

**ADMINISTRATORS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
IN A HIGHER EDUCATION ORGANISATION**

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Administrators' professional development in a higher education organisation

ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates administrators' engagement in professional development in a higher education organisation where academia is the organisation's *raison d'être*. Using literature from management and non-academic higher education administration, I frame the study on three fronts: administrators; professional development; and higher education organisations. I discuss administrators and professional development. I also discuss how all staff contribute to the achievement of organisational goals. All staff, in higher education, includes those directly involved in academia and those involved indirectly (Szekeres, 2006).

This research establishes that administrators define professional development as both training and education. However, their actual professional development engagement is work-related training courses. Reasons as to why administrators engage in training courses rather than training and education seem to be their perception of low levels of organisational support.

Authors such as Rudman (2002), Woodall and Winstanley (1998), and Argyris and Schön (1996) argue that engaging all staff in meaningful professional development enables all staff to contribute to achieving organisational goals. This research shows that administrators may not be engaging in meaningful professional development. Accordingly, they may not be contributing to organisational goals. I therefore argue that a dichotomy may exist between the activities of administrators in a higher education organisation and organisational goals.

Case study methods of enquiry, and qualitative methodologies were employed to study administrators' perceptions of professional development in one higher education organisation. The research employed data gathering tools such as focus group discussions and a questionnaire to gather data from one group of administrators within the organisation.

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*I dedicate this thesis to Dad, who would
have been immensely proud of my
achievements.*

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CHAPTER ONE

ADMINISTRATORS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: AN INTRODUCTION

Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the thesis. I provide a rationale for the study and outline the context of professional development for administrators in higher education organisations. I then provide an overview of the thesis structure.

Rationale

Whereas academic staff members focus on their key role of teaching, learning, assessment and research, administrators ensure that academic activity is integrated into the core business of higher education organisations (Szekeres, 2004; and Conway, 2000b). Furthermore, administrators ensure that the organisational and central government requirements of recording, reporting, and archiving statistics of student achievement are met (Szekeres, 2004).

The argument presented by Conway (2000b) and Szekeres (2004), suggest that administrators' contribution to higher educational goals is valuable. How then, do administrators in higher education organisations develop themselves so that their contribution to the organisation is meaningful? Furthermore, does the organisation support the development of all staff in higher education by developing their administrators? These questions are the focus of this thesis.

Professional development is a requirement of all staff, as everyone within an organisation should develop their capabilities to enable them to better contribute to achieving organisational goals (Woodall and Winstanley, 1998; and Fielden, 1998). After all, "choosing to work in a university, and to make a career of it, represents a commitment to the educational mission of universities, their uniqueness as organisations, and to academic values" (Conway, 2000b, p. 201).

According to the South Pacific Higher Education Organisation (SPHEO, a pseudonym for the organisation at the centre of this research) individual and

collective employment contracts, all staff members are expected to engage in professional development. The 'general staff' collective and individual employment contracts cover all staff members that are not academics or in a senior management position (South Pacific Higher Education Organisation [SPHEO], 2006a; 2006b). Academics are employed under an 'academic' individual or collective employment contract (SPHEO, 2004; 2005). Here, I would like to highlight that the academic staff contracts provides five times more professional development than that detailed in the general staff contracts. Accordingly, the following aim and research questions underpin this study.

Research Aims and Questions

Research Aim:

The aim of this qualitative study is to examine administrators' perceptions of their professional development within a higher education organisation.

Research Questions:

1. How do administrators define professional development programmes?
2. What kind of professional development programmes do administrators undertake?
3. How are professional development barriers perceived by administrators?

The Higher Education Organisation

SPHEO is a large higher education organisation attracting approximately 9,000 effective full-time students per annum, which equates to over 50,000 full and part-time students (SPHEO, 2006c). The Annual Report also states that the total full-time equivalent staff population is approximately 1,000. Of these, approximately 45 percent are non-academic.

SPHEO offers academic programmes of study to local, national and international students, ranging from foundation learning to doctoral study. Furthermore, to add to the already diverse range of learning levels, it offers programmes in an applied context ranging from architecture to accountancy, communication to construction, engineering to education, horticulture to health, and technology to tourism (SPHEO, 2007). SPHEO's mission statement espouses academic success through students'

contribution to their societies with their application of creative and intellectual potential (SPHEO, 2006d).

SPHEO is structured internally into schools. Schools are also a common term used in the compulsory education sector. The term 'school' used in the context of this research refers to defined internal sections of SPHEO rather than schools in the compulsory education sector.

In the following section, I define the administrators invited to participate in the study.

Administrators

Administrators in the context of this research work within academic schools in a higher education organisation. Furthermore, they are students' point of contact for academic programme advice, support and progress reports, individual course lecturers, councillors, financial advisors, IT support, and academic learning support provided for students. They are therefore, administration staff providing academic support to academics, programmes, students, and student learning support systems.

There are three administrator positions within SPHEO that formed the basis for data collection. The three positions are programme administrators, programme managers, and school managers. In relationship with the organisation, administrators in this research make up approximately 22 percent of the total population of all non-academic staff. Anecdotal evidence indicates that these administrators can, and have progressed through the various positions, from programme administrator to school manager.

Programme administrators complete many of the non-academic clerical processes required for the recording and reporting of programme and student information. Programme managers manage academic support systems for programmes, students, and academics. Some programme managers in larger schools may have added responsibilities, such as a team leader. School managers are responsible for the overview of and accountability for administrative requirements of all academic programmes offered in their respective schools. They are also responsible for the effective management of all administration staff within their school.

Organisation of the Thesis

The thesis contains six chapters including the introduction. The following chapters are summarised below.

Chapter Two examines related literature associated with administrators, their professional development and higher education.

Chapter Three provides an overview of the research methods employed and research tools used to collect data.

Chapter Four analyses data gathered from a questionnaire and focus group discussions.

Chapter Five discusses the disparities and similarities between administrators' perceptions of professional development and relevant literature.

Chapter Six presents the conclusions and recommendations. This chapter also discusses limitations of the study and proposes areas for further research.

CHAPTER TWO

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Introduction

This chapter examines literature from New Zealand and Australia, as well as from the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States of America (US) and explores literature from higher education professional organisations. As literature on professional development for higher education administrators seems to be sparse, literature from management and, to a lesser extent, literature from the compulsory education and public service sectors are also explored.

In this chapter I define administrators in relation to higher education organisations and their role in the organisation. I then examine the notion that the development of all staff in organisations is considered important. In a higher education environment, all staff would include administrators and academics alike. Finally, I examine barriers that may detract from administrators engaging in meaningful professional development programmes.

Key words such as leadership, management, professional development, training, management development, and professionalism are explored and applied in context to administrators, their employment contracts, and higher education organisations.

Administrators

There seems to be no one term to define non-academic staff in higher education organisations other than by defining them by what they are not, 'non-academic' (Conway, 2000b; Dobson and Conway, 2003). Pickersgill, van Barneveld and Bearfield (1998) and Szekeres (2006) use the terms 'general staff' as well as 'administrators' to define 'non-academic' staff within the higher education sector. Furthermore, professional organisations such as the Association of University Administrators (AUA) use the term 'administrator' (Boswell, 1998). In comparison, the term 'administration' or 'administrator' can define high leadership or educational governance within the compulsory education sector (Sergiovanni, Burlingame, Coombs, and Thurston, 1999).

The term 'administrator' defines one sector of the non-academic staffing in higher education. Not all 'non-academics' are administrators. Positions such as technicians, grounds persons, and maintenance staff are non-academic yet they are also non-administrative. These positions are sometimes referred to as 'allied' staff or 'general' staff as well as non-academic. However, administrators can also be defined as general staff or allied staff (Conway, 2000b; and Szekeres, 2006). Therefore, there is further confusion over the correct terminology for staff other than academic staff in higher education.

On line employment search engines such as jobs.co.nz, jseeker.com.au, and seek.co.nz use the term 'administrator' to identify data entry operators, office managers, personal assistants and executive assistants, receptionists and secretaries. Although not related to higher education, it nonetheless illustrates the use of this term in a New Zealand and Australian context. The term 'administrator' in the job search engines refers to general support staff and general management rather than high-level management and leadership personnel.

Where, then, do administrators fit in higher education where academia is the organisations *raison d'être*? Do administrators contribute to the development of academically focused mission statements? Johnsrud and Rosser (1999) argue that their contribution supports academic success through student learning support systems, reports, and academic staff support. Therefore, administrators' contribution is relevant to the success of higher education organisations. Moreover, administrators are employed by the organisation and therefore must, in some way, contribute to the requirements of organisational success. Otherwise, their role in the organisation would seem to be superfluous.

Administrators in higher education organisations can be defined in two distinct groups: specialist administrators; and generalist administrators (Boswell, 1998; and Whitchurch, 2004). Specialist administrators may also be associated with a secondary profession such as human resource management, accountancy, and public relations. Generalist administrators' profession may be more associated with academic support such as academic support, student advisers, learning support and the like (Johnsrud and Rosser, 1999; Boswell, 1998; and Whitchurch, 2004). The non-academic terms used in this research are defined and clarified in table 2.1 below.

Table 2.1: *Defined terminology of non-academic staff in higher education organisations*

Term	Descriptor
Non-Academic Staff	All Staff within higher education organisations that are not academic.
General or allied staff	All staff within higher education organisations that are not academic or managers.
Administration Staff	General staff members in higher education organisations whose function is administration.
Generalist Administrator	Administration staff involved with academic administration such as timetable and exam coordinators, student support administrators, and school managers. Higher education administration is their profession.
Specialist Administrator	Administration staff involved with operational organisational administration such as human resource personnel, marketing staff, and information technology technicians. Higher education administration is their secondary profession.
Administrators (In the context of this research)	Generalist administrators who provide programme administrative support in higher education schools and create an interface between students, academic staff, and the organisation. Administrator positions within SPHEO include school managers, programme managers, and programme administrators.
Administration	The non-academic organisational operational requirements of higher education organisations, such as finance, student data management, and the like generally completed by generalist and specialist administrators rather than academics and senior management of the organisation.
School	A school in the context of this research is a unit within the higher education organisation which provides education and training to the community in a defined range of disciplines. Academics, administrators and general staff would normally staff a school for the effective delivery of academic programmes.

Specialist administrators contribute to the development of academia in higher education organisations by managing educational resources such as the human resource management of teaching staff, computer lab facilities, buildings such as classrooms, and attracting students to the organisation through marketing strategies. These are resources of which without, teaching, learning and research would not be possible. Therefore, specialist administrators contribute to the academic operational requirements of higher education and are therefore indirectly involved in achieving academic success.

Administrators such as programme managers and learning support staff have direct contact with students. They help make a student's journey completing academic programmes successful. Boswell (1988) defines these administrators as generalist administrators. Generalist administrators work in areas such as the library, student support services, programme and regulations development, quality assurance, curriculum development, research support, committee work, admissions administration, examinations and assessment processes, and alumni relations (Boswell, 1998). According to Boswell, they create an interface between academic

programmes, students, academics, and academic support centres within the organisation. Therefore, generalist administrators are also indirectly involved in achieving academic success.

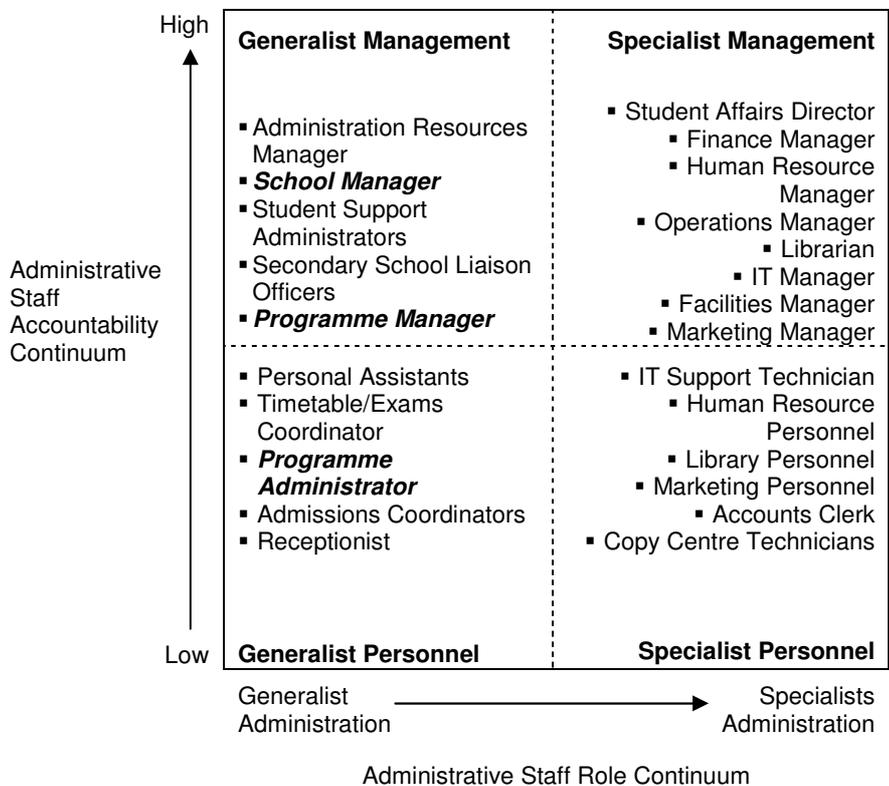


Figure 2.1: Higher education administration role and responsibility continuum.

Specialist and generalist administrators are represented in figure 2.1. On one continuum, levels of accountability, on the other, administration roles of purpose from generalist to specialist administration are indicated. Together, they form four distinct quadrants. However, in some cases, I would suggest that the boundaries between them may be blurred. SPHEO administrators who administer academic activity within their school span the generalist administrators' responsibility continuum.

Administrators are only one small group of non-academic staff within SPHEO. They provide students with *administrative* (New Zealand and Australian context) support to the academic programme to which they are assigned. They provide academic *administrative* (US compulsory education context) leadership to systems, procedures, and structures to academic systems and reporting requirements. However, administrators' leadership role in higher education systems and reporting

requirements is not high organisational leadership and management levels as the term implies in a US context.

Administrators and Mission Statements

Administrators, according to Conway (2000b) and Szekeres (2004) may not contribute to academic goals directly. Administrators may therefore be ignored where their contribution to higher educational goals are not valued. After all, “University administrators are used to being ignored. They are ignored by government, by the institutions which employ them and by the academics with whom they work on a day-to-day basis” (Conway, 2000b, p. 199).

