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ABSTRACT

There is little empirical evidence relating to how university administrative employees view the performance appraisal process (Analoui & Fell, 2002). The aim of this paper was to investigate administrative staff perceptions and understanding of the appraisal system using AUT University (AUT) as a case study. Areas investigated included (1) how administrative staff viewed the process, (2) did it impact on their motivation, and (3) did it help or hinder career development.

The research for this paper was a partial replication of the Analoui and Fell study of appraisal systems at The University of Bradford (UK). The Analoui and Fell questionnaire and interview guide were modified to suit the AUT context. The AUT sample consisted of 543 staff members with a response rate of 20 per cent.

It was found that there was no evidence that the respondents wanted the process discontinued even though comments from those who had been through a Performance and Development Review (P&DR) and Formative Appraisal (FA) indicated a range of positive and negative experiences. In terms of performance appraisal as a motivational tool, few respondents felt that the process motivated them. There was evidence that FA was beneficial in helping with career development. The stated main purposes of AUT performance appraisal is: to assist in administration (pay increase and promotion), and developmental (training) decisions, with the latter purpose being secondary. Resulting from this study recommendations are (1) the current process should be evaluated, and (2) appraisers and appraisees should undertake training prior to an appraisal. On-going research should be undertaken to find out how administrative staff in the wider NZ university sector view the process. To follow-on from the current research, a longitudinal study should be undertaken of administrative staff reactions immediately after an appraisal. Research should also be undertaken to investigate if administrative staff associate completion of the performance appraisal process which includes the setting of goals with an increased work overload.

INTRODUCTION

Performance appraisal is a long-term feature of human society (Johnson, 1995; Vallance & Fellow, 1999; Wiese & Buckley, 1998), and is an often debatable human resource activity (Deming, 1986; Roberts, 2003; Scholtes, 1998; Simmons, 2002; Thomas & Bretz, 1994; Vallance & Fellow, 1999; Wiese & Buckley, 1998). There are those who want to do away with it, and those who view it as necessary. There are those who see it as mainly a control mechanism and even as a 'power trip' for the appraiser (Hyman, 1975; Hyman, 1994; Kelly, 1998; Heller, Pusic, Strauss, and Wilpert, 1998). The purpose of this paper is not to champion performance appraisal, but to accept that it exists, and to consider how best it can be employed to achieve benefits for the appraiser and those appraised and for the organisation as a whole. Regardless, its usage has grown over the years, both in the private and public sectors (Bowles & Coates, 1993; Harrison & Goulding, 1997; Redman, Snape, Thompson, & Yan, 2000). Broadly, it has two uses; for administrative and developmental purposes, but also as a system to meet legal requirements (Dean, Kathawala, & Wayland, 1992). Administrative applications include such activities as promotion, salary increases, demotions or terminations (Cleveland, Murphy, & Williams, 1989; Dean et al., 1992). As a developmental tool, it is used to identify training and staff development (Cleveland et al., 1989; Dean et al., 1992). Conflicts arise when a performance appraisal process is used for both purposes, and the best way to avoid this is to use the process to serve only one purpose, either for a developmental or an administrative purpose (Rudman, 2003). Regardless, contemporary research and thought shows that performance appraisal can still serve a number of valuable organisational purposes (Baker, 1988; Thomas & Bretz, 1994; Tziner & Latham, 1989; Wiese & Buckley, 1998).

STUDIES ON APPRAISEES PERCEPTION

For employees who have a strong desire to find out how well they are doing, this is the only means they can seek that feedback (Lee & Shin, 1999; Tziner & Latham, 1989). Studies undertaken from the viewpoint of appraisees have found generally

that they do not want to do away with the performance appraisal process (Analoui & Fell, 2002; Redman et al., 2000; Wilson, 2002). Johnson (1995) claimed that there is no empirical evidence performance appraisal itself is undesirable. People generally like to know how well they are doing and some have found the process beneficial (Johnson, 1995; Lee & Shin, 1999; Redman et al., 2000; Tziner & Latham, 1989; Wilson, 2002; Wilson & Nutley, 2003). On the other hand some writers and commentators see that there are dangers in the way appraisal are used, for example as a power trip for the appraiser and as a top down control mechanism (Hyman, R, 1975; Hyman, R, 1994; Kelly, 1998; Heller et al., 1998). Appraisees' dissatisfaction with the process often relates to how it was conducted. Common criticisms are that: the means of measuring performance are unclear and not agreed upon; the system is perceived to be unfair; application of the process is patchy; commitment of managers is uneven; there is a lack of continuity between appraisals; and there is little or no connection to compensation (Davies & Landa, 1999; Redman et al., 2000). Appraisees' also indicated that training and development needs were generally not identified from discussion of performance, and even though organisations claimed that their performance appraisal is used for developmental purposes, in reality, this often takes second place to administrative function (Redman et al., 2000). Furthermore, the process did not motivate employees to improving their performance (Mani, 2002; Simmons, 2002).

Even though there have been studies done focusing on employee effects relating to performance appraisal (Tziner & Latham, 1989), these are small; and this is especially true of universities' administrative staff members and their perceptions of the process (Analoui & Fell, 2002). As a consequence Analoui and Fell (2002) conducted an exploratory study at the University of Bradford in the United Kingdom (UK). Their sample consisted of administrative and secretarial staff from four departments within the university. The sample was small, 34 respondents out of 55, but Analoui and Fell believed that their study gave some insight as to how administrative staff perceived the process. This paper is to a large extent a replication of Analoui and Fell, to find out what Auckland University of Technology (AUT) administrative employees think of its performance appraisal process.

The aim, methodology and objectives of this paper are as follows:

Aim

The aim of this paper is to investigate administrative staff perception and understanding of the appraisal system.

The principal areas investigated were;

- a) how allied staff viewed the process,
- b) did it impact on their motivation, and
- c) did it help or hinder career development?

OBJECTIVE OF THIS STUDY

The aim of the study was to gain an insight into how allied staff members view the appraisal process at AUT. From the research findings, the researcher would then be able to prepare a set of recommendations for the AUT Human Resource department. The intention is that the recommendations will assist in making AUT performance appraisals more meaningful and relevant to administrative staff.

METHODOLOGY

The research for this paper to a large extent followed the Analoui and Fell (2002) study and consisted of:

1. Literature review.
2. A questionnaire containing structured closed questions.
3. Semi-structured interviews. The data was collected via audio-taped semi-structured interviews in an attempt to gauge what people were thinking.
4. The main researcher as an appraiser and as an appraisee was also able to draw on her own experiences, and as such the researcher herself became a research instrument.
5. A review of AUT policies, procedures and reports.

The Analoui and Fell questionnaire and interview guide were modified to suit AUT. The survey sample consisted of 543 staff members. This group was full-time or proportional or employed greater than 0.3 months for contract of 12 months or more, and who have no staff reporting to them. The return rate for the survey was 20 % (107 responses). With a sample response of 107, and at a 95 per cent confidence level then the results are accurate within a range of ± 7.7 % (Remenyi, Williams, Money, & Swartz, 1998).

FINDINGS

Profile of the respondents at AUT

Of the 107 respondents, the majority, almost three quarters, 78 (73%), did not have staff reports. The remainder had staff reporting to them, but it was decided to include these respondents to incorporate their view point. Almost two thirds, 60 (56%) respondents, indicated that they had been at AUT over two years, and a third of these have worked for over five years. The respondents were categorised into either from the faculties or the centre, and more than half of the respondents, 64 (60%), were from the centralised administration department.

