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THE QUEST FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE: ASPECTS RELATING TO THE ASSESSMENT OF THE PERFORMANCE OF UNIVERSITY TEACHING STAFF

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OPSOMMING

In 'n poging om akademici se beskouings van aspekte rakende hulle eie prestasies, en outeurs se menings oor die onderwerp te ondersoek, is 'n vraelys met 23 items saamgestel. Die vraelys is onder 'n ewekansige steekproef van senior lektore, mede-professore en professore versprei. Die navorsingsdeelnemers is versoek om die items te beoordeel aan die hand van die belangrikheid van die aktiwiteite wat deur die items verteenwoordig word, en die mate waarin die onderhawige aktiwiteite in hulle tuisdepartemente toegepas word. Die twee datastelle is aan 'n hooffaktorontleding en skuinsrotasie onderwerp en vyf komponente is geïdentifiseer, naamlik *Terugvoer en advies, Gereelde en formele evaluerings, Personeelontwikkeling, die Rol van eksterne eksaminatore en Verbruikersevaluering.* Geen verskille is ten opsigte van fakulteit, rang, opvoedkundige kwalifikasies of doseerervaring gevind nie. Dit was egter duidelik dat daar 'n betekenisvolle verskil tussen akademici se beskouings van die belangrikheid van aspekte van evaluering en bestaande praktyke binne hulle onderskeie departemente bestaan. Die bevindings het belangrike implikasies vir die wyse waarop akademici bestuur word.

ABSTRACT

In an attempt to assess the views of academics about issues relating to performance appraisal, and to test the views expressed by several authors, a questionnaire consisting of 23 items was developed and distributed to a random sample of senior lecturers, associate professors and professors from all South African universities. The research participants were requested to evaluate the importance of each of the items, as well as the extent to which these activities in fact existed in their departments. The resulting data were subjected to a principal factor analysis and an oblique rotation procedure, and five readily interpretable dimensions were identified for both sets of ratings. In the main, these dealt with *Feedback and advice, Regular and formal appraisals, staff development,* the *Role of external examiners,* and *Consumer evaluation.* While no differences were found between faculties, different degrees of experience, different qualification levels, and ranks, it was apparent that there were sizable differences between the importance that academics ascribe to the different aspets of appraisal and development and current practices in their departments. The findings have important implications for the management of academics.

Academic excellence is an ideal which is striven for by university managers, the state in its capacity as primary funding body, and the corps of lecturing staff upon whom rests the responsibility for ultimately ensuring that this goal is attained. Within the South African university context, general university policy is determined by the Minister of National Education in terms of the provisions of the *Act on the national Policy for General Educational Affairs* (Act 76 of 1984). While this Act determines issues of broad educational policy, the day-to-day running of universities and the implementation of policy is left to the discretion of the councils and senates of the various universities.

Broad policy issues are generally addressed via the Department of National Education, and a series of reports has appeared over the years in which various issues, such as the structure of qualifications, the basis on which universities are financed, and so on, have been addressed. In a report under the title *'n Kwalifikasiestruktuur vir universiteite in Suid-Afrika* (Department of National Education (DNE), 1987) three broad categories of activities of universities were identified, namely tuition, research, and community service. According to the principles put forward in this report, tuition involves the development of the intellectual capacities of students by imparting the fundamental principles of scientific thought and praxis in the various disciplines; research concerns the development of new knowledge and a spirit of enquiry; and the goal of community service concerns the involvement of universities in activities in which the unique resources and abilities which are to be found at universities are put at the disposal of the public in general.

