RESEARCH ARTICLE:

Exploring Academics' Performance Management Experiences at a University of Technology in South Africa

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Abstract

This study was designed to explore the academics' experiences of the performance management system (PMS) at a university and to understand which of their performances enhanced the achievement of the university's strategic goals. Furthermore, the study sought to establish the support required by the academics to achieve the performance as captured in their key performance indicators (KPIs) within the faculty. A qualitative research design was adopted using semi-structured, in-depth, individual interviews to collect data from 18 academics, coded L1 to L18. Interview questions revolved around the participants' four KPIs, namely quality teaching and learning, research productivity, community engagement and participation in management activities. Through content data analysis, participants' experiences were highlighted. It was revealed that PM at the institution revolved around pre-determined KPIs that were given to the academics in advance before the exercise. The four KPIs later came out as the key PM practises applied by the university to enhance the achievement of its strategic goals. It was also possible to establish the participants' performance, the support given by the university and the gap between the participants' performance and the institution's expectations, as captured in the KPIs. It emerged that whilst the participants had the needed competencies to ensure quality teaching and learning, they also required, among others, a mechanism to assess the impact of teaching on the students' performance. It further emerged that little was done in terms of research productivity; and that participants required enormous support from the university, and rewards to enable them to publish and supervise. Regarding community engagement and participation in administrative activities, participants indicated that it was more challenging due to pressing teaching loads. Based on the findings, recommendations to enhance all the identified KPIs were proposed.

Keywords: *performance management; academics; rewards; community engagement; research productivity*

Introduction

This paper explores performance management (PM) experiences of academics at one university of technology in South Africa. Performance management is viewed globally and in South Africa as key to the achievement of strategic goals, in public and private organisations, institutions and departments (Cognology, 2021; Republic of South Africa, 2007; Simbolon, 2018; SurveySparrow, 2021; Tebetso, 2020; Tucci and Hanna, 2021). Cognology (2021:1) suggests that PM is an instrument that aligns employees to an organisation's strategic plan and gives a way to execute the plan, whilst tracking indicators at individual, team and organisational levels. For Gupta and Kumar (2012), PM is one of the most important human resource management practices in organisations. SurveySparrow (2021) suggests that PM is a continual process that entails measurement of employees' performance and helpful feedback between management and employees. This exercise can lead to increased levels of production as well as organisational alignment at the workplace. . This alignment drives and enhances overall growth in the organisation since it has to do with being orderly with performance checks and guiding employees on the right track to success, for themselves as well as the organisation. However, Seyama (2017) argues that PM is a subtle, coercive power tactic and its reliance on quantitative measurement suggests that employees are reduced by it to a category or quotient; their worth, their humanity and their complexity are abridged.

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Studies conducted on PM include those by Melo and Figueiredo (2020) who argue that PM systems in public service organisations, including higher education, are poorly applied due to politics, limited resources, institutional differences, organisational capacity and the nature of public goods and services that create several complications. These complications, according to Melo and Figueiredo, may make implementing PM systems ineffective or harmful for public organisations. Gichuhi *et al*. (2012) argue that whilst a quality PM system is anticipated to yield precious information to workers regarding their performance and progression at work, the way the PM is implemented remains a major concern for organisations. In their study on PM, Maimela and Samuel (2016) found that although academics were happy with the execution of the PMS by the managers, performance bonuses payment was not contemplated as adequately motivating, thus requiring a pragmatic appraisal by management. Thus, Melo and Figueiredo (2020) offer that PM systems may introduce perverse incentives, induce gaming and divert attention from unmeasured, yet important organisational outputs or outcomes, such as contributions to social outcomes, considering the complex and multi-mission nature of higher education institutions (HEIs). However, a study on PM by Irwan *et al.* (2020) found that an individual's performance becomes a function of ability and motivation.

