its expressed aims were to,

improve the quality of teaching and learning through enhancing the professional development of teachers and promoting the better management of schools (Barber et al. 1995, p. i).

It seems evident from the slow implementation of this national policy by schools that considerable confusion around expectations and purpose existed. This may also have represented avoidance and resistance by teachers to the notion of appraisal, given historical animosity from teacher unions. Despite the statutory requirement, it was not until 1992–1994 that all British primary and secondary schools actually implemented a form of hierarchical appraisal of teaching staff.

Wragg and colleagues undertook a two-year national research project focused on the implementation of the NSSTA from the multiple perspectives and levels of all those concerned: local educational authorities mandated with 'officially' translating national policies to the local level, school management, appraisers and appraisees (Wragg et al. 1996). Their findings are of particular interest for this study given the national scope of the project and the similarity in the way appraisal policy has been nationally mandated by the Australian Federal government for universities, and funding arrangements made contingent upon its implementation.

Additionally Wragg and his co-researchers sought the opinions and reactions of 'managers' and 'employees' in an educational environment to PM practices that affected them. These researchers used multiple data generation methods, (a review of primary source literature, questionnaires, interviews, and direct observation) over three successive strands of research to produce one of the few large-scale studies of appraisal, which was country-wide. The sample size, representation and use of triangulation provide rich insights to the appraisal experience of the UK's teaching population.

The first strand of Wragg and colleagues' research focused on all local education authorities (LEAs) responsible for articulating national policy at the local level, including recommendations about training to support the new system. Their analysis of documents showed how the national policy was 'officially' translated at the local level and indicated that a great variety of approaches were used. Some LEAs provided prescriptive instructions about creating a collegiate appraisal relationship, training and methods of providing feedback, and others left it entirely to the discretion of the individual school authorities. Subsequent case studies confirmed the filtering effect that various levels of government may have on communicating policy directives.

National initiatives often suffer the effect of Chinese whispers, as regulations, circulars and guidelines are filtered, interpreted and wittingly or unwittingly distorted down a complex communication matrix to individual teachers (Wragg et al. 1996, p. 123).

This analysis and case study evidence is consistent with anecdotal evidence reported by forum participants about appraisal implementation processes in Australian universities (Dickensen 1997), where a similar diversity of approaches has been noted. Whilst this allows an organisation to tailor aspects of its PM practices to suit its specific internal and external operating environments, it may also dissipate or distort the original policy intent. This is critical as it goes to the heart of a significant appraisal dilemma discussed earlier: clear communication of appraisal purpose.

The second and third strands of Wragg and colleagues' studies sought responses on what appraisers and appraisees actually did and thought, how they perceived the process and its outcomes and the extent to which they followed the regulations and procedures recommended by the LEAs. Study two used a multi-item questionnaire mailed to a representative sample of primary and secondary school appraisers and appraisees which focused on how the appraisal process was implemented.

Appraisers were asked questions about their teaching experience, position held, training received, observation methods used, role, feedback and targets set. Appraisees were asked about their teaching experience, position held, how their appraiser was chosen, reaction to

being observed, focus of appraisal, feedback, targets set and what they saw as the benefits and the perceived effects on classroom practice (Wragg et al. 1996, p. 61).

Study three used intensive case studies over the two-year period to add detail and depth to the survey answers. Twenty-nine teachers (including appraisers, appraisees and principals) from primary and secondary schools of different types, sizes and locality, in both urban and rural settings, acted as voluntary subjects. They participated in semi-structured interviews and were observed in actual appraisal interactions on three occasions with researchers as non-participant observers in the classroom.

Voluntary subjects may have provided a different perspective on appraisal than the broader population of teachers and it is possible that the presence of observers may have had an effect on their classroom performance. The use of interviews allowed researchers to explore these factors and no data was presented to suggest that they had a significant impact on the participants.

Despite the diversity of LEA instructions and support, most schools followed a fairly standard appraisal format: initial meeting, some form of self-appraisal, information gathering, observation, feedback and/or an appraisal interview, a summary statement of the interview, target setting and a review meeting usually over a one-term timeframe (Wragg et al. 1996, p. 45).

Most schools provided some form of training for appraisers although many did not train appraisees. Comments about the inadequacy of training to support the process, under-resourcing, or time to analyse experiences and learn from them were common.

The majority of teachers endorsed the NSSTA appraisal processes but wanted the major outcomes to be enhanced teaching performance and an opportunity to identify the specific skills and experiences they would need to develop in order to gain promotion and further their career. Only 50% believed it made any difference to their effectiveness as a teacher.

The perceptions of 'managers' (principals and appraisers) about the appraisal implementation and execution differed from those of teachers (appraisees). Appraisers saw it as,

a highly organised and well thought out procedure in which all staff had been fully consulted, whilst appraisees experienced it as confused as to actual responsibilities, roles, stages and aspects (Wragg et al. 1996, p. 116).

Time, money and energy were all consistently and frequently mentioned as working against the process of improvement.

Appraisal brought together the members of a large community, already with conflicting pressures on their time, energy and priority setting, and placed them into another web of complex interpersonal relationships, from which they saw no clear benefit (1996, p. 117).

Clearly the appraisal processes had limited success against its expressed intention of 'improving the quality of teaching and learning' given that only 50% reported any movement in this direction!

Further evaluation of the implementation and impact of the NSSTA are consistent with Wragg and colleagues' research. Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools reported that appraisal of teachers appeared to have little impact on teaching prowess and too little integration with other key aspects of school life (Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools 1996, p. 20). This report, based upon 331 school visits by Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) between 1991 and 1996, involved both observations of classroom practice and discussions with teachers. Its findings show an even bleaker rate of success against the expressed policy intention in that only 20% of teachers were assessed as having improved the quality of their teaching practice.

Subsequent reforms introducing guidelines for PRP elements and requiring head teachers and external reviewers to evaluate teachers' performance proved largely unsuccessful. Head teachers expressed extreme ambivalence about the guidelines (Marsden & French 1998), and were highly critical of the training provided to conduct the assessments (Chamberlin, Wragg, Haynes & Wragg 2001, p. 2). Furthermore a survey of the success rate of applicants (Chamberlin et al. 2001) showed that 97% were successful in obtaining performance-related pay amounts suggesting as 'many observers commented, it would have been easier and cheaper to have simply given everyone a pay rise' (Kleinhenz et al. 2002).

Other attitude surveys of teachers in UK primary schools confirmed these findings and indicated apprehension of the potentially divisive effects of PRP, ignorance of the scheme, apprehension of equity and measurement issues, concerns about possible bias and victimisation by head teachers and a view of PRP as a further attack on the professional autonomy of teachers (Forrester 2000; Forrester et al. 2000; Haynes, Wragg, Wragg & Chamberlin 2001; Neill 1999).

Experiences of performance management in Australian Schools

Historically, appraisal in Australian schools has swung between highly prescriptive inspectorial systems, where teachers were assessed annually on classroom performance, and voluntary systems heavily skewed towards formative or development purposes. For a considerable time teachers were not subject to any form of evaluation.

Pressure from teacher unions brought an end to Inspectorial systems during the 1960s and 1970s, with the result that after gaining tenure at about the age of 23, a teacher who did not apply for promotion or precipitate disciplinary action could continue teaching for the next 40 years without being formally evaluated (Ingvarson & Chadbourne 1997, p. 45).

PM systems are thus still relatively new in Australian schools, although Ingvarson and Chadbourne (1997, p. 45) describe the

push for increased productivity of learning, calls for tighter processes of accountability, and more educational re-structuring based on a public service version of corporate management that has come to dominate the Australian school system.

There are no Australian evaluation studies of teacher appraisal of the same magnitude or comprehensiveness as those based on England's nationally based school education system, although a number of State based studies have been undertaken and one recent study overviews PM programs and processes in schools from all Australian States (Kleinhenz et al. 2002).

The Victorian Professional Recognition Program (VPRP) and Western Australia's Performance Management Framework (PMF) are two examples of compulsory PM systems for teachers

introduced by State Education Departments. The VPRP introduced a new career structure and PM system that included performance-related pay (PRP) components. Its aims were

more rigorous methods of teacher evaluation, greater recognition for good teaching and the enhancement of teamwork, trust, accountability and morale (Chadbourne & Ingvarson 1998, p. 62).

Similar to the UK system where head teachers assumed responsibility for assessing teacher performance, the VPRP created a three-tiered structure that required 'leading teachers' and principals to act as 'appraisers,' thus introducing a strong sense of hierarchical line management into schools that had hitherto operated with flatter, collegial and team-based structures. The hierarchical aspect was additionally reinforced by the fact that senior staff (leading teachers and principals) were able to access bonuses that were not available to the bulk of teachers. Further salary increments for Level 1 teachers (the most junior grade) were made contingent on successful performance, as judged at an annual performance review. In its first year of operation the system was optional, with the inducement for staff to participate being an immediate pay rise, although transfer to the system was conditional on teachers leaving the existing industrial award. Unions therefore viewed the VPRP as a cynical exercise designed to weaken their membership base. By the second year, participation was made compulsory.

Although the VPRP has now been superseded, the hierarchical nature of PM in government and non-government Victorian schools has been largely retained, with teacher evaluation remaining the ultimate responsibility of school principals.

The aims of the PMF system in Western Australian, similarly combined both summative and formative elements and such aims are well summarised in the official journal of the Education Department of Western Australia (EDWA). It described PM as,

providing the most appropriate environment whereby staff develop clarity about the role they are employed to undertake, access the support they need to undertake their required duties, look for ways that they can use feedback from a range of resources to enhance

their performance and participate in professional development activities to help them to find better ways of doing their job (Education Department of Western Australia 1997).

This is common PM terminology, as attested to by previous definitions and descriptions offered in this chapter, and it reinforces the stated goals of PM as those of increased efficiency, productivity and accountability, along with the capacity to deliver individual gains in the form of targeted professional development. This is, however, ‘a disarming way of framing policy that appeals to several familiar discourses and renders performance management unproblematic, representing teachers’ fears and insecurities as unfounded and irrational’ (Down et al. 1999, p. 17).

The researcher personally worked with many teachers in primary and secondary schools that were required to introduce the VPRP during 1995–1996 as a mandatory element of the government’s *School’s of the Future* imperative. Her anecdotal evidence concurs with the findings of Down and his colleagues on Western Australia’s PMF: that whatever the official rhetoric, ‘teachers were sceptical about the potential of performance management to make a difference to teaching and learning and remained suspicious of the real motives behind its implementation’ (1999, p. 13).

Ingvarson and Chadbourne (1997) investigated whether the introduction of government mandated PM systems for Victorian and Western Australian teachers led to enhanced teaching skills that contributed to better student outcomes. They conducted both a review of policy documents from Victoria and Western Australia and interviews with 21 teaching staff (drawn from different hierarchical levels and including both appraisers and appraisees) in four Victorian government secondary schools.

Chadbourne and Ingvarson (1998), carried out related research expanding the investigation into the VPRP to gain an indication of the extent to which teachers and principals in other schools held the same views as those expressed in interviews in the earlier study. Interview themes formed the basis of a questionnaire mailed to a larger sample of teachers and principals in 20 Victorian metropolitan secondary schools with all accredited leading teachers, principals and assistant

principals also invited to complete the questionnaire. The response rate was more than 70% (350 questionnaires).

Chadbourne and Ingvarson described their research as preliminary and exploratory and noted several study limitations given that it was conducted towards the end of the first year of system implementation at a time when,

agreement had yet to be reached between the state government and the unions over what evidence had to be provided for annual reviews and schools varied considerably in the seriousness and skill with which the process was conducted (1998, p. 70).

Although it is thus a snapshot of the early implementation stage of a new statewide PM system and is limited to secondary schools, their main findings are remarkably consistent with the findings from the international studies cited earlier.

Ingvarson and Chadbourne (1997) found that official policy documents on the VPRP provided some guidelines for developing performance targets and professional development to aid in their achievement, but in the main these standards were fairly generic. Many teachers were not averse to the VPRP as a communication device for engendering greater accountability and focus upon professional development but wanted it to contribute towards enhanced teaching performance.

They saw it as

making all teachers accountable for undertaking periodic reviews of their practice;
encouraging teachers to reflect on their professional abilities and clarify career goals;
requiring teachers to develop professional development plans; providing teachers with
feedback on their work; and keeping line managers informed about staff contributions to
charter goals and priorities (Ingvarson & Chadbourne 1997, p. 61).

Interviews revealed that teachers believed the PM system did little to clarify what they were supposed to do or actively contributed to their professional development. Teachers indicated that they viewed PM as lacking the capacity to provide them with an idea of what to get better at, as an ineffectual form of professional development, not validly assessing the quality of their work,

and offering inadequate incentives to improve their performance (Ingvarson & Chadbourne 1997).

Thus the system, as teachers perceived it, met neither formative nor summative goals. Furthermore, teachers perceived it as inequitably distributing rewards to those in leading teacher and principal roles who took on additional coordinating, managerial and administrative skills rather than classroom teaching. Given that higher performance-related pay was available to those who took on these duties, teachers felt that ‘good teaching is not valued or given high priority and that the school pay system progressively rewards staff who teach less and less’ (1997, p. 51).

Findings from the second study conducted by Chadbourne and Ingvarson (1998) substantially reinforced interview findings, with 75% of the 350 respondents surveyed believing the VPRP would have little positive impact on their own teaching and had lowered morale amongst teachers. Most teachers described the system as ‘no different to previous career structures’ in its failure to provide meaningful rewards and incentives (1998, p. 78).

Almost 70% of teachers believed the VPRP standards lacked the power to differentiate between levels of performance of those in their subject area. The problem of what is being measured and evaluated is a common one referred to earlier in this chapter, and is key to considerations of equity, fairness and system credibility.

Over 90% of all respondents perceived PM as ineffectual in providing viable career paths (including salary and promotional opportunities) for teachers who wished to continue teaching, as opposed to taking on managerial or administrative duties. Given that ‘greater recognition for good teaching’ was an espoused policy aim of the VPRP, this is an extremely poor result.

Similar to their British and US counterparts, there were major differences between teacher and principal perceptions, with teachers reporting a strong sense that the VPRP had driven a wedge between teachers and those in school managerial roles, who had access to bonus systems that teachers did not (Chadbourne & Ingvarson 1998, p. 74).

The responses from leading teachers indicated additional problems. Far from improving teaching practice, morale, collaboration or openness of communication, they described the time required

for PM activities as taking time away from the classroom and thus ‘exacerbating workload demands and forcing them to cut corners so that they could perform managerial duties’ (1998, pp. 71–72). The burden of administrative work required to fuel the system was regarded as an onerous ‘add-on’ for which leading teachers were not properly recompensed and key tasks such as classroom preparation and collaboration with peers suffered accordingly.

Overall the VPRP was seen as ineffective in improving teaching practice, failing to offer viable career paths for teachers to remain in a teaching role, inequitable in its allocation of performance-related pay and divisive in its effects on relationships within schools. It was discontinued following an industrial agreement between the Victorian Department of Education and Training (DE&T) and the Australian Education Union (AEU) in 2001 and replaced by the Staff Performance and Development system (Department of Education, Employment & Training 2001).

A major difference of the new system was the inclusion of centrally developed teaching standards against which performance is planned and assessed. Generic standards developed by the Department of Education, Employment and Training provided different sets of standards for teachers at different career stages, from a beginning teacher to a highly skilled professional (Department of Education, Employment & Training 2001). The process otherwise aligns closely with standard PM practice in that it is hierarchical, follows an annualised cycle and includes both formative and summative appraisal elements.

The government mandated ‘cycle’ prescribed a first planning meeting between the teacher and the reviewer (during which the review processes, the teaching standards, expectations of professional development and performance are explained), a mid-cycle review meeting, and an end of cycle assessment of the teacher against each standard. All standards must be met for a teacher to achieve a salary increment and principals are empowered to instigate disciplinary action, including dismissal, if a teacher’s performance is unsatisfactory.

Three recent studies of PM in Australian schools are of great interest to this researcher as they use the direct accounts of teachers to investigate how the official purposes of PM are understood

and how appraisal is actually carried out and experienced within school settings: these are studies by Down and his colleagues (1999, 2000) and the work of Kleinhenz and co-researchers (2002).

Down and colleagues' 1999 study reports the accounts from two focus group meetings with nine experienced classroom teachers on the introduction by the Education Department of Western Australia of its PM system. This is a small sample and no detail of the nine teachers is provided as to how they were selected or the type and number of schools represented. Most of the results are, however, strongly correlated with previous research findings, and provide insight into how knowledge workers habituate to mandatory PM systems and learn to productively work within them, given the two-year longitudinal study.

Overall the teachers in this study viewed PM even more negatively than previous studies would indicate and

feared its impact upon trust, collegiality and respect amongst teachers. Their feelings about it were shaped profoundly by past experiences of appraisal, in which most of them had felt anxious and powerless to some degree, and many felt that they had been judged falsely or inadequately (Down et al. 1999, p. 20).

This echoes findings from the APS study that individuals and organisations will be profoundly influenced by their past history of experiences with PM and related initiatives (Management Advisory Committee 2001, pp. 23-24) and reinforces the idea that overcoming teachers' negative attitudes about evaluation and winning their trust, is one of the greatest challenges and a necessary precondition for any successful evaluation system (McLaughlin & Pfeiffer 1988, p. 5).

Consistent with previous research findings in Down and colleagues' 1999 study, these teachers were not opposed to increased accountability but wanted feedback and support to be based on a professional, rather than a managerial, model of teacher review and development. They viewed the system as a government imposed means of engendering accountability rather than a means by which their practice could be improved which lead to them

playing the game as one form of resistance to the performance management regime and doing what was minimally required to complete paperwork, refusing to attend interviews or more commonly simply ignoring it (Down et al. 2000, pp. 21–22).

Twelve months after the initial interviews the same group of nine teachers were interviewed about their ongoing concerns, experience and reactions to the PM system and whether they believed it made any difference to their teaching. Interviewees reported a marked lessening of anxiety about the system by the second year, largely because they had been able to marginalise, ignore or control it.

A major reason why teachers were less concerned about performance management than they had been at the outset was that, in many instances, it was not happening, happening only superficially, or having no appreciable effect (Down et al. 2000, p. 217).

This reinforces previously cited research on the importance of achieving teacher commitment to any form of PM if it is to be successfully implemented (Chadbourne & Ingvarson 1998; Johnson 1990; Kleinhenz et al. 2002; Peterson 2000).

Of interest is the way in which the teachers who were most sceptical and mistrustful of their school executive undertook training so that they could understand the system and work within it to control any potential impact on them. Other teachers used the system to gain access to resources such as professional development that they would not otherwise have had.

Within one year this group of teachers had adopted much of the language of the system although Down and colleagues (2000) question whether this signalled an internalisation of the norms of PM practice as much as a means of ‘neutralising’ it or rendering it harmless.

Systemic control is never total, and workers often demonstrate considerable skill and ingenuity in locating the gaps and loopholes which enable them to maintain a sense of autonomy and control over their work (2000, p. 216).

Within one year of implementation these teachers had moved from the position of being fearful and anxious about the PM system to perceiving it as basically ineffectual and having little impact upon them.

A third study, by Kleinhenz and co-researchers (2002) of one Victorian school, investigated teachers' understanding of the Staff Performance and Development system and reactions to the centrally developed teaching standards being implemented.

This is a small case study, and the researchers note that findings cannot be generalised, although generalisability is already complicated by the diversity of PM practice across the Victorian school system. The inherent tension for policy makers between providing prescriptive PM policy or allowing organisations to tailor aspects to their specific culture and staff needs is again identified as an issue. In the UK, Wragg and colleagues (1996) noted the 'Chinese Whispers' effect of policy distortion through successive levels of officialdom when governments leave room for organisational 'tailoring' of PM practice. Similarly Kleinhenz and colleagues (2002, p. 14) note the difficulty that local tailoring of the central model in Victorian schools raises, especially in assessing the validity, reliability and credibility of PM practice across the schools involved.

In Kleinhenz and colleagues' case study, both the selection of the school and study participants reflects a bias towards favourable assessment of the Staff Performance and Development system. The school was selected on the basis of an official recommendation that it represented an exemplary model of staff performance and development, and study participants were nominated by the principal who openly acknowledged that he would only nominate interviewees whom he believed would give a positive report of the school's PM practices.

The principal and six other people (two reviewers and four teachers) participated in tape-recorded interviews, which were subsequently transcribed. The main findings from the case study are remarkably consistent with previous research.

Reviewers and teachers did not share a common understanding of PM system purposes. Reviewers viewed the main purpose as staff development and 'their main intentions seemed to be to make teachers feel 'comfortable' and to give them useful tips and hints about improving their practice'

(Kleinhenz et al. 2002, p. 24). Teachers perceived the review as being more about accountability than staff development and whilst appreciating the input from reviewers 'did not expect that it would lead them to change their practice in the classroom or to significant professional learning' (2002, p. 25). Generally both reviewers and teachers gave limited amounts of time to the processes and aimed to get through it with minimum fuss and work. 'There seemed to be tacit understanding among all participants that the processes should be as undemanding as the meeting of basic accountability requirements would allow' (2002, p. 25). Most respondents disliked what they called the 'bureaucratic' language of the centrally developed teaching standards, felt that they had been imposed on teachers and expressed no sense of ownership for them.

Unlike the US teaching standards, which include specific evidentiary requirements, the DE&T standards lacked specific information regarding their application and how performance should be assessed against them.

In this respect, the assessment was hardly a measured assessment at all, but rather a subjective judgement based on the reviewer's own tacit knowledge, in relation to each criterion, about the performance of the teachers whose performance was being judged (Kleinhenz et al. 2002, p. 26).

Perhaps the most pertinent aspect of these findings is that a senior government representative nominated the school as an exemplar, a site where PM policy and practice was being implemented as it was intended, and presumably also achieving its intended outcomes. The school principal also characterised his selected interviewees as positive exponents of PM practice in the school.

In that context it is notable that respondents reported different conceptions of system purpose, appeared to give it minimum time and effort, and aimed to make each other 'comfortable' rather than rigorously determine how to improve the quality of teaching standards. The failure, shown in this study, despite the careful selection of school and staff, of the government framework of standards to provide the means for evaluating performance suggests that much work is needed in either improving the standards or developing reviewers in the application of the standards.

Summary

The main findings from research in the US, UK and Australia on schools and performance appraisal and PM show that most teachers view it as an externally imposed activity whose hierarchical form is divisive, inequitable and inappropriate to the collegial norms of their profession and serves little of the intended purposes. Whilst teaching staff value professional feedback and agree that they should be accountable for high quality performance, formal PM systems have not been seen as providing any meaningful direction about how to enhance performance, clarify role responsibilities or lead to enhanced career prospects. Principals and senior teachers responsible for conducting reviews and assessment find the guidelines, training and support for their role inadequate and experience it as increasing their administrative workloads. Moreover, recent studies of Victorian schools reveal how teachers have learnt to adapt to formal PM by either ignoring it or manipulating it for their own purposes. It is relevant now to examine the literature on PM in higher education environments.

Performance Management in Higher Educational Environments

There is a paucity of evidence from the literature regarding positive outcomes from, or experience of, formal PM in higher education institutions, especially where empirical data on the views of university staff are concerned (Lonsdale 1998; Lonsdale & Varley 1995).

Simmons describes universities as representing

the apogee of knowledge-based organisations for which intellectual capital has the greatest significance. The academic staff at their core are arguably one of, if not the key, organisational resource strength so the motivation, development and career management of these knowledge workers is thus of particular importance (2002, p. 91).

He suggests that understanding the characteristics and features of PM that will engage professionals in knowledge-based organisations is therefore a significant issue, but one that is under-researched.

Khoury and Analoui's study, one of the few empirical studies of how performance appraisal processes are experienced by faculty members in universities, concluded that poorly conducted appraisal processes result in low morale, de-motivation and dissatisfaction (2004, p. 69). This two-year survey explored faculty members' perceptions of the PM processes used in their university. The profile of staff surveyed is similar to those in the present study, as are its use of both quantitative and qualitative methods of data generation. A survey was administered to 451 staff (with 265 responses) and follow up semi-structured interviews were conducted with 25 staff across 5 public universities in Pakistan. As in the present study Khoury and Analoui used personal observation, literature review and personal semi-structured interviews to triangulate the data and thus strengthen the research design.

Khoury and Analoui's respondents identified the following four greatest dissatisfactions with their organisation's appraisal processes.

- more than half believed too much emphasis was placed on student evaluations;

- over a third found top management failed to adequately support the process;
- over a third believed there were unclear performance standards (with an eighth also experiencing standards as inflexible); and
- just under a third identified secrecy and lack of feedback as problematic (2004, p. 61).

The model that the researchers propose as ‘effective PM’ practice is consistent with the broader literature in that it emphasises the establishment of clear performance standards negotiated between the staff member and reviewer at the beginning of an annual cycle, the provision of ongoing informal feedback, inclusion of mid-point and end of cycle formal interviews with self review components, and concludes with action planning and professional development based upon the appraisal results.

Findings indicated that important contextual factors included the strategic orientation of the institution (research versus teaching) and the effect that this had on determining individual performance standards), top management commitment, training of reviewers, and the impact of external factors (national culture and a turbulent political and economic environment) on resourcing for PM activities (Khoury & Analoui 2004, pp. 66–67).

In contemporary PM systems a defining element is the combination of summative and formative approaches to appraisal. Whilst professional development is seen as important, so is holding staff accountable to their employing organisation for the processes by which they produce work, as well as the quality of outputs and final outcomes that eventuate.

Lonsdale reviewed international developments in relation to the use of incentives, rewards and sanctions in higher education and concluded that university administrators increasingly favour appraisal as a means of ensuring accountability, assisting staff management and improving efficiency—and that they directly associate appraisal with rewards and sanctions, despite active resistance from academic unions (1993, p. 226). This increasing emphasis on evaluative appraisal in modern PM systems confronts a key element of the academic role, long held as inviolate: the concept of academic freedom.

Proponents of PM in universities see it as a means of providing increased accountability and incentive for higher performance in a system lacking such mechanisms because employment has traditionally been ensured through tenure, regardless of performance (Aper & Fry 2003, p. 242). They suggest that it will enhance professional development, motivation and productivity although there is little evidence to support that this is the case (Leatherman 2000; Lonsdale & Varley 1995; Miller 1999).

Tenure, or the notion of secure employment until retirement, is highly valued by academic staff as a primary means of preserving freedom from administrative interference into work that may contradict the views of their employer. Unless the institution

can prove professional incompetence or other serious breaches of the employment contract such as moral turpitude, violations of the law, insubordination or dishonesty in teaching or research, a tenured academic's continued employment has been virtually guaranteed (Giano & Kleiner 2001, p. 34).

Simmons (2002, p. 91) summarises some of the many objections to attempts to introduce the broader practice of PM into universities as an effort to

transpose corporate managerialist approaches to performance appraisal within the education sector, antithetical to a self governing community of professionals, an infringement of academic freedom, based on a top-down approach to research and teaching which severely restricts creativity and self development, or a covert means of introducing greater governmental control of the HE and FE [Further Education] sectors and the remuneration of those who work in them (Barry, Chandler & Clark 2001; Henson 1994; Holley & Oliver 2000; Townley 1990, 1992).

Others add that PM processes are excessively costly in time and money needed for other important endeavours and compromise faculty collegiality (American Association of University Professors 2001; Bennett & Chater 1984), given the 'monitoring or review of individual academic staff performance by a hierarchically superior manager' (Hort 1997, p. 4).

Findings from the literature indicate that the response of academic staff to the implementation of comprehensive PM practices into universities is remarkably similar to that of teachers in school environments.

Schools-based research indicates that teaching staff are not averse to appraisal but dislike the summative forms of it that they feel have been imposed upon them. Similarly, research studies or reviews of PM in higher education assert that academic staff accept appraisal as a necessary and constructive process (Morris 2005; Moses 1988, 1995; Paget et al. 1992; University of Tasmania 2001), although they generally then go on to present findings that outline the exact opposite!

The key difference between the reactions of educational staff in schools and universities seems to centre on the issue of academic freedom (Anderson et al. 2002; Encel 1990; Marginson 1993; Meek 1991; Williams 1990) which is logical, given the traditionally greater flexibility inherent in the academic role, especially with respect to research.

The concept of hierarchical line management is similarly contentious in higher educational environments where academics are often more strongly affiliated to their professional discipline than to their organisation or Head of Department.

Middlehurst identified the ambiguous role Heads of School assume in trying to act as both an academic colleague and a manager.

Many academics do not see themselves as belonging to a structure that has to be managed at all; they are highly individualistic with no strong sense of corporate identity either to the department or to the university. Heads of departments in universities have no effective managerial power and operate by inspiring or engineering consent (1993, p. 138).

This theme is referred to in recent literature that notes the lack of leverage and authority university managers have to deal with performance issues, whether it is rewarding exemplars or sanctioning poor performance (Jackson 1999).

The academic faculty in universities traditionally lacks a strong management culture and various surveys (Meek & Wood 1997; Taylor et al. 1998) as well as informal reports indicate that senior staff often view management tasks and functions as disadvantageous to their career and an area of professional weakness. Comments such as those from academic staff in a forum on PM practice illustrate this, for example 'management is a full-time occupation' (Dickensen 1997, p. 72), 'university managers are ill-equipped or trained to be effective managers' (1997, p. 76), and 'selection criteria for department heads do not include capacity and experience in staff development' (1997, p. 88).

Further forum comments suggest that assuming managerial duties may actually compromise a departmental head's academic career.

Universities do not reward managerial skills. If an academic takes on a managerial role, and then returns to the academy they have killed their promotional opportunities, are not as attractive for research funds, and not going to have a recent history of refereed articles, etcetera (1997, p. 74).

Other research suggests that heads of department are rarely appointed for their managerial abilities and are largely untrained in this regard (Jackson 1999, p. 145). Training courses for new heads of departments are infrequent, limited and do little to assist them in managing staff performance (Bone & Bowner 1998).

Informal Performance Management Practice

Very little literature on informal PM practice in higher education exists although Jackson notes the range of informal rewards and sanctions that assist with PM in HE environments.

Support for conference attendance, provision of secretarial help, the purchase of computing and other equipment, matters like the allocation of office accommodation and controlling the allocation of workloads are available and some heads of department systematically use these to encourage or motivate better performance (1999, p. 144).

Lewis notes that the reason many people are attracted to an academic role and career is the intrinsic interest, worth and meaningfulness of the work. 'Different responsibilities such as course leaderships and external examiner-ships are sought and accepted often for personal development and for peer recognition, not simply for the financial reward' (1993, p. 12). Adopting a formal PM system that emphasises extrinsic rewards, such as performance-related pay, may therefore have the unintended effect of discouraging these types of personal development in preference to pursuing the extrinsic motivator (Kohn 1993).

This may be critical in university systems that rely heavily upon academic staff adopting coordinator and curriculum leadership roles that are time intensive and necessary administrative responsibilities.

As in school environments the opportunity to informally observe ongoing performance and provide relevant feedback on that basis are scarce, and more likely to emerge from collegial work arrangements and collaboration (whether this is in teaching or research) than through 'manager'/subordinate relationships in academia.

Formal Performance Management Practice

Any formal PM system must be able to clearly demonstrate the purposes of the system and the gains to be had from participation. Empirical and anecdotal evidence suggests that most PM systems in higher education fail dismally in this endeavour and thus serve their organisations poorly in terms of enhanced alignment, integration or credibility.

Formative Appraisal

Academic staff and managers consistently report a dichotomy of expectations regarding the purposes of PM.

Dickensen documented the feedback from workshop groups at a forum on PM organised by the Staff Development and Training Working Group of the Australian Vice Chancellors Committee. These are anecdotal observations and viewpoints from participants in facilitated group sessions, rather than data obtained through more rigorous research designs, so it is impossible to tell the

influence of group dynamics or potential bias from one or two players. The inclusion of academic staff from all levels, representing both reviewers and staff members from 28 universities across Australia, makes the study population directly relevant to this study. Collated results from respondents highlight the difference in expectations of PM between individuals and their employing organisation.

Individuals expect to receive recognition, feedback and advice, be rewarded both intrinsically and extrinsically for performance, have fair systems, a broad range of development opportunities; and good role models.

Universities are interested in maximisation of outcomes consistent with organisational goals, higher levels of motivation, reward for good performance, the provision of mentors for newer staff, the individual and collaborative contributions of staff, communication of expectations, identification of poor performers, and ability to demonstrate accountability (Dickensen 1997, pp. 11–12).

Individual expectations clearly reflect an emphasis on appraisal primarily for developmental purposes. However, six of the eight comments relating to organisational expectations of PM relate to accountability – the communication of expectations so that individual effort can be harnessed toward organisational goals, and achievement against these as a means to differentiate between levels of performance.

Evidence from the literature suggests that academic staff value formative appraisal as providing ‘opportunities for performance feedback, formal communication about developmental needs and career planning requisite to one’s stage of career and future prospects’ (Morris 2005, pp. 73-74). In addition, where PM is used as a developmental aid to enhance forward planning for both teaching and research it is also shown to improve goal setting, relationships and morale amongst academic staff (Paget et al. 1992, p. 52).

Summative Appraisal

Jackson suggests that moves towards summative appraisal in HE characterise the more competitive global environment within which tertiary educational organisations now operate.

Increased external scrutiny and measurement of university performance has inevitably had an impact on universities and caused them to more critically examine internal management and operating systems, including the way staff are dealt with through performance management processes (1999, p. 143).

Townley and others view this trend as a result of coercive isomorphism where governments have used their control of the financial purse strings to pressure educational organisations towards rationalising the acceptance of more summative models of PM (Meyer & Rowan 1991; Meyer & Scott 1992; Townley 1997).

One of the greatest challenges for summative appraisal is finding fair and objective ways to measure performance upon which to base differential rewards. Without this perceived equity, PM systems fail to engage participants and suffer credibility issues that compromise or erode their effectiveness in the organisation. In universities, this challenge is exacerbated by the complexity of the academic role, the highly qualitative nature of the work, the long cycle time frames for research activity, the short cycle time frames for teaching work, and the amount of time spent working independently.

In the academy an MBO approach may be appropriate for some output-based measures, such as the number of research publications (and more recently the ability to attract substantial grants), but there is a risk of ‘dumbing-down’ output to mere numbers if a quantitative gauge becomes the sole criterion. Lindsay argues that,

a pre-occupation with quantifying performance has distorted our conception of educational processes and outcomes at the expense of important but intangible dimensions which cannot be captured by performance indicators or assessments of effectiveness and efficiency (1992, pp. 155–156).

In several countries (for example, the UK and New Zealand), recent experience with research quality frameworks has proven problematic around issues of measurement and the associated compliance costs required to collect sufficient data (Department of Education, Science and Training 2005a). Appraisal of research performance may for example involve complex

discussions of quantity versus quality, weighted indices for various types of writing, an assessment of the prestige of journals, and the value of citation counts amongst other issues but teaching, is notably process-based and does not easily lend itself to measurement in this way (Davis 1997, p. 113).

The use and abuse of performance measurement in higher education remains a contentious issue and has attracted much attention in the professional literature (Ashworth & Harvey 1994; Cave, Hanney & Kogan 1989, 1991; Doyle 1995; Kells 1993; Sizer 1992; Yorke 1995).

Whilst objectivity in assessing academic performance is difficult to achieve, the subjectivity of behavioural measures (such as traits, BARS and BOS) has already been noted in this review.

Likewise, research already cited has highlighted the complexity of developing national standards of teaching in school environments. To the author's knowledge no such endeavour has been attempted for tertiary educators. The challenge would be considerably magnified by the fact that many academic staff, who may be recognised as an expert in their field of knowledge, do not have teaching qualifications.

Previous citations have suggested that in general, managerial skill in designing measurable performance objectives and fairly differentiating between levels of individual performance is, at best, tenuous and at worst, non-existent. When performance-related pay (PRP) is involved, the importance of good measures that enable fair judgement is accentuated.

Lewis's review of the research in public and private sectors both in the UK and the US suggests that PRP for academic staff in higher education suffers from problems in establishing objective assessment and is most likely to be driven by budget considerations. As such it may threaten collegiality, affront professionalism and have a detrimental effect on motivation, alienating those who do not receive additional pay and leading to the other benefits of appraisal being dissipated

(1993, p. 114). Other studies in the US further support the idea that the link between PRP and the productivity of academic staff is tenuous (Hearn 1999).

Performance Management in the US HE System

Conventional approaches to performance appraisal in United States universities involving formal assessments by supervisors using structured forms, and the provision of feedback to subordinates 'was not found to lead to enhanced organisational performance' (Blackburn & Pitney 1988 cited in Lonsdale 1998 p. 305).

Recent moves towards post-tenure review for academic staff in the US replicate the trend toward more broadly based PM systems in the UK and Australian tertiary education sectors. Reasons cited by policy makers and administrators for its introduction are also similar. Empirical research indicates that reactions from academic staff are consistent with their international counterparts.

Post-tenure review refers to the evaluation of faculty staff 'separate from the annual review that determines salary decisions, aimed specifically at assessing performance and/or nurturing faculty growth and development' (Licata & Morreale 1997, p. 1). It combines both summative and formative aspects of appraisal and introduces broader PM expectations for tenured staff than had hitherto existed.

Advocates of post-tenure review propose that it contributes to high quality education through addressing accountability issues, improving faculty development and morale, linking mission and individual performance, and identifying unproductive faculty members (American Association of University Professors 2001; Edwards 1997; Licata & Morreale 1997). Despite the fact that a high percentage of universities implemented post-tenure review during the 1990s (Licata & Morreale 1997; Trower 1996), the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) historically resisted government pressure for more intensive PM of academic staff, indicating their belief that little would be gained, in that the costs to institutions would be unacceptably high and it would jeopardise the quality of educators, academic freedom and the general relationship the faculty member had with their college (American Association of University Professors 1998).

In 1997 recognising that many of its members were already working under post-tenure review policies (PTR) with no guidelines to assist them, the AAUP ‘promulgated recommendations for practice if such policies were to be adopted’ (Aper & Fry 2003, p. 243). The recommendations provided both guidelines for policy development and key policy characteristics and are reproduced below in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2. AAUP Recommendations for Post-Tenure Review

Prior to policy adoption:

- faculty members should hold primary responsibility for the design of any post-tenure review policy;
- current institutional practices and policies for faculty evaluation should be considered prior to adding new ones;
- costs in time and personnel of establishing new evaluative measures should be assessed;
- post-tenure review procedures should be established on a trial basis.

Policy characteristics:

- post-tenure review policy and practice should explicitly address and aim to protect academic freedom;
- criteria for review should be specific and published;
- faculty members should be involved in conducting reviews;
- reviews should be aimed primarily at faculty development and not simply for the sake of personnel decisions;
- standards to be flexible to account for the variety of faculty activities and appointments;
- appropriate resources should be made available to make such activities manageable and meaningful;
- outcomes of reviews should be confidential;
- due process procedures should be protected and maintained.

Source: American Association of University Professors (1998) cited in Aper & Fry (2003, p. 244)

Pre-policy guidelines emphasise both the necessity for staff involvement in system design and the requirement to locate any new system within the existing framework of PM practices in the organisation. As with any major policy, the guidelines also sensibly suggest that thorough cost/benefit analysis is undertaken before implementation and that systems are to be piloted, and modified where necessary.

Recommendations for policy characteristics cover all of the due process elements one would expect, but also specifically refer to appraisal for both formative and summative purposes and the need to adequately resource any new system.

Aper and Fry (2003) undertook a comprehensive study of PTR policy and practice across the American tertiary education sector to ascertain what was actually happening in the sector and how it aligned with the AAUP recommendations. Their findings are of direct interest and pertinence to the present study, as an example of a recent national survey exploring PM practices in universities. Even though the US and Australian tertiary educational systems are structurally different, the focus is upon graduate institutions where faculty roles are analogous to those of Australian academic staff in the 'explicit expectations for performance in research, teaching, and service' (2003, p. 244).

Aper and Fry used a mailed survey questionnaire to collect data from a stratified random sample of accredited HE institutions across the US that included 372 of the total 742 institutions. A 79% response rate indicated substantial interest in the topic with over half the respondents reporting that post-tenure review policies had only been adopted in the last five years (between 1994 and 1999). Additionally, PTR was more common in public than private institutions, 'reflecting the opinion of their CEOs that this was because of exogenous pressures' (2003, p. 255). The researchers saw this as representative of the 'tension between public policy, accountability and institutional autonomy' (2003, p. 255), a concern expressed by educational researchers and practitioners across international boundaries regarding external interference into the internal affairs and management practice of universities (Anderson et al. 2002; Boyer, Altbach & Whitelaw 1994; Moses 1995).

Findings from this study suggest that institutional practice mostly aligned well with the AAUP's recommendations for staff involvement in system design and major matters of due process such as conduct of reviews, flexible standards and confidentiality of outcomes. In the main, however, PTR PM processes were experienced as failing dismally to align with key recommendations regarding integration, clarity of purpose and resourcing issues.

The overwhelming majority of responding institutions did not evaluate the costs (in time and personnel) and the benefits of PTR to the academic program prior to adoption, did not pilot or periodically evaluate their approaches and failed to set aside financial resources to enable development requirements identified through the process to be delivered. Respondents reported a lack of agreement concerning the primary purpose of PTR—whether it was for faculty development, to make personnel decisions, or some combination of the two (Aper & Fry 2003, pp. 246–254).

This last point is a particularly critical finding as it reiterates a common theme throughout the literature pertaining to clarity of purpose. It seems that whenever summative and formative elements are combined in PM systems, it is the summative element that assumes the greater significance and obfuscates formative intent. Leung and Lonsdale (1996) note the strenuous efforts required to maintain a focus on the developmental aspects whenever this duality is present.

Aper and Fry draw a cautionary note regarding their questionnaire design and point out that it may have lead to some confounding of the data on system purposes. In the context of the broader body of literature regarding confused purposes, however, their findings are too consistent to be discounted.

