

University of Cape Town



School of Management Studies

**UNDERSTANDING THE FACTORS WHICH ENABLE AND HINDER THE  
ACADEMIC HEAD OF DEPARTMENT IN THEIR ABILITY TO BE EFFECTIVE IN  
PEOPLE MANAGEMENT**

**By Sandy Hill  
(HLLSAN005)**

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of the  
Degree of Master of Organisational Psychology

**Supervisor:** Ines Meyer

21 August 2019

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## ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to first identify which competencies are important to enable the academic Head of Department (HOD) to be more effective in people management, and secondly, to understand the factors which hinder the HOD in achieving this important function of the role. The HOD is pivotal to the running of an effective university in that he or she ensures the academic discipline is well-functioning and successfully operational. An essential requirement to do this is to manage and develop the staff employed to meet these goals. The literature on academic people management was reviewed and the results of this review produced propositions which were used as a basis for the study.

To identify the important competencies, data was collected from staff reporting to HODs at the University of Cape Town (UCT) via way of an online questionnaire. To gain insight and understand the perceptions and perspectives of HODs, a qualitative research approach and an interpretative phenomenological inquiry-based research design was used, and data was collected via semi-structured interviews. The data was analysed, making it possible to identify whether the propositions made via reviewing the literature, were able to be supported.

A summary of the key findings and a discussion of what needs to be considered for effective people management by HODs at UCT is presented. Recommendations for further studies conclude the dissertation.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

This research study attempts to understand the challenges which Heads of Department (HODs) at the University of Cape Town (UCT) face, particularly when undertaking people management. It is hoped that this will assist UCT's HR Department to identify how best to support the HOD role.

#### 1.1. THE ACADEMIC ROLE AND PEOPLE MANAGEMENT

UCT's mission to engage "with the key issues of our natural and social worlds through outstanding teaching, research and scholarship" (UCT, 2016, p.1) cannot be met without the optimal functioning of its academic disciplines in which teaching, research and scholarship take place. For this reason, leadership of these disciplines is pivotal to the functioning of an effective university. Providing such leadership rests in the hands of the Head of Department (HOD)<sup>1</sup> who is responsible for ensuring the academic discipline is well-functioning and successfully operational by supplying academic leadership and effectively managing and developing its human, administrative and financial resources.

Yet, across the world universities experience academic leadership and management challenges (Bolden et. al, 2012; Bryman, 2007; Cilliers & Pienaar, 2014; Floyd & Dimmock, 2011; Gmelch, 2004; Hancock & Hellawell, 2003; Moran, 2007; Seyama & Smith, 2015). This seems at least in part due to increasing managerialism at academic institutions which is seen at odds with the principle of academic freedom, a core value of academic institutions. Historically, universities have been self-regulatory and collegial but government and other funding bodies have forced academics to adapt to a more corporate-style management system (Winter, 2009).

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<sup>1</sup> Academic disciplines are structured into Division, Section, Department, Unit, College or School depending on the faculty's organisational structure. In this dissertation, an individual taking up any of these leadership roles is referred to as Head of Department (HOD).

The principle of academic freedom has been one of the foundation principles of universities. This, over time, brought about a state of devolved autonomy in which academic departments could independently manage their teaching and administration as they wished (Salmon & Angood, 2013). Salmon and Angood also noted that “this nonconformist existence was one of minimal constraints, restrictions and impositions, eliciting for many academics memories of better times now past in relation to academic pursuits” (p. 918).

At UCT, prior to 1972, there was a single professor appointed permanently per discipline and, by default, this professor served as HOD (Moran, 2007). However, with the increase in demand for higher education, the institution grew, and organisational changes occurred. In most countries, including South Africa, technology was introduced, which multiplied and diversified to keep pace with this expansion and then led to inoperability between systems (Salmon & Angood, 2013). Salmon and Angood explain that in response, institutions developed central management entities such as finance, human resources (HR) and information technology (IT) departments, to attempt to bring order and control. Faculties, that is conglomerations of academic disciplines, were the university’s primary source of income, and were thus required to fund these central entities. This led to academic departments giving up their idiosyncratic systems and having to start complying with centrally determined corporate practice.

The increase in demand for higher education also led to additional academic staff being required and a performance-based promotion system for academic staff was introduced. As this meant that additional staff could enter full professorships it became common to have several professors in one department (Moran, 2007). In May 1972, the role of the HOD began to change from being permanent to rotating between senior academics within a department. This practice is still in place today. Currently the appointment is for a term of three to five years (UCT, 2016). There is no limit to the number of terms an HOD can serve and taking on the role is voluntary. The rewards and recognition given to those volunteering for the role consist of a monetary allowance, research support and additional leave privileges. The HOD is required to ensure that the department is well functioning by attending to administrative tasks, managing the department’s finances, providing leadership and managing staff. At the

same time, an HOD is expected to fulfil his or her academic responsibilities of teaching, research and social responsiveness (UCT, 2016).

Academic leadership in scholarship and teaching is a skill which forms part of the core academic role and an HOD is required and expected to give leadership in this area. UCT expects HODs to do this by contributing to academic programmes, undertaking curriculum development, organizing of seminars, vigorous scanning and planning of the international disciplinary landscape and managing relationships with undergraduate and postgraduate students (UCT, 2016). The skills required for scholarship and teaching are well established by the time an academic gains professorial status and does not require much development when the role of HOD is taken up. The skill of people management is not an area in which HOD's have much prior experience of.

Moran (2007) noted that academics choose a career at UCT due to their dedication to teaching and research in their own field of interest and they often have no desire, aptitude, training or experience in leadership and administration, finance and people management, which require a different skill sets to that for the academic role. Some academics believe the relationship between people management specifically, and academic leadership to be incompatible (Bolden et.al, 2012). Consequently, the role of the HOD is often reluctantly taken up, with little support and training on what is expected of an HOD. It is perceived as a thankless job that undermines academic careers. Oliver-Evans (2001) reported that 70% of the HODs at UCT did not want to do the job due to perceptions that by taking up the position they would lose respect among their academic peers. Yet, Moran (2007) asserts that the performance (or non-performance) of the HOD dramatically effects the performance of academic departments.

Since Oliver-Evans' 2001 study, the university landscape in South Africa has again changed substantially. According to Mabizela (2016, p. 1) universities have become places of uncertainty, which are "standing at the edge of a precipice and could implode". The student protests which first emerged in 2015 have added to anxiety and uncertainty experienced by staff (UCT, 2017). As leaders of academic disciplines, it falls onto HODs to manage these fears. In addition, UCT's strategic planning

framework stresses the importance of increasing the pace of transformation and creating a new identity which addresses the inequalities of the past (UCT, 2016). As managers, HODs are expected to operationalise this strategy. Strong people management skills are again crucial to lead staff through this change. The role of the HOD has thus become even more complex since the turn of the century, yet currently UCT does not provide targeted training or support to new HODs in this regard. Potential HODs are not assessed on their people management skills before taking on the role, either. In order to equip HODs with the required skills it is important to establish which behaviour specifically needs to be shown. It is based on this particular context, that the problem statement and research question below have been developed. A back-to-the-drawing-board approach might thus be appropriate to review the HOD function, given the many issues that need to be considered, which include the recruitment process, the high level of administration, the people management aspect of the job and the associated training required (UCT, 2016).

## **1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT AND RESEARCH QUESTION**

Effective people management is a core function expected of HODs. It should be considered as a critical priority in that the success of any institution is reliant on retaining and engaging talented employees (Frank, Finnegan & Taylor, 2004). There is, however, limited empirical research that identifies the factors which enable or hinder effective people management among HODs of academic units at higher learning institutions, even though academic departments have been appointing HODs for decades (Gomes & Knowles, 1999). Identifying these factors would assist higher learning institutions to resolve how best to structure and support the HOD role. In order to contribute to this, the research question investigated in this study is thus:

*What factors enable and what factors hinder HODs at UCT in their ability to be effective people managers?*

The objectives of the study will therefore be to identify:

- what critical people management competencies are required for an HOD to be effective in a every-changing higher education environment?

- What functions and practices make it difficult for HOD's to be effective in people management?
- What are the supportive aspects of the environment which assist and support HOD's in being effective in people management?

To address this research question and these objectives, chapter 2 presents a literature review of the related literature. In chapter 3, the research design and method, which will be used to investigate the research question, will be discussed. Chapter 4 presents the results of the study that consists of an online questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. Chapter 5 discusses the key points of the results and implications for people management at UCT and presents limitations and recommendations for further research.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 explained how the leadership role in academic disciplines has changed at UCT since the early 1970s. It showed that still today, though, HODs are typically selected based on seniority and interest and not on relevant leadership competencies. They are also not given training in the required skills areas, particular in one very important area, which is people management. Furthermore, it is not clear what specific skills are required for effective people management in the UCT context. In Chapter 2, a literature review of the factors which enable people managers to be effective, as well as the challenges facing HODs in general, will be presented. The likely relevance of these factors and challenges is then assessed against the specific UCT context. The chapter begins with a definition of people management, followed by a consideration of the theoretical framework and context which underpins this research. A discussion of the literature identifying competencies as the enabling factors which support effective people management, and the challenges facing HODs, which hinder their ability to effectively manage people, will be presented. The chapter is then concluded with a summary of the key insights found.

#### 2.2 PEOPLE MANAGEMENT

According to Armstrong (2006), the term *HR Management* came about in the mid-1980's when a group of academics from Harvard Business School identified Human Resource (HR) Management as a system with inputs, throughputs and outcomes. They stated that this system comprises of all management activities that impact the relationship between the organization and its staff (Beer, 1984). The term *people management* is a modern term for HR Management. It has the same meaning and is often used interchangeably when reference is made to both the discipline of HR as well as one of the tasks required by a manager. For this study, I will be using the term *people management* as referring to the effectiveness of managers when they perform their tasks of managing their employees (Ruiz, Hamlin & Esparza, 2014). In the UCT context, it refers to what Bolden et al. (2012) describe as staff who are employed as

academics but who are required to take on the role and function of managers and leaders.