Based on the above observation, the requirement for managers to craft strategies to optimise business performance (Imran *et al*., 2014) cannot be denied. Crafting and implementing a PMS is one such strategy. According to Aguinis (2013) and Hawke (2012), PMS functions have to be planned and carried out in such a way that they achieve predetermined organisational objectives through employee's work performance. Indeed, PM is considered part and parcel of the management function in an organisational setting. As managers endeavour to craft objective standards to measure employees' performance, as both individuals or groups, they are also charged with the responsibility of determining the extent to which PM contributes to the overall achievement of business effectiveness and efficiency (Stanton and Navenkis, 2011). HEIs in South Africa have also embraced PMS as a mechanism to achieve teaching distinction and to enhance research productivity. However, in this case, the available literature does not show how academics experience PM, neither does it show the way in which academics' PM enhances the achievement of the institution's pre-determined goals. If academics' experiences are not explored, the university faces the problem of these academics perceiving PM as a tool that seeks to place command and dominance on employees' work behaviours. This might eventually cause resistance to PM, making it impossible for the university to establish how PM could enhance the achievement of the institution's pre-determined goals. It would also be impossible to establish the support needed by the academics to achieve the required KPIs.

It is against this backdrop that this research addresses the question: How do academics at a university of technology experience performance management? Thus, the study was guided by the following objectives: 1) explore the implementation of a PM system within one South African university of technology, 2) clarify the nature of PM practices that enhance the achievement of strategic goals through employee performance and 3) explore academics' PM experiences and establish the support they require to achieve pre-determined performance goals as captured in their KPIs. The gap between what was expected of the academics in terms of performance and how they performed highlighted were highlighted.

Literature Review

To foreground our study, we drew from Locke and Latham's (2002) goal-setting theory, which states that some employees do better than others since they have dissimilar performance goals. The goal-setting theory puts forward three main basic arguments. It maintains that individual employees hold different goals and will only act on such goals if the probability for success is high. In this case, the motivation to perform hinges upon the value attached to the goal (Locke and Latham, 2002). Relatedly, Peter Drucker's concept on 'management by objective", which aligns with the goal-setting theory, emphasises goal explicitness, collaborative decision making, definite performance periods as well as performance feedback (The Economist, 2009; Sah, 2012). This means that for goals to be accomplished by individual employees, in this case academics, they must be aligned to the overall organisational performance goals (Aguinis, 2013). Furthermore, the goal-setting theory states that the enhancement of performance is not only due to the assignment of specific goals to employees, but it is also about employee involvement in the process of goal setting (Sah, 2012). The authors argue that the emphasis by managers on the achievement of goals reinforces managerialism, which advances both management and individual managers' interests. This consequently augments their social ranking and strengthens their institutional positions, disregarding the interest of employees, in the context of the current study (Janse, 2019). This is so

because as argued by Seyama and Smith (2015), the commencement of managerialism in universities, with its drive for individual accountability through PMS, is contentious. Furthermore, Seyama and Smith (2015) assert that first-hand evidence out of South African research indicates that academics are fearful of and oppose the idea of PMS, viewing it as a corporate tool unsuitable in the context of higher education, which is structured to generate knowledge, not profit. Corroborating these views, Melo and Figueiredo (2020) argue that it is not so much about employee participation in the goal-setting exercise, rather, HEIs have become fixated on PMS due to rankings, attempts to create national centres of excellence based on exceptional performance and performance funding, mostly in association with research performance.

Despite the limitations regarding goal setting expressed above, Locke and Latham (2002) suggest that it is crucial for managers to increase the challenge or difficulty of goals so that employees can be able to exert themselves more and be motivated to work harder. Thus, to ensure employees' increased performance, it is assumed that there is a need to assign employees clear, challenging, and motivating goals to accomplish the assigned tasks (Locke and Latham, 2002). Additionally, the goal-setting theory states that emphasising adequate levels of challenge and clearness, as well as employee participation in the goal-setting exercise and feedback to them after the PM exercise, will contribute to higher and better task performance (Juneja, 2022). The implication, therefore, is that effective PM requires employee and management participation in the goal-setting exercise. Junega (2022), however, argues that in the goal-setting exercise, employee participation is not always desirable. The compelling necessity for universities to enhance performance effectively has led to the introduction of performance management systems that allow management to keep track of organisational goal achievement on the one hand and the extent to which employees contribute to the attainment of these goals (Maimela, 2015). It is assumed that the implementation of PMS in HEIs could enhance the growth and development of staff and departments within faculties (Mampane, 2020). This development could be achieved by exposing staff to staff development initiatives, with the necessary support to ensure that commitments made are seriously translated into relevant actions in the department. Such actions by the institution's various departments could lay a sturdy foundation for improved performance (Gupta and Kumar, 2012).