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Numerous authors have given attention to various issues associated with the meaningful and productive employment of academic staff. Sizer (1988), for example, has maintained that individual, departmental and organisational assessment cannot be implemented without considering the general environment in which such an organisation functions. Creswell (1986) and his collaborators have devoted a book to the challenges surrounding the assessment of the research performance of academics. Ways in which the quality indices of faculty performance may be developed have been suggested by Donald (1984), while Wanner, Lewis and Gregorio (1982) have compared the research productivity of academics in the natural sciences, the social sciences, and the humanities. Walker (1988) has pondered the problems of staff assessment, and Johnes (1988) has been able to indicate that bibliometric approaches such as science citations indices are of extremely limited value in the measurement of performance. The level of ambiguity and vagueness which surrounds the assessment of academic staff have been discussed by Riegle and Rhodes (1986), and that the purposes, functions, and types of evaluators need to be taken into account. These authors indicated that there are at least six different purposes for which such staff may be evaluated, namely, appointment, tenure, promotion, salary, termination and improvement; the three well-known functions of teaching, research and service which may be considered; and six kinds of evaluators who may be involved in the assessment procedure, namely, other academics, administrators, students, outside consultants, lay persons, and themselves. The product of these three sets of variables yields 108 different contexts within which academics may be evaluated, which inevitably results in a good deal of confusion and lack of comparability of assessments.

In an investigation into the manner in which various kinds

of research performance indices (status as a researcher, contributions to the professional development of younger professionals, research participation, scientific contributions, community-based research, and providing advice) are related, Watkins and Labuschagne (1991) were able to show that the criteria are closely associated. They were, however, concerned that the pressure on academics to produce scientific findings may well result in them experiencing undue levels of role conflict, role ambiguity, and role overload. It is evident that such a situation would necessarily result in adverse consequences relating to the motivation of academics.

While the three dimensions of teaching, research, and service appear to have fairly general international acceptance as the primary foci of the activities of university teaching staff, there has been some controversy about the relative importance of research as a determinant of teaching proficiency (Jencks & Riesman, 1977; Tuckman & Hagemann, 1976).

Flowing from the work of a committee appointed specifically for the purpose of investigating an approach to the appraisal of academics, and an analysis of the available research literature, Adey and Steyn (1989) developed a measure for staff development through evaluation in which they identified and operationalised five dimensions, namely *Teaching competence or excellence as a lecturer, Scholarship, Administrative skills, Interpersonal orientation,* and *Attitude towards work and the university.* In assessing the psychometric properties of the instrument which they developed, 433 lecturing staff were appraised in the presence of the various Deans. The Cronbach alpha coefficiens were exceptionally high, ranging between 0,816 and 0,917 before item analysis. In order to develop as brief a scale as possible, several items were dropped from each scale resulting in alpha coefficients ranging between 0,875 and 0,925. In addition, it was decided to remove the scale *Attitude towards work and the university* from the final instrument, mainly as a result of its high correlations with the other dimensions in the instrument.

In terms of Pollitt's (1988) formulation, staff appraisals at universities may be classified into one of three categories, namely, a Managerial model, a Professional development model, and a Consumer model. Largely similar views were expressed by Rutherford (1987) who also attempted to operationalise this approach.

While there can be little doubt about the psychometric properties of the instrument developed by Adey and Steyn, the approach adopted by these authors falls squarely into what Pollitt (1988) would term a Managerial model. The Managerial model of appraisal is typified by organisational relationships which are predominantly hierarchical, objectives are set at the top, the most legitimate discourse is that of means/ends rationality, and extrinsic motivators are believed to be effective. Given this kind of philosophy, appraisal schemes developed in such organisations show strong links with the organisational reward and punishment system, approaches to appraisal are generally highly standardised, appraisal is centred on superior/subordinate interaction, and it is not applied to senior management. Coupled to these factors, Pollitt says '[t]he dominant criteria for performance will tend to be mainly those to do with *efficiency* and *economy* rather than with *effectiveness* and *quality*' (p. 8).

In the Professional development model the primary aim is to raise professional standards, and to disseminate knowledge of good practices. In addition, the improvement of communication between those working in the same field is regarded as a priority. Under such a set of circumstance, appraisals tend to be characterised by peer review and self-evaluation. All members of the organisation are, therefore, both appraisers and appraisees, the procedure is not linked with the general reward system of the organisation, and participation in the appraisal process is voluntary.

The Cunsumer model, according to Pollitt (1988), is still largely in the process of emerging. The primary assumptions which underlie such a model are that consumer dissatisfaction with a service is legitimate, that consumers are competent to judge the appropriateness of a service provided, and that it is possible to aggregate such appraisals in reliable and meaningful ways.

