Performance management in higher education: bridging the gap

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Abstract

Higher education worldwide has been undergoing transformation. Pressure is sometimes applied on universities to become more “businesslike” in their way of doing things. Within the changing paradigm of what constitutes a university, the position and role of the academic staff have also come under pressure. This paradigm shift has impacted on higher education institutions in that there is an increased emphasis on productivity, quality and accountability with regard to the key functions of a university. One of the consequences of increased “managerialism” and “corporatisation” in higher education institutions is an attempt to develop performance management/appraisal systems. In this article a critical overview is provided of performance appraisal at one higher education institution. The role of a performance management system is outlined within a holistic view of the role and functions of the institution. A theoretical framework for an individualised performance appraisal system is described and discussed critically. This is linked to an argument for a triangular approach to performance management using profiling, contracting and the use of portfolios as possible ways of individualising appraisal. A critical review of this triangular approach is provided and contextualised, using a case study of a specific faculty at one higher education institution.

INTRODUCTION

Higher education worldwide has been undergoing continuous transformation. The process has seemed to be particularly severe in the last decade with attempts to transform the “soul of a university” (Newman 2000:16–23). Not only has the sheer existence of the university as an institution been questioned, but pressures on institutions of higher learning to become more “businesslike” in their way of doing things have increasingly become the norm. Within this changing paradigm of the view of a university the position and role of the academic staff have also come under pressure.

A stronger emphasis on increased productivity, quality and accountability as a result of this approach led to attempts to develop effective performance management/appraisal systems.

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In the light of the above, an overview is given of the notion of performance appraisal in higher education, which is followed by a description of performance management in higher education as well as of a case study of the implementation of a triangular approach to performance appraisal in a specific faculty of education.

AN OVERVIEW OF PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The history of performance management/performance appraisal in higher education has not always been one of acceptance and success. Doidge, Hardwick and Wilkinson (1998) report marked disparity amongst academics regarding the process of performance appraisal.

In a pioneering report on the topic, Blackburn and Pitney (1988) discuss the employee perceptions of performance appraisal as well as the outcomes of performance appraisal in educational settings. The findings of the literature review by these authors are not encouraging. Raelin (1985) found a built-in conflict between the nature of professionals and organisational control systems (performance appraisal). Professionals believe that only other professionals (their peers) can evaluate their work. Pearce, Stevenson and Perry (1985) reported that merit pay for managers had no effect on organisational performance. Watts (1985) pointed out that the impact of a performance-contingent reward system on research and publication activity to be ineffective. Ehli (1986) found an overwhelmingly negative effect of performance management on the relationships between academic staff and decision makers. Holley, Halpin and Johnson (1986) and Omrod (1986) found performance appraisal systems to be inconsistent and ineffective. D’Heilly (1975) and Hobson, Mendel and Gibson (1981) both reported negative changes in relationships between supervisors/supervisees as well as negative attitudes towards evaluation.

Ory and Braskamp (1981) found that the information used in performance appraisal was more credible, useful and accurate for their self-improvement than for promotion purposes.

According to the findings of Landy and Farr (1980) and Jacobs, Kafry and Zedeck (1980), despite the numerous attempts to develop error-free approaches to performance appraisal, none existed in the early eighties. Love (1981) and De Nisi, Randolph and Blencoe (1983) found that peer appraisal meet acceptable standards of reliability, while various researchers (Holzbach 1978; Thornton 1980; Meyer 1980; Shapiro & Dessler 1985; Blackburn, Boberg, O’Connell & Pellino 1980) reported that self-appraisals usually exaggerate toward the positive end of the rating scale.

Also, it does not seem to matter whether the occasion (appraisal) calls for formative evaluation (for improvement) or summative evaluation (for making personnel judgements) – the thought of engaging in either type very often brings on stalling tactics and avoidance of most of people involved (Nancy Van Note
Chism, in Learning 2003:179). For most chairs and deans, performance appraisal is a necessary, but not eagerly anticipated part of the job (Licata 2000).

