Academic staff performance and workload in higher education in the United Kingdom: the conceptual dichotomy.

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Higher education in the United Kingdom (UK) is under increasing pressure to manage the workload of its academic staff in a way that maximises the outputs from teaching and research. The emergence of this can be traced back to 1989 through government legislation that introduced neo-liberal managerialism into the sector mirroring the laissez-faire approach to the economy that was prevalent. This paper examines the literature surrounding workload management and staff performance in the sector to try to establish whether the two have been conceptually linked. A desk-based narrative literature review was executed in order to scrutinise the literature and attempt to answer the main question; what does ‘performance’ mean in relation to an academic role and how is this related to an academic’s workload within the post-92 higher education\(^1\) sector? The results of the review show that the literature is dichotomous both in terms of the two areas being discrete and also in the conceptual stance taken by writers in each area. Whilst there are inferred links between workload management and performance, these have not been explored. The paper concludes by outlining what further research is needed on the linkages between workload management and staff performance specifically, using socially-critical methodology.

Keywords; academic performance; workload planning; workload allocation; NPM

Introduction

The post Browne review era (Browne 2010) has led to more emphasis being placed on the effective and efficient use of the main resource of a university viz its academic staff. This is

\(^1\) Post-92 higher education refers to those institutions that became universities in title following the Further and Higher Education Act 1992. They were the ex-polytechnics and colleges of higher education.
imperative because of a further diminution of the unit of resource through the projected reduction in income from the removal of the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) teaching grant, which has not been wholly compensated for by the increased fee regime, and is coupled with a demographic downturn in student numbers for 18 year olds in the population of 12.5% by 2019 (Office for National Statistics 2011). Another factor that is becoming increasingly demanding is the Transparent Approach to Costing for Teaching (TRAC(T)) (JCPG 2005) methodology that demands robust data on staff workloads based on a definition of an overall annualised academic workload of 1650 hours. This methodology audits actual staff time spent on key aspects of their role; broadly teaching, research and support for those areas, and it has been recognised (P. Barrett and Barrett 2009) that appropriate workload systems are potentially capable of filling this data return need.

The aim was to scope the literature to try to establish potential linkages between workload management systems and performance as well as examining the effects on the performance of academic staff as a result of the models used for the management of academic workload in post-92 institutions in the United Kingdom. This leads to the key question forming the purpose of this review:

“What does ‘performance’ mean in relation to an academic role and how is this related to an academic’s workload within the post-92 higher education sector?”

There is a lack of literature directly addressing the question and a dichotomous view soon emerges; on the one hand literatures about performance and its attributes and on the other those examining workload planning. Whether this is indeed the case is tested through this literature review. Thus the main question led to two sub-questions;
• What are the current issues in the literature regarding ‘performance’ in an academic role?
• What types of projects have been conducted into academic workload management and academic performance in higher education, and what is their evidence base?

This review will lead to recommendations for further research into what is an ever more critical area for the management of academic staff in post-92 institutions.

Context

Workload management and ‘performance’ within the post-92 sector can be attributed to the changes brought about by the Education Reform Act 1988 (ERA 1988) enacted progressively from 29 July 1988 to 1 April 1990, which “altered the basic power structure of the education system” (Maclure 1992) and subsequently the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 (Her Majesty’s Government 1992). These two pieces of legislation progressively pulled the control and governance of polytechnics, Colleges of Higher Education (HE) and Further Education (FE) colleges away from local authority control. As Maclure (1992) says this was borne out of a belief that “more autonomous institutions would be more efficient and achieve higher standards”. Maclure (1992) goes on to argue that the intention of the government of the day to break the stranglehold on education by Left-wing political groups then in control of most local authorities is accurate.

From the early 1970s there is a concept of ‘new public management’ (NPM) which seems to have influenced thinking in the political sphere at the time of the Conservative government in...
the United Kingdom (UK) in 1979. This NPM subjected jobs within the public sector, including universities, to new forms of management more usually associated with the private sector (Parker and Slaughter 1990 quoted in Chandler, Barry, and Clark 2002). This led to more measurable performance standards being adopted and mechanisms designed to produce these types of output, usually for public consumption in the hope that it would assure value for money. Such a move was not entirely new, having first surfaced in the Jarratt Report (1985) relating to efficiency in pre-1992 universities. A telling quote from that report is “The time of academic staff is the primary resource of a university and it needs to be managed and accounted for with appropriate care and skill.” (Jarratt Report 1985 quoted in Chandler, Barry, and Clark 2002) This could be viewed as the start of a consideration that ultimately leads to workload management of academic staff.