The implications made by Szekeres (2004) and Conway (2000b) are simple. Administrators are not academic, and therefore may not contribute to academic goals. SPHEO mission statements espouse academic success through students’ creative and intellectual potential (SPHEO, 2006d). Academia is therefore SPHEO’s *raison d’être*. Therefore, mission statements and strategic goals of higher education organisations may not be inclusive of all staff (Conway, 2000b; Dobson and Calderon, 2006; and Szekeres, 2004).

One of five values statements espoused in the SPHEO mission statement highlights fairness and justice as organisational values (SPHEO, 2006d). Furthermore, one of over 10 vision statements express the institute’s student-centred focus and state that all services and activities contribute to academic success. Mission statements are an organisation’s statement to their community, stakeholders, and investors who have vested interests in the organisation’s purpose in the community (Samson and Daft, 2003). As argued earlier, all services and activities students engage in while studying in higher education are not delivered by academic staff. However, they are all supported by administration staff (Conway, 2000b). Therefore, academic values statements may not reflect administrators’ contribution to the organisation.

Contradicting the way values statements are used generally, such as by SPHEO, Henderson, Thompson, and Henderson (2006) describe values as “mental constructs that capture and express what is important to us” (p. 19). Furthermore, they describe different ways of defining values. According to Henderson et al. SPHEO’s fairness and justice ‘values’ are defined as morals, principles, and attitudes rather than values. Henderson et al. (2006) describe values as those which an organisation strives to achieve. The ultimate value is an organisation’s ‘goal’ value. In a higher

education context therefore the main goal value may be academic status or academic achievement. A 'means' value, Henderson et al. (2006) argue, are values that an organisation may focus on so that the ultimate goal value may be achieved.

When an organisation's goal value is academic success and achievement, an organisation may implement means values to achieve their ultimate goal. However, if the mean values are so focused on academia, difficulties may arise where non-academic staff in organisations may not see their contribution. In this situation, Henderson et al. (2006) argue, unaligned values may be evident, and therefore, conflicting values within the organisation may detract from the organisation achieving its goal values. Where the dynamics of two values are not managed appropriately they are referred to as a values conflict (Henderson et al., 2006).

The theories of Conway (2000b) and Szekeres (2004) may therefore be appropriate in a higher education administrative context. Administrators may not contribute to organisational goals in higher education. Furthermore, there may exist a values conflict in higher education between administrators and higher education *raison d'être*.

The following section discusses theories of professional development in organisations from both a management perspective and a higher education perspective.

Professional Development

Professional development is an important aspect of educational life for teachers and non-teachers (Oldroyd and Hall, 1997; and Anderson, 2003). They argue that professional development is an important aspect for all staff in the compulsory education sector. Partington and Stainton (2003) argue a similar theme in higher education. They argue that academics and non-academics alike should be engaged in professional development. Therefore, all staff in higher education organisations, including administrators, should be engaged in professional development.

Before a discussion can continue the term 'professional development' should be discussed and clarified. Rudman (2002) defines three distinct themes of professional development: Education, training, and development.

Education, according to Rudman (2002) is the “learning experiences which improves a person’s general knowledge and overall competencies. The orientation of education, therefore, is focused on the person not their job” (Rudman, 2002. p. 473). Woodall and Winstanley (1998) define education as the development of staff to learn, grow, and effectively develop their skills in a formal process. Woodall and Winstanley further argue that this kind of development may include programmes such as MBA’s, undergraduate business degrees and highly specialist post-graduate qualifications.

Training is the improvement of the person’s performance for a particular job, and focuses on the development of the individual’s ability to reach their full potential (Rudman, 2002). Woodall and Winstanley (1998) define this as ‘in-house’ management development programmes. Furthermore, they also argue that it is these programmes, rather than the educational orientated programmes that build staff skills and capabilities that help an organisation meet their goals.

Development according to Rudman (2002) and Woodall and Winstanley (1998) are a blend of both education and training. Education develops the core skills and abilities required by staff to be effective within their profession. Training develops the link between the core skills and organisational goals.

Meaningful professional development, therefore, is a blend of education and training. Education-based professional development engages the person’s effectiveness within their profession. It develops the core skills that enable the person to strive for excellence and mastery in their field of professionalism (Harrison, 2003). Training develops links between skills required for the profession and skills required for the organisation, as argued by Woodall and Winstanley (1998).

Professional development should therefore be a requirement for both organisational staff and the organisation. Without it, staff may not make the connection between their profession and the organisation. Furthermore, staff may not be able to strive for mastery and excellence, which sustains their profession and their ability to work effectively in the organisation. Similarly, organisations may not develop staff members that contribute effectively to organisational goals (Argyris, 1977; Argyris and Schön, 1996; Osei, 1996; Partington and Stainton, 2003; Fielden, 1998; and Conway, 2000b). Partington and Stainton (2003) further argue that all staff in higher education contribute to the development of academia, and therefore all staff contribute to the development of academic goals in higher education organisations.

Training is not enough, according to Harrison (2003). He explains that professional development is not just about staff members' active participation within a learning environment to support their immediate job requirements. It also requires an active engagement within an individual's profession, research, and career. Harrison's theories suggest that administrators have a responsibility to engage in professional development that focuses on not only their immediate need, but also on the wider context of their profession. A wider context may include the development of skills for the progression in their career (Harrison, 2003; and Johnsrud et al., 2000). To achieve this, Woodall and Winstanley (1998) suggest that a positive attitude and self-motivation is required before any development activity becomes effective.

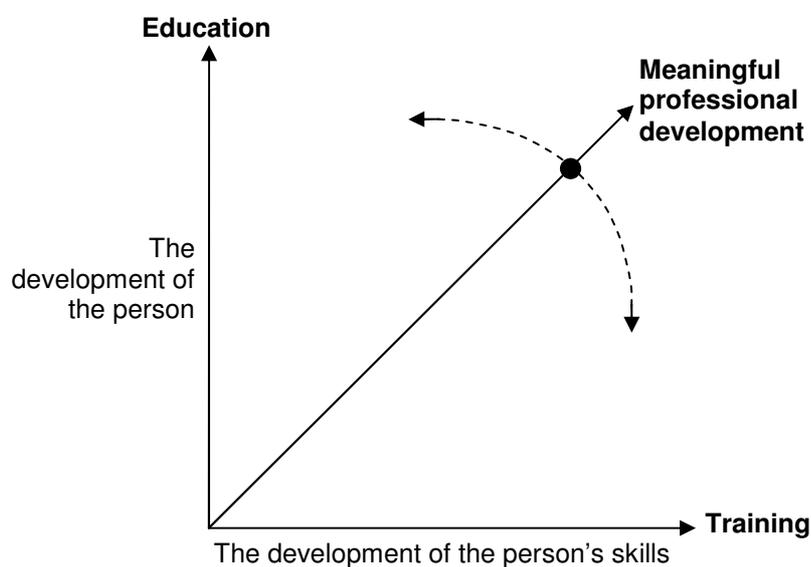


Figure 2.2: *Meaningful professional development: The person and their skills*

A relationship between education and training is illustrated in figure 2.2. The pendulum illustrates the engagement in education and training equally as being meaningful professional development (Rudman, 2002; Woodall and Winstanley and Harrison, 2003). However, it may be that some professions require a little more of one aspect of professional development than the other.

Organisational staff members also need to be continual learners (Laske and Maynes, 2002). Laske and Maynes argue, "One of the hallmarks of a learning organisation is the need for employers to be continuous learners who can monitor their own

performance and who recognise what is essential for success in the organisation” (p. 702). However, when the weight of either education or training is greater than the other, effective meaningful and continuing professional development may be compromised (Rudman, 2002; Woodall and Winstanley, 1998; and Laske and Maynes, 2002).

Administrators’ Professional Development

Eraut (1994) explicitly defines professional development as the correct term for the development, or continuing development of professionals. This view is extended by Doney (1998), who argues that continuing professional development is “generally regarded as related to a high-level of education and is not, therefore, applicable to para-professional or very junior staff” (p. 487). These statements imply that professional development is for professionals and their development of professionalism through high-level educational development programmes.

Indicating that there is another view point of staff development, Argyris and Schön (1996), Dick and Dalmau (1999), and Senge (1992) argue that everyone in an organisation should be engaged in professional development. Therefore, professional development is not just for professionals or managers, but it is just as important for non-professionals and junior members of an organisation. However, these arguments are contrary to those expressed by Eraut (1994) and Doney (1998), who explicitly define professional development as for professional or senior management staff only.

Higher education administrators’ professionalism is in an embryonic stage, according to Osei (1996). Beale (2001) describes similar positions as ‘para-professionals’. Strachan and Duirs (1993) further argue that administrators within higher education organisations should be interpreted as a “pseudo-professionalisation” (p. 463). Osei (1996) argues that administrators demonstrate the following elements of professionalism:

“(1) increase in formal status of administrative positions, (2) increase in the requirements for formal educational qualification to hold administrative positions, (3) emergence of a common cognitive basis, and (4) the growth and formalisation of networks between personnel in administrative positions” (Osei, 1996, p. 462-463).

Contrary to Osei's (1996) theory for the requirements for formal qualifications, Lauwerys (2002) observes that administrators' professional development is training focused. He explains that the "achievement of professional competence is very much to do with 'learning on the job' with an absolute minimum of formal training and a complete absence for the generalist of professional qualifications" (Lauwerys, 2002, p. 95). However, when suitable formal qualifications were available, he argues that an enthusiastic commitment to engage in such qualifications was not apparent amongst administrators despite encouragement from higher education organisations (Lauwerys, 2002). Therefore, professionalism and professional development for administrators may require support. For administrators, there are at least two professional organisations that offer support for administrators' professional development and the development of their profession.

Administrators in Australian and New Zealand higher education organisations can choose to belong to the Australasian Association of Tertiary Education Management (ATEM) (Conway, 2000b). ATEM provides pathways to continuing development, and provides support to the administration sector in higher education through the ATEM 'Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management'. Therefore administrators who belong to ATEM may be supported in their profession. Furthermore, excellence and mastery developed through meaningful professional development supports administrators' professionalism (Harrison, 2003). An introductory statement in an ATEM journal articulates its members' professional development and professional practice. It explains:

Tertiary education administration and management is a specialised and developing profession within academic institutions, requiring a commitment to lifelong learning and continuous professional development to the highest standards of professional practice (Dobson and Calderon, 2006, p. iii).

The Association of University Administrators (AUA) also provides support for the development of administration professionalism in the UK (Conway, 2000a; and Whitchurch, 1999). The AUA offers members an academic journal and a professional post-graduate qualification. Furthermore, the AUA expects members to "acquire a generic body of knowledge which is underpinned by its code of professional standards" (Boswell, 1998, para 11). With this framework in place and available to all members, AUA affiliated administrators have access to high-level educational development designed for a profession as described earlier by Doney (1998). Moreover, the AUA provides a qualification, at post-graduate level, which is available

to any administrator who has an undergraduate degree. According to Gornitzka and Larsen (2004) and Strachan and Duirs (1993) more administrators in higher education have degrees than those in the public sector. Research conducted by Strachan and Duirs (1993) established that twenty-five percent of administrators in their research population had an undergraduate degree level qualification.

Post graduate qualifications have been developed for public servants in Australia to meet the growing requirement for further professional development of public service professionals who have degrees (Dixon, 2006). Furthermore, skills development is specialised in areas to meet the specific professionalism and core competencies required of the profession as argued earlier by Woodall and Winstanley (1998). Although Dixon's theories are in the public service sector rather than higher education, it nonetheless illustrates that specific post graduate qualifications are available for related professions. There are specialist post graduate programmes available for administrators from at least two professional organisations, the AUA and the Australian public service. As many administrators may already have degree-level qualifications, post graduate study may be an achievable goal for further study.

It may be that educational qualifications are not appropriate for some, and may be more appropriate for others. Nonetheless, educational professional development in some form may still be required to effectively enable administrators to strive for excellence, develop mastery, and maintain levels of professionalism (Harrison, 2003).

The following section discusses barriers that may detract administrators from engaging in meaningful professional development.

Barriers to Professional Development

Administrators do not have the same provisions for professional development as other staff in higher education (Szekeres, 2004; SPHEO, 2000a; 2006b). The only way administrators can engage in meaningful professional development, other than learning on the job training courses, is by manipulating their employment contracts to suit their own professional development requirements (Szekeres, 2004; and Lauwerys, 2002).

Learning on the job seems to be the predominant kind of professional development that administrators engage in (Lauwerys, 2002). Engaging in training related courses

demonstrates that administrators are engaging in professional development. Therefore, administrators demonstrate that they as 'non-academics' engage in professional development as do academics (Oldroyd and Hall, 1997; Anderson, 2003; and Partington and Stainton, 2003). However, it does not demonstrate that administrators are engaged in a balance of education and training professional development as argued by Rudman (2002) and Woodall and Winstanley (1998). Administrators not engaged in meaningful professional development may therefore find it difficult to develop the skills for their career growth (Harrison, 2003; and Johnsrud et al. 2000).

Career growth and advancement in the administrative profession may therefore be limited. Administrators may not have the time for the kind of professional development that may enhance their career advancement. Advancement as an administrator in higher education is difficult, argues Johnsrud et al., (2000). They claim that it is easier for an organisation to employ administrators with the requisite skills rather than develop existing administrators. Furthermore, when promotion opportunities arise in higher education, administrators find it difficult gaining the required formal qualifications through professional development due to a lack of time and the availability of suitable programmes of study (Johnsrud, Heck, and Rosser, 2000).

As discussed earlier, 25 percent of administrators have a degree qualification (Strachan and Duirs, 1993). However, Johnsrud, et al. (2000) argues that this may detract from engagement in professional development. Johnsrud et al. discuss the morale of administrators and establish that, despite their relatively high levels of education, they are not respected in higher education organisations. This aspect may manifest in the fact that administrators' workloads and working hours are higher than those for academics (Anderson, Guido-DiBrito, and Morrell, 2000). They argue that student affairs administrators, US higher education student support administrators, work longer hours and are tied to task and procedural duties (Anderson et al., 2000). The inequality of working conditions is one factor that may detract administrators from engaging in professional development opportunities, other than 'on the job' training (Johnsrud et al., 2000; and Lauwerys, 2002).