Some other significant findings on performance management are that low ratings can cause a drop in employee morale and commitment (Pearce & Porter 1986), and that the performance appraisal process does not have a positive impact on subsequent job performance (Pearce & Porter 1986; Dorfman, Stephan & Loveland 1986; Bernardin & Beatty 1984). Several researchers (Mount 1983; Dipboye & De Pontbriand 1981; Steel 1985; Wexley, Singh & Yukl 1973) found that ratee participation in the performance appraisal process affects satisfaction with it.

From the report by Blackburn and Pitney (1988) it is clear that performance appraisal or evaluation does not necessarily lead to improved performance. Literature points more in the direction of the possible dysfunctionality of performance appraisal, leading to reduced productivity and creating morale problems. The outcomes of performance appraisal have a significant, often negative, impact on the climate of the organisation and the commitment of its employees. Of the conditions shown to facilitate performance management systems, employee participation in the design and implementation of the appraisal system is one of the most important. Performance-based reward systems usually produce the behaviour that is desired and rewarded, but they often produce other unwanted outcomes such as an excessive focus on individual rather than collective performance, emphasis on short-term rather than long-term results, greater concern for extrinsic rather than intrinsic rewards and a negative impact on attitudes and morale.

From the literature it is clear that although performance appraisal has the intention to empower people, they often experience it negatively. The intention is thus to develop people, but the outcome is sometimes being experienced as negative. One must acknowledge and accept this disparity of the process and rather focus on continually developing the system to overcome these negative aspects. Thus, performance appraisal has an important role to play in higher education as it has to guide staff towards accomplishing the vision of the institution. It should then be done in such a way that it can overcome the mentioned limitations inherent to the process.

THE ROLE OF PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Organisations have to grow and develop, but their growth and development depend on the individuals within the organisation. Organisations cannot grow and develop if the individuals within the organisation do not grow and develop themselves (Senge 1990). Growth thus requires learning.

The institutional mission, future strategic position and strategic goals often depend on the work ethic, goals and aims, needs and expectations of the individuals who make up the institution. The institutional structure has to identify
those behaviours that should be encouraged in order to attain strategic aims and to satisfy realistic needs of staff. Disparity between a mission statement and its reward system (what it says and what it does) undercuts the effectiveness of each. The institution should reward behaviours that best support its mission (Diamond 1999:ix). These behaviours that should be encouraged are usually called Key Performance Areas (KPA’s) or Critical Performance Areas (CPA’s). They should be embedded in the job description (profiling) of each staff member.

Linking the identified behaviour of staff to be encouraged in order to attain the strategic aims of the institution to a “system for performance appraisal”, is essential. This could feed into the identification of training and development needs, barriers to performance as well as succession and career planning. This has to be aligned with remuneration and recognition. Leaders believe, amongst other things, that rewards and accountability are adequate in response to good and poor performances respectively (Bolton 2000:138). The leaders should thus be empowered to “reward” both good and poor performances.

According to Yukl (1997:157–161) correcting a subordinate’s performance deficiencies, is an important, but difficult managerial responsibility. People tend to be defensive about criticism because it threatens their self-esteem. Managers often avoid subordinates about performance, because such confrontations often degenerate into an emotional conflict that fails to deal with the underlying problem.

The performance management system has to contribute to both the effectiveness of the institution and the quality of work of all the employees. The focus thus has to be on the individual to ensure both institutional and individual effectiveness, growth and development.

From the preceding paragraphs it may be possible to deduct the following two assumptions:

● that what is good for the individual staff member is good for the institution and that an appraisal system should thus be endorsed and supported by staff members because it will help them better to accomplish their performance goals, and

● that to be effective, performance appraisal should be individualised.

With these two assumptions in mind, the factors which need to be taken into account when appraising staff can be analysed. The discipline and place of work will vary greatly.

Scholarship differs dramatically across disciplines (even within disciplines) and the frequency of output will vary. Scholarly products also vary when the place of work is compared (research universities, teaching universities, technikons). This variation is also true regarding laboratory work (natural sciences), fieldwork (applied sciences), creative work (arts) or any other possible variation. There can
even be variations within a discipline and between undergraduate and postgraduate programmes.