An ‘audit explosion’ (Power 1994) occurred during the 1990s with the term ‘audit’, once reserved exclusively for the financial sector, being used in all sectors of society. As Power (1994, p. 7) says “Audits do not passively monitor…performance but shape the standards of this performance” and this is key to what higher education has experienced in the last 20 years where ‘performance’ has come under increasing scrutiny particularly of the academic staff through such instruments as teaching quality assessments, professional reviews and appraisal. Audit processes mean that any system has to have identifiable and measurable outputs and this has led to an increasing reliance on quantifying academic workloads. The eroding of the unit of resource (Deem 1998) with increasing demands to improve productivity of academic staff have meant that ways have to be found to more effectively manage the increasing workload and to be able to evidence this
The ability to perform in an academic role would seem to be logically linked to workload in as much as the complexity and volume of work in the role will impact on the ability to function effectively across all components of the role. This of course presupposes that there is an agreed definition of ‘performance’ within the academic context in higher education.

**Methodology and Methods**

At an early stage it became clear that an appropriate way of proceeding with the literature review was to use a narrative approach since this offered a ‘best-fit’ solution, allowing for interconnections to be made (Baumeister and Leary 1997) through a comprehensive narrative synthesis of previously published work and will typically critique that work through a summary of the papers reviewed drawing together many items of literature into a readable format (Green, Johnson, and Adams 2006).

Searches were undertaken using the American Education Research Information Center (ERIC) database and the British Educational Research Index (BEI) with the earliest date being 1989 (the mid-point in the implementation of the ERA 1988) because this is when there was a step change in the legislative background to higher education in the United Kingdom. The epistemological basis for these literatures was identified as being functionalist (applying to the workload management) and socially-critical (mostly applying to the academic performance).

**Academic performance**
A discussion of performance in any role presupposes that the functions of a particular role can first be defined, against which measures to show how well those functions are being performed can be attributed. The modern academic is increasingly expected to work across four broad domains; teaching, research, scholarly activity (other than research) and administration in support of the other three areas of work. The expectation is that such an academic will produce outputs in all four domains that can be measured in some way. Thus there appears to be a link to workload management at least in the more easily measurable areas of teaching and administration, and yet writers on the subject of performance largely avoid this linkage. There is a widespread agreement that from 1989 to today, there has been a significant change in what it means to hold an academic role within higher education (Ball 2003; Bryson 2004; Marginson 2000; Ranson 2003; Smyth 1995). The literatures revisit the political situation pertaining at these times causing higher education institutions to rapidly evolve from autonomous seats of academe into business-oriented enterprises.

In order to try to make sense of the impact that these changes have had on the role of the academic it is suggested (Bryson 2004; Smyth 1995) that the labour process is examined in context. Essentially this means examining the controllers of work, what skills are used in that work and how payment is made in recognition of that work (after Braverman 1974 cited in Smyth 1995). One element of this is what Bryson (2004) calls the intensification of work possibly leading to work overload as evidenced through a large-scale survey of attitudes that he then relates to the labour process. Certainly Smyth (1995) argues that there is a separation between those who control academic work and those who actually undertake the work which can probably be linked to the rise of ‘managerialism’ (used pejoratively by most authors) within the higher education sector (Bryson 2004; Deem 1998).
One result of the above was the introduction of formal staff appraisal systems following the
requirements manifested in the ERA 1988. Interestingly Fidler and Cooper (1992) locate staff
appraisal firmly in the industrial arena and yet make the point that they offer models which
are “positive and developmental” and that a managerial approach is essential because it
relates to the objectives set for an individual and the performance against those objectives by
the individual. Fidler and Cooper (1992) are also adamant that such a system is needed
because of what they see as its “vital [sic] concern” to the management of an organisation.
This is reminiscent of the key tenets of Taylorism (Handy 1993). It is possible that it is this
type of management philosophy that provides a link between the two aspects of this review;
such an argument would be tenuous. Staff appraisal is a managerial means of reviewing all
areas of academic work on a regular basis. So a holistic role is reduced to components that
may be more easily measured. Indeed Shore and Wright (1999) suggest that academics
actually ‘perform’ in response to which of these areas is under scrutiny and that there is not a
single definition of performance.