Melo and Figueiredo (2020), as well as Maimela and Samuel (2016), contend that, although a substantial number of researchers argue that performance information contributes to organisations being more strategic and efficient, enabling service users to hold them more accountable, a growing body of the literature illuminates potential design and implementation problems. These problems are highlighted in the goal-setting theory, as: (i) the organisational goals could conflict with managerial goals; if such a conflict exists, it is assumed that it will be detrimental to performance and could cause unsuited action drift (Jenega, 2022); (ii) hard and complicated goals provoke riskier behaviour; (iii) if employees do not have skills and competencies required to perform the set goals, goal setting could fail, leading to crippling of performance; (iv) there is no proof to confirm that goal setting enhances job satisfaction (Jenega, 2022). Cognology (2021) asserts that PM is a marvellous technique senior manager could use to follow measures of performance. Through PM, employees' performance is linked to the organisation's strategy through both goal and behavioural alignment. Tucci and Hanna (2021) note that goals are one of the main methods at hand in PM to align employees to the strategic plan of an organisation. If well executed, an employee should be capable of understanding the extent to which each of their goals connects to the strategic plan of the organisation. This helps employees feel a sense of being part of the organisation. But Cognology (2021) notes further those goals are not always appropriate for all roles in the organisation. This means that to ensure that everyone in the university moves in a similar direction and contributes to the strategy, all university employees must share the same values and demonstrate behaviours that align with organisational goals. Values, together with behaviours, transmit important features regarding the organisational culture to all employees. They do not only provide direction but also a set expectation for how things should be done. It is thus vital that an organisation clearly articulates its goals to the employees and such goals should be shared among all employees in the organisation. The researchers assume that it is through such sharing that employees can internalise and own the set goals.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative, interpretive, and explorative research methodology (Schurink, 2003). The qualitative approach was found relevant for this study because the researchers were concerned with how the selected participants conceptualised and understood PMS, what meanings they assigned to it, their experiences and how they interpreted that reality (Nieuwenhuis, 2012). Given that the current study is qualitative, it was

conducted within an interpretative paradigm, or ways of understanding the nature of reality. To achieve this objective, the researchers chose purposive sampling based on certain and specific criteria to ensure rigour (Northcote, 2012; Sargeant, 2012). The selection criteria for the study were informed by Cohen and Crabtree (2008), Northcote (2012) Sargeant (2012) and Tracy (2010) who found that rigour in qualitative research is informed by seven criteria for good qualitative research, namely: (1) carrying out ethical research; (2) importance of the research; (3) clarity and coherence of the research report; (4) use of appropriate and rigorous methods; (5) importance of reflexivity or attending to researcher bias; (6) importance of establishing validity or credibility; and (7) importance of verification or reliability.

For Nikolopoulou (2022), these criteria are collectively known as eligibility criteria and establishing them is critical when seeking rich, thick descriptions from the selected participants. Thus, these criteria helped the researchers identify the study population from which the sample was drawn; those who were likely to have the attributes that would make it possible to robustly answer the research question (Nikolopoulou, 2022). The process of participant selection was done in a consistent, reliable, significant, and objective manner (Nikolopoulou, 2022; Tracy, 2010), which allowed the researchers to study the needs of a relatively homogeneous group (Nikolopoulou, 2022). The researchers thus selected the participants using demographic characteristics such as gender, qualifications and number of years employed in the institution. The participants' qualifications ranged between masters and doctoral degrees. In terms of gender, there were ten males and eight females. These participants were lecturers who had spent a minimum of five years in the institution. Access to the participants was made possible because both researchers worked at the same institution and the main researcher in the same faculty. Furthermore, the selected participants were willing to speak about their experiences of PMS because they had been included in the evaluation exercise. Consequently, the researchers believed that the selected participants had enough experience to be able to provide rich information regarding PMS. As noted by Northcote (2012:57), "qualitative researchers, attempt to recognise the diversity and complexity of their research participants and the context and, subsequently, work with rather than within the boundaries or contexts of their research settings".

Thus, open-ended questions were used to source information from the purposively selected participants. Questions revolved around the participants' key performance indicators (KPIs). The KPIs showed how well each participant performed against the identified strategic goals of the institution, implemented at the faculty level. These strategic goals included four key areas of performance, namely ensuring quality teaching and learning, enhancing the departmental research productivity, active engagement in community initiatives/development and participation in the university's administrative duties. Before one of the researchers, who was previously employed in the faculty, left the institution, he had had several opportunities to explain the exercise of PMS and the KPIs to the selected participants. The researchers thus believed that the PMS process had been clearly elucidated to every selected participant. Consequently, the questions were structured to establish how the participants experienced the PMS exercise and the intensity to which they had achieved the identified strategic goals and KPIs. The questions were also structured to establish the support participants needed to enable them to achieve expected performance as captured in the KPIs.