The service role of academic staff is seldom appraised, while in some disciplines (medicine, nursing, social work) this is a major part of the workload of an academic staff member. In an individualised approach this role can be properly accounted for.

Most academics settings are characterised by a norm of privacy. Teaching (the classroom) and research (to a lesser degree) is personal and it can be linked to individual personality and style. It thus becomes difficult to compare. Academics value autonomy (academic freedom) and performance appraisal is often seen as a threat to this autonomy. Combining privacy and autonomy as major prerequisites for an individualised performance appraisal system, academics often perceive attempts to compare and elevate some people over others, with suspicion.

An important aspect of performance appraisal is feedback, which only has positive meaning if it is individualised. Feedback has to provide new knowledge and the individual must feel the feedback information is valuable, relevant, accurate and descriptive. If the feedback has implications for development or change, it should provide advice on how to change. Feedback should also be aligned with the perceptions about the meaningfulness of their work of individual staff members (Learning 2003).

The variations in scholarly work, teaching styles and approaches, as well as the presence of a more time-consuming service role, necessitate an individualised approach to performance appraisal. It is against this background that a triangular approach to performance appraisal is suggested.

**A DESCRIPTION OF A TRIANGULAR APPROACH TO PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL: A CASE STUDY FOR BRIDGING THE GAP**

Background to case study and contextualisation

As pointed out earlier, the history of performance appraisal in higher education is not a success story. In addition, and as argued in the previous paragraph, performance appraisal is about individuals contributing to institutional effectiveness, and it needs to be individualised to be effective. The triangular approach that is suggested consists of the following three components, each of which will be described in more detail after the rationale and background of the case study is given:

- personal profiling;
- personal professional contracting; and
- personal professional portfolios.

Following this triangular approach, a performance management system has been developed and implemented since 1998 in the Faculty of Education at the University of Stellenbosch. Before 1998, all staff members of the university were
appraised by “measuring” their performance with regard to research, teaching and community service by means of a performance appraisal form. A staff member could also submit additional information and evidence. However, this was very unsatisfactory as the instrument did not focus on stimulating the growth and development of the staff. There was a general feeling of dissatisfaction throughout the university and the decision was taken to do something about it. The Faculty of Education therefore developed a performance appraisal system through a process of intense consultation, participation and collaboration of all faculty members. This was necessary to ensure that staff took ownership of the system.

In the development of this system of performance management, the faculty took into account the following premises:

- that the university environment represents a complex work situation and that the appraisal of the work of academics is correspondingly complex;
- that within the scope of each employment agreement period the focus will necessarily be on previously determined key performance areas and not on the total spectrum of a staff member’s work;
- that the strategic priorities of the university and the faculty, that may vary from time to time, determine the key performance areas;
- that performance management consists of two clear dimensions, namely performance development and performance appraisal;
- that the objective and transparent performance appraisal can only take place if it is preceded by the conclusion of an employment agreement with a staff member;
- that the processes of developing and appraising performance be conducted within one system, as the implementation of two separate systems is impractical and unrealistic;
- that general guidelines on the expectations that are set for faculty staff per post level should be available;
- that academic output is important, but that the processes should not be overlooked;
- that performance development demands constant attention;
- that performance management is essentially based on effective communication and negotiation;
- that performance management must be characterised by realistic expectations, equity, transparency and even-handedness.

Against the background of her mission and vision the university views her research, teaching and community service as the core processes that affirm the dynamic, relevant and accessible character of the institution. The objective of the University of Stellenbosch to integrate research, teaching and community service more closely, and to do it by creatively exploiting the synergy potential that is thus generated, makes the university-wide ownership of the three core processes essential.
The next challenge was to develop a process that would accommodate these views and provide evidence of peoples’ performance within this context.