The researchers concluded that, despite its large-scale adoption across American universities, PTR, 'seems largely to have been initiated based on external pressures, has not been supported with additional resources, and has not been subject to careful analysis of the real purposes and benefits of such activities' (2003, p. 257). As such they argued that PM runs the risk of becoming a 'policy orphan' that remains unintegrated into the larger purposes and mission of the institution

and provides only the appearance of accountability whilst actually delivering little benefit to any of the stakeholders concerned (2003, p. 257).

In a separate study, Leatherman (2000) found that fewer than 6% of those surveyed nationally across the US strongly agreed with the statement that ‘post-tenure review has impacted faculty performance’. The effectiveness of PTR as a PM practice thus seems questionable.

UK Experience

Since the 1980s UK government policy has increasingly focused on ‘modernising’ the public sector, including higher education, so that it is more efficient, effective and accountable for the use of public funds (Cave et al. 1989; Hardy 1991).

In 1985 the Steering Committee for Efficiency Studies in Universities was established

to examine whether management structures and systems are effective in ensuring that decisions are fully informed, that optimum value is obtained in the use of resources, that policy objectives are clear and that accountabilities are clear and monitored (Jarratt 1985, p. 6).

Its report recommended major changes for the governance and administration of universities in the UK. It was particularly critical of the national system of collective wage bargaining that resulted in age-based annual increments and that ‘little formal attempt is made on a regular basis to appraise academic staff’, viewing this as a disincentive for staff to aspire to high quality performance (1985, p. 28). The report also recommended transition towards a more hierarchical private sector model of organisations where heads of department function as line managers responsible for formally reviewing the performance of academic staff on an annual basis through summative or judgemental appraisals, including performance-related pay, (Townley 1997, pp. 265–267).

As with other government mandated systems of appraisal for educational institutions cited previously in this literature review, the PM system elements were to be negotiated between the academic trade union and university management, thus leaving room for some local discretion.

The union's position was that formative appraisal based on professional development was the only feasible type of system (Townley 1990, p. 267).

A proportion of government funding for universities was, however, withheld, contingent upon individual universities developing and implementing procedures for greater flexibility in pay structures through a move toward PRP based upon summative appraisals. This is directly relevant to the implementation of PM in Australian HE institutions, where similar government mandates have been issued, particularly with regard to the withholding of funding amounts (Illing & Thorp 1999; Nelson 2003b). Several studies have since comprehensively reviewed the implementation of appraisal into the UK HE sector, with consistent findings.

Townley examined appraisal documentation from 29 out of 54 universities and conducted semi-structured interviews with staff from 14 universities to ascertain the type of PM system introduced, the implementation processes and staff responses to the system. As with Down and colleagues' (2000) study of PM in Australian school environments, Townley notes the use of language in the UK policy documentation to pre-emptively 'neutralise' concerns among academic staff about the introduction of compulsory summative appraisal in describing it as a 'legitimate' and necessary aspect of organisational life, designed to 'ensure efficiency and effective use of the most important and valuable resource, that is, teaching and research staff' (1997, p. 269).

Comparable 'positioning' statements can be found in the Australian HE sector, where typical examples of PM documentation state that,

in articulating the university's commitment to staff as its key resource, the importance of aligning job profiles to agreed institutional directions is noted. Staff annual plans will link directly to faculty, unit and the University Plan, and will enable review and assessment of individual contributions and rewards (Monash University 1998, p. 38).

In the UK Townley found that,

Whilst there was no outright defiance of the introduction of appraisals, there was resistance to the judgemental model of appraisal, and a questioning of its relevance arguing

an inconsistency both with the nature of a university and its work requirements (1997, p. 272).

Respondents perceived that there was little benefit to them personally from participating in the PM process and were highly critical of the authoritarian and formal way in which it had been imposed. Townley reports that they viewed this as ‘challenging the autonomy of professionally based organisations to manage internal administrative matters and conflicting with the professional self-image of academics’ (1997, p. 275).

Whilst the UK government was successful in ‘securing the introduction of university-wide, annual or biennial individual performance reviews, where previously there had only been two university-wide schemes in existence’ (Townley 1997, p. 277), the majority of universities did not adopt summative forms of appraisal and PRP provisions were ‘discarded as soon as possible’ (Shelley 1999, p. 440).

UK Universities almost unanimously designed and introduced formative appraisal systems targeted at staff development, as more aligned to their culture and more acceptable and useful to academic staff. In effect, they used their discretionary power of selecting particular PM system elements to shape the policies and procedures that they valued, as opposed to those the government favoured.

Shelley (1999) conducted research aiming to portray the pattern of PRP practices across the UK higher education sector as a whole. Using reports gathered from Heads of Schools of Management in universities, he summarised the reasons why PRP processes were unpopular and discontinued as soon as possible. The reasons included the perception that,

the scheme ‘was felt to be imposed’, that ‘it was wrong to reward individuals in a team culture’, ‘performance-related pay was a waste of time’, the scheme was ‘not believed to be effective in motivating teachers’, and that there were ‘problems with the consistency and fairness of the system’ (1999, p. 449).

A further research study by Simmons (2002) into performance appraisal systems in UK universities and colleges is of particular interest to this study, given that it is one of the few studies

found that focuses on exploring multiple stakeholder perspectives and expectations of PM in a higher education environment.

Simmons conducted in-depth interviews with a total of 20 staff from the business schools of two institutions, comprising teaching staff together with those managing them and providing HR services to them. He also reviewed policy documentation and sent a questionnaire to all academic staff in the two schools to obtain a broader base of staff opinion. This questionnaire focused on respondents' experience of appraising and being appraised, as well as their general attitudes to performance appraisal; 48 (41%) completed questionnaires were returned. To enhance the sample representativeness, a second group of 23 study participants, drawn from the author's personal contacts, was mailed a modified version of the questionnaire with 87% of this group returning completed responses. This second group provided the perspectives of key stakeholders or 'expert witnesses' (Stoney & Winstanley 2001), given that they comprised 'academic staff from universities and colleges across the UK whose research interests, professional expertise and teaching responsibilities are in performance appraisal—but whose opinions are seldom canvassed' (Simmons 2002, pp. 92–93).

Simmons's use of structured interviews with academic staff—who are Heads of School, appraisees and appraisers— as well as analysis of relevant policy documents mean that his population, methodology and focus are all directly relevant to the current research. Also relevant is the concept of an 'expert witness group,' given this researcher's selection of Heads of Schools of Management for the first phase of her research (on the premise that they would be a particularly knowledgeable group able to provide pertinent insights to the specific topic under study).

Previously cited research findings have highlighted the central importance of winning the support and confidence of staff if a PM system is to establish and maintain credibility and become a viable organisational system that delivers outcomes for its stakeholders (Elmore 2002; Kleinhenz et al. 2002; Management Advisory Committee 2001; McLaughlin & Pfeiffer 1988; Peterson 2000).

Similarly, Simmons hypothesised that,

a key factor in the acceptability and effectiveness of performance appraisal systems is the degree to which those appraised regard the performance criteria used as under their control, view the appraisal interview as a motivational experience, and believe that the outcomes of performance review are used in a developmental way. An identification of performance measures that academic staff regard as relevant and legitimate was a key part of the study, and was given particular emphasis within the questionnaire (2002, p. 93).

This latter point is especially relevant given that performance standards and measures are identified in both the general appraisal literature and in the literature relating to educational environments as problematic. Simmons used appraisal literature and documentation obtained from universities and colleges to identify the most commonly used measures of academic performance and asked respondents to comment on the acceptability of these measures, as well as their views on the motivational impact of performance appraisal and performance-related pay in the higher education context. Key findings of relevance to the present study are summarised and discussed below.

In the university sector appraisal criteria that academic staff and 'expert witnesses' see as legitimate and acceptable measures included contribution to administration, curriculum development, liaison with external bodies, classroom observation, student evaluation of courses taught, number of research publications produced and research funding generated (Simmons 2002, p. 94). (The gauge of 'acceptability' was that at least half of the respondents indicated that a particular performance measure was seen as valid.)

Additional findings that relate to the motivational impact of PM on HE staff, and attitudes towards performance-related pay, align strongly with those from other educational settings. There was a significant dichotomy of experience between appraisers and appraisees. Around half of appraisers believed their appraisal interviews had an influence in improving staff performance, although both questionnaire and interview data indicate that more than 80% of appraisees did not feel 'motivated to improve job performance as a result of the appraisal discussion' (2002, p. 95). Moreover, the 'line of sight' between individual effort and organisational objectives was not enhanced through participation in PM systems, with only a third of university respondents

reporting increased clarity of job responsibilities and clearer understanding of organisation objectives. Half of the respondents did not believe that the PM system would assist them by identifying strengths and development points or that development needs would be actioned as appraisal outcomes (2002, p. 95).

This lack of faith in the follow-through on outcomes is supported by other research in British universities that found failure to implement the professional development outcomes from appraisal significantly damaged the credibility of the system. The researchers argued that this was not so much a result of indifference on the part of appraisers or universities but rather an inability to resource the range of outcomes identified in the appraisals (Bryman et al. 1994), consistent with Aper and Fry's (2003) findings that PM systems in American higher education institutions generally fail to set aside budget to action development needs.

An overwhelming majority of Simmons's respondent group was opposed to PRP. In line with other research (Armstrong 2000; Henson 1994; Storey 2000), they described it as

inappropriate and divisive; detrimental to team roles and to team operation; that there would be insufficient funds to provide adequate differentiation in reward between high and low performers, and incompatible with a staff development focus or with gaining trade union support for the appraisal activity (Simmons 2002, pp. 95–96).

Most of these findings are consistent with those from studies in school settings and the HE sectors of other nations.

Australian Experiences of Performance Management in Higher Education

As discussed in Chapter one, international and local trends in public sector reform have emphasised the introduction of broader PM systems (that include summative elements) into universities. This has been driven by the perception that it will provide increased accountability and quality of education. In Australia, a number of government-sponsored reviews of PM practice in higher education have been undertaken. However, as in the US and the UK, policy initiatives

designed to move the HE sector towards more comprehensive PM approaches for academic staff have met with substantial resistance.

The national academic conditions of employment award was introduced by the then Federal Minister for Employment, Education and Training John Dawkins in 1988 (Dawkins 1988) and included a strengthening of the management of universities and colleges and the introduction of combined summative and formative staff appraisal. As a part of the negotiations surrounding these conditions, Australian academics and their employing institutions agreed to individual academic appraisals for development and staff evaluation purposes. This broke the nexus between the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) and universities, since the NTEU had hitherto directly negotiated certified agreements, on behalf of all academic employees, with individual universities. The wages and conditions of academics had been traditionally determined on a collective basis and made no reference to the outcomes of individual performance appraisals (Stone 1998, p. 265). The NTEU's position on PM practices is similar to its international counterparts in supporting formative appraisal as culturally appropriate for universities and viewing summative forms of appraisal (for determination of unsatisfactory performance, incremental progression or confirmation of tenure) as antithetical to knowledge workers, and to be resisted as representing an erosion of hard won conditions of employment (Hort 1997, p. 3).

Following significant industrial unrest, the Australian Industrial Relations Commission mandated a twelve-month trial of staff appraisal schemes in universities for developmental purposes only from July 1991. A government-funded evaluation study reviewed the implementation of staff appraisal procedures for academic staff in Australian higher education institutions, as required under the second tier Agreement and subsequent Award and amendments (Paget et al. 1992, p. 1). The overall conclusion was that the basic steps in implementing the requirements of the Award had not been fully met. The study involved a mailed survey to 400 academic supervisors, trained through the Higher Education and Research Unit at Monash University, seeking their views on the PM procedures they were required to use, including the adequacy of the compulsory training in appraisal methods for appraisers. The supervisors who responded (48%) represented 20 institutions across four states, drawn from a range of subject disciplines. To strengthen the

research design, 30 randomly selected supervisors from the original respondents were interviewed by telephone and also asked to distribute a structured questionnaire to their staff seeking appraisees' perceptions of staff appraisal. One hundred and seventy staff responded (an estimated 60-65% response rate) from a range of disciplines and institutions.

Unlike the present study Paget and colleagues' evaluation canvassed the views of supervisors trained through only one organisation (and their staff) so it is difficult to know whether this constituted a source of bias, although responses are highly consistent with findings from the broader field of research.

Supervisors were asked for their views on how they believed staff generally perceived performance appraisal: their feedback was overwhelmingly negative and reflected that:

- nearly 20% thought staff were suspicious, unconvinced, generally hostile or threatened by the procedure;
- another 15% thought staff were accepting when PM was used for staff development purposes but not when it was used for punitive purposes, or when performance problems were identified;
- 26% believed that staff were resigned to performance appraisal and that there was grudging acceptance of a necessary evil;
- 3%, a staggeringly low figure, of supervisory respondents accepted performance appraisal as good management practice. They expected it to have a negative or destructive outcome in lowering of morale, to be time consuming and time wasting, with the most frequently noted outcomes being objections of staff associations, general opposition, resentment, non-cooperation, inertia by staff and not enough time to conduct staff appraisal properly (Paget et al. 1992, pp. 24–25).

Just over 50% of the staff respondents approved of the idea of performance appraisal as a way of obtaining feedback about their performance although staff and supervisor comments were, however, consistent in noting confusion as to the 'purposes and requirements of academic staff

appraisal under the current Award, and also a tremendous variation in the ways in which staff appraisal has been implemented at various organisational levels in some institutions surveyed' (Paget et al. 1992, p. 68).

The discrepancy between the 50% staff approval of the appraisal process compared with what their supervisors believed they would say may reflect the harder task that supervisors have in terms of greater systemic responsibilities, poor staff/supervisor relationships or some other unknown factor. That the discrepancy exists, however, is important.

Interview comments indicated the lack of systemic integration between PM and other areas such as staff development, confirmation of appointment and promotion, which is evocative of Aper and Fry's assessment of PM practices in the US as 'policy orphans' that remain unintegrated into the mainstream of academic life (2003, p. 257).

Lonsdale and Varley's report to the National Steering Committee on Staff Appraisal regarding the operation of academic staff appraisal schemes in Australian universities concluded that,

by and large, staff appraisal for development purposes turned out to be unsuccessful...staff development outcomes beyond those already occurring had not resulted and were unlikely to result in the future, ...there was no evidence of performance improvement, and ...other outcomes which may have enhanced institutional functioning did not result (1995, p. 23).

This is consistent with the 1995 Report of the Review Committee on Higher Education Management (the Hoare Report after its chair), which was critical of the sector's people management practices and specifically noted:

- that current practices covering the management of academic performance are industrially restrictive and operationally complex;
- many in the sector have a narrow view of staff performance issues;
- concern that academic staff development activities are separated from decisions concerning tenure, probation, contract renewal (where appropriate) and increment

advancement, particularly when these decisions are intrinsically linked to how well people perform in their roles;

- the absence of guarantees that academics receive feedback on their performance;
- narrowly defined career paths in universities;
- the lack of integration of PM and institutional planning and review; and
- differential PM systems for general and academic staff (Higher Education Management Review 1995, cited in Dickensen 1997, p. 26).

The Committee recommended that every Australian university should ‘phase in a comprehensive performance management system for both academic and general staff’ (1995, p. 86) that included both summative and formative processes, although it fell short of mandating compulsory performance-related pay (PRP) elements. The government preference for PRP is clearly illustrated in the 1997 Review of Higher Education Financing and Policy discussion paper (West Report) that alludes to the need to provide incentives for good teachers through the use of salary rewards (West 1997, p. 36), as did the Jarratt Report in the UK which had similarly sought to institutionalise greater flexibility into university salary determination, through mandating summative appraisal including PRP. (This was demonstrably ineffectual and was abandoned as an official policy several years later.)

The Hoare Report recommended that PM systems should improve the line of sight between individual staff efforts and organisational direction, provide multi-source feedback to staff on their performance, identify future development actions and career paths for staff, and be better integrated with other organisational systems such as probation, increments, tenure, contract renewal, and the management of under-performance (Higher Education Management Review 1995).

By September 1996 only 8 out of 28 universities represented in a forum on this topic indicated any system had been implemented. Forum participants highlighted critical obstacles to the

successful implementation of PM systems for universities including mistrust, lack of relevance, and lack of support (Dickensen 1997, pp. 40–43).

That these continue to be critical obstacles is graphically illustrated in a recent review of the University of Tasmania's PM system. The University of Tasmania's PM system adopted after its 1998 EBA negotiations introduced a complex MBO based system that required quarterly meetings and combined formative and summative elements, including performance-related pay, and integrated promotion and unsatisfactory performance (University of Tasmania 2001, p. 8).

The terms of reference for the external review committee were to assess the current system and address staff concerns about it, focusing particularly on the benefits, scope, effectiveness and links to other HRM processes and implementation (2001, p. 4). The three members on the review panel were all university managers, one from the UTAS.

The review panel received written submissions from university staff and conducted group interview sessions with randomly selected staff and supervisors, although only approximately 30% of staff selected actually attended meetings. Additional interviews with Faculty Deans, union representatives, and some Heads of School were also conducted, although the selection process for these individuals is not specified.

The authors note that this evaluation was undertaken in the early stages of system implementation when a high level of scepticism remained about the system and suggested that 'the failure of all invitees to attend the meetings may have resulted in a more negative overall assessment than would otherwise be the case' (2001, p. 9), although the converse is equally plausible. It is arguable whether attendees were those most likely to see the positive possibility of a PM system and whether the failure of 70% of those selected to attend is indicative of staff perceptions of the PM system's irrelevancy and abject failure to engage them.

The Review's findings show general agreement that some kind of PM process was necessary, although staff feedback about the PM system is remarkably consistent with evaluation findings from the broader literature on PM in educational environments. The evaluation report indicated:

- a lack of clarity regarding system purposes and the reasons for system implementation. Despite several stages of consultation during its design, staff did not appear to be aware of the reasons for its introduction. ‘In seeking to address a range of organisational problems (communication, the development of a strategic planning culture, and performance assessment) the system met none’ (2001, p. 11);
- failure to engage a majority of staff, who rejected the MBO structure of the system and described the requirement to negotiate Key Result Areas, performance objectives and indicators with their ‘manager’ and identify staff development needs as anathema; and
- great concern over PRP given the potential for inequity, the lack of clear guidelines for the award of payment and the perception of inadequate resources in the form of any central financial support (University of Tasmania 2001, p. 10).

Summary

The research suggests that, like their school counterparts, the academic staff of several nations (and many of their managers) view performance appraisal and PM as an externally imposed activity that is counter to the collegial norms of their profession and serves little positive purpose.

As with the vast majority of teachers in primary and secondary school settings, the history and experience of university academic staff with performance appraisal has been largely negative. Despite increased government pressure to adopt PM systems that incorporate summative elements such as PRP, these models continue to be seen as culturally inappropriate and have been largely resisted (and unsuccessful) in university environments. Academic unions have clearly influenced this by advocating formative or developmental versions of appraisal, although it can be argued that they are merely representing the viewpoints of their constituents.

Hierarchical line management remains a problematic concept in higher educational environments, where academics are often more strongly affiliated with their professional discipline rather than with their organisation or the Head of Department or School.

Academic ‘managers’ responsible for implementing PM systems through the provision of ongoing feedback and conduct of formal reviews also perceive themselves as under-skilled to perform these duties competently and as largely unsupported by their organisations. Evidence suggests that many of them view staff management as an onerous set of responsibilities deflecting them from their own career interests in research.

Overall it appears that PM systems remain unintegrated in the essential life and activities of academic personnel and, in particular, not much of substance has changed on the Australian higher education PM landscape, despite the radical change in operating environments, role responsibilities and expectations of increased accountability.

Chapter Summary

The literature review shows there is increasing convergence towards integrated models of PM practice that combine both formative and summative approaches to appraisal, including PRP links. This appears to be universal across the US, UK and Australian educational sectors, particularly at the tertiary level. The danger of combining too many goals for the one PM system is well documented in that it potentially leads to confusion of purpose and obfuscates system intent. Clarity of purpose remains a significant issue affecting the credibility of systems and their acceptability among both the managers and staff who participate in the PM activities.

There is a strong rhetoric of positive outcomes attributed to PM, although those accountable for actually implementing systems find it a difficult role, and perceive themselves as largely under-skilled and under-supported and resourced by their organisations for this function. This is a theme in the literature on PM in general, as well as in educational environments.

The literature identifies managerial commitment and the leadership role displayed in establishing a PM culture and conducting appraisal interviews as significant. Skill in providing feedback and effectively managing performance on an ongoing basis is critical, and training in these areas is also identified as an important requirement for system success.

Despite a multiplicity of aims, most organisations use their formal PM systems as a planning tool to set work objectives against which achievements can be retrospectively reviewed, to assist with training and development needs, and to inform decisions regarding career planning, promotion and salary or bonus determinations.

PRP continues to be particularly unpopular in public sector institutions, including schools and universities, and is generally resisted by unions as culturally inappropriate and as a contributing factor to poor staff engagement with formal PM systems.

Research on schools shows that the vast majority of teachers appreciate the need for increased accountability and value professional feedback that leads to improved performance. Teachers find the hierarchically based forms of PM that have been introduced do little to advance these aims and resist them as an externally imposed activity that is divisive, inequitable and inappropriate to the collegial norms of their profession. This is consistent across national borders and equally applicable to tertiary educational environments.

PM systems continue to be viewed as an additional compliance requirement that lack systemic integration and have few, if any, positive outcomes.

A comprehensive review of the literature reveals few studies that focus on exploring the multiple stakeholder perspectives and expectations of PM in higher education environments or the system elements perceived as acceptable and valid.

Simmons's (2002) study of these factors in the UK environment is an exception. His use of an 'expert witness' group to seek information from academic staff with specific expertise in the area of performance appraisal is very similar to the approach used in Phase One of the present research, although Simmons used a mailed survey to gather data. His use of in-depth interviews is also similar, although his were with personnel from only two institutions.

Similarly, Khoury and Analoui's (2004) exploration in Pakistan of faculty perceptions of PM processes used in their university is directly relevant to the present study. The profile of staff surveyed is analogous, although their use of a mailed survey does not provide the same depth of

information. Khoury and Analoui conducted semi-structured interviews with a selection of staff although this was limited to five universities.

To the author's knowledge there is no nation-wide study (in Australia or elsewhere) that both identifies the types of PM processes currently being used in public universities and uses interviews as the primary data gathering methodology.

The researcher's intent was to develop a rich description of the academics' experience of PM practices, from the perspective of both the academics being managed and those doing the managing. The use of telephone and personal interviews allowed the most effective way of capturing both factual data and the nuance and richness of respondents' opinions and viewpoints.

Previous Australian studies that have collected data about performance appraisal and PM in higher education have been government-sponsored evaluations, which primarily used surveys and questionnaires rather than interviews upon which the present study is based.

Chapter Three—Methodology

This chapter describes the research design and methodology, the respondents and how they were selected for Phases One and Two, the tools and procedures used for generating and analysing the data, and some of the possible methodological limitations.

Research Methodology

Sarantakos (1998) notes that the aims of social research seem to depend on the paradigm that guides the project. The underpinning paradigm for this research is that of the interpretivist who seeks to understand people and their interpretation of reality.

Interpretivism contends that ‘reality is internally experienced, socially constructed through interaction and interpreted through the actors [and] the definition people attach to it. Reality is not objective but subjective, reality is what people see it to be’ (Sarantakos 1998, p. 36). The present study’s research questions seek to understand the respondents’ experiences of PM practices or their ‘reality’ with regard to this. Whilst the first research question is about the existence, structure, espoused purposes and other factual details of university PM systems, the bulk of information sought relates to the opinions, perceptions and attitudes of the respondents. It is clearly located within an interpretive framework.

Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell and Alexander (1995, p.10) suggest that qualitative approaches can be distinguished from quantitative on both a conceptual and methodological basis. Conceptually, qualitative research provides the opportunity to capture how people ‘attach meaning and organise their lives, and how this in turn influences their actions’, rather than being counted, measured and studied as inanimate objects.

The other means of distinguishing between qualitative and quantitative research is methodological. ‘Qualitative researchers are not primarily concerned with assigning numbers to their observations or transcripts’ and data generated is ‘studied for themes in the natural language of the participants’ (Minichiello et al. 1995, p. 11). In the present study the researcher has made extensive use of the respondents’ own words to capture their views and experiences.

The use of a qualitative methodology attempts to present information in a detailed and complete form not in numbers or formulae (with minimal statistical analysis) and uses procedures that produce descriptive data (Sarantakos 1998). However, it is clear that both quantitative and qualitative approaches were appropriate for the research questions posed in this study, although fundamentally it is located within a qualitative framework.

Research Design

The research was conducted in two phases to address the main research questions. Phase One of the study generated information on the current PM practices across the 37 public universities in the Australian HE sector, the similarities and the differences in the approaches being taken and how academic staff who take part in these practices (as either staff or management) experienced them. Both primary and secondary data were sought during Phase One, predominantly through telephone interviews, university websites and specific documents (such as their PM policies and procedures). Phase One data was analysed in terms of simple numerical procedures, such as percentages, and an intensive analysis of themes.

Phase Two involved an intensive case study approach of three selected sites and personal interviews of a further 13 individuals drawn from the Lecturer B, Lecturer C and Head of School designations. Of interest was how these academics (both reviewers and reviewees) experienced their university's PM practices, what cultural and contextual factors (if any) contributed to this experience, the perceived effects of these practices on the performance of individuals, teams and the organisation, and which system elements they perceived to be most effective in academic cultures.

Data were again analysed in terms of key themes and the results presented from both the perspective of reviewers and reviewees. Every effort was made to use respondents' actual words so that a 'thick, deep, and rich description' that transported readers to the setting and gave the discussion an element of shared experiences (Cresswell 2003, p. 182) with PM emerged. The researcher's supervisor referred to this as the 'ripping yarn' quality of the data! Short text-embedded quotations were used in combination with the researcher's interpretations, to illustrate

specific points or issues but longer quotations that the researcher considered captured the ‘ripping yarn’ qualities were included. These have generally been indented in the data analysis so that it is easier to identify direct quotations from participants. As Patton notes ‘the ‘vicarious experience’ that comes from reading a rich case account can contribute to the social construction of knowledge that, in a cumulative sense, builds general, if not necessarily generalizable, knowledge’ (2002, p. 583.)

In order to protect the identity of individuals as much as possible, the gender of interviewees was randomly altered in data presentation.

Phase One

Respondents

A purposive sampling technique was used to target the specific position of Head of a School of Management or of a Graduate School of Management in each Australian university and include the total population of Australian public universities. Purposive sampling involves the deliberate choice by researchers of ‘respondents who, in their opinion, are thought to be relevant to the research topic (and) will involve identification of the informants, and arranging times for meeting them’ (Sarantakos 1998, p. 152).

Rather than approach Human Resource Managers or senior administrators, who were likely to provide data only on the official PM practices within their universities, Heads of Schools of Management (or their equivalent) were targeted. This area was chosen for three reasons. The researcher has a particular interest and experience in this discipline, having worked both as an academic, teaching human resource and PM in a range of Australian universities, and as a consultant to organisations in these areas. She therefore brought to the research a good understanding of the context in which these people work.

Management was also chosen because it is an increasingly important growth area for both local and offshore education, and PM issues are particularly critical at times of growth and change (Armstrong 1994). Staff in these roles were also expected to be knowledgeable about both formal PM practices and those that were actually being used in their systems, the historical background, and the issues of concern for staff and organisations regarding such practices. As a 'line manager' in a university setting they were practitioners with responsibility for actually implementing policy in their university. Because many management academics also teach in the area of PM, it was felt that they would have a particularly well developed understanding of the issues involved and be uniquely placed to reflect upon their experience from both an individual and institutional perspective. Their opinions and perceptions were therefore expected to provide a rich source of information from a relatively well-informed population. In that sense they constituted a very similar 'expert witness' group (Stoney & Winstanley 2001, p. 604) to that used in Simmons's (2002) exploration of UK academic staff reactions to PM.

An administrative plan was drafted to define the equipment required, sequence of tasks and the timetable for interviews to be conducted.

Recruitment of Participants

Sequence of Tasks

University internet sites were used to identify the names and contact points (e-mail, telephone and facsimile) of the Heads of Schools of Management (or equivalent) in the population of 37 public Australian universities. For universities with more than one School of Management (for example with a separate Graduate School), the decision was taken to contact both Schools. The researcher saw the inclusion of Graduate Schools of Management as highly relevant, to identifying some of the different PM factors that may operate when award, reward and salary structures differ to the conventional university environment.

Some universities that had a School of Management did not have a Graduate School of Management, although others with a Graduate School of Management did not have a School of Management or its equivalent. The total population of potential interviewees can best be described as the 46 individuals who were either the Head of a School of Management or of a Graduate School of Management (or its equivalent).

In October 2000 the initial introductory letter (including a plain language statement) was e-mailed to the 46 Heads of Schools who had been identified as potential respondents. The letter explained the nature of the study and requested participation in a thirty-minute telephone interview about the formal and informal PM practices at the respondent's university. Each letter was tailored to match the terminology associated with the different organisational levels at the particular university, (for example Faculty, Division, Department, School etc.) that Internet research identified. An informed consent form (see Appendix One), which respondents were asked to complete and return, was attached. The letter stated that agreement to take part in the phone interview would also be taken to constitute informed consent.

Within the first week, over 50% of those contacted during that week had replied.

Overwhelmingly, respondents were interested and happy to help. Of the total target population the researcher was successful in interviewing 40 out of the 46 potential respondents. All but one of the total Australian public university population was represented. The specific identifying details of participating individuals are retained to protect their confidentiality and that of the university.

Four interviews were conducted with Human Resource (HR) managers or senior HR staff when the Head of School was not available. Two interviews were conducted with senior academic staff, one in a university where there was no position equivalent to that of Head of School due to recent restructuring, and the other when the Head of School was not available. Telephone interviews were used in all but one case, at the respondent's request, where the respondent knew the interviewer well and instead specifically suggested a personal interview.

Most of the individuals interviewed during Phase One data generation indicated that they were also willing to be re-contacted for possible inclusion in Phase Two (in-depth case studies of a number

of sites). Some were, in fact, keen to participate, given the stage of implementation of their university's PM system and their interest in the topic under study.

Phase One Data Generation and Administration

The primary data generation method was the semi-structured, in-depth interview conducted by telephone with each respondent. Investigation of university internet sites both at the commencement and completion of Phase One data generation provided another source of 'documentary' current information about PM systems and processes in the universities under study, in addition to the verbal data from respondents. Documentary information from internet websites was relatively quick and easy to access with few associated costs. However the quality of data varied tremendously between universities. In some cases:

- no information was available on the formal PM practices of the university and/or school of management;
- information was not available to an outside researcher, i.e. someone who was not a university staff member;
- historical information was available but the website had not been updated in the last twelve months. This was often true of university sites where the PM system had undergone a recent evaluation or was in the process of being re-designed;
- extensive information was available and/or the website was reviewed on a regular basis (less than three months old); and
- website information was up to date but did not match what respondents had described during interview.

Development of a Semi-Structured Interview Schedule

The decision to use a semi-structured interview schedule rather than a questionnaire was based on the researcher's fundamentally qualitative orientation to research. Factual and quantitative data about what is happening with PM practice across the sector was of interest and utility, but it was

more the experience and perceptions of the people involved and their construction of their experience that was of paramount interest. This rationale led to the view that the combination of a semi-structured interview schedule and short, but in-depth, interviewing techniques would be the most appropriate research tools to develop some understanding of the salient issues.

The Advantages of an Interview

Interview situations give respondents the opportunity to provide more in-depth information, elaborate upon their experiences and express themselves freely, resulting in a greater variety of information.

The researcher wished to gain information such as facts, opinions, values, thoughts, feelings and experiences which go beyond what might have been obtained from a series of pre-set questions. It is also possible during an interview to gain higher quality and more relevant information by probing. This approach is what Long (1993, p. 1) refers to as 'in-depth interviewing,' describing it as a means of understanding organisation behaviour, particularly how individuals construct reality and take up their roles and activities in an organisation. Minichiello and colleagues define in-depth interviewing as 'a conversation between researcher and informant focusing on the informant's perceptions of self, life and experience, and expressed in his or her own words' (1995, p. 87).

As Long notes, the in-depth interview uses a plan of the area to be investigated and some pre-set questions, but essentially the interview is shaped as a consequence of the interaction between interviewer and informant. 'The informant's responses provide data that gives rise to comments and/or questions by the interviewer, which helps the informant to probe for additional information and/or clarify information' (1993, p. 2).

The literature does not seem to cover the conduct of in-depth interviews using the telephone. It reflects a more positivist and quantitative research approach to those using telephone interviews and predominantly discusses telephone interviewing from the perspective of call centre operations and 'yes/no' closed-ended, factual questions (Frey & Oishi 1995). Where the literature discusses qualitative telephone interviewing, it assumes the use of attitudinal scales to measure the intensity or frequency of response, rather than the free flowing conversational form of in-depth

interviewing. Similarly, the literature on the selection of interviewers to conduct telephone interviews concentrates on training them to correctly follow and record respondent answers, using checklists, scales and a homogenous approach to all respondents so as to avoid bias.

Kumar states that the interview is ‘the most appropriate approach for studying complex and sensitive areas as the interviewer has the opportunity to prepare a respondent before asking sensitive questions and to explain complex ones to respondents in person. Information can be supplemented by observation of the non-verbal reactions’ (1996, p. 115).

PM practices in universities are definitely an area of considerable complexity and sensitivity. Whenever a questionnaire or an interview schedule was used in the present study, it was necessary to consider carefully the nature and sequencing of the questions posed to respondents as well as their clarity for the purpose. Whilst not as powerful as a face-to-face interview, it was likely that the interviewer would obtain valuable additional insights from the non-verbal, vocal reactions of respondents during telephone conversations.

Disadvantages of an Interview

In addition to the aspects of time and cost involved, Kumar identifies a disadvantage of interviews as ‘the quality of the interviewer–interviewee interaction, which may be affected by the researcher’s skill and possible bias’ (1996, p. 115–116). Zikmund (1994) raises the difficulty in categorising and summarising the answers from the more open-ended questions that characterise interviews. Each of these factors is briefly addressed below.

The researcher’s background as a trained and skilled interviewer was considered to be a significant asset to the research process. She was aware of the need to minimise her possible bias as a researcher and developed the semi-structured interview schedule as a framework to ensure that common questions were framed for interviewees. Additionally she was able to use her experience, skills and commitment to concentrate fully on the interview itself. The decision to use audiotapes released her from note taking and allowed full concentration on responses and discussion.

Sarantakos notes that the qualities demanded of the interviewer may vary from case to case and will depend on the type of interview employed.

Intensive interviewing, also known as depth interviewing for instance, requires more personal qualities, knowledge of the topic, initiative, creativity, long experience, and more maturity than other types of interviewing. For these reasons it is less frequently used as it requires sophisticated technique, requiring extensive knowledge of the research topic, extensive experience with interviewing, and the ability to communicate effectively and to establish and maintain relationships with respondents (Sarantakos 1998, p. 264).

As noted previously, it was expected that the researcher's career and background in the topic area as well as in interviewing techniques would be an asset to this study.

Open-ended questions are especially useful in exploratory research but their disadvantage is that they are more costly than fixed alternative questions because of the uniqueness of the answers. Analysis of open-ended questions is more difficult because 'the job of coding, editing, and analysing the data is quite extensive. As each respondent's answer is somewhat unique, there is some difficulty in categorising and summarising the answers' (Zikmund 1994, p. 325).

Another potential disadvantage of the open-ended response question is that interviewer bias may influence the recording of responses. While many interviewers aim to record answers verbatim, rarely is it possible to get every word spoken by the respondent.

Thus there is a tendency for interviewers to take short cuts in recording answers, and a few words that are different from the respondent's may substantially influence the results. The final answer often is a combination of the respondent's and the interviewer's ideas rather than the respondent's ideas alone (Zikmund 1994, p. 325).

Taping allowed this trap to be avoided and freed the researcher to actively listen and interact with respondents. This is identified by several researchers as an important adjunct for strengthening the credibility of data collection procedures (Cresswell 2003; Drew, Hardman & Hart 1996; Patton 2002).

Developing the Interview Schedule

Developing a semi-structured interview schedule at the beginning of the research process meant that there was a clearer understanding of the areas of interest that needed to be covered during interviews. It allowed the researcher to be absolutely clear about the most critical areas to be covered, irrespective of the actual sequence taken. In a structured interview the investigator asks a pre-determined set of questions, using the same wording and order of questions as specified in the interview schedule. The researcher is familiar with the range and types of possible questions and had carefully thought through the utility of both closed-ended and open-ended questions. Whilst closed-ended questions would have made subsequent data reduction and analysis much easier, the information obtained through them was considered to lack depth and variety. The semi-structured interview schedule is attached at Appendix Two.

Pilot Testing

Zikmund states that it is usual to conduct a 'try out' of a questionnaire (or in this case a semi-structured interview schedule),

on a group that is selected on a convenience basis and similar in make up to the one that ultimately will be sampled. The pre-testing process allows the researchers to determine if the respondents have any difficulty understanding the questionnaire or if there are any ambiguous or biased questions. This process is exceedingly beneficial (1994, p. 345).

During September and October 2000 a pilot test with six current academics was conducted prior to commencement of the interview phase, to ensure that questions in the semi-structured interview schedule were clear and logically ordered. The semi-structured interview schedule was forwarded to the six individuals by e-mail and their feedback received by the same medium. Additionally two of the researcher's personal contacts agreed to participate in a 'practice' telephone interview, using the schedule.

The Format of the Semi-Structured Interview Schedule and Progression in its Use

Commencing each interview with personal introductions and a re-iteration of the researcher's areas of specific interest served a number of useful purposes. It enabled the researcher to check whether the interviewee had received relevant information, had read it and was prepared for the interview. It was common for the researcher to find that respondents had not actually read (or digested) the content of e-mails outlining the purpose of the study. Those who responded in the first week were the exception, in that they were clear about the purpose of the study and what was required of them. The only three informed consent forms that were faxed back and signed were received from these respondents. Many of the subsequent respondents had received the introductory e-mail information a number of times (for one, five times over a period of twelve months) at their request, as well as had the purpose re-iterated in phone contacts arranging the interview. Reiterating the study context was therefore critical.

The introductory procedure before the interview proper began, allowed the researcher to take account of the time demands on the interviewee and in some instances to re-schedule the interview. Every effort was made to ensure that the respondents' mood was positive by providing them with a high degree of control over the time they chose to be interviewed and by acknowledging their workload issues. A number of times during the interview, the researcher would pause to check whether it was all right to continue, given the originally stated time limit of 15 to 30 minutes only. Where the interview exceeded this time limit it suggests that respondents were predisposed to be helpful and were interested in the topic and that the interaction between interviewer and respondent was very positive.

During the introductory phase, the researcher also re-stated the context for the interview by defining key terms such as 'performance management' and emphasising an interest in both the formal and informal practices that may have been in use. She began to build the relationship of trust necessary to engage interviewees. 'Qualitative researchers look for involvement of their participants in data collection and seek to build rapport and credibility with the individuals in the study' (Cresswell 2003, p. 181). Given that their opinions as well as factual data were to be sought, this was critical.

The respondents in this study were not passive and were not always content to let the researcher decide the direction of the interview. She therefore had to develop ways of directing the interview without offending the respondents. It was common to find respondents would progress to the areas of interest to the present study naturally, without necessarily following the order as planned and directed by the researcher.

Personal Reflective Notes

Miles and Huberman (1984) note that the scribbles and jottings that make up the researcher's reflective remarks during the research process form a valuable adjunct to the data generation from respondents. These jottings include such things as the researcher's reactions and relationship to the respondents or a mental note to pursue an issue further at the next contact. This was the researcher's experience, finding she was scribbling down immediate impressions during an interview and jotting annotations on the contact sheet. These informal notes, on her personal experiences of initiating contact with potential respondents, her reactions to their responses regarding participation in the study and the subsequent interviews that were conducted, proved to be quite valuable. They provided an additional source of information about the research process itself, particularly the power dynamics of dealing with such a senior group of respondents, and were a useful source of data by which to confirm, add to and qualify other data during initial analysis.

Data Analysis

Miles and Huberman (1984) refer to qualitative data analysis as an interwoven stream of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification that occurs before, during and after data generation. Sarantakos similarly describes it as a cyclical process of data reduction, data organisation and interpretation. Data reduction is the process of manipulating, integrating, transforming and highlighting the data while they are presented; summarising, coding and categorising are some ways of doing this. Data organisation involves assembling information around certain points, categorising information in more specific terms, and presenting the results in some form such as text, charts and graphs. In interpreting data, the researcher makes decisions and draws conclusions related to the research questions; identifies patterns and regularities; and discovers trends and explanations, which allow the development of some firm views to guide the research further (Sarantakos 1998, p. 300).

At the beginning of the data generation process the researcher established a master contact summary sheet as an organising tool. It enabled her to swiftly review what stage the data generation had reached, to re-connect with her last contact attempts and to schedule further interviews. Initially, the sheet was a brief listing of the identifying details of the university and contact individuals, however, it progressively incorporated more and more detail, until it came to include the following:

- the name of the university
- whether it had a School of Management, Graduate School of Management (or where the equivalent positions were located)
- the name and title of the individual(s) to be contacted
- the date(s) of attempted contact
- the date the interview occurred
- an identifying number for each transcript

- an identifying colour for each transcript indicating the institutional status of the relevant PM system
 1. blue PM system in a University,
 2. green PM system in a University of Technology,
 3. red PM system in a Graduate School of Management, and
 4. black no PM system.

Brief annotations were also made of interesting features and the overall impression gained from the interviews; for example, interesting names of systems or interesting features, its stage of development, the overall perceptions of the respondent to the topic and their interest, the researcher's comments regarding their enthusiasm, range of knowledge, willingness to share data and their potential involvement as a Phase Two respondent.

Essentially the contact summary sheet became a major organising tool that allowed the researcher to continuously keep track of the research process and interweave the process of data organisation with data generation as it occurred (Miles & Huberman 1984). It also played a pivotal role during data coding.