The terms 'management' and 'leadership' are often used interchangeably (Hamlin, 2006; Ruiz, 2014; Toor & Ofori, 2008) but managers and leaders have two different functions. Toor and Ofori (2008) argued that not recognizing these differences will create difficulties when it comes to measuring, hiring, developing and promoting both, leaders and managers. Leadership, they said, is about knowing where the organisation needs to go, whereas management is about how to get there. Knowing where the organization needs to go and how to take it there requires visionary leadership and high-quality management. Toor and Ofori furthermore argued that in today's competitive environment, organisations must have leaders with managerial capabilities and managers with leadership qualities. Hamel (2012) argues that management structures need to be reviewed to ensure that structures are better suited to changing and uncertain environments. Perkins and Arvinen-Muondo (2013) refers to people management as a complex task of creating a social interaction. This task therefore requires competencies which will enable HODs to be effective in this role. Academics are unlikely to have people management competencies to start with (Moran, 2007), so the task at hand will likely be all the more difficult.

As shown by Bolden et al. (2012), universities have a distinct purpose of learning and transformation and with their monastic origins, they are also ideological in nature, in that they require academics to work towards scholarly excellence. They also happen to be utilitarian in that they require a business-like approach to survive financially and operationally. This, according to Bolden et al., gives academics a dual identity of part-monastic, part-utilitarian. The decrease in funding and increase in competition has added pressure to strengthen the utilitarian identity. Bolden et al. assert that the incongruence between those who stand firm in upholding the historic ideologies and those who work towards utilitarian aims creates damaging tension. Bolden et al. explain that in the recent past, an increase of expertise in higher learning institutions to assist with marketing, human resources, estate management and information technology has been required whereas the academic work has changed less so. Here, excellence is still based on scholarly as opposed to financial performance. This has resulted in higher learning institutions having to walk a fine line between the ideological

(academic staff) and utilitarian (PASS staff) objectives and priorities. Bolden et al.'s work assists in understanding the peculiar context in which academics work. Bolden et al. concluded that it is not advisable to adopt a 'best practice' approach to people management in such a dual-identity organisation. They rather suggest developing a hybrid form of management practices which complement one another and acknowledge the concerns of both parties but with a shared identity, because the more staff see themselves as one unit, the more likely they are to support each other. Albert and Whetten (2004), too, suggested that "effective leaders of dual-identity organisations should personify and support both identities" (p. 12).

### **2.3 PEOPLE MANAGEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

Middlehurst (2012) pointed out that research on people management in the higher education field was, until the end of the 20th century, based on trait and behavioural theories which focused on specific individual characteristics associated with successful people management. Bryman (2007, p. 14) claimed that "not enough is known about exactly what makes an individual effective as a leader in the higher education context" and Middlehurst suggested that this elusiveness was due to the research undertaken being mainly in a narrow range of disciplines of politics, psychology and business administration. He furthermore indicated that the focus of the studies tended to be bias towards white Anglo-Saxon males, given that they typically occupied these positions at the time. Research conducted now in the 21st century, according to Middlehurst, has shifted its focus to a wider range of disciplines, such as history, drama, anthropology, physics and biological sciences, in order to identify new conceptual and theoretical directions. He also states that studies are now concerned with how management promotes learning, empowerment and change.

Tajfel and Turner's (1979) social identity approach accounts for the influence of context and power (or status) in intergroup situations. This approach proposes that groups which people belong to shape one part of an individuals' self-identify. These groups can become an important source of pride and give a sense of belonging. An us/them mentality is formed when a person identifies a group to which they belong, adopt the behavioral norms of the group and then compare themselves in a favorable light to other groups. At UCT this often plays out between the two main categories of

staff, Academic staff and Professional, Administrative, Support Services (PASS) staff. In a survey undertaken in 2007, PASS staff reported feeling badly treated by academic staff and academic staff reported feeling less important and undervalued by the University Executive in comparison to PASS staff (UCT, 2007).

Bolden et al.'s (2012) research found that taking a social identity approach to people management in higher education was helpful. HODs are viewed by others in many roles – as teacher, researcher, manager, leader, member of a department or part of a profession. Each of these social identities can be seen as either complimentary or conflicting to the role of HOD. They can occur simultaneously, and a key question Bolden et al. ask is “which identities are important to academics, how they are articulated, and to what degree they are experienced as ‘in tension’ with one another and/or organisational structures, processes and priorities” (p. 9). Bolden et al. concluded that to achieve important common goals, both staff and management must identify themselves via a common social identity. They furthermore concluded that HODs are not going to be seen as effective unless they are perceived to be working on behalf of the department and putting in place structures and processes that further the interests of the department

Being required to hold multiple and conflicting identities, such as being a researcher, teacher and a manager, can lead to what Roccas and Brewer (2002) termed as Social Identity Complexity, which is the degree of subjective overlap between groups in which an individual is simultaneously a member. This overlapping of different group memberships is sometimes experienced as challenging, as Floyd and Dimmock (2011) found that those HODs who struggled to balance conflicting identities were more likely to revert to their previous positions or resign. Those who were more capable of switching between multiple identities stayed and aspired to move into higher positions.

There is much debate on whether enabling factors which support effective people management are context-related or generic across different organisations, cultures and countries. A contingency theory view is that appropriate people management styles are dependent on different situations. This is supported by a study by Floyd (2016), which found that it was essential to consider differing departmental cultures

and individual needs when developing and supporting HODs to be effective people managers. Bolden et al. (2012) furthermore argued that HODs are expected to manage differently in times of crisis to how they are expected to manage when things are going well. Bolden et al. also stated that academic management styles are likely to be dependent on organisational context such as culture, history and performance. At the same time, there seems to be great overlap between what factors make for good people management, regardless of context. In a study focussed on managerial effectiveness within a United Kingdom private sector organisation, Hamlin and Bassi (2006) identified 66 competencies which were perceived by research participants to motivate and retain staff and contribute towards the organisation's success. These 66 competencies were then compared against sets of behavioural competencies from three UK public sector replication studies. Almost all, i.e. 97% of the competencies found in the private sector organisation were near identical to the three public sector organisations. This result supported Hamlin's view that there are "universalistic models" (p. 470) of people management effectiveness. From this, one can assume that there are generic competencies across different contexts, countries and continents which assist positively in people management, however, certain competencies and management styles would need to be used, more or less, dependent on the context.

## **2.4 ENABLING FACTORS WHICH SUPPORT EFFECTIVE PEOPLE MANAGEMENT**

There has been little empirical research on what factors enable HODs to become effective people managers. Ruiz et al. (2014) define effective managerial competencies as "behaviours which you wish all managers would adopt if or when faced with a similar circumstance" (p. 5). Identifying these competencies can guide management practice and enable HODs to undertake their people management function more effectively.

Attempts were made to find studies done on people management competencies in the higher education environment specifically. However, as stated by Croucamp (2013), there is a scarcity of literature in this domain. Therefore, in addition to two studies found within the higher education environment and given Hamlin and Bassi's (2006)

view that effective management competencies are universal, studies in two other domains were used, namely the public-sector environment and the corporate environment.

Bryman (2007) surfaced 13 HOD competencies which motivated employees. Based on a review of related literature Bryman suggested that creating a positive/collegial work environment and proactively advancing the profile and needs of the Department were the two most relevant competencies. Literature revealed that effective HODs created a sense of community among staff, and that HODs who were perceived to be advocating for the Department's causes, within the university and beyond, were considered effective. Bryman recommended that professionals, such as university employees, be managed differently to non-professionals, in that they do not require close supervision of tasks, for example, but rather support as per the competencies listed above.

Jordan's (2012) research focussed on management competencies for library managers in the public sector. Using Delphi technique, he refined competencies identified in the literature by obtaining the opinions of library directors through structured interviews and surveys. This resulted in a list of 19 core competencies which were used to develop training opportunities for librarians who wished to become managers.

The purpose of Croucamp's (2013) study was to develop a competency profile for South African HODs to inform a development training programme. Competencies were gathered from a literature review and then opinions obtained by HODs of ten universities across South Africa via a questionnaire. This resulted in a list of 20 competencies which HODs found to be most important. According to Croucamp, for HODs to become competent in these competencies they require practical experience alongside formal training. Croucamp concluded that support, such as coaching and mentoring programmes, to put the skills into practice, would be beneficial.

Ruiz, Esparza and Hamlin (2014) got Mexican managers and non-managers to choose the behaviours relevant to effective people management from a list of behavioural statements. The choices of managers and non-managers overlapped on

eleven statements, leading Ruiz et al. to conclude that both managers and non-managers perceive effective managerial behaviour in a very similar manner.

The competencies listed below are those identified as contributing to effective people management among HODs (Bryman, 2007; Croucamp, 2013; Ruiz, Esparza & Hamlin, 2014; Taylor, 2004):

1. creating a positive/collegial work environment
2. (proactively advancing the profile and needs of the Department)
3. (Recognising problems and taking necessary action)
4. effective communication skills
5. showing care and concern for health and well-being of staff
6. (supporting and rewarding performance growth)
7. building trust and esteem
8. (building and reinforcing high level performance)
9. engaging with and retaining staff to build a committed team
10. monitoring how employees feel and taking pre-emptive action before someone leaves or becomes disengaged
11. (effective recruitment skills to assist a committee in finding the most suitable employees)
12. (making sure employees have good working conditions)
13. is flexible and understanding of personal needs and offers support when needed
14. caring about employees being trained and prepared
15. (actively supporting career development of staff)
16. (initiating activities which lead the staff towards common goals)
17. accepting shared responsibility
18. effectively delegating tasks and decisions
19. listening with full attention, using all senses
20. building positive and co-operative working relationships
21. (a clear sense of direction and a strategic vision)
22. (innovating and creative in producing new ideas to help staff)
23. considerate
24. producing feelings of value in staff by showing an interest in their work

25. treating staff fairly
26. demonstrating integrity
27. adopting an open and approachable leadership style
28. (allowing staff to participate in key decisions)
29. (communicating well about the direction in which the department is going)
30. acting as a role model
31. has credibility
32. (providing feedback on performance, irrespective of whether good or bad)
33. (adjusting workloads and/or providing resources to stimulate and support departmental goals)

The following competencies were found to be consistent in two or more of all four studies:

1. Good communication skills
2. Creating a positive working environment
3. Being considerate of individual needs
4. (Developing goals and strategy to meet common goals)
5. Demonstrating integrity
6. (Supporting and rewarding performance growth)
7. (Providing resources to accomplish Departmental goals)
8. Building trust and credibility
9. (Allowing staff to participate in decision making)

A distinction between the relationship building driven (soft) skills and the work function driven (hard) skills are noted by bracketing of the hard skills in the above two lists.

Bryman (2007) called for caution in inferring that by developing these behaviours HODs' management effectiveness would automatically be enhanced. He listed five points to consider:

1. The competencies are wide-ranging and only provide partial guidance about the actions required to achieve the behaviours. In addition, knowledge of a relevant

competency is necessary, but does not guarantee that the behaviour will be implemented.