**Personal profiling and post-level expectations**

One of the key elements in a performance management system is the development of a job description and simultaneously the identification of behaviour to be encouraged in order to attain the strategic aims of the institution and to satisfy the needs of staff, earlier referred to as Key Performance Areas (KPA’s) or Critical Performance Areas (CPA’s). Personal profiling includes this, but goes a few steps further. A personalised/individualised profile can consist of post level expectations, as developed in this particular case study. Any other CPA can also be negotiated for that particular post level.

In describing the post level expectations the following points were considered during the development of the system:

- The broad definitions of the post level expectations are of a cumulative nature. The post expectations for a particular post level therefore also include the expectations that exist for lower post levels.
- For the purpose of performance development and performance appraisal a professional portfolio in which details are given of teaching and research achievements, as well as of contributions to community service, may be submitted to the departmental chair for consideration.

Table 1 is an example of the profiling that is currently used for three post levels, namely Lecturer, Senior Lecturer and Professor.

**Table 1:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lecturer</th>
<th>Senior Lecturer</th>
<th>Professor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic qualifications:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Academic qualifications:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Academic qualifications:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A <em>master’s degree</em> or an <em>appropriate qualification</em> as well as experience at a (higher) education institution.</td>
<td>A <em>doctorate</em> in Education or in an appropriate field, or in <em>exceptional</em> cases, a Master’s degree in Education, supported by published research, or an equivalent professional qualification, or some other qualification supported by research publications equivalent to a doctorate.</td>
<td>The same as for associate professors, but additional academic, professional, managerial, teaching and research qualifications and/or experience are desirable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecturer</td>
<td>Senior Lecturer</td>
<td>Professor</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| **Study record:**  
Signs of *academic excellence*. Has the potential to develop further as academic. | **Study record:**  
An *academically excellent* study record. Results of the doctoral research project have been reported in accredited scholarly journals / have made an important contribution in the particular field of study. Participates authoritatively in a forum with academics who share his / her field of specialisation. | **Study record:**  
Demonstrates *excellence*. |