Decisions and conclusions related to the research questions also emerged from ongoing review of the interview responses. New areas for speculation or questioning emerged from the earlier contacts in terms of areas the researcher was either under-covering or previously ignorant of. The first few interviews were less comprehensive in their coverage of salient issues. This required the researcher either to re-contact those individuals or attempt to supplement information through additional sources such as revisiting the university's website or obtaining additional documents regarding the university's PM system.

When additional documents were obtained from a respondent these were clearly marked and filed electronically. As they were usually transmitted by e-mail or downloaded from the Internet this simplified the process of synthesising relevant material. Wherever possible they were read immediately and the data relevant to the research questions, or of interest in itself, were

incorporated into the transcript for that university. The aim was to continually review and interpret incoming data rather than store it until the end of data generation, given the knowledge that narrative transcripts of 40 interviews was going to involve a substantial amount of data in itself.

Similarly, if documentary evidence had been gathered from investigation of a university internet site or other sources it was appended to the relevant transcript for each university. It constituted a form of triangulation (Miles and Huberman 1984) that allowed the researcher to obtain an additional source of 'documentary' current information, as opposed to the verbal data from respondents on the topic of study. Patton highlights the utility of this strategy, not only in providing diverse ways of looking at the same phenomenon, but for adding to credibility by strengthening confidence in whatever conclusions are drawn.

Combinations of interviewing, observation, and document analysis are expected in much qualitative fieldwork. Studies that use only one method are more vulnerable to errors linked to that particular method (for example, loaded interview questions, biased or untrue responses) than studies that use multiple methods in which different types of data provide cross-data consistency checks (2002, p. 566).

At the conclusion of data generation the researcher reviewed every university's website once again. In some cases this was to double check and verify simple details such as the titles of those contacted. In other instances it was to gain further information, such as the date of system implementation and coverage of the system.

Data Transcription

The first step of analysis was to transcribe the data from the original form – in this case, audiotapes, onto paper. All of the resulting transcripts were verified against the original tapes and amended for accuracy. Each transcript was individually named and page numbered. Lamnek (1988) describes this as the researcher 'cleaning' and editing the manuscript by eliminating typographical errors and contradictions in the text.

Taped transcripts provided a rich source of verbatim material from which to synthesise themes without losing the full flavour and intonation of the study population's responses.

Development of Codes and Themes

Analysis of data from qualitative research can be approached from many directions. In the present study Crabtree and Miller's editing approach articulates the researcher's initial data analysis techniques well. The researcher enters into the text—much like an editor searching for meaningful segments—cutting, pasting and rearranging until the reduced summary reveals the interpretative truth (Crabtree & Miller 1992). The use of chart paper, colour coding and word processing software proved fruitful in the early stages in uncovering broad categories, each of which received a heading or a descriptive code.

Whilst there was a lot of raw data, its analysis was best undertaken manually so that the researcher could simultaneously 'reconnect' with some interviews that had been conducted over a year previously and let both her intuition and the repetition within the data suggest the initial categories and themes that emerged.

A code is an abbreviation or symbol applied to a segment of words – most often a sentence or paragraph of transcribed field notes – in order to classify the words. It is a retrieval and organising device that allows the analyst to spot quickly, pull out, then cluster all segments relating to the particular question, hypothesis, concept or theme (Miles & Huberman 1984). Whilst the research questions and the researcher's knowledge of the area under study dictated a certain 'start list' of codes, these were primarily around the factual or more tangible data – for example, 'Was there a PM system in place?' 'What was its nomenclature?' 'How long had it been in operation?' 'Whom did it cover?' and 'Who was the reviewer?'

Most codes were what Miles and Huberman (1984) call post data due to the decision to employ a more inductive approach. This allowed the researcher to remain sensitive to the variety and context of the data—to let it 'speak to her' and allow codes to emerge. Descriptive codes were developed from an analysis of the text, line-by-line, paragraph-by-paragraph. Initially text was analysed to note the number of times a respondent raised a particular issue or commented on it. It

was not the intent to apply any form of statistical analysis, apart from simple percentage counts with respect to the factual data relevant to the first research question. This process helped to condense the data into categories and allowed certain themes to come to the surface. This type of initial analysis results in the development of simple, initial codes or preliminary concepts, which are refined and modified later. Strauss refers to this as 'open coding' (1987).

As each individual interview transcript was analysed codes were listed on chart paper and new codes added if a comment could not be categorised under an existing code. Details of their source (transcript, page number and category of university) were recorded, as were recurrences of the same code. Where comments related to two or more research questions, they were all noted and numbered. The frequency of the comments made by more than one respondent was also noted on the chart paper, by using the interviewee number of the respondents making similar comments. Interviewee comments were colour coded by the four broad categories outlined above to enable a check to be kept on whether any specific themes emerged in a particular university or group of universities.

All chart paper data related to a specific code was collated using the chart paper and three working word processing files. This enabled the chain of evidence to remain clearly traceable as well as the selection of the best direct quotations to represent a theme. The three files were the original raw data transcripts; an edited version that consisted of the original transcripts minus all quotes selected out for the chapter on themes; and the draft themes chapter. When text from the raw data transcripts was cut over to the themes chapter it was also colour coded so that a quick visual reference was available to indicate whether all of the quotations selected against a particular descriptive code came from the same category source.

Once the final chart paper data had been developed into draft codes, what remained in the edited original data file was crosschecked. The purpose was to determine whether the remaining data contained material not yet represented or inadequately represented in the existing themes. The researcher wanted to check that no significant issues had been lost in the process of moving from coded raw data to broader themes and whether there was any disconfirming data for the identified themes. This is one of the 'tactics' for testing or confirming findings suggested by Miles and

Huberman (1984) who describe the process as one of checking the meaning of outliers and extreme cases. They suggest that it can be very useful in identifying the strength of the findings and therefore the quality of the conclusions. Cresswell (1998) also recommends this tactic as a means of ascertaining whether rival or co-joint explanations may exist for the same data. For example, the researcher found in one case that the issue of performance-related pay (PRP) being linked to PM practices was cited as a reason for the re-development of university practices. In one university, where there was an emphasis on increased monetary rewards for the discretionary efforts of academic staff, the PM system was being developed to include PRP; in another the system was being developed to remove PRP, acting on feedback from academic staff that it was experienced as de-motivating and thus a problematic link. Incorporating this apparently ambiguous/ambivalent data resulted in the identification of a more complex and multi-faceted theme.

Continuous data analysis sought the inter-relationships between coded data. The researcher clustered potential causes and consequences, underlying patterns of interaction, strategies, categories and concepts, so that subcategories or dimensions became more visible. Essentially this involved a reverse process to that undertaken in reducing the data, where the word processing files were used to expand the codes, by including all of the selected quotes and reviewing them for iteration, emphasis and meaning. Clear concepts became evident, concepts and themes were tested through empirical evidence and major themes were identified. These abbreviated codes proved to be a very effective technique for retrieving and organising large amounts of data into meaningful themes.

When she began analysing the data the researcher coded all data, not just that which she found particularly interesting or relevant. As the themes began to emerge the researcher went back and forward between the themes and the original transcripts to look for 'disconfirming data' (Cresswell 1998). The researcher also went back to the transcripts to see if there were any large pieces of data that could not be classified into a theme, that is, she wanted to check that no significant issues had been lost in the process of creating themes. Patton suggests that,

a qualitative analyst returns to the data over and over again to see if the constructs, categories, explanations and interpretations make sense. Creativity, intellectual rigor, perseverance, insight—these are the intangibles that go beyond scientific procedures (2002, p. 570).

Phase Two - Case Studies

An in-depth case study approach was used for the second phase of this research where the intent was to select a number of sites for further and more intensive study. A comparative case study approach was appropriate, given the focus of the third research question; *What key issues of concern are commonly expressed by university staff regarding these practices?* Furthermore, because data generated during Phase One research was unexpectedly rich and comprehensive, only a small number of participants was selected for interviews at each site.

Selection of Sites and Respondents

The rationale for selecting three of the Phase One sites for further study was based upon a number of key factors. Firstly, it allowed the researcher to choose one site with no formal system in place, one with an ongoing system that was described positively by the HOS during Phase One interviews, and one with an ongoing system described negatively by the HOS during Phase One data interviews. This was seen as important in providing the means to more intensively investigate as broad a range of views and attitudes as possible about existing practices.

Phase One findings indicated five universities that had no formal system in place. This situation had altered in the fourteen months between data generation in Phases One and Two, so that all universities now had a formal system in place and it was not possible to compare the practices of sites without a formal PM system. (One of the sites selected was a university that had been amongst the group with no formal system in Phase One and now had a newly implemented system). Secondly, it enabled the researcher to select universities with different types of PM systems or practices in place and explore the differences this might raise for respondents. Thirdly

the number of sites only needed to be small, given the amount of data generated during Phase One of the study.

The researcher chose to exclude Graduate Schools of Management from this phase of the research given that in Phase One the data had confirmed that very different PM factors may operate when award, reward and salary structures differ from the conventional university environment. The literature review also highlighted the differences and difficulties that PM systems linked to performance pay and evaluation face in tertiary educational settings. The researcher was more interested in identifying the PM issues of most concern to the 'typical' academic staff member at Levels A, B and C, rather than those few who are covered by a salary-linked PM system such as Graduate Schools of Management tend to deploy.

During Phase One data generation respondents were asked to indicate whether they were willing to be re-contacted for possible inclusion in Phase Two of the research. In Phase Two, the researcher first consulted this list to ascertain whether any universities should thus be excluded from selection. University internet sites were again used to verify the names and contact points (e-mail, telephone and facsimile) of the Heads of Schools of Management (or equivalent) in the population of 37 Australian public universities. It is worth noting that a 42% of the Heads interviewed for Phase One had moved on, and consequently, although the site was still included for potential selection, the individual interviewee might be a different person.

More intensive research at the three sites constituting Phase Two case studies was conducted by spending some time in each university, on average about a week, during which time interviews were undertaken, documents analysed, and in effect a form of observation occurred, simply from being around the place. As Cresswell notes,

Qualitative research takes place in the natural setting and the qualitative researcher often goes to the site (home, office) of the participant to conduct the research. This enables the researcher to develop a level of detail about the individual or place and to be highly involved in actual experiences of the participants (2003, p. 181).

For the interviews, a very broad semi-structured interview approach was used, consisting largely of prompts, or open questions along the lines of ‘Tell me about performance management practice here’, or ‘How do you achieve clarity around what you’re supposed to focus effort upon and a sense of how well you are doing in your work?’ In the first instance, respondents were key people, such as the Head of Human Resources, Head of School of Management and senior staff. Subsequent respondents were selected from the School of Management, with an attempt at interviewing a range across the staff levels, Lecturers A, B and C, of interest to the present study.

Each interview lasted for around two hours and was tape-recorded, numbered to retain anonymity and for ease of reference, and transcribed. In reviewing the transcripts for accuracy, the researcher then inserted punctuation, or used her hand written annotations of impressions gained from body language and other contextual cues observed during the interviews, which sometimes had the result of radically changing the meaning of a sentence.

Phase Two Data Analysis

Phase Two data was handled in a similar way to that of Phase One, although each site was analysed separately to begin with. Once the initial coding had been completed codes were examined for themes across the three sites, or ‘meta-themes’ as the researcher labelled them.

Respondent Group

Formal agreement to participate in the study was personally obtained from selected sites by the researcher. The university websites were used to identify appropriate potential contacts including the Human Resource Manager and two or three academic staff members as study participants, additional to the Head of School who had been initially contacted. The researcher checked whether the university administration of each site required local ethics approval as well as that of RMIT. Informed consent from individual participants was obtained. Appropriate draft letters were prepared as part of Phase One ethics approval and only required modification and personalisation for each participant in Phase Two. A copy of the Plain Language Statement for respondents in Phase Two is attached at Appendix Three.

The researcher spent time at each site to conduct in-depth interviews (Steyaert & Bouwen 1994; Templeton 1987) to ascertain how individuals experienced their university's PM practices. Interviews with key individuals (for example one responsible for conducting performance reviews and two staff members who are reviewed whether formally or informally) were arranged at each site. Obtaining these multiple perspectives of PM experiences and practice provided a valuable data source that Patton describes as 'triangulating data sources' (2002, p. 566) and thus as adding credibility to qualitative study findings.

These individual interviews together with internet website research, PM system policy and procedure documents and the researcher's related field notes (Stake 1998) yielded additional organisation contextual and cultural perspectives. A similar data analysis approach to that of Phase One was used.

Rigour

Qualitative research is based in naturalistic inquiry and fundamentally focuses upon 'humanising the research process by raising the role of the researched' (Sarantakos 1998, p. 83) to centre stage and seeking to understand and report on their reality. The criteria for judging qualitative research must thus vary considerably from those suggested for the quantitative researcher.

First and foremost, the researcher seeks believability, based on coherence, insight and instrumental utility (Eisner 1991), and trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba 1985) through a process of verification rather than through traditional validity and reliability measures (Cresswell 2003, p. 199).

It is critical therefore that the researcher is able to develop and articulate insights that provide a deeper understanding of the respondents' worlds and the primary issues under study, as well as explore the impact and potential applications of the study findings. The context of the research should be clearly articulated and findings must be located within the broader body of literature relating to the area and topic under study.

Given the nature of qualitative inquiry, the researcher must be transparent in specifying his or her status or position, experience, training, prior knowledge, assumptions, bias and the perspective that is brought to the topic and the study site. 'The role of the researcher as the primary data collection instrument necessitates the identification of personal values, assumptions and biases at the outset of the study' (Cresswell 2003, p. 200) so that readers know exactly what point of view drove the data collection. It is important that the means by which the researcher aims to be 'balanced, fair, and conscientious in taking account of multiple perspectives, multiple interests, and multiple realities' (Lincoln & Guba 1985) are articulated. Patton notes that this is an important aspect in establishing the researcher's credibility, and that, 'for better or worse the trustworthiness of the data is tied directly to the trustworthiness of the person who collects and analyzes the data, and his or her demonstrated competence' (2002, p. 570).

Drew and colleagues (1996, p. 169) suggest that the qualitative researcher should define the analytic constructs which guide their study by describing the specific conceptual frameworks used in design and deductive analysis, and meticulously specifying the procedures for data collection and analysis. Cresswell adds that the degree to which a planned approach to data collection procedures and protocols is clearly articulated, and the protocol for recording information is clear, demonstrates to the reader that the complexity and nuance of findings is fully captured (2003, p. 185), and findings may be seen as credible. Additionally this transparency of process allows confidence that the researcher operated ethically and professionally in the selection and treatment of study participants and the generation and analysis of data.

Technical rigour in analysis is a major factor in the credibility or 'trustworthiness' of qualitative findings (Patton 2002, p. 566). The researcher must be able to identify key themes from the data that 'display multiple perspectives from individuals and are supported by diverse quotations and specific evidence' (Cresswell 2003, p. 194).

What is critical is the ability to develop a 'chain of evidence' (Denzin & Lincoln 1998) or 'a careful audit trail' (Drew et al. 1996) that illustrates how the raw data has evolved into themes and patterns and which can be followed by another scholar back from conclusions to the raw data. Evidence that the researcher entertained alternative possible interpretations to the conclusions

reached (Smith 1992, p. 103), through a rigorous search for confirming and disconfirming data (Cresswell 2003, p. 551), is also important. This shows the reader that a systematic process has been systematically followed and that it is dependable or trustworthy. These are the criteria that guided this work.

Limitations of the Research Method

The three sites selected for Phase Two research were all universities within the Australian Technology Network (ATN) and therefore may share particular characteristics that are distinct from other universities. This was not a deliberate criterion for their choice. Instead, selection was based upon a range of criteria that the choice was not felt to compromise. There is no reason to believe that the views expressed by study participants in the ATN universities are in any way different to those that may have been expressed by participants from other universities. Given that the data strongly reinforces findings from the literature, it adds weight to the conviction that it is representative of the viewpoint from the broader academic community.

A potential danger with in-depth interviewing as a research tool lies in the researcher unintentionally misinterpreting the perspectives of respondents, that is, the significance and meaning they attached to their experience, (Minichiello et al 1995). Despite the researcher's professional skill in interviewing techniques and familiarity with the topic of the research, these potential sources of bias must be acknowledged.

In addition, some caution must be exercised in extrapolating the study's findings to any broader population. Overall they may reflect the unique viewpoints and experience of this set of respondents rather than the wider university experience of academics with PM systems, or of knowledge workers with PM systems in other organisations.

Phase One of the study was based upon comprehensive data generated with a representative from every Australian public university, except for one, so it should be possible to draw some conclusions about which practices seem to work best or to not work at all with academic populations in the Australian setting. Although the sample for Phase Two respondents is limited, it is diverse and representative of the population of interest to this study. No Level A staff were

available for interviewing, however, this reflects the decreasing incidence of this group of staff in many Australian universities. Again, the strong convergence of findings with issues raised and explored in the literature reinforces the conviction that the viewpoints expressed by respondents have relevance to the broader academic community. At the very least, the study findings will provide rich insights indicating where wider exploration would be fruitful.

Research Ethics

As part of the initial ethics approval of the study the researcher had identified that the project did not present any potential risk to the respondents, above those that they might encounter in the normal course of their working day.

The research ethics involved the researcher being clearly identified as a student, and respondents were given her phone, facsimile and e-mail contact points, as well as those of her primary supervisor and the university, so that should they wish to discuss any matter raised in the interviews, they could do so at any time. Interviews took place at a time and place nominated or agreed to by the respondents. The questions they were asked were not dissimilar to the types of questions work colleagues might ask of one another. Prior to participation in the study, respondents were asked to sign an informed consent form acknowledging that, if they agreed, interviews would be audiotape recorded by the researcher.

At both the start and end of each interview (and during if appropriate), respondents were reassured that the information they communicated in the interviews would be treated confidentially by the researcher and that their anonymity in the production of the thesis and in any other published material related to the study would be maintained. As well as the usual ethical requirement to reinforce confidentiality, it did seem that this issue was particularly crucial for some Heads of Schools where there were ongoing negotiations about the PM system or it was felt to be a 'politically hot' topic. Several respondents double-checked whether they would be directly quoted or whether their university would be identified in any way in the data analysis.

Audio taping of the interview was refused by one responding Head of School due to the perceived extreme sensitivity of the information she wished to discuss regarding both historical, and

currently continuing, managerial ineptitude at the Chancellery level and its impact upon the staff PM practice. The interviewer took notes at this interview and a second meeting was required to cover all of the relevant research questions as well as allay the concerns raised by the respondent regarding data management, confidentiality and the purpose of this research.

The respondents' identities and organisational affiliations were also protected by the use of a coding system. Only the investigator and her supervisors know the key to the code. This gave additional reassurance to respondents that any information they provided would be treated with the utmost confidentiality; this enabled them to be extremely candid in their responses.

Information such as the original interview tapes and transcripts is kept in a locked filing cabinet to which the investigator holds the key. All other electronic data and files are password protected and accessible only by the researcher and her supervisors.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has defined the interpretative framework within which the study is located as well as outlining the key parameters of the research design and methodology, the group of respondents and how they were selected for both Phases One and Two, along with the means by which ethical considerations were managed.

The primary methods of data generation were telephone interviews, face-to-face interviews and the analysis of documents, and the advantages and disadvantages of these processes are articulated. Techniques and procedures used for recording and analysing the data included audio taping, verbatim transcription and the development of codes and themes based upon the text.

Lastly, the standards against which the research should be compared in determining its rigour, and some of the possible methodological limitations have been discussed.

Chapter Four–Phase One Results

This chapter presents the results from Phase One interviews conducted with Heads of School (or their equivalent counterparts), and the analysis of associated website data containing PM policy and procedural documents. It is organised along the major themes and sub-themes that emerged during data analysis.

Only a minority of Schools of Management lacked a formal PM system covering academic staff in the designations of interest to this study, so this information is presented first. It is followed by a more extensive report of the majority of Schools of Management with formal PM systems covering academic staff. In this second, major section factual and tangible information is presented relating to the first and second research questions, *‘What PM practices are currently in use in Australian public universities?’* and *‘What are the similarities in approach and what issues does PM raise?’* It is followed by a more extensive presentation of the data relating to the remaining questions reiterated below.

- *How do academic staff who take part in these practices (as either staff or management) experience them?*
- *What cultural and contextual factors (if any) contribute to this experience?*
- *What are the perceived effects of these practices on the performance of individuals, teams and the organisation?*
- *Which system elements do academic staff and academic managers perceive to be most effective in academic cultures and why?*

The researcher found that respondents in Phase One were interested and keen to provide information about all these issues and would often lead the interview in this direction. It was her initial intent to limit responses in Phase One data generation to mostly factual data. The enthusiasm of response and the quality of data volunteered by respondents, however, quickly caused a revision and adaptation to accommodate the generosity of data being provided.

Schools of Management with no Formal Performance Management

System that covers Academics

Within this group of five, every university had previously had a formal system of PM and had made a conscious choice to discontinue the practice, due to negative experiences with overly complex paperwork, industrial action or staff dissatisfaction arising from its implementation.

Four Heads of School (HOS) characterised formal systems as an incredible waste of time, not worth the effort or counter-productive. One valued formal systems highly but considered that the existing culture of uncertainty and unrest in her university was unfavourable to implementation at this juncture.

On balance it appears that these five HOS were comfortable with the idea of discussing performance but averse to any system that attempted to institutionalise or centralise their existing practices. The need to keep it simple was emphasised.

What I wouldn't want is something massively bureaucratic and everybody having to fill in forms right left and centre. I know of no better way to kill a process than to document it to death. If it's not simple so you can summarise it on a page or two you have got the wrong thing and it's not going to work (Interviewee Thirteen).

Of interest was how much was actually happening in these Schools despite the absence of a formal system. There were well-developed performance planning, review and feedback processes that were systematic but not 'formal'.

We've adopted a fairly informal approach. As HOS I endeavoured to spend a half hour to an hour a couple of times a year with each staff member, one-on-one and I e-mailed a proforma for staff to complete which covered things like teaching interests, research, their development for the year in terms of conference attendance and longer-term plans about whether they wanted to go for promotion or outside studies, etcetera, so I could get a picture about where they wanted to go and what sort of assistance they might need. It went very well. People enjoyed it and they explored things they might not otherwise have

done and it was time for them to think about what they really wanted to do (Interviewee Twenty).

In three instances Heads had provided staff with extensive feedback about their performance as a result of university and school re-structures involving job spills and staff targeted redundancies. As one HOS noted, this had the valuable ancillary effect of providing remaining staff with information regarding their career potential and developmental needs.

They responded really well to it because here was somebody actually saying ‘you have gone to sleep on the job. I notice it. We need to talk about how to stretch you and engage you a bit more’ and obviously nobody had done that for a long time (Interviewee Thirteen).

All the Heads in this group described the necessity for some sort of meaningful discussions about workload allocation and staff development given their turbulent environment and the ongoing escalation of demands on individual academics, including themselves as HOS.

Performance Planning Including Goal or Objective Setting

Three Heads described performance planning as centrally important, and saw it as a process of discussing, clarifying and agreeing performance expectations, setting goals in key areas and agreed action steps for achieving these. Each described this as encompassing performance in the immediate job, as well as goals and action steps related to professional development and performance enhancement. These ‘informal’ discussions were valued both as a means of keeping informed and in touch with staff as well as a primary device for communicating departmental and university goals and strategies. The significance, level of commitment and time they attached to these informal processes far outweighed that of many of those reported by HOS in the group of universities having a formal system.

They also reported that the informality of the discussions was an enabling factor. Every Head felt that the time they invested in informal discussions produced valuable outcomes. They noted that academic staff enjoyed it and communicated and explored things with their Head that they might

not otherwise have done. Additionally they reported that their knowledge of the total staff group as well as the individual's competency was increased.

Of course I got to know staff a lot better too. There were lots of people where I discovered all sorts of things that they could do and there were connections between staff that could also be made then because I could suggest link ups with other staff and so on. It was surprising how much people did reveal, they weren't trying to cover up or protect themselves or conceal things; they were very open (Interviewee Twenty).

As with formalised systems the drawback was also that of time.

It's an exorbitant time commitment and there were often things that had to be followed up (Interviewee Twenty).

Informal Performance Practices Using A 'Workload Formula'

All five Heads used informal processes to review performance around the common job requirements of an academic—teaching, research and original achievement, and university administration and leadership. However, the priority or weighting within these categories varied considerably. They identified the difficulty of accurately reflecting the academic role in a workload formula and of trying to accommodate different individual strengths and preferences within it and balancing this across a staff group.

Heads described a collaborative process for the development of their workload models analogous to the consultative processes being deployed in universities that were implementing a new PM system or re-designing their existing system.

Well it was a university-based thing and the unions and management sat down and worked out a set of general criteria and then sent it to the schools and recognised that every school is different with different needs. I asked for volunteers from the school for a workloads committee. I wanted one from each level, A to E and got that (Interviewee Thirty-six).

It seems that attempts to formalise workload models encountered the same dilemmas that implementation of a formal PM system would do.

Not all staff are happy about this. It seems the more you try and make things transparent the more people get a bit toey, because it actually risks highlighting where people might not be meeting a full workload requirement (Interviewee Twenty-eight).

Informal Processes and Dealing with High Performers

Every Head in this group described difficulties in rewarding and recognising their high performing staff with anything other than praise, and perhaps some preferential treatment in terms of departmental resources such as recommendations for conferences, research, post doctoral awards, compacted teaching load, references for increments and promotions, for example.

The reality is that I can't financially reward good performances. No-one has ever stopped me, but practically I couldn't do it because we just don't have the funds. On that basis I'm really only prepared to have monetary rewards attached to performance at school executive level where people carry management responsibilities and a great deal of weight (Interviewee Thirteen).

Informal Processes and Dealing with Under-Performance

When it came to dealing with situations of under-performance Heads outlined the extreme difficulties and disproportionate effort and time that could be consumed. They considered that there was a paucity of avenues and lack of systemic support to effectively deal with under-performance issues. Strategies such as using group pressure, clarifying and raising expectations, allocating additional responsibilities, close monitoring and initiating disciplinary procedures were all mentioned. As one put it,

if there's a case of someone clearly neglecting their duties then I try to persuade them to pull their weight, they're letting others down, talk about the reasons why they haven't lived up to their responsibilities, etcetera. I tend to give them quite a few chances when we

discuss issues to improve but if they don't it takes on a formal note and I act accordingly (Interviewee Five).

One Head had found that raising expectations often had useful side effects on the whole staff team.

Well it's really a lot of group pressure. We put the emphasis on collegiality and people pulling their weight and I pull them in and give them major tasks. One thing I have discovered as a manager is that nothing upsets staff more than the feeling that they are pulling someone else's weight (Interviewee Thirty-six).

Monitoring performance adequately was again described as problematic, particularly in the teaching area. 'It's very hard because you don't have a lot of evidence. You get a lot of hearsay without actual complaints from students in writing' (Interviewee Five).

Most stated that it was clearly unacceptable to do nothing about an under-performing staff member, but that there was little support to do anything. Interestingly enough, two Heads described the 'reputation' they had acquired as a result of taking steps to deal with under-performance.

Very few in this university at the management level have actually tackled that so I've become known as being 'bossy boots' and ready to 'have a go' at people. I've actually got one person on disciplinary proceedings pending dismissal from the university because they've been mucking up in a spectacular way, but that's been incredibly labyrinthine and complex with large amounts of legal advice being taken by the university behind the scenes (Interviewee Thirteen).

In the second instance, the Head stated that he had been

criticised for 'biting the bullet', but I have a philosophy that everybody is treated the same and expected to perform. When you have a totally different perception of the individual's performance to what they have, this is really where it gets extremely problematic and where you have to have a one-on-one (Interviewee Thirty-six).

Heads agreed that a clearly outlined, consistently applied and supported process for tackling such issues would be of enormous assistance. Primarily it seemed that the issue for Heads was the lack of agreed policies and procedures for dealing with under-performance and a strong belief that there was no historical precedent to demonstrate support from more senior staff to deal with problems of this nature. They reported that the tendency was therefore not to provide feedback about unsatisfactory performance at an early stage. As one said,

it would allow for more self-correction early in the piece. It would actually give people earlier notice of whether their performance was on track or off track and the need to adjust their behaviour (Interviewee Thirteen).

This lack of formalised procedures/approach to dealing with under-performance was a reflection of the wider lack of a formal PM system.

Reasons Given for not Favouring a more Formalised Approach

A range of reasons was given for not favouring a more formalised approach to PM. The majority of Heads reported that past attempts to implement staff appraisal schemes in their universities (as well as others they had worked at during their career) had met with staff resistance, including industrial action, apathy and resentment. These reactions continued to significantly influence their thinking with regard to the reintroduction of a formal PM scheme.

However, where the developmental nature of the interactions was emphasised it seemed possible to obtain good engagement from staff.

I think it works best when you get people on board and once you start making things mandatory there tends to be some resentment to that. That's why I concentrate more on the developmental focus (Interviewee Five).

Several Heads feared that staff would become uncooperative and collegiality would be reduced if they attempted to introduce standardised procedures or rules to codify PM practices.

Three different Heads described their sense of vulnerability with regard to staff, given a shortage of resources and additional, sometimes unpredictable environmental demands. One Head stated,

Staff can hurt you in many ways if they dig their feet in when you want favours and in this entrepreneurial environment you are often going begging cap in hand asking someone if they wouldn't mind going to Singapore in two weeks time, even though they have planned their holidays. It's got to be very much give and take (Interviewee Thirty-six).

Skills to Conduct Reviews

Every HOS in this group expressed concerns about the skill of reviewers to support a formal PM system, usually including themselves in this category. Whilst three stated that PM was within their area of professional competence, it was more usual for them to highlight deficiencies in their skill levels (or that of the staff expected to conduct reviews) and a lack of training or system support.

Some explained this in terms of a common issue cited in the management literature regarding the transition between two distinct professional role identities. Academic staff who move into a coordinating or leadership position (or take on some aspects of this role such as responsibility for conducting performance reviews) continue to see themselves as primarily an academic belonging to a specific discipline, rather than as managers. As one Head put it,

a lot of coordinators with academic backgrounds in their own discipline may not have ever managed programs, much less people. Unless one is determined and dedicated enough to really go into more long-term development programs, it doesn't happen (Interviewee Seventeen).

Or, as another put it,

technical proficiency in their profession doesn't equate to the skills of being a manager and one of those is around actually managing the performance of other people (Interviewee Ten).

The reason why several Heads opted to keep things informal rather than move to a formal PM system had to do with skill and timing. One stated,

A fair bit of training work might have to be done with discipline heads. They need to have a fairly high level of counselling skills, feedback skills and a reasonably systematic approach to setting some targets that are strategically aligned so that the individual and the discipline are all pulling together (Interviewee Thirteen).

Summary

Whilst these five universities had no formal PM system in place Heads of School systematically used informal processes to discuss performance planning and to provide staff with feedback about progress towards agreed goals. These HOS identified as critical the need for an effective means of discussing workload allocation and staff development, given the context of a turbulent external environment and the increased demands this placed upon individual academics, including themselves as HOS.

Every Head in this group described difficulties in rewarding their high performing staff and in effectively dealing with under-performance, although they did not believe that a formal PM system would offer much assistance in this regard. They identified a range of reasons for not favouring a more formalised approach, including unsuccessful past attempts to implement staff appraisal schemes in their universities.

Schools of Management with a Formal Performance Management System

Thirty-two Schools of Management either have a formal PM system or one in development or under review. The research questions focused on locating two levels or types of data. One was concerned with factual data identifying the formal practices within the university or part of the university. The other focused on the opinions and perceptions of Heads about these practices as well as the co-existing informal practices. Data is presented here in that order.

System Characteristics

In any organisation the naming and supporting terminology of the PM practices and systems is important, and is interpreted by participants as signalling something fundamental about the system itself. The terminology and naming of systems was therefore of interest to the researcher. Four basic ways of naming PM systems and practices emerged in the 32 schools, covering a wide range of terminology. Table 4.1 presents this range in four categories, together with a miscellaneous category, which are not mutually exclusive. In two cases the HOS did not know the name of the formal system which was instead obtained from the university website.

Table 4.1 Naming PM Systems and Practices (N = 32)

<i>Performance Review (PR) in name (10)</i>	<i>Performance Management (PM) in name (11)</i>	<i>Development in name (7)</i>	<i>Performance Enhancement (PE) in name (3)</i>	<i>Miscellaneous (5)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PR, Planning & Development • Academic PR System • Academic Staff PR Planning Program • PR Planning Process • Academic Annual PR • Performance Planning & Review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PM System • PM Plan • PM Program • Academic PM System • PM for Academic Staff • Managing for Performance • PM & Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance Development Process • Staff Development Review • Performance Development Review • Career Development Process • PM & Development • PE & Development Scheme (PEDS) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PE & Review for Academic Staff • PE & Development Scheme (PEDS) • PE & Support Process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance Planning System • Salary Supplementation Meetings • Annual Performance Assessment • Building Upon Individual Learning & Development (BUILD) • Annual Review

The majority of PM systems had been operating for between one and five years. In some instances these dates were estimates based upon the Head’s knowledge and/or website data that had not been updated in the last year. In five instances Heads stated that they did not know when the formal system had been introduced. Three quarters were either new or under review, with proposed changes ranging from minor modifications to major reorientations.

Table 4.2 PM Systems: Length of Operations (N = 32)

<i>Longevity</i>	<i>No.</i>
Less than 1 year	5
1 to 2 years	6
2 to 3 years	9
3 to 4 years	2
more than 4 years	5
don’t know	5
Total	32

Most systems operated on the calendar year and required interviews to be conducted either late in the year (October to December) or early in the following year (January to February). This reflected the fact that a high number of Heads perceived these interviews as a planning tool for the ensuing year. Either for reasons of convenience, planning, timetabling or habit, this was the general time frame, although sometimes workload pressure dictated a longer timeframe reflecting ‘the reality that it takes that long to get through them’ (Interviewee Sixteen).

Table 4.3 **Timing of Reviews (N = 32)**

<i>Timing of Reviews</i>	<i>No.</i>
October to December	16
January to February	9
Discretionary	2
Annually (date of appointment)	2
Biennially* * of which one was returning to annual reviews	3
Total	32

One Head stated that,

the only requirement really is that it is completed by middle of November, because by October we are determining preliminary timetables for the next year and it's a convenient time for us to start talking to staff about what our needs are as a School and how they can best meet those needs (Interviewee Thirty-two).

Some Heads found that the 'official' timing requirement was not suitable for their purposes so varied it within their own School.

It's actually supposed to be done on people's anniversary dates but I told the university I couldn't be doing them all the time. You lose your perspective across staff and also you can't integrate it with other sorts of plans (Interviewee Twenty-three).

Only in three instances was the timing of the interviews variable because it was based upon the date of appointment. Heads saw this as dysfunctional and believed that,

once the university realises that supervisors will probably procrastinate without any deadlines, then we'll probably develop some new ones (Interviewee Nineteen).

The vast majority of systems were based upon one interview conducted annually between the HOS and the academic staff member.

In three cases the formal system was based upon a biennial time frame, although one of the universities in this group was changing back to an annual system because of a high level of non-engagement or low take up rate. In one of these three, the Head described the biennial time frame as a critical factor to the success of their system.

We do it every two years because we recognise even in teaching you can run a course, review it and then run it again so the time span is quite long, reflecting the nature of the work that you are doing. And if they are working on big projects, which may not have directly produced things in the last two years like writing a book, then we are willing to take a six-year horizon for the research as well so that we get a sense of ongoing contribution (Interviewee Thirty-one).

Enterprise Bargaining Agreements, personnel policy and procedures, or the requirement to link in with other reporting processes (such as government reports compiled at the end of the year) mandated the timing of interviews in many universities. In over half the cases Heads said that pragmatically the timing was altered to fit around the time demands, task cycle and workloads they and their staff faced.

Some universities, however, required more than one review a year. Four interviewees said that their system formally required them to include an interim meeting as a critical part of the process (although there were many more websites that indicated this was a formal requirement) with another five stating that this was not a requirement, although they did it anyway.

Only one respondent noted a number of formal meetings during the year, although more respondents mentioned additional informal meetings.

Ideally there are four meetings per year. The first one is the goal setting and then there are two three-monthly interviews to check if the goals are still appropriate and whether they require modification. And there's a final evaluation one (Interviewee Eighteen).

No apparent link existed between the number of staff to be reviewed and how many meetings were held. The Head responsible for the greatest number of reviews held interim reviews for all staff and reported that he saw it,

as important to do if you're going to do this properly. It's really your early warning call and it's too late to be saying at the end of a review cycle that they should have told you there was a problem beforehand (Interviewee Twenty-One).

System Coverage

The systems covered both academic and general staff in eight of the 32 universities, although three respondents noted that that different criteria were applied to general staff reviews. The majority of universities (18 or just over 56%) used different systems for their academic and general staff. It was usually described as much more straightforward to introduce a PM system for general staff.

Who Does the Review?

In 21 cases an academic who was the Head of School, Department or discipline, was solely responsible or chose to be solely responsible for conducting the reviews. In 11 others, the conducting of reviews was delegated to senior staff. Five Heads believed that it was mandatory that they conducted the interviews although they were uncertain why. One Head stated,

I think it's to give consistency and the way we're structured the HOS has wide ranging powers and subsequently it enables staff to talk confidentially and comfortably with just the HOS (Interviewee Ten).

In many cases there was no clear sense of 'line management', and Heads commented on the effect this had in complicating PM practices. One stated that,

Universities are slightly idiosyncratic cultures, and they don't have the same tight line management relationships as many others do. So the issue of who does appraisal interviews is a complex one here (Interviewee Thirteen).

Another Head noted,

Bureaucracy is only getting worse as we become entrepreneurial, corporatised and all that stuff and it's not sitting well with staff. Unfortunately performance appraisal practice hits head on this area because the model the university has adopted is a straight down the line hierarchical, top down model. Given our past history (which is pretty much the same across the whole sector I have to say) this probably wasn't a great choice and staff have reacted as you'd expect (Interviewee Fifteen).

Flat and collegial university structures and inter-disciplinary teams dictated certain logical supervisory arrangements, although the span of control within each School and across Schools and universities varied considerably between Heads. Some had responsibility for conducting reviews of three staff and some had responsibility for conducting reviews of up to 60 staff, whom they described as reporting directly to them.

Table 4.4 shows the number of staff for which an individual Head of School had responsibility to conduct reviews. Only in four instances did this number include general staff for whom the Head of School conducted reviews. A general staff manager, Deputy Head or Administrative Manager, more commonly conducted the general staff reviews, with the HOS conducting the academic staff reviews.

Table 4.4 Number of staff reviews for which a HOS had responsibility (N = 32)

<i>Number of staff reviews</i>	<i>Number of HOS</i>
Up to 10	6
11–20	12
21–35	9
40–50	2
51–60	3
Total	32

Rarely was there a cap on the number of reviews a HOS might be required to do, despite the workload implications of a high span of control. Only two interviewees noted that their university's PM system design limited the HOS's review responsibility to 10 in one case and 15 in another.

One Head, in a university that was implementing a system for the first time, said he would do all of the reviews himself in this first year because it signalled the importance of the system, and then delegate them in the second year. The reasons he gave were that it was valued by staff as dedicated time with their Head and valued by him as vital information flow. Other Heads specifically noted the benefits they gained from the interview information.

Because my department's so diverse—we've got five disciplinary areas—it's where I find out where everyone is, how they're going, what's going on. It's a kind of reality check and an opportunity where people get to chat to me and me to them. This is dedicated time for me (Interviewee Twenty-one).

In another 11 cases the responsibility was delegated (usually on a shared basis) with senior staff members at the Associate Professor, Professor and Deputy Head levels, who occupied a role as subject or course discipline coordinator. As such they were in a position to see a much more representative sample of the person's work behaviour than the Head who was more focused on a strategic overview of management. In preparation for formal reviews, some systems required appraisees to undertake a self-review.

Self Review

Eleven respondents referred to a self-review process as an integral part of their system's practice with only one stating that this was optional.

All our policies are on the net so staff can use that to learn what's required, plus pull together some views of their own and come prepared (Interviewee Twenty-two).

When it's time for reviews I send out the reminder list of what they agreed to last year and if they can't find their list we'll talk about that and ask them to prepare a page of how

they think they've gone as an *aide memoire* rather than a thesis. They send it to me the week before we meet and if I have any different perception I can ask them to bring in extra supporting evidence. This is before we ever get to the interview. At the interview we go through their perceptions and my perceptions (Interviewee Seven).

Summary

In sum, there is some diversity in the names given to formal systems and the numbers of performance reviews for which one individual may be responsible. There was much similarity with respect to the timing of reviews and the reliance on one annual interview, approximately two-thirds of which were conducted by the Head of School, and one-third by senior staff. The majority of respondents reported the use of different systems for academic and general staff, and 75% indicated that the formal PM system was new or currently under review.

Beyond these formal system characteristics, the present study examined a number of other aspects.

Non-compliance

The majority of respondents indicated that there was a culture of non-compliance with the formal PM system and cynicism about its outcomes so that participation in required activities was best described as patchy and pretty casual, regarded as taking too much time and too hard, was markedly different from the official policy and practices espoused by HR managers and on the university website, was done for the first year or so then just fell away, or was questioned in terms of 'what happens if we don't do it?'

One respondent said,

We'll survey staff as we've done this year so we can find where the issues are but you can't take a real jack boot approach to it because there is this culture of non-compliance.

People from a business culture get very frustrated in higher education and don't know how to get things achieved here—academics just keep doing what they've always done and PM just doesn't happen (Interviewee Eleven).

Some university websites included well-developed and detailed PM policy and procedures, which the Head of School described as a HR system that just sits there. He said,

at the very least we might send the papers because we have to jump through that hoop but really nobody does it, the university is largely at war with it (Interviewee Twenty-three).

Most striking was one case where the 'official' HR policy indicated a PM system had been in place for over six years but the respondent had not participated in one PM interview in the time she had been at the university.

Over the years the management discipline has had different Heads and been located in different Schools due to restructures but as far as I recall I haven't gone through any performance management review, regardless of which School or position I have been in (Interviewee Seventeen).

Staff Engagement

The range of staff reactions varied with a minority of appraisees described as 'keen' especially if they were new staff coming in from business environments.