The broader research findings were derived from questions concerning the following issues and questions:

1. Have you been through a form of appraisal?
2. Are you preparing for an appraisal?
3. Awareness of the University policies and procedures.
4. Documentation for the appraisal process.
5. Choice of appraiser.
6. Appraisal training.
7. 360-degree feedback.
8. Formulation of future plans.
9. Impact on motivation, performance and career development.
10. Post-appraisal expectations.
11. AUT policies and procedures

The relevant findings were as follows:

1. Have you been through a form of appraisal?

This section presents findings on whether respondents had gone through a Performance and Development Review (P&DR) and/or a Formative Appraisal for Individual Practice (FA).

					Total
					n=
		Yes		No	
		n=	%	n=	%
OVERALL		44	43%	59	57%
Length of service	1 to 2 Yrs	11	50%	11	50%
	2.1 to 5 Yrs	19	49%	20	51%
	Above 5 Yrs	11	58%	8	42%
Work location	Faculty	18	51%	17	49%
	Centre	25	40%	37	60%

Table 1: Have Staff Been through a Performance & Development Review (P&DR)

As shown in Table 1, 103 respondents answered the question (yes or no) but for this question, and subsequent questions tabled below, not all indicated length of service or work location. 59 (57%), indicated that they had not been through a P&DR. For those respondents who had been at AUT for one to two years and two to five years, half and half indicated that they either had been or had not been through a P&DR. However, once over five years, just slightly over half, 11 (58%), indicated they had been through a P&DR. It is important to note that AUT policy is that Staff must apply for promotion when they want to be promoted from Level 1 to 2, or Level 2 to 3; or if they were at the top of their salary band for a period of twelve months they were eligible to apply for an annual re-earnable salary supplement. Carrying out a P&DR was a major part of the promotion process.

Of the ten volunteers interviewed, five had been through some form of appraisal for promotion or one-off re-earnable salary supplement. From the interviews, it seemed that each work location within the university had adopted different procedures, although the underlying practice was to use the Position Description as a means to measure performance. From the interviews only two respondents out of the five who had experienced a review indicated their appraisal

process followed the AUT procedures. The different practices in conducting the processes could be as stated by the respondents, “I guess a lot of people are just too busy to have to go through a process which can be quite a long process and paperwork”; “Maybe I felt that my boss wasn’t really aware of the process and it should have been, but I can’t speak for other people. I got the feeling that with a lot of senior staff who have staff reporting to them, because they are so busy, they don’t get time to read through the policy and the internal procedures for appraisal.”; “I think every manager has their own way of appraising their employees depending on which area they are in.”. One of the respondents interviewed was not in favour of P&DR and said “I think it should (be used) only (when) needed. I think, if management is working properly, they should be looking for people doing a good job. And if people feel that they are being overlooked, then they should go through the process. I haven’t really given it a great deal of thought, but it always strike(s) me as strange that people have to beg for a pay rise. The more busy you are, the less time you have for begging.”

					Total
					n=
		Yes		No	
		n=	%	n=	%
OVERALL		30	38%	48	62%
Length of service	1 to 2 Yrs	5		12	
	2.1 to 5 Yrs	7		17	
	Above 5 Yrs	8		5	
Work location	Faculty	9	35%	17	65%
	Centre	11	27%	30	73%

Table 2 Have Staff Been through a Formative Appraisal for Individual Practice (FA)

* Not all respondents indicated length of service or work location.

When asked if respondents had been through a Formative Appraisal (FA) 78 responded, and two-thirds, 48 (62%) indicated that they have not been through one. Like P&DR, those who had been at AUT above five years were more likely to have gone through the process. See Table 2 for details.

Only one of the 10 interviewed went through a form of FA. The feedback gathered was used for career development and also for formulating the Individual Development Plan (IDP) which was what the policy intended. However, this respondent had found the process difficult and indicated little support or interest from the manager to develop the IDP.

2. Awareness of the university policies and procedures

Findings in this section outline respondents' awareness of the policies on P&DR and FA.

					Total
		Yes		No	n=
		n=	%	n=	%
OVERALL		74	70%	31	30%
Length of service	1 to 2 Yrs	14	58%	10	42%
	2.1 to 5 Yrs	31	79%	8	21%
	Above 5 Yrs	16	80%	4	20%
Work location	Faculty	28	78%	8	22%
	Centre	41	65%	22	35%

Table 3 Awareness appraisal policies & procedures

* Not all respondents indicated length of service or work location.

As shown in Table 3, 105 responded to this question. Almost three quarters of respondents, 74 (70%), indicated that they were aware of both AUT appraisal policies and procedures; 31 (30%), were not aware of the policies and procedures.

Of the 24 who had only been at AUT one to two years, just over half, 14 (58%), indicated that they were aware of the policies and procedures. It was interesting to note that the awareness was slightly over three quarters once the respondents had been at AUT over two years and one month; 31 (79%), for two to five years, and 16 (80%), for above five years.

Aware of P&DR					Total
	Yes		No		n=
	n=	%	n=	%	
OVERALL	64	91%	6	9%	70
Aware of FA					Total
	Yes		No		n=
	n=	%	n=	%	
OVERALL	46	68%	22	32%	68

Table 4: Staff Awareness of P&DR and FA

In Table 4, when asked if they were aware of the specific appraisal policies and procedures, the majority of respondents were aware of P&DR, 64 (91%), and well over half, 46 (68%), were aware of FA. The number of respondents to this question was 70 for P&DR, and 68 for FA.

However, from the interview group seven out of ten indicated that they were aware of the policies and procedures for P&DR, and six for FA. When probed, three gave a brief description of P&DR. One respondent described it as “one is general, the other a review of performance not involving money’. Another respondent stated that “one is for appraisal; the other for promotion.” The third respondent described P&DR as “getting feedback from colleagues who you work with and submitting that feedback to your boss and basically filling in a questionnaire type form with your manager who you report to”.

3. 360-degree feedback

Findings in this section outline respondents’ views on multi-raters feedback and the groups they felt should participate in the feedback process.

360 degree feedback is a term commonly used for when appraisal is received not only from those to whom you report, but also includes feedback from those who report to you and can include feedback from other colleagues and clients.

							Total
	Yes		No		Do not Know		n=
	n=	%	n=	%	n=	%	
OVERALL	39	72%	10	19%	5	9%	54
Work location Faculty	15	71%	5	24%	1	5%	21
Centre	23	74%	4	13%	4	13%	31

Table 5: Perception of Benefits in including opinions of others

* Not all respondents indicated length of service or work location.

As shown in Table 5, when asked if respondents thought it would be of benefit to their appraisal if they included the opinions of others beside their manager, 54 responded and almost three quarters, 39 (72%), indicated “Yes”. Five (9%) indicated that they did not know if it would be of benefit.

	Count	% of responses	% of cases
Colleagues to be included for P&DR	37	46	100
Students to be included for P&DR	19	24	51.4
Clients to be included for P&DR	19	24	51.4
Others to be included for P&DR	5	6	13.5
Total responses	80	100.0	216.2

Table 6: Group(s) to be included for Performance and Development Review

When asked who should be included when undertaking their P&DR, almost half, 37 (46%), indicated colleagues and just on one quarter indicated students, 19 (24%), and clients, 19 (24%) should be involved in providing feedback. See Table 6 for details.

	Count	% of responses	% of cases
Colleagues to be included for FA	22	51	95.7
Students to be included for FA	12	28	52.2
Clients to be included for FA	9	21	39.1
Total responses	43	100.0	187.0

Table 7: Group(s) to be included for Formative Appraisal of Individual Practice

In terms of who should be included when undertaking their FA, just slightly over half 22 (51%) indicated colleagues. Slightly over one quarter, 12 (28%),

indicated students should be included, and nine respondents (21%) indicated clients. See Table 7 for details.