| **Teaching / Facilitation of learning:**  
- *Postgraduate supervision* up to master’s level.  
- Curriculum development skills  
- High quality of test and examination question papers  
- Favourable reports by external examiners  
- Capable of applying a variety of learning facilitation methods.  
- Good communication with students  
- Is able to utilise communication and information technology in teaching and learning.  
- Innovative teaching  
- Positive student feedback | **Teaching / Facilitation of learning:**  
- Outstanding *postgraduate supervision*  
- Advanced curriculum development skills  
- Facilitates learning on graduate and postgraduate levels. Utilises information technology.  
- Designs learning and ancillary material.  
- *Advises* junior lecturers and lecturers on teaching and research skills.  
- Positive student feedback  
- Is capable of applying evaluation of *student learning* at different levels. | **Teaching / Facilitation of learning**  
- Outstanding *postgraduate supervision*  
- *Integration* of teaching and research and community service  
- Indisputable *competence* and leadership in curriculum, *programme innovation and maintenance*; capable of creating quality opportunities for learning and learning evaluation as well as a culture of learning  
- *Gives guidance* to colleagues on these priorities.  
- Capable of establishing and promoting national and international *networks on excellence in teaching*.  
- Acts as moderator, both nationally and internationally.  
- *Critical reflection* and self-evaluation |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lecturer</th>
<th>Senior Lecturer</th>
<th>Professor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research:</strong>&lt;br&gt;• Should a lecturer not yet hold a doctorate, this matter must be given priority and preferably be handled as part of a greater research programme or research focus.&lt;br&gt;• Be capable of initiating and conducting research.&lt;br&gt;• Publications, conference contributions and an involvement in team research programmes are required.&lt;br&gt;• A lecturer maintains an average of 0.5 publication unit per annum.</td>
<td><strong>Research:</strong>&lt;br&gt;• <em>Projects of limited scope</em> with research focus&lt;br&gt;• <em>Sustained</em> scientific publication performance&lt;br&gt;• <em>Reports</em> results of projects. Encourages students to publish research results.&lt;br&gt;• Promotes a culture of research. Integration of research and teaching&lt;br&gt;• Maintains average of 1.0 publication unit per annum.</td>
<td><strong>Research:</strong>&lt;br&gt;• Leads <em>larger projects</em>.&lt;br&gt;• Academic leadership&lt;br&gt;• Can focus a <em>research portfolio</em> through establishing a complete research plan.&lt;br&gt;• <em>Research quality enhancement and assurance</em> in department&lt;br&gt;• Research for development of human potential&lt;br&gt;• Resources and research&lt;br&gt;• Development of <em>research capacity</em> in department&lt;br&gt;• Average of 1.33 Publishing Units per annum&lt;br&gt;• Has the <em>expertise</em> to give guidance with regard to various research aspects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community service:</strong>&lt;br&gt;• Involvement in a local community service project with a high degree of relevance to his/her teaching and/or research programme should have priority.</td>
<td><strong>Community service:</strong>&lt;br&gt;• Involved in a local community service project with a great degree of relevance to his/her teaching and/or research programme</td>
<td><strong>Community service:</strong>&lt;br&gt;• Takes the lead in local, regional or national community service projects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Professional associations:</strong>&lt;br&gt;• A lecturer participates in the activities of at least one professional association. Membership of a higher or professional teachers’ association is a recommendation.</td>
<td><strong>Professional associations</strong>&lt;br&gt;• Participates actively in professional associations; makes contributions in the form of papers, poster presentations and workshops.</td>
<td><strong>Professional associations</strong>&lt;br&gt;• Involved in activities of local and international associations.&lt;br&gt;• Involved in scholarly committees.&lt;br&gt;• Editorial involvement in professional journals&lt;br&gt;• Professional associations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecturer</td>
<td>Senior Lecturer</td>
<td>Professor</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Committee work:</strong>&lt;br&gt;A lecturer is involved in at least one departmental committee. Involvement in a Standing Committee of the Faculty Board is desirable.</td>
<td><strong>Committee work:</strong>&lt;br&gt;Serves in committees at both departmental and faculty levels.</td>
<td><strong>Committee work:</strong>&lt;br&gt;Serves in committees at departmental, faculty and university levels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leadership and managerial ability:</strong>&lt;br&gt;● Organises, can take the initiative and act as leader.&lt;br&gt;● Manages departmental administration.&lt;br&gt;● Is the departmental chairperson.&lt;br&gt;● Prompts new initiatives in the faculty.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scholarly standing:</strong>&lt;br&gt;● Reports by or information acquired from colleagues&lt;br&gt;● Postgraduate students’ evaluation attests to the expertise and scholarly standing.</td>
<td><strong>The professor’s stature is confirmed by:</strong>&lt;br&gt;● invitations to act as speaker/consultant&lt;br&gt;● consultations by other institutions&lt;br&gt;● contract work awarded&lt;br&gt;● development projects that have been prepared for other institutions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The first step in professional profiling is of major importance and has to be thoroughly considered, discussed and negotiated, as it becomes the contract between the individual staff member and the departmental chairperson. This also forms the basis of the personal professional contract. These are only post-level expectations as they provide guidelines for performance management within this specific context.

**Personal professional contracting**

The use of contracting in higher education is not new. It is also especially well-known in some professions where learning contracts are used to determine individualised learning outcomes. The personal professional growth contract meets both the assumptions made earlier, namely that both the individual and the institution have to benefit from the performance appraisal and that it has to be individualised. The contract helps the individual to find a starting-point, is based on the input and initiative of the individual, and ensures progress and communication (Gmelch & Miskin 1993:76–77). In this triangular approach the contract is based on the personal profile and in fact the profile becomes the contract. However, the contract can be extended to identify potential growth areas or output for a particular time frame and contracting to meet individually specified objectives. If contracting has to be done separately from the personal profiling, it could be done as suggested in the following example.

In the light of the post-level expectations a work agreement or contracting process is used in this case study. The instrument or form itself is utilised for three purposes, namely for concluding a work agreement, staff development discussions, and the evaluation of work performance.