Interview protocol was used to enable all participants ask the same questions (Nieuwenhuis, 2012). The questions were structured in such a way that they solicited participants' experiences of the PMS exercise (Yin, 2014). Thus, the following four overarching questions, revolving around the participants' four KPIs, were asked, namely i) Can you please share with me what you understand by the concept quality teaching and learning? (ii) Explain to me how you contributed to the university's research volume or peer-reviewed articles in the past one year? (iii) Which community-based projects have you been involved in and what was your role? iv) Share with me some of the administrative duties you have been involved in as a lecturer. Subsequent questions flowed naturally from the participants' responses for probing to ensure that no restrictions were imposed on the participants' answers (Nieuwenhuis, 2012). Avoiding such restrictions made it possible for the participants to talk freely, resulting in the collection of rich and nuanced data from which the sought answers were obtained (Giorgi, 2009).

Collected data were analysed through content analysis to identify patterns and emerging themes (Leedy and Ormrod, 2010). Fundamental meanings and impressions, as divulged through the analysis, were congregated according to emerging elements of the text, such as words or phrases (Yang *et al.,* 2008). Data analysis entailed compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting and forming conclusions about PMS and KPI from the experiences of the participants. Through this process, raw data were converted into a new and understandable narration of the research topic, bringing to the fore the participants' PMS experiences. During the process**,** Yin

(2014) encourages researchers to set aside prior experiences and prejudgments as the data analysis process involves identifying all meanings through reductions and analysis of detailed statements into themes.

To ensure the study's trustworthiness, several measures were adopted. These included triangulations, member checks and an audit trail. Triangulation implies the use of more than one data collection method or cross-checking data from multiple sources in search of credibility in the data findings (Maree and Taylor, 2016; O'Donoghue and Punch, 2003). An audit trail, a clear depiction of the research steps followed from research commencement to the end of the research process (Akkerman and Meijer, 2011), was kept, ensuring that the study maintains its trustworthiness. This process enabled the researchers to audit the events, influences and actions taken as part of the study (Akkerman and Meijer, 2011). The final measure to be adopted for trustworthiness was member-checking, which assisted to improve the accuracy, credibility, and transferability of the study findings. According to De Loyola *et al*. (2022), member checking is a well-established strategy for appraising credibility. Considering the foregoing, five of the 18 participants were separately given the opportunity to comment on the findings of the research. Thus, through member checking, participants were provided the opportunity to engage with the processed data and confirm whether the findings, as recorded by the researchers, were in synch with their experiences. Where there were slight disagreements, these were corrected by the researchers. Consequently, in the schema of the researchers, the member checking strategy used was in coherence with their epistemological constructivist stance, which is that knowledge is co-created. Thus, member checking contributed to co-constructing the findings of the current study, confirming the truthfulness of the findings.

To adhere to the ethical requirements, permission to conduct the study was sought from the institution's ethics committee. The selected participants were informed about the aim of the study and that participation was voluntary. Their anonymity was guaranteed. It was further indicated to them that they were free to withdraw from the study at any point if they so wished.

Findings and Discussion

This study was designed to explore the implementation of a PM system within one South African university of technology, with a view to clarifying the nature of PM practices that enable the achievement of strategic goals through employee performance. It was also designed to establish the gap between what was expected of the academics in terms of performance and how they performed. Eighteen academics, coded as L1 to L18, participated in the study. During the interviews, participants were required to rate themselves on a five-point scale, as reflected in Table 1, with 1 denoting unacceptable performance level and 5 indicating outstanding performance.