While the debate may be interesting, little attention appears to have been given to the opinions and perceptions of academics regarding those factors which either enhance their research and teaching performance or detract from it. Bearing in mind that researchers affiliated with tertiary educational institutions constitute roughly 60% of the active researchers in this country, and while this sector receives less than 20% of the national research expenditure, there can be little doubt that they constitute an important national asset which ought to be husbanded. Research findings which provide greater insight into the circumstances of academics could prove to be a useful tool further to enhance their research productivity.

The problems which were to be investigated were, therefore, to establish whether the measuring instrument had a reasonable factor structure, the extent to which independant variables such as length of experience, the faculty in which researchers are employed, their academic qualifications, and the level of the position occupied by the incumbents may exert an influence upon their perceptions of what may constitute an appropriate approach to evaluation. The second research goal is to assess the extent to which academics perceive a difference between what they regard as ideal in terms of appraisal and development systems, and the differences that may exist between it and their perceptions of current practices in their departments.

METHOD

Measuring instruments

With a view to generating information on the opinions and perceptions of researchers associated with university teaching departments, a questionnaire consisting of 23 statements was developed. The items in the questionnaire were derived from the literature cited above, and expecially from the views expressed by Pollitt (1988). As Pollitt's postulates bear a close relationship to the work which has been done by Rutherford (1987), the design of the items was also based on Rutherford's published research. For each of the items the research participants were requested to indicate the extent to which they believed a specific activity was important on a four-point scale, as well as the extent to which each of the activities took place in their departments. Two scores were therefore associated with each of the items.

Sample

A list was drawn up of the names of all academics occupying the ranks of senior lecturers and higher as reflected in the calendars of those South African universities which fell under the jurisdiction of the Committee of University Principals (CUP). In view of practical considerations, a random sample of 1 390 individuals was drawn from the list of 5 596 names identified in this manner. The questionnaires were posted to them and 605 completed questionnaires were returned to the researchers in due course, yielding a response rate of 43,5%.

The effective sample consisted of 221 (36,3%) senior lecturers, 113 (18,6%) associate professors, 261 (43,1%) professors, and 10 (1,7%) individuals who failed to supply information concerning their ranks and who were therefore, excluded from further analyses of the data. As far as teaching/research experience was concerned 182 (30,6%) recorded less than 11 years, 134 (22,5%) between 11 and 15 years, 131 (22,0%) between 16 and 20 years, and 148 (25,9%) more than 20 years. The formal qualifications of the respondents varied between 407 (69,6%) with doctoral degrees to 21 (3,6%) who held honours degrees.

To ensure that the numbers which fell into the various categories were sufficiently large to permit meaningful ana-

lyses of the data, it was decided to ignore specific disciplines as reflected by departments, and rather to group faculties into three broad groups: Economic sciences, Arts, Theology, Law, Education, and Architecture were labelled *Human Sciences;* Physical sciences, Engineering, Agriculture, and Forestry were classified as *Natural sciences;* and Medical sciences, Veterinary science, Dentistry and Pharmacology became *Medical.*

RESULTS

As one of the 23 items had been rated by only three respondents, it was decided to exclude it from any of the further analyses. The remaining 22 items of the two sections of the questionnaire were subjected to an iterative principal factor analyses using the SAS (1990) suite of programmes, and the factor pattern matrices were rotated by means of the oblique Promax procedure (Hendrickson & White, 1964). Kaiser's Measure of Sampling Adequacy (MSA) for the data relating to the extent to which respondents agreed with the statements *(Importance data)* was 0,89, while that for the data pertaining to the extent to which the conditions referred to in the statements existed in their departments *(Current practice data)* was 0,90 indicating that both data sets were highly suitable for factor analytic procedures. In both cases five factors were eventually extracted using the Kaiser (1959) criterion as decision rule. Although the Kaiser criterion suggested that five factors be extracted (there being five Eigen values greater than 1,00 in both matrices), it was decided to extract four, five, and six factors respectively from both data sets to ensure that the factor solutions which were eventually eccepted would be those that were conceptually most sound. The five-factor solutions appeared to be the most rational for both data sets. In the case of the Importance data 22 iterations were required for the criterion to converge, while 30 iterations were necessary in the case of the Current practices data.