Professional development that academics undertake would naturally lead to the development of organisational mission and values statements where mission statements are academically focused. Firstly, it develops their intellectual knowledge

in their area of expertise, and moreover, their professionalism. Secondly, it supports the development of their students' success in the organisation and achieves academic mission and values statements (Sergiovanni, 2000). The same opportunities for professional development should therefore be available to administrators in higher education (Rosser, 2000). Rosser suggests that administrators who engage in "professional development gain the skills and experience necessary to take on new and more challenging positions" (Rosser, 2000, p. 9).

Conclusion

Professional development, according to authors such as Eraut (1994) and Rudman (2002), is for professionals in a profession. However, other authors, such as Strachan and Duirs (1993) and Beale (2001) define administrators as professionals, even if only emerging. However, to add to the complexity Argyris and Schön (1996), Oldroyd and Hall (1997), and Anderson (2003) argue that all staff within an organisation should be involved in professional development to grow the organisation and the individual regardless of their levels of professionalism.

Other than on the job training, formal professional development appears to be problematic for administrators in higher education organisations. Either suitable professional development programmes are not available or administrators have difficulties finding the time to engage in them.

Effective and meaningful professional development for administrators in higher education organisations seems to be problematic. Some of the issues that create a problematic environment are administrators' levels of professionalism, their role in higher education, organisational mission statements, and contractual support.

The following chapter outlines how I investigated administrators' perceptions of professional development in higher education organisations.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGIES AND RESEARCH METHODS

Introduction

This chapter explores the various methods I employed to gather perceptions of administrators in higher education organisations. Administrators' perceptions, understanding, and beliefs within an academic organisation may, in some ways, be overlooked in an organisation where academia is the primary focus.

An appropriate method of study for this thesis was qualitative rather than quantitative. I collected data with a questionnaire and focus group discussions in a phenomenological style and in an interpretive paradigm. The study was a bounded phenomenon, and therefore a case study style of research was appropriate to interpret administrators' perceptions.

A questionnaire and two focus group discussions were employed to complement each other and provide some validity to the data collected. A questionnaire provides an opportunity for all administrators to participate whereas focus groups provide a limited sample with an opportunity to explore perceptions in more detail.

Methodology

Qualitative research, according to Bryman (2004) is more concerned with the exploration of the "understanding of the social world through an examination of the interpretation of that world by its participants" (p. 266). Therefore, understanding the needs of administrators in higher education is best interpreted through the views of participants themselves (Bryman, 2004). Mertens (2005) more specifically lists approaches that can be employed in qualitative research, including "field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings and memos to the self" (p. 229).

There are two distinct strands to qualitative study. Both strands attempt to make sense of human activity or social rituals, traditions or relationships (Denscombe, 1998). Denscombe's first strand description addresses the "concern with meaning and the way people understand things" whereas the second has more of "a concern

with patterns of behaviour” (p. 267). How administrators relate to and undertake professional development within higher education organisations may be of interest to higher education organisations that recognise that all staff contribute to the development of organisational goals. Therefore, this research seeks to understand administrators’ perceptions rather than understanding patterns of behaviour (Denscombe, 1998).

In comparison, quantitative methods are more concerned with numbers and their relationship with theory and with an emphasis on testing scientific theories (Bryman, 2004). Quantitative research is more about fact finding than interpretation (McQueen and Zimmerman, 2006). Furthermore, Bell (1999) argues that quantitative research tests scientifically hypothesis statements rather than understanding the human environment and their behaviours (Bell, 1999; and Denscombe, 1998).

Social science researchers are “united in their common rejection of the belief that human behaviour is governed by general, universal laws and characterised by underlying regularities” (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000, p. 19). Cohen et al. describe social science as being predominately anti-positivist rather than a quantitative and theory testing positivist research style. However Cohen et al. (2000) also define two different social science research styles: normative and interpretive. They argue that normative paradigms, being positivist, assume that “human behaviour is essentially rule-governed; and second, that it should be investigated by methods of natural science” (p. 22).

From a different perspective, Fox, Martin and Green (2007) argue that normative research strategy “assumes people will seek to follow whatever feels culturally appropriate; they will go with the flow” (p. 176). Furthermore, they illustrate that normative strategy will “bring about cultural change within the practice area” (Fox et al., p. 176). The kind of professional development administrators engage in is not rule driven. Furthermore, this research study is not attempting to initiate change within the practice area. Rather it aims to understand perceptions of a select group of administrators’ engagement in professional development in a higher education organisation.

In contrast, in an anti-positivist social science paradigm, interpretive research is more concerned with seeing through the eyes of others (Bryman, 2004). Interpretive researchers “begin with individuals and set out to understand their interpretations of the world around them” (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 23). Administrators are the focus of

this study. It is about administrators' understanding of professional development in the context of their organisation. No attempt has been made to initiate change to administrators' culture. Therefore, this research is interpretive rather than normative.

Case Study

A case study method of study enabled me to study administrators within SPHEO, their needs, and their perceptions of professional development in an academic environment (Bell, 1999). Stake (1995) defines a case study as a "bounded system" (p. 2). The object of study, rather than a process, is bounded by working parts. Cohen et al. (2000) suggests that case studies "are set in temporal, geographical, organisational, institutional and other contexts that enable boundaries to be drawn around [a] case" (p. 182). The temporal, geographical, organisational, institutional and other contexts of this study are set within the boundaries of three distinct foci. As illustrated in figure 3.1, these include administrators, professional development, and academic organisations. Furthermore, Bell argues that a case study gives a researcher an opportunity to study one aspect of a phenomenon in some depth and within a set period of time.

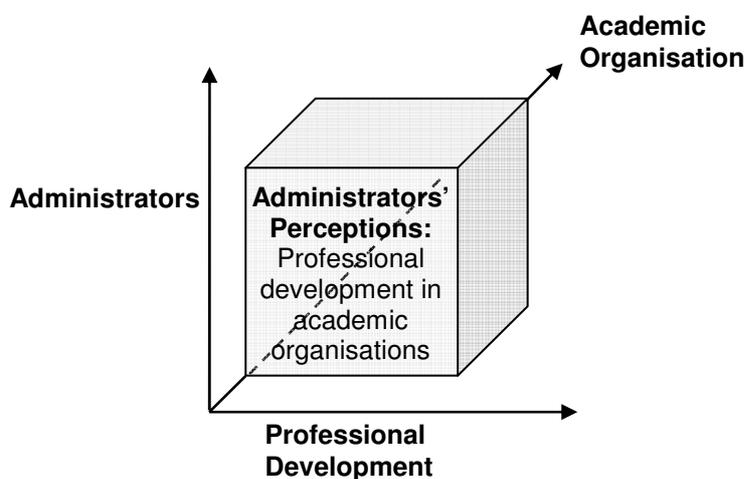


Figure 3.1: *A bounded phenomena: Administrators' professional development in higher education - A multi-foci single case study.*

Figure 3.1 illustrates the bounded phenomena of this case study. One focus represents the higher education organisation. The second focus represents professional development activity which may be administrators' training needs or

professional qualifications. The third focus represents administrators. Tensions between administrators and the first two foci may illustrate a dichotomy administrators' encounter while engaging in professional development programmes in an academic organisation.

As this research is only studying one organisation, the case study is a single case study rather than a multi-case, or a multiple organisational study (Yin, 2003). Furthermore, it is only gathering data from one sector of the organisation. Therefore, the case study is classified, according to Yin (2003) as a single and holistic case study.

Both quantitative and qualitative methods can be used effectively within case study research (Yin, 2003; and Denscombe, 1998). Moreover, Yin (2003) clarifies that the 'why' and 'how' research questions are better answered in a focus group or an interview. The 'what' and 'who' research questions are better answered in questionnaire surveys. Yin argues that the 'why' and 'how' questioning methods are more likely to gain an understanding of the behavioural aspects of the research population. Furthermore, the 'what' and 'who' questioning methods are more likely to gain an understanding of the occurrence of actions and engagement within professional development programmes.

Participants

SPHEO management provided me with permission to contact administrators directly through school managers. I was also granted access to organisational internal documents, such as employment contract templates. Through school managers, 104 administrators were identified and included in a draft list. Emailing all 104, using a blind copy address format, six replies were received indicating that they were not in positions that met my participation criteria, and therefore requested to be removed from my final list.

A final population of administrators was therefore formed, with a total of 98 participants, or 22 percent of SPHEO's non-academic staff. A population of 98 participants falls slightly below a minimum of one hundred participants in questionnaire studies, as recommend by Cohen et al. (2000). Of the 98 administrators, 17 were school managers, 68 were programme managers, and 13 were programme administrators.

The Questionnaire

To gain administrators' perceptions of their professional development activity and support, the questionnaire asked 'why' and 'how' questions (Yin, 2003). Hinds (2000) argues that a questionnaire is "concerned with gathering data from, usually, a large number of people (or respondents), and the data gathered usually focuses on the views, ideas and attitudes" (p. 41). Therefore, the questionnaire was personalised to the administrators own situation, with 'I' and 'me' contextualised questions and with a selection of correspondingly related 'I' responses.

The questionnaire in this thesis is therefore more interpretive in a social science anti-positive environment rather than being normative in a positivist paradigm (Bryman, 2004; Cohen et al., 2000; and Fox et al., 2007). The 'I' and 'me' statements enable all participants in the questionnaire to be, as Yin (2003) states, "participant observers" (p. 93). The questionnaire therefore gathers data from each participant as if the questionnaire were the eyes of a single participant observer (Yin, 2003).

The questionnaire, available in appendix one, is structured in three sections. Section one seeks demographic information of the participating population. Section two seeks details of previous and current professional development activity. It also seeks administrators' perceptions of their professional development experiences, and organisational support. Section three seeks administrators' perceived requirements for professional development for both their personal and professional requirements.

Questionnaire Design

In designing the questionnaire, I was guided by Anderson's six-step questionnaire design process (Anderson, 1998). Anderson provides six steps for the design of questionnaires. These being determine your questions, draft the items, sequence the items, design the questionnaire, pilot-test the questionnaire, and develop a strategy for data collection and analysis. My design processes followed these six steps and are discussed in the following sections.

Step One: Determine Your Questions

Questions were determined by three factors: the participants' demographics; their current professional development; and their future professional development requirements.

Demographic questions were designed to ensure that a wide as possible cross section of the administrator population was represented. Simple 'tick the appropriate response' questions were asked. Thomas (1999) states that sub group information help a researcher understand the data. She also argues that demographic information is looking for differences in the questionnaire population. Differences may be existing qualifications, gender, the duration of employment, schools, and position (Statistics New Zealand, 1995).

However, to maintain some anonymity, the questionnaire in appendix one has been amended slightly from what was distributed to participants. Question 1.2, which lists the names of all the schools in SPHEO, has been amended to generic unrelated school names. Which school administrators belonged to was not relevant. I had made assurances in the 'Invitation to participate' letter and the focus group consent letter that I would not present data that identified anyone or their school. However, identifying that participants were invited and responded from all schools was of more interest to me for reliability issues (Bell, 1999).

Current professional development was explored in section two. Questions in section two were designed to gain an understanding of administrators' perceptions of professional development. As discussed earlier, the literature states that professional development could be training, education, or a blend of the two. Furthermore, questions were designed to engage participants in self reflection, and therefore express their perceptions. Participants were asked to reflect on the effectiveness of professional development in areas such as their own employment needs, their personal goals, their career aspirations, or because they were instructed to engage in professional development. Further exploration in this section asked administrators to express how they were supported by the organisation to engage in professional development activity.

Section three asked three questions. Each question was similar in format and wording. However, each was slightly different. Questions asked administrators to reflect on the kind of professional development they would like to participate in for their current career position, their next logical career step or direction, and for their long term career directions.

Step Two: Draft the Items

Questions were drafted at the same time as the questions were determined, as espoused by Gillham (2000). Therefore, a picture of the overall design of the questionnaire was being formed during the question drafting process.

Questions in section one of the questionnaire were all multi-choice questions. Some open ended response opportunities were provided to include participants who did not meet the responses provided. Anderson (1998) articulates that multi-choice questions are familiar to most participants and it therefore eases participants into engaging into the questionnaire. Anderson also explains that this feature provides reliable and valid responses. Cohen et al. (2000) argues that multi-choice questions are quick and easy to use. They also argue that multi-choice questions limit responses available and therefore make coding straight forward.

Section two of the questionnaire employed a range of question styles. Four distinctly different kinds of questions were designed, ranging from multi-choice questions to questions requiring administrators to rank given statements. There were two kinds of multi-choice questions, single response and multiple responses. The responses provided for these questions were based on the theories and arguments within the literature review relevant to administrators in higher education. Multi-choice questions with only one response expected were generally worded as closed questions whereas multiple response questions were open (Hinds, 2000). Multi-choice questions had between four to eight possible response statements, as recommended by Thomas (1999).

Likert rating questions were also used in section two. I employed likert questions in my questionnaire to similarly understand attitudes of administrators to their professional development. Five possible response options were available to each statement made, from 'very important' to 'not important at all'. A middle option was also provided. However, the middle response was a 'not sure' option rather than a 'middle of the road' choice. A 'not sure' response effectively changed a five-step likert scale to a four-step scale, or an even-step scale, such as discussed by Bell (2007). Therefore, unless the participants did not select the 'not sure' response, their final selection had to be either positive or negative rather than a neutral choice (Cohen et al. 2000).

An open-ended question was provided at the end of section two with space for administrators' comments. Open response sections to a question provided administrators an opportunity to move outside the given responses, and therefore make it more relevant to themselves while still staying inside the boundaries of the question structure (Cohen et al., 2000). "Gems of information that otherwise might not have been caught in the questionnaire" (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 255) were collected in an open-ended question.

Some questions in section two and all questions in section three of the questionnaire requested administrators to rank their three most relevant responses to a given question. From a response statement bank, administrators were asked to select only three, and rank these three in their order of appropriateness to the given statement. Anderson (1998) argues that ranking questions are more powerful than single or multiple selection response questions, as it forces administrators into some difficult decisions. As with multiple selective multi-choice questions, the stem statement was structured for an open response. Figure 3.2, an excerpt from the questionnaire in appendix one, was provided as an example of how this question format should be answered. However, the example had limited success, as will be discussed.