2. The different demands of HODs often clash. For example, maintaining credibility among staff might require the HOD to maintain a high level of research output. However, this may not be possible due to the number of other activities the HOD is required to perform.
3. Management behaviour and styles are not always transferable from one context to another, given the diverse cultures which abound in the workplace. Therefore, applying a competency which is effective in one particular work environment might not necessarily be effective in a different environment.
4. Most of the literature on effective people management in an academic environment focuses on the more formal roles, such as HODs and Deans. Other academic leadership roles, such as course convenors, research directors and chairs of committees, all which require people management skills, are not included as study participants.
5. Most HODs are temporary appointments for a fixed-term period. Because HODs are rotating it is difficult to establish whether an observed positive outcome of effective people management is due to the current HOD or to a predecessor.

These points, as well as other challenges which will be discussed below, are important to consider and understand before assuming these competencies as a support tool for effective people management.

## **2.5 FACTORS WHICH HINDER EFFECTIVE PEOPLE MANAGEMENT**

Moran (2007) stated that many academics experience being an academic while also being a manager as an oxymoron (see also Bolden et al., 2012). It may not be easy to match the professional identity of a teacher and researcher with the managerial identity which HODs are required to assume. Winter (2009) stated that the incongruence stems from the clash of values in a traditional academic culture, such as self-regulation and collegiality, with those in the contemporary corporate culture,

characterized by, for example, hierarchical structures and performance management systems. Most managerial processes seek to conform to a regulated set of procedures and protocols to maintain order and consistency. This does not fit well with the academic values of critique, debate and freedom of expression. Bolden et al. found that academics rarely had the opportunity to discuss and reflect on management procedures and protocols.

Taking on the role of HOD also requires a shift in how work is performed which may be difficult. Gmelch (2004) noted that much of an academic's research and teaching preparation work has them working independently while HODs must learn to work with others. He furthermore noted that academics can block out extended periods of time for scholarly work while HODs need to be accessible always.

Once contracted into the role of HOD there is often little time and opportunity to keep up with personal scholarly interests (Gmelch, 2004). Participants in Floyd and Dimmock's (2011) study reported feeling that they had lost some of their skills as academics after becoming HODs, due to the burden administration and people management placed on them. This did not allow them to maintain their academic professional identity. Thus, Bolden et al.'s (2012) argument that anyone who wants to maintain prominence in an intellectual field may feel it is best to avoid being an HOD is not surprising. Floyd and Dimmock, on the other hand, found that those who were interested in an academic management career trajectory, felt that the role of HOD assisted positively and gave them a broader institutional profile.

Cilliers and Pienaar (2014) researched the psychological experiences of 24 HODs at a South African university via focus groups and found that participants were resentful and angry that what they assumed to know would be a role to the advantage of the department became a disadvantage to themselves. Cilliers and Pienaar reported that participants felt their academic careers had been severely damaged and participants reported being respected and appreciated in some circumstances, but disrespected, exploited and humiliated in others. These experiences by HODs led to feelings of isolation, loneliness and emotional fatigue. Their study also found that HODs avoided conflict with colleagues with whom they had established personal friendships. This made it difficult to make decisions which were good for the department but unpopular

with peers. Cilliers and Pienaar expressed their surprise at how unhappy and trapped this group of highly intelligent and diligent academics were. They concluded that the group had been “set up for failure, away from their passion, in a dual role where they struggle with a sense of poor performance and damage to their academic status and progression” (p. 38).

As HODs manage academic and PASS staff they may think they are required to adopt two different management styles: A more facilitative management style when working with academic staff and a more traditional line-authoritative style when working with PASS staff (Gmelch, 2004). When it comes to people management, a different management style is not necessarily required, and doing so can lead to a negative work environment with perceptions of discrimination and favouritism.

The temporary tenure of the HOD role creates further hindrances. An academic's expertise lies in research and teaching and the often-limited training provided in preparation for the role of HOD is an indication of the degree to which the ambiguity and complexity of the role is underestimated at institutional level (Gmelch, 2004). Gmelch questioned the assumption that HODs are expected to be effective upon taking up the role when it has taken them years to obtain the academic professorial status which makes them eligible in the first place. Gmelch suggested that as institutions of higher learning do not cultivate academic managers, potential talent is not often identified and there is little or no development opportunities for staff who might be interested in management roles. Academics are not prepared for undertaking people management and the transition from academic to HOD can be very traumatic and often unsuccessful (Croucamp, 2013).

Hancock and Hellowell (2003) found that senior management was not supportive of HODs and that they were left to resolve difficult staffing issues on their own. In this way, HODs were “at the brunt of the command and control power of the deans above them and losing favour and respect among colleagues below them” (Seyama & Smith, 2015; p. 7). Cilliers and Pienaar's (2014) study furthermore found that at the university at which they conducted their research only a vague job description was available, and no induction programme, training or mentoring were offered to HODs. This is true for HODs at UCT where a job description for HODs does not exist. Furthermore, the

HOD recruitment and appointment process at UCT is perceived by some staff as lacking vigour and therefore being open to favouritism and preferential treatment of certain candidates (CFASM, 2016). Cilliers and Pienaar also reported that the HOD recruitment process was based on academic expertise and research output, but people management or interpersonal competence were not considered, even though the latter would likely be a more appropriate predictor of success as HOD than research and academic expertise.

At UCT professors and associate professors are “contractually bound to make themselves available for appointment as HODs” (UCT, 2016, p. 2). Moran’s (2007) study on the role of HODs at UCT found that those who do take on the role, do so out of loyalty to the department, despite the sense of “amusement” (p. 10) by their peers that they volunteer to take on the job and despite the same peers being grateful that the job was taken by someone other than themselves.

Given the variety of hindrances noted, it is not surprising that Moran (2007) found many HODs at UCT, if not all, to have been demoralized, frustrated and reluctant to do the job. In 2001, Oliver-Evans (2001) had found that 70% of the HODs at UCT did not want to be in the role. This reluctance results in university leadership being in scarce supply (Gmelch, 2004). Given that there is declining public-sector funding and increased competition in the higher institution sector (Bolden et al, 2012), this scarcity of academic management skills will result in further problems for higher institutions. Gmelch pointed out that universities socialise and reward academics to become internationally renowned experts in narrow fields but are criticizing the resistance of staff to serve as an HOD.

## **2.6 SUMMARY**

The purpose of this chapter was to highlight the factors found in literature which are important to effectively manage people in academic departments and to outline the challenges which may make effective people management difficult. This has led to the following insights:

1. Given the competitive higher education environment, staff see people management competencies as vital for HODs.
2. The critical competencies are (1) effective communication skills; (2) Creating a positive/collegial working environment; (3) Showing care and concern for health and well-being of staff; (4) Demonstrating integrity; (5) A clear sense of direction and a strategic vision; (6) Supporting and rewarding performance growth; (7) Providing resources to accomplish departmental goals; (8) Building trust and credibility and (9) Allowing staff to participate in decision making.
3. There is incongruence in the characteristics of a traditional academic culture and the corporate culture required to be adopted for the role of HOD.
4. Conflict is caused due to HODs having to balance different identities, often leading to the HODs academic career being disadvantaged.
5. The short-term and temporary tenure of the HOD contract is a barrier to effective people management.
6. HODs lack the required support from senior management or through coaching or training.
7. Most HODs are reluctant to perform the role and do so due to the loyalty and commitment to their Department.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODS

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the methods that were used to address the research question *What factors enable and what factors hinder HODs at UCT in their ability to be effective people managers?* It outlines what type of evidence and how evidence was collected. The ethical considerations relating to the research are also discussed.

#### 3.2 RESEARCH APPROACH AND DESIGN

To gain insight into the problem data was collected from two groups of participants: Current incumbents of the HOD role and staff members' views on their HODs, thus from those who manage and those who are being managed.

Data from staff being managed by HODs was collected cross-sectionally via a quantitative questionnaire which had the purpose to identify the following:

1. Which competencies staff believed to be most effective for people management.
2. To what extent HODs at UCT were meeting these competencies in order to identify areas of development.

In order to understand the perceptions and perspectives of HODs, a qualitative research approach and an interpretative phenomenological inquiry-based research design was used. This phenomenological design was used to identify common phenomena among individuals who have similar experiences, in this case HODs at UCT who manage people. The primary goal was to investigate how the participants made sense of their experiences (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). A questionnaire was presented to staff who reported to HODs and one-on-one semi-structured interviews were conducted with four HODs, who were selected randomly prior to analyzing the questionnaire results. The data obtained from the individual participants has assisted in understanding what is thought to enable and hinder people management practice at UCT.

### **3.3 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Mouton's (2001) list of participants' rights was used to ensure the research was conducted along sound ethical standards and as a basis to draft the consent forms for interviews and questionnaire. These were:

- All information was treated confidentially and anonymously.
- Participants informed consent was obtained.
- The process was voluntary, and each participant had the right to withdraw at any point or have data withdrawn.
- Hand-written notes during interviews were offered in place of audio-recording, if requested.
- Interviews were conducted in a venue of the participant's choice.
- Anonymity in the write-up of the results was ensured.
- Interviews were transcribed using codes rather than names.
- Survey participants were assured that the data provided would be aggregated across all participants in the department and no HOD would have access to an individual's data.
- The identity of survey participants was further protected by not collecting any biographical data, which was not relevant for this research. This further ensured participant anonymity.
- The researcher articulated her personal and professional interest in the study as a member of the HR Department and to provide stronger support to HODs. This assisted in the researcher being able to gain interview participants' trust in revealing their personal stories so that meaningful data for the study was obtained.

A summary of the research findings was supplied to all research participants who requested it, upon conclusion of the data analysis.

