If We Only Had Time

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Abstract

This paper is a comparative study of two institutions taking part in the national teaching/postgraduate study nexus research project started in 2005. This multi-stakeholder comparative case study was based on a series of interviews with Heads of School, Human Resource personnel and members of senior management team and on a questionnaire sent to teaching staff currently engaged in their own postgraduate study. Outcomes discussed include both positive and negative factors such as time pressure, stress, recognition, employment contracts, senior staff expectations, family, collegial and institutional support, integration of own study with teaching practice and content. Implications for alignment across institutional organisational levels and for positioning of higher education institutions within the tertiary education and research sector are also discussed.

Keywords: Teaching/postgraduate study nexus, higher education, motivators, inhibitors

1   Introduction

The stance adopted in this paper is a 'view from within' two institutions that examines multiple points of view with respect to the relationship between teaching and postgraduate study as academics upgrade their qualifications. These view points are: academic staff upgrading qualifications, Human Resource (HR) personnel, Heads of School (HOS), and senior management staff.

While many academics were employed without the need to have a postgraduate qualification, the goal posts have moved: the higher education sector is currently assessed by the government with respect to quality assurance.

In the present climate all those higher education institutions wishing to be considered 'research active' must take part in research assessment exercise known as PBRF (Performance Based Research Funding). Individual staff members may be considered as 'research active' provided that they have obtained first a postgraduate qualification at least at the Master's degree level.

This paper is structured in the following manner: a literature review is presented that scopes the domain for this paper; the specific comparative case study research methodology employed is described; data collection and

analysis methods are described; findings are discussed and implications for further research are presented.

2   Literature Review

Fielden and London (2001) discovered that engagement in research for polytechnic staff was governed by individual clusters of motivators and inhibitors. If an individual staff member had more motivators than inhibitors then the chance of engaging with research was greater. They also discovered that the individual clusters of motivators and inhibitors were context-dependent. This paper is situated in just one of those contexts – staff members upgrading qualifications while they are teaching.

2.1   Time

It can be seen from many studies (Akerlind,1999; Barnacle 2002; Brew 1999; Bruce-Ferguson 1999; Cooper, 2002; Marsh and Hattie 2002; May 1997; Wildy and Holland 2002) that time pressure is a major factor when staff engage in postgraduate study. In this highly self-motivated group (Akerlind 1999) it is less certain when time pressure ceases to be a deterrent as engagement with postgraduate research increases and becomes the primary task in a staff member's daily activities.

Time release from teaching duties is also regarded as important: Brew (1999), Bruce- Ferguson (1999), and Wildy and Holland (2002) all state that time release is important and when given contributes to the perceptions of value associated with postgraduate study undertaken whilst engaged in fulltime work. Wildy and Holland (2002) stated that none of the postgraduate students they interviewed were granted time release and all felt that there study was devalued as a consequence. Bruce-Ferguson (1999) stressed the need to use scarce 'personal time' to manage the mix of activities required by this sector of postgraduate students. Ash and Bacisch (2002) list time pressure as 'high personal cost' for staff members engaged in postgraduate study. Marsh and Hattie (2002) suggest that the pressure experienced in undertaking research detracts from quality of teaching and that time devoted to research is negatively related to time spent on teaching. Perhaps this picture is a little simplistic.

It is apparent from the literature that time pressure is definitely an important factor. More important it seems are time management skills and the perceived and real levels of support that polytechnic staff experience as they upgrade their qualifications. Zamorski (2003) suggests that a breadth of knowledge and skills are obtained from engaging in research: 'teachers can acquire confidence, courage and authority' along with reflection and

reflexivity. Cooper (2002) believes that academics may have some control over how they prioritise their time but no control over other resources.

