Publication Challenges of Lecturers in Private Higher Education

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Abstract

This paper presents a report on the investigation conducted to determine the challenges that confront lecturers with specific reference to publishing papers in peer reviewed journals as well as in-house publications.   The survey was conducted with a group of lecturers and academics from private higher education institutions in South Africa. As the study was quantitative in nature, a questionnaire was used as the main data collecting instrument. The results of the study revealed that lecturers acknowledged the immense benefits of research but conceded that engaging in academic research was influenced by several factors namely, heavy teaching/lecturing loads, poor writing skills, lack of knowledge on how to conduct research, intense administrative work and lack of funding. The significance of the study was the realisation that lecturers and academics view undertaking research in a positive light; hence, it becomes imperative for institutions to consider innovative ways to promote research activities.

Keywords : Research, action research, motivation, barriers

Introduction and Background

The debate about the quality and quantity of research output and the factors which influence the research output of lecturers has steadily increased in recent years (Hemmings & Kaye 2007). Concurrently, the intensification of lecturer workloads

and heightened quality enhancement (CHE 2014) makes it difficult to balance research, lecturing and administrative activities (Chinamasa 2012; Lertputtarak 2008). In addition, lecturers undergo close surveillance by their senior colleagues as well as by their students; they have their own high expectations of lecture room performance, and their increasingly administrative tasks contribute to increasing pressure to balance research, lecturing and administrative tasks successfully. Public Institutions unlike Private Institutions obtain research funding which makes it possible and lucrative for Public Institutions to reward lecturers for research outputs, innovation and conference presentations. This reward climate places further strain on academics to research for publication purposes.

The quality and quantity of a researcher's publications provide a key measure of their research productivity and the credibility of the institution. Consequently, publication track records are often used to determine whether or not researchers get hired, promoted, or funded for their future research. In addition, at the institutional level, the quality and quantity of a university's publication output help to determine its international reputation and the amount of funding that it receives based on national research performance reviews (Rubin 2014).

While quality research is highly esteemed within the academic environment, the satisfaction of lecturers lies in lecturing and completing the daily administrative tasks rather than focussing on long term research outputs. Herein lies the dilemma, as lecturers are not mindful of the fact that successful lecturing entails thorough research and preparation! What is required is a model which helps to interpret these multiple dimensions and constraints in a meaningful way to facilitate research as well as enhance lecturer preparation. In fact, academic staff in higher education institutions have always been encouraged to integrate research, teaching, conference presentation and other scholarly activities as part of their academic roles (Sanmugam & Rajanthran 2014). While this maybe so, it is still a daunting task to get lecturers in private institutions to publish scholarly articles. Thus, the present study specifically seeks to investigate the many challenges that hamper publication in higher education.

Research Questions
This study focussed on the perceptions of lecturers from private higher education institutions regarding the issue of research. The following questions guided this study:
- How important is academic research?
- What factors motivate lecturers to publish?
- What are the challenges that prevent undertaking research activities?

Literature Review
The importance of academic research
The importance of academic research in student learning cannot be over emphasised! It is an integral part of student life and, hence, students expect to be guided by their lecturers to teach them how to navigate the mass of accessible information stored on

the internet and even in the cloud (CHE 2014). Students' expectations of their lecturers are very high indeed. They expect their lecturers to teach them meaningful information processing skills so that they can identify quality information, select appropriate information and act upon it in intellectually rigorous ways to create knowledge (CHE 2014: 5). Do lecturers teach their students correct research skills, as well as academic writing skills as part of their daily lecturing responsibilities?

Research exposes students to current practices, shows them how the theories and models in their textbooks have evolved, and demonstrates their applications in select case studies. The application and extension of textbook materials and additional research on specific subject content, often brings that knowledge to life in ways that assignments, examinations and class discussion cannot accomplish. Work Integrated Learning exposes students to different standards and perspectives different from the textbook. Exposing students to projects in industry research prepares them better for real world environments and expectations (CHE 2011:21).

How does research benefit the Lecturer?

While lecturers have to comply with the college curriculum, it does not mean following a prescribed formula to deliver the subject content. Lecturers can adapt it to fit the individual needs of their own students. However, lecturers are accountable for the success and failures of their students. The public must have faith in the profession and attitudes to education vary across many social groups so the performance of lecturers can be demonstrated through the publication of research findings and the success of the students (Young 2006).