Table 1: Performance assessment scales

1	2	3	4	5
Unacceptable performance	**Performance not meeting expectations**	**Performance meets expectations**	**Performance significantly above expectations**	**Outstanding performance**
• Performance does not meet the standard expected for the job. • The review/assessment indicates that the member has achieved below fully effective results against almost all the performance criteria and indicators as prescribed in the contract.	• Performance is below the standard required for the job in key areas. • Performance meets some of the standards envisaged for the job. The assessment shows that the employee has accomplished below fully envisaged results *vis-a-vis* more than half the critical performance criteria and indicators as	• Performance meets expected standards in all job areas. • The review/assessment shows that the employee has fully accomplished effective results *vis-a-vis* all the performance standard and indicators prescribed in the contract.	• Performance is remarkably higher than the standard envisaged in the task. • The appraisal shows that the employee has accomplished fully above envisaged results against more than half of the performance standards and indicators and fully accomplished all others round the year.	• Performance far surpasses the envisaged standard. • Performance evaluation shows that the employee has accomplished above fully effective results against all performance standards and indicators prescribed in the contract and preserved this in every area of

1	2	3	4	5
Unacceptable performance	**Performance not meeting expectations**	**Performance meets expectations**	**Performance significantly above expectations**	**Outstanding performance**
• The employee has failed to show the required commitment needed to ensure performance level expected in spite of management's attempts to encourage development.	prescribed in the contract.			responsibility all over the year.

FINAL RATING----------

The participants' views about the PM exercise manifested in four major themes that included quality teaching and learning, research enhancement, community engagement and participation in university administrative duties. These themes are reflected in Table 2, columns 1 and 2. Column 3 shows what was expected of the academics in terms of their performance while column 4 reflects the participants' views regarding enhancing performance in all four areas.

Table 2: Themes, sub-themes expected KPIs and required support to enable expected performance.

Theme	Subthemes	Expected output as per KPIs	Required support
• Quality teaching and learning	• Increase student success. • Increase technology enabled learning. • Engage in Staff development. • Curriculum development.	• Achieve a minimum of 77% throughput rate. • All modules uploaded on learning platform. • Attend a minimum of two staff development workshops per year. • Update learner guides/follow-up on inactive students and their assessments.	• Training. • Harness teacher leadership. • Support student engagement online • Craft relevant institutional policies to support online learning. • Provide a mix of online learning tools.
• Research productivity	• Increase volume of peer-reviewed published research articles. • Increase conference. proceedings. • Increase postgraduate supervision.	1. Accredited article 2. Conference proceedings 3. Postgraduate supervision	• Highlight the significance of research culture and involve all academics at all levels across the university. • Identify gaps in research knowledge and offer courses for development to improve behaviours and attitudes among all staff towards research productivity. • Develop support structures to raise morale and build up a research culture that is positive. • Promote open discussions and help advance a more participative environment that enables academics to share both positive and negative research experiences.
• Community engagement	• Planning services for community, university,	• Participation in one activity	• Allow time to develop a productive working relationship with

Theme	Subthemes	Expected output as per KPIs	Required support
	school partnerships and networks. • Contribute to social cohesion to support • service community self-help groups. • Involvement • in support of social action groups, social activism, social justice as public intellectuals. • Build community. • Participation in inter-agency meetings. • Undertake needs assessment. • Increase people's skills.		community partners, as communities of learning. • Time to design projects that meet both learning and community goals. • Time to manage the logistics of the projects as they unfold. • Time to engage students in special skills training and to reflect on the meaningfulness of projects with communities.
• Administrative responsibilities	• Assist in student registration. • Assume acting responsibilities. • Assume delegated responsibilities. • Assume open day duties/first year orientation.	• Student registration. • Acting responsibilities • open day/first year orientation participation	• Facilitate training the following management functions: planning, organising, leading and controlling or coordination.

Quality teaching and learning

Quality teaching in higher education matters for student learning outcomes. Institutions are, therefore, compelled to guarantee that the education offered matches not only the students' expectations but also current and future needs of employers. Cognisant of the fact the participants were expected to ensure quality teaching and learning, all were asked how they conceptualised the concept quality teaching and learning. As reflected in Table 2, all respondents linked the concept to increased student success, increased technology-enabled learning, adaptation of blended learning, engagement in staff and curriculum development. Epitomising the views of most participants, for instance, L1 indicated, *"for me quality teaching and learning means that the student you teach succeed with quality grades and are able to use the acquired knowledge in the work environment."* Asked how she would ensure quality teaching and learning, L1 further stated that, "*a lecturer must have the required resources and the skills to use such resources. For example, today all lecturers must be able to teach online since we no longer have face to face classes; actually, we have when the need arises to use blended learning. Therefore, if we have to achieve quality teaching and learning we have been trained and retrained all the time."*