In terms of post-level expectations for academic staff in the Faculty of Education the primary aim of the relevant system is to negotiate equitable and attainable work agreements with lecturers, to encourage, acknowledge and reward their academically excellent performance, to develop their academic potential and to create a productive, stimulating working environment. In the work agreement the KPA’s are: Supervision to postgraduate students; Research outputs (Publications); Current research projects; participation in national and international conferences; quality of teaching (graduate and postgraduate); community service; management and administrative responsibilities.

The written agreement may have the following format (see Figure 1 on the next page).

In concluding a WORK AGREEMENT the following steps are applicable:

**Step 1**

- A weight allocation for selected performance areas and intended outputs is established.
Figure 1: Work agreement / contract and performance appraisal form: (C1 staff)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incumbent:</th>
<th>Academic year:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title:</td>
<td>Date of appointment:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post:</td>
<td>Post number:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Departmental Chair:</td>
<td>US number:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial: Incumbent</th>
<th>Initial: Dept. Chair</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date of work agreement/contract discussion:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date of follow-up discussions:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date of appraisal discussion:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments / Notes:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- There is no minimum or maximum weight allocation per performance area, except in a few areas (eg research).
- The final weight allocation and objectives are finalised through negotiation.

Step 2
- A post agreement discussion takes place.

Step 3
- An initial work agreement form as confirmation is completed
- Additional arrangements or particular stipulations are inserted on the form.
The DEVELOPMENTAL DISCUSSION

The following steps are relevant to the developmental discussion:

Step 1
- It can be initiated at any time in the particular period.

Step 2
A developmental discussion focuses on:
- progress;
- possible obstacles or any interim amendments; and
- documentation of amendments.

Step 3
- Reconfirmation takes place.

During PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL at the end of a performance period the following steps are relevant:

Step 1
- The actual performance/output columns are completed and substantiating documentation/evidence is attached.

Step 2
- To start off with, the staff member appraises his/her own post performance.

Step 3
- The allocation of the final award/rating is discussed.
- Submission of a performance portfolio is highly desirable.

Step 4
Points on the scale are carried over and the performance column is completed.

Step 5 Recommendation
- Total score of 100
- Total score from 101 to 200
- Total score from 201 to 300
- Total score from 301 to 400
- Total score from 401 to 500
Step 6
- The document is submitted to the Faculty Committee for Performance Management.
- The allocation of points is audited.
- Adjustments are made where necessary.
- The lecturer concerned is informed accordingly.

Step 7
- Feedback is provided to the faculty with regard to possible shortcomings in the system of performance management.

Step 8
- Feedback is given to the members.
- Possible areas of development are identified with a view to increased professional performance.

Personal professional portfolios

The personal profiling and/or the personal professional (growth) contracting has to be substantiated with proper evidence of what has been achieved. The best way in which this can be ensured is to have it properly documented with a professional portfolio.


Portfolios are used for a variety of purposes. Redman (1995:12–13) identifies seven good reasons for using portfolios:

- to serve as a tool for self-development;
- to assess prior learning;
- to gain accreditation;
- to share good practice;
- to evaluate training;
- to enhance performance; and
- to change a culture.

For the purpose of the triangular approach, at least three of the above reasons are valid, namely to evaluate training, to enhance performance and to serve as a tool for self-development with the main focus on providing evidence of performance. Not only is an awareness of their own skills (or shortcomings) developed, but professionals also develop ideas on how to improve things. Having to provide evidence of what has been achieved leads to positive change by individuals.
Portfolios normally constitute five aspects that are recorded, namely experience (what was done), learning (significance for the future), demonstration (evidence or proof of what has been learnt or achieved), learning needs and learning opportunities (Redman 1995:12). For the purposes of the triangular approach, demonstration as evidence or proof of what has been achieved is the most important.