If they have come from industry I think their attitudes tend to be very different and they expect a degree of supervision and evaluation and sort of reward on development and merit and so forth and feel slightly uneasy if none of these things occur (Interviewee Thirty-five).

Respondents differed on this, however, with another Head stating that,

The newer people are a little more reticent. I think it's a learning process and the longer serving staff have been exposed to that and know that you're not going to be hit over the back of the head with a 'two-by-four,' and really are going to get something out of it that will help you (Interviewee Seven).

Respondents described the majority of staff as 'ambivalent', or alternatively 'happy although cynical'.

I think they see we are trying as a university, faculty and school to do something positive towards their careers. They may be cynical about some of the outcomes but at least it gives them the opportunities to express their desires as to where they'd like to teach and research and we try and accommodate individuals. By making it formal it makes people think about where they've been, where they're going and how they can improve along the way. You get caught in the everyday minutiae and the operational and you just don't have the time because you're just too busy treading water. At least this sits people down for an hour over a prescribed period of time every six months to review how they're going. Most people find it a positive experience (Interviewee Ten).

Respondents indicated that the Head's attitude was an important influence on staff engagement with the PM process.

I haven't heard any gossip, which I think means it's generally regarded positively. I think because I dwell on the positives and how we can move forward together it's considered at the very least as a bureaucratic annoyance but more usually as much better than that (Interviewee Sixteen).

Heads also believed there was a minority of 'unhappy' staff who perceived formal PM negatively.

I know in other parts of the university staff either refuse or don't turn up at appointed times and use every trick in the book to try and avoid the system but not in this part of the university. It's not compulsory (Interviewee Thirty-two).

There's a lot of angst about the formal system. It's been very negatively perceived as an example of a very mechanistic management methodology being applied in a knowledge management area where it's quite inappropriate. In terms of informal performance management, people have not seen it as part of a supervisor's role to undertake this. Supervisors sign off on leave forms quite frankly and even then you expect them to just sign them and not quibble! The idea that someone actually looks at your performance and provides feedback on that has been negatively perceived, but the culture of universities is changing (Interviewee Four).

Heads described gradual and grudging acceptance of formal PM systems by staff as a means of recognition for workload.

PM systems are gradually being introduced. I think it's a combination of adaptation to the reality of the changing character of universities—that they are being run differently and recognising that means you do have to do some things differently. I think it's also partly a reflection of people believing they're overworked and this is a way of demonstrating and documenting what they are doing (Interviewee Four).

Many Heads acknowledged that as more and more above-workload activities were folded into the 'normal' academic workload, staff discontent was increasing.

A cynic's point of view, not only in higher education, is that from a staff member's point of view, we are seeing performance management as trying to screw people more for less. Squeeze the last little extra bit of blood out of them (Interviewee Twenty-four).

Allied to this, Heads noted increased expressions of concern from staff regarding their autonomy and academic freedom.

Historically academics have resisted having any strong framework put around the exercise as well. It's just a matter of the degree of discretion they have had and handling their own workloads (Interviewee Twenty-five).

In addition to the range of reactions HOS reported of their staff, the data indicated a wide variety of practices around forms, processes and local adaptation.

Differential Practice

Within and across universities there is very different take up of the formal systems in terms of flexibility in the forms used, processes and local adaptation.

Every School in a Faculty might use their own version of documents and approach but pursue the same broad objectives. Some Heads described directives from central HR departments as largely irrelevant to actual practice.

The university wide system requires a form to be ticked off for formal purposes (it's a bit of a paper chase) once a year and covers both academic and general staff. Within this is quite a lot of latitude to tailor-make. We do the university stuff but there is a lack of clarity about what they really want. Our own system is about improved dialogue not assessment (Interviewee Two).

The Head's role in adopting and interpreting a formal system is pivotal.

The process depends very much on the Head of School so you get considerable and significant variation. Someone who would be clearly unsatisfactory in one school will be getting a tick in another school (Interviewee Twenty-six).

Some Heads would have liked more direction around implementation and conducting of PM processes than they received.

Central HR provides a central Performance Review system or a set of policies about staff performance and workload and then within your own schools and cultures you can interpret that any way you like. We have absolute freedom. In fact we're probably looking for a lot more guidance from the central part of the university but they're pretty overburdened with other things (Interviewee Six).

Or as another respondent put it,

I suspect it's very sort of idiosyncratic. The picture might well be different in different schools depending on a range of things such as the nature of the Head of School, the workload. There's another factor in there too. If people are still going through increments in their scale there is a formal requirement that going to the next increment is approved by the Head each year (Interviewee Thirty).

Summary

A majority of Heads of School indicated that there is a culture of non-compliance where formal PM processes are concerned, a wide variety of staff reactions and differential take-up of systems within and across the university. A number of factors were relevant here including recognition for

increased workload, previous experience with systems, concerns about autonomy and the Head's attitude.

System Orientation and Purposes

The formal documentation collected (including published information on university websites) shows the espoused purposes of the existing PM systems to be diverse, although the predominant focus was developmental. Heads of School for 30 out of the existing 32 universities with a formal system (including those currently under review) stated that it was primarily developmental. They also consistently identified this as a key factor in obtaining or retaining academic staff engagement with the formal system. They emphasised that any PM system that purported to make academic staff more accountable or that mentioned evaluative links to performance-related pay was perceived as unacceptable by academic staff.

These 30 respondents said their university's formal system had been initially introduced for a range of reasons, including that it was supposed to enable staff work objectives to be better integrated with other planning processes at the school, faculty, departmental and university levels and to ensure accountability and equitable treatment of staff in the university. Most Heads also said they used the formal PM system to enable them to provide feedback to staff about their performance, develop the means to recognise and reward outstanding performance, and to manage staff workloads. Table 4.5 outlines seven developmental sub-purposes identified by respondents. Aside from workload allocation (characteristic of all 30 systems), discussion of each sub-purpose follows.

Table 4.5 PM Systems with a Developmental Focus (N = 30)

<i>Sub-purpose</i>	<i>No. of respondents</i>
Workload allocation	30
Performance Planning	24
Performance Review	26
Career development	7
Staff development	6
Communication	9
Feedback	5

Performance Planning

According to the documentation, 24 out of the 32 existing systems had some sort of forward looking, performance planning component involving the negotiation and mutual agreement upon performance goals or objectives at the beginning of each cycle. The terminology differed, with descriptions such as a performance plan, work plan, future activities plan, engagement profile, statement of responsibilities, all being used. Most respondents stated that the primary purpose of these activities was the management of staff workload. Discussions were generally informed by some sort of workload formula, guidelines, points system or workload allocation model but, as one might expect, they all included teaching performance, research and original achievement, and university administration or leadership as the three key areas of academic responsibility.

Weighting and the emphasis between these factors varied considerably across universities with some institutions attempting to recognise that academic staff might not be interested in or skilled at both teaching *and* research for example.

Performance Review

From the documentation it appears that 26 out of the 32 existing systems had some sort of retrospective review of performance, involving a summary and discussion of the staff member's

work activities over the preceding twelve months. Evidently two institutions undertook retrospective reviews without the preceding activity of performance planning or goal setting. The terminology again differed with descriptions such as the Annual Report, Activities Report, Performance Review, Achievement Report, Learning and Development Review all being used.

Staff Development and Career Development

Heads identified as important, opportunities to explore the professional development needs and career aspirations of individual staff and of the group overall as it aligned with strategic goals. The majority of respondents described a focus on identifying a Development Plan, Career Development Plan or Professional Development Plan, although they did not believe that the formal PM system provided much assistance in actually developing academic staff, describing the 'formal system as a waste of time such as it is' (Interviewee Fourteen).

An additional seven respondents referred to career development discussions, placing the emphasis strongly upon the development of junior staff, with the more mature academic being entrusted with the management of their own development. One Head stated,

I think the developmental parts are the main thing junior colleagues get. If you want to be promoted you need quality book chapters or articles, you need to have a long-term plan of your own. I think a lot of junior colleagues are looking around for a senior mentor in shining armour to come along and rescue them, which is pretty rare. Or they enter into relationships with senior staff where the junior colleague is the tail and it very seldom wags the dog in this game; it can be quite an exploitative relationship (Interviewee Twenty-six).

Heads felt a strong responsibility to help academic staff manage their careers and some noted that this had been under-managed in the past with newly appointed junior faculty brought in and 'we didn't do much with them'. Sometimes this meant letting someone know that 'we really don't think you will make it but we will help you look for another place' (Interviewee Thirty-one), but it was seen to be a critical part of the growth and development of academics for a Head to fulfil this role.

The ancillary benefit of discussing careers, even at senior level, was the ability it provided Heads to factor individual career aspirations into the school's strategic direction and match individual staff strengths and development areas across the school. Sometimes this enabled the Head to direct staff energies to certain directions that the staff member may not otherwise have been considered, but which were productive for the individuals and strategically for the School and university.

The relationship between staff development, career development and formal PM practices seemed often unclear. One Head summarised the opinion of several respondents when he claimed that,

We've had two parallel processes; career development, which is about feedback, career objectives, reviewing progress, counselling, coaching, etcetera, in a very non-threatening way. We introduced a performance assessment process that runs parallel to that. It basically requires staff to develop the same type of information. The difference is this *is* about performance review and appraisal not purely career development. It's actually a very artificial distinction that's been imposed on universities and eventuated due to union reluctance in the past to see the two brought together (Interviewee Nine).

Several Heads expressed the view that PM is increasingly irrelevant to a staff member as their academic career progresses.

Performance management generally is very much dependant for its effectiveness and leverage upon the stage of the career of the individual concerned. So, early in the career, I think that colleagues would normally require quite a bit of developmental advice and a degree of evaluation and would tend to be more sympathetic and pro-active about it. In middle career I think people are less inclined towards this, given that university academics tend to be inclined towards autonomous work patterns and achievement. So they would only engage to the extent that they could see some particular benefit. The third category of people are in the later stages of their career and aged fifty plus and to be honest I would think many of them would have little interest in either development or performance management. For them, they are fully conversant with what they do, and although they

appreciate the need to change and develop over time in response to student demands and requirements and university initiatives and so forth, they do so with different degrees of willingness and enthusiasm. But it's not really an engagement. So that's a major problem you know (Interviewee Thirty-five).

Motivating, developing and evaluating people who are focusing on their retirement was described as difficult. Effectively managing someone at the top of the scale who is performing well, when there are no tangible rewards to offer other than praise, was also identified as problematic.

It's very frustrating to go through this process with someone at the top of their salary scale who is actually producing good stuff and have nowhere to go except into a completely separate process; and going through the internal promotions committee system particularly to get from senior lecturer to associate professor is hopeless (Interviewee Twenty-three).

Communication

Five respondents referred to the capacity of formal PM interviews to identify staff areas of strength and interest that may not have been previously known. Another three stated that PM interviews enabled the Head to clarify directions for staff and communicate what was required, especially when this did not seem to be understood or valued.

It gives you a sense of where there are problems and issues in the school that need to be confronted and a chance to give some reasonable advice in an environment which is not too threatening. It also gives you a sense of where the resources of the school could be better spent (Interviewee Twenty-two).

Given the more strategic orientation of a HOS it is logical to expect that they may be marginally or substantially removed from day-to-day activities. Not only did the formal PM interviews create occasion for dialogue with staff, but they also enabled the Head to gain a more balanced picture of staff performance. As one Head noted,

What I tend to end up accumulating is a whole lot of bad experiences about different individual members of staff, because my discussions during the year with them are about the bad things that have happened. This means I sometimes get to explore other more positive aspects of their performance and even things out a bit (Interviewee Twenty-three).

The time allocated to reflection and dedicated communication between the Head and an individual staff member was often mentioned as critical.

I can't say I'm looking forward to it but it's a way for me to communicate, a vehicle for dedicated communication time between myself, as HOS, and each staff member (Interviewee Nineteen).

Sometimes the communication took the form of an individual or collective 'reality check'. One respondent reflected upon his experience of coming in to a school that required significant change and using the performance reviews to communicate his expectations. As he described it,

this School was known for never having produced a publication in its life and the staff said that was their intention to continue that way and they liked it like that. I actually sat with each individual to develop a program as to how they could lift their game and I just told them they would be leaving and finding other jobs if they didn't, because I wasn't going to put up with that (Interviewee Twenty-three).

Feedback

This was noted as a separate reason for the existence of a formal PM system in the sense that it was specifically mentioned nine times by respondents in the context of needing a formal mechanism to enable feedback.

If there was no system, you would never hear feedback from your Head of School as to what he or she thinks of your contributions (Interviewee Twenty-three).

The reasons proffered for this failure, on behalf of Heads, to provide ongoing, informal feedback, clustered around either the individual nature of the Head or the busy role he or she occupied. Many

Heads reported that the extent to which people got damaged in past ‘feedback’ transactions lingered in the collective academic memory when it came to PM systems. They suggested that a key staff attitude was the widespread fear of receiving unskilled feedback that was still common and felt to be based upon historical precedent.

People actually fear the process because they think they are going to be clobbered in the hands of an amateur who has no clue what they are doing, and in fact they may have been in the past. The previous Dean and the previous structure here were noted for having virtually zero feedback skills; I mean so profoundly dysfunctional that he fed one person into oblivion, and lost her in the process. That episode was pretty widely known (Interviewee Thirty-seven).

Evaluative

Far fewer respondents described their formal system as having an evaluative purpose. Only eight interviewees, three of whom were in a Graduate School of Management (GSM), described an evaluative component, although what this actually meant was varied. These interpretations ranged across supplementary payments, ratings, and the process of working towards PRP. Supplementary payments included salary increments, bonuses, and market loading concepts. Four Heads saw their system as an evaluative one because it involved a system of ratings at the end of the year and ‘assessed’ staff performance. Two respondents suggested that this emphasis on evaluation lay in their HR Department’s way of ‘softening people up’ to move towards a salary-linked PM system. Table 4.6 outlines aspects of the evaluative component described by the eight respondents.

Table 4.6: PM Systems with an Evaluative Component (N = 8)

<i>Sub-purpose</i>	<i>No. of respondents</i>
Supplementary payments/bonus /market loadings	3
‘Satisfactory’ needed for increment	7
Ratings applied	4
Double increments* * to accelerate promotion	3

Some Heads referred to the requirement that academic staff gain satisfactory performance ratings if they were to obtain a yearly salary increment, although most described this as just a meaningless requirement that could not realistically be withheld without a great deal of industrial unrest and difficulty. One university was in the process of linking remuneration to performance, and was aiming to draw together a number of existing systems that hitherto had been disparate and not governed by an over-arching set of guidelines.

Two respondents stated that they would like to be able to link the system to salary in a meaningful way but did not see this as either possible or probable in the near future given traditional union attitudes to such a concept. One university’s PM system included ‘provision for staff members to receive performance payment on the basis of outstanding performance’ (Interviewee Thirty-seven). This proved to be a major sticking point with the system’s reputation and use and was shelved, following an evaluation of the system.

Salary Linked

Given the different organisational structures of some of the GSMs and their independence from centralist policies governing employment contracts, several HOS outlined the additional flexibility that they had around employment contracts and pay rates. As one respondent said,

Obviously we have to behave ourselves and do the right thing under the Industrial Relations Law but it gives us more flexibility mainly in the upward area, paying rates which would normally be above most university administration remunerations. Given that we pay an average of about 50% supplementary payments there is quite a lot of money involved here. Those supplementary payments all come from the funds that we generate so we have more flexibility than your standard faculty (Interviewee Thirty-one).

Two Heads mentioned the possibility of obtaining accelerated promotion through double increments.

If staff perform very well and they are not at the top of the rank I go to my Dean and recommend that the individual has a double increment instead of a single increment. It gives them a bit more money but that's not the main issue; it pushes them further up the rank and allows them to apply for promotion a bit earlier (Interviewee Thirty-eight).

Three of the eight GSM respondents used a system of market loadings for their more experienced and senior staff (which included those at Levels B and C) although members of other universities referred to this process disparagingly.

Market loadings can basically be described as a system of salary augmentation to attract academics to enter or remain in the university system. By allowing them to apply for an additional loading on top of their salary that is reflective of their potential earning capacity in the external community, these Heads of GSMs argue that they are less likely to lose good staff.

One Head expressed the view that staff should be told,

Well go and earn it and most of them couldn't. That's probably cynical but for 'X university', for example, you are offered 25% loading if you are offered a job because only the very best get offered a job and they know that their salaries alone won't attract the best (Interviewee Fifteen).

The relationship between market loadings and PM was not a straightforward or consistent one among those who used such a system. One respondent believed that over time the loadings tended to go to the most capable people anyway.

So I suspect it is not linked formally to the outcome of the reviews because the reviews simply confirm what you already know and which is already obvious to everybody in the school in terms of performance (Interviewee Thirty-two).

Another stated that the connection was an unequivocally clear and strong one and that his management of the PM process signalled the performance required to the wider university community. He stated that it was the norm for academics to retain their market loading and that,

in most schools in this campus no one plays around with the market loadings. It's ongoing unless staff performance drops although I've taken market loading away from a person for a lack of performance, so it sends the right message around the campus that here, you have to perform (Interviewee Six).

Summary

The vast majority of Heads described their formal PM system as primarily developmental rather than evaluative and said that they used the system for performance planning, review, staff and career development, communication and feedback purposes. They consistently identified this as a key factor in obtaining or retaining academic staff engagement with the formal PM system, although they also noted its irrelevance of existing PM system activities to academic staff as they progressed in their careers.

The eight respondents who identified their formal PM system as having an evaluative component discussed the use of salary increments, market loadings, supplementary payments or ratings. The findings confirm that the use of PRP remains low in the sector.

Links to Other University Systems

The picture that emerges from these interviews of HOS in the 32 universities with PM systems, is predominantly one where PM systems are not integrated with the central policies, systems, strategy or direction of the university at any organisational level—departmental, school, faculty or university-wide. There are some exceptions to this generalisation. Some PM systems were described as generating data for making decisions on specific matters although there was little consistency across the sector. Table 4.7 outlines the nature and existence of these links and related discussion follows.

Table 4.7: PM Systems–Links with other University systems (N=32)

<i>University System</i>	<i>No. Linked</i>	<i>Nature of Link</i>
Centralised PA/PM system	21	Not good 14
University-wide strategic plan	8	Poor/vague 8
Divisional, Departmental or School plans	4	Not good 3
Promotional system	4	None
	Most	Unspecified/vague/optional
Probationary system	6	Strong
	Others	Unhelpful
Tenure	3	Poor
Disciplinary system	None	Not mentioned in general
Enterprise Bargaining Agreement	22	Mandated
	20	Problematic
Staff development processes	6	Production of a Development Plan
	9	Poor connection between SD outcomes and the PMS

The Centralised University Performance Management System

Twenty-one respondents acknowledged a link between the centralised appraisal or PM system and their own PM practice, but of these 14 described it as ‘a waste of time such as it is’ (Interviewee Fourteen). Central systems were described as overly formal, overly bureaucratic and complex or paradoxically over-simplified and essentially under-integrated.

Strategic Plans

Whilst eight respondents noted a link with the PM practices and the university’s Strategic Plan each of them characterised this link as poor or vague, while wishing it were stronger. Several Heads saw themselves as the linking node between staff and this level of planning but described this as a problematic responsibility due to the limited time they had to communicate these plans in any depth. Establishing the inter-connections between individual effort and higher order plans was seen as critical to motivating staff but also as a very time-consuming task. It was, however, seen as an area where significant improvement needed to occur in the short term. Efforts in this direction were noted.

The university is doing a lot of things, which would indicate that it’s very serious about aligning things with strategic goals and actually caring about individuals and how they fit into the picture. So rather than just talking about it there’s a lot of structural things happening, there’s a lot of resources going into different places and there’s genuine actions behind what’s being said (Interviewee Thirty-nine).

Divisional, Departmental or School Plans

At the next level of planning the picture that emerged was not much stronger, with four respondents stating that Divisional, Departmental or School Plans were integrated with individual performance planning and management, but three of those describing the links as ‘not good’.

The Promotional System

Four respondents stated that there was no link between the promotional system and the PM system but most said the link was either unspecified, vague or an optional one for the individual staff member to make if it suited them. This was seen as a critical systemic link for any PM process, given that academics were described as 'promotion driven'. Several Heads described how the absence of this link weakened the credibility of a PM system. All too common in their experience were situations where a staff member was considered to be patently under-performing, received that feedback through the performance review system and yet was successful in obtaining a promotion. In five cases this was given as the primary reason for a major system review being undertaken.

Academics are tuned up to promotion and the promotion process has got nothing to do with performance appraisal—the panel can't ask for the current or past performance appraisal. So all Heads of Departments are quite frustrated that we go through this process and we see someone getting promoted and it just bears no relationship with what we are doing in a performance appraisal. People get promoted because they tell a good story to this panel (Interviewee Twenty-four).

There are cultural and historical impediments to this link being successfully established. As one respondent put it,

Historically promotion was given as an appeasement to keep people out of the limelight and to shut them up where there have been industrial relations and other problems surrounding their performance (Interviewee Twenty-five).

The Probationary System

Six respondents stated that there were strong links between the probationary system and the PM system, although others noted the discrepancy in timing between the two processes and described formal PM systems as inflexible and unable to provide much help in informing the other. If formal PM interviews are scheduled for set times of year that do not coincide with appointments

throughout the year then they are of little use to probationary decisions. Some Heads held a broader interpretation of 'PM' and thought that ongoing feedback and monitoring throughout the probationary period assisted them in making appointment decisions. Most felt that the cycle times of the two respective formal systems did not integrate sufficiently to be of much assistance to them. The result was often appointment of an unsuitable staff member who was then characterised as 'difficult to manage' or a 'performance problem'.

Tenure

Only three Heads specifically mentioned a relationship to tenure and there was a surprising lack of emphasis on this area. The researcher had assumed that PM feedback and monitoring would facilitate better decisions around tenure decisions. Reasons named for a poor formal link between tenure and PM processes included concerns about industrial action arising from the perceived lack of ability to 'make a case' for inadequate performance, particularly given the under-specification of role requirements and the difficulties in 'measuring' performance.

The Disciplinary System

In the main disciplinary action was just not mentioned as having any link to the formal PM system. This aligns with the predominant emphasis in these 32 universities on developmental rather than evaluative PM systems.

The Enterprise Bargaining Agreement (EBA)

Twenty-two respondents stated that their university PM system was linked to the EBA, and formally mandated as a part of 'improved people management practice'. Twenty of these respondents described this as a problematic link, and believed that the implementation of compulsory PM had resulted in few real changes.

The EBA for the university says annual performance review must be done, but it's up to each school as to how they manage this and their own performance management culture and it's patchy at best (Interviewee Six).

Another respondent said that,

Since 1995 there's been an EBA policy on performance management trying to bring together things such as performance, promotion, probation, etcetera, but it's taken until the beginning of 1999 to do this. It was seen as a lower priority than other things (Interviewee Two).

Staff Development Processes

Discussions about staff development and career development were previously identified as critical purposes of formal PM systems. Only six respondents specifically referred to the production of a Development Plan (whether oriented towards the current job or future jobs and career) to support this, and nine respondents alluded to poor connections and integration between staff development outcomes and the PM system. Many respondents viewed the identification of a Development and/or Career Plan to assist staff as a primary purpose of formal systems. The actual delivery of planned development was described as often compromised due to lack of resources, including time, to release staff in an increasingly pressured university environment.

I have got a couple of staff that have identified a number of courses they could attend to improve specific skills. These inevitably have quite significant resource implications but it's often difficult to be able to do the things that staff believe are necessary to improve their capabilities in the classroom (Interviewee Thirty-two).

Summary

Overall, respondents identified a lack of integration between their PM systems and other university processes and procedures. They believed this weakened the credibility of the formal system with staff, who did not view it as a meaningful way to enhance their work performance or career prospects.

Formal System Development or Transition

New Systems

At the time of conducting the interviews eight of the existing 32 PM systems were new and either yet to be introduced or in the very early stages of implementation. The majority of these eight Heads said they did not know exactly why a formal system was being introduced at this time although three provided specific reasons. In contrast, one Head, whilst recognising the limitations and time burden of formal systems, said she was increasingly too busy and distanced from her staff to know what was going on without the formal mechanism.

Actually seeing it as your responsibility to give people constructive feedback is not something that happens regularly in this university. A performance management system formalises the expectation that it will be part of your supervisory role and that you have been appropriately trained to do it. What that means from my experiences is that without a system people will mealy mouth around the issue infinitely and never cut to the chase (Interviewee Ten).

Downsizing and restructures, including moves towards multi-campus sites, meant that issues of quality of delivery and content became more critical to monitor. Restructuring was described as the catalyst for a new PM system for a number of reasons.

Re-profiling of the school has meant that we had to downsize and shed some staff. Were it not for that trigger I am not sure that I would have legitimately been able to get in and create opportunities for feedback discussions but they occurred as part of the process and follow-through. People decided they were useful so a formal system was considered (Interviewee Fourteen).

In the increasingly competitive university environment, increased priority is being given to PM systems as a way of evaluating the outcomes and quality of academic work in terms that justify the allocation of resources. One respondent speculated upon the fact that universities might

contain the necessary knowledge to design academic 'user friendly' PM systems but this was seldom accessed given it was ascribed a lower priority in a time of organisational change.

An issue in our school that we talk a lot about is the time lag between the thinking about performance management that goes on in schools of management and the kinds of PM systems that are introduced by the university. And the fact that the university is behind in the sort of system that it introduces and in current thinking; and, in fact, wondering why it should be that we're not at the cutting edge but right back on the trailing edge. Not recognising the need for much more flexible, interactive and responsive systems but using relatively formulistic kinds of systems. I don't know how we get around that. I think that that's a symptom of a system and an institution that's undergoing change, trying to explore new directions. My own expectation is that this exploration and reorientation is likely to go on for some time and that whilst that's the case we're less likely to see more sophisticated and forward thinking performance management practices and more likely to rely on what's already been tried and tested (Interviewee Four).

One respondent's comment epitomises the view of many Heads when he stated that 'proper management of work is not historical here' (Interviewee One). It was described as a slow but gradual cultural change for universities to introduce a PM system that reflected a more strategic way of managing.

Up until now the kind of data that's tended to be recorded has been simply to list things—research projects, teaching responsibilities that they may have been involved in. Gradually this is changing to include more outcome-focused information and to maybe making it truly related to performance management (Interviewee Four).

Review of Existing Systems

A review of the documentary data and evidence from the interviews indicates that PM in universities is currently an area of significant activity. Of the existing 32 systems, 16 were either in development or under review. The reasons for this were manifold and the planned changes ranged from minor modifications to major changes and reorientations. In each case a key element

driving the transition was that the existing situation and/or system was unacceptable to those meant to use it—the academic staff. The reasons why it was perceived as unacceptable resembled those cited by the five Heads whose university did not have a formal PM system and who did not favour its introduction: staff resistance, industrial unrest, inappropriateness for the university culture, escalating workload demands and administrative requirements, diminishing time and the lack of skilled reviewers.

These 16 respondents from universities whose existing system was undergoing review also provided additional reasons for likely changes. These included its overly complex nature, the need to improve its strategies and integrative links, its lack of effect and perceived irrelevance, the desire to conform to a ‘normative’ benchmark and the impediments posed by unions.

Overly Complicated Systems

Some existing systems were perceived as unnecessarily complex which obscured their purpose and did not suit the culture, as indicated by the University of Tasmania’s review.

It seems that one of the fundamental problems with the current system concerns the definition of purpose. The system seems to be a vehicle for improving a range of organisational problems—communication, the development of a strategic planning culture, and performance assessment—and as a consequence is rather too complex and sophisticated for easy implementation. The culture in which it is being introduced is not yet ready for the complexity, for spending the time necessary for success, and may not have the management skills across all units necessary for success (University of Tasmania 2001, p. 11). Several reviews argued for narrowing the focus of the formal system and reducing elements formerly included, such as the university that had found its purposes to be too ambitious in the current climate of change. Its system had been actively disowned by academic staff and as such was achieving little, other than polarising opinions and creating industrial unrest.

Several respondents believed that an understanding of university cultures gained through internal managerial roles was critical.

I think the real danger with many new university managers is that they haven't managed elsewhere. They think the way to manage is to run it like an industry unit where there are tight rules and proscribed behaviours and you treat people like dogs. You treat them like that and they start behaving like that (Interviewee Fourteen).

There was a view that knowledge of university cultures and context informed good PM system design.

The university initially started off with a very structured thing and rating scales were a part of that. But there was going to be a fair bit of displeasure amongst the academics with that system so this School put forward an informal submission to the process that was far more open ended and qualitative. Sure it's got evaluation in there, which I think is important but it's in a context of career planning and staff development. As part of the submission we did a literature search on knowledge workers in general—not just academics. What we found was strong opinion that you do not manage knowledge workers with tight numeric indicators; it's sort of counter to the whole ethos of them, and I'd personally agree with that (Interviewee Sixteen).

This was a controversial issue, with some Heads subscribing strongly to the notion of the university as a corporate or business entity and the need for feedback from PM systems to ensure that academic staff are accountable and contribute to business sustainability. As one respondent said,

If everyone was professional and just did their job then it'd be a great place to work. I had a colleague recently say to me that I shouldn't be trying to manage this as a business—it's a university. And I said to this person that with a budget in excess of four million dollars how could I manage it any other way? We are businesses and make a significant contribution to the national economy. Over 30% of our revenue comes from DETYA funds, the rest from earned income, most of that from international programs. International students will put up with a lot to come and sit at the master's feet but if the master's never there for them to sit at his [sic] feet or assess the work done, then over a

period of time that business source of revenue is in jeopardy. We have a lot of academics who see students as impediments along the road—a great place to work if we didn't have the students—and I have a problem with that type of mentality and culture (Interviewee Ten).

Equally, many Heads characterised this business mentality as an infringement on academic independence and freedom and saw PM as a tool of the 'managerialist' and thus unacceptable. This was felt by respondents to be particularly true of those staff who had been in the university system for a longer time and essentially had a different psychological contract around their work with the university.

The rules have changed and I guess that's part of the problem. A lot of the academics have been around for some time and the contract that they thought they were getting when they got into the game is so different to what it is now. I think there is a line between the theory and the practice and while we are quite happy to say this is how it should be done, when it actually affects *us* sometimes that's not quite so easy to accept (Interviewee Twenty-five).

Streamlining the System by Improving its Strategic and Integrative Links

Several universities intended to widen the terms of reference and the elements included in their PM systems, streamline timing issues and integrate it with other university systems, including value statements about inter-relationships with people and enhancing knowledge.

From this year onwards we have drawn together all these things that were in existence but all very disparate and they weren't really collected into one over-arching set of guidelines (Interviewee Eighteen).

The university has a very important value statement at the front of its corporate plan and one major component is a distinguishing and somewhat unique thing and it relates to knowledge and it talks about autonomy, academic freedom, and pursuit of truth. The

underpinning philosophy is about recognition and most folk like to be recognised for what they do even if they are autonomous (Interviewee Thirty-four).

Lack of Impact and Perceived Relevance

The significance and level of commitment to the formal PM system varied from those Heads (and staff) who characterised it as fundamentally important, to those who described it as crap. On the positive side respondents said,

I certainly see it as an important process and because it was introduced when I came here people know I do attach quite a lot of importance to a reasonable level of performance. That gets communicated from me as a manager, part of our culture. I actually do what I say I'll do. If they don't perform I'll take appropriate action, and when they do I'll reward that (Interviewee Twelve).

Less positively, one stated,

I think most people think it's crap, because it doesn't link properly with the outcomes. It's all the paperwork. I think they think 'oh well so what's going to happen?' (Interviewee Twenty-three).

Another noted the influence of past practice.

The previous Director didn't bother doing reviews because he thought this was a load of bull...and in fact some of the staff do too. Quite a few of the staff think 'well it doesn't do anything, it doesn't go anywhere,' and these are the people who haven't come yet and made an appointment to do it (Interviewee Twelve).

Five Heads noted that their system was viewed as superficial, irrelevant, an onerous imposition in terms of additional workload or in some way 'out of fit' for its purposes by academic staff.

Participation in many PM systems is not compulsory. Some respondents perceived this as contributing to their irrelevance.

Not being mandatory allowed people to think it was not important. Also those who needed it most were most likely to avoid it as too threatening (Interviewee Eleven).

Some also questioned whether it was worthwhile both in time and cost factors and the money to develop it, particularly if there were insufficient resources to follow through on commitments such as training and development.

There's a lot of lack of confidence in how to push it forward. I suppose even among the literature available there hasn't been a very effective way of managing performance and of course the system will need to be really perceived to be worthwhile both in its time and cost factors and the money to develop it. Eventually you are identifying so many developmental needs and yet we don't go through with it (Interviewee Seventeen).

Benchmarking

As the incidence of PM systems increased across the sector, so did the desire to learn from the experience of other universities as well as the wish to ensure they were not behind some supposed 'normative' benchmark. During interviews the researcher was usually asked to comment on others' systems or how the respondent's university compared.

Anything which you can feed back to me about what's being done elsewhere or what's happening or not happening elsewhere is useful for me because it fills me in a bit and maybe will kick start some ideas about what I might try next (Interviewee Three).

Several interviewees also noted that an important part of their system's development process (or part of the re-development occurring currently) was research and discussion with other Australian universities.

Union Involvement

Union involvement in facilitating review of systems was described variously as obstructionist and polarising, through to not particularly adversarial and commendable in trying to work through problems with the university.

Academia is fairly heavily unionised and a lot of staff have a world-view that's essentially a socialist one. So you come against many of their ingrained world-views about managers and corporatisation, etcetera, so you do have those sorts of hassles. Having said that I think the Union here is not particularly adversarial, it tries to work through problems with the university (Interviewee Ten).

There was some acknowledgement of the need to protect staff and that unions played an important role in this respect. It was seen as unfortunate that the union management and the university management have thoroughly industrialised PM processes. Some Heads believed that union involvement in designing or re-designing systems had seen central elements of the PM system watered down to such an extent it was probably not workable anyway.

Summary

Findings show that PM is currently an area of substantial activity, with 75% of the existing systems being either new, in development or under review. Respondents identified several reasons for this activity including the need to simplify systems, better integrate them with other university systems, benchmark within the sector and involve unions in negotiating systems that were more acceptable and relevant to academic staff.

Implementation Processes

Most systems that were in transition or development had incorporated multi-level consultations with staff, unions and management representatives to facilitate discussion about the suitability and acceptability of a proposed system, following Enterprise Bargaining negotiations.

It was developed using a steering committee that included external consultants, union, general and academic staff members who developed guidelines that were then piloted in five or six places. Briefing sessions were used to allow a lot of the angst to be expressed (Interviewee One).

In addition, three PM systems had had pilot tests, and a further three a gradual or staggered implementation. Table 4.8 outlines the details.

Table 4.8: PM Systems–Implementation Processes (N= 32)

<i>Process</i>	<i>No. of respondents</i>
Pilot-tested	3
Staggered	3
Consultations via:	
• Focus groups	5
• With academic staff	7
• With general staff	4
• Joint union and management	32
• External consultants used	4

Gaining the participation of academic staff and union members was described as difficult in several cases.

The academic working party had as wide a cross-section as possible with gender representation, age, hierarchical levels covering from Level A right up to our own Vice Chancellor. Getting general staff to participate was no problem at all. With the academics we ended up with eight, which isn't huge. They were in the loop for decisions that were made by the working parties, which kept circulating all that back but there was no input and no response from staff that was sent out and not a huge commitment to it (Interviewee Twenty-five).

A number of respondents referred to a 'staggered' implementation process where, for example, 50% of academic staff were to be reviewed during the first year of a system with the rest to follow within three to five years or the use of pilot tests to determine system 'fit' for staff.

Respondents described consultative implementation processes as time-consuming, although critical. The time involved in communicating the iterations a developing system went through and dealing with issues of concern was substantial. Four respondents noted that an external consultant had been employed to assist.

Training to Support System Implementation

One of the most problematic aspects of system implementation, both initially and as a continuing factor, was training for participants. Table 4.9 shows the range of responses.

Table 4.9: PM Systems – Training to Support Implementation (N= 32)

<i>Training</i>	<i>No. of respondents</i>
None	8
For supervisors and managers	22 compulsory (8 indicating mandatory requirement for conducting reviews)
For staff	3 (1 indicating optional)
Flexible methods used	5
Don't know yet	2

Eight respondents stated that no specific training was offered and that other existing processes were expected to fulfil the requirements for skill development.

Our university certainly has promotion committees or merit and equity committees where you learn about interview process, structuring interviews, asking questions, managing all of that with respect to promotion processes. It's not exactly for performance management but it gives you a few tips and it's a big help. There's very little that you get as a Head of School to assist you with the hard cases (Interviewee Thirty-eight).

Twenty-two respondents indicated that it was compulsory for supervisors and managers to undergo training with eight indicating that this was a mandatory requirement in order to conduct review interviews. In one instance the training approach was an intensive one that was extremely well received by staff, especially supervisory staff. Significant resources had been committed to the implementation of this system, which was characterised as a cultural change the university was implementing.

We are into implementing the first cycle and we have trained about 400 supervisors and 2000 members of staff in this philosophical approach. We talked to them about how they talked, about how they use listening skills, encouragement skills, reinforcement and developing trust. People really appreciate what we are trying to do and the focus is very strongly developmental (Interviewee Thirty-four).

Most Heads indicated a very different response to training. In the main it was seen as an effort to persuade people that a PM system was necessary or as something that occurred in response to a particular stimulus such as a new leader being appointed. Four in particular indicated that there had been, and continued to be, significant resistance to training provided. Descriptions like 'academics had to be dragged along basically kicking and screaming' were common.

It was also common to find a low take up rate of training to facilitate the operation of the PM system. Various reasons were described for this, including the suitability and quality of the training methods, timing issues and other more subtle reasons such as ego in admitting training may be worthwhile. In some instances the pitch and level of the training for managers had been at question.

We all went along to a room and the guru came in and I think we were out in 25 minutes. It was just a joke. You know 'Here's the document, here's where you fill it in, this is what's expected of you, this is what is expected of them. Any questions? See you later!' There was some outrage in the room, we told the person what we thought of what was going on. It was very inadequate training. Training in terms of the university indicating the issues that we will back you on, and that are important to us, would have been really received well, but the university hasn't clarified any of those issues (Interviewee Thirty-three).

Five universities were introducing flexible training approaches such as self-paced, intranet-based training or half-day modular training scheduled over a series of weeks, to redress what were described as the significant skill deficits of reviewers. The limitations of these approaches were however also noted.

At this point we will be offering modularised training through a number of avenues including the Web. We are struggling at the moment to get academic staff managers to see that they need to do this—even in schools of management who teach these things. It's this thing about raising awareness of the competence level and taking care of people's egos at the same time. That is quite difficult (Interviewee Forty).

Or, as another respondent noted,

We had a fair debate with academics about the medium through which people are going to be trained. The academics specified that training should be online, self-paced and more individualised. I can see the appeal from a cost-benefit viewpoint but we are looking at changing culture and, ultimately, with PM systems I think the group mode is far more effective for that kind of role (Interviewee Twenty-four).

Only three respondents indicated that training was provided for staff with one saying it was an optional requirement.

Summary

Implementation processes generally incorporated consultation processes with staff, unions and management representatives and some universities had additionally used either a staggered introduction or pilot tests to enhance system acceptability for academic staff. Training for system participants was identified as a continuing problem, with most Heads indicating a low take-up rate of training by all concerned.

Specific Concerns and Issues

Respondents indicated their concern over a number of issues associated with PM practice in their universities. These included the difficulty of measuring academic performance, shortage of time, the absence of a positive feedback culture, the paucity of senior staff modelling acceptance of the PM systems, the limits to a HOS's authority in how the system operated, and difficulty in managing the performance margins.

Difficulty Measuring Academic Performance

For both those universities that had a formal system in place and those that did not, the difficulty of measuring academic staff performance was a primary concern. Trying to define and measure the academic's job in a transitional environment introduced questions of how to adequately capture the quality and quantity of teaching performance, research performance, supervision of research students, leadership and other aspects.

There is no system-wide definition of what counts as normal workload and staff are increasingly reactive to what they experience as escalating demands (Interviewee Twenty-eight).

I can't get meaningful data about the transactions that happen between teacher and student in an ongoing way and yet they are fairly fundamental to what sort of a job they are doing. I can get some better data around research and publication but a big chunk of their education role I can't get data about at all—not objective data (Interviewee Seven).

Traditionally academics have been wary of being evaluated by measures of their outputs because they believe that the available measures do not express the complexity of, or time spent on their activities. Critics argue that objections to output measures are motivated by reluctance to be evaluated by outsiders or just to being evaluated.

The great dilemma with academics is that even the concept of performance is foreign to them. They spend their whole life assessing the rest of the world and yet are very reticent to be assessed themselves. Academics are so ensconced in this non-evaluation of their own performance that it's often seen as quite draconian to even raise issues of performance, despite student and collegial comments about some less than acceptable practices (Interviewee Ten).

Almost every respondent referred to the difficulty of obtaining meaningful measures. Quantitative or numeric measures were described as objective but 'reductionist' approaches to measuring performance.

Respondents noted that there are all sorts of detailed student evaluations on the quality of subject outlines, turnaround times on marking, supervisors' comments etcetera, but they are essentially quantitative measures which do not capture the essence of the academic's job.

Most universities have amassed large data sets of quantitative information on teaching, usually through student and graduate surveys. Paradoxically, however, we may have little to show for this effort, at least in terms of continuous improvement (Interviewee Thirty-four).

Heads expressed how vulnerable to industrial action they would feel in the current climate were they to make public comparisons of staff performance.

It's extremely difficult because you have to come out and say in public that what this person is doing over the year is qualitatively much better than what you are doing and they get the rewards, and that is fraught with danger (Interviewee Twenty-four).

Respondents believed that workloads are not going to be manageable unless there is institutional understanding of what academic performance means and how it is to be characterised.

Because at least then you have some kind of benchmark, but right now it's so slippery that you don't feel on really safe ground. If you have a staff member who is under-performing how do you concretely demonstrate that to them? It's mostly an intuitive gut feel and that doesn't sell (Interviewee Twenty-eight).