The majority of those interviewed agreed that it was beneficial to include the opinion of others. However, two respondents interviewed remarked that if there was a conflict between the appraiser and appraisee, this might pose a problem, especially if they had to continue to work closely and the feedback had been negative, or that the feedback was used against the appraisee. So it was even more important for the appraisers to give constructive feedback on performance rather than be emotive, and that they had to be aware that when appraisees received negative feedback, it could be a negative experience.

4. Formulation of future plans

Findings in this section outline respondents' view on the usage of appraisal for career development.

						Total
		Yes		No		n=
		n=	%	n=	%	
OVERALL		19	66%	10	34%	29
Work location	Faculty	4	40%	6	60%	10
	Centre	14	78%	4	22%	18

Table 8: Feedback of FA was for IDP

Part of the FA process was to seek feedback of past work performance with the objectives of affirming good practice and of identifying any areas and action for improvement, and that the feedback was to be used in the development of the Individual Development Plan (IDP). When respondents were asked whether the feedback from the FA process was used to prepare for their IDP, 19 (66%), indicated "Yes" out of the 29 who responded. See Table 8 for details.

						Total
		Yes		No		n=
		n=	%	n=	%	
OVERALL		26	87%	4	13%	30
Work location	Faculty	7	70%	3	30%	10
	Centre	18	95%	1	5%	19
		Satisfaction of the IDP				Total
		Yes		No		n=
		n=	%	n=	%	
OVERALL		24	86%	4	14%	28
Work location	Faculty	6	67%	3	33%	9
	Centre	17	94%	1	6%	18

Table 9: IDP was jointly agreed

As shown in Table 9, majority of respondents, 26 (87%), indicated that an IDP was jointly agreed, and 24 (86%), were satisfied with their IDP.

Of the ten staff interviewed, all but one felt that the formulation of an IDP was a good idea for career development. One respondent remarked that the outcome of the process was the identification of a different career path and for her a positive result. Workshops that would assist her in developing skills for her new career path were agreed upon with her manager, and she was able to attend all these workshops. Another respondent agreed that a FA could assist in career development but she felt for her the whole process of writing out an IDP a waste of time. She remarked that nothing ever comes out of her IDP and she felt that she was unable to choose her own career path. She felt that if her manager thought that they know what was best for her, then they should complete the IDP, and she added that “I’ve flagged it, you know, so I haven’t pursued except for one thing I am pursuing”

5. Impact of appraisal on motivation, performance and career development

Findings in this section outline respondents' view on the impact of appraisal on their motivation to work and on their career development.

					FA was likely to benefit career development			
	Total n=	Agree %	Disagree %	Mean	Total n=	Agree %	Disagree %	Mean
OVERALL	41	46	39	4.15	30	63	23	4.70
Current location								
Faculty	16	50	38	4.19	10	40	40	3.80
Centre	25	44	40	4.12	18	78	11	5.22

Table 10: P&DR enhanced motivation to work

When asked if respondents felt that the P&DR processed enhanced their motivation to work, just under half (46%) of the 41 who responded indicated they agreed and 39% disagreed. (See Table 10 for details.) Of those interviewed, half indicated that the P&DR increased their motivation to perform, two adding that this was more so if there was monetary rewards and one remarking only if it was good feedback.

Almost two thirds (63%) of the 30 who responded indicated that they believed that FA would be beneficial to their career development. As stated earlier, one respondent was very positive with the outcome of her FA, as it resulted in a new career path.

Of the ten interviewed, two indicated that conducting any form of appraisal has an impact on their performance such as putting more diligence and thought into their work and one stating that "It's nice to get positive feedback, and it's good to know that people respect what you are doing and notice the changes that you made. And it makes you want to keep doing it as well." Four indicated that that the appraisal had no impact on their performance as the general feeling was that they were performing

their best already. Some comments (below) from respondents present a mixed picture to whether the P&DR and FA did have an effect on job performance.

Some of the comments on whether respondents felt the P&DR had a negative or positive effect on their job performance:

- *Positive because manager does support staff, but they are not consistent with everyone, ie some get more opportunities than others which does affect overall perception. Job performance still at a high level, but dissatisfaction on my part with how wording has been interpreted.*
- *Negative, the process was long and tedious. My manager at the time was not informed about the process, so I sought help from HR. Did not enjoy this.*
- *Strongly negative for reasons as above (was shown all comments, positive and negative which had a damaging effect on my self confidence and had to go to counselling to regain my confidence), but in retrospect I think it had helped me to improve my performance.*
- *Positive on my own work ethic, it made me work harder. Negative - top level management tried to give me a load of extra work above and beyond my position description justifying that it should do the extra because I was promoted. My understanding is that a promo/grading are not given for future work.*

Some of the comments on whether respondents felt the FA had a negative or positive effect on their job performance:

- *The appraisal had a very negative effect. I was working and performing out of fear. Don't know if I will trust another one or want to have one.*
- *Positive although I'm trained to use reflective practice anyway so I've quite hands on myself. Sometimes I'm inclined to take criticism to heart which knocks myself esteem and takes me a while to regain my confidence in my work.*
- *In general we have good ongoing feedback about performance. Preparing an IDP certainly concentrates the mind on how one might learn new skills.*
- *So excited at the time with the overwhelming feedback yet it seemed to be completely overlooked by the people who could have done something with it.*

6. Post-appraisal expectations

Findings in this section outline respondents' satisfaction with P&DR and FA.

	Opportunity to put forward concerns					Competency of the appraiser					Constructive feedback given					Quality feedback was given					Adequate time was given for P&DR				
	Total	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	%	Mean	Total	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	%	Mean	Total	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	%	Mean	Total	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	%	Mean	Total	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	%	Mean
OVERALL	34	71	21	03	5.	34	74	18	18	5.	35	63	31	77	4.	35	69	17	09	5.	35	60	23		4.91
Current location																									
Faculty	16	63	25	94	4.	16	69	19	19	5.	17	41	47	12	4.	17	53	29	47	4.	17	65	24		5.00
Centre	18	78	17	11	5.	18	78	17	17	5.	18	83	17	39	5.	18	83	6	67	5.	18	56	22		4.83

Table 11: Satisfaction with P&DR

Of the 34 who responded to whether there was opportunity to put forward concerns, 71% were satisfied. Again, 34 responded to the question on appraiser's competency, and 74% were satisfied. 63% of the 35 respondents were satisfied that they were given constructive feedback on their past performance; 69% of the 35 respondents were satisfied with the quality of feedback received; and 60% of the 35 respondents were satisfied that adequate time was given to prepare them for their appraisal. See Table 11 for details. It was interesting to note that even though respondents were generally satisfied with their appraiser's competency, in an earlier finding over two thirds of respondents did not know if their appraisers had been for training.

	Constructive feedback given - FA				Quality feedback was given					
	Total	n=	Satisfied %	Dissatisfied %	Mean	Total	n=	Satisfied %	Dissatisfied %	Mean
OVERALL	30	57	20	4.50	29	59	21	4.48		
Current location										
Faculty	11	73	18	4.91	11	82	18	5.00		
Centre	18	44	22	4.22	17	41	24	4.12		

Table 12: Satisfaction with FA

Like P&DR, respondents from those who had gone through a FA were generally satisfied that they were given constructive feedback on their past performance, 57% of the 30 respondents, and with the quality of feedback received, 59% of the 29 respondents. See Table 12 for details.