It has been argued that the performance culture started around 1983 when the Audit
Commission was established with a mission given to it to drive the improvement of public
services. This culture was translated into higher education progressively from the enactment
of the ERA 1988. Audits were to measure ‘performance’ against indicators that they would
help to establish as a means of demonstrating value for money. As Shore and Wright (1999)
commented, by 1992 the audit methodologies used by financial institutions had “become the
[sic] model for auditing all areas of performance by public bodies, including higher
education.” This can be viewed as a natural extension of the neo-liberal forms of government
that were all pervasive around this time; characterised by the UK Governments from 1979 to
1997 where there was a gradual diminution of the role that government took in society. Shore
and Wright (1999) suggest that the Teaching Quality Assessments (TQA) introduced by HEFCE were experienced by academics as a “threat to collegiality and a fragmentation of professional life”. The notion of the collegiate institution with professional autonomy was eroded by the introduction of these types of audits focussed on teaching or research. A perverse outcome from such ‘audits’ is that academics learn how to ‘play the game’ and consequently the audit skews the very performance it is trying to measure! In summary Shore and Wright (1999) say that to have an effective dialogue about such issues as ‘performance’ in academic roles, we need to define what this means in terms of the culture within which academics operate.

Around the same time in Australia changes in higher education very similar to those in the United Kingdom were taking hold. Marginson (2000) talks of the “crisis in academic work” being caused by the same neo-liberal ideas permeating Australian universities as in the United Kingdom. He goes further in saying that this is leading to a “deconstruction of academic professionalism” (Marginson 2000).

The notion that there is now a separate group of professional managers dealing with review (audit), teaching and research is a common thread (Marginson 2000; Smyth 1995) as is the issue of the intensification of the work undertaken by academics (Bryson 2004; Marginson 2000). Both of these aspects are deemed to have an adverse effect on research and scholarly work. Given that Marginson (2000) bases his assertions on a research study into management in higher education, it is interesting to note the common ground he shares with Shore and Wright (1999) in relation to academic staff engaging more fully with the changing context in order to better understand their disciplines in the context of a shifting notion of ‘university’. At this stage we have the idea that academic work is changing from a professional-
autonomous activity to a more managerially focused activity but there is still no definition of what performance actually means. There is agreement in the literatures on the effects that audits, reviews, managerialism and so on must be having on performance in as much as they can skew performance and there is acknowledgement of the basic roles of academic staff but there is not clarity on what ‘performance’ means in the academic context. It is important to try to standardise ‘performance’ in some way so that agreement can be reached on what common measures are used to try to quantify, what is after all, a subjective undertaking in terms of academic work. It is easy to agree with Ranson (2003) when he says that in order to secure confidence in what is happening in publicly funded higher education we have to be able to check on compliance with agreed performance indicators. Of course this presupposes that the current system of audits will remain with us and that there is a continuing acceptance of the neo-liberal. Indeed Hull (2006) suggests that acceptance of the latter is necessary for the academy otherwise it risks being undermined further as it tries to continue to protest against the now embedded managerialism. It could be argued that such attempts at standardisation lead the way for workload planning which, in turn, is about trying to standardise the multi-faceted academic life. Ranson (2003) notes that employment contracts now require guaranteed engagement with these performance assessment processes. He also suggest that those within organisations are now ‘actors’ (Ranson 2003) which of course links to ‘performance’ in a very direct literal sense.

