

**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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Doctor of Education**

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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

Ng, S. 2007, 'University Staff: Learn to Dance Again: A Literature Review', in C. O'Connor (ed.), The 7th Annual Pacific Employment Relations Association Conference 'Regional, National, Global: Emerging Trends in Employment Relations', Queensland, 14-16 November 2007.

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List of Abbreviations

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

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.