Loadings greater than or equal to 0,45 were regarded as significant, and are shown in the rotated factor matrices in bold print.

Importance data

The rotated factor matrix for the Importance data is shown in Table 1. The variables have been rearranged so as better to display the factors which were extracted. The means and standard deviations of both the Importance and Current practices data are shown in Table 2. The inter-factor correlations are shown in Table 3.

TABLE 2
ITEM MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR CURRENT PRACTICES AND IMPORTANCE DATA

	Importance data		Current practice data	
Item Number	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1	3,22	0,67	2,44	0,85
2	3,53	0,71	2,79	0,82
3	3,52	0,67	2,71	0,87
4	3,36	0,63	2,49	0,91
5	3,41	0,61	2,61	0,90
6	2,99	0,68	2,30	0,87
7	2,92	0,86	1,79	0,94
8	3,27	0,58	2,39	0,86
9	2,96	0,75	2,27	1,00
10	2,77	0,83	1,82	0,92
11	2,44	0,82	1,52	0,79
12	3,18	0,73	1,95	0,92
13	2,94	0,78	2,11	0,93
14	3,07	0,77	2,36	0,97
15	2,74	0,76	1,99	0,89
16	2,57	0,78	1,47	0,72
17	2,93	0,74	2,21	0,98
18	3,08	0,69	2,21	0,95
19	2,78	0,72	1,82	0,83
20	3,09	0,69	2,24	0,95
21	3,12	0,69	2,16	0,91
22	3,07	0,67	2,12	0,92

TABLE 3
INTER-FACTOR CORRELATIONS FOR IMPORTANCE DATA

	I	II	III	IV
II	0,46			
III	0,28	0,47		
IV	0,63	0,38	0,31	
V	0,31	0,29	0,19	0,19

The first factor deals with the need which academic staff have for *feedback and advice* on the content of the courses which they teach, the manner in which they teach, their approach to ex-

TABLE 1
PROMAX FACTOR STRUCTURE MATRIX FOR IMPORTANCE DATA

	I	II	III	IV	V	h^2
23 Detailed criticism and advice by colleagues on final research report	**0,78**	0,41	0,31	0,30	0,25	0,62
20 Detailed criticism and advice by colleagues on manuscript or book based on research results	**0,74**	0,38	0,27	0,24	0,32	0,55
18 Detailed criticism and advice by colleagues on funding proposals	**0,77**	0,40	0,38	0,25	0,39	0,60
19 Detailed criticism and advice by colleagues on supervision of postgraduate students	**0,69**	0,41	0,43	0,27	0,41	0,50
17 Detailed criticism and advice by colleagues on examination questions	**0,58**	0,39	**0,47**	0,20	**0,48**	0,42
16 Observation of teaching by colleague followed by detailed criticism and advice	**0,49**	0,30	0,43	0,20	0,40	0,31
13 Detailed criticism and advice on course content/teaching material by colleagues	**0,55**	0,44	**0,57**	0,14	0,43	0,45
4 Active role by heads of departments in assisting staff to develop teaching skills	**0,49**	**0,85**	**0,46**	0,19	0,30	0,72
5 Active role by heads of departments in assisting staff to develop research skills	**0,46**	**0,81**	0,41	0,19	0,23	0,67
6 Active role by heads of departments in assisting staff to develop administrative skills	0,43	**0,70**	**0,49**	0,21	0,34	0,50
2 All areas of academic activity (research, teaching, community service, etc.) to be included in appraisals	0,24	**0,53**	**0,49**	0,15	0,40	0,37
3 Teaching, research and administration to be done by different academics depending upon individual aptitudes	0,27	**0,47**	0,36	0,11	0,25	0,24
8 Purposeful arrangements for performance assessment of department	0,37	**0,50**	**0,72**	0,24	0,34	0,54
7 Annual interviews with academics to review performance and gauge expectations	0,28	0,39	**0,62**	0,18	0,32	0,39
9 Annual report on performance and priorities of each department for faculty review	0,23	0,27	**0,52**	0,21	0,19	0,28
21 Regular interview with immediate supervisor on full spectrum of work	**0,56**	**0,49**	**0,65**	0,17	0,37	0,52
1 Purposeful arrangements for assessment with a view to professional development	0,31	**0,61**	**0,65**	0,21	0,40	0,52
12 Training for heads of departments in university organisation and management	0,31	0,22	0,35	0,19	0,18	0,16
11 Responsibilities of external examiners to include postgraduate teaching methods	0,34	0,22	0,33	**0,88**	0,25	0,78
10 Responsibilities of external examiners to include comment on postgraduate course content	0,30	0,24	0,26	**0,80**	0,25	0,64
15 Information from students through discussion on course content and teaching methods	0,37	0,25	0,25	0,19	**0,68**	0,48
14 Information from students through questionnaires on course content and teaching methods	0,28	0,23	0,34	0,17	**0,58**	0,34