In follow-up questions, participants were asked whether, in their opinion, they were able to achieve the specified outcomes (KPIs) in quality teaching and learning and how many points they would score themselves on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 representing unacceptable performance and 5 denoting outstanding performance. Though none of the participants rated themselves with a 5, none scored below 4 in this area. The implication is that all participants' performance in this area was significantly higher than the standard expected in the job. Reflecting the opinions of all the participants in this area, L10 stated, *"for me teaching is the core of my work. That is why, as expected of me by the university, I have been able to achieve a throughput rate of 77%, loaded blended learning materials on Vutela, attended at least two workshops for staff development, updated my study guides and followed up on all inactive students."*

From the participants' responses regarding the area of quality teaching and learning, it is evident that the participants were well-versed with the core competencies needed to perform their jobs as required in the balanced

score card (BSC) (Kaplan and Norton, 2001: 7). It is against this backdrop that they were able to interact well with students on Vutela (a learning management system adopted for the institution), create supportive learning environments, design good lesson plans, use varied teaching strategies, communicate, and follow up on inactive students.This significant performance indeed confirmed Locke and Latham's (2002) contension that assignment of clear, motivating and challenging tasks to employees was bound to enhance their performance. Academics in this case knew what they were supposed to do and they diligently executed their roles; scoring an average mark of 4 out of 5 on a five point scale.

It emerged during the interview process that quality teaching and learning were more than merely attaining a throughput rate of more than 77 percent (a standard set by the faculty) and achievement of other KPIs as shown in Table 2. When asked what would enable them to achieve expected performance, most of the participants recommended that lecturers should be aware of what constitutes quality teaching and learning. Furthermore, the need for developing effective and efficient lecturers was also a common thread that ran through all the responses. In the words of L15, *"lecturers require yearly training as technologies change and students too have become technocrats, lecturers should thus be educated on issues related to depersonalised digital platforms to ensure quality teaching and learning".*The need for yearly training as indicated by participant L15 confirms the need for the appropriate skills as captured by Lock and Latham's (2002) goal setting theory and supported by Juneja(2022). According to the Goal setting theory if employees do not have skills and competencies required to execute the set goals, PM could be crippled.

The participant went further to indicate the need for teacher leadership, student engagement, alignment of institutional policies to foster quality teaching and learning, as well as the need to embrace innovation as a driver for institutional change. Participants further observed that for quality learning and teaching to be achieved there was need to have a mechanism to assess the impact of teaching on students' performance and progress. This finding echos Juneja's (2022) assertion that as employees take part in the goal-setting exercise for PM, feedback to them is essential to ensure better task performance.

Research productivity

Research productivity is vital to enhance a university's ranking. It is also an important metric to measure the performance of academic staff (Maimela & Samuel, 2016). Participants were required to show how they had contributed to the university's research output in the previous year. When asked how they contributed by enhancing research productivity, most of the participants indicated that they did not have time to write and publish, or even engage in supervising masters' students in the last year (i.e., 2021). This was amongst others, attributed to the onslaught of COVID-19 and its ramifications. When asked to rate themselves on a five-point scale, none of the lecturers scored above the three-point mark and many scored two and below. When asked what impeded their quest to publish, attend conferences or engage in supervision, several participants cited "overload and lack of time". In the words of L7, "*I personally cannot be able to write and publish due to the heavy teaching load. I have over four hundred students who require my attention. I have to teach, mark, give feedback and capture marks on ITS*." Echoing L7s sentiments, L2 revealed that even though enhancing research productivity was part of her KPIs, writing and publishing required dedication and plenty of time, which she did not have. Whilst teaching overload and lack of time were major reasons given for non-participation in article writing and publication by most of the senior lecturers, most of the lecturers cited the issue of lack of writing skills, in addition. L16, for instance, indicated that he needed to develop his research and writing skills if he had to score higher in this (research enhancement) area. This view was echoed by most lecturers below the level of senior lecturer. This finding confirms one of the weaknesses of the goal setting theory that if employees lack the required skills and competencies the PM exercise is bound to fail. Lack of research and writing skills for some lecturers accounted for the poor score in the research area.