While lecturers project their own personality upon learning experiences it is important for them to invent and innovate lecture room experiences. Sometimes this is intuitive and these decisions can either be a success or a failure (Aydin 2012). Research gives lecturers the tools to analyse and make informed decisions about their practice and prevent one from circulating stale methodologies and subject matter (Chinamasa 2012).

The need for educational research starts from effective programmes and teaching methods which will help students to learn what they really want to discover and it also helps lecturers to plan intervention programmes (Young 2006; .Pramodini & Anu Sophia 2012).

In addition:
- Research helps to understand any subject and its principals better.
- It helps to encounter new questions and search for answers thereby enhancing one's knowledge of theory on any subject.
- Research means trying and thinking out of the box. It gives the student a competitive advantage.
- Research is not always a concept that practitioners, managers and policy makers respect. Too often it is seen as an academic activity conducted by others – to the profession, not with the profession.
- Research education professionals are always learning, finding out things, analyzing information, adapting their behaviour according to information

received, looking to improve and adapting to modern demands (Witt 2015;.Pramodini & Anu Sophia 2012).

The importance of action research

Within education, the main goal of action research is to determine ways to enhance the lives of students (Mills 2011; Pedler & Christine 2013). At the same time, action research can enhance the lives of those professionals who work within educational systems. To illustrate, action research has been directly linked to the professional growth and development of teachers (Hensen 1996; Pedler & Christine 2013). According to Hensen (1996), action research (a) helps teachers develop new knowledge directly related to their classrooms, (b) promotes reflective teaching and thinking, (c) expands teachers' pedagogical repertoire, (d) puts teachers in charge of their craft, (e) reinforces the link between practice and student achievement, (f) fosters an openness toward new ideas and learning new things, and (g) gives teachers ownership of effective practices.

Factors motivating research activities

Herzberg et al. (1959) proposed that an employee's motivation to work is best understood when the respective attitude of that employee is understood. As a result of his inquiry into the attitudes of employees, Herzberg et al. (1959) developed two distinct lists of factors. One set of factors caused happy feelings or a good attitude within the worker, and these factors, on the whole, were task-related. The other grouping was primarily present when feelings of unhappiness or bad attitude was evident, and these two factors, were not directly related to the job itself, but to the conditions that surrounded doing that job. The first group he called motivators (job factors). These factors deal with job content and lead to job satisfaction. These factors are recognition, achievement, possibility of growth, advancement, responsibility, work itself. The second group Herzberg (1959) named hygiene factors (extra-job factors). These factors deal with job context and lead to job dissatisfaction. These are salary, interpersonal relations, supervision, company policy and administration, working conditions, status and job security (Herzberg 1968). According to Herzberg (1986), the opposite of job satisfaction is not dissatisfaction, but rather a simple lack of satisfaction. In the same way, the opposite of job dissatisfaction is not satisfaction, but rather "no dissatisfaction".

 Research publication in an institution is the most significant indicator of academic staff productivity. Typically high status business schools value research productivity which is often reflected in a strong relationship and reward such as pay rises, tenure and promotion (Aydin 2012). The research findings of Chen, Gupta & Hoshower (2010) suggest that untenured faculty members are motivated by extrinsic rewards while tenured faculty members are motivated by intrinsic rewards. Their findings clearly reveal that research productivity is positively correlated with tenure status and the percentage of work time allocated to research activities and negatively correlated with years in academic employment.

The quality and quantity of a researcher's publications provide a key measure of their research productivity and the status of institutions (Rubin 2014). Consequently,

publication track records are often used to determine whether or not researchers get hired, promoted, or funded for their future research. In addition, at the institutional level, the quality and quantity of a university's publication output help to determine its international reputation and the amount of funding that it receives based on national research performance reviews. So, there are several reasons why Public Institutions encourage lecturers to publish (Zachariah et al, 2010). In Private Colleges, lecturers do not enjoy the benefits of funding and it becomes a costly exercise apart from being too time consuming.