Rank, in order, three statements in each of the following two questions by numbering 1 to 3, the three that best describe how they relate to you. (1 being your first choice, 3 being your third choice) See the example below.	
Example I like the colour purple because:	
	<i>Rank 1 to 3 your first three options ✎</i>
a) It makes me feel good	3
b) It reminds me of someone I know	
c) It is a blend of my two most favourite primary colours	1
d) It's the same colour as an Aubergine	2
e) It's a Royal colour	

Figure 3.2: Selected ranking question format

The ranking question format proved to be the most difficult from which to gain a valid and reliable response. Although most participants responded to the questions correctly, fifteen percent of participants found this style of questioning difficult to complete correctly. A range of up to eight possible responses were provided, well within the recommendations by Anderson (1998). An example of how the question should be answered was shown on the questionnaire, as illustrated in figure 3.2. Instead of ranking just three statements, some ranked all statements from one to three. Therefore, some statements were ranked 'one' others ranked 'two' and so forth until all statements were ranked either with a one, two, or three. This, in effect, made

this kind of response to the question invalid. Incidentally, this difficulty was not identified during the questionnaire pilot-testing phase.

Step Three: Sequence the Items

Early questions set the tone for the following questions (Cohen et al., 2000). Some questions in section one introduced professional development and qualifications. Section two and three provided administrators the opportunity to elaborate on their current professional development activity and perceptions.

Sequencing the questions within each section was therefore important to maintain interest and offer structure. Cohen et al. (2000) provided some guidance to sequencing questions. The questionnaire started with non-threatening questions that provided some nominal data. Questions then moved to multi-choice and likert questions in section two. Important at this stage was “eliciting responses that require opinions, attitudes, perceptions, and views” (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 257). Finally questions move into more open questions in section three. These responses requested more personal or sensitive data from administrators (Cohen et al., 2000; Bell, 1999).

Step Four: Design the Questionnaire

It was apparent in the early design phase of the questionnaire development that it was not going to be short. Anderson (1998) considers a short questionnaire being less than four pages. Administrators are busy people, as argued earlier, and may not have the time to complete a long and difficult questionnaire. Unfortunately, my questionnaire grew to seven pages and therefore, was no longer short.

Bell (1999) argues that there are no firm rules on the layout of questionnaires. However she does provide some guidelines such as instructions, words of thanks, statements on anonymity, and details of the research project.

Instructions for the questionnaire were added at the beginning, as well as a statement of thanks at the end. Included in the introduction statement was a declaration that participants were, by returning the questionnaire, a willing and informed participant, as detailed in the ‘Information to Participants’ letter distributed with the questionnaire.

Total anonymity was promised to participants. Therefore, individual questionnaires were not numbered or coded in any way (Bell, 1999).

Step Five: Pilot-Test the Questionnaire

The draft questionnaire was pilot tested several times. Firstly it was piloted with close associates with corresponding amendments made to the questionnaire according to feedback received. The amended questionnaire was then pilot tested again by administrators in SPHEO, but outside the target participants. Finally the re-amended questionnaire was pilot tested for a third time by administrators from another similar higher education organisation (Bell, 2007).

The purpose of piloting the questionnaire, according to Bell (1999) is to test the effectiveness of the questions, layout, instructions, and time taken to complete. After each pilot test, I requested feedback from the pilot participants. Changes were made in response to feedback received. Changes made included redesigning multiple selection multi-choice questions and re-wording some instructions to improve clarity to some questions.

Step Six: Develop a Strategy for Data Collection and Analysis

It was argued by Hinds (2000) that serial numbers should be added to the questionnaire before being distributed to aid identification when they were returned. I considered this unnecessary where each individual school was listed in section one. It was more important that there was a cross section of participants from all, or at least most schools rather than tracking the return of numbered questionnaires.

The questionnaire and the invitation to participate were sent to administrators through the organisations internal mail system. A detailed covering letter and consent forms accompanied the questionnaire, as well as an addressed and postage paid return postal envelope (Fogelman, 2002).

The 'invitation to participate' letter detailed my role as an academic with management responsibilities so that any possible power relationship was disclosed (Fogelman, 2002). Thomas (1999) argues that informed consent must be gained if there is a power relationship over respondents. Administrators completing the questionnaire were therefore able to make an informed decision whether to participate or not through the information provided in the 'invitation to participate' letter.

Questionnaire Data Management

I numbered the questionnaires as they were returned. I did this for two reasons, firstly to track the number of responses from the questionnaire, and secondly to establish a link between individual returned questionnaires and the data entered into a computer spreadsheet programme. Where difficulties with data analysis were experienced, I was able to revisit the questionnaire and clarify data. I considered this to be an effective way to manage possible confusion. The numbers on the questionnaires in no way relate to participants. The order of numbering was based on the order the questionnaires were returned.

Data from the returned questionnaire were analysed using the 'Microsoft Excel' computer programme. There were less than one hundred administrators. Therefore the use of specialist computer programmes, such as SPSS, designed for the analysing of large quantities of data as suggested by Cohen, et al. (2000) was not considered necessary. However, the analysis of the ranked questions, such as that illustrated in figure 3.2 earlier, was problematic. Firstly, I could find no examples of how to analyse this kind of data, and secondly, manipulating the data from the raw data was problematic. Methods of analysing this data are explained in more detail in the following chapter.

Focus Groups

Focus groups took place in a semi-structured format to ensure that questioning was not dominated by the focus group facilitator and to prevent discussion fragmenting (Hinds, 2000). Furthermore, discussions and interactions between administrators enabled deep and meaningful data to emerge (Cohen et al., 2000). A semi-structured format allowed administrators to express their interrelationships between their professional development activity, personal development plans, career path, and organisational support.

The semi-structured questioning and discussion plan, available in appendix two, followed the same themes as the questionnaire. All questions used the 'why' and 'how' format. Firstly, administrators discussed their current professional development, and their perceptions of what defines professional development. Secondly, discussion centred on administrators' professional development requirements for themselves, for their career, for their personal development, and for their

organisation. Thirdly, administrators discussed perceived barriers that may prevent them participating in effective professional development.

It was argued by Krueger (1994) that 'why' questions should not be used in focus groups. Krueger suggests that 'why' questions promote quick answers from participants. Bryman (2004) used the word 'why' in an illustration of focus group questioning and discussion. Although Bryman's example demonstrated a short response, this was not evident during my focus group discussions. In fact it was the contrary. One focus group discussion extended half an hour past the agreed one hour limit.

Although being semi-structured, questions need to be very carefully planned, even though they may seem to be spontaneous (Krueger, 1994). A brief round robin introduction section eased administrators into a discussion and developed relationships between participants. Key questions forming the basis of discussion were asked next. Time was provided to enable administrators to share and discuss their perceptions of what professional development meant to them and why their ideals were important. This section provided the core data that was used for the final analysis and triangulation with the questionnaire data. Finally, ending questions were asked. Administrators were asked to sum up their ideal professional development requirements and plans as if there were no barriers to what could be achieved.

It was my intention to run one focus group for programme managers and school managers, and another focus group for programme administrators and programme managers. Unfortunately, I was not successful attracting any programme administrators willing to participate in focus groups. Therefore, the second focus group was again a mixture of school managers and programme managers.

All administrators were openly invited to participate in a focus group. However, the final selection of each focus group was determined by me to ensure that each group reflected participants' experience and tenure of employment from across the organisation.

I limited each focus group to no more than 10 participants, but expected more than four to participate. Ten were invited to each group. If participants could not show on the day, as was the case, a reasonable number would nonetheless be available at the time to create meaningful discussion (Bryman, 2004).

Focus group discussions was recorded and transcribed for analysis by myself. During the transcribing and reading process, themes and sub-themes were identified, and therefore, the beginning stages of coding the data began. Themes and sub-themes generally matched the format of the questionnaire. Therefore, triangulation of data analysis between the questionnaire and focus groups added to the study's validity.

The analysis of data into themes and sub-themes was managed manually, using the 'long-table' cut and paste methods described by Krueger and Casey (2000). Each focus group transcript was printed, with 'line numbering format' function activated, onto different coloured paper. Therefore, as themes and sub-themes were created, I could track the focus group from which the data emerged and from where in the discussion the data emerged. It was not envisaged that sufficient data would be collected to justify the use of electronic qualitative data analysis programmes.

Limitations, Reliability and Validity

Limitations to the data collected in focus groups may be apparent where the moderator is also the researcher (Bryman, 2004). However, the semi-structured focus group format provided the opportunity for administrators to explore issues that were pertinent to them rather than the moderator steering the discussion. In essence, I therefore considered that the researcher moderating a focus group created no limitations to the quality of data collected.

Integrating themes and sub-themes from focus group discussions with that from the questionnaire provided some basis for analysing data. Furthermore, it made a difficult task of analysing data from the focus group manageable (Bryman, 2004). Comparing both sets of data in similar themes and sub-themes added some form of verification of the data collected. This is evident in the following chapter.

Creswell (1998) discusses the use of "multiple and different sources, methods, investigators and theories to provide corroborating evidence" (p. 202). Using a questionnaire and a focus group employs two different methods of obtaining corroborating evidence. Hussey and Hussey (1997) argue the same concept. They argue that the use of "different research approaches, methods and techniques in the same study" (p. 74) assists triangulation. Hussey and Hussey advocate the benefits of using different methods in the same study which strengthen validity and reliability, particularly when the two methods arrive at similar conclusions.

Initial findings in the questionnaires enabled some areas of interest to be investigated within the focus groups. However, the questionnaires were still being collected as the focus group discussions began. Initial reviews of the questionnaire data allowed me to explore some areas that validated the relationship between administrators and professional development activity.

Whereas focus groups establish rich data within the administrators' world, questionnaires provide details of actual professional development activity across the participating population (Cohen et al., 2000). Therefore, as Creswell (1998) and Hussey and Hussey (1997) espouse, the use of two different data collection methods and two complementary styles of investigation created reliable and valid data. Administrators' perceptions of professional development within the context of the case study were therefore reliable and valid. However, there are some limitations to the study. Hussey and Hussey (1997) explain that limitations are the constraints put on the boundaries of the investigation. They also argue that these limitations produce potential weaknesses in the research.

A limitation to the investigation may be the narrow focus of administrators (programme administrators, programme managers and school managers) participating in this research. The participating administrators are a portion of an unknown percentage of generalist administrators and 22 percent of all non-academic staff in SPHEO. Therefore, data collected and analysed may only relate to an unknown range of generalist administrators in higher education organisations. As argued earlier, specialist administrators have a secondary profession. Therefore data gathered from generalist administrators may not be relevant to specialist administrators in higher education.

Focus group discussions did not include any programme administrators. Therefore, their views have not been explored in greater detail in a discussion format and can therefore not be compared to data collected in the questionnaire.

Ethical Issues

There are four main ethical issues, which concern the interpersonal interactions of the participants. These are the anonymity of participants, informed consent, possible harm issues, and participants' rights to withdraw from the study (Cohen et al., 2000).

Administrators were predominantly female. I am a male, an academic, and a manager in a higher education organisation. Therefore, there was a concern that a power relationship may compromise the focus group session by virtue of gender, position, relationship, or all of these aspects and pose possible harm issues. To minimise the effect that the facilitator may play, focus groups were designed as semi-structured focus groups (Hinds, 2000). Furthermore, the facilitator encouraged both positive and negative discussions, to “avoid judgements about responses and controlling body language communicating approval or disapproval” (Hinds, 2000, p. 50).

All research data gathering tools developed for this enquiry were presented to the SPHEO Research Ethics Committee (SREC) for their approval before being distributed. Furthermore, all SREC and ethical policies and requirements normally requested within SPHEO were respected. These included informed consent, rights to withdrawal, possible harm issues, a complaints process, and participants’ rights to view a draft report, anonymity, and confidentiality issues.

Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview of the methods of enquiry used to explore the perceptions of administrators’ professional development in higher education. Interpretive case study methods were employed. Qualitative data collection tools such as a questionnaire and focus group discussions invited administrators to participate and share their perceptions.

Administrators’ perceptions gathered from these data collecting tools are presented in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

ADMINISTRATORS' PERCEPTIONS OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

This chapter provides a narrative of the data collected in both the questionnaire and focus group discussions and summarises the perceptions of administrators' professional development. The four aspects of this chapter are:

1. Professional development as defined by administrators;
2. Professional development courses that administrators engage in;
3. Professional development courses that administrators would engage in for themselves and their profession; and
4. Barriers that prevent administrators engaging in meaningful professional development.

In this chapter, I present general demographic data of participating administrators and participation rates for the questionnaire and focus groups separately. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, themes in the semi-structured questioning of the focus group sessions were similar to the themes of the questionnaire. Therefore, I present administrators' perceptions of professional development from the questionnaire data alongside the data collected from the focus group. Comparisons and disparities between the two data collection methods may then be discussed where required.

Participant Details

In this section I present details of administrators participating in the questionnaire and focus group questionnaire.

Participant Response Rates

Questionnaire: Of the 98 generalist administration population identified in chapter four, a total of 51 administrators returned the questionnaire providing a response rate

of 52 percent. The participating administrators collectively represented all schools within the organisation.

Focus groups: A total of 10 administrators participated in two focus group discussions, representing 10 percent of the generalist administration population. Of these, seven were programme managers and three were school managers. Administrators represented 41 percent of the total number of schools in the organisation.

Administrators' Demographics

Questionnaire: Data from the questionnaire established that 98 percent of administrators were female. Thirty percent of administrators were new to the organisation, employed by SPHEO for less than a year. Nearly 70 percent of administrators had been with SPHEO for two or more years. Of the 70 percent employed over two years, 40 percent had been with SPHEO for over five years. Participating administrators were well qualified. Nearly half of all participating administrators had a degree level qualification, or higher.

Focus groups: All participants were female. Sixty percent of focus group participants had been employed by SPHEO for two years or more. Of these, 30 percent had been with SPHEO for over five years.

The following section presents data from the questionnaire and focus groups together, as discussed earlier.

Administrators' Defined Professional Development

According to questionnaire data, 86 percent of administrators perceived one day work-related training courses as professional development. For 71 percent of administrators, training courses of a week-long and up to one month was defined as being professional development. Therefore, administrators have indicated that they define training courses as relevant professional development. Administrators also defined formal qualifications as relevant professional development, with 76 percent of administrators selecting this option.

Collectively therefore, the questionnaire data established that administrators define professional development as training courses and formal qualifications. However,

with an 86 percent response rate, one day training courses seems to be defined as the preferred kind of professional development, as illustrated in figure 4.1.