When asked for their views regarding enhancing research productivity, both senior and junior lecturers, agreed that there was a need for the university to create more time by hiring more staff to relieve all lecturers engaged in research of some of their teaching loads. Participants also felt that the university should financially compensate all lecturers involved in research activities. This finding is in line with the financial perspective of the BSC (Kaplan and Norton, 2001). This means that the university should put emphasis on shareholder value. Whilst shareholder value refers to the shareholders' financial worth in a company, in the context of this study, it would mean management of the university paying greater attention to research funding opportunities, rewarding collaboration among researchers, availing and enabling ICT, remunerating researchers for their publications and improving job

satisfaction to boost research productivity of the academic staff. This might encourage staff to actively participate in all activities related to research.

Participants further suggested several other strategies to enhance research productivity. For instance, L3, L5, L6, L12, L13's responses suggested exposing lecturers to research culture workshops, ensuring development of consensus among the lecturers on individual and collective behaviours and attitudes that would enhance research. L15, L16, L2 and L7 proposed the establishment of support systems that would boost lecturers' morale and enhance research productivity. In addition, L9 suggested, "…*for me I also see a need for open discussions among ourselves as lecturers and researchers to foster a more collaborative environment, that gives us opportunities to share our research experiences, negative or positive."*

Community engagement

As one of the KPIs, lecturers were supposed to participate in planning and giving services to communities around the university, initiating and guiding self-service community groups, organising and supporting social action community groups, establishing community networks, taking part in inter-agency meetings, facilitating community needs assessment as well as enhancing people's skills. Whilst lecturers were required to participate or initiate a single project, it emerged during the interview that out of 18 participants, only three were actively involved in community work.

Most of the participants' responses revealed that it was practically impossible for individual lecturers to initiate and run community projects. Time to start and run a project of that nature was cited by all 18 participants as a major impediment to community engagement. However, the glaring absence of the university itself in assisting lecturers to participate in community projects was a major concern. L4 for instance, indicated *"if we as lecturers have to participate effectively in community-based projects, the university must take the lead. Am not a local person. Which community should I engage? My suggestion is that the university helps us to bridge the gap between campus and the community."* The participant went on to observe the need for the university to liaise with community leaders, indicating that this would ensure that planning was much easier, and it would assist in establishing a constructive working relationship between the lecturers and the community. Echoing the sentiments of L4, L7, L9, L12 and L13, L17 went further to suggest the need for the university to engage in a needs assessment to establish what the community needed and how the university would assist to meet the identified needs. The participants suggested that based on the results of the needs assessment the university would then deploy individual lecturers and students to assist in the identified community. L9 noted, *"In such cases, the university would also be able to assist with services such as campus vans or other logistical necessities that the project would require."* To make it easier for lecturers to identify communities in need, almost all participants suggested the need to create an online database that lecturers, students, and the community would use to register needs or ideas and develop partnerships.

Whilst most participants cited lack of time as as one major impediments to their participation community engagement, there was a significant number of participants who confirmed that they did not know what to do when it it came to community engagement as one of the KPIs. It appeared as if the University focused more on teaching and research to the detriment of community engagement. This is contrary to to Aguinis' (2013) and Hawke's (2012) assertion that successful PM has be planned and carried out in such a way that pre-determined activities are successfully executed.

Administrative responsibilities

Apart from providing academic leadership in teaching and curriculum development, undertaking research, consultations and community engagement duties, lecturers were also evaluated on their performance of administrative duties. Among others, the duties include contributing to the management of the department, assisting with the registration of students, managing personal, departmental and academic administration, undertaking departmental delegations, attending departmental and faculty meetings and acting on behalf of the head of departments (HODs).

Whilst administrative responsibilities were identified as one of the KPIs for the lecturers, there was a perception that administration was entirely the work of HODs. Indeed, asked how many times they had represented the HOD in any meetings, or carried out any of the administrative duties they were supposed to execute, less than half of the participants had done so. The following is a sample of the responses captured:

L4: *I did not do any administration because the HOD never assigned me any.*

L10: *I think registration of students should not be part of my KPI since there is a registration department to deal with that.*

L11: *There was no opportunity for me to engage in management; probably the HOD will delegate duties to me next semester.*

L12: *I don't feel comfortable executing delegated duties as an HOD, I would rather attend meetings on his behalf, but I never got such an opportunity to do so last semester*.