### **3.4 PROCEDURE**

The procedure used for this study consisted of the following four steps:

- Step 1: Approval was obtained from the Commerce Ethics in Research Committee to ensure the research undertaken was in line with ethical standards. Additionally, permission for the study was sought from the Executive Director of HR at UCT.
- Step 2: All 56 HODs currently contracted to the position at UCT were requested, via email, to indicate their willingness to participate in the research project. This participation took the form of (a) being accessible for a one-on-one semi-structured interview and (b) allowing their staff to express their perceptions about the HOD with regards to what they felt were important people management skills via a confidential and anonymous questionnaire. A response was requested to be provided within two weeks. There was no interest in a specific faculty or individual but rather in the role of the HOD across the university in general. The introductory email to HODs is attached as *annexure 1*. Of the 56 HODs approached 25 HODs notified the researcher by the deadline of their willingness to participate.
- Step 3: A total of 489 staff who reported directly to these 25 HODs were then approached by the researcher via email (attached as *annexure 2*) to request their participation in the survey. The email included a link to the survey. A separate survey link had been created for each HOD's staff, making it possible to link staff responses to a particular HOD. The email to staff explained that the study sought to assist UCT's HR department to develop ways in which to support HODs to better understand how to manage people in the changing environment the university finds itself in. Staff were informed that participation was voluntary, and they were assured of their anonymity in that all data received from the questionnaires would be aggregated, and no demographic information would be asked for. Out of 489 staff approached, 143 staff responded, which equates to a 34% response rate.
- Step 4: Four HODs were selected randomly and one-on-one semi-structured interviews were conducted with them. These were set up via email and

telephone and took place at an agreed time and date in the office of each HOD. The interviews were approximately 40 to 80 minutes long, were recorded and transcription took place thereafter. The interviews were conducted in English and all four HODs were fluent. The size of the sample was small due to limited time and resources.

### **Sample Description**

No demographic information was required to be supplied to ensure anonymity of all respondents so that no specific staff members could be identified.

### **Methods of data collection**

#### **a) Questionnaire**

The online questionnaire was set up in the software programme Qualtrics. Instructions on how to answer the questionnaire were included on the cover page. Thirty-three factors comprising behaviours, skills, and characteristics (refer to *table 1* below), which had been identified as important competencies for effective people management through the literature review, were presented in the questionnaire. Participants were asked to indicate the degree to which each competency was characteristic of their HOD. A 5-point Likert scale was used to record the responses (1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neutral; 4 = agree and 5 = strongly agree). An additional category was supplied for “don’t know”.

Following this, participants were asked to choose out of the 33 competencies the five which they believed to be the most important for effective HODs by selecting “1” for the most important competency, “2” for the second most important and so forth up to “5” as the fifth most important. The full questionnaire is attached as *annexure 3*. The questionnaire ended with an open-ended item which stated, “*Please feel free to add any further comments in the block below.*”

**Table 1:** *Competencies Which Contribute to Effective People Management among HODs as identified in Chapter 2*

- 
1. creating a positive/collegial work environment
  2. proactively advancing the profile and needs of the Department
-

- 
3. Recognising problems and taking necessary action
  4. effective communication skills
  5. showing care and concern for health and well-being of staff
  6. supporting and rewarding performance growth
  7. building trust and esteem
  8. building and reinforcing high level performance
  9. engaging with and retaining staff to build a committed team
  10. monitoring how employees feel and taking pre-emptive action before someone leaves or becomes disengaged
  11. effective recruitment skills to assist a committee in finding the most suitable employees
  12. making sure employees have good working conditions
  13. is flexible and understanding of personal needs and offers support when needed
  14. caring about employees being trained and prepared
  15. actively supporting career development of staff
  16. initiating activities which lead the staff towards common goals
  17. accepting shared responsibility
  18. effectively delegating tasks and decisions
  19. listening with full attention, using all senses
  20. building positive and co-operative working relationships
  21. a clear sense of direction and a strategic vision
  22. innovating and creative in producing new ideas to help staff
  23. considerate
  24. producing feelings of value in staff by showing an interest in their work
  25. treating staff fairly
  26. demonstrating integrity
  27. adopting an open and approachable leadership style
  28. allowing staff to participate in key decisions
  29. communicating well about the direction in which the department is going
  30. acting as a role model
  31. has credibility
  32. providing feedback on performance, irrespective of whether good or bad
  33. adjusting workloads and/or providing resources to stimulate and support departmental goals
- 

Sources: Taylor (2004); Bryman (2007); Croucamp (2013); Ruiz, Esparza & Hamlin (2014).

#### **b) One-on-one semi-structured interviews**

The experiences, expectations and perceptions of the four HODs were documented via face-to-face interviews. These interviews assisted with identifying common factors

which seemed to enable and hinder HODs' effective people management. After obtaining confirmation of the HOD's willingness to participate in the study, four HODs were chosen on the basis of their reasonable and practical availability. They were also required to have had a minimum of five questionnaire responses from their staff to be able to link perceived skills to specific themes and patterns which emerged from the questionnaire data. Each participant was contacted by either telephone or email and an appointment for the interview was made. Each interview was guided by a structured interview guide containing open-ended questions (see *annexure 4*). A participant information sheet and schedule, based on a document by Bolden et al. (2012) was emailed to the interviewee beforehand and is attached as *annexure 5*. The information sheet set out the aims of the study and indicated the logistics of the interview.

Opdenakker (2006) advises that interviews done face-to-face as synchronous communication were advantageous in that they create good ambience as well as pick up on social cues. This method was therefore used. Participants were asked to sign a consent form (attached as *annexure 6*) and indicate whether they agreed for the interview to be audio recorded for transcription purposes. All interviewees consented to audio recording. The interviews were conducted in a venue of the participant's choice to allow for confidentiality and convenience. Face-to-face interviews lasted between 40 and 80 minutes and as required when using the phenomenological approach, active listening was applied as well as open questions were asked, free from presumptions, so that depth could be reached (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). At the beginning of the interview, interviewees were asked to identify the five competencies out of the same 33 item list which had been provided in the questionnaire which they personally felt were most important in being effective HODs (where 1 = most important, 2 = next most important and so forth up until 5 = fifth most important). The list is attached as *annexure 7*.

The pre-set interview questions were then asked to elicit interviewees' views and input on the enabling and hindering factors which had surfaced in the literature, as well as any additional factors they might be aware of. Key terminology was explained: "People management" was referred to as the "behavioural effectiveness of managers in performing their everyday tasks of managing and leading people" (Ruiz, Hamlin &

Esparza, 2014, p. 2). “Effective people management” was defined as “behaviours which you wish all managers would adopt if or when faced with a similar circumstance” (Ruiz et al, 2014. p. 5). In order to ensure quality and integrity of the data, active listening skills were applied. Furthermore, given that the researcher works at the institution, a rapport was quickly established, which assisted in gaining the trust of the participants. The researcher also monitored the engagement and applied empathy and counselling when participants became emotionally sensitive.

### **Data Analysis**

The quantitative data was analysed in Excel using descriptive statistics in that the size, central tendency and spread of the data was considered. The quantitative data enabled the researcher to compare the extent to which participants within departments agreed on their HOD’s people management competencies and to compare different competencies to each other across departments. The purpose of this was to understand how effective generally HODs at UCT were at people management. By identifying which competencies were less prevalent areas of development for HODs to become more effective could be established. Finally, the analysis allowed to determine which HODs were perceived as highly effective and which were perceived as being less so.

The interview data was reduced by using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012), highlighting clusters of statements provided by the participants and combining these into emergent themes. What the participants experienced (textural description) and how they experienced it (structural description) was explored to establish common clustering themes (Opdenakker, 2006). These themes were then placed into groups which had been identified as factors which impacted effective people management. Quotes from participants’ responses illustrate the identified themes and ensure interviewees’ voices are retained. Pietkiewicz & Smith note that this enables the reader to measure the relevance of the interpretation. A profile of each interviewee was initially going to be provided, but given that this might have compromised participants’ anonymity, this was omitted. For further guarantee of anonymity, all reference to gender has been replaced with the pronoun “they”.

### **3.5 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter, the study procedure, samples and data collection methods were presented for the quantitative research undertaken. To obtain further and deeper insight, a qualitative research method was used, and the phenomenological inquiry-based research design assisted in obtaining data which made it possible to identify what factors enable and what factors hinder HODs at UCT in their ability to be effective people managers.

University of Cape Town

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is structured into two parts: The first part presents the data collected from staff via questionnaires. The second part presents the HOD interview findings. It is important to note that in the presentation of the results departments and HODs are indicated by numbers and letters only, to ensure that readers cannot link the results to any specific HOD, staff member or department.

#### 4.2 FINDINGS: QUESTIONNAIRE

The purpose of the questionnaire was to identify what competencies staff believed to be most effective for people management, which competencies were prevalent among HODs, and to what extent different HODs at UCT were meeting these competencies.

##### a. **Competencies staff believed to be most effective for people management.**

The five competencies chosen by most staff members as most important for effective people management were

- *creating a positive/collegial work environment,*
- *effective communication skills,*
- *proactively advancing the profile and needs of the Department,*
- *a clear sense of direction and a strategic vision and*
- *demonstrating integrity.*

Table 2 shows the frequency with which each competency was chosen.

**Table 2:** *Perceived importance of each people management competency by staff members who report to HODs (N = number of participants out of a total of 143) (brackets differentiate the hard skills from the soft skills)*

	<b>Competency</b>	<b>% and number (n) of participants that chose competency as most important</b>	<b>% and number (n) of participants that chose competency as one of the five most important</b>
1	Creating a positive/collegial work environment	30.9% (n =42)	61.8% (n =84)
2	effective communication skills	10.3% (n =14)	38.2% (n =52)
3	(proactively advances the profile and needs of the Department)	9.6% (n =13)	39.7% (n =54)
4	(a clear sense of direction and a strategic vision)	6.6% (n =9)	21.3% (n =29)
5	demonstrating integrity	6.6% (n =9)	19.9% (n =27)
<i>Other people management competencies which were rated as important by one or more staff reporting to HODs but were not chosen as one of the five most important (N = number of participants out of a total of 143)</i>			
6	Has credibility	4.4% (n =6)	9.6% (n =13)
7	(recognising problems and taking necessary action)	2.9% (n =4)	36.0% (n =49)
8	adopting an open and approachable leadership style	2.9% (n =4)	20.6% (n =28)
9	showing care and concern for health and well-being of staff	2.9% (n =4)	22.1% (n =30)
10	(actively supporting career development of staff)	2.9% (n =4)	15.4% (n =21)
11	building trust & esteem	1.5% (n =2)	21.3% (n =29)
12	knowing how to engage with and retain staff to build a committed team	1.5% (n =2)	21.3% (n =29)
13	building positive and co-operative working relationships	1.5% (n =2)	14.0% (n =19)
14	treating staff fairly	1.5% (n =2)	13.2% (n =18)
15	(supporting and rewarding performance growth)	1.5% (n =2)	12.5% (n =17)
16	(makes sure employees have good working conditions)	1.5% (n =2)	5.9% (n =8)
17	(allowing staff to participate in key decisions)	0.7% (n = 1)	14.0% (n =19)