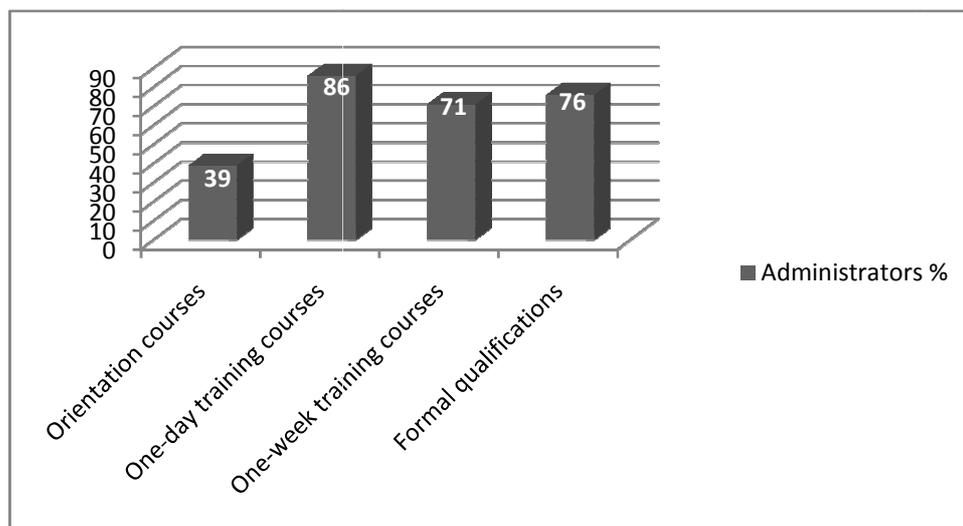


Figure 4.1: Administrators' definition of professional development

A different perception is presented in the focus group discussions. Administrators in focus group discussions defined professional development as training-related courses rather than formal qualifications. At the beginning of each focus group, I asked participants to define their perceptions of professional development. Ninety percent of participants in this exercise defined training courses as professional development. Formal qualifications received a relatively low level of support from all focus group participants except one (10 percent). One administrator clearly stated that training was not professional development, as will be discussed later in this chapter.

One administrator commented that computer training courses are the most prevalent kind of professional development. She stated:

What is provided is mainly computer training and it is all focused back on what your job is. Although that is what I think professional development is, it should be related to your job. If you can do the study as well that is just a bonus I guess (FG2, Participant 1).

Discussion within one focus group touched on courses that develop the person as a whole rather than just for the organisation. These courses, they argued, provide some benefits to the organisation and colleagues alike as it developed skills that computer training courses cannot develop, such as interpersonal skills. She stated:

We all bring life skills to the role as well as being not just a parent and a grandparent and a [trainer]. They're all skills that you bring to the role you have at [SPHEO]. But in developing those roles you professionally develop both yourselves and the staff you work with. It is all about those opportunities (FG1, Participant 6).

Professional development that administrators engaged in is discussed in the following section.

Administrators' Professional Development Engagement

In section two of the questionnaire, participants were asked to identify whether they had engaged in professional development while employed in their current position. Ninety percent of administrators said they had completed professional development while employed in their current position. Of the administrators who indicated that they had engaged, a majority (80 percent) said they completed their last professional development course or programme within the last six months. Only two percent indicated that their last professional development course was over a year ago.

Collectively, 10 percent of administrators had not undertaken any professional development in their current position. Reasons as to why they had not participated are unclear. It may be that the wording of questions in the questionnaire did not enable relevant data to emerge. Administrators may not have been in their current position long enough to have been active in professional development and therefore, their feedback had not provided their actual development activity. Unfortunately, returned data did not provide these answers. Nonetheless, 90 percent of administrators are actively engaged in professional development. The kind of professional development activity was not clarified in the questionnaire. However it was clarified during the focus group discussions.

Kinds of Professional Development Activity

During focus group sessions, I asked participants to recall the professional development programmes they were engaged in during the last twelve months.

All but one participant recalled their professional development activity as being training related courses rather than educational programmes. Moreover, computer programme training seemed to be the most prevalent kind of professional development recalled by administrators. The following two statements exemplify statements from focus group participants. It was clear that computer-based training

courses and other organisational related training courses were the focus of administrators' professional development activity. Two examples of focus group statements are provided below.

I've done [student management information system (SMIS)] training. I've also done performance development and time management course, [and] minute taking workshops (FG1, Participant 5). (SMIS - is a student, organisational and financial management database programme used extensively within the organisation.)

I've done probably a couple of computer courses and at the moment I'm sort of enrolled in a practical course in computer information (FG1, Participant 4).

There were some exceptions to the typical statements. One participant had recently attended an off campus minute taking course that was directly relevant to her duties as a programme manager. Another said she was completing a self-development course on presentations and public speaking. Although not directly relevant to her current job, she commented that public speaking added value to her skills, and therefore to her performance in her current role.

One administrator clearly articulated that work related training courses were not professional development. She said that these training courses are just part of the job. Without it, administrators could not perform their job effectively. Professional development, she explained, is more to do with the development of the person through the completion of formal qualifications.

Another focus group participant said she was completing a bachelor degree that was not directly associated with her current position. However, she said formal qualification study was not supported financially or otherwise by her immediate manager or the organisation. Therefore she was funding the course herself, and completing the study during her own time. She believed that the skills gained were reflected in her performance as an administrator. She stated:

Basically, I undertake my own professional development. I'm doing my Bachelor of [named degree]. But I do that outside work hours. I do two courses a semester (FG1, Participant 1).

According to the focus group discussions, the kind of professional development courses that administrators engage in is predominately training-based. Furthermore, the training based courses are work related. According to the questionnaire, administrators define professional development as both training and formal

qualifications. Therefore, there seems to be some disparity between administrators' defined professional development and the courses or programmes they engage in.

The following section may clarify the disparity between the professional development engaged and the professional development defined by administrators.

Purpose of Professional Development

In the previous two sections of this chapter, I asked administrators for their perceptions of professional development and the kind of courses they engage in during their employment as an administrator with SPHEO. This section presents administrators' perceived reasons as to why they engage in professional development courses.

Reasons for Engagement

Administrators were asked in the questionnaire to rank three options from a range of seven options that defined why administrators engage in professional development. The format of this question was similar to that shown in figure 3.2 in the previous chapter. Administrators were asked to put a '1' (their first ranked option) against their most preferred statement, and marking corresponding numbers ('2' and '3') for their next two selected statements. The purpose of the question was to enable administrators to consider why they engaged in their courses, and whether they considered the courses advanced their profession.

Of the seven statements provided, one option stood out from the rest by a large margin. Ninety three percent of administrators stated that professional development courses 'develops my skills to perform my work more effectively', and gave it a ranking of one to three. Therefore, administrators stated that they engaged in professional development courses for the development of skills for their current position in the organisation.

To clarify the data further, I calculated administrators' mean ranking for each statement. To calculate a final ranking, I transposed administrators ranking numbers '1' and '3' in a spreadsheet. The final ranking was obtained by multiplying the percentage of the frequency of responses by the mean ranking number, the sum of which I called the final score. The statements with the three highest scores were then

numbered '1' to '3', as presented in table 4.1 below. The closer the score was to '3' the higher the ranking.

After finer analysis the first ranking statement identified by administrators was still the option gaining 93 percent of responses. Furthermore, second and third ranking options indicated that administrators considered the development of themselves and their skills for career opportunities as being reasons for engaging in development programmes. Moreover, fifty percent of administrators considered that the development of themselves professionally as the reason why they would engage in professional development.

Table 4.1: Purpose of professional development: Administrators' perceived purpose for engagement

Development statements	f (%)	Score = m * f %		Rank
		Mean	Score	
a) It develops my skills to perform my work more effectively	41 (93)	2.4	2.25	1
b) It develops my skills and knowledge toward my career opportunities	33 (75)	2.0	1.5	2
c) It is of interest to me professionally	26 (59)	1.7	0.98	3
d) It is of interest to me personally	16 (36)	1.9	0.68	4
e) It was suggested to me by someone that it would help me professionally	8 (18)	1.6	0.3	5
f) It will help me into another career direction	6 (14)	1.7	0.23	6
g) I do not want to undertake professional development for my own benefit	0 (0)	0.0	0.0	-

Although other options were provided, such as career development and their own development requirements, these options were selected by less than fifty percent of administrators.

In a similar manner, another question in the same format as that above was asked. In this question, administrators were asked to rank similar statements in the context of their current employment. The responses from this angle of questioning were very similar to that displayed in table 4.1. Administrators overwhelmingly ranked the statement 'It develops my skills that enable me to be more efficient in my work' first, with 95 percent of administrators ranking this item. Second ranked, with only a 54 percent response rate was career advancement within SPHEO.

Administrators, therefore, made a clear statement that clarified their perceived views of professional development. Professional development is of most relevance to

administrators for the purposes of: a) their current work related position; and b) their career development. This is succinctly summarised by a comment made by an administrator in the questionnaire. She stated:

In my opinion, professional development is to be offered and taken for these reasons: 1) To enable employees to gain more skills in performing their daily duties to help he/she work effectively and efficiently towards a completion of tasks given; 2) To provide and create opportunities for employees to gain more skills/knowledge to advance into higher positions within [SPHEO]; 3) To provide skills to employees in relation to creative thinking, new initiatives, and problem solving skills; 4) To encourage employees to move up the company ladder (Questionnaire comment).

In a similar theme, focus group participants discussed the purpose of professional development. Administrators stated that any professional development course should develop administrators further than their current position, citing career progression, both within the organisation and beyond, as being relevant reasons for professional development. One administrator said she would not attend any courses unless it was beneficial to her personally. She stated:

I will never attend a course that doesn't really benefit me whether it is going to be better for my job or not. I need to be interested in it. And I need to think that is a skill that I really want for me. 'Cause I don't plan to be at [SPHEO] for the rest of my life either. So for me it needs to look beyond [SPHEO] where I can promote myself perhaps in a different position one day (FG1, Participant 4).

Another focus group participant was quite adamant that professional development was not training courses that developed skills for their current position. However, her sentiments are at odds with Woodall and Winstanley (1998), who described training courses as programmes which build staff skills and capabilities that help an organisation meet their goals. The administrator states:

I would like to make a differentiation about professional development: Its two different areas. One is what you need to know for your job and for the company to actually carry out your job especially if it changes. And I don't see that as professional development. It's actually job-related training, although it is developing you, it's more to suit the organisational needs directly to carry out the job. Professional development to me is different from that. You are actually developing yourself, formally with qualifications (FG1, Participant 2).

These sentiments were supported by comments from within the questionnaire. Two similar comments were made in the questionnaire. Each stating they would participate in formal qualifications that support their current position, and therefore gain some form of academic recognition for the work of administrators in higher

education. One administrator's statement, which encompasses the sentiments of both, says:

It would be encouraging to see a formal recognisable qualification for [school managers]. A qualification one's able to work towards. Years of experience don't always speak louder than a qualification (A piece of paper) (Questionnaire comment).

Administrators also indicated in the focus groups that training-based courses are the appropriate kind of professional development programme for administrators in their current position. However, they also said that formal qualifications would help administrators advance their career or to develop appropriate skills for a change in career directions. It is clear that some administrators are engaging in formal qualifications. However, evidence from the questionnaire and focus group discussions indicated that only a small minority of administrators engaged in these kinds of programmes.

Desired Professional Development

Section three of the questionnaire asked administrators to define the kind of professional development that would develop appropriate skills for their profession and their career. The questioning format was a ranking selection format, similar to that illustrated in figure 3.2 and table 4.1 previously.

Three questions were asked in this section of the questionnaire, each similar in format and each with identical optional statements to select from and rank. However, the context of each question differed in relationship to the purpose of professional development. One question related to administrators' current position, another on advancement in the organisation. The final question asked administrators to select the professional development options that would best develop their skills for their career in five years time.

For their current career position, administrators clearly indicated that 'one-day training courses for the development of work-related skills' as the appropriate form of professional development, with a score of only 1.5. Administrators second and third ranked options were also training related forms of professional development. As with table 4.1 earlier, a score closest to 'three' gains the highest ranking score. The low scores to the first three ranking statements indicated a wide perception from administrators on all options presented in this question.

In the last two of these three questions, administrators' career advancement within SPHEO and their advancement for the next five years, administrators clearly identified 'Long-term study towards a formal qualification' as being the relevant kind of professional development. Second and third options were clearly well behind long term study, with scores less than half that for the first ranked option.

The results of administrators ranked options in the final section of the questionnaire for each of the three areas (current position, career advancement, and five year career plan) are illustrated in figure 4.2. The first ranking option selected by administrators is those in each of the three sections with the highest scores. Similarly second and third options have correspondingly lower scores.

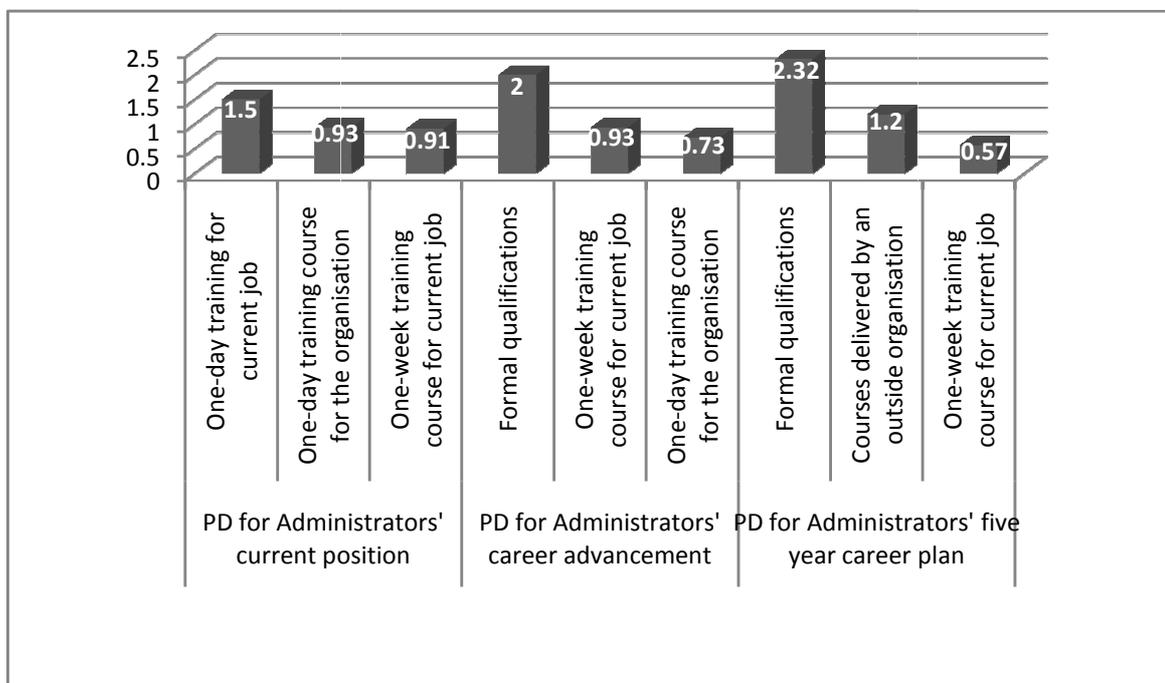


Figure 4.2: *Desired professional development for administrators' career development*

It is clear from the questionnaire and focus group discussions that administrators perceived professional development as being both training courses and formal qualification programmes. Administrators also indicated that they predominately engaged in training related professional development courses. When asked to rank the reasons for professional development activity, administrators clearly indicated their reasons as being the development of work related skills and for career advancement.