2.2 Stress

Stress is experienced in many ways – at work and at home Feeling isolated, financially, confidence levels, professional recognition, collegial respect and lack of control – are some of the ways in which stress was experienced in this case study. Blake *et al.* (2004) cite 'survival skills' as necessary in coping with stress experienced by staff upgrading qualifications as distance students; Cooper (2002) suggests that maintaining academic and professional standards whilst upgrading qualifications places staff in 'stressful positions'. Akerlind (1999) believes that despite the high stress experienced by staff in studying, there is a driving force to engage with all academic work-related tasks to maintain professionalism, as academics are highly self-motivated. Marsh and Hattie (2002) state that extra research-related activities place a strain on the balance between teaching and research. May (1997) suggests that 'conflicts of loyalty between spending time promoting their own study and the needs of their own students can be very severe'.

Family-related issues that add to stress experienced by staff engaged in postgraduate study include: persistence at the expense of time stolen from family (Barnacle 2002); the need to ensure the family's support (Bennetts 2003); the essential nature of family support during postgraduate study and the stress that it places on the whole family (Blake *et al.* 2004); and the need to persuade family and friends to be actively involved (May 1997).

2.3 Isolation

Bruce-Ferguson (1999) states that isolation is a primary issue forced upon staff as they upgrade their qualifications. Not only are they required to apportion time carefully to fit everything in, they find themselves isolated as they 'work alone' on postgraduate research. This is felt most strongly at the 'writing up' stage. Demski and Zimmerman (2000) also believe that below the surface research is a lonely process.

2.4 Funding

Funding – or the lack of funding – to support postgraduate study has the following effects: Bruce-Ferguson (1999) believes that there is a need for an 'equitable formula' for the allocation of funding for postgraduate study to overcome a disparity in the allocation of funding. Bruce-Ferguson noted that in some instances study was considered "private" not "public" and therefore was not funded by the institution. in their study of mature-age students completing doctoral studies Wildy and Holland (2002) reported that these students each felt that a low level of value was placed on their doctoral training - none received financial support, none was given time to attend courses or to write up the thesis.

2.5 Recognition

Recognition and respect within a research domain and within their own institution are gained as staff members immerse themselves in their own postgraduate research and their knowledge grows and matures (Akerlind 1999; Bruce-Ferguson 1999).

2.6 Reason for Upgrading

Academics upgrade their qualifications for a number of reasons including: interest in the research domain (Lawton 1997), interest in the research process (Lawton 1997); personal reasons (Akerlind 1999; Barnacle 2002; Hobson and Webourne 1998; Katz and Coleman 2001; Marsh and Hattie 2002); employment contract requirements (Barnacle 2002; Bruce-Ferguson 1999; Cooper 2002); and for career progression purposes (Akerlind 1999; Bruce-Ferguson 1999; Lawton 1997; Marsh and Hattie, 2002).

2.7 Support

Many studies into the nexus between teaching and research activities emphasise the need for support from institutions and institutions' departments (Ash and Bacisch 2002; Blake *et al.*2004; Bruce-Ferguson 1999; Schuller *et al.* 1999). Professional support from research domain experts is also regarded as important by Wildy and Holland (2002), and by Barnacle (2002). Personal support from family and friends is considered important by Bennetts (2003), Blake *et al.* (2004) and Schuller *et al.* (1999). Similarly, the nexus between teaching and upgrading qualifications requires support.

2.8 Integrating Factors

The teaching/research nexus literature abounds with findings on the benefits gained by teaching academics from integrating research activities (Barnacle 2002; Brimblecombe 2000; Demski and Zimmerman 2000; Jenkins *et al.* 1998; Kane *et al.* 2004; Katz and Coleman 2001; Marsh and Hattie 2002; Rowarth 2004; Thomas and Harris 2000; VanBriesen 2002; Woodhouse 2001; Yourn 2002; Zamorski 2003; Zubrick *et al.*, 2001). Little, however, was discussed on the benefits of upgrading qualifications whilst teaching and yet the process of completing a postgraduate qualification is traditionally thought to be the training ground for competent research.

Thomas and Harris (2000) discovered that active engagement in research not only enhanced staff job satisfaction but also improved the educational experience of their students. Jenkins *et al.* (1998) found in their study that students perceived clear benefits from staff research that encompassed staff enthusiasm, staff credibility, and institutional recognition. Again, this research relates to research/teaching nexus. However, direct parallels can be drawn with the upgrading qualifications/teaching nexus.