Time

Every Head mentioned the time to initiate and complete the reviews for a total staff group as significant. Some believed it was an integral part of their job that reaped worthwhile benefits; others viewed it as all a bit out of control and of dubious value to them.

You get a very big workload out of this. I would put in, just for the formal one, 60 hours in preparation, interviews and the aftermath. It's a huge time commitment but it's critical and really it's my job (Interviewee Seven).

Responsibility for initiating the process was also described as an onerous additional time burden by four Heads who found that getting staff to commit to an agreed time for formal interview requirements was problematic.

It's not just doing them it's getting people organised to do them. Staff are away and can't make it on that day and ring up the night before or the afternoon before and cancel, and it's damn well because they haven't actually sat down and done their paperwork. What should take three or four days ends up taking weeks (Interviewee Thirty-three).

The Lack of a Positive Feedback Culture

Moving the perception of performance feedback from punishment to learning and development, Heads described as likely to take time. There was an historical culture of punishment and criticism in universities where feedback was provided by exception and only when mistakes were made.

The previous director didn't bother much. If things went wrong he just hauled them in and beat them up. He was a fairly abrasive, blunt and demanding individual and got a lot of people's backs up. I don't believe that's the way to get the best out of people, especially with a small team. I happen to believe that what you say is the reality you create so I'm trying to send that message all the time (Interviewee Twelve).

This was seen as further exacerbated by the structural changes affecting universities and as one Head mentioned,

It's a very competitive environment and one in which vulnerability is not necessarily very sympathetically handled especially if you are downsizing. I think it has to be something that is more a management oriented process but actually attempts to give people some constructive dialogue and feedback about how they are doing and what they need to focus on. That's new for most of us (Interviewee Thirteen).

Leadership

The role of leadership in modelling acceptance of the PM system by doing it, actively supporting and championing it was alluded to—usually in the sense that this was not happening. It was felt across the field that systems of this sort work most effectively when the top levels of the university were included and in fact role modelled its importance by being the first to start the process. When they didn't the impact was noted.

It permeates deep down to the junior faculty who look to their seniors to see how to behave and if they see a kind of disengaged behaviour occurring will themselves disengage (Interviewee Thirty-one).

One interviewee who had been largely instrumental in re-developing and re-invigorating his university's system expressed concern that it may go 'off the boil' without someone like him at a senior level to support and champion the approach and keep emphasising its critical importance.

The other thing about these sorts of initiatives is that they are cyclic. They are driven by people with commitment and when those people leave the scene the capacity to maintain the enthusiasm at succeeding levels of the organisation diminishes, and then eventually the thing withers (Interviewee Thirty-four).

It was seen as problematic that senior academic staff and senior staff per se were not covered by the same system as lower levels or not covered at all by a formal PM system. Those not covered by a system suffered no consequence for non-compliance, as it was not one of their assessable performance requirements.

Limits to the Authority and Authorising of the Head

To Evaluate Performance

A strong theme emerged around a view of objective professionalism and collegiality that challenges the right of the Head of School to judge performance. Operating as both a colleague

(co-researcher) and the boss was often described as compromising the ability to give or receive honest or critical feedback for both parties.

The longer you are in a leadership role you can be compromised in the sense that you are working with colleagues. You are writing books with them and then it is very hard to turn around to those colleagues and say, 'look I don't like what you are doing here'. I think from a Head's point of view 'use by dates' should come up a lot sooner (Interviewee Twenty-four).

In bigger Schools, which transcend disciplinary boundaries, the Head may additionally be on weak ground not knowing the performance expectations of disciplines other than their own.

To Apply Sanctions and Rewards

Heads rarely had the discretion to operate unilaterally and had to get the signature of a senior officer to approve recommendations about pay and disciplinary actions.

Part of the problem is that I don't actually have any authority over the process because I have to get the Dean's signature as approval and then ultimately the Head of Personnel and the VC's approval on the recommendation about pay (Interviewee Twenty-three).

The majority of respondents wanted greater discretion to reward differentially so that there was a more obvious, clear and immediate relationship between performance or the lack of it. To get to the point where under-performance problems were in the hands of the Vice Chancellor usually took several years of effort.

Managing the Performance Margins

Dealing with High Performers

As in those universities with no formal system, the capacity to differentially reward top performers remains a problematic area that Heads of School would like more latitude to deal with, and which often undermines staff engagement with PM systems.

The type of rewards on offer were essentially reduced teaching loads, teaching-free semesters, increased research time or funds and other forms of preferential access to resources—almost exactly the resources available to those without a formal PM system in place.

In most instances GSMs, particularly those that operate under different award and contract conditions, have considerably more discretion to manage this area by flexible application of monetary and non-monetary bonuses, although they too described limitations.

One GSM interviewee described the procedure developed through twelve iterations that ensures accountability and transparency of the PM and rating procedures used to determine differential remuneration.

We form a performance review committee of six or seven senior faculty members across the school. It meets after all the interviews have been conducted and spends a full day, going through every single one to look at equity and then do a sort of calibration of the overall results. So we are trying to indicate who were the people at the top, who were the people in the middle and who in the bottom, so we can celebrate our successes as well as think seriously about what we do with the bottom. That may be in terms of further support or at the worst case talking about moving them out of the school. The Dean and I then sit down with a committee to decide remuneration. Our board expects us to justify the amounts we are paying and how we differentiate between people (Interviewee Thirty-one).

One of the limitations brought up by a number of GSM respondents was how divisive it could be to a group's morale if reward differentials were large.

Differential financial rewards are a very two-edged sword. It can prove very disruptive to morale and it's very hard for any institution if some people give more of their time and effort to the school—they're not down town consulting—and that's very punitive to their income (Interviewee Eight).

Another limitation was that much of the academic's work on innovative or offshore programs is conducted in teams, but the reward mechanisms are individually designed.

I'm given certain money by the university to use as salary supplementation that is awarded for exemplary achievement. Then it's up to me to allocate how much they get of this. The problem is of course that many of our things are team-based, so often the amount of money that people get is not that different. I'm not sure whether people value it as a reward now anyway. They did but it's become seen as 'mine by right' not that I have to earn it. It's not the monetary value it's the recognition (Interviewee Seven).

The effects of salary differentials between industry and the academy on the ability to attract and retain high calibre staff were raised by a number of respondents.

How people get rewarded is a huge problem here (Interviewee Ten).

The rewards in the academic system are really problematic. How are we supposed to get, much less retain, good people? It's ludicrous (Interviewee Twenty-three).

Dealing with Under-Performance

Very few PM systems were described as currently assisting Heads to deal effectively with under-performance.

Even when you have got conspicuous evidence through the appraisal process of chronically bad performance it's very vexed to actually get rid of a problem. It's taken me a year to get to the point where I now have a disciplinary report duly investigated and in the hands of the Vice Chancellor who is the only person who could choose to summarily dismiss. You wouldn't want to have to do it this hard for every single problem (Interviewee Fifteen).

Performance problems that could potentially be turned around in the early stages are not. Alternatively, 'problem' staff are given redundancy packages and basically rewarded for their unsatisfactory behaviour.

You need a developmental plan and to be still unsatisfactory after two times then they can be given the boot but that takes three long years. Nobody in the whole time that the plan has operated has been shown the door on that basis. The reality is that where people are

under-performing you need to work out a policy with your HR people and meet them constantly. The people I have got rid of I have given them packages—basically rewarding people to leave (Interviewee Twenty-six).

There is a strong belief amongst Heads that little system support exists for them to deal with under-performance.

You can't really do much; it's like hitting people with wet spaghetti. And of course there are equity issues. If some people aren't performing others look at it and everyone suddenly comes down to the lowest common denominator (Interviewee Ten).

Informal Performance Management Techniques

Most Heads identified a lot of discussions about performance that go on outside the formal PM process—not only between the Head and individual staff—and tended to value these more highly.

People actually *talk* about performance quite a lot but generally the paperwork is only looked at infrequently and that's in the middle of the year to amend them rather than talk about performance. I think there's more recognition and realisation nowadays that feedback and talking about performance is actually a more important issue (Interviewee Four).

Heads, who described feedback responsibility as a key area of their job, characterised these methods as ongoing alternatives that feed into their formal PM systems. Continuous dialogue with their staff throughout the year was described as the most significant form of PM.

The formal process is out of step with what we need because a lot of the appraisal stuff is done daily. You form your opinions and provide your feedback daily for better or for worse (Interviewee Twenty-four).

Those who saw formal processes as significant said their worth lay in ensuring that important factors had not been overlooked or under-emphasised during the year.

There was a range of attitudes expressed here from those who said feedback never happened unless there was a formalised opportunity, to those who saw the only benefit of formal PM systems as a chance to ensure nothing had been inadvertently missed in other forums. Interviewees outlined five main sources of informal PM and feedback.

- *A competitive culture*

Despite the view that a collegial culture characterises the academy, Heads described a degree of professional competition, which arguably, forms a source of existing feedback.

In an academic environment there are many different forms of PM that just exist because people are competing for research money. Externally they are competing to get papers published in prestigious journals. They are competing to get publishers to recognise books so there's quite a lot of acknowledgement or rejection already in the system. So getting a new type of performance management or appraisal system is a very difficult thing to do (Interviewee Thirty-four).

- *Academic mentoring*

HOS also consistently referred to mentoring as a means of valued professional feedback and development.

New staff are assigned a mentor in their particular discipline area with whom they can discuss a range of issues about rules, regulations, requirements of writing or running a program, etcetera. The outcomes of mentoring are looking at how they are going and things to help them over the next year as we run up to the serious big performance review where money and future careers and what not depend (Interviewee Thirty-one).

- *Course coordinator feedback and meetings for those teaching in a program*

Ongoing work-based feedback from a course or discipline coordinator constitutes the day-to-day professional feedback and development for many academic staff that parallels (and hopefully cross-informs) more formal PM requirements.

We have a system of course coordinators who hold meetings for those teaching in the program and review a whole lot of things. A report's produced and it goes to the whole of the department for a two-day annual strategic planning process, which occurs in December. It provides hard data for us to make decisions for the year ahead (Interviewee Nine).

- *Student assessments*

Some Heads viewed teaching and subject evaluations by students as a very critical piece of feedback whilst others found their primary use was as an informal mechanism to open discussions with academic staff about a range of issues.

You also have a number of sources of feedback, including from students, that inform whether someone's doing the job they're supposed to or not. Full fee paying students are not backwards in coming forwards and these things land on my desk to be dealt with. The important thing is to ensure that the academic gets the feedback, has an opportunity to respond, then we come to some amicable decision about what this means for your teaching from now on, because students move on but the academic continues (Interviewee Twelve).

Probably the most blunt and painful tool of performance management in the present higher education environment is student feedback. Students use the formal subject evaluation processes but also make their views known through a variety of methods when they are confronted by a serious problem. This can be either individual letters of grievance or complaint or often groups together or sometimes whole classes. Students are increasingly assertive and regard themselves as clients if they pay 1500 bucks and are determined to get their money's worth. The regrettable thing is that student input can be crude and brutal. I see myself as an essential arbiter and buffer. As Head of School I would try to work sympathetically with the individual academic to develop them where they need to be developed or to move them to teaching where they wouldn't face this degree of criticism (Interviewee Thirty-five).

- *Staff meetings and conferences*

Ongoing staff meetings were described as a simple forum for the exchange of peer feedback and the opportunity to attend conferences was also identified as an informal form of reward for good performance.

The chance to network and converse with your peers internationally and nationally provides academics with an important level of feedback about your currency, innovation, etcetera within your own discipline. That's why conference attendance is so fought over (Interviewee Two).

Summary

Respondents identified a comprehensive array of concerns and issues they perceived with current PM practices in their institutions, particularly given the rapidly changing academic environment. Issues such as the difficulty in defining much less measuring academic performance, time commitment, the lack of a feedback culture, lack of leadership support, failure to fully authorise and support a Head of School to judge performance, differentially reward top performers or effectively deal with under-performing staff were all described as problematic. Lastly, Heads identified some of the informal PM techniques that they felt paralleled formal systems and that they and their staff sometimes valued more highly.

System Improvements

Heads were asked to nominate how they would improve their current PM practices whether through formal or informal means.

There was some variation among respondents as to whether they favoured more or fewer meetings, more resources to reward staff and more immediate sanctions (and system support) to apply in situations of under-performance. The two most consistent themes were around the number of reviews and the time this required and the skills to support the process.

Fewer Reviews

Discipline heads or coordinator positions below the HOS are not trained and often not willing to take on the additional role responsibilities of Human Resource functions such as performance reviews. They are also close colleagues and lack the seniority. This often results in the Head being responsible for a high number of reviews including those in flat university structures who are not managers.

Heads have the weight of responsibility without the reward. And they have a higher opportunity cost of putting their own publications or further studies on hold, because the task of staff management can be fairly consuming and some of these people are doing reviews of twenty staff which defies organisation theory (Interviewee Twenty-five).

More People Management Skills Training For The Head of School Role

Many respondents described the steep learning curve they had faced on coming to the office of HOS and how little support or feedback they felt they had received.

There's certainly no formal induction, training in appraisal protocols or feedback skills for HOS whatsoever. It's a very steep learning curve where you rely on various others for legal advice and you get very little support and no feedback (Interviewee Twenty).

Respondents described the all too common tendency facing the 'new manager' where others assume that anyone smart enough who knows their job can also manage people.

With managing, same with teaching, people think if you know something you can teach it. We don't appreciate the skill that's involved in successfully doing these things and therefore think it just happens (Interviewee Eleven).

Some suggested that in an academic environment, where egos were significant, the more positions of responsibility taken on, the harder it became to reveal the lack of that set of necessary skills.

My networking with other Deans or Heads of School around the traps suggests to me that very few actually have good people management skills. I ran a seminar in our school just recently on giving constructive feedback and I could see that they hadn't got any skills around this and the hard thing with that is that the more positions or tasks of responsibility that you take on the harder it becomes to actually reveal that. Because it's just accepted that somewhere along the way you have picked it up by magic (Interviewee Fifteen).

The focus and pitch of training was again noted as missing the mark.

The university does have some management training workshops but those tend to focus on episodic behaviours rather than the more routine management of performance. It's not pitched to the level where Heads of Schools need it and quite frankly we're swimming at the moment (Interviewee Twenty-eight).

Summary

Heads identified the areas of greatest potential for system improvements as improved and more timely skills training for themselves and for discipline heads or coordinator positions so that they could assume greater responsibilities for PM activities, thus reducing the time burden on Heads alone.

Chapter Summary

At the time of these interviews the vast majority of respondents indicated that there was a formal PM system in place that was developmental in focus and used mainly for performance planning, review, and development, communication and feedback purposes. Seventy-five per cent of the existing systems were either new or under review for a range of reasons, many of them associated with low system credibility and a failure to successfully engage staff. The majority of respondents indicated that there is a culture of non-compliance with the formal PM system, and cynicism about its outcomes.

In the five universities that had no formal PM system there were systematic ‘informal’ practices used for similar purposes of performance planning, workload allocation and feedback to staff about progress towards agreed goals.

Difficulties in rewarding excellence, as well as effectively dealing with under-performance were identified, and a number of reasons were given for not favouring more formalised PM approaches, including concerns about staff reactions of resistance, apathy or resentment.

Remarkably similar concerns and issues were identified across the universities that do have a formal system. Measuring academic performance, time commitment, the lack of a feedback culture and skill in providing feedback, lack of leadership support, failure to support a Head of School in managing high and low performance were all described as problematic.

Training for system participants and increased devolution of role responsibilities for PM activities were key areas that Heads identified for system improvement.

Chapter Five–Phase Two Results

Three of the 37 universities were selected for Phase Two.

- University One was amongst the group with no formal system in Phase One and now had a newly implemented system;
- University Two had an ongoing system described positively by the HOS during Phase One data generation; and
- University Three was a site with an ongoing system described negatively by the HOS during Phase One data generation.

All three universities had previously been an Institute of Technology although this was by coincidence rather than deliberate selection by the researcher. Academic staff in these organisations had traditionally therefore had a strong teaching rather than research background, although this was not considered an impediment to any of the research questions under study.

Thirteen individuals from the three sites were selected for Phase Two, three of whom were HOS, with the remaining 10 drawn from the Lecturer B and Lecturer C designations. The researcher had specified that she wished to speak with staff who had responsibility for conducting performance reviews as well as those who participated in them as reviewees. No Lecturer A staff were available to participate due to their low numbers in the selected universities and the fact that those in that designation were described as casual staff to whom there was limited access, due to the unpaid time they would have to give up.

Results from the reviewers' perspectives are presented first. Predominantly this reflects the HOS perspective, although comments from other senior staff who had responsibilities for conducting reviews are also included in this section. In order to protect the identity of individuals as much as possible, the gender of interviewees has been randomly altered.

The Reviewer's Perspective

In all cases reviewers noted the importance of the overall institutional context or environment within which the formal PM system was located on how it operated.

University One

This university had no formal system during the period of Phase One research but had since implemented a system. It was formerly an Institute of Technology and became a university in the late 1980s as a result of amalgamations during the Dawkins reforms. Its early beginnings as an Institute of Technology meant it had a strong tradition of teaching and research oriented towards vocational and technical areas.

Significant re-structuring within the School had been undertaken during the last two years and the HOS spoke freely about the re-profiling of the staff group and the requirements she had of her academic staff.

The university system's not flush anymore, it's very tightly resourced, and that means we haven't got any room for expensive passengers. I need every single person to be delivering. That's a big ask, and there's still very uneven contribution, but I make no excuse for the fact that I'm on the case of those that don't, and if I make their life a little uncomfortable in the long run, that's fine with me. Deliver or move; either get on with things and improve performance, lift the game or leave (Interviewee F).

This Head of School was very positive about the newly implemented PM practices in her School, characterising people's reactions as 'on balance very cooperative. A number of people have said that they thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to talk at more length with a manager about what they were doing' (Interviewee F).

Those of her staff who were interviewed by the researcher were on balance far more negative than the Head perceived them to be, including staff with the responsibility for conducting reviews of others.

Structurally the PM system was based upon annual goal and performance targets negotiated between the staff member and the academic coordinator to whom they reported.

Preliminary briefing and training of all managers with responsibility for negotiating goal setting and conducting performance reviews occurred. Information was disseminated for all participating staff.

Implementation was on an incremental basis to allow staff to get used to the process and develop some confidence in it.

The first review is all but complete and in aggregate they have not been unduly pushed.

Let's just get mobile with this and get the process up and running (Interviewee F).

Although the system was fundamentally developmental, participation was compulsory.

I basically said 'our priority objective here is a developmental one, and we need everybody to have activities well aligned with the university strategic plan, their own school's or management unit's strategic plans'.

We've done it in an incremental way so that nobody gets a nasty fright and they can all see it coming, but we've not shied away from the fact that clearly somebody who sets and negotiates reasonable targets each year and then consistently fails to meet them is looking at a performance issue. So they know that whilst the teeth are not on show, it's fundamentally got teeth. A performance problem that consistently shows up in this process is likely to get picked up and dealt with, using disciplinary processes or whatever (Interviewee F).

Clearly this Head viewed the new PM system as linked to other university HR systems and a potential vehicle for managing under-performance issues, despite the developmental focus. She had actively worked to shape key aspects of the system such as the choice of reviewer.

The Vice Chancellor had the expectation that Heads of School do everybody in the school but our HR Manager kept saying 'that's unrealistic,' and logic prevailed here. I cannot meaningfully appraise 60 to 70 people, especially when I don't know what half of them

do on a day-to-day basis, but there are others who are closer to the action who are much better placed to do this, so they can share the task (Interviewee F).

She also noted that the status differences between reviewer and reviewee were an important factor in the university culture.

If levels are too close, for example, someone on an Academic Level C as a team leader trying to tackle someone on an academic Level B who is recalcitrant, it doesn't work. The culture of collegiality makes it nearly impossible for them to discuss the un-discussable. I've got professors being appraisers. I wanted them to step up to bat, because they've got clout and others see them as having clout (Interviewee F).

The PM system was described as an important part of an ongoing cultural change agenda, in which the Head played a significant leadership role. As someone with a strong HR background she believed it was important to state management expectations clearly, align the system with broader university agendas and challenge staff to continually expand their capability, particularly in the research area.

I've worked for about the last five years to reorient the school from where it was to where it needed to be so that there's a really consistent approach all shifting it in the same direction, in fact total alignment of messages. What we found is that we began with four separate parts, with four separate cultures, and four quite separate sets of work practices. For the first couple of years all we did was sort out the scramble and try and get some shared understandings, but progressively we've built new administrative and policy frameworks and all kinds of mechanisms for work practice and so on which are shared right across the school, so there's no point at which you're getting a different message. And I think that that's a part of change management, if you don't change that basic architecture around people, then you won't change what's in their head (Interviewee F).

It was her strong opinion that developmentally based PM systems were more acceptable in educational settings as they were more familiar to academics who 'are used to being fairly formative with students and find developmental feedback more comfortable'. She was also clear

that whilst the developmental aspects were important, the strategic aspects and increased accountability were equally critical and that,

We have passed the era where it can be developmental only for the individual's sake. We can't afford that luxury anymore where people might be developing fabulously and become advanced students of macramé or something, but we don't need any advanced macramé experts here. Academics can be terribly self-indulgent and often in their own world of ideas and exciting things, and if you don't harness that, they often spin off into little hermetically sealed bubbles that don't actually take anybody anywhere at a collective level (Interviewee F).

She outlined her viewpoint that role expectations of academic staff were in transition and acknowledged that as a HOS, she had high expectations of staff, although believed these to be the developing norm across the Australian university sector.

Culturally we are expecting a lot more teamwork from academics than was historically the case. We are expecting them to be a bit more strategic and organisationally savvy than they might have once been, and at the same time we're still asking them to be excellent scholars and researchers. So we want everything. And we want a lot of it. (*Laughter*) And more every year (Interviewee F).

The most significant change she expected from academic staff was an increased degree of research activity and output, even from those in predominantly teaching positions.

We have a lot of people who are relatively novice researchers who are only just getting into the rhythm of regularly writing, researching and publishing something: and I need it to be second nature to them. Strategically we expect staff to be doing both teaching and research. If they can't manage to write a scholarly article as a practitioner about what they're doing, then they're really just high school teachers rather than a university academic, because all they're doing is picking up other people's texts and intellectual property and generating none.

I figure that we have to push people well out of their comfort zone to get them into doing research, and that as the bar gets higher it is possible that a couple of people will just not have that research capacity in them. At that point I'd be recognising that if they really are excellent teachers they're a true asset, and I'm happy for them to stay here. But if I find really that what we're left with are people who are mediocre researchers and mediocre teachers, they haven't a future with us, and we'll re-profile and retrench as we've done before, and people know that (Interviewee F).

She acknowledged that there had been some resignations and that some staff were apprehensive about these increased expectations and accountability.

Every now and again I've had to remind people that I'm not asking for something that's off the planet and unreasonable but what any other tertiary institution would require, and in fact in some of these issues we've been slow to force the pace. A few have actually gone and talked to some friends and colleagues in other institutions and have been sobered in the extreme by what they've learnt, and recognised that they either had to make the choice to go with it or to get out. We've had a few unforced resignations where people made quite a constructive career choice and said, 'I'm out of here'. They were welcome to stay—but only on our terms (Interviewee F).

This HOS was pragmatic about the potential short-term results to be gained from a PM system and viewed the longer-term agenda as shifting staff attitudes from complacency to achievement.

I can clearly see that some of the performance targets that were set may not come to pass, there have been several illnesses, they have been very thin on staffing, and I'll be surprised if they manage to cover everything that they set out to do, because they've been galloping on the spot just to keep the routine going. These are reasonable contextual explanations for why they might not achieve everything planned (Interviewee F).

She did not expect the performance planning and review cycle to identify significant needs for off-site professional development of staff. 'I believe that almost all of an academic's

developmental needs can be met within their normal working pattern or with colleagues' (Interviewee F).

This Head noted that the supporting documentation for the formal system was unwieldy and did not facilitate either its usage or participant engagement with the system. She exercised her discretion as a HOS to tailor the formal university-wide PM system for her School's purposes and additionally sought to influence senior decision makers about the design factors.

In the first instance, the university went overboard with documentation, and there's a website full of stuff, down-load-ables and documentations and checklists, and my God, it goes on and on and on forever. As a School we looked at it and thought, 'We're not doing that'. The important issue here is the dialogue between supervisor and staff member and that the dialogue needs to be captured succinctly in one or two pages so we actually pretty much ignored what was on the web and cut to the chase. We made a little, simple, two page document that we use as our instrument which is totally consistent with what's on the website, but cuts all the paper out of it (Interviewee F).

All other reviewers across the three selected sites that were interviewed in this study (including the Heads Of School) described their experience of formal PM systems as predominantly negative. This interviewee, a HOS, was alone among the 13 Phase Two respondents in reporting a favourable view of the university's PM system, and of her School's ability to adapt its requirements to their needs.

University Two

The second university selected for study in Phase Two had formerly been an Institute of Technology but unlike University One, already had a PM system when Phase One interviews took place. In Phase One the Head of School had described the PM activity as mainly positive although needing improvement to enable the HOS to deal effectively with under-performance issues. This Head characterised the institution as a university where significant activity in the PM field was anticipated in the short term. Since Phase One study, the HOS had changed.

The new HOS described the formal system as one that had been in place for over five years, was voluntary and based upon individual career mentoring. The failure of mentors to follow up on initial contacts largely consolidated her opinion that the system was irrelevant to current academic life. 'I think the output from these formal meetings was that you wrote a report and then it just sat in the Dean's office. You know, 'So what?' kind of thing' (Interviewee E).

She described the system implementation as 'a low consultation process with not a great deal of participation or good communication' (Interviewee E) and academic staff responses to the system as negative.

If someone here mandated that academics have to go through a performance management system with academic supervisors such as Heads of Schools and Deans, everyone would just say 'bloody hell, more work, more useless form filling and jumping through hoops'. That was their response with this system (Interviewee E).

She did not consider that whether the system was predominantly evaluative or developmental was a significant point in its ability to effectively engage academic staff. Rather than a hierarchically based, goal oriented process the system was described as,

based on the idea that staff members ought to find themselves someone who could in a sense be their mentor, their helper, their advisor, in terms of developing their career over a period of time. It was partially done voluntarily and partially sort of supervised. So ultimately everyone ended up with a reviewer with whom one was supposed to meet on an annual basis (Interviewee E).

The importance of the reviewer was again highlighted.

Just reflecting on my own experience, my reviewer was someone whom I was patently out of sync with. Great bloke and friends and everything, but we didn't have research interests that were similar. It just happened that we were located on the same campus and he didn't have many people to supervise.

I met with him once and we developed a plan of what I would do in different areas of teaching, community and research and it's just fallen into oblivion. Every now and again it was kind of raised as a way in which staff could seek feedback, and the response of most staff was 'Oh this doesn't have any teeth' (Interviewee E).

Furthermore this HOS saw the PM system as essentially redundant given other university systems such as workload policies, salary supplementation schemes and an electronic management information system (MIS). 'Our school has a very good MIS so we have in place data electronically, which captures a lot of those things that another Head of School might take the time to negotiate individually like workloads, performance planning, etcetera.'

She did, however, describe these existing systems as reliant on trust or voluntary participation and hence open to abuse.

We have formal workload policies, but people have always in a sense been trusted to manage their own workload in a way that conforms to the school and faculty policy. And in the main they do. We also have a salary supplementation scheme, and I guess that would be the closest thing to a performance appraisal. Anyone who feels as though they are performing beyond the level at which they ought to perform at their level of appointment is encouraged to apply, so it's self-selective. That system is a way of being able to both assess people's performance but also feedback to them how well they're doing in the job, and amounts range up to 60% on top, which is pretty substantial. I guess the measure of perceived success, your perceived performance, is a measure of how much you get in terms of salary supplementation (Interviewee E).

She also identified sources of bias that emerged from the lack of more rigorous and universally applied PM practices. Personal knowledge and contact with the HOS generally translated to a more positive assessment for salary supplementation purposes as it provided,

quite extensive tacit knowledge about individuals because you've worked with them for years and so on and so forth. It's not a perfect system and there's a perception that senior

people do better than less senior people and that's proved in the data that emerges (Interviewee E).

Casual staff were not eligible to apply for salary supplementation, nor were they covered by the university's formal PM system, despite a high ratio of part-time to full-time teachers, which she described as an increasingly common trend in this university and across the whole sector.

Casual and part-time staff are very peripheral to management in the system—totally marginal—and that has huge implications for staff accountability to the university. We have over 100 part-timers teaching our programs but despite all good intentions to do something about it, at every level of managing their performance, nothing's really happened. Basically the casualisation of staff has meant the development of a real dichotomy of feedback and accountability between full-time and part-time or sessional staff (Interviewee E).

This interviewee expressed what appeared to be a fairly common theme: that formal PM systems were viewed with scepticism in terms of their ability to achieve anything of worth and failed to gain any credibility with staff.

From all my years of teaching and understanding communication in an organisation, I'm yet to be convinced that PM systems actually improve communication or open a dialogue that's beneficial in an ongoing and constructive manner (Interviewee E).

She described lack of skill in managing performance as a key factor.

Academic managers are not trained, and I would feel very nervous in engaging in some formal appraisal process without some significant training. A lot of academic management is learnt on the job, and I'm extremely grateful that I had several years as an academic manager before I took on this job.

The timing of skill acquisition was also highlighted as important.

When there's a big role change or a systemic shift where there's devolution of HR functions, (just dumping of them), there's often no skilling up, and people are absolutely

spinning in terms of ‘How the Hell do I do this appraisal and feedback stuff’? Once you are at a certain level it’s pretty hard to reveal that you actually don’t know how to do this. It’s sort of like, you *should* know because of the positional power invested in you, you’re in the role (Interviewee E).

This Head also raised the personal costs and challenges she had found to be associated with being the Head of School and adopting a managerial role as opposed to a collegial one.

I think that you can keep the collegiate stuff going at the same time as run the school reasonably well. I don’t want to be seen as secretive, I want to be seen as transparent, fair and generous when it’s warranted. If the door is shut all the time people feel there is a barrier between the Head of School and the rest of the school, and they get nervous and quite often what might be a fairly benign request, becomes bigger than Ben Hur. Having been an academic for many years and really enjoying the freedom that comes with academic life in terms of being present or not, the time availability required of a Head of School is a big adjustment for me. I think it’s the difference between being in a managerial role or not. A lot of people who have achieved success academically won’t take an admin role either. It’s such a sacrifice in terms of your own research (Interviewee E).

She saw issues of under-performance as exceptionally difficult to manage both in terms of perceived lack of support from the university leadership and the difference in status and position between a HOS and those they were expected to manage.

How do you deal with an under-performing Professor at the Head of School level? It can’t really happen, it wouldn’t happen, even if it were Professor to Professor. I can name any number of people at the professorial level whose behaviour is bloody outrageous, who definitely need some feedback about ‘this is not acceptable behaviour, you don’t scream and shout at people, you don’t do this’, but they do. To have the legitimacy to manage under-performers is the area that at the moment really defeats me (Interviewee E).

This Head described the university's industrial relations policy for managing under-performing staff as 'incredibly weak' and cited ongoing examples where very senior level members of the university had failed to take some action when she believed it was warranted.

We have one person who is still in the school and is still causing the same number of problems that they have caused for the last ten years. It takes a huge amount of time to manage under-performance and successive Heads of School have tried to reinvent this person by giving her responsibilities and it just backfires. I just wouldn't bother to put the time in to a wasted effort if I'm not going to be supported (Interviewee E).

University Three

As in University Two, the occupant of the HOS position had changed since Phase One data generation. The current incumbent characterised her working environment as 'absolutely toxic', where staff, management and union relationships were tense and distrustful and significant deficits in senior university leadership existed.

This has really de-stabilised the whole working environment because of the interplay between management and union. It's a very old fashioned set of attitudes, that goes 'managers are bullying and vindictive and unionists are defensive, backward and adversarial', so each side produces the evidence to reinforce the other's perception! So the context is really critical, and at the moment in terms of performance it's sub-optimal for everyone (Interviewee L).

In such a context PM became additionally fraught, with people unwilling to trust each other.

The formal system was described as a goal setting system, approximately three-years-old that was linked to the university's EBA. It required an annual performance review meeting between the Head of School and each staff member and an overall performance rating of satisfactory or unsatisfactory. The Head noted that,

it took 18 months for a lot of facets of the system to be agreed between the union and working parties, and there was great debate about the forms particularly around the rating scale (Interviewee L).

Initial training to support the system was offered to reviewers but since its implementation, there's been no development, no discussion of how to do reviews, much less how the system is going and nobody reminds you that reviews are due, there's no HR prompt (Interviewee L).

As in the second site, formal PM practices were largely viewed with cynicism by staff and 'failed to engage them as a meaningful process or constructive tool for enhancing performance' (Interviewee L).

The role of leadership in this process was highlighted.

There'll come a time when the Dean will furiously rush around saying, 'Ooh performance reviews are due'. But that's just because he's being leaned on from more senior staff, and not because it's actually any sort of working document (Interviewee L).

Within this context this individual saw her responsibility to staff,

as attempting to buffer people from the worst of that toxic environment and to actually try and extend the third of the staff in the middle—those who are neither absolutely cynical and beyond redemption versus those who are incredibly research oriented and active. So we're talking about the middle third who are basically sort of puddling around there, who could do more, but need a lot of guidance and support to do so (Interviewee L).

This interviewee also alluded to the personal costs of being in the Head of School role.

In your personal life it's hard for a partner to deal with the fact that your energy level is constantly and consistently depleted and that when you come home it takes five stiff whiskeys and three hours before you stop bitching about work! I took on the role for

many reasons and in retrospect really none of them has been satisfied, but I'm still here (Interviewee L).

She stated that meaningful performance data on which to assess and develop staff was either unavailable or in the wrong format.

A Head of School needs a lot more knowledge and open communication about whatever forms of feedback regarding individual staff members that he or she can get their hands on. There's a lot of data to which I don't have access and there needs to be a lot more being shared about performance (Interviewee L).

Student feedback was described as next to useless. It was perceived as generating only aggregated, anonymous data provided to the individual lecturer, and forming little basis for constructive discussion between academic coordinators or at a Head of School level about individual or systemic improvements.

Lecturers are not obliged to discuss their feedback with anyone and in fact tend to hide it. There's a majority in the school who believe they're doing good work. I know that they're not. They're off doing either consulting work or research in their own time, but they just don't have sufficient presence in the school. There is a place for quite strong mechanisms of reward and punishment as a framework to manage from within (Interviewee L).

She commented that skill as a reviewer (including her own) was not common and that there was little genuine commitment to good PM practice from the university.

I've only ever seen very few people do this stuff well, and I wish I knew what they actually did to achieve that. Maybe I'd be a better leader if I were happier giving and receiving criticism. Unless something is really wrong I don't tell people. I don't really give constructive feedback on a timely basis at all, and I know that. But again it would be far easier and more meaningful if there were a context within which there was a systematic collection of evidence and a commitment at the uni level, both in terms of culture and practices around feedback and continuous improvement (Interviewee L).

Academic Staff Perspectives

Of the 10 individuals interviewed from the staff perspective, (two of whom also had responsibility for conducting reviews or interviews with more junior staff) attitudes towards PM systems and processes ran the gamut from qualified and guardedly positive to very negative. Results are presented in eleven major themes identified during data analysis.

The HOS Role

Without exception, all staff interviewees described the Heads of School with whom they had worked as having a dramatic effect on the culture of feedback that was established within their school and pivotal in determining whether or not a formal system was adopted and how it was interpreted to staff.

Despite very different experiences, approaches and individuals, those in the HOS role were usually criticised for their lack of attention to internal staffing issues, particularly a failure to provide meaningful and regular feedback.

Various 'styles' of Heads were described, and summarised well by one interviewee. They ranged from the

very authoritarian bureaucrat who publicly humiliated and hauled staff over the coals and created a feedback regime that was very little, one-way and top down, to the entrepreneurial person who brought in substantial external consulting contracts, but paid little attention to what was actually happening amongst staff. Or the totally research focused person who ignored the bread and butter teaching profile so that the student/staff ratios sky-rocketed and research active staff received all the accolades and positive feedback (Interviewee C).

Another interviewee highlighted the use that could be made of the Head of School position to achieve personal and political gain. The comment also however indicates the cynicism that an incoming Head may encounter from staff.

When a new HOS comes in with good aims and intentions people at the grass roots level look at them and their change agenda and say, 'Oh yeah, well that's not going to happen'. And it doesn't! Everyone is here to promote him or herself and then move on. They establish their political track record, use the position for what they want to achieve and then move on. As good as people are, as well intentioned as they are, if they are at all career-driven that's what happens. When people move from the ranks to become HOS our perception of them changes, usually in a bad way (Interviewee B).

Clearly the position is one invested with significant power although some staff did appreciate the complexity and demands of the role.

The HOS role is pivotal. They can marginalise or include or promote, very subtly over a period of time. I feel sorry for people in a HOS role. It's a damn hard job. Few of them get any skills training for it, and there are a lot of demands on it. It's rarely recognised that it can break a career as well as make it. You can be strutting around a rooster one week and you're a feather duster the next (Interviewee C).

Performance Management as 'Pseudo' Risk Management

Several respondents expressed concern that the developmental aims expressed as the official purpose of their university's formal PM system were being hijacked for other purposes.

They expressed the cynical viewpoint during interviews, that PM training was a 'window dressing' exercise used as a means of pseudo 'risk-management' for systemic protection against claims of unsatisfactory performance.

We all went along to the required training for managers, which was a bit of a joke really. We teach this stuff and know a lot about it. Including the fact that if there's a system in place and people don't do the right thing, we'll be the ones whose heads are on the block as managers. You know how it goes. 'Oh, such and such didn't turn up to take the lecture. He or she wasn't available for sufficient student contact. They didn't give timely feedback to their research students'. Etcetera, etcetera, etcetera (Interviewee K).

Ensuring that there is a formal PM system in place (and that training in its usage has been offered) was seen by some respondents as an attempt by universities to shift the responsibility for managing unsatisfactory performance of staff from an institutional level to a personal level. If the university has officially made every effort to educate managers appropriately in the management of performance, then it is arguably the individual manager who is derelict in duty if feedback about under-performance is not provided to staff who subsequently appeal adverse decisions that affect them.

Sometimes the first way we know when people are not pulling their weight is because something goes administratively wrong. Grades aren't in on time, there's no lecturer arranged for a particular class. We know because of what's happening at the front counter or in torrid e-mails, the stuff that really goes wrong. You've got students paying nearly \$2,000 a subject and they've got no seat, no desk (Interviewee A).

Other respondents identified the increased risks to universities from disgruntled students who believe they are not receiving value for their expenditure on education, to move towards litigation.

When I started here it was a requirement that you'd be present in your office at least three days a week and you'd have a timetable on your door that showed when students could access you. That's gone. We have no requirement in terms of presence or availability hours. If that means a student doesn't get to see their supervisor or lecturer we're at risk in terms of them appealing a decision regarding progress or failure. Usually it's the very worst students who will pull this type of stunt, but we can't legally defend against it well (Interviewee A).

Use of Informal Mechanisms

Salary Supplementation

Achieving monetary gains through salary supplementation processes was noted as important, although its meaning as a form of feedback was somewhat obscure.

I do get feedback if I get a good salary supplementation amount, but it remains at a very distant sort of level. You submit the application, you get the letter that says you have been successful, you receive X % and you don't even know whether that X % is good, fantastic or just a token X % (Interviewee D).

Mentoring

Of more apparent worth were mentoring relationships with experienced academic staff.

For me the success of the mentoring relationship was having a confidential cone of silence, where you could go and say whatever you wanted and actually problem solve. My mentor was very experienced in the university and helped me negotiate the politics of the place. So it's also about the trust we developed. We were at least within the range of the same level in the organisation so we dealt with the same issues and that mattered (Interviewee J).

Feedback

A minority of staff from those interviewed regarded formal PM systems as valuable in developing a dialogue around performance expectations and achievements, and

getting into the culture that it's okay to give and receive feedback. I actually thought it was done very well and in a very collegial and cooperative way, but nobody holds the system itself with much regard (Interviewee J).

Interviewees from all three universities referred to a minimal feedback culture, where praise from any source was scarce but criticism or abuse was common.

You only know how well you're going or whether you've screwed up when you receive end of semester student evaluations, or when you know that your article didn't get into a tier one publication. Or when your research grant gets rejected. Informally no one comes to my office and says, 'you've done a wonderful job here, keep it up' (Interviewee A).

Certain disciplines have always got their feedback through very informal mechanisms—like being yelled at in public by their colleagues or Head of School in the corridor. It would be fair to say that no one gets praised but you certainly hear about it if you've stuffed up in any way. It's feedback by exception, only when something is wrong (Interviewee H).

Whether feedback experiences were positive or negative they had a significant impact on willingness to participate in PM systems.

I'm quite lucky in the sense that I've never had anything negative happen to me here so I've never had to view the performance management system from a negative point of view, but I know there are colleagues of mine who are in the bad books, and it will take on a very different meaning for them (Interviewee C).

Lack of familiarity with formal PM systems or prior feedback experiences also influenced people's engagement.

Most people here have never been through a similar process, which makes it more understandable why this would be quite a confronting process for them. Some have had past, bad experiences, and they're not willing to even give another person or another system the opportunity to show that it could be different. Academics are a particularly cynical bunch of human beings (Interviewee H).

Feedback was reported as valued but strongly influenced by a number of factors including the relationship, the skill of the person providing it and the context in which it was provided.

Often people think that those giving the feedback are getting above themselves. So we're back to professional jealousy, ego, and competition. With feedback you don't get it at the collegial level, it's questionable if it's coming from the Head level, and the area of student feedback is just not valued. Receiving genuine praise that's valued in academia is rare. If you get it from people who are not those few trusted colleagues that you work with consistently, then you're looking for the agenda.

When it's coming from the Head, you listen to what's said, how it's said, the context in which it's said, who else is around at the time it's said. So you're putting together a whole raft of information to see whether that's a piece of trustworthy feedback or not (Interviewee H).