Performativity as a concept (Ball 2003; Deem 1998) potentially provides a useful way of understanding performance. In fact performance *per se* is a subset of the overarching concept of performativity. Ball (2003) provides a very helpful definition of performativity as a “mode of regulation” (Ball 2003) that uses the mechanisms of audit as a means of incentivisation and control that can lead to change for the better. It is a policy technology in itself (Ball
2003) that is displacing the older technologies of collegiality (cf. Shore and Wright 1999) deemed to have been dominant prior to the early 1990s. Ball (2003) then goes on to make a very helpful link with ‘performance’ by arguing that performance acts as a measure of productivity or output in a very industrial sense and it can be argued that this sets performance as an attribute of performativity. The recurring argument is made that performativity undermines the professional autonomy, or collegiality, that used to be the hallmark of academic life. The issue then is one of the validity of the measures chosen as performance indicators. Ball (2003) links this to appraisal since this is used to judge performance of academics across several aspects of their role; teaching, research and scholarly activity. The focus on the indicators being measured means that individuals within the system are no longer at the heart of what is happening since they become merely part of the statistical set used in process control. “Performance has no room for caring” (Ball 2003) is difficult to agree with completely whilst the underlying tenet is understandable, most academics would not wholeheartedly agree with such a sentiment. The critical element is the way that the ‘new’ managers apply the performance measures to illuminate practices and argue for the investment that may be needed to improve these practices; a definition of quality improvement systems. There is a gender dimension to this aspect of performance that inevitably becomes linked with ‘caring’ (Newman 1995 quoted in Deem 1998) where women end up taking a greater share of responsibility because of their alleged emphasis on people skills. There is a suspicion that female academics may also do more of the ‘hidden’ work (such as personal tutoring) than their male colleagues. It can be argued that this affirms the need for workload planning systems in order to try to restore equity across the genders and arguably this may provide a potential link with workload planning. Ball (2003) reinforces the point made by Power (1994) that the processes used to measure performance sometimes make the underlying processes opaque rather than transparent as the very performances are
changed to meet the needs of what is being measured. Ball (2003) goes a step further in suggesting that those in a weak position, based on published indicators of performance, may actually seek to become whatever is necessary to survive.

Deem (1998) identifies that pressures on academic staff to increase their numbers of publications, improving their contributions to research assessment exercises, do not cause favourable reactions amongst academic staff more accustomed to autonomy and yet these are now key measures of performance at an individual and institutional level. Deem (1998) further helps to expand on the issues surrounding ‘performance’ by identifying some core activities that academics undertake that can be measured; research (artefacts or publications), student learning outcomes (teaching assessments), student assessments, quality assessments (institutional review). The writing reinforces the view that performance is a subset of performativity (Ball 2003) thus helping with a potential definition. Performativity is viewed as a cultural issue (Ball 2003; Deem 1998) that managers can change because the old order of collegiality and trust was risky.

**Academic workload planning**

The literatures relating to workload planning are functionalist in nature because the majority of authors have examined this from the perspective of institutions previously in local authority control where there was already a bureaucratic (functionalist) culture (Deem 1998). It is certainly true that the issue of workload planning is more to the fore in post-92 institutions. Some have argued that academic work is being managed in a way that is similar to the Taylorist movement in manufacturing with a focus on management by objectives (Campion and Renner 1995). The argument is made that as the commodification of higher
education gained momentum then so the language of industry, focused on products, came to the fore and with this the associated methods of scientific management. Governmental pressures to increase efficiency are reminiscent of the same industrial language. This is happening in HE at a time when industry is moving away from such regimes in favour of individual empowerment through concepts such as total quality management. Yet such systems seem to offer a rational, logical, way of ensuring equity of workloads. This could explain why there is a dearth of research literature in this area since it is seen as purely managerialist and hence its unpopularity with academic staff. At the same time it could be argued that such systems appeal to managers in post-92 organisations because of their lineage based in more bureaucratic systems.

Finlay and Gregory (1994) relate discussion in various reports from 1985 and 1987 that related to the management of local authority maintained higher education regarding the drive to improve efficiency. However, there was a clear change in emphasis that can be traced to the Education Reform Act of 1988 which established the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council (PCFC) to distribute funds previously channelled through local authorities, directly to those designated institutions. In chapter 1 of the Act there was a statement that said that an aim was to bring these institutions “close to the world of business” (Maclure 1992) mirroring the political rhetoric of the time that focused on inefficient publicly owned bodies.