aminations, the quality of their research proposals, the manner in which they supervise postgraduate students' work, draft manuscripts, and final research reports. In essence, these items imply that peer review – and to some extent feedback from supervisors – of the different activities which constitute the major portion of the professional lives of academics are viewed as constituting a single construct, and that, bearing in mind the magnitude of the mean item ratings, academics are in agreement about the importance of such activities.

The second factor, on which there were eight items with substantial loadings, deals with the *development of staff*, and the active role of the head of the department in question in this process. The activities involved relate to the development of teaching, research and administrative abilities and skills and to the processes which are involved in making arrangements to ensure that these tasks are carried out. Interestingly enough, the means of the ratings appear to indicate that staff members regard teaching as the most important function for which such a need exists, followed by research and then administration.

The third factor which was extracted appears to deal with the kinds of managerial inputs which academics believe to be necessary in the regular and formal appraisal of their performance. The individual items which load on this factor include the need for purposeful arrangements for performance assessment with a view to further professional development, the need for annual discussions on past performance and expectations for the future, the need to evaluate the performance of the department as a whole, comparisons between departments in faculties, the need for training departmental heads in the principles of management, and the need for regularly scheduled evaluation sessions with heads of departments.

The fourth factor is a doublet which deals with the *role of external examiners* as far as comments on post-graduate course content and composition, and post-graduate teaching methods are concerned. Turning once again to the means of the ratings, it is evident that the respondents regarded these activities as a good deal less important that those included in the preceding factors.

The fifth factor deals with what appears to be the *consumer aspect* of performance evaluation. The items deal with the broad scope of roles which academics have to fulfil, and the need for feedback from students (consumers) on course content and teaching methods by means of both questionnaire methods and formal dicussions. The nature of examination papers and feedback from colleagues on this aspect of teaching is also involved in the factor.

The largest correlation between the factors is that between factors I and IV. This may have been expected as both deal with feedback either from colleagues (probably interpreted by most respondents as those who occupy academic positions at the same university) and external examiners who are, in the final analysis, colleagues in a somewhat different sense of the word.

Current practice data

The rotated factor matrix for the Current practice data is shown in Table 4. Once again, the variables in the matrix have been arranged to facilitate interpretation, and the loadings which are regarded as significant are shown in bold.