Administrators indicated that training courses are the appropriate kind of professional development for their current positions. They also indicated that formal qualifications were the relevant kind of professional development for their career and profession. Therefore, why are administrators not engaging in formal professional development programmes? The answer to this may be explained in the following section.

Professional Development Barriers

Whereas the previous section examines administrators' reasons why they would engage in professional development courses, this section examines administrators' perceptions of organisational support. Furthermore, it examines administrators' perceptions of barriers that may prevent them from completing courses that develop them and their skills further.

Organisational Support

Administrators were asked in the questionnaire to consider their perceptions of organisational support for their engagement in professional development. On the whole, administrators considered that the organisation supported the completion of courses that developed skills for their current position in the organisation. Furthermore, over forty percent of administrators agreed that the organisation supported their engagement in formal qualification study in some way.

Administrators agreed that the organisation provided support for them to complete professional development up to the limits of their employment contract. However, as discussed in chapter two, administrators' employment contracts provided five days professional development leave with no agreement for financial support.

Seventy five percent of administrators agreed that the organisation supported their professional development by providing time to complete their courses. However, only seven percent of administrators agreed that they received time release support over and above their contractual limits. Furthermore, 75 percent of administrators said that they receive full or partial financial support. Less than half of these said that the organisation funded their development activity fully. Given that administrators stated earlier that they engaged in training-related professional development, time and financial support they received may be for professional development courses related to their current positions.

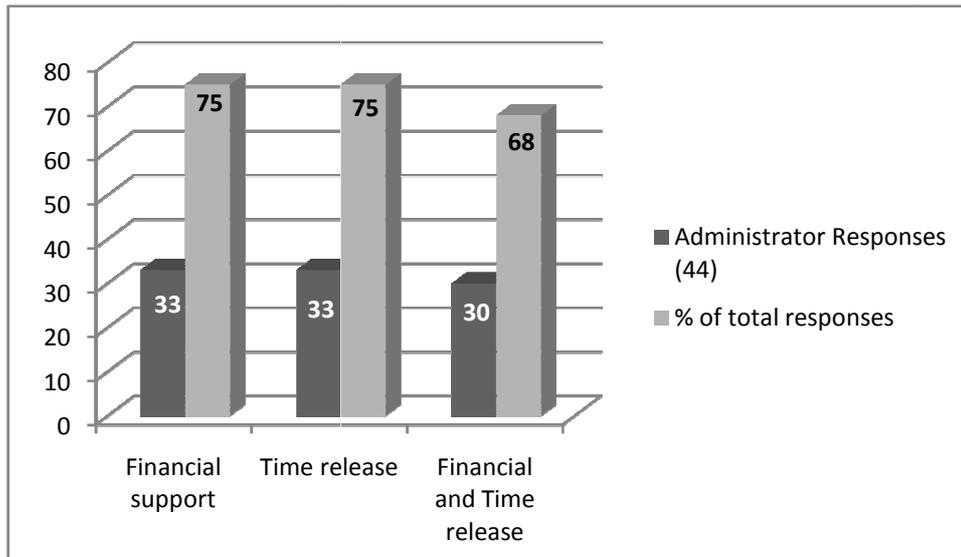


Figure 4.3: Organisational support for administrators' professional development

What is not shown in figure 4.3 is more concerning. Whereas 75 percent of administrators identified that they received financial and time support, a quarter of administrators may not be receiving either financial or time support for their professional development activity. If this is the case, 25 percent of administrators are not supported by the organisation to further develop their skills for their current positions.

Given that the terms of administrators' contract only provide five days leave with no financial support, it is difficult to understand how administrators engage in professional development other than short work-related training courses. Five days professional development annually may not provide adequate time for meaningful professional development. Furthermore, five days annually may not support continuous professional development. Therefore, it may be perceived that administrators are not supported in the development of themselves and their skills that may contribute to the development of academic goals.

Participants raised the issue of a lack of time and financial support for professional development courses which are not specifically related to their job. However, this may be a local issue within organisations. One administrator said that her last position in a similar higher educational organisation provided funding for professional development. Similar comments were also expressed by two other participants. One, who was employed by another higher education organisation previously, stated:

You were allowed to enrol in two papers a year and you were granted two and a half hours a week to attend lectures and it didn't have to be anything related to what your job was. You were just entitled to study and they would pay your fees. It didn't have to be related (FG2, Participant 1).

In contrast, however, other focus group participants said that the organisation funded their non work-related professional development courses. Therefore, there may be inconsistencies in the manner that SPHEO supports administrators' professional development. One focus group participant commented that it does depend on your manager. She stated:

It depends on your manager, and not all managers, or [school heads] or whoever you report to have the same understanding that by providing professional development they are actually helping their staff to develop in their roles and as people. Some see it as an obligation which affects their labour budget which they're not particularly happy about. Some perceive it as the first thing that gets dropped off the budget when things are tough (FG1, Participant 6).

Participants in one focus group expressed perceptions of the low value that the organisation had for administrators given that they may not contribute to academia. The same group also stated that time available for engagement in professional development was an issue. Three of the four members expressed time as the single issue, and that time shortage was due directly to their workload.

Administrators raised concerns over the way that their contractual agreement for professional development was applied. Administrators perceived that professional development support was not allocated consistently and perceived that some managers value their administration staff differently to other managers. As discussed in chapter two, these inequalities may be a result of an organisational values conflict (Henderson, et al. 2006).

Conclusion

Administrators perceived training courses and formal qualifications as relevant professional development courses. However, administrators' engagement in professional development was more related to training courses associated with their current employment rather than formal qualifications. There were examples where administrators engaged in educational professional development programmes. However, these were an exception rather than common practice.

Administrators perceived that the organisation supported their training-based professional development activity adequately with financial and time support. However the support provided was generally only to the limits of their contractual limits. Furthermore, there was little evidence of financial support for educational professional development.

Similarities and disparities between theories in the literature review and administrators' perceptions of professional development in higher education are discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION: ADMINISTRATORS AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

The previous chapter analysed administrators' professional development activity and organisational support for their development. This chapter contrasts administrators' perceptions of professional development with relevant literature theories presented in chapter two. As outlined in chapter one, the aim of this research was to analyse administrators' perceptions of professional development in a higher education organisation.

While addressing similarities and disparities of the research data, the research questions will be addressed as they relate to administrators in the higher education organisation.

The questions this research is attempting to answer are:

1. How do administrators define professional development programmes?
2. What kind of professional development programmes do administrators undertake?
3. How are professional development barriers perceived by administrators?

Many of the results described in the preceding chapter echoed and extended research findings recorded in the literature. In addition, there are a number of points where the findings of this study show divergence between administrators' perceptions and established research. A summary of the similarities and differences between literature and my data is provided in Appendix three.

Administrators and Professional Development

It is apparent from my data that administrators engage in professional development. Furthermore, administrators are clear that professional development is available and supported by the organisation. However, the key issue that emerges from my

research is that administrators' engagement in professional development is predominately training-based courses. Training courses only develop the person's skills for the job rather than developing the person (Rudman, 2002; and Woodall and Winstanley, 1998).

In a previous chapter, I discussed the balance between education and training. If the indicative arrow in figure 2.2 from chapter two was applied to administrators' actual professional development activity, the pendulum would swing closer to the training continuum, as illustrated in figure 5.1. Therefore, administrators perceived that professional development is predominately training related courses, for the development of skills related to their current jobs.

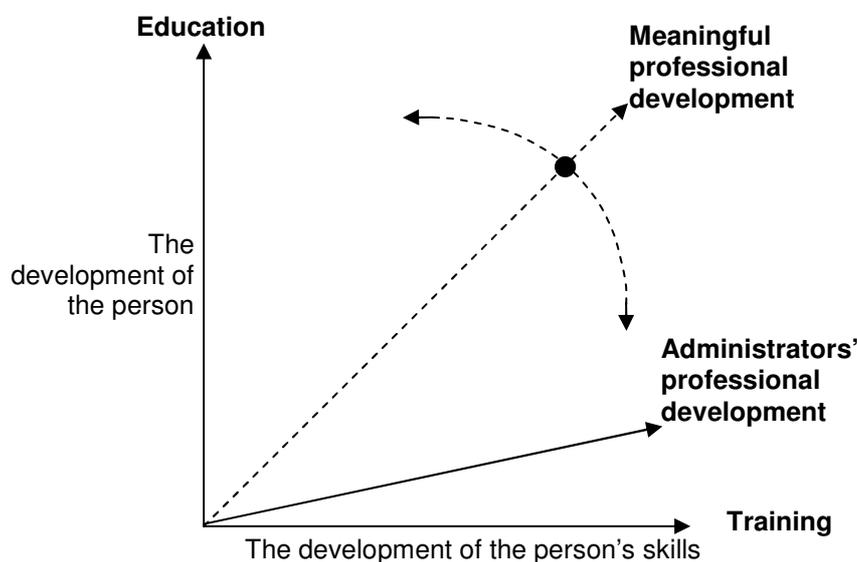


Figure 5.1: *Administrators' professional development*

Discussion in the focus groups identified that there was at least one administrator who was studying a degree. However, she also identified that her engagement in this programme was her initiative, supported by herself and studied in her own time. Whether this example can be considered professional development is arguable. Educational professional development studied in isolation from the employing organisation may not be developing the person's skills for their current role or developing the person for their future advancement. Eraut (1994) and Doney (1998) argued that professional development is the development of skills for a profession. Therefore, the engagement of isolated and unsupported educational programmes may not be considered as being professional development.

Administrators defined professional development as both training and educational programmes, despite their predominant engagement in work-related and skills-based training courses. Training does not support administrators' development as a professional in their defined profession. Moreover, administrators' engagement in training-based courses may not develop excellence and mastery, as argued by Harrison (2003). Training-based courses only support the development of skills required for their current position (Rudman, 2002; and Woodall and Winstanley, 1998). Therefore, work-related and skills-based training courses may not be defined as professional development (Argyris, 1977; Argyris and Schön, 1996; Fielden, 1998; Harrison, 2003; Osei, 1996; Partington and Stainton, 2003; Rudman, 2002; and Woodall and Winstanley, 1998).

Administrators were not actively engaged in the development of themselves as a person. My research concluded that administrators identified that formal or educational professional development programmes are relevant for their future careers. They also concluded that administrators were not supported by the organisation to engage in formal qualifications professional development. ATEM and AUA stated that they provide administrators with professional support required for their profession. Furthermore, they both expressed support for administrators' further qualification development (Conway, 2000a; Conway, 2000b; Boswell, 1998; and Whitchurch, 1999). However, without the organisational support, engagement in such programmes was perceived by administrators to be problematic. Where administrators were engaged in formal study, they were supporting their own professional development activity.

My research established that administrators were highly qualified with nearly 50 percent having a degree qualification, nearly double that suggested by Strachan and Duirs (1993). Graduate or post graduate study may therefore be a realistic possibility for administrators in higher education. However, barriers for such study may be limited to administrators' own aspirations and organisational support. AUA offers such a qualification specifically for administrators. However, this qualification may only be relevant to members in the UK. Unfortunately, administrators were not asked in either the questionnaire or the focus groups whether they were aware of the two professional organisations or qualifications that were available.

Comparisons between Literature and Professional Development

When my professional development literature is analysed and applied to administrators in higher education, there appears to be two bases of theory, management-based theories and higher education-based theories. Management-based theories provide a base for professional development expectations for staff in any organisation. Higher education-based theories argue disparities of professional development activity in higher education.

Literature from the management field and outside higher education espouse professional development as being relevant for all staff in organisations (Argyris and Schön, 1996; Dick and Dalmau, 1999; Dixon, 2006; Doney, 1988; Eraut, 1994; Rudman, 2002; Senge, 1992; and Woodall and Winstanley, 1998). These authors, except for Woodall and Winstanley, did not identify the kind of professional development that staff should be engaged other than training and educational programmes. Woodall and Winstanley (1998) identified programmes such as MBA's, degrees and specialised post graduate programmes as relevant formal educational professional development.

Management literature theories that espouse that everyone in an organisation should be engaged in professional development are relevant to administrators in higher education. Administrators are engaged in training related professional development. However, there was little evidence that administrators were involved in educational formal qualifications. Where it was evident, it was not supported by the organisation.

Literature from the higher education administration sector argued a disparity between administrators' professional development against academics (Boswell, 1998; Conway, 2000a; Conway, 2000b; Johnsrud and Rosser, 1999; Lauwerys, 2002; Partington and Stainton, 2003; Rosser, 2000; Strachan and Dairs, 1993; Szekeres, 2004; and Whitchurch, 1999). My research concluded that administrators were not actively engaged in formal professional development programmes. It also concluded that the allocation of time and financial support for professional development for administrators was considerably less than academics.

Higher education literature also argued that administrators contributed to the achievement of academic goals. However, the low levels of time administrators received presents barriers that prevented them from engaging in any other form of professional development other than work-related training courses. Therefore

Lauwerys' (2002) theories that administrators predominately engage in training related professional development were correct. The reasons as to why Lauwerys' (2002) theories were correct may be due to the barriers that prevent administrators engaging in meaningful professional development. After all, administrators clearly stated in my data that they perceived professional development as education and training. They also identified the relevance of education and training for their career and their profession. Barriers that administrators perceived are discussed next.

Barriers to Professional Development

Administrators are the one group of staff in higher education organisations identified by a deficit-label such as 'non-academics'. Where more positive labels are used, such as administrators, allied staff or general staff, no one common label is applied (Dobson and Conway, 2003). The range of administrators, such as generalist and specialist, in higher education adds complexities to their collective role in higher education organisations. Furthermore, the very values expressed by higher education organisations may exclude administrators' contribution.