The personal professional portfolio can be aligned with the personal profile and will have to follow the structure of the key performance areas. The evidence for the portfolio can be kept in a ringbinder file with copies of examples to document evidence of what has been achieved. A portfolio on teaching could include the programme, notes, handouts, test and examination papers, assignments, student feedback and peer feedback. For the example of one CPA (research), the following evidence will have to be provided (see Table 2):

Table 2: Evidence to be provided in the portfolio regarding research as a key performance area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Assessment criteria</th>
<th>Evidence in portfolio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research projects/reports</td>
<td>At least one contracted project every three years</td>
<td>The research report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articles</td>
<td>At least two articles per year in an accredited journal</td>
<td>Page copies of the article (or evidence that it has been accepted for publication)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books</td>
<td>Co-publish with student at least one article in an accredited journal</td>
<td>Page copies of the chapter and the title page of the book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manuals/workbooks with intellectual property rights</td>
<td>At least one chapter in a book every three years</td>
<td>Page copies of the manual/workbook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper(s) at international conference(s)</td>
<td>At least one manual/workbook (for a module) per year</td>
<td>Copy of the conference programme and the paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper(s) at national conference(s)</td>
<td>At least one paper at an international conference every two years</td>
<td>Copy of the conference programme and the paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in international conferences</td>
<td>Attendance of at least one international conference every two years</td>
<td>Copy of the conference programme and a two-page report on the conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in national conferences</td>
<td>Attendance of at least one national conference every two years</td>
<td>Copy of the conference programme and a two-page report on the conference</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The third dimension of performance in this case study, therefore, is the portfolio. In this regard staff members may submit any information that will strengthen their case. However, the portfolio is still one aspect in this particular system that has to be further developed.

**CONCLUSION: ASSESSING THE SYSTEM**

Performance management and performance appraisal are part and parcel of the modern, increasingly corporatised, entrepreneurial university with its managerial mindset. Based on the theory that performance appraisal should benefit both the individual and the institution and ought to be individualised, a triangular approach combining personal profiling, personal professional contracting and personal professional portfolios, is suggested to enhance a positive outcome. This case study is evidence of an attempt to apply this approach. This system was at the time of writing, only implemented in the Faculty of Education at the University of Stellenbosch.

An evaluation of this performance appraisal system was done in 2002 in one department as part of their strategic planning. In general there is satisfaction with the fact that such a system was developed in collaboration with all staff members. There is also great appreciation for the progress that has been made in developing such a more fair system, which is not threatening. It should not be done annually but over a three-year period to ensure more development. Some are of the opinion that the follow-up discussions should be done more frequently (which can be even more time-consuming), and that a personal portfolio should also be submitted by all staff members as part of a more qualitative approach which can be extended by the work agreement/contract and a reflective report. Although not a general consensus was reached on this, a few felt that the system of making “projections” for the year, should be stopped and that they should be strictly assessed on the agreed post-level expectations.

However, some felt that they are professionals and that their professional development should not be monitored (which is problematic as the university requires an appraisal process), that the panel for the actual appraisal discussion should include more members of the department and not only the departmental chairperson (eg a peer of that person’s choice) and that feedback should be communicated to all staff at the end of that year’s process.

Further informal feedback from staff indicates that this approach recognises individual differences, interest, potential, preference, skills and level of involvement (respect for and acknowledgement of privacy and autonomy). This system furthermore acknowledges the professionalism of the academic staff member and allows for specific key performance areas to be emphasised. The apprehension is taken out of the process and provision is made for intrinsic rewards. Less damage may be caused to relationships and goodwill.

This case study clearly shows that when a performance management system is contextualised, transparent, fair, focuses on the needs of that environment, is inclusive
and allows staff members to take ownership and believe in it, and that it focuses on the development and capacity building of people, that it can have a positive outcome.

Yes, it is not perfect. The system still needs time to be developed and sustained, but it is dynamic and flexible enough to allow just that. In general people realise that this approach is an evolving process and that one will never have a perfect system or one that will satisfy everyone. Within this specific context, however, it is a flexible approach that works relatively well as it intends to develop people (a positive aspect). Changes have to be made continuously in order to accommodate emerging needs and identified problem areas.

The ultimate outcome of the triangular approach is a realistic system based on true key performance areas, assessed against valid criteria, contracted in a professional way and validated with authentic evidence. The application of this approach as described in this case study, has the potential for quality improvement of staff productivity in higher education and for bridging the gap between theory and practice.

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