First-hand postgraduate study experiences increase the level of empathy that academics feel for their own students. Blake *et al.* (2004) stated that "The pressure experienced by these students in multi-tasking also helped in understanding the pressures their students felt in turn" (p. 51) and Bruce-Ferguson (1999) found that

postgraduate study enabled higher education staff to focus students better and to appreciate what was boring to students and how to reframe teaching content and practice.

Kane *et al.* (2004) found that there was a link between research and reflective practice that carried over into teaching practice. McLoughlin and Samuels (2002) reported that staff engaged as postgraduate students gained a better understanding of course and assessment design. Marsh and Hattie (2002) stated that staff engaged in both teaching and research reported a sense of satisfaction from research that was reflected in their teaching. Zamorski (2003) suggests an increased ability and confidence in curriculum design as well as teaching practice that utilises up-to-date knowledge and research and employs critical reflection, and an understanding of the research processes.

Rowarth (2004) believes that "active research is a necessary first step towards good teaching" and that "teaching is enthused by research and informed by practice" (p. 5). Demski and Zimmerman (2000) state that "doing more research increases the value of the teaching" (p. 350). Thomas and Harris (2000) believe that active participation in research also improves the educational experience of students. Zubrick *et al.* (2001) believe that academics who are more engaged manage to do both research and teaching and that institutions, staff and students all benefit.

3 Research Design

Much has been published on the research/teaching nexus, however there appears to be little published on the link between academics upgrading qualifications and teaching. The value of this project is that investigates the upgrading/teaching nexus, identifies the emerging issues and provides recommendations.

3.1 Research Objective and Process

This study investigated, from the perspectives of staff upgrading qualifications the impact that studying had on their teaching and on other aspects of their professional life. Its main objective was to identify the inhibitors, motivators, integrators and outcomes as staff members upgrading qualifications draw their own inner complexity maps (McKenna 1999) and cluster factors such as . career progression, personal satisfaction, gaining new knowledge, and skills, and professional status (possible motivators), lack of time, isolation, lack of support, and stress (possible inhibitors), and the ability to enrich both teaching content and practice by engaging in postgraduate study (possible integrators).

The views of other stakeholders: senior management, HR staff and school heads (HOS), were also gathered to provide a comprehensive picture of the reasons for encouraging staff to upgrade their qualifications and of the benefits that the institution gains from the process.

Applying content analysis (Potter 1999) to clusters of words and/or phrases in the data allowed inferences to be made by the writers about new researchers. An individual's cluster is dependent on her/his local research conditions, and may be different from one person to the next both within local environments and in the population of staff upgrading qualifications as a whole.

3.2 Data Collection Method

In May 2004 at Institution A, a selected group of 15 lecturers who were involved with or who had completed postgraduate qualifications were interviewed. A purposive sampling technique was used to identify the lecturers to be interviewed. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique in which researchers select samples based upon their own judgement about appropriate characteristics required of participants. The sample was selected for the specific purpose—in this case staff members who were also engaged in formal study. Four HOS, two members of the institution's HR Department and four members of the institution's senior management were also interviewed. Semi-structured interviews were conducted. Although a series of questions was prepared, not every interview took the same format as each interviewee had different experiences to explore; these were interesting and informative for this study.

The same sampling approach and data collection methodology was used in 2005 to collect data from Institution B where a selected group of 21 lecturers and nine senior managers participated in the study (two of them were in HOS positions and one was in a delegated role acting as an HR manager).

3.3 Data Analysis

At institution A, fifteen lecturers from five of the 18 schools at the institution were interviewed for this study ten of the lecturers were female and all but one was of European ethnicity. Only one of the lecturers was under 30 and 5 were more than 50 years old. All of the lecturers interviewed were full-time staff members with the majority (seven) employed at the institution for less than 5 years. When first employed at the institution all lecturers had been employed in a teaching role with three lecturers also employed in a research role. All but one of the lecturers is still employed as a teacher however eight are now also conducting research as part of their role.