TABLE 4
PROMAX ROTATED FACTOR STRUCTURE MATRIX FOR CURRENT PRACTICE DATA

	I	II	III	IV	V	h^2
17 Detailed criticism and advice by colleagues on exam questions	**0,78**	0,32	0,21	**0,54**	0,23	0,61
16 Observation of teaching by colleague followed by detailed criticism and advice	**0,68**	0,35	0,24	0,42	0,25	0,47
19 Detailed criticism and advice by colleagues on supervision of postgraduate students	**0,76**	0,32	0,20	**0,63**	0,25	0,63
13 Detailed criticism and advice on course content/teaching material by colleagues	**0,68**	0,39	0,27	**0,47**	0,22	0,47
15 Information from students through discussion on course content and teaching methods	0,34	0,22	0,06	0,21	0,24	0,14
8 Purposeful arrangements for performance assessment of department	0,31	**0,79**	0,39	0,29	0,21	0,62
9 Annual report on performance and priorities of each department for faculty review	0,27	**0,65**	0,29	0,22	0,32	0,45
1 Purposeful arrangements for assessment with a view to professional development	0,25	**0,61**	0,38	0,24	0,13	0,39
7 Annual interviews with academics to review performance and gauge expectations	0,39	**0,63**	0,31	0,26	0,21	0,42
21 Regular interview with immediate supervisor on full spectrum of work	**0,54**	**0,63**	0,37	0,43	0,15	0,49
12 Training for heads of departments in university organisation and management	0,33	0,44	0,34	0,30	0,15	0,24
14 Information from students through questionnaires on course content and teaching methods	0,42	0,43	0,24	0,30	0,25	0,26
4 Active role by heads of departments in assisting staff to develop teaching skills	0,23	0,43	**0,87**	0,22	0,17	0,76
5 Active role by heads of departments in assisting staff to develop research skills	0,18	0,34	**0,78**	0,29	0,18	0,62
6 Active role by heads of departments in assisting staff to develop administrative skills	0,32	0,43	**0,51**	0,21	0,22	0,33
2 All areas of academic activity (research, teaching, community service, etc.) to be included in appraisals	0,17	0,25	0,28	0,14	0,03	0,10
3 Teaching, research and administration to be done by different academics depending upon individual aptitudes	0,15	0,22	0,25	0,13	- 0,05	0,10
18 Detailed criticism and advice by colleagues on funding proposals	**0,61**	0,35	0,25	**0,81**	0,19	0,68
20 Detailed criticism and advice by colleagues on manuscript or book based on research results	**0,52**	0,28	0,21	**0,75**	0,13	0,57
23 Detailed criticism and advice by colleagues on final research report	**0,54**	0,36	0,32	**0,76**	0,21	0,60
11 Responsibilities of external examiners to include postgraduate teaching methods	0,33	0,24	0,18	0,18	**0,85**	0,72
10 Responsibilities of external examiners to include comment on postgraduate course content	0,26	0,26	0,15	0,19	**0,77**	0,60

TABLE 5
INTER-FACTOR CORRELATIONS FOR CURRENT PRACTICE DATA

	I	II	III	IV
II	0,51			
III	0,45	0,57		
IV	0,32	0,22	0,28	
V	0,44	0,37	0,50	0,24

In general, the factors are strikingly similar to those which were identified for the Importance data. Factor I is the same in both cases factor II is similar to factor III for the Importance data, factor III agrees with factor II for the Importance data, and Factor V and IV of the Importance data are similar for both data sets. The most noticeable difference between the factor structures is that which exists between factor IV of the Current practices data and factor V of the Importance data. It would appear that factor IV of the Current pratices data relates to advice and criticism by colleagues on activities which are associated with academic output in general rather than to direct teaching endeavours. The fact that the two items which concern feedback from students do not load substantially on the same factor, may well suggest that very little is done about acquiring and using information from students concerning their evaluations of courses taught.

A comparison of the communalities reported in tables 1 and 4 suggest that there are a number of activities which are regarded by various authors as important in advancing academic excellene, but which may not receive a great deal of emphasis at present. The most striking are activities which relate to a differentiation of departmental activities on the basis of skills and aptitudes (Item 3), comprehensiveness of appraisals (Item 2) and scheduled discussions with students about the nature and content of teaching (Item 15). In these cases more than 80% of the variance of the items was not explained by the factor analysis. In the case of the Importance data, it would appear that the item concerning the training of heads of academic departments in management practices was not regarded as relating to any of the other issues in question.

Independence of classification variables

To determine whether the three classification variables (rank, experience, and highest qualification) were independant (which appeared unlikely) Chi-squared tests of independance were done between these three variables. Because of potential problems with unacceptable small cell sizes it was not possible to include the three variables in the same analysis, and separate analyses of pairs of variables were consequently done.