Academic values, as expressed by SPHEO (2006d) are academic. I used the term 'values' here to define academic mission statement goals that are important to organisations (Henderson et al., 2006). According to my research, administrators perceived that their role in the organisation was not important as their role did not contribute to academic values. This concept is contrary to the theories of Johnsrud and Rosser (1999) who argued that administrators do contribute to the academic life of organisations.

Administrators perceived that the organisation does not value their contribution in higher education. As such administrators perceived that their managers did not support their engagement in meaningful professional development as defined by Rudman (2002) and Woodall and Winstanley (1998).

My research identified that administrators considered five days professional development leave not enough for appropriate engagement in formal programmes. Therefore, any formal study for educational qualifications must be taken by administrators in their own time and with their own financial support. Training based professional development, as defined by Lauwerys (2002) is therefore the only kind of development that administrators can undertake as that may be all that five days leave supports.

To add to the complexities of organisational support, administrators indicated in my research that there may be a disparity in the way managers allocate professional development. Some managers, they perceived, allocated and supported professional development for some administrators differently to the way other managers did in the same organisation.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the following statements broadly answer the research questions.

Administrators defined professional development as both work-related training courses and formal qualifications: Training courses for their development in work related skills; and formal qualifications for the advancement of their career and profession.

Administrators predominately engaged in work-related training courses. They also indicated that they would engage in formal qualifications for the development of their career. However, there is little evidence that educational professional development occurred.

Administrators perceived that they are not valued in higher education organisations. They also perceived that their low value status contributed to the low levels of support provided by the organisation for formal qualification engagement. Employment contracts which provided a minimal level of support for meaningful professional development also contributed to the low levels of engagement in formal qualifications.

The following chapter summarises this thesis. Furthermore, it presents recommendations and further research opportunities in this field.

CHAPTER SIX

LOOKING BACK AND MOVING FORWARD

Introduction

In this chapter I summarise my thesis. Firstly, I make broad observations of administrators' professional development activity and make connections between their development and higher education. Secondly I present recommendations that may address some of the issues identified and discussed. Thirdly, I highlight limitations that may affect my research. Finally, I outline areas of study that could be explored further, particularly concerning administrators in higher education organisations.

Administrators and Professional Development

I have argued that administrators' contribution in higher education does support academic success through their involvement in areas such as student learning support systems, reports, and academic staff support (Conway, 2000b; and Johnsrud and Rosser, 1999). Therefore, administrators' contribution is highly relevant to the success of higher education organisation. Administrators are employed by the organisation and therefore must, in some way, contribute to the operational and academic goals (Partington and Stainton, 2003; and Fielden, 1998). Otherwise, their role in the organisation would seem to be superfluous. Meaningful professional development programmes are therefore appropriate so that administrators make meaningful contributions to the organisation (Harrison, 2003; Rudman, 2002; and Woodall and Winstanley, 1998).

Authors, such as Argyris, and Schön (1996) argued that all staff contribute to the development of the organisation as they all play a part in the achievement of organisational goals. However, Szekeres (2006) argued that the espoused academic statements of higher education organisations make it difficult for administrators to contribute to organisational goals. Laske and Maynes (2002) on the other hand argued that the continual development of all staff through continuous learning develops staff members who contribute to the development of a learning

organisation. Therefore, there may be a dichotomy between administrators' professional development and their role in academic higher education organisations.

Meaningful professional development develops the person and their skills through educational programmes and training courses (Rudman, 2002; and Woodall and Winstanley, 1998). However, my research demonstrated that administrators' engagement in development programmes were predominately work-related training courses. Argyris (1977) argued that staff members were better prepared to contribute to the development of organisational goals when they engage in meaningful professional development programmes. Administrators may therefore not be able to contribute effectively to the development of organisational goals where they are engaged predominately in training related professional development courses. Training alone is not meaningful professional development (Harrison, 2003).

Evidence of organisational support for professional development is apparent in employment contract documentation. SPHEO's employment contracts for administrators provided five days professional development (SPHEO, 2006a; and SPHEO, 2006b). However, there was no agreement for financial support for any kind of development activity.

Administrators agreed that the organisation supports their work-related training courses, with time to engage in courses up to the limits of their contracts, and financial support (course fees, if any). There is also some evidence of organisational support for professional development activity over and above contractual limits. However, my research established that organisational support for educational professional development for administrators is not provided. It may therefore be assumed that SPHEO only finances professional development courses that develops administrators' skills to perform their work-related tasks efficiently.

Administrators' role in higher education is increasingly more important the more accountability such organisations may have with their funding stakeholders (Szekeres, 2004). However, Conway (2000b) and Szekeres (2004) also argued that the same staff members are often ignored within these organisations, as their role is not one related to academia. It is apparent through my research that administrators' requirements for meaningful professional development for them as a person and their skills may be ignored.

Moving Forward

In this section I present recommendations that may create an inclusive organisation that enables all staff in higher education to contribute to academic goals.

Recommendations

Recommendation One: Senior managers of higher educational organisations consider the allocation of financial and time support for administrators' engagement in meaningful professional development programmes that reflect administrators' contribution to organisational goals.

Recommendation Two: Espoused organisational statements such as strategic goals, mission statements, and mean and goal values statements are reworded in such a way that they are inclusive of all staff, including administrators. All staff may therefore be considered to contribute to academic goals.

Recommendation Three: Administrators consider engaging in professional development programmes that develop them as a person as well as their skills so that meaningful development occurs. Meaningful, in this context, includes educational and training-based professional development programmes.

Recommendation Four: Administrators consider engaging in professional development programmes that maintain or enhance their levels of professionalism so that they are equipped and able to strive for mastery and excellence, Administrators who strive for professionalism may then be better equipped and qualified to accept increasing levels of accountability and responsibility for their role in the organisation.

Recommendation Five: Administrators be proactive in searching for and engaging in meaningful and continuous professional development programmes for their career, and career directions, and to progress their professionalism and profession. Administrators may also consider affiliating themselves with a professional body such as the ATEM or AUA to support their development and professionalism.

Limitations

There are various limitations in this research. I discuss these and outline methods that may overcome them.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire designed for this research was too long. With over seven pages of questions, there was a lot of data to interpret and analyse. Overall, the focus of the questionnaire could have been much tighter.

As Anderson (1998) suggested, a short questionnaire is less than four pages long. I had indicated in chapter three that I had set a limit of seven pages. On reflection, I could have taken more time designing and refining the questionnaire, particularly in the selection of questions that addressed the research questions directly.

A short questionnaire, with hindsight, may have been more appropriate for this study and removed some of the confusion experienced during analysis. Furthermore, more in-depth data could have been gained from focus group discussions rather than trying to gather in-depth data from the questionnaire.

Focus Groups Discussions

During the initial planning stages of the study, the questionnaire and focus group discussion questions were developed together. Had I developed the focus group questions after gathering questionnaire data, I may have had an opportunity to explore themes in focus group sessions that both enhanced the data from the questionnaire. Developing the focus group questions after analysing questionnaire data may have enhanced validity and reliability of the data collected.

One such area was establishing the extent of continuous professional development. The questionnaire did not provide any data relating to the extent of continuous development activity. Had this aspect been followed through in the focus group, more meaningful and relevant data may have been collected.

Case Study Methods of Enquiry

The case study involved one organisation in the South Pacific region. As argued in chapter three, the case study is a holistic single case study (Yin, 2003). Furthermore,

only one sector of administration staff was involved in the data collection. This may present some limitations to the reliability of the study if the recommendations were to be implemented in other higher education organisations as the validity my research was narrow. Therefore, it may be difficult to suggest that the findings of this study were apparent in all higher education organisations.

Participants

The number of participants in this research when compared to all administrators within SPHEO was low. Furthermore, of all the positions that make up the total generalist and specialist administrator staff in higher education organisations, only one was selected to participate. As detailed in figure 2.1, the range of non-academic staff varies considerably in higher education organisations. Therefore, the selection of only one group of staff within the generalist administration continuum may not apply across all administration groups; generalist, or specialist. Furthermore, the total number of administrative staff in SPHEO is unknown.

The Annual Report provides data for staff numbers in two groups, academic and non-academic staff (SPHEO, 2006c). Participants in my research can be calculated as a representative population against the 98 administrators invited to participate and against 45 percent of the total non-academic staff population. No calculation can occur against specialist or generalist administrators, as the total staff numbers in these groupings was unknown.

Further Research Opportunities

My research had a single focus of administrators' perceptions of professional development in higher education. Three further research opportunities exist that may extend the knowledge of administrators and academics contribution to higher education.

A research opportunity therefore exists for a comparative study of academics and administrators professional development activity, support, barriers, and beliefs in higher education.

An additional research opportunity exists for a comparative study of academic and administrators' contribution to the development of academic goals.

A further research opportunity exists for a comparative study of higher education administrators' and managers' perceptions of the role of administrators achieving academically focused goal values.

Summary

This research has provided an overview of administrators' professional development activity in a higher education organisation. Although administrators define professional development as education and training, it is apparent that they predominately engage in work-related training courses that develop their skills for the position they currently hold. However, administrators do not consider that their current professional development fulfils their career progression requirements.

Although administrators identified time as their major barrier to engaging in professional development, it was not the only barrier. Organisational support for administrators' engagement in educational professional development seems to be a major issue in two areas of concern. Firstly employment contract conditions for professional development limit administrators' engagement in professional development. Secondly, administrators perceived that they were not valued in an academic organisation. Therefore, there may be a dichotomy between administrators' role in higher education and the levels of professional development that is supported by the organisation.

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APPENDIX ONE

Programme Administrators Professional Development Questionnaire

Programme Administrators Professional Development Questionnaire

Thank you for agreeing to complete this questionnaire. Your responses will help me to complete my degree. It will also help me to understand what role professional development plays in programme administration positions within SPHEO. Please contact me to discuss any concerns or queries you may have about the questionnaire. My contact details and those of my supervisor are available on the 'Invitation to Participate' letter attached to this questionnaire.

Please read the statement below, which outlines your commitment in completing and returning this questionnaire anonymously.

I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research, from the 'Invitation to Participate' letter, enclosed with this questionnaire. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered. I understand that neither my name nor my School will be disclosed in any reports, either inside or outside SPHEO. I understand that the data provided in this questionnaire is provided anonymously.

By returning this questionnaire back to the researcher, I agree to participate with this project and the information being used in this thesis as outlined in the 'Invitation to Participate' letter.

Please do not forget to return the completed questionnaire in the enclosed envelopes by 29 September 2006.

1. General Demographical Information

1.1 What is your current administrative position within SPHEO?

- Tick the **appropriate** option/s
- a) Programme Administrator
b) Programme Manager
c) School Manager

1.2 What SPHEO School are you currently employed in?

- Tick the **appropriate** option/s
- | | |
|--|--|
| a) School of Apple Sauce <input type="checkbox"/> | g) School of Plum Compote <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) School of Avocado Oil <input type="checkbox"/> | h) School of Potato Pie <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c) School of Bacon and Eggs <input type="checkbox"/> | i) School of Pumpkin Soup <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d) School of Banana Muffin <input type="checkbox"/> | j) School of Red Wine <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e) School of Green Pea Soup <input type="checkbox"/> | k) School of Zucchini Slice <input type="checkbox"/> |
| f) School of Orange Juice <input type="checkbox"/> | l) Not listed here (<i>State below</i>) <input type="checkbox"/> |



1.3 Did you hold an administrative position at SPHEO prior to your current position?

- Tick **one** option
- a) YES (Go to question 1.4)
b) NO (Go to question 1.8)

1.4 Is your current position a promotion from your previous position?

- Tick **one** option
- a) YES (Go to question 1.5)
b) NO (Go to question 1.6)

		Very Important role		Not sure	No role at all	
		1	2	3	4	5
1.5	What role do you think your professional development played toward you gaining your current position? <i>Tick one option</i> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				

1.6 What was your previous administrative position within SPHEO?
 Tick one option

a) Programme Administrator

b) Programme Manager

c) School Manager

d) Other (*Please specify below*)

1.7 Was your previous administration position within your current School?
 Tick one option

a) YES

b) NO

1.8 How long have you been employed at SPHEO?
 Tick one option

a) Under one year How many months?

b) 1 year and over How many years?

1.9 You are
 Tick one option

a) Female

b) Male

1.10 What is your current age group?
 Tick one option

a) Under 18 <input type="checkbox"/>	f) 41 to 45 <input type="checkbox"/>
b) 18 to 25 <input type="checkbox"/>	g) 46 to 50 <input type="checkbox"/>
c) 26 to 30 <input type="checkbox"/>	h) 51 to 55 <input type="checkbox"/>
d) 31 to 35 <input type="checkbox"/>	i) 56 to 60 <input type="checkbox"/>
e) 36 to 40 <input type="checkbox"/>	j) 61 and over <input type="checkbox"/>

1.11 What is your highest current qualification? (Please tick one option)
 Tick one option

a) Secondary school qualification

b) Certificate, (level 3 and above)

c) Diploma (Level 5 and above)

d) Bachelor degree

e) Masters degree

f) Doctorate

g) No qualifications

h) Other (*Please specify below*)

2. Current Professional Development

2.1 I would consider professional development as being:

*Tick **as many** options that are relevant*

- a) Orientation days at the start of a new position within the organisation
- b) A one-day long training courses that will develop my skills to enable me to perform my job better
- c) A one-day long training courses related to the development and implementation of new initiatives within the organisation
- d) A one-week long training courses related to new initiatives within the organisation
- e) A one-week long training courses that develop my skills to enable me to perform my job better
- f) A course of a month or two delivered by an outside organisation
- g) Long-term study towards a formal qualification, such as a 'Certificate in ...' a 'Diploma in ...' or a 'Bachelor of ...'