Most of the lecturers interviewed had undergraduate qualifications when first employed. The one lecturer who was employed with a certificate level qualification now has a PhD. Ten lecturers are currently enrolled or have recently finished a Master's qualification and five are currently enrolled or have recently completed a PhD qualification. All but one of the lecturers' postgraduate studies involved at least one year of research study. The exception was a Master's programme with a one semester research component. Although four of the lecturers had not presented or published any research from their study, one lecturer interviewed had between 11 and 20 research outputs from her postgraduate study and 9 lecturers had between one and five research outputs from their postgraduate study.

At institution B, twenty-one lecturers were interviewed (from two schools in one of its faculties which at the time comprised three schools). Compared to institution B a higher proportion (seven lecturers) was female. The ethnic diversity was greater compared to institution B: Nine lecturers identified themselves as Pakeha, one as Maori, three as Chinese, three as Indian and five as 'other'. The age band distribution was somewhat dissimilar to institution B: five lecturers were between 30 and 39, seven – between 40 and 49, and nine – between 50 and 59. All but one of the lecturers interviewed were full-time staff members, with the majority (12) employed at the institution for more than 10 years while two were recently employed (less than five years). When first employed at institution B all lecturers but one had been employed in a teaching role with two lecturers also employed in administrative and three in service roles, and one as a consultant. At the time of the interview all lecturers were engaged in teaching, with 16 also conducting research and nine in administrative positions.

The majority of the lecturers (eleven) had an undergraduate degree or less when employed, and none had a PhD degree. At the time of the interview all had a postgraduate qualification (a Postgraduate Diploma or a Master's degree, with two of them having recently obtained a PhD degree and one – an MSc degree). At the time of the interviews, eleven lecturers were enrolled in a PhD course and seven - in a Master's one. All staff studying or having recently completed a postgraduate degree were involved in at least one year of research study. Only one lecturer had not published research from her/his study, with the majority of lecturers having published at least one output (thirteen lecturers had published two or more outputs).

Content analysis techniques were used to analyse the data collected. Common themes were identified from interview responses. Themes which had commonalities were grouped together. This method of analysis of qualitative data is consistent with Singleton *et al*.'s (1993) explanation of content analysis as a set of methods for analysing communication content which involves defining a set of content categories, selecting and coding the communication into the categories, quantifying the categories – for example by counting their frequency of occurrence, and relating the category frequencies to one another or to other variables.

4   Results

All teaching staff participating in this study experienced time pressure (Table 1). 1We discovered that perceptions of what time release meant differed. One HOS at Institution A believed that staff members were given time relief to engage in study. This was not the reported perception of the staff from within that school. All sectors interviewed stated that it was necessary for teaching staff to have support while they were studying. Teaching staff most frequently reported that they received support from family and friends. All HOS interviewed stated that teaching staff received support from the school. Only one teaching staff reported that collegial support was received.

Staff had their own individual cluster of factors motivating them. Many reasons were stated for engaging in postgraduate study including: interest in the research content; the research process itself; personal reasons; an employment contract requirement; HOS expectations; professional development; and career planning.

The link with teaching content and teaching practice was experienced by the teaching staff engaged in study at both institutions. The strong links between postgraduate study and teaching were expressed by the other sectors interviewed: senior management, HOS and HR personnel. Important elements of this nexus in this particular study were: actively role-modelling research as it happens; empathy with 'the lot of students'; and feeling part of a research community.

Stress was experienced by all teaching academics taking part in this study. Some expressed the need to adopt 'survival' tactics; others felt the impact of time taken for study at the expense of teaching-related duties. Some reported that their study program suffered because of the pressure experienced from work activities. The time taken from family related activities was widely reported - and this was at a time when support from family was experienced as being necessary. One staff member reported that the extra stress caused by the extra burden of studying had negative effects on health.

It can be seen that that managers at both institutions perceive that they are providing support for staff upgrading qualifications. Organisational cultures appear to be different for the two institutions studied. At Institution A managers believed that they 'walk the talk (Table 6) and at Institution B managers recognised that policies for providing equitable support were needed. Staff at Institution B felt that further pressure was placed upon them to continue postgraduate study, especially after completing a postgraduate diploma or a Master's degree. In the following sections both negative and positive factors are considered.