There was genuine concern expressed by some interviewees about the lack of skill of those supposed to be providing the feedback and how unprotected people could be in the process.

Feedback can be just being battered around the head and with the culture of management in this place that's certainly so. Often the issue is that no one provides those people who aren't pulling their weight with any feedback about how they're going at an early stage and they get inured into some bad behaviours and some bad patterns that they just come to see as acceptable. The other issue is that colleagues just don't challenge that and in fact compensate for it by taking on a heavier workload themselves. I've had experience across a number of unis and I think that's a common circumstance (Interviewee K).

Two interviewees nominated informal collegiate feedback as the most fundamentally important form of PM in their opinion, and another interviewee commented on the value he placed on unsolicited but genuine feedback from whatever source. He also described this as rare.

I've got some fantastic colleagues who really support each other and keep each other informed and share knowledge. I think that's about building personal relationships fundamentally. If you've built a trusting relationship with a colleague you can give and receive the information you need, and really hear the feedback. Even if it's not always positive, it is valued. But it takes years to develop that (Interviewee I).

Resourcing

There were those who believed the formal processes were well designed but that the continuous feedback required to support them was inadequate or reserved for those who had performance difficulties or problems.

Basically the system that's in place is okay, the problem is that it's actually not applied; people don't do it. Let's only deal with the problem child. If you're performing, great, I'll let you go on your way (Interviewee D).

The commitment of resources, energy and time to formal systems was universally described as insufficient and the failure to follow up was a consistent theme.

The proof of an effective system is surely a couple of years down the track. With ours a note went out in the second cycle offering for reviews to be done and out of 30 staff in that school, two replied. I believe it's the second year that's really critical because if things don't happen then it sort of disappears into the ether, which seems to be pretty much what's happening across the board (Interviewee J).

Lack of Relevance

The abject failure of compulsory systems to engage academic staff was highlighted several times with staff describing it as an onerous waste of time, a bothersome and irrelevant form filling exercise, something one complied with minimally or evaded by whatever means possible.

Samples of such comments include:

I think it's doomed to lip service compliance and a fast fade into obscurity, where most of these things end up (Interviewee H).

It's now several years since anybody's bothered me with it, and when they were bothering me with it, I managed to avoid it totally. I was allocated to another woman who I really wasn't comfortable about being allocated to because I saw her and me being at the same level. It worked out brilliantly because she was about as interested in doing it as I was. And so we managed to lie really for quite a long time. We'd say things like, 'We've had a meeting to discuss this'. Well it wasn't really a lie. We did have a cup of coffee together and we did say 'Oh shit we've got to do something about that friggin interview' (Interviewee A).

Compulsory systems caused some interviewees to view participation as a quid pro quo.

So if this is an additional extra that I have to do, that I'm forced to do, I'll comply with it, but something else will drop off the end as a result. So the attitude is, 'what can I do less of, what can I find a shortcut around'? I give up enough of my time unpaid already. How can I fit this in without driving myself into the ground (Interviewee H)?

Failure To Follow Up

It was common for interviewees to describe the formal interview process they had gone through as an isolated event that generated a performance plan that they had never looked at since.

When we were actually in the interview it was very casual – we had a chat about the document I'd prepared and my reviewer had written her perceptions and listed some resources she thought I might need and I signed it off at the end of the discussion.

Although I have to say I haven't looked at it since (Interviewee G).

We're supposed to forward these forms back to HR and at my next review it'll probably be brought up that I haven't. (*Rummages through filing cabinet for 2 minutes to locate document.*) See that's never ever been opened. A real working document (*laughs*) since it was done, and that's nearly two years ago now (Interviewee K).

Several interviewees noted the industrial sensitivity surrounding implementation of formal PM systems in universities and that their experiences had done little to engender further commitment to the process.

I had the interview and then was asked to go away and have a go at writing a draft of our discussion. So I did the draft and put a note on it, 'Here is the draft. What do you think'? That's the last I heard so technically I don't have a plan, I have made no agreement and I will stand by that (Interviewee H).

It was also common for interviewees not to know the correct title of their university's formal system and to report long delays between interviews. Some stated they had never had a formal interview.

I'll have to actually double check the correct term for it. As I recall there was a huge introduction of it a few years ago where there was bells and whistles around it and people were invited to briefings for senior staff and staff workshops, so it exists. There was something in existence before, but it was terribly informal and was almost whimsical; it really depended on whether someone felt like doing it that year. This was much more formal and during the first year there was a great deal of activity and it was pretty much compulsory (Interviewee J).

In some instances negative perceptions of the formal processes were related to inadequate implementation and/or follow-through, however far more fundamental issues were generally cited.

Erosion Of Academic Freedom and Autonomy/Cultural Fit of PM Systems

Interviewees consistently raised issues of erosion of academic independence and autonomy as barriers to effective PM practices. For some it was almost an affront to be asked to discuss performance issues.

Essentially it's irrelevant to the bulk of academics who just want to be left alone to do their own thing without being bothered about being held accountable for how they do it (Interviewee H).

Academics are backed up by the concepts of academic creed and independent professional operation that militate against effective performance management practices (Interviewee C).

For others, system design that failed to consider the developmental needs, concerns and egos of professional knowledge workers was pivotal in ensuring low engagement.

Academics are amazingly narrow-minded. They study hard in their own field, they teach in their own field, they research in their own field, and they develop students in their own field, but when it comes to developing themselves, they often don't take on board new ideas and they're just not receptive to them at all. So any system that says it's about developing them is something they're going to look at and say 'Ooh I don't need that'.

There's also this false notion that academia is a collegiate culture. That's a total myth; it's rampantly competitive, protective and defensive and that's only going to get worse as schools contract and people continue to lose their jobs. It'll be a real struggle to get any system in place, particularly given another major restructure and the fact that we never get to settle after a restructure (Interviewee H).

Others referred specifically to a failure to customise the system for the particular university.

Public sector organisations have progressively been taking on board the systems that business use without tailoring them to their peculiar environments and any business knows you can't do that successfully. But academics are good at passively resisting those sort of imperatives—so they don't actively resist—it just sort of gets atrophied and goes away due to lack of engagement (Interviewee B).

Career stages

Similar to the viewpoint expressed by many Heads, staff respondents also expressed the view that the relevance of PM for them, and the value they placed upon it, was largely contingent on the stage of their academic career.

I think the new culture is much more the business bottom line type culture and it's very much about you've got to keep proving yourself to keep staying. The sense of needing to do that seems to be stronger with the people who are newer and who feel more vulnerable. Any performance management system is operating in a context where people are feeling pressured, overloaded and probably anxious about what their career path is as well as what their day-to-day workload is. People who've been there a long time appear to be more secure to me, although from their perspective they may also be feeling incredibly insecure (Interviewee I).

Interviewees who had been their academic role for over 10 years believed that they were past the stage of their career when PM could offer them much of use.

I suspect people who are interested in promotion, permanency etc participate in these things as an information gathering exercise so they know what the hurdles are. In my younger years when I could possibly have done that, there was nothing (Interviewee B).

For newer staff, more junior staff, those from minority groups or those who do not readily put themselves forward, a system based on individual interviews was perceived as providing dedicated time with a more senior staff member that may create access to information and career guidance that they would not otherwise have.

I don't think I'm someone who has a very high profile so I'm not someone who would have necessarily come to the attention of the Head of School. I'm sort of a quiet achiever rather than a mover and shaker I suppose. He wouldn't have had a sense about whether I had ambitions to do anything more, so it would have clarified that for him I think (Interviewee I).

Being a person from a minority background I think the system is very useful and can actually provide me with a lot of networks and entree into the political area where I am excluded unless I'm aggressive enough to put myself forward (Interviewee D).

Reward Based on Doctoral Qualifications

What emerged most powerfully from all of the interviews held with academic staff was the diminishing sense of satisfaction that they expressed about their role and the perception that PM practices and systems had little relevance or influence on the allocation of rewards in the university system.

A dichotomy of rewards, expectations and academic freedom was clearly aligned to whether one possessed a doctorate or not.

Having the doctor in front of your name is critical as it opens lots of doors that otherwise remain firmly shut. At the very least it means you have a voice in the faculty with senior decision makers, which you otherwise wouldn't have (Interviewee K).

The difference in perspective between the following two interviewees (one with a doctorate, one without) is tangible in the sense of career options and personal desperation.

You can put in the same performance but you're very differently rewarded if you are a doctor. I don't have a PhD, and I'm trapped to the senior lecturer level and the rest of my working life will be the burden of administration and coordinating huge classes. I've done a lot of stuff to merit promotion I just don't have the doctorate. If I had any sense at all I would do whatever I had to do to get rid of every bit of big coordination I could, and go bunker down and finish my doctorate (Interviewee A).

I have my doctorate so the first thing you do is look around. I'm stifling here and if the performance management system is working they should have picked that up a long time ago and had a chat to me to see how they could motivate me to stay. It doesn't have to be big and it's not just about rewarding me monetarily. There are other things in life apart from that (Interviewee D).

Interviewees who were newer to academic environments or who lacked a doctorate reported a sense of needing to fit a certain academic profile if they were to retain their job. Goal setting and assessment of achievement through formal PM interviews were viewed as a necessary vehicle for demonstrating willingness and aptitude to take on additional challenges that might favourably position them.

Relationship of Formal Systems to Informal Mechanisms

There was a strong sense of disconnection that emerged from these interviewees. They described it as increasingly difficult to maintain ongoing relationships with colleagues in their professional discipline, within their own schools and within the overall university for which they worked.

Several interviewees from different universities mentioned the impact of geography on decreased opportunity for 'corridor conversations' and informal collegial contact and feedback.

Economising on space by eliminating dedicated staff tearooms or a space where staff can sit down and talk delimited,

that level of informal feedback to each other that really is the backbone of any academic culture. Various staff will be overseas at different times much less the fact that we're just on different campuses. I have colleagues located at a different campus that I see more often when we are overseas than I do when we're in the same country. I mean how ridiculous is that? Different disciplines of the School are located at different campuses so it's difficult to build any inter-disciplinary understanding (Interviewee K).

One interviewee described this as a feeling of being 'fractured' that had an impact on informal mechanisms of collegial information exchange.

When you've been fractured in other ways, with people all over the place, teaching offshore, teaching at different campuses, doing all sorts of different things it's quite difficult to get together. We don't have any School of Management area. That's often where you get invaluable informal information about something you'd done or something a student said about you or early warning even, and when people talk about a collegial system I think that's what that means (Interviewee A).

This potential for disconnection is a theme to which one HOS had also alluded although she described it as an artefact of academic cultures.

The thing that is missing in a lot of academic cultures is a place for individuals to feel connected to the organisation and to feel acknowledged. If nothing else, the performance planning and review process here gives individuals an hour and a half once a year where they sit down and are the centre of attention, and can talk about what they want and need.

Unlike corporations, academic institutions are very loosely-coupled systems, and that means that it's very easy for people to feel under-led and disconnected, and they whinge about that at times. Performance planning and review processes are possibly more important for a university than for some other organisational types, because otherwise the pieces, the people are very disconnected potentially. And so is the bigger picture (Interviewee F).

Interviewee comments seem to under-score a fairly dramatic increase in this sense of disconnection.

Expectations of Increased Workload

A commonly expressed view was that PM was about looking for ways to increase the workload of staff and introduce higher expectations and duties.

Probably the biggest fear was whether they'd get left with a whole lot more work. So if they haven't been lumbered with too much they're breathing a sigh of relief. But most people came out with a sense of more work (Interviewee I).

Several people valued the process of performance goal or objective setting but noted the tendency to 'dumb down' the level of challenge they agreed to, so as to make their goal achievement easier and preclude taking on additional tasks.

My personal view is that this can't hurt. It's got me setting some targets but if I'm going to be assessed on them I'll pull them back a bit and be pretty optimistic because otherwise you've set yourself up with a possible failure (Interviewee G).

I didn't feel intimidated, but it's difficult to say to the Head of School, 'hang on a minute, I've got enough I don't want that extra task'. I'm conscious of needing a certain type of profile if I want to keep my options open and be able to stay here. In that sense I guess there's a whole lot of dynamics around. Maybe it's just as well not to meet one of the objectives so you can say it was a lot and I'll do that one this next year (Interviewee I).

Most people perceived their workload as already unrealistic, particularly in the area of increased requirements for administrative and coordinating tasks, higher demands for research output and increased internationalisation of teaching. In some instances it seemed that PM systems were expected to solve all of the resource dilemmas afflicting modern universities.

The external environment is impacting on things like larger classes and competition for resources which the Heads of Schools in reality have very little control over themselves.

So people have said ‘Well why bother? It’s a waste of time, because the things that we need nobody is prepared to do anything about’ (Interviewee J).

Confusion Around Purposes

The question of what PM could productively offer was insufficiently answered for most academic staff, particularly given the historical resistance of tertiary unions to all forms of appraisal systems that academics reported. This was further complicated by to the failure to clearly articulate the purposes of the system or ensure its integration with other university systems and processes. Questions regarding the timing of system implementation also raised staff cynicism. In sum this contributed to the perceived lack of relevance and meaningfulness of PM for academic staff.

I think the main problem aside from the industrial connotations in academia for staff, is suspicion regarding its purpose. Is it a developmental thing or is it an evaluative thing? And I don’t think it’s absolutely clear where it might fall. There were some monetary incentives for the university to put it into place now so it did. It’s not a good system really (Interviewee J).

As one interviewee said

I teach HR but I have such a disdainful view of the formal performance appraisal system because it has no correlation with anything else that is actually happening in the place. It’s an embarrassingly ill-conceived irrelevance (Interviewee A).

This interviewee further pointed to the apparent disparity he saw between the actual versus the espoused purposes of his university’s formal system and the inequities that were developing between individual workloads.

What you do and what you’re assessed on, what the institution says are the objectives and what you’re forced to spend your time on and how you are appraised are alarmingly different. It’s supposed to be across the four platforms of teaching, research, leadership and coordination and community service, with all being equally valued, but it’s not.

There are people in the system who don't do a lot and there are people who are just totally loaded down. Those who appear not to be doing very much fall into two categories. One group is those that are actually doing a lot to further themselves professionally. They're invisible in terms of the administration and the workload here, but they're researching; they're the new breed of winner. The other category is those who're doing enough not to get into strife. You don't get any complaints about them because they don't do very much anywhere and they stay out of sight (Interviewee A).

Allied to this confusion of purpose is a failure to clearly articulate who has the primary responsibility for driving PM systems.

If you don't actively go and say, 'let's have a meeting', it will not happen. I think I should be the person driving it, and at the end of the day it's my career, it's not HR's problem, it's my problem (Interviewee D).

Chapter Summary

Results from the three case studies covering these 13 academics largely reinforced the predominantly negative perceptions of formal PM systems expressed by Heads of School interviewed during Phase One.

Despite significant variations between the three sites, the findings were highly consistent. These variations included three different PM models, (one based on hierarchically negotiated annual performance targets, a second based on individual career mentoring that was voluntary and the third on an annual performance review meeting and overall performance rating); different stages of system implementation; and different experiences of training to support the systems.

The one reviewer, (Interviewee F at University One), who was very positive about the newly implemented PM practices, expressed sentiments that were not supported by her staff.

Academic staff perceptions of formal PM practices were largely negative and although informal mechanisms such as mentoring were more favourably regarded, they were described as infrequently done well.

The majority of staff responses indicated that formal systems are seen as irrelevant to an academic's core work, time consuming, a way of expanding their workload and diminishing their academic freedom and universally regarded as under-resourced and insufficiently followed up.

Staff at an earlier career stage or lacking the all-important doctoral qualification tended to see participation in PM as more advantageous to them.

The significance of the leadership role played by the Head of School in establishing a feedback culture, and the skill of reviewers to conduct PM processes were referred to, although staff mainly identified a minimal feedback culture, where praise from any source was scarce but criticism or abuse was common.

Chapter Six–Discussion

This research study had three objectives.

1. Identify the types of PM processes currently in use in Australian public universities;
2. Provide a rich description of the academics' experience of them, from the perspective of both the academics being managed and those doing the managing; and
3. Critically examine how effective PM is with these staff groups in Australian universities so that strategies for improving current practice may be identified.

This chapter discusses the study findings in detail, using the primary research questions as an organising framework:

1. What PM practices are currently in use in Australian public universities?
2. What are the similarities in approach and what issues does PM raise?
3. How do academic staff who take part in these practices (as either staff or management) experience them?
4. What cultural and contextual factors (if any) contribute to this experience?
5. What are the perceived effects of these practices on the performance of individuals, teams and the organisation?
6. Which system elements do academic staff and academic managers perceive to be most effective in academic cultures and why?

1. What performance management practices are currently in use in Australian public universities?

At the time of initial data generation, 32 out of the 37 public universities had a formal PM system in place, although 56% were less than three years old and 75% were either new or under review. In the five universities without a formal system systematic performance planning, review and feedback processes existed. Their ‘informality’ was the most valued aspect and was described as facilitating high staff engagement in discussions concerning performance expectations and how to meet them. In the year between the first and second phase of data generation every university had implemented a formal system, confirming previous studies that indicate heightened activity and moves towards the implementation of formal PM systems in Australian organisations, including the tertiary education sector (Commerce Clearing House 2000; Compton 2005; Dickensen 1997; Lonsdale 1998).

Faced with exogenous government pressure (in the form of recurrent funding amounts tied to such ‘improvements in people management’) for increased accountability (Nelson 2003b), Australian universities seem to have responded in a similar way to their international counterparts, and have introduced formal PM systems. Study findings indicate, however, that the official PM policy that is espoused and the actual practice that emerges in a university often do not match.

The ‘Official’ Performance Management Picture

Detailed PM/appraisal policy and procedures can be found on the majority of university websites. A review of this information, and other policy documentation that respondents provided, indicates that there are well-developed and articulated PM systems, which integrate with and support other significant organisational policies.

Various reviews of the Australian tertiary education system have been highly critical of the sector’s people management practices, specifically noting the lack of integration of PM and institutional planning and review (Higher Education Management Review 1995; Lonsdale 1996; Paget et al. 1992). At face value the documentation therefore suggests an encouraging shift

towards the more strategic HR management practice, identified as contributing to improved individual and organisational performance (Patterson et al. 2000; Stone 2002).

Findings from the documentation certainly confirm that the majority of Australian universities have followed the trends noted in the literature toward:

- increased usage of a formal performance appraisal system (Compton 2005; Nankervis & Leece 1997);
- the use of terminology and nomenclature for systems in educational environments that largely replicates that deployed in corporate environments (Down et al. 2000; Townley 1997);
- hybridised systems, usually based upon cascading MBO structures (Commerce Clearing House 2000); and
- systems that incorporate elements of both formative and summative appraisal (Commerce Clearing House 2000; Compton 2005; Management Advisory Committee 2001).

The study findings further suggest that institutional practice mostly aligns well with the legal requirements for PM systems to observe major matters of due process in the conduct of reviews and confidentiality of outcomes. This is also consistent with findings from the literature (American Association of University Professors 1998; De Sander 2000).

Actual Performance Management Practice

The picture that emerges from the interviews is, however, substantially different and reveals a diversity of PM systems, practices and engagement with them that belies the ‘official’ publications.

Informal Practices

Little information regarding informal PM practices was provided, although the literature suggests that a robust PM culture will include a variety of interlocking formal and informal feedback

processes (Management Advisory Committee 2001). Comments from both staff and Heads were consistent with the literature in valuing ongoing informal feedback highly. Recognition, thanks, praise, gestures of appreciation and even constructive criticism from a multitude of sources (including the HOS, students, course and discipline coordinators, other colleagues, mentoring arrangements and conference attendance) were all mentioned by study participants as important, but infrequent, informal practices.

Heads valued informal practices as one of the few means they had for differentially rewarding high performing staff, although they mainly highlighted the resources and sanctions they had at their disposal rather than the use of feedback and praise as an ongoing reward. Several Heads identified the ways they used formal control of resources to reward or motivate better performance, in line with findings from previous studies (Jackson 1999, p. 144; Management Advisory Committee 2001). Recommendations for conference attendance, increments and promotions, post-doctoral awards, control of workload allocation and work hours, provision of administrative help and the purchase of equipment were all resources that Heads mentioned as within their discretionary control to use as informal rewards. This chapter will focus more upon the formal systems in use, given that this is what the vast majority of respondents described, despite several prompts about informal PM practice.

What was graphically clear was that informal and ongoing feedback about performance remains as uncommon as previous research has shown it to be (Higher Education Management Review 1995; Khoury & Analoui 2004; Lansbury 1988), despite the value that academic staff in previous studies and in this study placed upon it. Several interviewees speculated that the common failure to provide informal and ongoing feedback was one of the primary reasons why there was an increased incidence in the implementation of formal systems. They speculated that the provision of a formal vehicle for feedback might provoke heightened commitment to its provision.

Also resoundingly clear was that current PM practices, as reported by all study interviewees, are far from 'cutting-edge' and more reflective of performance appraisal than the broader interrelated strategies the literature defines as PM (Armstrong 1996; Management Advisory Committee 2001).

A comprehensive discussion of how staff experience their university's PM system (at Question 3) indicates how few perceive it as 'benefiting employees in terms of recognition, receiving feedback, catering for work needs and offering career guidance' (Lansbury 1988). Findings suggest that sector practice around candid and ongoing performance feedback that leads to targeted staff development and career enhancement is poor.

The translation of goal setting activities to enhanced individual, team and institutional performance that Lonsdale outlines as a key feature of PM systems is consequentially compromised. The study findings strongly suggest that the role of leadership in realising the 'fourth generation performance management' which Lonsdale (1996, 1998) discusses is probably the least well developed part of the PM process in university settings.

Clarity of Performance Management Purposes

The majority of interviewees at all levels indicated that there is a culture of non-compliance with formal PM systems, suspicion and lack of clarity regarding system purposes, and cynicism about its potential to deliver outcomes of any value to them.

This is not assisted by the common tendency to have different PM systems for different staff groups. The majority of respondents reported different systems in use for general versus academic staff, and for more senior staff levels. The literature is clear about the divisive effects this has on staff morale, particularly when more senior staff can access monetary rewards not available to others and there are no consequences for failure to fulfil their PM obligations to staff (Chadbourne & Ingvarson 1998; Commerce Clearing House 2000; Management Advisory Committee 2001; Thomas & Bretz 1994). Previous studies have also indicated that a factor differentiating higher performing organisations from their counterparts is the consistency of appraisal practice across organisational levels and the embedding of appraisal and other PM activities as an integral part of an organisation's people management culture (Commerce Clearing House 1994, 2000; Management Advisory Committee 2001).

Many interviewees described a scenario resonant of that outlined by Down and colleagues (2000) when a new PM system is implemented or an existing system is reviewed: there is an initial burst

of organisational energy and attention given to the system launch, followed by enforced compliance for the first year or so until managers and staff begin to more overtly ignore or marginalise the system. Or as one interviewee described it, 'I think it's doomed to lip service compliance and a fast fade into obscurity, where most of these things end up' (Interviewee H). This is often described as eventuating due to the failure of the formal PM system to deliver anything perceived to be valuable by staff during its first iteration. Clearly the inaugural year is a critical one where a system must be perceived as delivering valued outcomes to staff if their engagement is to be achieved.

While every Australian university now has a formal system nominally in place, (that is, since data generation for the present study ended in 2003), it is still the case that great ambivalence and confusion about the purposes and the role of PM in universities exists (Aper & Fry 2003; Dickensen 1997; Marshall 1995; Paget et al. 1992; Sharrock 1998; Simmons 2002). Some Heads were unable to identify the specific reasons why the formal system had been implemented, although most said it was to:

- enable better integration of staff work objectives with other university planning processes;
- manage staff workloads;
- ensure accountability and equitable treatment of staff;
- provide feedback to staff about their performance; and
- develop the means to recognise and reward outstanding performance.

These reasons reflect a mixture of both formative and summative purposes, although Heads described their university's formal PM practices as predominantly developmental or formative in focus, with 30 of the existing 32 universities with a system identifying this as a key factor in obtaining or retaining any level of academic staff engagement with the process.

Few systems were summative in the sense that they were tightly integrated with, and cross-informed other organisational systems governing compensation, promotion, transfer, termination or training and development. Interview comments indicated a lack of systemic integration

between PM practices and other central university policies, systems, strategies and direction. This is evocative of the characterisation of PM practices as ‘policy orphans’ which remain unintegrated into the larger purposes and mission of the institution. They provide an appearance of accountability, whilst actually delivering little of benefit to any of the stakeholders concerned (Aper & Fry 2003).

The present study thus confirms one of the Hoare Report’s criticisms of the Australian public university sector’s people management practices being the lack of integration of PM and institutional planning and review (Higher Education Management Review 1995). It specifically noted that the management of academic performance was industrially restrictive and operationally complex, separated from decisions concerning tenure, probation, increment advancement and promotion. Findings from the current research suggest that not much of substance has changed, despite a plethora of activity in the sector over the last five years. Furthermore, interviewees in the few universities that had a performance-related pay (PRP) system component, described it as problematic, where the link to pay was tenuous, under revision or not really followed through.

Whilst an increasing number of Australian companies use their PM systems for determining bonus and merit-based pay decisions (Commerce Clearing House 2000), this study’s findings suggest that PRP for academic staff Levels A, B and C, is not a strong trend reflected in the Australian public university sector. The situation of GSMs varied slightly in that they tended to operate under different award and contract conditions which enabled more use of individual work contracts and therefore greater capacity to design and follow through on PRP linkages.

There has been a rapid increase in the adoption of formal PM practice with over half of the systems less than three years old. Every Australian public university has now introduced individual performance reviews, and almost unanimously they have designed and introduced formative appraisal systems officially targeted at staff development.

The academic staff interviewed were generally less clear about the purposes of the PM system and more sceptical, viewing it as a means of engendering more work and essentially about further control of their activities.

Failure to adequately address this question of purpose is a major stumbling block to academic staff engagement with PM practices and is thematic throughout the literature on PM in educational environments. The difficulties of achieving and maintaining staff engagement with formal systems are well documented, particularly in public sector organisations where system alignment, integration and credibility often prove problematic (Fletcher 1993; Management Advisory Committee 2001).

Lack of System Ownership

Most interviewees including Heads of School, who have a pivotal role in conducting formal reviews, continue to describe their PM system as driven and owned by the Human Resource Department. Although some reviewers view the PM system as a highly important set of activities for which they have primary responsibility, most reviewers do not. Again, ownership of the system by line managers is noted in the literature as a critical factor in establishing its credibility (Compton 2005; Management Advisory Committee 2001).

Respondents outlined the common tendency for centralised formal systems to be locally adapted within divisions, departments and schools, on the premise that this enabled the central system to be tailored to suit each specific operating environment and culture. Although 65% of Heads interviewed in Phase One of the study acknowledged a link between the centralised appraisal system and their own PM practice, close to half (44%) characterised it as weak. They ‘tailored’ the central system as a means of reducing bureaucratic language and overly complex and unwieldy paperwork that did not facilitate either its usage or participants’ engagement with the system. In other words, they were already modifying a centrally designed system that they perceived would otherwise receive low staff engagement.

Kleinhenz, Ingvarson and Chadbourne (2002) have identified the impact this type of adaptation has had in the Victorian school system where a lack of consistent processes has made it difficult to

assess the validity, reliability and credibility of PM practice. Others have similarly noted that modification of this nature is a double-edged sword. Despite efforts to achieve the same broad system objectives, the use of different documents, timeframes and approaches within local areas often has the effect of Chinese Whispers. It leads to a dissipation or distortion of the original policy intent and unclear communication of appraisal purpose (Dickensen 1997; Wragg et al. 1996). These factors also emerged strongly in the present study.

In the fourteen-month period of this study's Phase One data generation, 75% of Heads referred to their university's existing PM system as 'new or under review', usually because the existing situation and/or system was described as unacceptable to academic staff for a multiplicity of reasons.

There seems to have been little effort on behalf of policy makers or system designers to adequately offset the costs in time and personnel of implementing a formal PM system by providing additional resources. Implementation rests upon the inherent assumption that reviewers and staff will create the time in busy schedules for this 'important organisational activity'. Without clarity of purpose and conviction that genuine gains are to be had for the individual, team and organisation this seems a naïve and fatuous hope. Furthermore, in the context of the sector's past history of negative experience and union resistance to formalised PM practices, it is even more so.

Summary

Overall the findings indicate that the overwhelming majority of PM processes currently in use in Australian public universities are formal systems focusing on formative appraisal. There is however, a great degree of diversity in PM practices. Whilst policy and documentation would indicate that the systems are comprehensive and integrated with university's strategies, the reality is very different.

2. What are the similarities in approach and what issues does performance management raise?

Australian public universities use a diversity of PM processes ranging from colleague based mentoring to hierarchical objective approaches, although the vast majority of PM systems face similar design and implementation issues. This section outlines the similarities in approach and issues raised by PM systems.

Similarities in Approach

Consultation with 'Stakeholders'

Previous studies of PM practice in tertiary educational environments have suggested that good system design should task faculty members with primary responsibility for the design of any PM policy and system, and that systems should be implemented on a pilot or trial basis (Aper & Fry 2003; Dickensen 1997; Simmons 2002).

Most of the 32 universities with an existing system, adopted an implementation process that incorporated consultations with staff, unions and management representatives to facilitate discussion about the suitability and acceptability of any proposed PM system. For the main part, however, this was consultation *after* the system had been designed rather than integral involvement of faculty in the design of the actual system components. This has previously been identified as a key reason for the failure of PM systems (Armstrong 2000; Lonsdale 1998).

There were notable exceptions to this pattern. One university had spent an extensive amount of time in the design phase, seconded academic staff from various levels to working parties and piloted the system prior to full adoption. However, despite the effort made at this university, gaining the committed participation of academic staff on an ongoing basis was described as challenging.

System Structure and Features

The majority of Australian public university PM systems are modelled on hierarchical approaches where a one-to-one appraisal interview occurs between an academic staff member and a reviewing manager, usually an academic such as the HOS, Department or Discipline. This occurs in a context where reviewers and staff commonly referred to the uneasy fit of an hierarchical appraisal in knowledge-based and educational organisations and the lack of a clear sense of ‘line management’ in university cultures noted in the literature (Fletcher 1997; Kleinhenz et al. 2002; Lonsdale 1996; Marshall 1998; Peterson 2000). While the literature notes that team-based appraisal and reward mechanisms may particularly suit organisations with flatter hierarchies and collegial cultures, where increases in productivity may be largely attributable to the team’s efforts (Lonsdale 1998; Stone 2002), study respondents did not identify the use of such mechanisms.

The reliance on Heads of School to conduct reviews exacerbates staff concerns about vulnerability to subjective assessments of performance at the hands of a manager who may have little opportunity to observe performance and/or lack knowledge or experience in the same professional discipline. It also highlights the need for a HOS (or other reviewers) to be sufficiently skilled in conducting reviews, which is further discussed in question three. Additionally, the heavy reliance on a sole reviewer runs counter to previous findings that the use of team and peer review are preferred practices that suit the culture of educational institutions (Lonsdale 1998; Lonsdale, Dennis, Openshaw & Mullins 1989).

Of the 32 universities with a formal PM system, common structural features included:

- calendar year cycles with face-to-face interviews between the HOS and staff member;
- an espoused policy expectation of interviewee preparation in the form of self-review processes; just over a third of interviewees described this as something they actually did, which is comparatively low in terms of the trend towards increased usage noted in the literature (Compton 2005; Thomas 1997);

- a mid-cycle meeting, although this again highlighted the gap between officially espoused PM policy versus local adaptation. A minority of interviewees said a mid-cycle meeting was a required element, in contrast to the majority of websites which indicated it was a formal requirement;
- an annual interview either late in the year, or early in the following year, that the majority use for the following key purposes:
 - a workload planning tool for the ensuing year (100%), with 75% of existing PM systems involving the negotiation and mutual agreement of performance objectives at the beginning of each cycle; and
 - Discussion and retrospective review of staff performance over the preceding twelve months (just over 80%);
- an espoused policy expectation of ongoing informal feedback to support the formal interview processes, although the majority of both reviewers and staff said this was rare and that PM tended to be a ‘one-off annual event’ with few undertaking periodic review against plans.

These features align with the literature which suggests retrospective appraisal of performance is a key outcome of a formal PM system and that feedback processes are generally confined to the formal interviews (Cascio 1996; Management Advisory Committee 2001; Stone 2002).

Common Issues

System Integration

Study respondents indicated that the goal setting and retrospective review against goals that epitomise performance appraisal are now common activities meant to occur on an annual basis. In most cases they said that this did not actually eventuate. The data, however, failed to highlight other key systemic outcomes and links identified in the literature, reinforcing the contention that practice in Australian public universities remains largely at the performance appraisal stage of

development, rather than an integrated set of PM practices. In reality, linkages to strategic planning processes, staff development, career development, probationary, promotional and reward systems were all described as loose or poor.

Several Heads saw themselves as responsible for articulating the links for staff between university plans and the challenges in their individual academic role but described this as problematic due to the limited time they had to communicate the plans in any depth. This works against the critical need in universities, as large and diversified organisational systems with complex strategic planning processes, to provide viable means of articulating higher order plans to the teams and individuals who must operationalise them.

Strategic changes at the organisational level, such as the increased use of online technologies, greater offshore teaching responsibilities and multi-campus sites, dramatically reduced the interactions between Heads and staff, further exacerbating the amount of time available for communicating plans and observing actual staff performance. Not surprisingly, staff described the use of PM systems as a means to communicate and integrate overall organisational strategies and plans as largely ineffectual.

These findings suggest that there is a critical disconnection between organisational performance indicators and individual accountabilities, which previous research (Commerce Clearing House 2000; Cascio 1996; Compton 2005; Iles et al. 2000) indicates may result in unfocused effort and compromised organisational productivity.

Most Heads stated that there was either a vague link or no link between their organisation's PM processes and academic promotion. Confidentiality issues delimited open access to PM data for formal promotional purposes, although an individual staff member could choose to make reference to his or her own review outcomes to support their promotional aspirations. The ability to deploy formal PM practices towards the implementation of higher 'accountability' for individual academics must be questioned if it cannot be used effectively as a mechanism to relate individual effort to divisional and organisational plans.

In addition, over 80% of Heads stated that the linkages between the probationary system and the PM system were also weak. They described the cycle times of the two respective formal systems as insufficiently integrated, with the result that unsuitable appointments were commonly made. The longer-term result was often a staff member who was described as ‘difficult to manage’ or a ‘performance problem’.

Training to Support System Implementation

Nearly every reviewer interviewed in the present study indicated that their skill in managing performance issues could be significantly improved. It is clear that the investment of time and money to investigate the most appropriate forms of training, that will assist both reviewers and staff to competently and confidently take up their PM responsibilities, is currently deficient.

Managing Under-Performance

A theme throughout the study findings was that Heads did not find the formal PM procedures offered them much tangible benefit, particularly in regard to rewarding staff or managing issues of under-performance. At some point in every interview, whether it was with a HOS or a staff member, the interviewee raised the issue of under-performing staff. Heads universally referred to the difficulty of managing under-performance effectively whilst staff interviewees referred to the impact of under-performing staff members on a team’s productivity and morale. Both commonly related a current ‘horror story’ about a staff member renowned for conspicuously poor performance that no-one tackled.

Although Heads clearly saw the need to keep disciplinary procedures separate from the formal PM system, they unanimously identified the procedures for managing under-performance as unclear, complex and largely unsupported by senior management. Some suggested that more rigorous and consistently applied PM practices would assist in early identification of any performance issues and allow for timely development that might lead to improvement.

Most universities have official policies and procedures for dealing with under-performance but few Heads (or others responsible for managing performance) believe there is commitment or support

from senior staff to deal with problems of this nature. They point to the lack of historical precedent and current situations that demonstrate a lack of support, when recommendations they make fail to be actioned. This is a serious issue for many public sector organisations, exacerbated in universities by the loosely-coupled nature of the organisation and the nature of academic work itself. Staff often work at diverse locations on and offshore and much of their teaching and research activity occurs out of view of those responsible for providing performance feedback. The opportunity to monitor performance regularly and follow up, with the consistency that any performance problems require, is thus diminished.

Summary

Evidence from the interviews clearly indicates that the majority of PM systems currently in use are experienced as falling far short of the mark in improving ‘people management practice.’

Academic managers use the formal system to set performance objectives or goals with staff but provide little ongoing feedback about staff achievements or shortcomings. Most PM systems do not enable Heads to offer rewards to their high achievers and the systems are seen as a poor vehicle for preventing or managing under-performance issues.

Related to this is a lack of training to support system implementation and ongoing operation. Heads describe themselves as lacking the necessary skills to conduct PM interviews and reviews.

3. How do academic staff who take part in these practices (as either staff or management) experience them?

The expectations of, and experience with, PM differed between academic staff and managers. The discussion is therefore organised to allow findings of different perceptions to be highlighted, where they existed.

Reviewers

Whilst most Heads interviewed during Phase One accepted some form of PM as good management practice they did not feel that the current models and approaches either assisted them in fulfilling their role of ‘managing staff’ or were productive in engaging academic staff. They echoed the contingent viewpoint reflected in much of the literature that ‘one size does not fit all’ when it comes to PM approaches and that more flexible models for knowledge workers may be required (Kleinhenz et al. 2002; Lonsdale 1998).

Some Heads valued the appraisal interview as dedicated time with staff. They viewed its main purposes as a mixture of developmental discussion about improving practice, and planning discussions around workload management and accountability. These individuals used the formal interview as a feedback mechanism and a means of communicating with staff that they considered would not otherwise have occurred. The majority were more sceptical of its benefits, unable to explicitly state why the formal system had been introduced, or why it was under review, as many of the systems were when data was being collected. Most respondents felt that systems had been imposed by central policy areas and they reported a culture of non-compliance.

Phase One respondents were the Head of a School of Management (or equivalent), a group of interviewees one could characterise as ‘expert witnesses’ in line with Simmons’s definition (2002) when it comes to PM systems. Such scepticism, vagueness or lack of knowledge clearly indicates their feeling of a low ownership of the existing university-wide formal systems. Simply put, the majority of Heads interviewed in this study *said* PM was a critical function but did not appear to act on the opinion that they expressed. Argyris has referred to this type of behaviour as the

difference between espoused theory and the theory in use, when people are unaware of the contradictions between the theory that they espouse and the theory that actually informs their actions (Argyris 1991, p. 7).

Most Heads were more positive about the tailored versions of PM they had implemented into their own areas, as distinct from the 'official' organisation-wide system. For the main part they lacked knowledge of what was happening in other Schools, Faculties or Divisions. The implications of this for consistency of practice and perceived equity across an organisation are significant.

With one exception, all of the reviewers across the three selected sites who were interviewed in Phase Two of this study (including the Heads of School) described their experience of formal PM systems as predominantly negative. Most expressed concerns resonant of previous research findings when they alluded to the potential for PM to adversely affect individual and team morale, provoke resentment and general opposition amongst staff and opposition from staff associations (Paget et al. 1992). Most also perceived that there was insufficient time to conduct staff appraisal properly, in line with findings from many previous studies (Anderson 1993; Chadbourne & Ingvarson 1998; Hort 1997; Kleinhenz et al. 2002; Thomas & Bretz 1994).

The literature points to the importance of strong organisational leadership for the establishment or enhancement of PM system credibility with staff (Khoury & Analoui 2004; Lonsdale 1998; Management Advisory Committee 2001). Such leadership positively espouses and champions the purposes and benefits of participation in PM and models the use of formal and informal PM activities as an integral part of ongoing people management practice.

In the present study, as mentioned, the vast majority of those who were in the leadership roles responsible for PM in universities expressed a lack of ownership and negativity about their organisation's formal system. The literature suggests that academic managers, like their corporate and school counterparts, seem to dislike doing appraisal interviews (Alexander & Mannatt 1992; Sadowski & Miller 1996; Spillane 1992) and almost universally describe themselves as lacking the

skill to competently conduct the PM function (Jackson 1999). These were common themes also reported by the present study's reviewers.

University One's HOS was very positive about the newly implemented PM system in her School, characterising people's reactions as 'on balance very cooperative'. In contrast, each of the staff respondents interviewed at this site were on balance far more negative than the Head perceived them to be, reflecting a common dichotomy of opinion between reviewers and staff that is recorded in the literature on PM in educational environments (Kleinhenz et al. 2002; Paget et al. 1992; Simmons 2002; Wragg et al. 1996).

Reviewers' Perceptions of System Impact and Relevance

The significance and level of commitment to the formal PM system varied widely, from the small minority of Heads (5%) who characterised it as fundamentally important, to the larger minority (15%), one of whom described it far more derogatively as 'crap'. The majority of opinions, however, were more ambivalent or qualified, with Heads and other reviewers expressing the belief that sufficient and equitable ways of defining and measuring the performance of staff had yet to be determined across the sector.

Simmons (2002) identified a diverse range of appraisal criteria that academic staff and 'expert witnesses' see as legitimate and acceptable measures of performance, and this study's participants identified measures consistent with all of these, although determining the weighting and blend of factors was commonly noted as problematic. This suggests that the definition of 'performance' within (much less across) universities is ill articulated and begs the question of what 'evidence' of performance constitutes sufficient measurement.

Further complicating these issues is the ongoing review in many Australian universities of the relative emphasis and quality of research and teaching activities for academics (Dollery et al. 2006; Taylor et al. 1998). As Khoury and Analoui (2004) note, institutional decisions about long-term strategy will have a decided impact on determining the criteria against which individual academic performance is to be assessed.

Heads' Perceptions of Staff Reactions

Heads' views on how they believed staff generally perceived PM were remarkably consistent with findings from previous research into higher educational environments (Barry et al. 2001; Clements 2004; Henson 1994; Hort 1997; Lonsdale 1998; Lonsdale & Varley 1995; Townley 1993). They believed it was viewed as superficial, irrelevant and an onerous additional imposition to already crowded staff workloads. Heads described staff as more accepting if PM was for formative or staff development purposes, but highly resistant if it was used for summative purposes such as performance-related pay (PRP) or the identification of performance problems. GSMs generally have greater discretion in the use of performance contracts and PRP, but Heads in this group also described the potentially divisive effects on group morale, particularly when reward differentials were large and when much of the academic's work on innovative or offshore programs was conducted in teams, but the reward mechanisms were individually designed.