Finlay and Gregory (1994) in discussing the first Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) conducted in 1989 support a view, common in the literature, that this was the onset of ‘managerialism’ within the sector. This term is used pejoratively as summarising the loss of academic autonomy that had hitherto guided universities. Where post-92 institutions are concerned there was a different managerial culture emanating from a more specific contract
of employment and local authority control which may mean that the issue of ‘managerialism’ may not be so critical. It is interesting to read (Finlay and Gregory 1994) that the pressures on universities after the RAE meant that they had to “…demonstrate that it [faculty/school/department] could not only carry out its teaching duties effectively, but also it could produce quality research.” It can be argued that this is a nudge to the sector for some form of management of academics’ time in order to fulfil these agendas. Indeed Finlay and Gregory (1994) confirm from their literature search that it appeared that no previous work had been done on such workload management.

There is a body of literature (L. Barrett and Barrett 2007; L. Barrett and Barrett 2010; Burgess 1996; Burgess, Lewis, and Mobbs 2003) that identifies the pressures being placed on post-92 institutions that have led to the introduction of workload management systems. This literature uses case studies to present approaches to workload planning that have been adopted and explores how they have helped mitigate the effects of these pressures. The declining unit of resource is frequently mentioned along with the pressures on this through the drive for widening participation (L. Barrett and Barrett 2007; Burgess, Lewis, and Mobbs 2003); assuring the quality of teaching and research (Burgess 1996) and the increasing levels of public scrutiny (Deem 1998) through Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) audits. It is clear that this audit culture has made higher education institutions more visible and more easily criticised, at the same time as academic work has become more regulated as the labour process itself changes. A common factor throughout is the recognition that the critical resource of the university is its academic staff (Burgess 1996) and that this is costly and must be managed to best effect. The problem is then identifying the components of the academic role and managing the finite resource effectively. This is a problem that was recognised in the new pay framework agreement from 2003 (JNCHES 2003) which set about harmonising
academic conditions and pay across the sector lending weight to the assertion that this ‘deconstructed’ the academic role (Marginson 2000). This does not mean treating everyone homogenously but recognising the strengths of individuals in a way that is equitable and transparent (Burgess 1996). Indeed Burgess (1996) is emphatic when he says that departments need to “allocate workloads to individual staff members”. The common thread through this body of work is one of being instrumental in nature by proposing practical solutions to the problem of allocating workloads to members of staff. An argument can easily be made that these authors are representing a more pragmatic view based on the acceptance that the pressures on the higher education system will continue and not allow a return to a more professionally autonomous (laissez-faire) approach. Yet in a survey by Kinman and Jones (2003) 53% of all respondents found their workloads to be unmanageable, implying that some form of management intervention is necessary to redress the situation. Indeed P. Barrett and Barrett (2009) claim that one of myriad advantages of workload management is that it maintains the work-life balance and helps to avoid undue workload stress. This paper is very functionalist in outlining the process needed to design workload management models and by this is clearly part of the ‘managerial’ approach so often berated in other literatures.

Within the literature there are very few reviews of the implementation or effectiveness of the variety of workload models available probably resulting from the diversity of models used across the higher education sector which makes comparisons difficult. The notion that these models challenge the professional autonomy of staff is a recurrent theme but equally it could be the case that these models can bring positive benefits. The term ‘collegiality’ has been used as an alternative to ‘professional autonomy’ (Hull 2006) and it maybe that this is not something to defend. Certainly Hull (2006) makes the point that using a defence of damage to collegiality by the use of workload management models is a poor response to their
introduction. It is interesting to note that the word managerialism is not used pejoratively by Hull (2006) but this could be because of his background in a management department in a university. He does make a tentative link with performance saying that workload management models are “…initially flexible actors within the local circumstances of their applications” (Hull 2006). A case is made for workload models helping to manage stress in the workplace that in turn may foster greater collegiality thereby challenging the received wisdom to this point.

There is also an argument made that women, who are relative newcomers to the academy, may not have the same affiliation with the pre-existing notions of collegiality and autonomy that exist in pre-1992 universities especially since this may have given them heavier workloads (Deem 1998). Deem (1998) argues that this is increasingly the case where the notions surrounding collegiality are perceived to allocate higher workloads to female academic staff leading to their marginalisation. However, women are more likely to take on or be given more work that is administrative, committee based or student related in addition to teaching and research than their male colleagues (Acker 1996 and Brooks 1997 quoted in Deem 1998). It is difficult to know if this is simply a perception but an argument can be made that this is precisely where workload models can help if they have the necessary transparency to allow imbalances to be challenged in an open manner.