4.1   Negative Factors

By managing their time better and expressing their expectations of time release lecturers may be able to overcome the negative time aspects. Some managers are currently assisting staff by providing time release for study, less class contact hours or blocks of non-teaching time (when funds allow). It is possible, although not currently happening, for employment contracts to include clauses that specify the maximum number of teaching hours expected of staff involved in postgraduate study.

The stress experienced by staff upgrading is directly related to time, support, work-life balance and the experienced isolation (Tables 1, 2 and 3). It is apparent from this research that while some managers recognise that staff are under stress and have taken steps to overcome the stress, this is not always the case.

Table 1: Time

	Inst A		Inst B	
Staff	Expectations met	Time Mgmnt	Expectations mostly met	Time Mgmnt
Mgrs	Give block &/or session		Give block and/or session	
HR	Employment		Employment contract options	

At Institution B it was noted that upgrading qualifications changed work focus and also affected self-confidence. Managers at Institution B recognised the need for professional development to gain a deeper understanding of individual and organisation implications when staff members upgrade qualifications. It is definitely possible to lessen the stress felt by lectures by the intervention of managers and HR staff.

Table 2: Stress

	Inst A	Inst B	
Staff	Caused by time, support, recognition, balance, isolation	Positively changed focus, self confidence	Maintain mental health strategy
Mgrs	Recognised & supported	Not always recognised	Prof Dev for managers about up-skilling recommended
HR	Recognised & supported	Recognised	No strategies in place

Lecturers can become very isolated during intense periods of postgraduate study. Some lecturers in this study have joined research communities and attended postgraduate seminars to overcome a feeling of isolation. Where these groups are available it is possible for all staff involved in postgraduate study to become members. It is the role of managers to encourage and support lecturers align themselves with existing communities and to organise communities and seminars if they do not exist. Managers at Institution B recognised the importance of developing an institutional research culture.

Table 3: Isolation

	Inst A		Inst B	
Staff	Belonging to research community	PG seminars	Belonging to research community	PG seminars
Mgrs	Set up PG seminars		Develop inst. research culture	Mgrs feel threatened
HR			Expected consequence	

4.2 Positive Factors

Some staff members are aware of the funding that is available to support their study. It is the role of managers to ensure that staff members are aware of funding sources and to support their applications. In this study, some managers were already doing this. HR personnel have the role of informing staff of funding and the associated legal requirements, such as bonds, that may be attached to the funding. At Institution B a need was expressed by staff members for transparent and equitable funding policies (Table 4).

Table 4: Funding

	Inst A	Inst B	
Staff	Aware & apply	Supported	Need for a transparent policy
Mgrs	Staff informed	Staff informed	
HR	Staff informed legal requirements	Need an equity policy	

While it is definitely possible for staff's successes to be celebrated at staff seminars and postgraduate seminars, it is not currently the norm (Table 5). This could be explained by a cultural traditional reticence about sharing their own triumphs with other people. Managers can assist with this, by providing mechanisms to report success and for the celebration of success. HR staff can provide the method for formal recognition through promotion procedures to acknowledge successes.

Table 5: Recognition

	Inst A		Inst B	
Staff	Celebrate		Further expectations	More emphasis on achievement
Mgrs	Celebrate	Reporting mechanisms	Should have policies in place	Promote up-skilling
HR	Formal recognition		Aligned with inst. vision	Celebrate

Some, but not all, of the lecturers in this study have an expectation of support from colleagues, friends and family (Table 6). It is possible for this expectation to be met. Some managers espoused that they support staff members but this was not always been echoed by the staff reporting to them. At Institution B staff stated that support came from family first. At both institutions support was expected at work. HR personnel at Institution A stressed the importance of maintaining legal contractual requirements.