**Table 2. (continued)**

18	(building and reinforcing high level performance)	0.7% (n =1)	10.3% (n =14)
19	(adjusting workloads and/or providing resources to support depart goals)	0.7% (n =1)	8.8% (n =12)
20	(communicating well about the direction in which the department is going)	0.7% (n =1)	8.1% (n =11)
21	flexible & understanding of personal needs & offers support when needed	0.7% (n =1)	8.1% (n =11)
22	producing feelings of value in staff by showing an interest in their work	0.7% (n =1)	5.9% (n =8)
23	listening with full attention, using all senses	0.7% (n =1)	4.4% (n =6)
24	acting as a role model	0.7% (n =1)	4.4% (n =6)
25	(providing feedback on performance, irrespective of whether good or bad)	0.7% (n =1)	4.4% (n =6)
26	(effectively delegating tasks and decisions)	0% (n =0)	10.3% (n =14)
27	(initiating activities which lead the staff towards common goals)	0% (n =0)	7.4% (n =10)
28	monitoring employees feel/takes pre-emptive before someone leaves/disengaged	0% (n =0)	5.9% (n =8)
29	accepting shared responsibility	0% (n =0)	4.4% (n =6)
30	(innovative and creative in producing new ideas to help staff)	0% (n =0)	2.2% (n =3)
31	Considerate	0% (n =0)	2.2% (n =3)
32	Caring about employees being trained and prepared	0% (n =0)	2.2% (n =3)
33	(effective recruitment skills to assist in finding the most suitable employees)	0% (n =0)	2.2% (n =3)

Almost a third of staff rated *creating positive/collegial work environment* as their most important competency as opposed to demonstrating integrity, which was only chosen by 7% of participants as the most important of all. One of the least important competencies is *effective recruitment skills to assist in finding the most suitable*

*employees*. This might not be important because at UCT the HR department is tasked with undertaking the recruitment process, although HODs participate in the selection. When dividing the competencies into two parts – eighteen which are relationship building driven (soft skills) and fifteen which are work function driven (hard skills), the relationship driven competencies are chosen by staff are being more important, with the average score for the soft skills being 15.6%, in comparison to the average score of the hard skills, which was 13.1%. The hard skills are differentiated, by bracketing, from the soft skills, in table 2 above.

#### **b. The prevalence of people management competencies amongst UCT HODs**

Table 3 below indicates to what degree staff, on average, perceived their HODs to possess any of the 33 competencies. The competencies in Table 3 are ordered according to the extent to which participants experienced their HODs demonstrating them. The competency which participants, on average, experienced their HODs displaying to the greatest extent is provided first, the one displayed to the least extent last. This information is important to be able to identify areas of development for HODs at UCT. For thirty-one of the thirty-three competencies, staff, on average, agreed that their HODs demonstrated these as the average rating is above 3.49. Seven of the competencies, *building positive and co-operative working relationships; adopting an open and approachable leadership style; effective recruitment skills to assist in finding the most suitable candidates; communicating well about the direction in which the department is going; acting as a role model; making sure employees have good working conditions and flexible and understanding of personal needs and offers support when needed* were experienced as “neutral” as the average rating was below 3.50 indicating that staff neither disagreed or agreed to their HODs showing this competency. It needs to be noted, however, that the standard deviations are relatively high which indicates a wide spread of views among participants.

On average, participants perceived their HODs as most competent in

- *providing feedback on performance, irrespective of whether good or bad,*
- *proactively advancing the profile and needs of the Department,*
- *producing feelings of value in staff by showing an interest in their work,*

- *accepting shared responsibility and*
- *a clear sense of direction and a strategic vision.*

**Table 3:** *The extent to which staff members at the University of Cape Town experienced their HODs displaying specific people management competencies, listed in rank order according to average ratings (minimum score provided for each item: 1 (strongly disagree), maximum score: 5 (strongly agree)) (M = mean, SD = standard deviation, N = number of participants out of a total of 143 who provided a score, D = number of participants who indicated “don’t know”)*

	<b>HOD people management competency</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>
1	providing feedback on performance, irrespective of whether good or bad (N=137)	4.04	1.38	4
2	proactively advancing the profile and needs of the Department (N=142)	3.99	1.22	1
3	producing feelings of value in staff by showing an interest in their work (N=140)	3.96	1.32	3
4	accepting shared responsibility (N = 139)	3.87	1.37	4
5	a clear sense of direction and a strategic vision (N = 140)	3.86	1.31	3
6	showing care and concern for health and well-being of staff (N = 142)	3.84	1.38	1
7	creating a positive/collegial work environment (N = 143)	3.83	1.37	0
8	recognising problems and taking necessary action (N=142)	3.81	1.26	1
9	adjusting workloads and/or providing resources to support departmental goals (N = 133)	3.81	1.41	1 0
10	building and reinforcing high level performance (N = 140)	3.80	1.38	3
11	Considerate (N = 139)	3.76	1.35	4
12	effectively delegating tasks and decisions (N = 140)	3.75	1.37	3
13	actively supporting career development of staff (N = 139)	3.74	1.21	4
14	allowing staff to participate in key decisions (N = 140)	3.73	1.38	3
15	knowing how to engage with and retain staff to build a committed team (N = 139)	3.71	1.31	4
16	effective communication skills (N = 142)	3.70	1.39	1
17	supporting and rewarding performance growth (N = 139)	3.64	1.37	4
18	listening with full attention, using all senses (N = 141)	3.63	1.29	2
19	has credibility (N = 142)	3.63	1.55	1
20	initiating activities which lead the staff towards common goals (N = 139)	3.60	1.35	4
21	innovative and creative in producing new ideas to help staff (N = 183)	3.60	1.44	5
22	demonstrating integrity (N = 139)	3.59	1.45	4
23	Caring about employees being trained and prepared (N = 136)	3.56	1.56	7
24	treating staff fairly (N = 137)	3.54	1.36	6
25	monitoring employees feel/takes pre-emptive before someone leaves/disengaged (N=132)	3.52	1.51	1 1
26	building trust & esteem (N = 143)	3.50	1.37	0
27	building positive and co-operative working relationships (N = 140)	3.47	1.35	3
28	adopting an open and approachable leadership style (N = 140)	3.48	1.44	3
29	effective recruitment skills to assist in finding the most suitable employees (N = 126)	3.48	1.27	7
30	communicating well about the direction in which the department is going (N = 141)	3.49	1.36	2

31	acting as a role model ( <i>N</i> = 140)	3.49	1.42	3
32	making sure employees have good working conditions ( <i>N</i> = 140)	3.20	1.34	3
33	flexible & understanding of personal needs & offers support when needed ( <i>N</i> =138)	2.90	1.45	5

Two of these, *proactively advancing the profile and needs of the Department and a clear sense of direction and a strategic vision* were competencies which were also among those which staff chose as the top five most important people management competencies (see *Table 2* above). There were three competencies for which a comparatively large number of participants could not provide an answer. These were:

- *adjusting workloads and/or providing resources to support departmental goals,*
- *monitoring employees' feelings and takes pre-emptive measures before someone leaves or becomes disengaged and*
- *effective recruitment skills to assist in committees finding the most suitable employees.*

**c. The extent to which individual HODs at UCT are meeting people management competencies**

The average ratings per HOD across the 33 competencies are listed in *Table 4*, as well as the average ratings per HOD across the five competencies seen as most important. Out of the twenty-five HODs rated, two (8%) were rated by their staff as not displaying the competencies seen as most important whereas 18 HODs (72%) were, on average, rated as displaying these five competencies. Five HODs (20%) were rated as neutral. It may be that their staff did not have an opinion either way or that the HOD was new, as indicated by two comments from participants:

*'My neutral position to many of the questions hinges on the newness of our HOD, and therefore too soon to tell'.*

*'It's hard to assess a new HOD'.*

**Table 4:** Rank order of HODs based on their staff's average scores across the 33 people management competencies as well as the five most important identified by the sample (*N* = number of staff responses out of a total of 143, *M* = mean, *SD* = standard deviation, *Min* = minimum score, *Max* = maximum score). Grey shaded rows depict the HODs who participated in semi-structured one-on-one interviews

HOD	N	All 33 competencies				Top 5 rated competencies			
		M	SD	Min	Max	M	SD	Min	Max
HOD 18	4	5.00	.65	2	5	4.95	.11	5	5
HOD 17	3	5.00	.76	2	5	4.67	.33	4	5
HOD 1	3	4.84	1.31	3	5	4.73	.28	4	5
HOD 24	6	4.72	1.05	2	5	4.63	.53	4	5
HOD 13	2	4.39	.60	3	5	4.50	.35	4	5
HOD 10	5	4.24	.96	2	5	4.56	.26	4	5
HOD 19	10	4.20	.46	1	5	4.40	.27	4	5
HOD 15	8	4.19	1.23	2	5	4.57	.25	4	5
HOD 14	7	4.11	1.03	1	5	4.34	.39	4	5
HOD 3	3	4.00	.86	2	5	4.13	.69	3	5
HOD 11	5	4.00	1.09	1	5	3.64	.65	3	4
HOD 6	6	4.00	1.21	2	5	4.00	.16	5	5
HOD 22	5	4.00	1.35	1	5	4.39	.50	4	5
HOD 25	4	4.00	1.69	2	5	4.13	.35	4	5
HOD 7	6	3.80	1.33	1	5	4.00	.31	4	4
HOD 2	10	3.78	1.41	1	5	3.44	.56	3	4
HOD 12	6	3.53	1.24	1	5	3.70	.55	3	4
HOD 21	6	3.51	1.39	1	5	3.70	.35	3	4
HOD 23	6	3.36	1.05	1	5	3.47	.59	3	4
HOD 16	8	3.16	1.03	1	5	3.40	.36	3	4
HOD 20	5	3.08	1.43	1	5	2.96	.46	2	4
HOD 8	2	3.00	.84	1	5	2.70	.57	2	4
HOD 9	5	3.00	1.05	1	5	3.68	.52	3	4
HOD 5	15	2.04	1.22	1	5	2.19	.44	2	3
HOD 4	3	2.00	.98	1	5	2.27	1.12	1	4

#### d. Qualitative comments

Participants were able to add qualitative comments at the end of the questionnaire. A total of 38 of participants (27%) made use of this opportunity. The qualitative comments were categorised into nine themes (see Table 5). In total, 64 points were raised. Of these, 49 related to the competencies. They provided further insight into how HODs demonstrate or do not demonstrate the competency. Fifteen further qualitative comments not related to the competencies but related to other themes relevant to the study have also been listed. Participants also related other comments

which did not relate directly to the competencies considered in this study. They have been provided together with the full verbatim list of qualitative responses in *annexure 8*. No comments have been linked to specific HODs to protect study participants' anonymity.