Certainly (L. Barrett and Barrett 2007) make the point that informal management arrangements that may have accompanied ideas of professional autonomy were becoming increasingly problematic due to the complexities of managing in the political climate prevailing in higher education at the time of writing. They also note that managers have not made the link between workload management and other activities such as appraisal. Thus we
have a tentative link to what may be termed performance management although this is not explored. Measurable standards of performance have been linked to practices adopted in the private sector (Hull 2006) and it is argued that workload management models reinforce these practices. This, it is argued, provides a rational way for academic staff to build a case for more resources. New public management (NPM) (Chandler, Barry, and Clark 2002) is discussed as a context that allows for the growth of such bureaucratisation within higher education allowing for the workload allocation models to gain support although it is unclear whether these models counter the effects of NPM or reinforce the model. NPM has been associated with “intensification of labour” (Chandler, Barry, and Clark 2002) and yet in their study concentrating on stress in academia they found that staff accepted that managers fulfilled a positive role in helping to reshape the nature of higher education. What they found stressful was the manner of implementation of aspects of this new management agenda. Clearly this agrees with Hull’s (2006) view in terms of the benefits that workload management can bring and provides a useful balance to those authors suggesting purely negative connotations.

Houston, Meyer, and Paewai (2006) used a case study approach based in a university in New Zealand to try to understand the issues of increasing accountability and work intensification and their impact on academic staff. They argue that these staff have traditionally had their discipline and core academic values at the centre of their professional lives, reminiscent of the issues of collegiality and autonomy referred to by other authors (for example: Bryson 2004; Burgess, Lewis, and Mobbs 2003; Marginson 2000; Shore and Wright 1999). As with institutions in the United Kingdom, universities in New Zealand have the twin strands of teaching and research linked in such a way that there is tension between the two. It is incumbent on managers to balance this tension as part of the workload planning mechanisms
used because these tensions can affect performance in a negative way if not managed carefully. Again, the authors acknowledge that academic work has changed (cf. Ball 2003; Bryson 2004; Marginson 2000; Ranson 2003; Smyth 1995) especially as the concept of the ‘knowledge society’ has raised expectations of what it is to undertake academic ‘work’.

Within the context of their case study Houston, Meyer, and Paewai (2006) make the point that one approach has been to introduce a workload planning system as a positive measure to reduce the stresses associated with the increasing demands and changing roles. These are the tentative steps in linking performance to the management of workloads associated with that role although again this is not explored in any depth. Houston, Meyer, and Paewai (2006) relate the results from surveys that they conducted of staff at the university examining the academic work environment. Overall, the results highlighted the issues of excessive workload, under-valuing of the role and fairness (transparency) of the workload allocation process itself. These findings echo the assertions made by others when examining ‘performance’ in an academic context as discussed in an earlier section of this review.

Interestingly, Houston, Meyer, and Paewai (2006) reported that there were benefits to workload models particularly in acknowledging areas where the workload itself was difficult to quantify or where there had not been an effective distribution. Clearly this last item is a perceptual one and the area where most management time is expended in trying to explain the allocations. The staff surveyed also felt that the models allowed them as individuals to better manage their own workloads suggesting an element of empowerment as a benefit. In the conclusion to their paper Houston, Meyer, and Paewai (2006) say that the literature surrounding workload allocation models is limited and “…does not provide a comprehensive research-base for clear guidelines with known consequences.” Certainly this would appear to support the evidence gathered for this review although later work (for example that of P. Barrett and Barrett 2009) does try to bridge the gap by providing clear guidelines to follow.
but it still does not address the issue of the ‘consequences’ from doing this. Houston, Meyer, and Paewai (2006) acknowledge that both managers and academic staff must be active in managing individual workloads since this cannot be a passive managerial function.