2.2 Have you attended any professional development courses during your current position at SPHEO?

*Tick **one** option*

- a) YES (Go to question 2.3)
- b) NO (Go to question 2.6)

2.3 The last professional development course I completed was:

*Tick **one** option*

- a) Under 1 month ago
- b) 1 to 2 months ago
- c) 3 to 5 months ago
- d) 6 to 12 months ago
- e) Over 1 year ago
- f) Over 2 years ago
- g) Over 3 years ago

2.4 Why did you attend this professional development?

*Tick **as many** options that are relevant*

- a) For my own development requirements to meet a work related process
- b) For my own development requirements to meet personal development needs
- c) For my own career development
- d) For my career progression opportunities
- e) For my own self interests
- f) I was instructed to attend
- g) Other (Please specify below)

2.5 What role do you think this course had in meeting your development needs for each of the following statements:

*Tick **one** appropriate response for each statement*

	Very Important role		Not sure	No role at all	
	1	2		3	4
a) <u>Advancing my work skills toward my current job?</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
b) <u>Provide me with the skills that may support me toward a promotion?</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
c) <u>Provide me with the skills that may support me entering a new career direction?</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
d) <u>Provide me with the qualifications that may advance my career aspirations?</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>				

2.6 How important is professional development to you for each of the following statements. Professional development is important to me for:

Tick **one** appropriate response for each statement

	Very Important		Not sure		Not important
	1	2	3	4	5
a) My own development requirements to meet a work related process	<input type="checkbox"/>				
b) My own development requirements to meet personal development needs	<input type="checkbox"/>				
c) My own career development	<input type="checkbox"/>				
d) My own self interest	<input type="checkbox"/>				
e) Courses I was instructed to attend	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Rank, in order, three statements in each of the following two questions by numbering 1 to 3, the three that best describe how they relate to you. (1 being your first choice, 3 being your third choice) See the example below.

Example I like the colour purple because:

Rank 1 to 3 your **first three** options

a) It makes me feel good	3
b) It reminds me of someone I know	
c) It is a blend of my two most favourite primary colours	1
d) It's the same colour as an Aubergine	2
e) It's a Royal colour	

2.7 I would engage in professional development courses for my job because:

Rank 1 to 3 your **first three** options

a) It is a requirement of my job and has little relevance to me	
b) It is a requirement of my job and is relevant to me	
c) It develops my skills that enable me to be more efficient in my work	
d) It provides me with skills that I can use personally outside my current work	
e) It provides me with opportunities for promotion within SPHEO	
f) It develops my skills and knowledge that may advance my career options outside SPHEO	
g) It is of personal interest to me	
h) I do not want to undertake professional development for my current job	

2.8 I would undertake professional development for myself because:

Rank 1 to 3 your **first three** options

a) It develops my skills and knowledge toward my career opportunities	
b) It develops my skills to perform my work more effectively	
c) It was suggested to me by someone that it would help me professionally	
d) It will help me into another career direction	
e) It is of interest to me personally	
f) It is of interest to me professionally	
g) I do not want to undertake professional development for my own benefit	

2.9 SPHEO encourages me to complete the following kinds of professional development:

*Tick **as many** options that are relevant*

- a) Academic formal qualifications, such as a 'Certificate', 'Diploma', or a 'Degree'
- b) Courses only within formal qualifications that are relevant to my employment
- c) Courses only within formal qualifications that are not relevant to my employment
- d) Training courses offered by SPHEO on subjects such as new computer programmes
- e) Training courses offered by SPHEO on subjects such as new policy requirements
- f) Training courses offered by an outside organisation related to my employment
- g) Training courses that are not related to my employment
- h) SPHEO does not encourage me to undertake professional development

2.10 What kind of support does SPHEO provide you that enable you to attend and engage into professional development?

*Tick **as many** options that are relevant*

- a) Partial financial support
- b) Full financial support
- c) Time off work to complete courses up to the limits of my employment contract
- d) Time off work to complete courses and associated study before and after the course up to the limits of my employment contract
- e) Time off work to complete courses over and above the limits of my employment contract
- f) Time off work to complete courses and associated study before and after the course over and above the limits of my employment contract
- g) No support at all
- h) Other support not listed here (*Please specify below*)



2.11 SPHEO supports me to complete the following kinds of professional development:

*Tick **as many** options that are relevant*

- a) Academic formal qualifications, such as a 'Certificate', 'Diploma', or a 'Degree'
- b) Courses only within formal qualifications that are relevant to my employment
- c) Courses only within formal qualifications that are not relevant to my employment
- d) Training courses offered by SPHEO on subjects such as new computer programmes
- e) Training courses offered by SPHEO on subjects such as new policy requirements
- f) Training courses offered by an outside organisation related to my employment
- g) Training courses that are not related to my employment
- h) SPHEO does not support me to undertake professional development

- 2.12 Do you have any comments or statements you would like to make toward professional development? If so, note them here.

3. Professional Development Requirements

Rank, in order, three statements in each of the following three questions by numbering 1 to 3, the three that best describe how they relate to you. (1 being your first choice, 3 being your third choice) See the example below.

Example I like the colour orange because:

*Rank 1 to 3 your **first three** options ✍*

a)	It makes me feel warm	
b)	It reminds me of my last holiday	2
c)	It is a blend of my two most favourite primary colours	
d)	It's the same colour as the sun in the late evening	1
e)	It's a happy colour	3

- 3.1 What kind of professional development would help develop your skills in your current position?

*Rank 1 to 3 your **first three** options ✍*

a)	Orientation days at the start of a new position within the organisation	
b)	A one-day long training course that will develop my skills to enable me to perform my job better	
c)	A one-day long training course related to the development and implementation of new initiatives within the organisation	
d)	A one-week long training course related to new initiatives within the organisation	
e)	A one-week long training course that develop my skills to enable me to perform my job better	
f)	A course of study of a month or more delivered by an outside organisation	
g)	Long-term study towards a formal qualification, such as a 'Certificate in ...' a 'Diploma in ...' or a 'Bachelor of ...'	
h)	Professional development to develop my skills in my current job is not important to me	

3.2 What kind of professional development would help advance your career up to the next level in your current career?

*Rank 1 to 3 your **first three** options*

a) Orientation days at the start of a new position within the organisation	
b) A one-day long training courses that will develop my skills to enable me to perform my job better	
c) A one-day long training courses related to the development and implementation of new initiatives within the organisation	
d) A one-week long training courses related to new initiatives within the organisation	
e) A one-week long training courses that develop my skills to enable me to perform my job better	
f) A course of study of a month or more delivered by an outside organisation	
g) Long-term study towards a formal qualification, such as a 'Certificate in ...' a 'Diploma in ...' or a 'Bachelor of ...'	
h) Professional development to advance my career is not important to me	

3.3 What kind of professional development would help change your career directions into an area you personally want to move into in the next five years?

*Rank 1 to 3 your **first three** options*

a) Orientation days at the start of a new position within the organisation	
b) A one-day long training courses that will develop my skills to enable me to perform my job better	
c) A one-day long training courses related to the development and implementation of new initiatives within the organisation	
d) A one-week long training courses related to new initiatives within the organisation	
e) A one-week long training courses that develop my skills to enable me to perform my job better	
f) A course of study of a month or more delivered by an outside organisation	
g) Long-term study towards a formal qualification, such as a 'Certificate in ...' a 'Diploma in ...' or a 'Bachelor of ...'	
h) Professional development to advance my career into a new direction is not important to me	

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. The information you have provided will help me to understand the role professional development plays in programme administration positions within SPHEO. It will also help me to determine the needs that Programme Administrators, Programme Managers, and School Managers have toward professional development generally for your current and future requirements.

Please send this form back to the researcher by 29 September 2006 in the enclosed envelope.

Thank you again

Laurie Richardson

APPENDIX TWO

Focus Group Semi-Structured Questioning Guide

Focus Group Semi-Structured Questioning Guide

Programme Administrators professional development needs

The questions and format of this semi-structured focus group is set out as a guide only. During discussions, participants may flow from one section to another freely as they discuss aspects of their professional development.

This question sheet will not be handed to the participants. The focus group facilitator will only use this as a guide to begin and sum up discussions, and take notes of aspects of the discussions where it fits and when discussed. However, participants are free to request a copy of this discussion format, prior to, during or after the focus group discussion.

Focus Group Semi-structured discussion guide

Focus group: One

Location: Room *****

Date: 01 September 2006

Time: 12.00 Noon

Participants name	School	Position

Introduction

What professional development courses or programmes have you been on in the last year? What was good; bad about them? What would make you participate?

Current Professional development

What is professional development? Why? What about other examples? How do these meet your expectations? What are your expectations? How will these meet your current or future career plans?

Professional development requirements

How do you think professional development supports your career pathway?
Where is your career heading? What professional development programme would support your career pathway? Why?

Barriers toward professional development

What barriers are there which prevent you from engaging into your choice of professional development programme? Where do these barriers come from? How can they be overcome? By who? What support would you like? What can you do?

Wind-up

If you had a free hand toward setting up professional development programmes, what would they look like? What support would there be?

If you could sum up this session, how would you describe it succinctly? What main points would you highlight?

Provide thanks to all participants for their participation

APPENDIX THREE

Comparison of Research Data and Literature Review Themes

Table A3.1: Comparison of research data and literature review themes

Themes from the Data	Disparities between Themes	Themes from the Literature Review
<p>Defined Professional Development</p> <p>Q Administrators defined PD as training courses. However, they also identified formal qualifications as PD equally.</p> <p>F Administrators defined PD as training courses rather than formal qualifications. However, there was minor support for formal qualifications as being suitable professional development. One administrator claimed that training is not PD. Administrators identified PD as predominately training, of which, much was described as computer training courses.</p>	<p>Although administrators perceive formal qualifications as PD, they predominately see PD as in-house training courses for the development of skills for their current employment requirements.</p>	<p>Education – formal qualifications or development of skills in a formal way (Rudman, 2002; Woodall and Winstanley, 1998). Training – development of skills for the job; in-house development programmes (Rudman, 2002; Woodall and Winstanley, 1998). A blend of training and education (Rudman, 2002; Woodall and Winstanley, 1998). Post graduate degrees are available for administrators (Dixon, 2006; Doney, 1998). Development of the person and the persons’ skills (Rudman, 2002; Woodall and Winstanley, 1998).</p>
<p>Professional Development Engaged</p> <p>Q Ninety percent of administrators had engaged in PD in the last six months. Ten percent of administrators indicated that they had not engaged in PD at all.</p> <p>F There were pockets of examples where other PD activity was evident, such as public speaking and degree programmes.</p>	<p>Nearly all administrators are engaged in some form of training related PD.</p> <p>However, the literature suggests that administrators should be engaged in educational PD as well as training.</p> <p>Fifty percent of administrators have a degree.</p>	<p>Everyone in an organisation should be involved in professional development (Argyris and Schön, 1996; Rudman, 2002; Senge, 1992; and Woodall and Winstanley, 1998). Training is not enough – needs education as well (Harrison, 2003) PD of administrators in HE seen as learning on the job (Lauwerys, 2002). Professional associations (ATEM and AUA) for administrators in HE to support and encourage PD engagement (Conway, 2000b; Conway, 2000a; Boswell, 1998; and Whitchurch, 1999). Twenty five percent of administrators have an undergraduate degree (Strachan and Duirs, 1993).</p>
<p>Reasons for Professional Development Engagement</p> <p>Q Overwhelming support (over 90%) for the reason for engagement in PD is for the development of work skills followed by a distant second reason being the progression of administrators’ career. Administrators identified short training courses as the desired PD for the development of skills for their current position in the organisation. Administrators identified formal qualifications as desired PD for the development of skills for their progression both within and beyond SPHEO.</p>	<p>The level of training based PD that administrators engage compared to that of education suggests that administrators may not consider themselves as an important aspect of HE organisations.</p>	<p>PD is an important aspect of life in HE for academics and non-academics (Partington and Stainton, 2003). Administrators contribute to the academic life of HE organisations (Johnsrud and Rosser, 1999). Development of staff and the organisation for the growth of the organisation (Argyris and Schön, 1996; Osei, 1996; Partington and Stainton, 2003; Fielden, 1998; Laske and Maynes, 2002; Conway, 2000b; and Sergiovanni, 2000) Development of skills for a profession (Eraut, 1994; Doney, 1998).</p>

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Themes from the Data	Disparities between Themes	Themes from the Literature Review
<p>F Formal qualifications provide recognition for the years of experience as an administrator – something experience is not recognised for.</p> <p>Training-based courses for the development of administrators' career.</p>	<p>Training related PD may not develop mastery and excellence required for professionals or para-professionals.</p> <p>Administrators' engagement in low-level training PD may indicate perceived levels of professionalism.</p> <p>Formal qualifications seen as required for advancement, but there is little evidence of engagement.</p>	<p>Advancement in the organisation difficult. Easier for organisations to employ new staff with requisite skills rather than develop their own non-academic staff (Johnsrud et al., 2000).</p> <p>Engagement in professional development enables administrators to develop skills to take on new and challenging opportunities (Rosser, 2000).</p> <p>Administrators' professionalism - Striving for mastery and excellence in administrators' profession (Harrison, 2003) and the development of professionals generally (Eraut, 1994; and Doney, 1988).</p> <p>Administrators in HE are para-professionals, administration is a pseudo-professionalisation (Strachan and Duirs, 1993; and Beal, 2001).</p> <p>PD not just for managers, but also for non-professionals and junior staff members (Argyris and Schön, 1996; Dick and Dalmau, 1999; and Senge, 1992).</p>

Barriers to Professional Development

<p>Q Organisation supports PD to the limits of the employment contracts. However, some managers provide over the limits. 7 percent of administrators received additional time. Most administrators received financial support for training.</p> <p>Five days is not enough to support formal qualifications PD.</p> <p>F Time for PD and financial support is problematic for PD. Administrators perceived managers provide inconsistent support for PD.</p> <p>Administrators perceived that their role in the organisation is not valued and therefore meaningful PD is not supported.</p> <p>Administrators express a lack of time for PD activity. No time release from their managers.</p>	<p>HE organisation supports PD. However, there is disparity between academics and administrators allocation of time and funding.</p> <p>There is disparity in PD allocation and a disparity as to how managers allocate PD funding.</p> <p>Administrators and literature agree on the low values level of administrators in HE organisations.</p> <p>No time for PD other than short training courses.</p>	<p>Administrators do not receive the same PD provision as academics (Szekeres, 2004).</p> <p>If administrators want more PD they have to manipulate their contracts (Lauwerys, 2002).</p> <p>Administrators not valued, despite their relatively high levels of qualification (Johnsrud et al., 2000).</p> <p>Defined by what they are not – Non-academics (Conway, 2000b).</p> <p>No single term to define administrators (Dobson and Conway, 2003).</p> <p>Wide range of administrative staff in HE – Generalist and specialist and sub groups within each (Boswell, 1998; and Whitchurch, 2004).</p> <p>Administrators are ignored by Government, employing organisations, and academics (Conway, 2000b).</p> <p>Academic values of HE organisations (SPHEO, 2006d). Values are the important aspects of organisational business, therefore, where do administrators fit in HE (Henderson et al., 2006)?</p> <p>Workload of administrators is higher than it is for academics (Anderson et al., 2000).</p>
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Key: **Q** = Questionnaire data **F** = Focus group data **PD** = Professional development **HE** = Higher education