As can be seen from Table 5, the classification variables are mutually correlated, which implied that little would have been gained by including all three in analyses of variance. It is, however, likely that the faculty in which an academic is employed will be independant from variables such as experience, academic qualification and rank.

TABLE 6
INDEPENDENCE TESTS FOR CLASSIFICATION VARIABLES

Classification variable	*df*	χ^2	*p*
Rank x experience	6	118,9	<0,0001
Rank x qualification	6	100,7	<0,0001
Experience x qualification	9	73,5	<0,0001

Analysis of variance

To determine whether there were differences between the manner in which members of faculties perceived the *Importance* and *Current practices* data, and whether there were interaction effects between faculty membership and the other classification variables, it was decided to perform two-way analyses of variance with faculty and experience as the independant variables, and the factor scores of the five dimensions derived from the two principal factor analyses as dependent variables. The results for the *Importance data* are summarised in Table 6, while those for the *Current practice data* appear in Table 7.

TABLE 7
IMPORTANCE FACTORS; SUMMARY OF TWO-WAY ANOVA FINDINGS

	Factor	Source	*df*	SS	MS	*F*-value	Pr>*F*
I	Feedback & advice	Faculty	2	0,38	0,39	0,39	0,68
		Experience	4	3,76	0,94	0,93	0,44
		Faculty x experience	8	7,14	0,89	0,88	0,53
II	Formal appraisal	Faculty	2	0,11	0,06	0,06	0,94
		Experience	4	1,90	0,48	0,47	0,76
		Faculty x experience	8	10,10	1,26	1,26	0,26
III	Staff development	Faculty	2	5,11	2,56	2,57	0,08
		Experience	4	5,34	1,33	1,34	0,25
		Faculty x experience	8	10,10	1,26	1,27	0,26
IV	Esternal examiners	Faculty	2	3,03	1,51	1,54	0,21
		Experience	4	4,30	1,08	1,09	0,36
		Faculty x experience	8	4,19	0,52	0,53	0,83
V	Consumer evaluation	Faculty	2	2,49	1,24	1,23	0,29
		Experience	4	2,82	0,70	0,70	0,59
		Faculty x experience	8	3,39	0,42	0,42	0,91

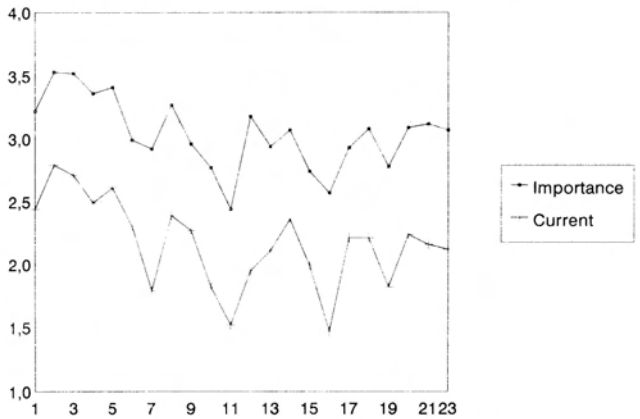
TABLE 8
CURRENT PRACTICE FACTORS: SUMMARY OF TWO-WAY ANOVA FINDINGS

	Factor	Source	*df*	SS	MS	*F*-value	Pr>*F*
I	Feedback & advice	Faculty	2	0,64	0,32	0,32	0,73
		Experience	4	1,49	0,37	0,37	0,83
		Faculty x experience	8	10,01	1,25	1,24	0,27
II	Formal appraisal	Faculty	2	2,09	1,04	1,01	0,36
		Experience	4	1,42	0,36	0,35	0,85
		Faculty x experience	8	2,16	0,27	0,26	0,98
III	Staff development	Faculty	2	0,35	0,18	0,18	0,84
		Experience	4	2,41	0,60	0,60	0,67
		Faculty x experience	8	7,15	0,89	0,89	0,53
IV	Esternal examiners	Faculty	2	0,55	0,27	0,28	0,76
		Experience	4	3,19	0,80	0,81	0,52
		Faculty x experience	8	10,14	1,27	1,29	0,25
V	Research	Faculty	2	0,57	0,29	0,29	0,75
		Experience	4	7,04	1,76	1,76	0,14
		Faculty x experience	8	8,59	1,07	1,07	0,38