**Conclusions from the literature: The link between ‘performance’ and ‘workload’ in higher education**

The literature is dichotomous in that there is a clear distinction between those relating to workload management and those that refer to academic performance. Factors that appeared in both groups of literature were those of the effects of rising managerialism, relating such ideas to those of neo-liberalism and new public management. This provides the link between the two discrete areas of course but it does not provide the explanations needed to fully answer the questions posed at the outset. Certainly the advent of an audit culture pervades all aspects of academic life potentially providing a further link between workload and performance, although, again, this is not clear in the literature. However, following an examination of the literature a conceptual model that illuminates this dichotomy can be proposed. This model is based on one developed by Raffo and Gunter (2008) and it provides a useful way of succinctly capturing the conceptual positions with regard to workload management and academic staff performance and is shown in Table 1;

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Issues</strong></th>
<th><strong>Structural-functional</strong> (workload management)</th>
<th><strong>Socially-critical</strong> (academic performance)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purposes</strong></td>
<td>Focus on the management control of the academic workforce; Efficiency and effectiveness of professional practice</td>
<td>Focus on revealing the power relations in NPM and the damage to collegiality; Illuminating the effects of neo-liberal policies on HE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rationales</strong></td>
<td>Meeting policy exhortations; Compliance with processes or structures based on a perception of national/local policy; Managerialism as a positive philosophy in the ‘new’ HE</td>
<td>Changing nature of the academic role; Detrimental changes to the labour process for staff within HE; Damaging interrelationships between performativity and collegiality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Narratives</strong></td>
<td>Instrumental; Aligned with policy bodies; Promulgating models of workload planning</td>
<td>Critically reflective; Challenging policy imperatives; The complex multi-faceted academic role and the pressures exerted on staff</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1. Conceptual summary

The absence of an overt link between the two issues is even clearer when presented in this manner.

Workload management has developed as both a concept and structural mechanism of management since 1989. The link between new public management and the rise of the managerialist culture is explored as the background to workload planning models that themselves are evidence of the increasing bureaucratisation of higher education. Some authors argue that this has led to the demise of what was a culture based on collegially autonomy claiming that this leads to academic work being deconstructed. There is a differentiation between what was the perceived culture in pre- and post-92 institutions because of the lineage of the dual system prior to 1992 and it is argued that workload planning is more in evidence in post-92 institutions because of their local authority heritage.

The potential gender imbalance in workloads was discussed in the literature almost as a side issue, but nevertheless it is an important area for further investigation in itself.

There was certainly more evidence of empirical research being undertaken to identify factors that could affect performance of academics, but this was limited. Performance was identified as falling within the four spheres of academic work; teaching, research, scholarly activity and support (administration) for these other three activities. Whilst attributes have been identified for the work in these areas there was no evidence of an attempt to define ‘performance’ in an academic role other than to describe expectations.

Conclusion
The central theme of this literature review has been about two strands relating to work as an academic member of staff within higher education in the United Kingdom; academic staff performance and workload management. The review was approached from the perspective that managing workloads has positive impacts on performance in a role, but there was no conclusive evidence to prove this or otherwise. This necessarily involved examining the evolution of the academic role since the Education Reform Act 1988 started the change that has ultimately led to the current HE sector. Thus the question was posed; “What does ‘performance’ mean in relation to an academic role and how is this related to an academic’s workload within the post-92 higher education sector?” Unfortunately there is no clear answer to this question.

There is a lack of convergence between academic performance in the work role and the effects that workload planning may have on this performance and yet there is an intuitive link. It can be argued that workload planning can help to mitigate the effects of neo-liberalism but this is by no means clear or overt in the literature and it must remain a speculation. Equally it could be that workload planning has an adverse effect on performance since it is arguably a manifestation of managerialism (or outdated Taylorist models of management) although this seems counter-intuitive. Further work on examining barriers to implementing universal workload models within and across institutions would be useful to the sector. None of the literatures reviewed make reference to the effects on performance from adopting a workload planning model and they do not explore the potential issues from the intersectionality of gender, class and race in the utilising such models.

The most obvious ‘missing link’ for further investigation is that between performance and workload management since this is missing from the existing literatures. What is needed is
empirical research tackling the subject from the socially-critical perspective as this is where knowledge about the efficacy of such models and their impact on performance is likely to be gained. Until this is undertaken the effects of implementing workload planning models on the performance of academic staff remains conjectural.

References