Four of the ten respondents interviewed indicated they were happy with the outcome of their appraisal. One of the four remarked that it was frustrating that the process had to be carried out each year for the re-earnable salary supplement, and suggested that an easier form or process should be created for staff going through the second round of re-earnable salary supplement. Two of the four who had a positive outcome remarked that they have a good relationship with their manager and who were supportive of them going through the process (Simmons, 2003). This suggests that the relationship between the manager and employee could “make” or “break” the process. As one respondent commented “I don’t want it to be used against people. It’s supposed to be used for both employer and employee and I’m not sure that that happens. I don’t think it is systematic enough, for a start. The promotion process is very complex, and probably puts people off. I look at it, and I’ve been putting it off too. I am a capable person. I like that it links with the incremental progressing, but then, here it’s only 3 years, then you have to do a promotion or something else.”

7. Auckland University of Technology Policies and Procedures

AUT Performance and Development Review (P&DR) provides an opportunity to (1) “to review past work performance base on previously agreed performance expectations” (for administrative purpose – decisions on pay) and also (2) discuss “development activities based on current performance, future career aspirations and performance plans” (to serve developmental purpose) (Auckland University of Technology, 2003). It is not to be an opportunity for managers to discuss unsatisfactory performance nor for disciplinary purposes.

It is the manager’s responsibility to plan the activities, provide feedback and finalise documentation for the P&DR process. However, the employee needs to be fully involved in the pre-P&DR activities and they are responsible to keep their manager informed of their performance and aspirations. The feedback instruments that AUT has adopted are a combination of 360-degree feedback and the graphic rating scales.

The position description of the employee forms the basis for a discussion on performance and a P&DR form must be used. The P&DR process is intended to be an annual event carried out on the employee’s anniversary date of starting in the role; however, giving and receiving feedback should be an on-going activity. If an employee moved to another role within AUT, the (current) manager is expected to have completed a P&DR within the past six months.

Other policies and procedures that relate to P&DR include:

(1) Allied Staff Grading and Promotion (AUT, 2004.) When staff members want to be considered for promotion, accelerated salary increment or one-off re-earnable salary supplement, they must have a recent P&DR.

(2) Policy on Staff Development. (AUT, 2003)
The policy recommends that all staff members carry out a FA of individual practice when developing their IDP. The purpose being to affirm good practices and to identify areas and actions for improvement. The policy encourages staff to reflect on

feedback received and to critically analyse their actions with the goal of improving performance.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The discussions followed the sequence of the findings. Therefore in the conclusion, these provided answers to the areas investigated (set out in the aims), namely:

1. How allied staff viewed the process,
2. Did it impact on their motivation, and
3. Did it help or hinder career development.

Discussion

1. Have you been through a form of appraisal?

The findings indicate that once allied staff members had been at AUT above 2 years, 30 staff of the 103 respondents had been through a P&DR (Table 1); for FA, 12 staff out of the 78 respondents (Table 2). For P&DR, the increased numbers of being reviewed among those with 2 years or more service could be attributed to the Allied Staff Salary Grading and Promotion Policy at AUT. As stated earlier (Staff must apply for promotion when they want to be promoted from Level 1 to 2, or Level 2 to 3; or if they were at the top of their salary band for a period of twelve months they were eligible to apply for an annual re-earnable salary supplement. Carrying out a P&DR was a major part of the process.) One would expect therefore that the number of respondents saying “Yes” to be much higher than it was especially of those staff who had been at AUT over five years (Table 2). However, as one respondent pointed out, their way of getting promotion was to change jobs within the university and therefore they avoided having to undertake an appraisal. This gave an indication that managers were not fully adopting the P&DR procedures, further supported by comments made during the interviews such as “I think every manager have their own way of appraising their employees depending on which area they are in”.

The limited application of the AUT procedures possibly indicated the managers’ lack of commitment to the process, mainly because there were no consequences to them when this was not followed (Redman et al., 2000; Wilson &

Western, 2001), and especially since the process was considered long winded involving a large amount of paperwork in turn making it a time consuming exercise. It was most likely that in many cases the process was cut short to ensure that the HR requirements were met. On the other hand it might simply be that managers did not have the necessary skills to conduct an appraisal process especially since they were put in the position of judging and acting on their judgements. However, it would be difficult to generalise that the managers at AUT did implement the appraisal process as designed, as there was not a specific question that relates to this in the questionnaire. Limited application of the appraisal process was also evident in the Analoui and Fell (2002) study, even though they found that there was generally a positive feeling to top management commitment and a recognition that procedures were in place.

Analoui and Fell (ibid) found that the main reason why the appraisal scheme was not conducted in the two departments was due to time constraints. Time seemed to be the contributing factor to why some managers did not fully adhere to the AUT procedures. Evidence from the interviews indicated that some staff members were advised to undertake a FA instead of a P&DR when applying for accelerated salary increment, promotion or one-off salary supplement to save time (thereby cutting short the process as outlined earlier). This could explain the increase in undertaking FA after staff had been at AUT over five years. There was also a sense that staff members and their managers were confused between the P&DR and FA processes.

There was some indication that the success of the appraisal was dependent on the quality of the personal relationship between employee and manager, that if there was a conflict the possibility of a negative outcome was more likely (Simmons, 2003). One respondent hoped that the appraisal process would not to be used against people. Another respondent said it could result in a power wedge if not done properly, and could be used as a power trip for the manager. The last two comments gave an indication of a fear that performance appraisal was seen as a tool to control employees at the expense of developing staff, and as pointed to earlier in the literature, empirical studies have found that this fear was quite well founded (Edmonstone, 1996). Furthermore, other comments by respondents to our survey

suggested that the performance appraisal was in some instances used for political purposes, whereby the process was distorted and manipulated to ensure the preferred outcome was achieved for the manager and AUT (Longenecker, Sims, & Gioia, 1987). An example, being that the process was dragged out to delay a pay rise. This could have been that the manager was attempting to send a message to the appraisee that they need to perform to a higher standard or it could have been due to budgetary (financial) reasons.

2. Awareness of the University policies and procedures

It is worth repeating that in the departments where appraisal was carried out, Analoui and Fell found that all of the respondents indicated awareness of the policies and procedures, but when probed responses revealed that their knowledge was very limited. In the departments that did not carry out the appraisal, the majority of the respondents were not aware of the processes. They concluded that the policies and procedures were not well disseminated at the University of Bradford, even though information on the procedures was available during the appraisal training.

It would appear that AUT policies and procedures on appraisal were well disseminated as 70% out of 105 respondents indicated that they were aware of the policies and procedures for both P&DR and FA. However, from interviews it was difficult to determine the extent of their awareness of the policies and procedures. It was interesting to note that the awareness to both P&DR and FA policies and procedures was slightly higher once the respondents have been at the university over two years. As stated earlier, a possible explanation would be due to where staff members were placed on the Allied Staff salary scale; it was likely that in most cases these staff had reached the top of their salary scale and they would then have to apply for promotion or an accelerated salary increment (this forms part of the Performance and Development Review process). Another possible reason was that as they become more familiar with AUT processes and procedures, they would eventually come across the appraisal policies through their own initiative or networking regardless of whether they were going for promotion or not. All the relevant policies and procedures were available on the AUT Intranet accessible by all staff. Staff members also had access to a workshop on how to apply for promotion

that covers conducting an appraisal. However, as stated in the findings, it was difficult to ascertain the depth of respondent's knowledge of the policies and procedures, because when probed during the interviews, only a small handful were able to describe simply what the two appraisals were. Furthermore, there was no specific question to investigate whether employees felt the appraisal process was in line with AUT stated objectives; this alignment could assist in employees' development and career planning and even increase their motivation, commitment and job satisfaction (Fletcher, 1993; Wiese & Buckley, 1998; Wilson & Western, 2001; Wright, 2002). But it would be fair to say that it would seem staff members' exposure to the policies and procedures were either by necessity or chance rather than on the university being pro-active in ensuring all were inducted to the appropriate documentation and process.