Table 6: Support

	Inst A		Inst B	
Staff	Expected		Family first	Expected at work
Mgrs	Walk the talk	Promote research culture	Develop policies	Promote research culture
HR	Legal requirements	'Subject to change'	In org context	'Subject to change'

A minority of lecturers in this study currently have achieved a work/life balance by recognising that their study is an integral part of their work (Table 7). It is possible for all staff to archive this recognition, however for some a mind-set change, supported by their direct manager, is required. It is possible for contracts to be written that specify the proportion of working hours that should be allocated to study for a lecturer upgrading qualifications. At Institution B staff stressed that self-discipline was required to maintain a work/life balance whilst studying.

Table 7: Balance

	Inst A		Inst B	
Staff	Aim to achieve	Study as work	Aim to achieve	Requires self discipline
Mgrs	Study as work		Recognise need	Smart allocation of teaching
HR	Legal study/work requirements		Legal framework for balance required	

Lecturers involved in postgraduate studies need to work smart to achieve a teaching/study nexus. In this study, a minority of respondents are currently doing this by integrating what they are learning with what they are teaching (Table 8). It may be a possibility open to all lecturers however it is up to the individual to achieve a greater degree of alignment.

Table 8: Alignment

	Inst A		Inst B	
Staff	Work smart	Realise nexus	Realise nexus	Enjoy nexus
Mgrs	Practice	Recognise nexus	Positive contribution from these staff	HOS leadership required
HR	Involve Senior Executives.	Legal requirements	Up-skilling aligned with inst. vision	

5 Discussion

Staff upgrading need to be supported professionally, collegially, and organisationally. The feasibility of some factors, such as funding, balance and alignment, is dependent on the importance placed on the changes by management and the empathy that line managers have with staff involved in postgraduate study. There appears to be organisational culture differences between Institution A and Institution B.

Mind shifts take time and are often not made in the short term. However, if the organisational changes to structure and procedures are reflected in employment contract legislation and if school management practices are in place, staff expectations for time release would be met. Equity issues in allocating time release were highlighted at Institution B, calling for a transparent policy.

Alleviating stress for staff upgrading qualifications is not just desirable and feasible. Stress relief becomes a necessity in a healthy organisation. Everything that relates to staff stress that is under the jurisdiction of the organisation should be examined and changed where practicable. A balancing act is required to alleviate stress in the face of a declining publicly funded education budget. In Institution B both managers and HR personnel felt that there was a need for professional development to recognise and cope with work/study related stress.

Management structures and expectations are important from an institutional point of view to reduce the feelings of isolation for staff upgrading. It is also important and realistic to set staff expectations on enrolling in higher degree studies, including the necessity for solitary work during the degree course. Isolation does not appear to be understood by HR personnel as an issue for staff members upgrading qualifications who believe that isolation should be an expected consequence of studying.

It is both feasible and desirable for staff to be aware of and to apply for funding to support postgraduate study. The onus is on management to inform staff and to support applications and for HR staff to inform staff and make sure that legal requirements are met. It was felt by all participants at Institution B that there should be a fair and equitable funding policy to support qualification upgrade.

Whilst it is desirable to recognise the endeavours of staff members engaged in postgraduate study, it is more difficult to overcome the 'tall poppy' syndrome where in the local culture it is not the 'done thing' to celebrate own success. Inbuilt mechanisms within organisations for both line and HR management would provide culture change. Institutions A and B exhibited different organisational cultures with respect to recognition. Management at Institution A espoused recognition but staff did not feel recognised. HR staff and managers at Institution B believed that achievements were recognised and supported but staff felt pressure to continue to study.

Organisational support is not only desirable and feasible for staff up-skilling — it is vital. Management need to 'walk the talk' not just espouse what is desirable. HR staff should be ensuring that legal requirements for staff engaged in postgraduate research are being met. Staff members at Institution A had differing experiences of organisational support dependent on departmental culture while staff members at Institution B expected organisational support.

Achieving a work/study/life balance is imperative for staff engaged in their own study at work. Both managers and HR Resource staff need to recognise that study is desirable, that it does become part of the overall work package, is linked to teaching, does have legal requirements for balance to be maintained and that this balanced approach should be inbuilt in employment contracts. Staff members at Institution B also felt that self-discipline was required to achieve this balance.