In summary, reviewers' perceptions of staff reactions were characterised in the following ways:

- a minority of staff are 'keen' especially if they are new staff and/or staff coming in from business environments where PM is a more culturally accepted norm than in the university environment;
- a significant minority of staff are 'unhappy' and perceive formal PM negatively; they are suspicious, unconvinced, generally hostile or threatened by the procedure; and
- the majority of staff are ambivalent or cynical although slowly developing a gradual and grudging acceptance of formal systems as a means of recognition for workload.

Clearly Heads perceived staff as fairly unwilling participants in the PM process, and had little energy or enthusiasm to confront this on a consistent basis, unless they genuinely perceived that there were benefits to be had from doing so. This is consistent with the literature from the organisational field that shows managers (including those in educational environments) often dislike undertaking appraisal processes and regard them as not worth the effort (Dickensen 1997; Grint 1993; Shelley 1999; Wright 2001).

Irrelevant as the Career Advances

All of the reviewers interviewed during Phase One and Two described the existing formal PM practices of their universities as increasingly irrelevant to a staff member as his or her academic career progresses. They expressed a strong sense that assistance with career development had been under-managed in the past and that greater attention to the function might assist a university with staff retention, particularly of the best and brightest staff who are also the most easily mobile and open to being 'poached' by other universities.

Only 20% of Heads specifically referred to a career development discussion as a part of the formal PM expectation, placing the emphasis strongly upon the development of junior staff, with the more mature academic being entrusted with the management of their own development and careers. Most Heads felt that the failure to support the career development of junior staff was a critical omission of the formal processes, with newly appointed faculty being brought in and pretty much neglected in terms of career guidance and management. Heads offered various opinions and perspectives that indicated different PM practices might be appropriate for different stages of the academic career. Although no one offered a formal definition of 'career stages' reviewers generally described those at Levels A and B, and/or who had only recently joined the university, as being in early career stages. New staff tended to possess doctoral qualifications— anecdotal and practitioner evidence indicates that this is now basically a prerequisite for academic appointments— despite the fact that they were often younger in years than staff with greater longevity who were still in the process of achieving their doctorate.

Staff with more than five years career experience tended to be those still at academic Levels A, B or C and were generally described as being in mid-career stages. Those with greater organisational longevity (although not necessarily greater qualifications or seniority) were generally described as being in later-career stages.

Some common observations were that:

- early in their academic career, people require varied duties that provide opportunities for challenge and appropriate feedback and developmental advice. A degree of guidance and evaluation is necessary for academics at an early career stage, and this encourages them to be more receptive and pro-active about formal PM as a means to achieve these ends;
- in mid-career most university academics tend towards autonomous work patterns and achievement and are less inclined towards PM unless they see some particular benefit; and
- in the later stages of an academic career people tend to be fully conversant with the challenges of their role and may have little interest in formal PM. Many reviewers referred to the ageing profile of their academic faculty members and the issue of how to keep them motivated and productive. Given the legislative changes to retirement age sweeping most of the Western world, the issue of how best to 'performance manage' ageing academic staff has recently been identified as a key one (Bland & Berquist 1997; Koopman-Boyden & Macdonald 2003).

In Phase One, 95% of Heads interviewed felt that the formal PM system provided little assistance in the area of career management or development and that it was left to the ingenuity and creativity of the Head to find ways and means (especially budgetary) for effectively continuing to develop academic staff. They also noted similar trends to those noted in previous studies, regarding a lack of viable career paths (including salary and promotional opportunities) for academics who wished to continue teaching and researching, as opposed to taking on managerial or administrative duties (Higher Education Management Review 1995; Ingvarson & Chadbourne 1997). They perceived this lack of viable career paths as contributing to staff lack of interest in feedback.

Academic Staff Perspectives

Previous research studies of PM in higher education assert that a majority of academic staff accept that some kind of process is necessary and constructive (Aper & Fry 2003; Lonsdale 1993; Morris 2005; Simmons 2002). All of the staff respondents in this study concurred with this viewpoint.

Furthermore, evidence from much of the literature suggests that academic staff value the occasion that formal PM provides for forward planning and goal setting in both teaching and research, and the opportunities it affords for feedback, communication about developmental needs, career planning and future prospects (Morris 2005; Moses 1988, 1995; Paget et al. 1992; University of Tasmania 2001).

A solid body of literature indicates, however, that many staff in educational environments experience their organisation's formal system as failing to provide these elements and opportunities (Down et al. 2000; Down et al. 1999; Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools 1996; Lonsdale 1998; Lonsdale & Varley 1995; Townley 1997; Wragg et al. 1996). The present study's findings are largely consistent with these latter findings.

In all three of the sites selected for follow up in Phase Two of this study, staff largely viewed formal PM practices with cynicism and failed to engage with them as a meaningful feedback process or constructive tool for clarifying performance expectations and actively contributing to professional development that might lead to enhanced performance. Of the 10 individuals interviewed for the staff perspective, attitudes towards PM systems and processes ran the gamut from qualified and guardedly positive to very negative.

Staff Perceptions of Performance Measurement and Feedback

Central to the issue of system credibility is that those using the PM system must perceive it as defining, measuring and rewarding meaningful aspects of individual performance. Evidence from the literature consistently highlights subjective assessment as one of the most common sources of employee dissatisfaction with formal systems (Armstrong & Applebaum 2003; De Sander 2000;

Gardiner 1992) and this was certainly upheld by the present study's findings. Interview comments indicated common concerns about how to 'measure' performance and the issue of subjective ratings resulting from personality differences, inadequate data sources or managers who were unskilled in the appraisal and assessment process.

Far from providing multiple forms of information, feedback practices were generally described by staff as poor. A minority of interviewees regarded formal PM systems as valuable in developing a dialogue around performance expectations and achievements. The majority referred to a minimal feedback culture, where praise from any source was scarce, but criticism or verbal abuse was common. Dickensen (1997) has referred to the importance of the feedback source as a critical element in determining staff perceptions of its relevance and utility.

Concern about the skill level of those supposed to be providing the feedback was consistently expressed. Staff respondents universally described their 'managers' as lacking the ability to clearly communicate specific expectations, or provide either positive or negative feedback about progress and achievements. This is consistent with research that shows how poorly academic managers are assessed by their staff in terms of their feedback skills, objectivity, honesty and transparency of their judgements (Down et al. 1999; Nankervis & Leece 1997). Heads of School and other reviewers generally concurred with this assessment of their feedback skills.

All the staff interviewed described existing PM systems as overly complex, confusing and 'underwhelming in terms of their motivational impact', as one staff respondent put it (Interviewee A). A significant body of literature on PM in educational environments attests to the lack of motivational impact resulting from appraisal discussions (Kleinhenz et al. 2002; Lonsdale et al. 1989; Simmons 2002; Townley 1990, 1997). A majority of staff respondents believed existing hierarchical models of PM did not suit the university culture and constituted an infringement on academic independence and freedom. They viewed systems modelled on industry or business environments as a tool of the 'managerialist', although they agreed that academic staff needed to be accountable.

In line with previous research, the present study findings show that academic staff view performance-related pay as incompatible with a staff development focus. It was described as inequitable and divisive, based on subjective assessment, detrimental to individual motivation, team roles and operation, and an attack on professional autonomy and collegiality (Ballou & Podgursky 1993; Simmons 2002; University of Tasmania 2001).

Staff Perceptions of Workload Allocation and Management

Staff commonly viewed PM with suspicion, as a means of increasing their workload and every staff respondent believed that they were already overworked and overloaded. Some viewed their participation in the formal interviews as a juggling act between increased management control and oversight of their activities, but also as a way of demonstrating and documenting their already heavy workload, and thus preventing the imposition of additional duties. They viewed the trade-off as one between decreased discretion and academic freedom against a lower workload allocation, and described this as learning to ‘play the PM game’. This is consistent with previous research findings in educational settings that found teachers became adept at using the formal PM processes to their advantage (Down et al. 2000; Down et al. 1999).

Respondents also described the failure of most universities to extend their practices to cover casual or sessional staff as a critical omission, given the high (and increasing) numbers of such staff in academic employment.

Irrelevant as the Career Advances

Staff perceptions largely supported the view expressed by reviewers that different career stages required different PM techniques and focus, although their reasons provided additional insights. All the staff respondents interviewed during Phase Two described the existing practices of their universities as increasingly irrelevant to a staff member as his or her academic career progressed.

Staff also referred to the lack of viable career paths for academics who wished to continue teaching and researching, rather than take on managerial or supervisory roles which they regarded as ‘non-core’ academic work. Staff perceived the taking on of heavy coordinating and

administrative duties for large undergraduate subjects as a way of achieving advancement (and additional salary). They also described this as a means of achieving more job security where the academic did not have a coveted doctorate. Ingvarson and Chadbourne (1997) have alluded to this trend in school settings, towards taking up non-core role responsibilities as a path towards advancement, albeit one that takes gifted educators out of the classroom.

A theme which emerged powerfully from all the staff interviews was the diminishing sense of satisfaction they expressed about their role and the perception that PM practices and systems had little relevance or influence on the allocation of rewards in the university system. Staff perceived the determining factor to be whether one possessed a doctoral qualification, with those without a doctorate, expressing a strong sense of personal desperation about their diminishing career options and continued tenure. This was acutely felt in the university context of increased staff 'casualisation', reduced funding and the increased potential for staff redundancies (Meek & Wood 1997; Taylor et al. 1998).

Staff in this study felt that early in an academic career, they had to make substantial effort to 'fit the profile' and participation in PM processes assisted them to do so. Newer staff, more junior staff, those from minority groups, those who lacked a doctorate or who did not readily put themselves forward perceived a PM system based on individual interviews as providing dedicated time with a more senior and more powerful staff member. They saw this as creating increased access to information and career guidance that they would not otherwise have. These staff viewed goal setting and assessment of achievement through formal interviews as a necessary vehicle for demonstrating willingness and aptitude to take on additional challenges, which might position a young academic for advancement or favourable assignments. Furthermore, it seemed that staff took a pragmatic stance towards participation in PM processes, viewing it as a means of 'playing the game' to achieve greater visibility and hence greater job security; this was especially the case in early career.

After the early career stage, most staff regarded PM practices and systems as largely irrelevant. They saw participation in interviews as having little relationship to good feedback practices or of much influence on the allocation of rewards in the university system. The more mature staff

respondents experienced the push toward greater accountability and summative forms of appraisal as a move towards a 'public servant' or managerialist mentality and a breaking of the psychological contract that they had signed on for in their academic role (Shelley 1999). This was especially true of staff who had previously worked in a College of Advanced Education (CAE) or Institute of Technology with a strong teaching (rather than research) emphasis, prior to the major reforms of the Australian tertiary educational sector (Dawkins 1988) that led to organisational amalgamations resulting in the 37 public universities. In contrast to their CAE or Institute experience, university status emphasised both teaching *and* an active research profile with consequent re-profiling of academic role expectations.

Overall the staff respondents in the present study expressed attitudes remarkably consistent with those of previous studies, with 85% believing formal PM was irrelevant to their practice as a researcher or teacher (Down et al. 1999; Kleinhenz et al. 2002), lacked the power to differentiate between levels of performance (Bryman et al. 1994; Chadbourne & Ingvarson 1998; Elmore 2002) and was a time-consuming once a year compliance ritual (Bryman et al. 1994; Down et al. 1999; Elmore 2002; Kleinhenz et al. 2002; Morris 2005). Reviewers and staff both found the administrative work required to fuel the system an onerous and time-consuming 'add-on' for which they believed they were not properly recompensed. Rather than enhancing practice, many described it as detracting from their core responsibilities of teaching and research and diverting scarce time from lesson preparation, student contact and collaboration with peers. Staff thus viewed participation in PM as additional work with few pay-offs for most (for which one should somehow be recompensed).

Such perceptions essentially demonstrate how peripherally PM systems continue to be seen and the enormous gap between the theoretical approaches that inform organisational rhetoric and the practical reality of academic staff referred to in the literature (Down et al. 2000; Down et al. 1999; Lonsdale 1998; Lonsdale et al. 1989; Simmons 2002; Townley 1993, 1997). Aper and Fry (2003) observed that PM systems remain a policy orphan and the present study's findings are consistent in characterising it as an organisationally 'unwanted child.'

Summary

Overall the present findings show that most of these academic staff viewed the PM systems they participated in as an irrelevance and/or an incursion on their academic freedom and time, arguing that the models and systems introduced are culturally inappropriate and poorly reflect or capture their work performance. The majority regarded their formal system with great suspicion, as a means to foist off more work onto already overloaded staff. They did not see PM as contributing to improved practice in their academic roles or as assisting with professional or personal growth that took into account the requirements of their particular career stage.

In sum, they experienced the formal PM practices as adding little of value to their skill, knowledge or career development as an academic. They also did not see that it had any real benefit for the organisation.

4. What cultural and contextual factors (if any) contribute to this experience?

Some of the factors discussed in this section have already been alluded to, from the perspective of study participants' experiences of their PM systems. Because they constitute key cultural and contextual factors they are reiterated and expanded upon here.

The current higher education environment in Australia is best described as dynamic. Funding cuts to operating grants, deregulation of the sector, new federal legislation that creates the potential for radically different employment arrangements and contracts, industrial unrest, increased global competition and technological transformation have all contributed to a rapidly changing context within which academic work is performed.

Every respondent noted the impact of exogenous factors, and the subsequent internal university-wide strategic reorientations that affected work relationships and performance, in one way or another. Heads noted the time pressure and resource issues which more intensive PM responsibilities introduced, whilst staff described a sense of heightened uncertainty, confusion and pressure about what was expected of them in their role and working environment.

The Australian Higher Education Context

The domestic and international context in which Australian universities now operate has dictated strategic decisions that have an impact on the way academic work is structured and performed. In many cases the relative value a university places upon the core components of the academic role has undergone substantial change as the strategic priorities of the organisation have shifted. This has altered the weight traditionally placed on teaching, research and original achievement, and university administration and leadership. For instance, in 1989 there were 13.7 students for each academic with teaching responsibilities, but by 2000 that had risen to 18.8 (Illing 2001, p. 35).

Research suggests that the productivity of Australian academic staff is comparatively high compared to their international counterparts (West 1997), yet increased competition across the tertiary education sector, between universities and with external providers, dictates a new level of scrutiny regarding productivity and the staff performance that contributes to it.

Governments want quality outcomes in teaching and research and expect formal PM systems to track and measure individual performance. Since 1996, the Australian Federal Government's Workplace Relations Act has enabled new employment contracts between the university as employer and the individual academic, so that both have a greater freedom to negotiate terms and conditions of employment (Department of Education, Science and Training 2005a; Nelson 2003b). Whilst it is now possible to negotiate performance-based salaries, few universities in the present study currently exercise this option. In fact, one had removed it from their existing PM system due to staff and union resistance (University of Tasmania 2001). It is incontestable, however, that political pressure has influenced the rapid adoption of formal PM systems across the sector. Funding amounts tied to improved workplace practices, of which a formal PM system is an integral part, have provided a strong impetus for the implementation of formal systems across the sector (Nelson 2003b).

Furthermore, students want and demand a quality educational experience. With the introduction of full fees for many students and income-contingent repayment of university tuition charges, students have become far more vocal about the quality of their educational experience and the

amount of contact time they receive with academic staff. The 'user-pays' principle may have provided a stronger revenue basis for public universities but it has also added to demands for more immediately visible accountability of academic staff. As Taylor and colleagues state, 'student concentration on vocational outcomes of education is unsurprising in a tight job market and in a climate where the individual's contribution to tuition costs is rising' (1998, p. 262).

Resourcing

Time Commitment

Study participants universally described the commitment of resources, energy and time to formal and informal PM activities as insufficient. Every Head in a university with a formal system mentioned the time to initiate and complete the reviews for their staff group as significant. As previously discussed, a minority believed it was an integral part of their job which reaped worthwhile benefit. Others viewed it as all a bit out of control and of dubious value to them, either as an accountability system or as a means of furthering the professional development and careers of their staff. This is consistent with previous findings in the literature (Locke 1990; Townley 1993; Wright 2001).

Strategic and structural changes affecting universities have also had an impact on the time available for meaningful forms of feedback and PM. Thus staff availability to service international student markets has meant that significant time is spent offshore or online thereby reducing the contact time for collegial interaction. Interviewees also said there was less opportunity for both formal discussions with their discipline Heads or the informal 'corridor conversations' and collegial contact that traditionally characterise academic work. Institutional amalgamations across the tertiary education sector also require staff to travel more and greater distances in order to work with students at multi-campus sites, further reducing time (and visibility) for effective PM practice.

Training

Whilst all universities offer training to reviewers, the majority of respondents questioned its adequacy, particularly in terms of depth and continuity. Research has noted that the role of the reviewer is key to the success of any PM system and that substantial investment in building the capacity of educational leaders (and staff) is imperative if they are to undertake the necessary tasks successfully (Elmore 2002; Lonsdale 1998).

Funding for Professional Development

The failure to follow through on professional development identified as necessary during the review process, consolidated the view that PM was a waste of time and lacked all credibility. Findings from the literature (relating to PM in both educational and other environments) show that failure to set aside the budget and time necessary for such development consistently compromises system credibility and creates a breaking of faith among participants (Aper & Fry 2003; Bryman et al. 1994; Lonsdale 1998). Staff universally expressed concern over the relevance and utility of PM activities and Heads said it was difficult to get staff to commit to an agreed time for formal interview requirements.

Historical Experience of Performance Management Systems

Adversarial Union Reactions

Many interviewees referred to their organisation's specific history and experiences with PM systems as a highly industrialised process characterised by the stereotypical attitudes of university administrators/managers and unions.

Every university had involved academic staff unions in the design and/or review of the PM system and Heads noted the time it took to obtain agreement on system design principles. Some Heads believed it was an unnecessarily elongated negotiation process dictated by past history and organisational concern over industrial action. This is consistent with research that shows how

industrial climate may influence both the nature of the PM system and the pace of implementation (Khoury & Analoui 2004; Management Advisory Committee 2001).

Meek and Wood (1997) note that the award conditions under which industrial relations in Australian universities presently operate provides a great deal of negotiating power to an often very small group of union executive officers and to senior management, which may not best represent the interests of all academic staff. PM system design and determination of key features are commonly included as part of Enterprise Agreements and these negotiations may not be sufficiently transparent to the bulk of academic staff who are only consulted once system structure and elements are substantially agreed.

Heads expressed how vulnerable to industrial action they would feel in the current climate were they to express qualitative judgements about staff performance or base rewards upon this. They commonly described the attitude of unions to any form of PM as negative, particularly where attempts to introduce PRP had been initiated. Some Heads specifically noted the desire to link pay and performance but described it as not possible or probable in the foreseeable future, given traditional union attitudes to such a concept.

The literature shows that unions may support formative appraisal as culturally appropriate for universities and other public sector agencies. Summative forms of appraisal have traditionally been resisted, as detrimental to job security and conditions of employment and unsuitable for knowledge workers due to the difficulties of equitably determining differentiated levels of performance (Drevitch 2006; Hanley & Nguyen 2005; Hort 1997; University of Tasmania 2001). Other research suggests that these are legitimate concerns, given the often poor design and implementation of PM into public sector environments (Marshall 1998; O'Donnell 1998).

Clarity of Purpose

Modern approaches to PM, or so called 'fourth generation managing for performance' (Lonsdale 1998), are reliant upon university leaders articulating the purpose and benefits of the activity and thus creating the conditions under which people can collaboratively do good work. The common organisational failure to clearly articulate the purposes of a PM system appears to be a strong

contextual factor, which exacerbates traditional union attitudes. This issue is identified in the literature as problematic whenever integrated models of PM, that seek to combine both formative and summative elements of appraisal, are considered (Aper & Fry 2003; Leung & Lonsdale 1996).

Staff expressed the view that the accountability elements of PM were becoming more important than the development focus, whatever the official organisational rhetoric. Comments from staff interviewed during Phase Two of the research showed that the purposes of the PM system were unclear or regarded with suspicion, even when a Head believed them to be understood. Some comments from staff indicated that they believed the purpose of the system was very clear (for example greater surveillance) even though other purposes were officially espoused.

Difficulty of Measuring Academic Performance

One of the greatest challenges for summative appraisal, already alluded to, is that of finding fair and objective ways to measure performance upon which to base differential salary rewards (Anderson et al. 2002; De Sander 2000; Lewis 1993; Management Advisory Committee 2001).

Some literature has suggested that managerial skill in designing measurable performance objectives and fairly differentiating between levels of individual performance is, at best, tenuous (Khoury & Analoui 2004). Lewis (1993) found that very few public sector organisations gave managers training in the complexities of performance measurement and this was certainly true for the interviewees in this study. Not one reviewer or staff member alluded to this type of training when asked, although universally they referred to the difficulty of articulating and designing meaningful performance measures that captured the complexity of an individual academic's role.

Contextually, much of an academic's work is conducted out of the view of their colleagues (for example much teaching) and scrutiny is not easily achieved without intrusion. It was not described as common practice in Australian universities, as it is in international contexts, for teachers to team-teach or have assessors attend classes. Heads alluded to the particular difficulty of judging teaching performance given the lack of available data and the fact that many academics are not trained teachers. There is no systemic agreement on teaching standards or on the evidence that might constitute different levels of performance, such as those developed to guide assessors in the

US school system (Dwyer 1994; Elmore 2002; Interstate New Teacher Assessment And Support Consortium 1992; National Board for Professional Teaching Standards 1989).

Feedback Practice and Culture

Phase Two staff respondents described an historical culture of criticism in universities where performance feedback was provided by exception and generally only when mistakes were made. In the few instances where staff reported favourable experiences of feedback and performance-related discussions with their HOS, they saw this as a corollary of the individual person, not associated with the formal system. Stories of unconstructive or negative feedback experiences were common knowledge amongst a staff group and a HOS's 'feedback record' was well known (even if staff did not have direct experience of it). This was highlighted as a major factor in staff unwillingness to engage with PM practices and lack of belief or trust that it might have some benefit.

Evidence from the literature indicates that previous experience of PM feedback has an impact on the success of a system and that there is widespread fear of receiving unskilled feedback, often based upon historical precedent (Down et al. 1999; Management Advisory Committee 2001; Simmons 2002).

Leadership

The perceived failure of senior members of university management to show leadership in role modelling the importance of PM activities has already been described, as have the effects on staff engagement and system credibility. Additionally, the lack of support of senior managers in following through on recommendations to do with pay and discipline was seen as undermining by those Heads who attempted to actively manage issues of under-performance.

These findings need placing in the context of research which identifies the role of the HOS (or their equivalent) as pivotal in managing performance effectively and also the critical relevance of senior level support (Jackson 1999; Lonsdale 1998; Middlehurst 1993).

An earlier chapter has similarly discussed the uncomfortable fit between hierarchical appraisal models and university cultures, which lack the clearer line management relationships of their corporate counterparts (Fletcher 1997; Hort 1997; Middlehurst 1993). By tradition, an academic's professional loyalty has often been to their discipline not to an hierarchical line manager or an organisation as such. The Head of a large School with a multi-disciplinary profile may, therefore, be on weak ground when he or she is required to recognise or assess performance across these boundaries, whether this is factual or based on the perceptions of staff. Additionally, Heads often have responsibility for managing staff who are more senior in designation or reputation to themselves, and may encounter difficulty in providing adverse feedback where these differences in status and position exist (Jackson 1999).

Lack of Skill in Managing Performance

Theory and research suggests that the skill of reviewers is a critical factor in the success of any performance feedback and appraisal system, particularly an integrated PM model (De Sander 2000; Management Advisory Committee 2001; Pickett 2000; Thomas 1997). However, previous evaluations in educational environments consistently highlight that those responsible for PM functions lack sufficient skill and training for the role (Khoury & Analoui 2004; Kleinhenz et al. 2002; Lonsdale 1998; Simmons 2002). Nearly every reviewer interviewed in this study assessed his or her skill in managing performance as 'able to be significantly improved'. Staff who were interviewed largely agreed.

Several researchers have shown that the selection criteria for departmental heads rarely includes capacity and experience in managing staff or staff development, and that there is little specific development offered in this regard when people move into management positions (Bone & Bowner 1998; Dickenson 1997; Jackson 1999; Lonsdale 1998). The rapid turnover in positions that carry responsibility for PM activities in universities is also a significant contextual factor. In the fourteen-month period of this study's data generation, just under 42% of personnel in position of the HOS had altered.

Staff confidence in the skill of those making performance assessments influences perceptions about whether the PM system is capable of delivering equitable rewards, and hence engenders engagement or lack thereof (De Sander 2000; Elmore 2002; Management Advisory Committee 2001; McLaughlin & Pfeiffer 1988). High turnover in the HOS role suggests that it is difficult for staff to develop a feedback relationship characterised by continuity, consistency and trust.

Culturally Appropriate System Characteristics and Elements

PM practices are largely grounded in the systems developed for industrial and corporate environments in developed countries, where task outputs and outcomes are generally more quantifiable than in service and knowledge-based occupations, and the financial 'bottom-line' is seen to drive all activity (Huselid 1995; Pfeffer & Veiga 1999; Pfeffer et al. 1995).

Many researchers have described the trend towards managing the public bureaucracies of developed nations along the lines of business enterprises, where a far greater emphasis is placed upon individual PM with explicit accountability standards (Anderson et al. 2002; Coaldrake & Stedman 1998; Gibbons 1998; Locke 1990). As previously discussed, the term 'managerialism' is used in public sector environments to represent many aspects of this new accountability, but it generally carries negative connotations of increased scrutiny, control of activities and decreased role autonomy (Morris 2005; Rees & Rodley 1995; Sharrock 2000; Stone 2002).

Consistent with findings from the literature (Khoury & Analoui 2004; Kleinhenz et al. 2002; Lonsdale 1998; Lonsdale et al. 1989; Simmons 2002; Townley 1993, 1997), the vast majority of this study's respondents were critical of the PM models introduced into their organisation, questioning the relevance and transferability of the underlying concepts. Individualised performance measures and one-to-one hierarchical feedback were described as culturally inappropriate, in that they were overly 'managerial' and bureaucratic, ill-suited to the nature of academic work and ran counter to the overt cultural preference for collaboration rather than competition. The poor cultural 'fit' of systems developed in business and private sector organisations for educational environments has been well documented in the literature (Anderson et al. 2002; Dick 1992; Dickensen 1997; Locke 1990; Morris 2005; Townley 1990). Simmons

(2002) has specifically noted that employees with high levels of autonomy and a strong professional identity based upon specialist knowledge, skills and codes of conduct are likely to perceive traditional models of appraisal as inappropriate, and this was certainly reflected in many comments from study respondents.

5. What are the perceived effects of these practices on the performance of individuals, teams and the organisation?

Preceding sections have largely answered the above question; hence this section will be brief.

In an investigation of PM in the Australian public sector, the three key areas of alignment, credibility and integration were identified as critical to effective practice (Management Advisory Committee 2001). These three areas provide a useful framework within which to summarise the present study's findings on the perceived effects of current PM practices in the 37 Australian public universities.

Alignment

Well-designed PM systems must take into account the strategic objectives and outcomes sought by key stakeholders, an organisation's history of PM practice and be culturally appropriate, or at least acceptable to the organisational members who will be affected by them. By articulating the links between individual and organisational goals an effective PM system enables the alignment of individual, team and organisational efforts. Put simplistically, PM activities should contribute to enhanced individual performance and organisational productivity. The present study's findings suggest that existing PM systems in the Australian higher education sector palpably fail on these dimensions.

On the surface it appears that the Federal Government has been overtly successful in raising the accountability of academic staff through encouraging 'better people management practices,' including the implementation of formal PM systems. Access to additional funding amounts has certainly contributed to the higher incidence and rapid implementation of formal systems,

espoused as demonstrating ‘better people management practices’. This study’s respondents reported a vastly different reality.

There is a culture of non-compliance that was described as fairly ubiquitous. The 37 universities all ‘play the PM game’ by putting forward an image of compliance along with the accompanying official trappings, such as websites outlining acceptably corporate models of PM and the politically correct terminology. This finding of non-compliance alongside a carefully contrived public image is analogous to the findings documented by previous researchers in educational environments (Down et al. 2000), which showed that administrators and educators do what is minimally required as one form of resistance to what they perceive as an imposed PM regime. Meetings occur and the required paperwork is completed and signed off, thus ‘playing the game’. From that point on the process is essentially ignored.

The commonly reported failure to involve key stakeholders in the early design phases of a system’s development exacerbates the disjuncture between the image of PM that is officially presented and the reality on the ground. Both the Heads of School (and other reviewers) who must champion and action PM on an ongoing basis, as well as the staff who are expected to participate in it, are rarely involved in its design. Union representatives *are* universally involved, because PM practice has become a part of enterprise bargaining or collective agreements regarding staff conditions and productivity agreements, although the history of adversarial union reaction to most forms of appraisal for academic staff is well documented. The overall result seems to be the negotiation of a system that is ill-suited to the constituents who must use it, which leads to increased cynicism and the common perception that it is an irrelevant waste of time.

The present study’s respondents have little belief, therefore, that PM contributes to enhanced individual performance, team performance or organisational productivity.

Credibility

Current PM systems in these 37 universities patently do not engage and win the support and confidence of staff. Academic staff interviewed in this study expressed confusion as to the purposes of systems, cynicism as to the fairness and justice of measurement criteria and concern

about the skill of those responsible for both establishing performance objectives and assessing performance achievements.

There was a common view that PM systems lacked simplicity, transparency and management commitment. Staff were clear about the gap they perceived between the rhetoric and reality of managing performance when they described instances of conspicuously poor performance that were not addressed. Previous staff surveys in public sector agencies consistently show that staff become cynical and resentful when poor performance is not dealt with (Management Advisory Committee 2001) and this was thematic in the reports from this study's staff respondents.

Approximately 25% of Heads interviewed indicated that the requirement that a performance review be conducted was only a hurdle, and that any consequent failure to meet agreed performance objectives rarely resulted in further action. Some Heads perceived this as contributing to academic complacency and even the creation of 'performance problems'. When it came to managing under-performance, Heads were of the opinion that salary increments could not realistically be withheld without a great deal of industrial unrest and difficulty. The majority of staff respondents perceived the failure to deal effectively with issues of under-performance as a further reason to view formal PM systems with cynicism.

Integration

PM remains predominantly outside the overall management structure of universities, in that is largely perceived as an 'onerous add on' by reviewers rather than a key leadership process for engaging staff.

The 'line of sight' between individual effort and organisational objectives was not enhanced for most staff, with few respondents reporting increased clarity of strategic directions or their own job responsibilities as a result of participation in PM processes. Lonsdale (1998) has identified the necessity for staff to have a clear appreciation of the expectations and priorities of the work group, together with an understanding of institutional expectations and strategic priorities as a pre-condition for effective PM.

Few Heads (less than 10%) found that formal PM interviews enabled them to clarify directions for staff, establish connections to departmental or university strategy and communicate what was required. Only 15% of Heads said that the formal interviews created occasion for dialogue with staff and thus raised their awareness of staff strengths, weaknesses and preferred career directions. In contrast, staff respondents viewed interviews more as increased visibility and potential access to resources such as training and development, which they perceived as generally not followed through.

Heads universally described their skill (and time) to provide feedback, negotiate meaningful and useful measures of performance and use these to make valid and equitable assessments of staff contributions as lacking. They described the training they had received to support formal systems as inadequate, spasmodic and of little assistance to reviewers in addressing the complexities of PM requirements.

Perhaps most critically, the current systems were perceived as offering virtually nothing of benefit to staff or Heads for managing the professional development and career development of staff. In line with previous findings (Leatherman 2000; Lonsdale 1993; Lonsdale & Varley 1995; Miller 1999), there is little evidence that PM practices enhance professional development, motivation or productivity and strong anecdotal evidence that these practices decrease team cohesion and motivation.

Failure at the organisational level to set aside a budget and time to action the development needs identified through the PM process means that participants mostly come to see the whole process as a waste of time (Aper & Fry 2003; Bryman et al. 1994).

Summary

The picture that this study's findings present of PM processes in the 37 Australian public universities is one where reviewers are under-resourced and under-skilled, largely un-authorised by peers and under-supported by the leadership of their organisation in their PM activities.

Strategic emphases upon the relative importance of academic role components differs within and between these universities so that a common understanding of what constitutes ‘effective performance’ is difficult to articulate and define.

Teaching staff largely perform their duties in isolation from observation by any colleague and are increasingly geographically peripatetic due to the amalgamation of tertiary institutions and pressures from globalisation. Those responsible for PM are unable to see a sufficiently direct sample of staff behaviour and lack sufficient sources of feedback upon which to base performance assessments.

Finally, complicated and overly cumbersome systems, processes and paperwork contribute to making current university processes for PM largely ineffectual. Far from achieving or enabling improved performance by individuals, teams and the organisation, the overall effect is a time-consuming set of additional responsibilities for reviewers and staff who perceive the system as having few gains.

6. Which system elements do academic staff and academic managers perceive to be most effective in academic cultures and why?

The Reviewer’s Perspective

Those reviewers who saw formal processes as significant said their worth lay in the time that was created for communication with individual staff members to determine and clearly articulate workload allocation, institutional expectations and strategic priorities. They valued informal techniques, such as ongoing dialogue with their staff throughout the year, as the most significant form of feedback and PM, but acknowledged that they were increasingly caught up with the everyday juggle between operational minutiae and strategic level demands. They perceived themselves as too distanced from their staff to know what was going on without the structure and mechanism of the formal PM system.

Whilst recognising the limitations and time burden of formal systems, the majority of reviewers believed that PM systems formalised and legitimised a role responsibility for a Head of School (or

his or her delegate) to give people constructive feedback. It also created opportunities for exploring the professional development needs and career aspirations of individual staff (and of the group overall).

Whilst most Heads espoused the positive rhetoric of PM, few actually described themselves as ‘walking the talk’ or actively promoting its benefits to their staff. Most felt they lacked the skills to genuinely ‘manage’ performance, particularly where discussion of performance problems was concerned.

Some Heads saw effective PM systems as those that provided data to challenge and extend people’s performance and weed out the incompetents, although the overwhelming majority emphasised the developmental nature of the interactions as key to obtaining engagement from staff. Heads also saw as critical the need to separate PM and disciplinary procedures, although they experienced the line and the transition between these two processes as unclear. All reviewers wanted a clearly outlined and consistently applied set of processes for tackling under-performance and one that demonstrated support from more senior staff to deal with problems of this nature. Staff too, commonly identified the need to deal effectively with under-performance as important, if the credibility of PM practices was to improve.

All respondents viewed the developmental needs, concerns and egos of professional knowledge workers as pivotal aspects of PM system design if staff engagement was to be ensured. They also saw it as important to have professors and senior academics as reviewers because they were perceived within the academic community as having the required ‘clout’ or status to provide authoritative feedback, compared with those at lower levels.

Heads variously described academic staff as highly independent, collegial, time stressed and resentful of formally imposed and compulsory PM systems, suggesting that successful systems will be those that incorporate collegial exchange and where the individual has some choice in how and from whom they receive feedback, or ways in which they obtain performance-based information.

The Staff Perspective

Most staff respondents saw student evaluation as a critical and important source of feedback about their performance but did not express a high value for existing forms of student evaluations, describing them as essentially quantitative measures, which did not capture the essence of their job. This reinforces Khoury and Analoui's (2004) findings that over half of the academics they surveyed believed too much emphasis was placed on student evaluations. The utility of student feedback was further described as next to useless, in that it generated only aggregated, anonymous data provided to the individual lecturer, and formed little basis for constructive discussion at the academic coordinator level, or at Head of School level about individual or systemic improvements.

The majority of the staff members interviewed wanted increased access to Heads and other reviewers for information about strategic directions, workload allocation and feedback about what they should be focusing upon. Many staff valued the time that PM interviews created for one-on-one discussion with their 'manager' or HOS, but did not, however, want increased formal practices. They described objective-based systems disparagingly as 'corporate' types of models and the tools of 'managerialists'.

Staff described the opportunity for dialogue with colleagues or more senior staff regarding ongoing projects and their professional practice as important in early career stages. Some staff wanted feedback and guidance about their career potential, as well as meaningful professional development that enabled them to achieve both immediate goals and career advancement. They found the existing formalised PM models fairly worthless in this regard.

Likewise, they valued input from more experienced staff in their discipline as well as contact with experienced staff in other disciplines, who had insight into the wider university's operations and 'organisational politics'. Staff additionally favoured discipline-specific mentors for new staff with whom they could discuss a range of issues, although several said it was only as successful as the matched mentor, and that follow-through in most cases was not designed or managed well in their experience.

There were few aspects that academic staff respondents in this study considered effective about the current PM practice in their institutions.

Chapter Summary

Both reviewers and staff said much about the inadequacy of their institution's PM systems and practices and far less about the elements that they perceived as effective or even workable. This reinforces previous studies that suggest that the influence of historical precedent on current experience of PM is significant, given that experiences of appraisal in higher education environments have been largely negative (Higher Education Management Review 1995; Hort 1997; Lonsdale & Varley 1995; Simmons 2002).

The majority of respondents identified the necessity to shape and customise the PM system for the particular university (and part of the university), so that meaningful discussions about workload allocation and staff development could occur. Generic systems with a strong 'corporate' focus were seen as ineffectual and the need to keep it simple was also constantly emphasised. Systems that used highly bureaucratised terminology and generated a lot of paperwork were considered unsuitable.

All interviewees were keenly interested in what was occurring across the whole university sector and generally expressed the view that their PM systems and processes were somehow not as good as they could or should be. Heads of School were also vitally interested to learn from the researcher who (if anyone) was operating an effective model and what 'the answer' was to managing these processes well. They shared a heightened interest and awareness of PM systems, an awareness largely attributable to exogenous government reforms that have tied significant funding to 'improved people management processes' and accountability, but they had little confidence that positive outcomes would be delivered.

The study findings show that the majority of academic staff interviewed want feedback about their performance, career and growth opportunities at particular career stages, but do not view the formal PM systems of their universities as an effective vehicle for achieving this.

Some of the Heads of School, and other university 'managers', responsible for conducting reviews and assessments of performance viewed their formal system more positively than did their staff, although most did not.

Chapter Seven—Conclusions and Recommendations

PM and appraisal practice continue to be one of the most researched and contentious aspects of institutional life. There are those who perceive it to be a fundamental organisational process that is central to effective human resource management and necessary if staff accountability and high productivity are to be achieved and maintained (Iles et al. 2000; Khoury & Analoui 2004; Lansbury 1988; McDonald & Smith 1995; Petty & Guthrie 2000). Equally there are those who are adamant that it is destructive to the employer/employee relationship, potentially undermines individual and team morale and overall is not worth the trouble it provokes (Bratton & Gold 1999; Deming 1986; Grint 1993; Soldonzi 1995).

In the university environment there are many parties who participate in, and are affected by, their organisation's PM system and practices and who thus constitute a set of 'stakeholders' with specific interests, ambitions and expectations of the outcomes to be gained from these activities. Hence, a useful way of summarising this study's main findings is to analyse them according to stakeholder perspectives: these include the Australian Federal Government, the Australian community (taxpayers), Australian industry, students, university management, and academic staff. This is also worthwhile because a consistent theme in research that seeks opinion about PM practice from parallel stakeholders in educational organisations is the dichotomy of opinion regarding its impact and effectiveness. In this regard the present study is no exception.

Main Findings from Stakeholder Analysis

The Australian Federal Government

The economic importance of the Higher Education sector in training the Australian workforce, as well as the overseas student market as a significant export service industry for Australia, has been clearly established (Gardner 1999; Gibbons 1998; Group of Eight Ltd. 2001; Johnson & Wilkins 2003).

The Australian Federal Government clearly favours formal PM systems as a vehicle to improve the people management practices in the public university sector and to increase the efficiency, effectiveness and accountability of academic staff. It has advocated systems that include both developmental and evaluative elements, including performance-related pay (Higher Education Management Review 1995; Nelson 2003a, 2003b). Despite consistent evidence from the sector that PM systems modelled upon those developed in corporate and business organisations are historically and currently seen to be culturally inappropriate and unsuited to academic staff in higher educational environments, this is still the prevailing government attitude.

It is not acceptable, however, to dismiss all forms of PM as an inappropriate waste of time, nor to dismiss the expectation that individuals must be held accountable for their performance. Most of the present study's respondents readily accepted the need for accountability, but did not perceive current PM systems as making any substantial contribution to it. This is a common finding within educational environments (Chadbourne & Ingvarson 1998; Elmore 2002; Ingvarson & Chadbourne 1997; Kleinhenz et al. 2002; Peterson 2000). It is clear that current PM practice in the 37 Australian public universities is perpetuating a ritual of little benefit to government other than the relatively superficial meeting of outward appearances—and it is an expensive way of achieving even this.

In line with international trends, the tendency has been to assume that productive outcomes flow from formal PM systems, without adequately tracking the costs in both financial terms and educational outcomes (Meek & Wood 1997). This is an issue that governments (and every individual university) must seriously assess, in determining whether PM (in its current form) really *is* worth doing.

The Australian Community (Taxpayers)

As a community Australians value the quality of their public educational institutions and the internationally competitive standard of education that is offered.

Australian higher education qualifications are recognised around the world and Australian graduates are highly employable internationally. All Australian universities benefit from

this reputation for quality, as does the country as a whole, not the least through the enrolment of fee-paying students from overseas (Group of Eight Ltd. 2001, p. 14).

Whilst the community may value education for its societal good and national gain, public debate, as reported in the daily newspapers (Illing & Thorp 1999; Kemp 2000), has also shown an increased demand for vocationally-oriented development and also higher accountability, so that taxpayers can be confident that their investment in public universities is warranted (Department of Education, Science and Training 2002b, 2005b). Whether it is the government's agenda that is driving the demand for greater accountability of public institutions, or whether they are responding to community pressure is a moot point. In either case, the calibre of academic staff is critical to the quality of educational experience that will be achieved, and formal PM systems have long been espoused as a primary means of both improving people management and people development in organisations (Armstrong 1994; Roberts 2002; Stone 2002; Tully 1994) and engendering increased accountability (Ainsworth & Smith 1993; Higher Education Management Review 1995; Jarratt 1985; Nelson 2003b).