**Table 5:** *Qualitative responses submitted by questionnaire participants relating to the top five people management competencies and other themes*

Theme	Qualitative Comment
i. Creating a positive/collegial work environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective relationship building and creating a supportive work environment should be the fundamental actions of any line manager. In return the manager will gain loyalty and commitment from staff, ultimately retaining happy staff.</li> <li>• The importance of an inclusive, consultative and fair head of department cannot be overestimated.</li> <li>• The HOD has transformed the culture in the department and created an improved work atmosphere.</li> <li>• The academic staff in my department enjoy rather better sympathies, attention, concerns for advancement, etc. from our HOD than PASS staff do.</li> <li>• Our HOD could have handled the issue of PASS staff positions being reorganised in a more sensitive manner than they did.</li> <li>• While my HOD is very good at encouraging collegiality, there are certain behaviours which are not acceptable and sometimes conflict resolutions and collegiality is not the way forward. Academic culture tends to resist managerialism which is generally a good thing. However, when certain staff members demonstrate sexism or other forms of discrimination it's not enough to ask for the two people to be collegial.</li> <li>• The HOD contributes in a negative way when even minor situations arise.</li> <li>• A HOD should not (which is all happening in the department) make staff cry in meetings, make staff feel unwelcome in the department and ignore staff in the corridor (a simple hello would suffice).</li> <li>• The HOD is ruining the department and has created a divisive, unwelcoming and toxic work environment. This can clearly be seen by the number of resignations and early retirements in the department.</li> <li>• A large portion of staff are made to feel like they should leave by our HOD.</li> </ul>
ii. Effective communication skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective communication should be the fundamental actions of any line manager. In return the manager will gain loyalty and commitment from staff, ultimately retaining happy staff.</li> <li>• Our HOD delegates and asks us to do what they want. They say they listen however what we say is never really taken into account, we are generally told we do not understand and we must adjust to their thinking.</li> <li>• An HOD should not disallow staff to express their opinions in staff meetings.</li> <li>• A big issue throughout UCT is of HODs communicating with their academic staff but never with their PASS staff. Academic meetings happen regularly but meetings with everyone never happen. Do pass [sic] staff never count?</li> </ul>

**Table 5.** (continued)

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It appears that our HOD has some secret discussions with their favourites which resolves issues in their favour. The other party gets to hear about this resolution "somewhere down the line" and "by the way", which is very disturbing.</li> <li>• The HODs communication with staff is shocking. I have never seen a department run so badly and the deterioration of the department under their 'leadership' has been noticeable.</li> <li>• The breakdown in communication with the current Head of the Department has been a concern for some time now.</li> </ul>
iii.	Proactively advancing the profile and needs of the Department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The HOD needs to focus on the longer-term strategy of the department and delegate responsibilities to a greater degree.</li> <li>• The HOD puts needs of troublesome students ahead of staff, teaching and learning, and what is generally good for the department.</li> <li>• The HOD applies silly mathematical formulae in which relationships between tasks and colleagues are dumbed down without paying attention to the type of lecturing, the preparation necessary and the international networking called for to grow new fields of knowledge.</li> <li>• The HOD should not force jobs onto people who are clearly not ready for them, and not provide support.</li> </ul>
iv.	A clear sense of direction and a strategic vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An HOD without the necessary people skills creates a department lacking direction.</li> <li>• Of concern is our HODs lack of direction and leadership, and urge to control everything.</li> <li>• Our HOD has no clear vision of what we are attempting to achieve in the department.</li> <li>• An HOD should not remain silent as to the vision and direction they're taking.</li> </ul>
v.	Demonstrating integrity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My HOD's high standards of integrity set an example for all of us.</li> <li>• An HOD should not be appointed simply to enable individual to use the position as an Ad Hom promotion tick for leadership. HODs should be appointed from Prof rank to ensure (hopefully) that the focus is on the department and not their own personal promotion plans.</li> <li>• HODs need to be held accountable - especially those who pretend to do much but 'delegate' almost everything and do not take ownership of problems.</li> <li>• An HOD should not force conveners to push marks for no valid academic reason.</li> </ul>
vi.	Transformation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My HOD has a clique and only people in their circle gets away with murder, do not have to complete leave forms, do not have to be accountable for their actions and can do and say what they like - even call their colleagues kaffirs in conversations.</li> <li>• In light of mentorship and succession planning for HODs, UCT should require that all HODs have two elected deputies who are actively involved in decision-making and managing in the Department. The deputies should represent gender and transformation values to ensure that future HODs have training/mentorship prior to becoming and HOD, and to support smoother transitions and continuity when a new HOD takes the lead.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I believe our HOD has no intention of meaningful transformation in our department. Senior white students get all high paid meaningful roles. Not a single black student.</li> </ul>

**Table 5. (continued)**

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HODs at UCT should recognise and value mentoring, training and development of young black academics. On paper they do, but it is clear that they still bypass equity statements to employ fellow senior white colleagues. The black junior members of staff then end up doing the lackey work with no formal mentoring and eventually leave to find growth elsewhere. Departments and divisions with high exit rates of black staff should be scrutinized.</li> </ul>
vii.	Building trust & esteem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leadership of a Department is about understanding the people you work with and being able to bring out the best in them. While UCT places a lot of emphasis on research success, there is little recognition for successfully running a department where staff feel heard and valued and it flows from this that they would give of their best.</li> <li>Trust: One has to trust the HOD (to make the right decisions for the Department and direction it goes in).</li> <li>Trust should be the fundamental actions of any line manager. In return the manager will gain loyalty and commitment from staff, ultimately retaining happy staff.</li> <li>I am fortunate that I have a really good HOD that I can respect and trust.</li> <li>The breakdown in trust with the current HOD has been a concern for some time now.</li> <li>I have no trust in my HOD. Lots of nepotism here.</li> <li>Sadly, an HOD without the necessary people skills creates a demotivated department.</li> <li>Our HOD has no regard with subject specific knowledge and we are treated as replaceable.</li> </ul>
viii.	Training and development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I think we often forget that HODs are promising academics who have had no management / people training.</li> <li>I strongly feel HODs should attend management workshops which would assist them with their people skills.</li> <li>I think a bit more managerial training is necessary for HODs.</li> <li>There should be workshops to teach/train academics how to manage staff. It does not come naturally to most academics.</li> <li>In the context of managing academics, HODs seem to receive little or no support from HR. HR seems to be more trained to support the management of PASS staff than the management of academics.</li> <li>Our HOD is clearly out of their depth.</li> </ul>
ix.	Other additional comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>My HOD rocks and this is the reason why I stay.</li> <li>They also have an excellent sense of humour.</li> <li>Very important study at this point when academic staff are feeling completely undervalued at UCT.</li> <li>From my experience, there have been very few HODs that have a high level of EQ.</li> <li>An HOD should take care not to become too officious- it stifles creativity.</li> <li>I could not ask for a more professional, kind and considerate HOD.</li> <li>The top five enabling statements are not necessarily the most important, but are among the most important.</li> </ul>

**Table 5. (continued)**

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The HOD takes the administrative burden without disempowering staff. This survey arguably ignores the most important part of the role: Administrative competence and source of institutional knowledge.</li> </ul>
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- Although they are my direct line-manager, I have only interacted with them a few times. My work is pretty independent (I am self-funded and they are not a co-investigator on my projects).
  - The HOD selection process needs review and less "interference" from Dean.
  - It is unclear if an HOD is meant to be a leader or a manager - which are two very different things.
  - The current ad hominem system means that supporting and rewarding performance growth is not under the control of a HOD.
  - 360-degree feedback is essential to ensure that potential problems are identified before they cause divisiveness.
  - I do believe that HODs are completely overworked and have such limited resources that it is close to impossible to do a good job as a manager and a leader.
  - The HOD is powerless in managing good researchers who are poor teachers and administrators
- 

The following sections analyse the comments provided in Table 5.

**a) creating a positive/collegial work environment**

Staff felt that a supportive work environment was fundamentally key in order to retain happy staff. One staff member raised a concern around the improper use of collegiality in that, although it can be positive, it should not be used as a tool to address misconduct in the form of discrimination. Of the ten comments, six were referring to the HODs' negative effects on the working environment. A further common thread was the perceived differential treatment of certain staff members, in particular, differential treatment between PASS staff and academic staff. Academic staff were seen to be favoured by HODs.

**b) effective communication skills**

Pretending to listen but not really paying attention to what was being said, was noted as a problem and experienced as derogatory. Here again staff referred to the differential treatment between PASS staff and academic staff. Academic staff members were seen as being effectively communicated with, while there was no communication occurring with PASS staff. A lack of open communication and not being allowed to partake in decision making was noted as a hinderance. Poor communication was also noted as leading to distrust.

**c) proactively advances the profile and needs of the Department**

The comments made seemed to indicate that there were differing views of what advancing the profile and needs of the department meant. One staff member noted it as being able to delegate, another spoke about jobs being forced onto staff who were not ready and not supported. In one comment, an HOD's loyalty to the department was questioned with the accusation that the HOD put "troublesome" students' needs ahead of departmental needs. Given that students' needs are paramount for the advancement of the department, this was a comment which indicated a lack of understanding perhaps of this competency.

**d) a clear sense of direction and a strategic vision**

The importance of consultation and inclusion was again raised, as well as the need for HODs to effectively communicate their strategic vision so that staff could move in the same direction along with the HOD. A further remark was that having a clear sense of direction required effective people skills. One staff member complained about their HOD being controlling yet lacking in direction. This may indicate a will to get things done but a lack of knowledge and skill on how to do so effectively.

**e) demonstrating integrity**

There were only a few comments related to this competency. These comments identified an understanding of the meaning of integrity and one participant suggested a mechanism be available to hold HODs accountable for displaying integrity.

**f) transformation**

A common thread throughout the qualitative comments was a lack of transformation at UCT, as evidenced, for example, in the differential treatment between black and white staff. The lack of demographic transformation was felt, too, as well as a need to have structures to assist the HOD to meet the transformation needs of the department and to allow for a transfer of skills. The lack of transformation in terms of developing and mentoring young black staff was also stressed.

### **g) Building trust and esteem**

The importance of trust was mentioned in many comments as a lever to other aspects which impact the working environment such as motivation and productivity. Trust was viewed as a cornerstone for effective people management leading to loyalty and commitment. HODs who value their staff were rewarded with motivated and committed staff in return. Again, effective people skills were mentioned as an important precondition for trusting relationships.