Alignment across institutional levels is essential for staff upgrading qualifications. It is essential for balance, legal protection, recognition, acknowledgment of the importance of the link with teaching and for support at all levels. At Institution A, lack of alignment between HOS and staff studying was exhibited in one school. At Institution B managers recognised that leadership was required to align study and other work-related activities.

5.1 Multiple Views

Staff members upgrading qualifications as a phenomenon has repercussions for the whole system. Student enrolment numbers are falling and are affected by the following factors: the rising New Zealand dollar; lower international enrolments; and low unemployment. The

implications from lower student numbers are inevitable staff redundancies because there is less government funding for institutions. Staff remaining will be required to teach more hours, possibly new and/or different courses and therefore will have less time for study. With staff redundancies looming, this creates an uncomfortable working environment— one in which stresses increase, pressures increase and conditions for successful completion of postgraduate qualifications deteriorate. With enrolments down there is less money to provide support for staff upgrading qualifications.

Organizationally, staff members upgrading qualifications require school funding for fees support, study leave and teaching relief. Culturally, staff upgrading put pressure on other staff. Those not upgrading see their colleagues obtaining extra benefits (study leave, fees support, a lighter teaching load) and also see them not taking part in committees, curriculum reform and school administration. Staff upgrading tend to isolate themselves from the rest of the school - in order to focus and to make the most of the time available to study. This results in a lack of collegiality, less informal discussion and not attending social functions. Socially, staff upgrading spend less time with their families and friends at a time when support from nearest and dearest is vital for success. Study is prioritized at the expense of all other activities.

Sometimes it is difficult to maintain a 'bird's eye' view of the whole system especially when the researchers identify most strongly with one of the subsystems being investigated. When a reflective step or two is taken back from the core problem being addressed there appears to be a system under considerable stress: financially from falling enrolments; politically from aspirations by both institutions to achieve a higher standing amongst their peer institutions with possibly better access to government funding, culturally from an uncomfortable employment environment with staff redundancies looming or already happening; and psychologically from emerging issues between the 'haves' and the 'have nots' for extra support given to staff engaged in upgrading qualifications. However, caution is required before taking any steps to implement changes within large and complex organisations in which academics and researchers have no ultimate decision-making power. Caution is also advisable in approaching senior executives and HOS whose world views may be challenged. Caution is most advisable at this time of shrinking student numbers and the subsequent staff losses.

5.2 Future Research

This research is ongoing and the results are still being analysed. So far, the most interesting results to date are that perceptions differ from one sector to the next within both institutions about the level of support supplied and/or received. There are also perception and real gaps with espoused and actual alignment of views on the link between postgraduate study and teaching. It also appears that alignment within schools or departments is vital to reduce pressure on staff.

Recognition needs to be given on the very real time pressure faced by staff members who upgrade their qualifications whilst they are teaching. Staff who received little or no time relief from teaching duties experience stress in a number of ways and many feel as if they are not performing adequately in any area of their lives.

6 Conclusion

Staff upgrading qualifications and teaching at the same time are a current feature of academic life in academic institutions at present. Institutional culture has changed and academics find themselves splitting time and energy over a multiplicity of teaching and study-related tasks. The stance adopted in this paper is a 'view from within' that examines multiple points of view with respect to the relationship between teaching and postgraduate study as staff upgrade their qualifications.

The higher education institutions studied are at present in a challenging position. Whilst many of their staff were employed without postgraduate qualifications, the goal posts have moved to encompass a higher education sector in which quality assurance has been adopted by the government (through (PBRF). In the present climate all higher education institutions wishing to be considered 'research active' must take part in the PBRF assessment. In order for individual staff members to be considered as 'research active' they are expected to gain a postgraduate qualification at least at a Master's level.

The most important 'survival' characteristic for staff engaged in postgraduate study is the ability to integrate research and teaching so that each set of activities feeds off the other. The most important factor for institutions with high numbers of staff upgrading qualifications is alignment of vision, policy and procedures from all sectors including senior management, school heads, Human Resource personnel and staff engaged in postgraduate study. Comparing the multiple perceived world views with the appropriate conceptual models has highlighted some action plan points.

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