3. 360-degree feedback

Surprisingly, there were respondents from the Analoui and Fell (2002) study who felt that there was no benefit to be gained from including feedback from peers, students and external parties. However, respondents felt peer assessment would give "a different perception of skills, work performance and specific areas that could be improved on".

At AUT, 39 respondents felt it was beneficial to include the opinions of others besides their manager. As also found by Fletcher and Bailey (2003) it was seen as being fairer and more accurate, expanding on the manager's views, seen as an empowering tool, increases self-awareness and could have powerful development and learning potential. Interestingly, in a study conducted by Taylor and O'Driscoll of NZ organisations, they found that most had the appraisee's manager as the main contributor and peers and customers did not have a formal role. 360-degree feedback was designed for managers to focus on their development, however, its adoption has been spreading because of its perceived benefits, the main one being that those who worked closely with the employee have the opportunity to appraise them, and that the feedback would be "balanced" as the feedback was supposedly from a cross section of people who worked closely with the appraisee and had a good knowledge of their work.

Two respondents from the AUT study who were interviewed remarked that if there was a conflict between the appraisers and appraisee, this was more likely to pose a problem, especially if they had to continue working closely and the feedback had been negative, or that this feedback was used against the appraisee, or if the employee felt that the appraisers were not qualified to render an opinion (Arnold & Pulich, 2003). Furthermore, the relationship between the employee and manager may also determine the outcome of the process whereby, a good relationship is more likely to result in a positive outcome (Simmons, 2003). One respondent interviewed saw it as a motivational tool, especially if someone higher in senior management was saying that they were performing well. So it was important for the appraisers to give constructive feedback on performance rather than be emotive, and be aware the negative effect of someone receiving negative feedback. Effort must be made by management to ensure that anyone who was planning to participate in appraising fellow colleagues should be encouraged to go through training. The manager overseeing the appraisal process must also ensure that the appraisers have an adequate sample of the employee's performance to make an informed assessment of the performance (Arnold & Pulich, 2003).

From the findings, the group "colleagues" was the one where most of the respondents indicated that they wanted included as part of the 360-degree feedback. Feedback from clients including students were rated lower and this could mean either that the respondents did not deal with clients or that they felt that their contact with clients or students were so random that this group should not be included.

Another issue that managers needed to be aware of in a multi-cultural organisation such as AUT is the influence of culture and gender, as these factors might also have contributed to why over half of the respondents had not been through an appraisal process. The manager needs to be aware that a person's cultural background may influence their performance appraisal experience especially when 360-degree feedback was used (Fletcher, 2001; Vallance & Fellow, 1999). However for this study culture or gender was not part of the factors investigated.

4. Formulation of future plans

Analoui and Fell found it encouraging that a joint plan for future action with the aim of improving performance was agreed upon in the departments that did carry out appraisal, as part of the appraisal process was to serve this purpose. The departments that did not carry out appraisal perceived that the formulation of the plan could be of benefit to them. Their study revealed that the training and development aspects of actions were highly valued, but there was evidence that support could be patchy. The same applied to the AUT study.

The second focus of the AUT P&DR was on (career) development and the survey revealed that 19 of the 29 respondents indicated that feedback from the FA process was used to prepare for their IDP. This was encouraging, as the IDP provided a framework of focus and direction for individual development and a part of the system to assist in setting and achieving personal goals which contributed to the overall success of AUT. However, it was important that whatever development activities were agreed upon that these be followed through, or else the process would be seen as a waste of time and the employees would become disillusioned with the whole system and justifiably so (Harrison & Goulding, 1997; Wright, 2001). Sadly, like the Analoui and Fell study, there was evidence that activities agreed upon were not carried through at AUT. This implied apathy on the part of the manager towards the IDP (Wilson & Western, 2001) which ultimately could impact on employees motivation, performance and career development. A comment such as “I felt like we were going through the paces for appearances sake. I did not feel that I was going in any particular direction.” suggested that the lack of coherent planning for employee career development and that it as another task completed (Bozionelos, 2001; Wilson & Western, 2001).

5. Impact of appraisal on motivation, performance and career development **Motivation**

Analoui and Fell found that the majority of their respondents (80%) from the departments that undertook the appraisal scheme believed that to some degree appraisal enhanced their motivation. Those that had not had an appraisal anticipated that the process would increase their motivation.

At AUT there were 41 respondents for the question does P&DR enhance motivation, of these 41 46% agreed and 39% disagreed. It was likely that respondents felt that they were motivated at work already, and that the appraisal process did not necessary increase their motivation and many were self-motivated (Mani, 2002). Although money was important to employees and did motivate staff, self-motivation and intrinsic rewards would have a longer term effect on motivation. However, managers need to be aware that self-motivation would decline if employees' pay did not increase, as an increase in pay is a symbol of recognition (for outstanding performance) (Mani, 2002; Wright, 2001; Wright, 2002; Rudman, 2003)

On the other hand, if respondents felt that they were not being assessed fairly or that there was a low level of trust between them and their manager, and of the process generally, the appraisal definitely would not motivate staff any further (Dean et al., 1992). If the appraisal was to be used as a motivational tool then the process needs to be explicitly shown to employees how it was linked to AUT goals and objectives (Wright, 2002), and also to the individual employee's goals (Nelson, 2000). This could also improve performance, whereby employees would put in more diligence and thought into their work, because they could see how their performances have assisted AUT in achieving its goals. Also it would be "an excellent foundation for ongoing communication and employee development" (Nelson, 2000). From the present study it was not possible to determine if respondents felt the appraisal process was linked to AUT goals and objectives.

PERFORMANCE

The majority of the respondents (86%) from the Analoui and Fell study anticipated a positive effect on their performance. From the AUT study, there were mixed reactions to whether P&DR and FA had an effect (either positive or negative) on job performance. If the performance appraisal was to be used to improve performance, it must focus on performance (by having frequent appraisals), it must have clear criteria to be used to measure performance and these must be agreed upon by both parties, and desired performance must be rewarded appropriately and in a timely

fashion. Our research indicates that AUT could then expect to receive higher levels of performance (Pettijohn, Pettijohn, & Taylor, 1999).

During the interviews when volunteers were asked about the effect of the P&DR and FA on their job performance, and as reported in the findings, only two indicated it made them put more diligence and thought into their work. This was congruent with a study undertaken by Watson Wyatt Worldwide in 1997 (Davies & Landa, 1999) where it was concluded that only a third of their respondents felt the appraisal assisted them in improving their performance. This was due to the link between appraisal and pay which was generally negatively viewed as people perceived the process as stressful for very little reward, especially if the pay decisions were done well after the process or that the decisions and/or process was not based on performance. However, practitioners need to be aware that performance could also be affected by decisions made by others, resource allocations and system-level factors beyond the employee's control. These factors could include inadequate equipment, lack of time and poor task preparation (Bacal, 1999; Carson, Cardy, & Dobbins, 1991).

CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Performance appraisals when used for developmental purposes can assist organisations in retaining staff, and may even influence employees' attitudes. Managers should use the process to assist employees to progress through their careers by setting (career) goals. The Analoui and Fell study found that most respondents who had been through an appraisal felt it had assisted their career development. At AUT two thirds of the 30 respondents (63%) indicated that a FA was beneficial to their career development. During an interview a respondent was very positive with the outcome of her FA, as it pointed her towards a new career path involving discussing training needs and career goals. Practitioners need to be aware of a possible dilemma, where employees might interpret the discussion of training needs as identifying weaknesses and (they perceive) that these could be used against them in such ways as not getting the promotion, or that they might be

perceived as weak and persistently labelled as such (Wilson, 2002). Managers need to be aware of the possible interpretation of the discussion and that they need to ensure the process be positive and supportive. On a positive note developmental feedback would signal to employees their value to AUT or their future in it, resulting in a positive affect associated with the feedback (Boswell & Boudreau, 2000).

6. *Post-appraisal expectations*

The Analoui and Fell study found that 80% of their respondents who had been through an appraisal were positive on their feelings immediately after the process. Respondents from departments that had not been through the appraisal were eager to undertake the process. Almost all the respondents from the Analoui and Fell study felt that their appraisers were competent.

At AUT, it was encouraging to note that 71% of the 34 respondents felt they had the opportunity to put forward concerns they had about the P&DR. However, there were mixed feelings immediately after the process. There were those who were happy with the outcome of their appraisal citing support and encouragement from their managers, but a number had a negative experience. For one it eroded their self-confidence whereby they needed counselling to regain their confidence. Others felt positive initially but were discouraged when the rewards (in the form of extra responsibilities) did not materialise. A few commented that they were relieved when the process was finally over (implying that the experience was a negative one). There were comments indicating how the process had served political motives, and that the process was seen as long-winded and rigid for others.

Even though at least half of the respondents felt that constructive and quality feedback were given (for both P&DR and FA), managers need to be aware that feedback can provide direction and boost confidence (Redman et al., 2000). Negative feedback needs to be handled with care.

7. *AUT Policies and Procedures*

In the Analoui and Fell study, staff development was one of the main focuses of the appraisal, and to achieve this the University of Bradford was committed to “creating

an equitable, developmental and motivating working environment which values and empowers staff at all levels". From the AUT study it would be fair to suggest that its appraisal process was predominantly being used to make decisions on administrative matters regarding pay and promotion, albeit that it also served a developmental purpose, to identify training and development for staff, the FA (within-individuals). It would seem therefore that the AUT performance appraisal process was used to serve multiple purposes as suggested by Cleveland, et al., (1989), McGregor (1972), Dean, et al., (1992).

There were some indications from respondents who were confused between the two processes thinking they were both serving the same purpose – to assist in making administrative decisions. This is not surprising, especially since the P&DR had two focuses; to review past performance to assist in administrative decisions, and also to plan development activities. This gave the impression that the feedback was then used to write up their development plans, the IDP. Was P&DR then in effect FA? However, as explained earlier, a third party was required to collect feedback for the P&DR process, whilst for FA the employee was responsible for this. It was not surprising that the technicality of the process could have caused the confusion among staff. There were benefits in having two processes to serve administrative and developmental decisions, such as the P&DR and FA. The main one being that if the FA was conducted regularly, strengths and weaknesses would be identified, thereby improvements could be undertaken. When the time arrived to undertake a P&DR, it would be expected that this be a positive experience.

Besides serving administrative and developmental purposes, it would be correct to suggest that the P&DR was also undertaken to meet legal requirements and to document or justify personnel decisions (documentation). AUT is an Equal Employment Opportunity organisation (EEO), and is bound by legislation surrounding this and the need to comply with other government legislation and regulations in relation to Human Resources especially the Human Rights Act 1993.

Even though the P&DR was not to be used to discuss unsatisfactory performance nor to discipline staff, comments from respondents suggested otherwise. This might be attributed to the managers' lack of skill in undertaking a

P&DR and also possibly their lack of knowledge of the policies and guidelines. On the other hand, managers might be actually purposely doing so as they saw the process as an opportunity to control their staff (Edmonstone, 1996; Spinks, Wells, & Meche, 1999). It was positive to find that where FA was conducted that the feedback gathered had been used to draw up an IDP and that most of the respondents were happy with the activities agreed. This showed that for those who undertook FA, it was being used as intended; but, there needs to be better communication of the use of FA to ensure this process was conducted annually to ultimately achieve AUT Staff Development policy, to affirm good practices and identify weaknesses.

CONCLUSIONS

It would appear that to a certain degree the AUT performance appraisal system is operating as intended in the policy, namely to review past performance and to plan for development activities. While there were criticisms of the various aspects of the process, overall, there was no evidence that respondents want the process discontinued. Experiences of those who had been through a P&DR and FA were mixed. Some had found the process positive citing that they felt they were supported by their managers, acknowledgement by management of their good work, had seen improved business relationships and communications, identified a new career path/opportunities and enhanced their motivation to work. There were others who had a negative experience and outcome: one lost confidence and had to be counselled, others experiencing the lack of commitment from management to follow through agreed developmental activities or agreed increased responsibilities, evidence of politics whereby the process was used against them, and for some it was long and tedious process for a small amount of (monetary) reward. It seemed that the main reason why the process was not undertaken was that it was seen as long winded involving a lot of paperwork and was thereby time consuming; the Analoui and Fell study also found time constraints the main factor to why the appraisal scheme was not conducted. This was one of the contributing factors to why some staff members avoided having to undertake a P&DR for promotion. Furthermore, there also seemed to be a loophole where staff members were able to gain a promotion, by changing jobs within AUT (even though they were still supposed to have undertaken a P&DR).

They were quite aware that there were no consequences when the P&DR procedures were not strictly adhered to especially when managers themselves cut short the process. This indicated managers lack of commitment to the process (Redman et al., 2000; Wilson & Western, 2001) and like the Analoui and Fell study, resulting in limited application of the process. This could simply mean that some managers did not have the skills to undertake the process effectively or did not understand the benefit of the appraisal process when properly applied.

Unlike the Analoui and Fell study, 72% out of the 54 respondents at AUT felt that 360-degree was beneficial. However, some felt that the quality of their relationship with their manager might affect the outcome of their appraisal, whereby if the relationship was positive, they were more likely to have a positive outcome (Simmons, 2003). Some appraisees were aware that the appraisal process was used to control them and for managers to exert their power and that it definitely had a political connotation. Politics in the appraisal process is unavoidable, and what needs to happen is for managers to manage or minimise the detrimental effects of politics in employee appraisal (Longenecker et al., 1987). This would mean training for managers in regards to managing the process.

The majority of the 103 respondents, 70%, (more so of those who had been at AUT over two years) indicated they were aware of the P&DR and FA policies and procedures indicating that these documents were well disseminated. The extent of their in-depth knowledge of the policies and procedures was difficult to determine as this was not included in the questionnaire. From interviews conducted it was found that the knowledge was quite superficial, indicating that even though respondents were aware the policies and procedures existed their understanding of its mechanics was questionable. This might explain why there were some confusion between the two processes, P&DR and FA. There was evidence that managers were also confused. It might be that P&DR encompassed FA, but this was not clear in the documentation of P&DR. Because of this confusion, more staff may have gone through the P&DR than what was indicated in the findings. Furthermore, this study did not investigate how respondents came to know of the policies and procedures. This would be an important investigation as AUT could then determine if the ways it was communicating the policies and procedures were working.