### **h) Training and development**

A lack of people management skills among HODs was mentioned several times. A need for HOD training was stressed by both the HODs interviewed as well as the staff. It was perceived that the HR department was more focused on supporting managers of PASS staff and not doing enough to support managers (HODs) of academic staff. A further comment was that no amount of training would be beneficial because the problem was HODs being overworked while access to resources was limited.

### **i) other qualitative comments**

One additional comment indicated that an HOD's effective people management skills could be a tool for staff retention and it was noted that by making staff feel valued and empowered, staff enjoy a happy workplace at which they want to stay. Administrative competence and institutional knowledge were mentioned as being the most important to fulfil the HOD role effectively, suggesting that people management competence played a secondary role. Two participants referred to not having much or no interaction with their HODs due to the independent nature of their research work. It was not clear if this was seen as positive or negative, but it seemed to indicate that the importance of effective people management skills may vary, depending on what category of worker an HOD is managing. A further comment suggested that the HOD selection process needed to be reviewed with the Dean needing to have less influence in the process. Role clarity was raised as a concern in that there was uncertainty if the HOD role was that of a leader or that of a manager.

### **4.3 FINDINGS: ONE-ON-ONE SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS**

This section of the chapter presents the key outcomes of the four interviews undertaken to identify common factors which HODs themselves saw as enabling and hindering effective people management. The purpose of these interviews was to surface themes through which the experiences, expectations and perceptions of the four HODs could be explored. They also assisted in identifying what the HODs themselves felt to be important people management competencies and how these compared to the ones identified by staff. The HODs' responses were coded and grouped together into themes. In this section, these themes are described and illustrated through quotes.

The interview data revealed seven factors which HODs perceived as what enables and what hinders their ability to be effective people managers. These are listed below.

#### **a. Competencies**

Three of the four HODs identified the five most important people management competencies out of the provided list of 33, but one HOD did not wish to do so, explaining that all competencies were important, thus having to choose only five was not possible. During the interview, however, this HOD identified specific competencies were required from a Dean, which were being consistent, being trustworthy and being able to make quick and effective decisions. A summary of the HOD responses is listed in *Table 6*.

**Table 6:** *The people management competencies which each of the four HODs identified as being most important and how their staff rated them on these competencies (competencies which had also been rated among the top five by participants are highlighted in bold).*

HOD	people management competencies identified by HOD as being most important	Rating of HOD by their staff on competency
A	Was not willing to identify particular competencies, explaining that all competencies were important.	
B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>proactively advances the profile and needs of the Department;</b></li> </ul>	4.10
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• building and reinforcing high level performance;</li> </ul>	3.70
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• effective recruitment skills to assist a committee in finding the most suitable employees;</li> </ul>	3.50
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>a clear sense of direction and a strategic vision;</b></li> <li>• producing feelings of value in staff by showing an interest in their work.</li> </ul>	3.80 3.60
C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>demonstrating integrity;</b></li> </ul>	2.80
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>effective communication skills;</b></li> </ul>	2.80
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• allowing staff to participate in key decisions;</li> </ul>	2.80
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• adopting an open and approachable leadership style;</li> <li>• actively supporting career development of staff.</li> </ul>	2.60 3.60
D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>proactively advancing the profile and needs of the Department;</b></li> </ul>	2.40
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>demonstrating integrity;</b></li> </ul>	2.80
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• has credibility;</li> </ul>	2.20
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>showing care and concern for health and well-being of staff;</b></li> <li>• <b>a clear sense of direction and strategic vision.</b></li> </ul>	1.73 2.13

One HOD's staff felt that they were not demonstrating four out of the five competencies that the HOD noted as most important. It is possible that this HOD knows what they should be doing but does not know how to, which relates to the importance of training and development, or that they perceive that they are doing well in these competencies when in fact they are not. Staff working with the remaining two HODs agreed, on average, that they were demonstrating the competencies they themselves felt were important. It would be beneficial for an HOD to know so that required and desired behaviour can be reinforced or developed. A culture of honest and respectful performance appraisal is important for this to happen. While none of the HODs included "building trust" in their top five competencies, it emerged as important during the interviews, with three out of the four HODs noting its importance. One interviewee expressed this as follows:

*“Staff like talking to me and so what happens in these four walls here remain in these four walls. [It’s] always a rule and it’s very clear to my staff so if they have to cry out this is the place to be and it’s a trust you need to build...probably the most important part of being able to manage people [is to] build trust with people.”*

This result thus mirrors staff’s views.

What is important to note is that the ideal competencies are also influenced by the environment in which the HOD operates. One interviewee shared this view:

*‘It was different the first [5-year stint] where I was much more nurturing to staff and making sure that everyone was happy and there was not fights, that sort of thing. It was a different type of requirement then [whereas now].... I have a goal to drive this department to high academic standards... to make sure that all people are on board, that they pull their weight, so again you do different things.’*

This suggests that the most appropriate people management skills may vary across different departments, depending on how they are structured (e.g. the independent self-funded researcher referred to in table 4.ix), it is also important to note that the most effective competencies may need to change within departments from time to time, depending on the current needs. This points to a possible additional skill which HODs may benefit from, and that is being able to identify a match between situational requirements and the management behaviour needed at the time.

All HODs stressed the importance of open communication, active and regular listening and keeping staff always updated and informed. Yet, interestingly only one HOD listed this competence as one of the top five competencies. This HOD was one of the three whose staff had indicated through the questionnaire data that they were demonstrating this competency. One HOD was deemed by staff to be very poor at this competency.

Three out of four of the HODs spoke of the value of building trust. One noted that being mature in accepting a good dose of disappointments would be beneficial and another stated that the HOD must be the 'glue' to make sure things keep going. The views expressed by the HODs during the interviews indicated a genuine willingness to be effective people managers but a struggle with balancing the time this takes alongside other HOD commitments. Furthermore, this also showed the need to ensure that relevant people management competencies are understood and executed, not just used as theoretical catch-phrases.

Two HODs found it rewarding that their position gave them the power to build the department and get things done. The ability to get to see it all fitting together and being able to influence and direct change was found to be one of the most enjoyable aspects of the job. Both these HODs' staff strongly agreed that they were demonstrating the competencies. Having this drive as an HOD is clearly a positive aspect for people management. Furthermore, the second most important competency chosen by staff is *proactively advancing the profile and needs of the Department*, which is what these two HODs were keen on doing and this is recognized by their staff.

#### **b. Prior experience**

All four HODs had prior experience in academic management by either having been an Acting HOD, Section Head, Deputy HOD or having previously served as HOD. Prior experience in the role itself seemed to assist when taking up the role again as expressed by one HOD who had served in the role previously:

*"After 5 years [in the first stint] I had a vague idea of what an HOD could do or should be doing. It was very much administration.....I grew up under [a previous Dean's) tutor leadership, so whatever I did here it was almost sanctioned immediately at faculty level. Now [the second time] I find it much more rewarding because now I can utilise some of the power that comes with this position."*

Acting, deputy and section head roles usually have oversight for various functions, hold a portfolio or manage the academic and/or research endeavor. There is often a limited understanding of what people management means, as shown by the quote

below. People management is not just about being officially a line manager as even with an oversight function, one could practice the skills of people management to some extent.

*“I guess until you become HOD, even though you may have oversight of various functions, you’re not a direct line manager....the section heads exist mostly from an academic point of view. You manage the staff from an academic point of view, but you don’t have any managerial role.”*

Previous experience in committee work was noted as a benefit, giving an academic an understanding of the mechanisms of the institution, a broader view on how things fit together, confidence and the ability to build networks:

*“You are getting a broader university view...It allows you to see how it all fits together and it gives you insight... it allows you to build networks, to be able to have an influence... to have a voice which I think, certainly as a newer staff member, builds that confidence that you’re going to need as an HOD.”*

Alongside the above, participation on committees builds confidence and gives one a broader insight into interpersonal interactions and management styles.

### **c. Comprehensive job description**

Currently, there are no specific job descriptions for HODs at UCT. One HOD outlined that this makes the job tough at first. Having served in the role previously provides the incumbent with an implicit job description which they have developed in their mind based on the previous experience. Being new to the job and without a job description, the role becomes overwhelming when there is no role clarity.

*“I think it’s a really tough job at the university because .... there’s no job description and everything gets given to the head of department.”*

Thus, a detailed job description, which includes people management – so that it is

seen as fundamental – as well as aspects specific to the particular department, would likely assist HODs to fulfill their role better.

#### **d. Recruitment and assessment process**

All HODs were recruited into the HOD role through different informal election processes, either elected by peers in the department or directly by the Dean. Two HODs were recruited via a competitive process, in that they were selected from several possible candidates, and two HODs were not, in that they were the only person approached for the role. There is no indication from the data whether the competitive process resulted in a more effective people manager. What all four HODs had experienced as similar was the unstructured and haphazard approach to the selection process:

*“When the position became vacant and then the request was okay so who wants to become HOD? There were four people who put up their hands and then staff was being asked okay who do you want? And I got the job.”*

*“I think most people just assumed I would have done it again...no one else was putting their hand up. I think they were pretty sure that I was going [to do another stint] again and would have been surprised if I said no.”*

*“We had three full professors at that point, but they all had done stints as head of department and so one of them was just finishing, another one I knew would never do it again, and the third probably would have done it but I don't think that's fair in the rotating system when we each need to take our turn.... It is a situation where you have to put your hand up.”*

In two cases, it seems that consultation occurred with staff within the department and in the other two cases, no reference was made to any staff having been consulted. It would be beneficial for a new HOD to have the support upfront of staff to be an effective people manager. Furthermore, data from the questionnaire indicated that staff valued consultation and inclusiveness. Therefore, a clear and structured consultation process with staff should be mandatory, alongside skills assessment of the candidate.

What was missing in all four of the HOD appointment processes was the lack of systematic matching of candidate skills to the requirements of the HOD role. As one of staff's top five needs of an HOD is a sense of direction and strategic vision, for example, then the skill to do so should be a non-negotiable criterion. At least, given that the pool of candidates is small, identifying upfront what development is required in terms of skills and competencies is vital.

While in literature it had been found that academics were reluctant to step into the HOD role (provide references here) this did not emerge among the four interviewees. Three of the HODs had volunteered to become an HOD and the fourth, despite being reluctant when asked, felt duty-bound. All four HODs also showed a high level of commitment to their department as well as to the university and felt that their contribution as HOD would be positive. These HODs had all volunteered for the interviews and thus are a select sample and it is possible that among HODs who did not opt to participate in the research, there would have been more reluctance.