Figure 1: Distribution of means of importance and Current practice data

It is worth noting that neither as far as the *Importance data* nor the *Current practice data* are concerned were there any significant differences for either faculty or experience. Similarly, none of the interaction effects was found to be significant. It must, therefore, concluded that the views of academics are remarkably similar concerning the Current practices in their departments as is the case in terms of what they regard as important. It would appear that the situation concerning the appraisal and development of university staff is perceived as remarkably similar, regardless of rank, qualification, experience, or the kind of faculty in which academics are employed. The similarity of the perceptions could be taken to imply that, should measures be introduced to deal with these management issues, there is no need to develop different approaches to accommodate the assumed dissimilarities that are believed to exist between faculties.

A question which ought to be of interest to those charged with the management of universities is whether a difference exists between academics' perceptions of Current practices and what they regard as important. The differences in perception of the research participants is clearly visible when the means of the various items are compared as shown in figure 1.



Although possibly not entirely acceptable from a statistical point of view, an attempt was made to establish whether a significant difference existed between the two sets of ratings by applying Hotelling's T^2-test for dependant groups on the 22 variables. The Hotelling-Lawley Trace value was found to be 3,95, which is highly significant as indicated by the associated *F*-value [$(F(22, 452)=81,16)$ $p[F \geq 81,16 < 0,0001]$. Post hoc *F*-values computed on the difference between the means of the *Current practices* and *Importance data* were extremely large for al the variables, with the *F*-values ranging between 212,6 and 866,5, all of which are significant at the *p*-level of $<0,0001$. In terms of the perceptions of the academic staff, there would thus appear to be a good deal of room for improvement as far as all the activities mentioned in the questionnaire are concerned.

CONCLUSIONS

From the findings of this investigation it would appear to be justified to claim that in their perceptions of appraisal practices which either exist, or which could be introduced at universities, academics distinguish between five kinds of evaluations. These refer to issues related to feedback and advice from their peers which could occur on a continuous basis; formal appraisal procedures which occur at set intervals and which inform university management about matters relating to promotions, salary adjustments, and so on; specific activities embarked upon for purposes of staff development; appraisals by the major consumers of the work of academics, namely their students; and, to a somewhat lesser extent, feedback from external examiners.

There seem not to be any real differences between academics at various stages in their careers – as indicated by variables such as rank, highest academic qualification, and total experience – nor does the faculty in which they are employed appear to have any bearing on the manner in which they perceive the current situation at universities or the importance which they attribute to appraisals of various kinds. What is, however, clear, is that the academics sampled in this investigation have a definite need for assessments and feedback of various kinds.

The instrument which was designed for the purposes of this study, and the findings in general, provide information on some of the aspects which may be addressed by universities in enhancing the management capability of individual departments. The manner in which senior academics are promoted to head departments – even if these appointments are made on a term basis rather than a permanent one – must necessarily be seriously questioned in the light of the findings of this study. In the main, it would appear that criteria for such appointments tend to ignore the very factors in which such appointees are expected to be competent to enable them to attain the teaching and research goals of the university system. Similarly, the expectations of academics in departments are not likely to be met if heads of departments do not command the skills which have been highlighted, and if they are not trained in the basics of management.

It may also be argued that the findings illustrate a need for departmental heads to become increasingly involved in communication between academics and students which is aimed at ensuring that the expectations of students are met, and to inform academic decisions. Such a departure from the current situation would imply certain changes in the roles of departmental heads. A major requirement would be that these officials would have to be trained to act as facilitators, and that they would become an important link in the communication process between university management and the student body. While such steps may well be regarded as threatening or intrusive by many academics, there can be little doubt that they would contribute to nurturing a culture of excellence in universities.

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