Australian Industry

Industry is largely driven by the economic imperative for work-ready staff and research outcomes that contribute to the financial bottom line. The quality of research provided by universities, its potential social and economic impact, and the value of university research and teaching in educating students are all critical considerations.

Academic staff can, with appropriate support, build a national and international reputation for themselves and the institution in the research, publishing and professional areas. Such a profile may have a significant impact on the ability of the institution to attract high calibre students, research funds and consultancy contracts (Rowley 1996).

It is logical that Australian industry leaders want the most effective academics possible who are capable of actively developing quality research, are knowledgeable and current in their fields and are able to offer excellent teaching services to students (Department of Education, Science and

Training 2006). PM must therefore deliver more efficient and effective universities that meet these goals.

Students

Students place much importance on high quality lecturers and research supervisors, and a favourable ranking in university league tables that validates the standard of their academic/professional credentials and will gain them the best salaries upon graduation. This is because the performance of academic staff, as teachers, researchers and also as managers of more junior academic staff with these key responsibilities, determines, to a large extent, the quality of the student experience of higher education; it has a significant impact on student learning and thereby on the contribution that such institutions can make to society (Rowley 1996).

Whilst most universities conduct student subject evaluations of academic teaching staff, few seek rigorous data from research students and this study's findings suggest that the utility of the evaluations and comments for determining, let alone enhancing, academic performance is poor. Additionally this study's findings suggest that evaluative information of this kind is not commonly available to the managers of academic staff. Ways of accurately defining appropriate measures of academic work, and even more so, differentiating between levels of achievement, remain problematic (Meek & Wood 1997; Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development 1997).

The quality of teaching in Australian public universities has been an issue for some time with several studies identifying concern (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development 1997; Taylor et al. 1998). More recently, concerns regarding the quality of research have also emerged (Dollery et al. 2006; Jopson & Burke 2005a, 2005b, 2005c; Taylor et al. 1998).

The present study's findings suggest that PM does little to enhance an academic's teaching or research prowess and in fact may diminish it, given the time it diverts from research activities, lesson preparation, student feedback and classroom activity.

Current systems also do nothing to manage the performance of casual staff who constitute an increasing percentage of Lecturers at A, B and C levels (Group of Eight Ltd. 2001). It has been estimated that as much as 40% of all undergraduate teaching is now done by casual hourly-paid staff (National Tertiary Education Industry Union 2003, p. 61), who are neither held accountable, nor offered professional feedback and development to assist them in their role performance. In extreme cases, poor student evaluations may lead to non-renewal of a sessional contract but anecdotal evidence suggests that there is now a career sessional staff member who teaches across a number of universities and is essentially not accountable to any of them.

University Management

Individual universities seek both summative and formative purposes from their PM systems. Theory suggests that effective PM enables an organisation to track individual and teamwork contributions and thus differentiate between high and low contributors (Bruce 1997; Fisher et al. 1999; Stone 2002). Furthermore, this is supposed to lead to the allocation of additional rewards for exemplars and consistent feedback, coaching and targeted development for those who need to improve their performance (Gilchrist 2003; Margrave & Gordon 2001; Tyler 1997).

The ability to clarify performance expectations, articulate 'line of sight', design and negotiate agreement to meaningful measures, monitor performance on an ongoing basis and provide feedback and career guidance is a set of significant challenges for most managers. Academic 'managers' typically do not have a strong management background and university cultures traditionally lack a strong concept of hierarchical line authority (Dickensen 1997; Jackson 1999; Middlehurst 1993). Under such circumstances these challenges are arguably magnified.

Study findings clearly indicate that the implementation of, and ongoing training for, a leadership role in PM is currently severely under-done and misses the mark. Several researchers in PM in educational settings have identified the critical necessity to develop a mindset amongst reviewing managers that views PM as a set of key leadership functions by which the conditions for effective work are created (Elmore 2002; Khoury & Analoui 2004; Kleinhenz et al. 2002; Lonsdale 1998; Lonsdale et al. 1989).

Study findings also indicate that the level of resourcing to genuinely support PM implementation and ongoing requirements is universally inadequate. Of particular impact is the fact that there is little effort to shift the attitudes of reviewers concerning responsibility for PM. In the university setting it is often the HOS who assumes responsibility for PM interviews, although most see the PM system as a HR Department owned and imposed system that they must modify to achieve any staff engagement.

Whilst most of the Heads interviewed in the present study said that formal PM systems were necessary in order to ensure that feedback was offered, most also described themselves as lacking the skill to conduct effective PM, and also struggling to find the time to do so. Staff respondents indicated that feedback was a rarity, with or without the formal system.

The majority of Heads (and other reviewers) indicated that they spent, on average, a minimum of one to two hours per staff member in an annual PM cycle, and respondents interviewed during Phase One of this study indicated that they had responsibility for conducting between 3 to 60 reviews with staff on an annual basis. The sheer amount of time spent by both managers and staff in PM activities on an annual basis (and the lost opportunity costs of what they might otherwise be producing) must represent a staggering total across the sector.

In addition, this study's findings confirm those from previous research which suggest that when PM is poorly done it can have a negative motivational effect on academic staff (Khoury & Analoui 2004; Lewis 1993), that represents a further set of hidden costs associated with dealing with disgruntled, disaffected staff.

It is also imperative to recognise that staff, not just managers, require training in PM processes if they are to appreciate its potential benefits and begin to fully utilise systems as a viable means of accessing opportunities. Comprehensive training has been identified as the first step toward changing attitudes and perceptions to PM in educational settings (De Sander 2000).

What reviewers in the present study identified as their greatest need were systemic processes and support both to differentially recognise and reward high-performing staff and to deal with under-performance issues as a part of the broader PM process.

Interviews conducted with reviewers during both phases of the research in this study indicated that current PM practices are not providing these desired outcomes for the vast majority of managers. Given the sheer investment of time required to support formal PM systems, that they fail to meet desired outcomes, at least for the majority of managers, is a critical factor.

In the intensely cost conscious contemporary university environment it is a fiscally unsustainable position to expect university managers to continue to espouse the rhetoric of PM without evidence to support its claims. University managers are unlikely to obtain the willing and enthusiastic engagement of academic staff without this evidence.

Academic Staff

One of the main reasons why staff select higher education as a career stems from the opportunity for a level of personal autonomy and the intrinsic motivation of working within a developmental environment (Dickensen 1997; Kohn 1993; Lewis 1993; Shelley 1999).

Most staff gain gratification from working with students and witnessing the achievement and development of those students. This is associated with having a professional pride in their work. It is important for them to be accepted by the students when they work as a leader and facilitator (Rowley 1996).

Although regular review and planning may be central to PM processes, it is clear from this study's findings that the most valued components for academic staff are the capacity that a formal framework creates to clarify performance expectations and standards through formal meetings, ongoing dialogue and supportive feedback. Whilst most staff wanted increased access to their HOS for information and feedback, they found that formal PM systems provided only an infrequent and fairly worthless vehicle in this regard. Some staff also wanted feedback about their career potential and opportunities and meaningful professional development that enabled them to improve and advance.

Those who are younger, newer in the academic role or lack doctoral qualifications see their tenure as more vulnerable and therefore view participation in formal PM activities as a necessary

compliance activity. Academics with greater longevity or job security view PM as offering little of benefit to them and participate begrudgingly, if at all.

Central to the success of teacher evaluation processes that have been established in parts of the US is that they focus on the core work of the staff concerned and engage them deeply in reflection, assessment and professional development related to this (Kleinhenz et al. 2002).

Current systems were not perceived as contributing to staff professional development and career development, given the common failure to action the development needs identified through the PM system. It was common for staff to view PM with suspicion and cynicism—a means by which they would be allocated additional work tasks, often not related to their core duties or daily work.

Overall the vast majority of staff viewed participation in PM processes as de-motivating and an onerous waste of time.

Summary

The overall findings clearly suggest that current PM practice in these 37 Australian public universities does little to meet the needs of any of the key stakeholders and remains fundamentally unsatisfying to all concerned.

Improved accountability, the professional and career development of staff and processes for effectively differentiating levels of performance all exert conflicting expectations of PM systems and result in formal systems that do little to address any one of these elements.

Failure to clearly articulate the purposes and to consider the real implementation and ongoing costs of a formal PM system typically results in widespread cynicism and a ritual dance of compliance that demonstrates palpably low engagement with systems.

In summary, the study findings indicate that formal systems may help to clarify performance objectives and workload allocation for many staff, but are poorly linked to organisational planning processes, poor at differentiating rewards or sanctions for performance, are not valued by academic staff as a vehicle for meaningful feedback, fail to follow through on staff or career development and thus do little to build team, individual or organisational capability.

It is not enough, therefore, to continue to ‘fiddle around the edges’ by re-packaging the same type of systems and processes as have existed in the corporate world for decades and been increasingly imported into higher education environments in recent times. Nor is it sufficient to continue to posit which systemic elements should be included, without a thorough investigation of how they are actually perceived and valued by those who must use them.

The present study’s findings are consistent with both earlier research into PM systems in Australian public universities (Lonsdale 1998) and more recent research, in the broader organisational domain (Compton 2006). Lonsdale argued that ‘past approaches to appraisal and PM in higher education have had limited and confused purposes and their contribution to enhanced institutional performance and quality has been minimal’ (1998, p. 303). Consistent with Lonsdale’s research, Nankervis and Compton’s more recent studies of PM in Australian organisations found that,

satisfaction levels with present systems have deteriorated since earlier studies, training of system users has declined and the involvement of employees in the review of their own and their team’s performance is not yet well implemented (2006, p. 101).

The present study’s findings suggest that, to date, much of the PM endeavour in Australian educational environments remains uninspiring, unengaging and more importantly, unsuccessful in producing its purported outcomes. These findings form the basis for a number of recommendations to improve the operation of PM systems in Australian public universities.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are based, not only on the present study's findings, but also on the assumption that Australian universities will continue to invest in PM systems, given that it is Federal Government policy and there are significant and recurrent funding amounts tied to it. Additionally, it is assumed that the historical attitude of Australian education unions to summative forms of appraisal and PM will continue to be negative. The patterned bargaining approaches enshrined in current Enterprise Agreements make PM a highly politicised aspect of organisational life and it is thus likely to take a long time, and the investment of significant resources, before alternative forms of appraisal of performance in educational institutions receive serious consideration.

On these bases, the present study makes the following recommendations. It briefly spells out the dimensions of the problem each recommendation relates to and suggests a solution.

Recommendation 1. PM systems in Australian public universities should separate the allocation of workloads, a summative attribute, from feedback, a developmental and formative attribute

Recommendation 1 derives from the fact that confusion regarding the purpose of PM continues to be a common feature across the 37 Australian public universities. This is largely allied to the reliance on one system to achieve too much, through incorporating both summative and formative appraisal: that is, attempting to combine the formative purpose of staff development (which relies on feedback) with the summative purposes of discrimination between, and reward of, different performance levels. University administrators and system designers must be clear and perhaps more modest about the purpose(s) of their formal systems and communicate this unequivocally.

Annual planning processes where team, divisional and university strategic goals are clearly articulated and work allocation is discussed, agreed and documented are mandatory requirements. All staff need current information about strategic reorientations and workload allocation so that priority of effort is clear. Locating these discussions at the beginning or end of a calendar year (as

is current practice in many universities) allows key priorities to be factored into team and individual workload discussions. These discussions should be compulsory whereas, those regarding developmental and career oriented feedback, which not all staff need or want, could be offered on a voluntary basis.

The summative character of performance-related pay (PRP) has been shown to be problematic in educational environments and must be seen as a questionable practice, given the plethora of evidence from the literature that points to its potential for weakening staff morale and working relationships (Ballou & Podgursky 1993; Shelley 1999; University of Tasmania 2001).

Fundamental decisions regarding the purpose of PRP need to be made on an institutional basis to determine whether it is the acquisition and application of increased competency standards that will be financially rewarded (as with models of teaching in the US school sector) (Dwyer 1994; Interstate New Teacher Assessment And Support Consortium 1992; National Board for Professional Teaching Standards 1989) or the achievement of a balanced set of performance objectives on a re-earned basis (Bruce 1997, p. 6).

Greater levels of improved staff performance could arguably be achieved through clearly articulating organisational direction and individual roles, then regular coaching and feedback towards these ends, rather than through the summative practice of linking appraisal to remuneration (Gubman 1998).

If universities choose to incorporate a PRP element in their PM system then robust and extensive consultation processes with academic staff that establish clear indicators for monetary rewards and are sufficiently piloted would seem critical.

Many organisations introduce such a scheme as a pilot for, say, twelve months before actually linking it to remuneration. Once satisfied that the measures chosen actually drive organisational success and performance in the real world (which usually involves some change and refinement along the way), then the link to employee remuneration can be established (Bruce 1997, p. 7).

In addition to the confusion of purpose which characterise PM in these 37 universities, there is the broader problem of measuring academic performance, whether in teaching or research. To date, the history of success in establishing valid and reliable measures of performance that are acceptable to academic staff is dubious. The possibility for potential cross-information from the 2004-2008 round of extensive investigations into appropriate ways of measuring academic performance with which to underpin the Research Quality Framework (Department of Education, Science and Training 2006) may be worth investigating.

Recommendation 2. PM systems in Australian public universities should contain a range of activities relevant to the three stages of an academic career (early, mid and late)

Serious consideration should be given to differentiating PM practice pertaining to the different stages of an academic's career, such as early career (those at Levels A and B and/or new starters), mid-career (those with more than five years career experience but usually still at Levels A, B or C) and late career (those with greater organisational longevity, although not necessarily greater seniority).

A range of PM activities that the individual academic can select from, whilst making it clear that they are required to choose a minimum of elements on an annual basis, is more likely to win engagement and participation than is the heavy-handed mandating of summative appraisal.

Both HR departments and central policy developers need to be far more creative and user-oriented in how they construct PM systems and which elements they contain. Modular PM systems, which contain a range of elements, allow staff to select the most suitable activities for their stage of career and role responsibilities. For example, junior staff members, new staff members and/ or those requiring additional assistance and resources to obtain their doctorate should be able to draw upon an eclectic range of PM activities, including work-planning activities, goal and objective setting, regular feedback, mentoring, coaching, and on and off the job professional development.

For academics at more advanced career stages, who are predominantly involved in teaching or research activities, peer-based systems that utilise meaningful student evaluations and rely upon

collegial feedback and review, or one-to-one mentoring or coaching (internal or external) may be more relevant and more acceptable than hierarchical forms of appraisal. The role of an HR department in such systems would be pivotal in ensuring good quality student evaluation processes (that use double blind techniques, for example), and in sourcing and matching appropriate mentors or coaches.

For academic staff in managerial or coordinating roles, PM modules that allow them to learn more about university wide systems, structures and policies so that they can more effectively manage both their own increasingly heavy administrative workload and best advise the staff for whom they are responsible, may be most effective. Processes that encourage the exchange of information and dialogue across professional discipline boundaries may facilitate the development of multiple perspectives and enable them to streamline their operational prowess and leadership styles. Again the strategic role an HR department could fulfil in creating such group forums and either facilitating them, or sourcing appropriate external facilitators, would be pivotal.

Recommendation 3. Users of PM systems (both managers and staff) should be involved in their design and continuing evaluation

University websites reviewed in this study and the interviewee responses from several Heads of School suggest that some of the newer PM systems in universities are structurally good. Whilst the design of formal systems may have improved technically, it is resoundingly clear they are either not used, or are tailored so that they are no longer implemented or used as designed. It is not enough, therefore, to design a theoretically well-structured PM system and put a good policy and clear guidelines in place. This is wasted effort if those who must use it merely comply to the minimum degree.

More rigorous internal evaluations of how useful managers and staff find their organisation's PM processes, and why they modify them to the extent that this study's findings suggest they do, is necessary.

Above all, those who must use the system must be integrally involved in its development, through a genuine consultative process, as opposed to the collective bargaining of industrial negotiations

which currently constitute most approaches to developing a PM system. Consultation *after* design is likely to result in continuing low engagement.

Recommendation 4. Australian public universities should develop change strategies to implement PM

Australian public universities need to develop a major change strategy focused upon reinvigorating their current PM system and approach this in the same way as they do other major change processes.

Managing change has long been conceptualised as a process of unfreezing or unlocking the existing behaviours and situation, moving to a new level and consolidating at this new level so that life does not return to the way it was before (Lewin 1951). In this context Birnbaum's comments on the traditional resilience of university managers in the US in the face of imposed change that they do not see as worthwhile, are worth bearing in mind. He describes academic managers as protecting their institutions against the worst excesses of exogenous reform by ritual compliance and symbolic adoption of the latest fad, where they publicly endorse the language of reform whilst doing as little of what was asked as possible, and finding ways to 'bunker down' until the fad passes (Birnbaum 2000).

Process models of managing change highlight the importance of diagnosing the need for change according to where the organisation currently is: this involves conceptualising what a more desirable state might look like, identifying strategies and plans to move an organisation towards the desired end state, and an implementation phase that translates intentions into actual change efforts, whilst managing the interpersonal and political issues associated with the change (Beckhard & Harris 1987; Dawson 1994; Egan 1988; Hayes 2002).

Data from this study may form a useful starting point for the first stage of a change process in establishing the need for change and the benefits. Convincing key stakeholders within the academic community, including academic managers, of the need for change will be of critical importance, as will the creation of a steering group with members of sufficient influence and wide representativeness in the university, to establish the credibility of the endeavour.

It will also be necessary to allocate adequate resources and time to investigate and address participant preferences for PM methods and approaches, to examine concerns regarding the system, and above all, to promote the benefits to be gained. Given the history of negative attitudes and union resistance to performance appraisal and PM in the higher education sector this will be no small undertaking.

Recommendation 5. Australian public universities should provide adequate resources for carrying out PM activities

Recommendation 5a. Training

Training for all participants is required if robust PM practices and cultures are to be created in the university sector. If hierarchical models of PM continue to be favoured, then regular and ongoing feedback about how teams and individuals are progressing are a clear role responsibility of the HOS and discipline leaders who must have practical, ongoing training in how to communicate this information. Support and perhaps leadership coaching to model the importance of PM is also needed. The leadership development of senior managers must emphasise the critical role responsibility they bear for supporting the decisions of a HOS where issues of under-performance are concerned.

Although online and self-paced methodologies may nominally meet the above needs, the author's experience unequivocally demonstrates the power of people-centred approaches to the development of these skills. Techniques such as shadowing, mentoring or coaching with an organisationally based manager or an externally based individual who is recognised as adept in these skills are far superior to training-based interventions that must, of necessity, operate at the lowest common denominator of experience. Peer coaching or participation in collegially based groups, where individuals have the opportunity to discuss real cases and issues of current practice are also powerful in engendering focused skill acquisition.

Staff at more junior levels in universities need training to be assertive about seeking performance feedback, appropriate professional development and career guidance on a continuing basis.

Induction training for staff should encompass basic information about PM processes, on the

premise that early knowledge and awareness contributes to confidence in actively negotiating goals and performance standards as well as seeking constructive feedback. The rhetoric of PM states that ideally it is a two-way negotiation process of dialogue (Creelman 1995; Management Advisory Committee 2001); however, the training to support this ethos is infrequently offered (Commerce Clearing House 2000).

Recommendation 5b. Australian public universities should fully authorise Heads to manage performance

If Heads are increasingly expected to manage staff performance, as the literature and the present study's findings suggest, then they must be fully authorised to do so and supported in the recommendations they may make on staff discipline or dismissal. Position descriptions need to reflect this delegation clearly, with the role of more senior managers being one of coaching and mentoring Heads in their staff management responsibilities. This presupposes that those at executive levels have such skills, which is in itself questionable. Thorough capability analysis of the people management skills for those at Head of School and above should be seen as a priority for our universities. Reviews and reports of university management over the last 10 years have consistently identified this as a problematic area (Higher Education Management Review 1995; Karpin 1995; Lonsdale 1996; Paget et al. 1992), and this study's findings, in the words of the managers themselves, endorse the fact that they perceive little improvement.

Recommendation 5c. Australian public universities should allocate specific funds for professional development

There must be a clear allocation of funds to action the professional development recommendations that flow from most PM systems. Heads must be trained to keep people's expectations of professional development modest, realistic and focused on the one or two issues that will make a genuine difference to an individual's performance and/or career development. Discussions regarding the expected contribution of the professional development to enhanced work performance and/or the academic's career profile should be a mandatory requirement. Whilst

some Heads already undertake such discussions, it will represent a challenge to those who use professional development as a way of avoiding giving candid feedback.

Recommendation 6. Australian public universities should allocate role responsibility for PM more broadly among the academic community

Hierarchical appraisal is unpopular and arguably inappropriate in the university setting and approaches that involve academic leaders, discipline heads or senior staff members who may have an interest and expertise in mentoring and developing staff should be investigated. This is particularly pertinent given the high personnel turnover in the role of HOS indicated in this study. The rate of turnover suggests that consistency of reviewer for longer than a year may be difficult to establish if it is located at the level of HOS. Consideration should be given to distributing the responsibility for PM activities much more broadly, particularly in larger schools where the load can be delegated and spread. Staff, at any level, who have an interest in, and aptitude for, these activities should be encouraged to take up such responsibilities and have their job roles adapted to allow them to do more.

Recommendation 7. Australian public universities should design and pilot alternative forms of PM

PM approaches that are specific to public sector environments, where there is a complex multiplicity of internal and external stakeholders, need further investigation for their applicability to university environments. Recent work combining stakeholder analyses and the development of measures and strategies using the balanced scorecard (Fletcher, Guthrie, Steane, Roos & Pike 2003; Moullin 2002; Neely, Mills, Platts & Richards 2000; Wisniewski & Stewart 2004) may lead to more effective ways of capturing academic performance, although issues of staff engagement, training and resource intensive development and implementation remain (Leitch & Davenport 2002; McAdam et al. 2005). PM using multiple stakeholder approaches remains an under-researched area in the university sector.

In addition, team-based PM models and models that utilise multiple sources of performance feedback should be designed and piloted to determine their applicability to the HE setting. Despite

research findings that suggest these models may be productive in collaborative cultures (Edwards & Ewen 1996; McKirchy 1998; Stone 2002) little attention has been given to exploring this in the academic environment. This is especially interesting given the observation that the impetus for academic staff to perform well comes from student expectations and the moral and social pressure from their peers, rather than from a negotiated performance contract with their manager (Moses 1995). In a climate where expectations of teaching and research (and the academic role) are undergoing significant transition, such models may offer much. As Lonsdale notes,

despite rhetoric that honours collaboration, cooperation and shared authority most colleges and universities neglect or under-utilise rewards for group performance and compensate, promote or otherwise reward for individual performance (1998, p. 312).

Re-thinking reward structures so that group incentives over and above individual salary (or not necessarily monetarily-based) are offered may prove highly motivational for academic staff: for example, to a team working collectively on a complicated research grant application or a team of lecturers who design an innovative online package.

Recommendation 8. Australian public universities need to address under-performance issues

Guidelines and processes for managing under-performance must be established and Heads of School authorised with the delegation and intensive training to undertake the necessary actions.

Although this study's HOS respondents indicated that current policies and processes for managing under-performance are in place in most universities, they described their organisations as lacking a culture for managing performance and themselves as either lacking the skill (or confidence) to manage under-performance effectively, lacking the time and energy to invest in the required counselling and follow up, or having no faith that they would be supported by their organisational leadership if they did implement action. Whether this is factually based or based in perceptions is largely immaterial: the effect is the same.

Methods to redress this situation may include a change management approach that starts with a clear statement of support from the senior management of universities signalling the

organisation's changed tolerance for under-performance and timely follow-through of appropriate action when required.

Academic managers should be required to undertake assessment centre training which focuses upon acquiring skill in the techniques to manage under-performance and involves an accreditation process. Whilst this is a costly exercise, the costs of under-performance across public universities are correspondingly costly in diminished individual outputs, increased pressure/workload on other staff (which in turn lowers staff morale), and the establishment of a culture of acceptance towards under-achievement.

For Heads who lack the time, skill, commitment, or continuity in the role to take on the responsibility for managing under-performance universities may need to develop viable alternatives. Partnering arrangements with internal HR experts or with an external cohort of coaches whose job is to work one-on-one with internal staff to deal exclusively with issues of under-performance are all possible. Where staff are willing to change but require extensive guidance, mentoring or specialist coaching to help them develop particular skills, such alternatives may be extremely productive.

Recommendation 9. Australian public universities should analyse the system-wide costs and benefits of PM practice and report these to government

A government funded cost benefit analysis that reviews the effectiveness of PM practice is necessary and would be of vital interest to both government and universities.

Many studies of PM have summarised theoretical approaches and debated the merit of key systemic elements and implementation guidelines. None have comprehensively sought to analyse the net benefits of PM in quantitative and qualitative terms against the commitment of resources, including the time and financial costs involved, particularly in Australian public universities.

In the current tight financial climate most universities struggle to find the resources for sufficient and ongoing skill training, a budget to action the professional development outputs for all staff, and dedicated time allowed in workloads for PM activities. As governments continue to move toward self-funding models for public universities this is unlikely to change for the better.

Despite the complexity of the undertaking it seems timely to mount a comprehensive evaluation study of PM practice and to assess the real outcomes, costs and benefits. It is critical that an independent research party, which is not associated with any historical 'position' or perspective on PM practices, conduct this. Previous studies have demonstrated that national evaluation surveys of PM procedures and their perceived effectiveness are both a feasible and a valuable undertaking (Paget et al. 1992; Wragg et al. 1996).

The author has, however, been unable to find any study relating to educational environments that has extended the analysis to include evaluative data of a cost benefit nature.

If universities continue to invest in formalised PM systems then they must begin to track the time and resources consumed in such activities accurately so that they are able to provide relevant data to governments regarding the system costs.

Possible Developments

What is possible given the current political and economic environment? Given the constraints of Australian Federal Government policy and the historically resistant attitude of HE unions to summative forms of appraisal it is interesting to speculate about alternatives and possibilities.

Alternative Approaches to Performance Management

There seems to be an implicit assumption in organisations, which is rarely questioned, that they must have a PM system and that it is a good thing. The evidence suggests that it is time to comprehensively explore more culturally acceptable and arguably appropriate models by which staff can discuss the performance issues that are vitally relevant and related to their specific discipline and research interests, as well as to the broader domain of organisational life and their ongoing careers.

Methods and models of PM must be found to encourage and enable academic staff (and their managers and leaders) to engage in the type of reflexive thinking about what they do, that may lead to significant and continuous learning throughout their professional career. It is only this type of endeavour that is likely to produce the outcomes favoured by all key stakeholders,

including academic staff. Recent studies have demonstrated that there are alternative practices that fulfil this requirement (Clements 2004).

Methods such as the promotion portfolio, that requires an academic to gather feedback from multiple sources, including colleagues, students, managers, internal and external stakeholders can enable self-reflection about overall performance. Far from a reductionist approach that attempts to codify all aspects of academic role performance, such an approach is more likely to relate to the core job components of an academic's role as well as capture the complexity of the job.

Rather than a defensive dance of compliance, which the present study's findings show characterises PM systems in Australian public universities, the results from such methods have been shown to have an immediate effect in improving teaching, and a long-term improvement in professional development in scholarship and service (Clements 2004) through stimulating the sort of self-reflection that challenges ideas, creates new perceptions and thus affects individual learning that shapes improved professional performance.

Such approaches still demand significant time to develop a portfolio, and also appropriate training to ensure portfolios are properly organised in format and content that includes areas of strength as well as those requiring improvement.

University-Wide and System-Wide Reflective Practice or Peer Learning

Groups

This study's results clearly show that academic staff highly value ways of establishing forums and collegial exchanges around the practical challenges and career opportunities for the teacher, researcher and academic manager. The ability to draw upon the collective wisdom and knowledge of individuals in a specific institution, as well as the broader professional field are an invaluable source of learning for all concerned. A number of processes may assist in this regard, such as induction training that establishes an early expectation of active discussion in setting performance goals and standards and seeking balanced feedback around achievements and areas for improvement. This may also be a fundamental way of engaging (or re-engaging) older academic staff who are in the latter stages of their career but may have much to contribute in such forums.

The author's continuing work with knowledge workers shows that they universally value opportunities to learn from each other through facilitated discussion and reflective group practice. The role of an HR department in constructing and facilitating such processes would signify a substantial contribution to organisational and individual functioning through the ability to establish genuine learning communities within the broader learning community. As Ingvarson and Chadbourne note, it is critical to find ways of bringing educational staff together more frequently on work tasks that are real and challenging. 'Creating opportunity to engage in meaningful collaboration, share expertise and constructively critique the quality of each other's work' (1997, p. 62) are powerful means of achieving professional development that benefits both the individual and the organisation they work within. Furthermore, the literature on reflective praxis strongly and consistently reinforces such approaches (Argyris 1991; Boucher 2006; Moon 1999; Schön 1983; Smith & Lovat 1990).

On a personal note, the author's work with managers in educational environments on the management of long-term under-performance issues graphically underscores how much they learn through collegial exchanges of experience-based wisdom and the effect this can have on their motivation, willingness and skill to tackle such issues effectively. Not only can managers develop practical strategies to deal with issues that have existed (and been assiduously avoided) for several years, but they also benefit from knowing that others face similar situations.

Managing Under-Performance

On a more pragmatic note, it is also necessary to provide academic managers with practical and realistic guidance regarding the focus of their energy with regard to PM activities, given the intensive resources they can consume.

More productive organisational results may be obtained from encouraging Heads of School and other reviewers to be strategically selective about where they invest their time and resources, and intentionally and consciously limiting the amount of time they give to PM activity overall. Better results may be achieved through the provision of feedback for new staff, high performers and the majority of staff who are doing a satisfactory job rather than the practice of attempting

to spend the same amount of time with every staff member, or spending most time dealing with staff whose performance is problematic.

Summary

If Australian universities continue to invest in PM systems for academic staff, they must clearly articulate the purposes to be achieved. The study's recommendations suggest that developmental models are most appropriate and acceptable in university cultures, and that considerable work would be required to successfully incorporate evaluative links such as performance-related pay.

Developmental feedback should be separated from discussions of workload allocation and a range of alternative models and approaches should be investigated, including the use of modular PM systems that cater for the different stages of an academic career as well as the devolution of PM responsibilities to individuals who may have an interest and expertise in developing staff, other than the Head of School.

More rigorous internal evaluations and consultation processes regarding user preferences must be undertaken and alternative forms of PM piloted, prior to full implementation. Comprehensive change management strategies will be necessary to begin the process of overcoming historical resistance to PM.

In order to have any credibility, adequate and dedicated resources for the PM function and its key outcomes (such as professional development of staff) are needed, including skills training for all participating staff, as are developmental approaches that are less didactic and more challenging than standard workshops.

The present study's findings show that most academic managers do not have expertise in the feedback skills required to effectively support PM (both formally and informally). A thorough capability analysis of the people management skills for those at HOS level and above should be seen as a priority, given that the findings consistently identified this as a problematic area. This is pertinent also to the area of managing under-performance where Heads of School should be fully authorised with the delegation and intensive skills acquisition training (such as accredited

assessment centre training) to deal with such issues. The substantial costs of under-performance warrant this expenditure.

A comprehensive national evaluation study of PM practice in Australian public universities should be undertaken to assess the real outcomes, costs and benefits. The system-wide costs and benefits must be weighed against the commitment of resources, including the time and financial costs involved, to determine whether in fact continued investment in PM systems is actually merited.

In its absence, alternative practices such as the use of promotion portfolios, reflective practice or peer learning groups that enable academic staff and managers to focus on core job components, discuss and share their collective wisdom and professional knowledge, may be more successful in enhancing the accountability and performance of academic staff than mandated hierarchical PM.

Limitations of the Study

- The data upon which this study's findings are based is now four years old. The rate and magnitude of change within Australian universities during this timeframe has been significant and PM has been an area of considerable activity. During this time, much may have changed in the way PM is experienced by key stakeholders. At the time of data generation, 75% of the formal PM systems were either new or under review, although anecdotal evidence and more recent surveys of Australian PM practice in the general organisational community (Nankervis & Compton 2006) suggest that significant improvements have not occurred.
- International applications need to be treated with some caution given that designations and types of institutional structure may vary widely to those of the Australian public universities. The public universities of other nations may be differentiated along the lines of teaching-only or research-only academic staff where Australian universities currently are not; they may be subject to very different salary and bonus systems and may reflect quite different role responsibilities for comparable levels of academic staff. While it is reasonable to assume some similarity of roles and tasks associated with an academic career, the potential for disparities must be acknowledged.

Opportunities for Further Study

The present study's findings suggested a number of pertinent opportunities for further research.

1. Several Heads of School in Phase One interviews identified what they perceived to be good PM practice in their organisation and examination of websites revealed apparent pockets of good practice. A wider study of PM practice across the 37 public universities to seek the perceptions of reviewers, staff administrators and government regarding their preferred models and techniques would be useful. Exploring this duality of perspectives is necessary to determine whether the difference between espoused and actual theory identified in this study is replicated more broadly. This has major implications for designers of PM systems and the level of resources allocated to such activities. If, for example, it emerged that no acceptable PM practice can be determined, it is surely wasted resource to continue to provide comprehensive training to support PM systems.
2. It would be relevant to explore whether there are significant differences in experiences of PM between staff in the 'newer' universities created as a result of the Dawkins' amalgamations and those institutions with pre-existing university status. As noted by some of this study's participants, the nature of the psychological contract has altered most substantially for those staff who must now maintain an active research profile as well as a teaching portfolio. It is possible that they report more negative viewpoints than staff in other universities.
3. It would also be extremely useful to investigate what happens in the absence of a formal PM system. This could take the form of an intensive international search to locate analogous educational organisations that do not have a formal PM system and conduct an intensive study of manager and staff experiences of direction setting, feedback and professional/career development.
4. Given the substantial commitment of resources, including time and finances, involved in the operation of PM systems, a study of the system-wide costs and benefits of PM practice in higher educational institutions, in quantitative and qualitative terms is long

overdue. The author has been unable to find any study relating to educational environments that has included evaluative data of this nature.

5. The impact of training on effective PM is also an under-researched area of great potential significance. Lewis (1993) has identified the lack of comprehensive PM training in educational environments, which is reinforced by this study's findings, where respondents alluded to the inadequacy of training in addressing the complexities of their role responsibilities –particularly how to construct meaningful performance measures, which respondents felt reflected the complexity of their role.

One Last Radical Proposition

The majority of the recommendations made in this thesis involve either the streamlining of current resources or the commitment of further resources to PM activities.

Given the low stakeholder satisfaction and questionable delivery of outcomes from PM for either formative or summative purposes that emerged from the present study's findings, it is necessary to consider whether continued efforts at formalised PM are worthwhile at all. In the absence of evidence that PM practice for academic staff in universities results in improvements to individual, team and organisational functioning, it is a viable (if radical) alternative to propose that organisations should cease to invest in formal PM systems. Coens and Jenkins noted that, despite the fact that,

many books talk about the pervasive problems associated with appraisal, sparingly few of them engage in any serious, in-depth discussion of the bigger question, 'Are they needed at all (2000, p. 3)?

In the absence of a formal PM system, it is inevitable that organic models of performance feedback and assessment will emerge, and almost as inevitable that they will range from being excellent to being subjective, biased and idiosyncratic to a particular university's operating environment. Evidence from the present study's respondents suggests that formal PM systems in Australian public universities are perceived as exhibiting all of these latter

characteristics—subjective, biased and idiosyncratic—hence little would be lost in ceasing the use of such systems, other than the ‘dance’ of compliance.

Appendix 1 – Plain Language Statement for Phase One Respondent

Dear

I am a graduate student in the Master of Business (Management) program at RMIT University, researching PM practices used with academic staff Levels A, B and C in Australian universities. PM issues are particularly critical at times of growth and change and the university sector is experiencing continuing and significant change.

The first stage of my study involves collecting data from the Schools and Departments of Management in the 37 Australian public universities.

I am approaching Heads of Schools of Management (or their equivalent) hoping to find out about both the official and actual PM practices currently in use and any issues of concern staff may have about them.

I would like to ask for your cooperation in completing a fifteen-minute telephone interview at a time of your choosing. The interview will focus upon:

- the practices known by you to be in current use for academic staff Levels A, B and C in your School and university, and
- the sorts of issues that PM raises for staff, managers and administrators.

The outcomes will be both a ‘map’ of existing PM approaches being used and the identification of key issues of current concern.

Part Two of the research involves the selection of a number of sites for further study, which I may seek your involvement with, if you are interested.

If you are prepared to help me with this part of the study, I would appreciate you notifying me by return e-mail and/or returning the attached consent form to me at:

454 Whitehorse Rd, Surrey Hills, VIC, 3127. Facsimile: (03) 9830 1569

Your participation is voluntary and you may choose to withdraw from the project at any time or to disallow the use of particular information. I will maintain your anonymity in the production of the thesis and in any other published material related to the study.

Additionally, please feel free to ask for clarification at any time regarding aspects that concern you, by contacting me (Lyn Stavretis) on (03) 9830 1569 (which is a phone and facsimile number) or at my e-mail address sbs@netspace.net.au.

Alternatively, you could contact Dr Rosalie Holian (senior supervisor) at RMIT on 9925 5943, e-mail address rosalie.holian@rmit.edu.au or Professor Robert Brooks (Chair, RMIT Business Ethics Sub-Committee) on 9925 5594, e-mail address robert.brooks@rmit.edu.au

Yours sincerely,

Lyn Stavretis

BA/ MSW

Appendix 2 – Semi-structured Interview Schedule

Nationwide study of Australian university performance management practices for academic staff

This interview focuses upon the PM practices used with academic staff Levels A, B and C in Australian universities.

I am seeking information about both the formal and informal PM practices currently in use and any issues of concern staff may have about them.

This section of the interview focuses on the practices known to be in current use for academic staff Levels A, B and C in your university.

Does your university have a formal PM system(s) that covers academic staff Levels A, B and C?

What is it called?

What date was this system introduced?

Who is covered by it?

Prompt–Academic staff:

Level A

Level B

Level C

Above Level C

Full-time staff

Part-time staff

Sessional staff

General staff

At what stage of implementation is the PM system? for example Beginning Fully Implemented

Informal Performance Management Practices

Apart from the formal PM system, what other means are used for academic staff Levels A, B and C? Please describe them.

Prompt—for example colleague and student feedback, criticism or advice on a range of activities

How frequently does the PM system require people to meet in a twelve-month time period?

Who was involved in the design of the PM system?

Prompt—for example General staff, Academic Staff, Managers, Union(s)

Has your system undergone modifications since its introduction?

Why was your system introduced? Why now?

What are the stated purpose(s) of the system?

How would you describe the system's primary focus?

Prompts— Evaluative: focused on accountability, reviewing or measuring performance and allocating rewards based upon these judgements.

Developmental: focused on staff development and training to address both short-term issues and long-term career needs.

Combination of both approaches

Describe the main elements of the formal PM system.

Prompts—for example one-to-one interview; objectives

Which elements does the PM system include?

What other systems is the PM system linked to?

for example informs decisions concerning promotion, tenure, probation, contract renewal, staff development, disciplinary actions

Is there an element of academic staff pay based on performance?

Does the system assist you to reward high performance? How?

Does the system assist you to manage unsatisfactory performance? How?

Training

What training is provided for system participants?

Prompt—for both parties

How would you describe the effectiveness of the training?

Can you suggest how it might be improved?

How would you describe staff attitudes to this system? Could you please elaborate?

How would you describe management attitudes to this system? Could you please elaborate?

Check Interviewee's Position title, length of time in this position, age range

20–30 years

31–40 years

41–50 years

51 years +

Thank you for your participation in the interview

Can you provide me with a copy of the PM forms used?

Can you provide me with a copy of the policy?

Appendix 3 – Plain Language Statement for

Phase Two Respondent

Dear

I am a graduate student in the PhD program at RMIT University, School of Management undertaking research titled ‘A study of performance management practices being used for academic staff in Australian University Schools of Management’.

The study focuses on the formal and informal PM practices used with academic staff Levels A, B and C in Australian universities. PM issues are particularly critical at times of growth and change and the university sector is experiencing continuing and significant change.

The first part of this study involved the collection of data from the Schools and Departments of Management in the 37 Australian public universities on the types of PM practices currently being used in their systems and some key issues commonly associated with their use. A ‘map’ of existing PM approaches has been developed and key issues of current concern identified.

This second part of the research involves discussions with academic staff who occupy various PM roles (as reviewer, reviewee or manager) at a number of selected sites to explore how they experience their School or Department’s PM practices.

The outcomes of this research will be both a rich description of the academics’ experience of PM practices and the development of ideas regarding effective PM practices for academic staff in university cultures.

Participation in the study involves an individual interview where you will be asked to discuss your views about your School or Department’s PM practices. Each interview will be approximately 90 minutes in length, may be audio taped and will occur between March 2003 to May 2003 at your place of work, or another venue if appropriate.

Your participation is voluntary and you may choose to withdraw from the project at any time or to disallow the use of particular information. I will maintain your anonymity in the production of the thesis and in any other published material related to the study.

Your signature on the attached consent form indicates you are prepared to help me with the study.

Please feel free to ask for clarification at any time regarding aspects that interest or concern you, by contacting me (Lyn Stavretis) on (03) 9830 1569 (which is a phone and facsimile number) or at my e-mail address sbs@netspace.net.au.

Alternatively, you could contact Dr Carlene Boucher (senior supervisor) at RMIT on 9925 5914, e-mail address carlene.boucher@rmit.edu.au or Professor Robert Brooks (Chair, RMIT Business Ethics Sub-Committee) on 9925 5594, e-mail address robert.brooks@rmit.edu.au

Yours sincerely,

Lyn Stavretis

BA/MSW

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