L13 *This is an area (administration) I will score very low. Not all of us should be administrators.*

From most of the responses regarding administrative duties, it is evident that many of the participants did not perceive themselves as administrators or managers, although, during their daily work as teachers, they execute the four managerial functions of planning, organising, influencing, and controlling. They are required to assign different activities and resources to the students to ensure that the teaching plan is accomplished, in addition to motivating, leading, and directing their students. To ensure that the teaching and learning process is successful, they exert control by monitoring the teaching and learning activities. Against these realisations, participants were asked how they would have liked the university to assist to enable them to participate actively in the administrative duties. In a response that epitomised the views of the other participants, L13 stated thus, *"I think the university should assist everybody to transit from being a lecturer to becoming a manager by availing monthly opportunities for each of us to act as HOD and to attend meetings that have been exclusively for HODs and Deans."* Participants further requested leadership workshops to enhance their skills as managers.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study explored academics' experiences of the PMS at a university of technology, soliciting the support they needed to accomplish their predetermined goals in the form of KPIs. Collected and analysed data indicated that if participants were to perform as expected by the institution, they required to ensure quality teaching and learning as well as increased research productivity, as indicated in the KPIs. They were also to actively participate in administrative duties and community engagement. Regarding community engagement as a predetermined goal, it emerged that it was practically impossible due to pressing teaching loads. Since not many lecturers participated in community engagement, it is recommended that the university establishes a centre for teaching and learning to plan community-based courses. Some of these courses would enlist building communities of learning (COL) that could have a high impact on community and university partnerships. This would bridge the gap between campus and community and develop meaningful partnerships more efficiently by enlisting others to attain a desired future. It would further foster the establishment of positive working relationships between the university and the community, promoting cooperative goals and building trust. Since community engagement is structured to solve some community needs, it is important that such needs are identified before any community development project is launched. The recommendation would be, that online databases be developed for lecturers and university students to access information on community needs that require attention and solutions. Following this, the university could initiate community projects that might fit with university research or teaching interests. Such community partnerships should be implemented for the mutual benefit of the university and the community.

Regarding participation in administrative duties, findings confirmed that academics' heavy teaching loads once again negated their effective execution of such duties. Furthermore, it emerged that not many staff members assumed administrative duties. It is, therefore, necessary in this regard, that their opinions on matters concerning the department are always sought. The need for transparency for management and staff should be emphasised and management should always acknowledge and recognise all efforts put in by the staff to run the departments. HODs, as managers, should ensure clear and effective communication channels all the time, set clear goals and let each lecturer know what they must do in terms of administrative duties. It is important for HODs to identify each lecturer's strengths and weaknesses and make use of the strengths of each while correcting the weaknesses. As far as enhancement of research productivity is concerned, there is a need for the university to illuminate the significance of building a positive research culture and to involve all academics across the departments/university to identify other causes apart from heavy teaching loads for academics that impede staff participation in publishing and supervision. Such gaps should be addressed through training and research culture workshops. It is envisaged that through such workshops, unanimity on shared and lone behaviours and attitudes to enhance research could

be developed. Furthermore, it would be possible to establish support structures to boost academics' confidence and amplify a positive research culture. The university should also look at the need for open discussion forums among all staff to help build a more collaborative environment, by giving researchers the chance to share their experiences, both negative and positive.

In light of the revelation that the heavy teaching loads for academics is an impediment to the fulfilment /achievement of some of the KPIs, it is recommended that the university supports the traditional approach to lecturing with an integrative one that involves the use of information communication technologies (ICTs) as well as various other teaching approaches to lessen academics burdens with regard to overcrowded classrooms and marking of student work. Considering the above findings, it is further recommended that before PMS is implemented, management should raise awareness of quality teaching among all staff and students. It is also vital that through staff development initiatives, effective and efficient lecturers are developed. Such lecturers will not only be able to implement quality teaching and learning but will also be in the position to build a university for change and teaching leadership. It is also vital that the university strives to align institutional policies to foster quality teaching and learning. There is, however, need to mention that the university's efforts to ensure that academics perform as expected may come to nil, if there is no motivation. Thus, if academics must achieve all their KPIs as spelt out by the institution, it is vital that the university puts programmes in place to motivate and encourage them. Among several other measures for instance, those who perform beyond expectations could be recognised. Recognition in this regard could be through offering rewards, which could be monetary or non-monetary. Management could also ensure that it is available for the academics, by listening to and solving their concerns.

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