The Impact of Organisational Restructuring on the Working Lives and Identities of Faculty-based Administrative Staff: A Study of Australian Universities

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Declaration

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

____________________________

Stella Ng
Work published in the course of this thesis

Conference Proceedings


Refereed Journal Article


Conference Presentation

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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AVCC</td>
<td>Australian Vice-Chancellors’ Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAE</td>
<td>Colleges of Advanced Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CGS</td>
<td>Commonwealth Grants Scheme</td>
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<tr>
<td>DERW</td>
<td>Department of Employment, Workplace and Relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEEWR</td>
<td>Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERA</td>
<td>Excellence in Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HE</td>
<td>Higher Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HECS</td>
<td>Higher Education Contribution Scheme</td>
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<td>HEWS</td>
<td>Higher Education Worker Scheme</td>
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<tr>
<td>HRU</td>
<td>Human Resources Unit</td>
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<tr>
<td>MFAS</td>
<td>Mid-level Faculty-based Administrative Staff</td>
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<td>NTEU</td>
<td>National Tertiary Education Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>RFM</td>
<td>Relative Funding Model</td>
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<td>RQF</td>
<td>Research Quality Framework</td>
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<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNS</td>
<td>Unified National System</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNSW</td>
<td>University of New South Wales</td>
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<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>United States</td>
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<tr>
<td>UTS</td>
<td>University of Technology, Sydney</td>
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Abstract

As universities focus on changing their operational and functional structures to adapt to the new competitive environment, the challenge for administrative staff is to make sense of their positions as a result of restructuring. More often, administrative staff are seen as dispensable employees under the economic rationalist policies of executive management. This research focuses on the impact of organisational changes on the identities of Mid-level Faculty-based Administrative Staff (MFAS) and how they see themselves as part of the university. Firstly, it identifies the types of restructuring that affect their day-to-day work. Secondly, it examines how they resolve various demands of key stakeholders in a complex environment. Finally, it identifies the kinds of approaches at work that help them to construct meaning and how their values are constructed.

The study argues that the way MFAS construct meanings is influenced by cultural change, organisational restructure and the impact of individual perception on their individual perception of stress and pressure in their workplace. This study defends the importance of talent management in recruiting and retaining committed, skilled employees, especially during restructure. A qualitative case study approach was used to collect the data and a constructivist approach in data analysis.

The findings of this study highlight the many constraints facing MFAS, and the complex nature of being an MFAS in today’s workforce. It emerged very clearly that dependence on a peer support network in helping MFAS themselves at work during restructure is key to their positive coping mechanisms; however, their direct supervisors hold the key to their well-being, trust and commitment. The findings suggest that organisational restructure has not only had an impact on the working lives of MFAS but went beyond the change process to affect individuals’ health and mental state. Furthermore, working as MFAS is a profession, shown by individuals’ dedication to their work and by their formal qualifications. In addition, the findings suggest that the construction of individual identity during restructure is affected by the three domains work-self, home-self and oneself. Each of the domains has its own set of values and beliefs that are socially constructed. The study suggests future research needs to incorporate the well-being of an individual in creating a desirable organisational
identity. A closer integration between theory and practice would be beneficial to all supervisors and management in term of organisational success, as would further management education for all managerial staff.