It would seem that the process did motivate some respondents; however, not a large number indicated that it did. Research has shown that performance appraisal did not necessarily motivate employees and that the benefits of the process as a motivational tool are still uncertain. Even though the Redman et al., (2000) study claimed that its respondents felt that the process contributed to their motivation, Mani (2002) found that her respondents were motivated by other factors besides the process. Simmons (2002) also found from his study that his respondents were not motivated by the process. The Analoui and Fell study concluded that a large number of their respondents believed that the performance appraisal process contributed to their motivation, but the current study at AUT did not show that a large number were motivated by the process. However, this study only asked respondents one question regarding if they felt the P&DR enhance their motivation to work. Further investigation would be required to determine how and why the P&DR motivated them. For those who indicated the process provided no motivation, further research would be needed to investigate why this was so. By posing these questions AUT performance appraisal could then be more meaningful and useful in achieving its goal of being the “employer of choice” (Hall, 2003, p. 27). It was assumed that AUT performance appraisal was used as a tool to motivate staff thereby increasing their productivity to enable it to achieve its goals. If this was so, AUT documentation (policies and procedures) on performance appraisal did not indicate how the process was aligned with its stated objectives. This would explain the managers apathy towards the process and why they saw it as a chore (Rudman, 2003). Furthermore, there was no evidence that AUT was committed to train its managers to conduct effective appraisals. Even though training workshops for managers were available, they were not motivated to attend any of these. It was likely that managers were directed to the corresponding instructions on the AUT Intranet and left to carry out the process by a specific date (Fink & Longenecker, 1998). If managers were trained they were more likely to use the appraisal process to achieve the intended goals and make the experience more positive for all concerned.

There was evidence that FA was perceived as beneficial to respondents’ career development and that the process was used to prepare respondents’ IDP to identify development activities for individual (including career) development,

indicating that the FA was used for developmental purposes as intended. For some the process had helped them achieved their career development goals, however, for others the development activities (even though already agreed by their managers) were never pursued due to lack of support. One of AUT appraisal focus is development of staff, and it would seem that commitment to career development depended on the willingness of manager; this result was also found in a study (cited earlier) undertaken by Bozionelos (2001). Again, this comes back to manager training, whereby a trained manager is more likely to use the process as intended, to ensure it is fair and honest. Like the issue of whether the process enhanced motivation, further investigation is warranted to find out to what extent performance appraisal assists career development to ensure that AUT achieves its goals.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Although many respondents viewed performance appraisals process negatively, there are definite benefits. Potential benefits for employees include the opportunity for acknowledgement of good work, the support of career development and encouraging motivation. Weise and Buckley (1998) claim that managers should view the process as a tool to manage, also as an aid to motivation, direct and develop employees and therefore maximise the organisation's most important resource. Furthermore, performance appraisal can be viewed as a critical managerial responsibility and considerable energies should be devoted to the process to ensure that they are conducted in a professional manner so that the process is perceived as fair (Pettijohn, Pettijohn, Taylor, & Keillor, 2001). It is only when the process is perceived as fair and providing accurate assessment of the employee's performance that it is effective (Murphy & Cleveland, 1991). Achieving this effectiveness may be possible by getting employees involved in the design of the process, by organisations devoting additional resources to training and by generally creating an organisational culture supportive of performance appraisal (Cook & Crossman, 2004; Longenecker et al., 1987; Thomas & Bretz, 1994; Wilson & Western, 2001).

An objective of this study was to prepare a set of recommendations for AUT Human Resource department, with the intention of:

- assisting in making AUT performance appraisals more meaningful and relevant to administrative staff, and
- fostering a better awareness of the benefits of undertaking the process.

To achieve this objective, the following recommendations will be prepared for AUT Human Resource department, that:

1. It should evaluate the current performance appraisal process, and
2. Training for both appraisers and appraisees prior to an appraisal is undertaken.

1. Evaluate the current performance appraisal process

This current study has given an insight to how administrative staff viewed the AUT performance appraisal process. Generally, the process was seen as lengthy involving huge amount of paperwork. It may be timely for AUT to evaluate its whole performance appraisal process and relaunched it if necessary (Edmonstone, 1996; Wilson & Western, 2001). The evaluation and relaunching of the process is to discourage indifference and apathy as this communicates to employees the value of performance appraisal and development (Wilson & Western, 2001). The evaluation should consist of the relevancy of 360-degree feedback for all levels of work, and the process for re-earnable salary supplement.

Even though 360-degree feedback is gaining popularity because of its perceived benefits (Fletcher & Bailey, 2003; Toegel & Conger, 2003), it tends to be for those in management positions (Rudman, 2003), and the focus is development. 360-degree feedback is feedback gathered from immediate managers, supervisors, peers, subordinates and customers. It may be that the gathering of feedback from such a big group of people may be seen as the lengthy part of the process. For respondents to perceive that the process is fair, they need to feel confident that the people evaluating them are qualified to give an opinion, which means that these people should have been able to observe their performance. It is not feasible to

expect everyone to have observed the performance. Furthermore, this process is expensive and if the annual appraisal happens at the same time each year for every staff member, appraisers will be saturated by forms. To overcome these issues, it is recommended that 180-degree feedback be adopted for non-management positions. This means that the appraisers will consist of the immediate manager or supervisors and peers (Macky & Johnson, 2000).

As the focus of 180-degree feedback (like 360-degree) is development, and AUT Staff Development Policy signifies its commitment to the development of staff, AUT should encourage a culture of career progression whereby staff members take the initiative to “climb the corporate ladder”, rather than wait for their line managers to make the first step. The current IDP will be the ideal tool to do this. Therefore, forums within each of the faculties should be conducted to communicate to staff the purpose of the 180-degree feedback, the purpose of the IDP and how it will assist them in their career progression. Line managers will have the responsibility for ensuring their staff attend the forum. AUT needs to focus on developmental activities (as outlined in its Staff Development Policy) and to put this into practice to increase staff satisfaction of the process (Boswell & Boudreau, 2000).

If re-design and modification of the process are necessary, all staff members (including managers) should be consulted (Macky & Johnson, 2000). Their participation creates involvement and a sense of commitment to the process (Thomas & Bretz, 1994). It is believed that if they play a part they are less likely to resist its implementation (Macky & Johnson, 2000). Managers may be more motivated to improve their compliance with the performance appraisal process (Grensing-Pophal, 2001), and the need for employee involvement cannot be overestimated (Harrison & Goulding, 1997; Roberts, 2003).

In re-designing the performance appraisal process, AUT could make it more meaningful by:

- Not treating the performance appraisal process as a special event (Rudman, 2003). Therefore, AUT should create an environment that view performance appraisal as a resource for managers to develop employees, and top managers

must create a climate in which accurate and timely performance appraisal is expected of all manager, the process be taken seriously, and managers are rewarded for carrying out effective appraisals (Macky & Johnson, 2000; Thomas & Bretz, 1994) including the undertaking of the performance appraisal interview. However, the process should identify minimum standards to be achieved or adhered to, and then it is acceptable for diversity of approach at the different work areas at AUT (Edmonstone, 1996). The role of HR then is to ensure the minimum standards are strictly adhered to, performance appraisal interview is undertaken, monitor the system for abuse and or unacceptable variance from the standards, and mediating grievances (Macky & Johnson, 2000).