The Relationship between Herzberg Theory and Research Performance

Job satisfaction of academic staff in universities and colleges is related to intrinsic factors (in particular, ministering to students and the work itself), and dissatisfaction is related to extrinsic factors, and arises from factors external to the job. Hill (1986) and Chen, Gupta & Hoshower (2010) concluded that tenured and well-paid employment provides satisfaction of the lower-order needs, whereas prestigious and autonomous work enables academic staff to satisfy higher-order needs to a greater degree than is possible for the general population (e.g., esteem need; the need for self-actualization). Academics who found their work less intrinsically satisfying than others, more commonly intended to leave the institution. The factors that affect research performance are: Personal characteristics, area of research, funds/equipment/support staff, colleagues and work environment, number of PhD students, administrative demands, tenure and other explanation such as the cost of travel or promotion (Aydin 2012; Chen, Gupta & Hoshower2010; Young 2006).

Challenges of undertaking research

Academic environments generally provide both socializing and reinforcing organizational messages about norms, values and expectations concerning research. The selection of new faculty members is the most critical process for developing and strengthening a culture of research. Ideally, the chair and members of faculty recruiting committees should themselves have high research performance (Hemmings & Hill 2009; Chinamasa 2012). Where this type of leadership is missing, it becomes very difficult to encourage colleagues to research and publish papers (Lertputtarak 2008).

The ability to secure research funding has become a criterion for success. Funding grants normally include salary money for the professor and funds that are available to hire other professionals to help teach and conduct effective research. Such type of funding is not available to Private Institutions.

According to Thair and Bakar (2009) the balance of time spent in teaching, research, service and administration explains a significant proportion of the variance found in research productivity, while total work hours did not explain a significant proportion of variance. On the other hand, Aydin (2012), found that time allocated to research did not relate specifically to research productivity.

Lecturers encountered the following challenges: moderate research skills, moderate research funds, time, and research resources (Sanmugan and Rajanthran 2014; Thair &Bakar 2009). In addition too much work load, poor writing skills, and poor statistical techniques were identified by Stener (1999), Thair& Bakar (2009) and Chinamasa (2012) Similar barriers and challenges were identified by Hemmings, Rushbrook and Smith (2007). The barriers they identified included workload, lack of support, and an under-developed research culture. They also found that personal characteristics, opportunities, support, issues relating to time management and training influenced motivation to engage in research and subsequent publication.

Methodology

The participants were lecturers from private institutions. A total of 100 respondents were randomly selected from campuses in Gauteng, Kwazulu Natal. As the study was quantitative in nature, a questionnaire was the main data collecting instrument. This approach ensured that data was collected from a large population to determine their perceptions and attitudes towards research. The survey questions were limited to three main aspects related to Research background, motivational factors for undertaking research and the barriers and challenges preventing research. The return rate was 80%.

Data collection took place over a period of two weeks.

The data was analysed using Statistical Package of Social Science (SPSS) software. Simple descriptive statistics was used to analyse the data.

Findings and Discussion

Table 1: Research Background

	Statement	Yes %	No %
1.	Have you presented at conferences/workshops?	6.25	93.75
2.	Have you obtained research funding?		100
3.	Have you published papers in peer reviewed journals?	6.25	93.75
4.	Have you published papers in in-house journals?	3.75	96.25
5.	Does the institution encourage research?	100	

Table 1 reveals that the majority of the lecturers did not present at conferences (93.75%); publish in peer reviewed journals (93.75%) and publish in in-house journals (96.25%). All respondents agreed that while their institutions encourage research they do not receive any research funding as Public Institutions. While the majority of the respondents acknowledge encouragement of research activities, in the main, only a very limited number (6.25%) engage in publication. It would appear that the lack of research funding together with the perks that accompany research are the major barriers to engaging in research activities. Both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation appear to be lacking (Herzberg et al.1959).

Table 2: Motivation Factors for Undertaking Research

	Statement	Strongly Agree %	Agree%	Unsure%	Strongly Disagree%	Disagree %
1.	I want to earn extra money	50	25	12.5	0	12.5
2.	I want to improve my knowledge	100	0	0	0	0
3.	I want to gain the respect of my students	93.75	6.25	0	0	0
4.	I want to obtain a better job elsewhere	50	37.5	0	12.5	0
5.	I want to contribute to my subject (discipline)	93.75	6.25	0	0	0
6.	I want to increase my student' knowledge	93.75	6.25	0	0	0

Table 2 reveals that all the lecturers agreed that research is essential for improving ones knowledge (100%); enhancing subject matter (100%); increase student knowledge (100%) and gain the respect of the students (100%). These findings strongly indicate that lecturers are aware of the benefits and importance of engaging in research (CHE 2014).

A total of 75% of the respondents agreed that they want to earn extra money for undertaking research, 12.5% were unsure whilst 12.5% disagreed with the statement. Money appears to a very strong motivator (Hill, 1986 Aydin, 2012).
The majority of the respondents further agreed that they want to look for better jobs elsewhere (87.5%), whilst 12.5% strongly disagreed that they were interested in seeking other jobs. Job satisfaction appears to be a precursor for undertaking research activities (Aydin, 2012; Chen, Gupta & Hoshower2010).

Table 3: Barriers/Challenges that Prevent Undertaking Research

	Statement	Strongly Agree %	Agree %	Unsure %	Strongly Disagree %	Disagree %
1.	Lecturing interferes with research	37.5	0	25	37.5	0
2.	Heavy workloads	75	6.25	0	6.25	12.5
3.	Too many administrative tasks	87.5	6.25	0	12.5	0
4.	Poor writing skills	37.5	25	12.5	11.25	13.75
5.	Lack of research training	36.25	18.75	17.5	15	12.5
6.	Research entails too much work	65	15	7.5	11.25	1.25
7.	Poor funding	75	0	25	0	0

Table 3 presents the results of the perceived barriers that prevent research. The main barriers are heavy workloads (81.25%), too many administrative tasks (93.30%), research entails too much work (80%), poor funding (75%) and poor writing skills (62.5%). A cause for concern is the large percentage of respondents who have poor writing skills. What is surprising is that 12.5% of the respondents are unsure of their writing skills!

A total of 55% of the respondents do not engage in research activities because of a lack of training (Sanmugan and Rajanthran 2014; Chinamasa 2012). They do not know how to undertake research! This is alarming, because these lecturers are the very ones who are expected to educate the students and encourage them to engage in productive learning through research activities! Even more surprising is that 17.5 % of the respondents are unsure of their level of competence for undertaking research.

It would appear that time and heavy workloads are the chief barriers and challenges regarding research activities (Thair and Bakar 2009; Chinamasa 2012).

Conclusions and Recommendations
This paper examined the challenges that confront lecturers' when engaging in research and research activities. The findings of the paper suggest that while the lecturers are aware of the importance and benefits of engaging in research activities, the majority refrain from doing so because of heavy workloads as well as paucity of time. The paradox of wanting to gain the respect of students and increase one's knowledge is highly unlikely in the absence of constructive research. This finding begs the question "do lecturers engage in additional research to supplement their study materials?"

The fact that the majority of the lecturers are seeking other jobs indicates that institutions will have to improve the status of research and the type of benefits attached towards undertaking research activities either for publication purposes or for the development and enhancement of study materials. As involvement in research activities is a daunting task, it requires the support of both institutions as well as

individuals. Institutions needs to encourage a culture of research that is relevant to organisational needs to bridge the gap between theory and practice. Academic and scientific rigour should not be at the expense of organisational relevance.

It is strongly recommended that action research together with research mentoring programmes be encouraged to boost research efforts. Institutions should encourage problem solving research by treating organisations as their primary stakeholders and be specific and substantive while articulating and communicating research findings as they add value to the institution. Hence, the need for making research more relevant to the needs of the institution.

Knowledge creation cannot be divorced from knowledge dissemination. It requires research skills, training and motivation. Therefore, it is recommended that all successful research efforts be linked to research compensations, incentives and other forms of rewards as in promotions for lecturers from one level to the next depending upon the number and quality of research output.

The findings in this study show major areas calling for a paradigm shift. First, lecturers need empowerment to solve their problems of low research output and develop research competence. Second, lecturers need to be mentored to publish. There is a need for mentoring for research skills development programs. There is an urgent need for a policy focusing on the development of lecturer research skills and funding of lecturers' research. There is need to train research mentors and to recognise their mentoring responsibility and provide research incentives.

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