- Ensuring that the process is aligned to its strategies. All staff members including managers need to be aware of this. Individual employees should be encouraged to set goals to support their department, faculty and ultimately connected to what AUT wants to achieve (Wells, 2005). It is believed that goal setting would favourably influence work satisfaction and organisational commitment. Employees will have a broader picture of their work area and AUT objectives and thereby they are able to see how the goals set for them relate and contribute to their work area and AUT (Tziner & Latham, 1989).
- Make the performance appraisal the responsibility of the appraisee (employee), a fundamental philosophical shift that takes the burden to “be nice” from managers and frees them to honestly “call it as they see it”, which means that employees must be trained to use the feedback from the appraisal process to manage their careers (Thomas & Bretz, 1994).
- The performance appraisal process must be one that everyone understands and uses, is one that facilitates open-discussion between the employee and their manager, helps the employee to improve their performance as well as meeting their personal goals, sheds light on organisational difficulties and problems and helps to fix them, and builds on understanding between the employee and their manager (Cole, 2001). It should incorporate a performance appraisal interview (Cole, 2001). The performance appraisal interview is pivotal to the success of the process as it is a chance to share successes and concerns, review performance

and to plan for further development (Cardno & Piggot-Irvine, 1997). Furthermore, an openness to discuss the appraisal results by allocating adequate time for a conversation, and an opportunity to discuss the results not only with the immediate manager but also with upper managers may result in the process as perceived as fair (Pettijohn et al., 2001). Openness and trust between managers and employees and cultivating understanding should lower political activity (Longenecker et al., 1987).

2. Training prior to an appraisal for appraisees and appraisers

Training for staff members prior to undertaking a performance appraisal is available as this is incorporated in the Allied Staff Grading and Promotion workshop. Training for managers as appraisers is also available. However, currently the training for all parties is voluntary.

2.1. Training for all employees as appraisees

Training appraisees is a vital component to ensure that expectations are realistic and that feedback is accepted and acted on (Cook & Crossman, 2004). They continued that even employees who may in the future be asked to be an appraiser should be encouraged to attend training so they can provide effective feedback. This study recommends that all employees who are planning to undertake a performance appraisal should go for training prior the process, and that their attendance to a training workshop should be recorded on their appraisal forms. Training will prepare staff for a performance appraisal, and is more likely to give them the confidence of the procedures and being involved in the pre-appraisal process. Ultimately, compulsory training for all employees as appraisees would ensure that the AUT performance appraisal would be effective and that the purposes set out in its policies are more likely to be met.

Training for appraisees should include the policies that incorporate performance appraisal, the purposes of AUT performance appraisals, on how to set objectives, how to keep accurate records, how to communicate all aspects of performance (Boice & Kleiner, 1997). It should also train staff on how to provide input to another person's annual review (Cook & Crossman, 2004). Appraisees should also be trained on how to accept negative feedback (McCarthy & Garavan, 2001), and on the

mechanics of 180-degree feedback in order to minimise biases and ensure accurate and relevant feedback to ensure a more balanced and realistic set of feedback (Toegel & Conger, 2003). Training should be an on-going process to increase the effectiveness of the performance appraisal process and ultimately lead to greater organisational effectiveness (Cook & Crossman, 2004).

2.2. Training for managers as appraisers

Employees are more likely to perceive that the performance appraisal process is fair when they are confident that their managers have the necessary skills to undertake the process. Training for managers as appraisers should be one of AUT's priorities. Therefore, it is important that managers (especially new managers) are required to have training prior to conducting a performance appraisal process for staff. Seasoned managers should be encouraged to undertake a refresher workshop every three years.

Training will mean that managers will undertake the process within the specified AUT policies and guidelines. When staff members observe that they are following the guidelines, they would perceive that the managers are committed to the process and thereby would be more likely to view the process as satisfactory. When employees know that their managers have undertaken the training they are more likely to view the process as fair, as they would perceive that they have the necessary skills to conduct a fair process. (Rudman , 2003). Furthermore, when training is one of AUT priorities, staff members will perceive that it is committed to ensuring the process was a positive experience. For managers this may make it clearer that performance appraisal is an integral part of their management role.

The training programme should have two aspects – the mechanics of the process and the development of interpersonal skills (Edmonstone, 1996). The mechanics part of the training should include how to do effective appraisals and why appraisals are needed to be done, as understanding the rationale for appraisals is important in building the perceptions that the process is an effective managerial tool and not merely a bureaucratic procedure (Longenecker et al., 1987).

To develop the necessary interpersonal skills, the training should be skills-based so managers will develop communication, listening, conflict resolution, coaching, counselling and problem solving skills (Edmonstone, 1996; Fink & Longenecker, 1998; Macky & Johnson, 2000). These skills are essential to ensure the performance appraisal interview is a pleasant experience for them and their employees (Arnold & Pulich, 2003). The performance appraisal interview (to discuss the appraisal report) is the final stage of the process and this is necessary to achieve the overall effectiveness of the performance appraisal process. Open discussion of the political aspects of the process and their legal ramification should be included in the training programme in order for the (astute) manager to effectively manage the role politics play in employee appraisal (Longenecker et al., 1987). It is also recommended that the training programme for both appraisers and appraisees be continually evaluated for its effectiveness and improved it on a continuous basis (Ford, 2004).

FURTHER RESEARCH

This research only sampled the population from one university, and performance appraisal will continue to be used, therefore on-going research should be undertaken to find out how this group of employees in the NZ university sector view the process. This would then assist in determining what changes need to be made and also to identify which university has a successful process which could be used for benchmarking purposes.

To follow-on from the current research, a longitudinal study should be undertaken, to investigate allied staff members' reactions immediately after an appraisal and over time. This research should scrutinise in-depth if the process has any impact on career development, job satisfaction and organisational commitment. It should also investigate what impact if there is any on appraisees' perceptions of the performance appraisal process if they knew that their appraisers had been through training.

The current study recommends that as part of the re-design of the AUT performance appraisal process, that an encompassing of goal setting at individual

level upon completion of an appraisal be considered. Should goal setting be implemented, future research should therefore investigate if allied staff members would associate completion of the performance appraisal which include the setting of goals, with an increase in work overload. A study undertaken by Brown and Benson (2005) concluded that particular aspects of a performance appraisal system, such as the setting of goals and existence of difficult goals were associated with increased work overload.

LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

It was difficult to investigate all aspects of appraisees' perceptions of performance appraisal within the limited time frame of a masters project. As this was a replication study, the questions had to be similar to the Analoui and Fell (2002) study.

The sample only consisted of administrative staff, and as such the researcher cannot confidently generalise about the whole population of AUT. However, the results should be interesting to human resources managers outside of AUT in general and to the Director of Staff Services (AUT Human Resources Department) in particular to enable them to seek ways to improve the performance appraisal process at AUT.

In hindsight, strategies that would have been put in place to ensure better survey response rate would have included the following:

- A notification at the AUT Weekly Global e-noticeboard that goes all to all staff via the AUT email system, and/or
- That the sample would have been coded in such a way that the researcher could identify those who had not returned their questionnaire, therefore the follow-up questionnaire would only target those who did not return their questionnaire. If this was adopted, the researcher would have to continue to assure the sample that anonymity was protected.

Due to AUT's ethics committee requirements the letter inviting participation was from the Director of Staff Services which may have caused participants to have mistakenly thought that the study was undertaken by Staff Services department and therefore may not have participated due to the sensitivity of the subject area. If the invitation letter had come from the researcher potential participants might have better understood that responses would be confidential to the researcher.

Another contributing factor that could have affected the response rate is the length of the questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of 39 questions, with some having sub-questions. It was necessary to have this many questions to ensure that AUT's two forms of performance appraisal processes were covered. This resulted in a 4-page questionnaire which might have been considered as too lengthy and a put-off for potential respondents.

Even though the response rate was 20 per cent it was difficult for the researcher to perform cross tabulations depicting sub-group analysis as not everyone who returned the questionnaire responded to all the questions. For example, if a better response rate was achieved, the researcher would have been able to determine the time interval between appraisals respondents considered to be appropriate.

Age and gender of respondents were not obtained, as it was felt at the point of planning that this was not necessary. In hindsight, this data would have been useful as it would offer different perception/ comments from respondents depending on their age and gender.

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