#### **e. Environmental and structural impacts**

Having an effective organisational, administrative and management structure was felt as important and invaluable for any new HOD. The interviews revealed that the environment and structure within which HODs operate also plays a role in how effectively they can focus on people management.

Number of staff: One such structural factor related to the number of staff having to be managed directly by HODs. The four interviewed HODs managed between 16 and 35 staff members. The results show that the number of staff does not have a strong correlation with the degree to which HODs are seen as effective people managers, but there is a slight trend that those with fewer staff to manage are seen as better people managers. In large departments, it would be wise to have unit/section heads who are responsible for people management.

Good HR practice recommends that managers have small, manageable spans of control so that they can develop strong working relationships with subordinates, and coach and mentor employees (Daft, 2010). One HOD, who has 35 permanent staff

plus 21 temporary academic trainees reporting to them, found the administration related to people management particularly challenging.

*“They [teach] undergrad, post grad...we also got staff that are new so they are in the middle of probation...either interim or final and then there’s the ad hom process and all of that. There’s a whole lot... it’s a whole range administratively and it’s burdensome... in terms of filling out those forms. There is just so much you can do..... you don’t necessarily believe you’re doing justice to all 50-odd people because you’ve got to fill out all these forms. So invariably you write something similar because more or less people are on the same track... in meetings and when we’re having the discussions practically and informally that’s a lot more considered and that’s a lot more focused and that’s a lot more individualistic”. [...]*

*“Getting a sense of where people are at either weekly or ... maybe touching base what’s happening from a teaching point of view, what’s happening from a research point of view. It’s not necessarily easy because there may be difficult conversations...*

*People can either come talk to me...with academic trainees I do a big group meeting at the beginning of the year, then I meet with them in smaller groups... and then I’ll meet with them informally on a weekly basis.”*

This is not sustainable nor practical if the university is wanting effective people managers for their staff.

Administrative support: Three of the four HODs spoke of the importance of a strong administrative support system. They reported that the support they received from their Departmental Managers was crucial to manage the administration systems of the department. This freed up time for HODs to focus on other functions of their role - and thus time, which could be used on people management. In one case, the unit heads in the department were not functioning efficiently, which led to the HOD having to take on additional work to compensate whilst they dealt with the poor performers. In another case, the department’s physical layout meant that a PASS staff manager had their office in a different part of campus to the staff they managed. This resulted in another individual managing the day-to-day work of the staff accountable to the PASS staff

manager. The HOD found this situation created confusion around accountability and hindered them in doing their work.

The dissatisfaction about having to follow formal HR processes for people management, as well as having to fill out of HR forms is strongly illustrated by the following quote:

*“Formal HR processes are the pits.... that the University demands that HODs manage in a formal HR way - the performance of their staff. That stuff is counter intuitive to anybody who understands what an academic department should be and how it should run. There is in my opinion zero need for that DD<sup>2</sup> form in my department. I meet with my PASS staff weekly, I have an open channel, the line management part works well, there’s hardly an issue around discipline... there’s an open channel. There are rough things that happen and they get sorted out in a collegial way... I must sit with somebody and fill a form out and we both know that this is pointless. That’s the worst... filling out all those forms all the time. HR administration is the pits and I resist doing it. If I can find a corner to cut I’ll cut the corner.”*

This illustrates that for at least some HODs, means that are intended as support systems to assist in dealing with the administrative tasks, creates a burden for the HOD. “Cutting corners” instead of addressing the structural issue which is creating the problem creates other risks in the long term. It may lead to workplace conflict which is far more difficult to fix than filling out forms. Interestingly, this HOD did not indicate the same dissatisfaction with the academic performance management system, which also requires documents to be filled out. It might be that they have not thought to utilise the same support structure that they use for their academic performance system (such as getting the staff to fill out the forms themselves or having Departmental Managers to assist). Or it could indicate that they do not value their PASS staff as much as they do their academic staff, a belief which has been raised several times by staff in the questionnaire comments. Another comment which should be noted from the questionnaire is the one which indicated the sometimes-inappropriate use of collegiality for matters of a serious and discriminatory nature.

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<sup>2</sup> Development Dialogue is the performance management system used for PASS staff

Student protests: While the above factors were related to the environment and practices within a department or related to the setup of the HOD role itself, one HOD illustrated how events in the broader university environment can also influence an HOD's ability to provide leadership. In this case it related to the Fees Must Fall student protests which had disrupted the university over the preceding years:

*“My term as HOD has not been normal because we had Fees Must Fall for three times running and that has been very difficult to manage because the rules of the university had been called into question and had to be circumvented to keep the system going and I've at times not known quite whether I'm in the wrong or right with the suggestion and sometimes the deputy dean goes “oh fine” and sometimes I'm told yet again I'm breaking the rules and why am I doing this...I know there's been a dreadful price to pay in many ways, staff turnover one of them. It has just been disorientating and for academics I think, in particular, having our vocation pulled into question - for most of us they are vocation at a very deep personal level...one of my colleagues who is black and is a [qualification]... his vocation was questioned... his blackness was questioned... that was just a hell of a year for him and as HOD I had to manage the emotion side while at the same time feeling like I had the rug pulled out under my own feet.”*

Although the circumstances under which the whole university community worked and studied at the time were traumatic for many university staff member, having sound people management skills would likely have assisted HODs to manage situations more confidently, efficiently and effectively.

#### **f. Tenure of role**

The role of the HOD is not permanent but rotating among departmental staff. Generally, an HOD serves for three or five years. There were conflicting views about the value of a temporary tenure, as opposed to a permanent appointment, in relation to people management. It was felt by all four HODs, however, that a limited time-frame was necessary to the incumbent's well-being as illustrated by two of the HODs as follows:

*“A limited time frame is probably good. I think just for your own sanity... there’s a fatigue that does set in just because of the nature of the demands. You know you’re still required to do all the other stuff....so I think the risk that fatigue sets in which can be detrimental... a tenure is important because it does give an exit point.”*

*“Ideally five years probably would have given me time to bed that [new curriculum] down and hand it over, but I can’t carry on, I’m just too tired.”*

Another HOD also stated that a permanent HOD role may be hard to fill:

*“You may not get people to do it - if they know it’s forever.”*

As illustrated by the following quotes, concern over too short a tenure was expressed in response to the question, ‘is a tenure of five years’ sufficient?’. The general view of all four HODs was that rotational tenure was necessary but what mattered was an appropriate length of time dependent on the needs of the department and the strategic vision being implemented.

*“[If you] want a stable structure which the wheels keep on turning, as you have in a normal<sup>3</sup> company, then a 10-year [tenure] will be better, but if you want innovation [and to] implement things in a different way, then a shorter term will be better.”*

*“I think 3 [years] is probably a bit too short...you know you got 5 years to be able to achieve something and at least move that forward... I did a lot to align things up to my style in the first five years, plans and those things so it probably needs time to mature.”*

*“Let’s say I wasn’t doing another five years and someone took over and changed everything then there wouldn’t have been enough time for what I had in place to mature.”*

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<sup>3</sup> The participant used the term “normal” to refer to “corporate”

What was stressed by all HODs, however, was the need for continuity in that the next HOD should build onto the vision and strategy put in place by the previous HOD. It is natural for a new HOD to want to initiate their own and new ideas and vision, but not at the expense of the overall strategic plan of the department.

One HOD suggested that having others within the department to assist with institutional memory and consistency, in the face of rotating HODs, would be helpful:

*“When a new HOD comes, it shouldn’t break away completely, it should be adjusted but not a complete change... I would rather see that the Departmental Manager is a static person...that person should have the [(institutional)] memory to correct the HOD sometimes when he or she gets it wrong.”*

*“the Departmental Manager was hired a month before I became the new HOD and I’ve been working with her and tried just to build her up because my department is quite a complex department and she’s now really getting into the job. She really knows what’s going on in the job.”*

A further concern raised by another HOD was that the previous HOD indiscriminately took staffing decisions based on personal instead of sound judgement:

*“The new HOD [before me] didn’t like that person or whatever...and it meant sacking people, getting rid of people, hiring new people”.*

This resulted in them having to come into a department as HOD and fix the poor morale and skills gap created by the previous HOD’s actions.

Generally, all HODs thought it would be relatively easy moving out of the HOD role back into their substantive roles and re-integrating back into the environment. One HOD indicated that this would be helped by the healthy relationship established with the department during tenure. This shows the importance of good relationships, which can be established and promoted by the HOD through effective people management practices, assisting a smooth transition between the old and new HODs. Another HOD

emphasised the importance of ensuring an effective, and possibly difficult, conversation be had by the new HOD with the previous incumbent to establish clear power boundaries. It is interesting that the one HOD who saw the need for healthy relationships was rated by their staff as being a competent people manager. The other HOD, who saw the need to define power boundaries, was not found to be functioning effectively. In conclusion, rotation enables an HOD in that it possibly prevents burnout, however the handover process needs to be managed properly and sound people management skills could facilitate this.

#### **g. Multiple demands on the HOD**

The four HODs had different experiences in how the pressures of the HOD role impacted on their teaching and research components of their substantive jobs as an academic.

Only one HOD felt their research and teaching had suffered because of the demands of being an HOD. They indicated that they were behind on papers and had been carried at times by their colleagues. Work has had to be taken home every evening and research got done on Sundays. Another HOD also noted that they worked about 78 hours a week to ensure that they kept up with their teaching and research. A third explained that their research was less of the traditional and more of the engaged and practical type and that the HOD-ship had created opportunities. The fourth HOD noted that their research had in fact improved:

*"I think my academic influences increased since being HOD. There's some things I just can't end up doing. The nuts and bolts hands on stuff. You find a good post doc ... if you're a strong academic researcher, when you become HOD then it's probably easier to keep that going strongly ... they have the machine in place, they established, and they lead and part of the leadership that you enact is associated with your enterprises or research."*

Approaching the HOD role in a strategic way and thinking creatively on how best to structure the work required will be beneficial. This could include moving some of the responsibilities to Departmental Managers or introducing Assistant/Deputy HODs to

share some of the load. This would require a review of the structure and the role/s. Another possible solution would be collaborating with postgraduate students to get some research momentum going. This would need to be set up prior to becoming an HOD and would require time.

#### **h. The role of training, development and support**

While many questionnaire participants recommended that HODs should be provided with training when taking on their role, all four of the HODs felt that a structured classroom-type training approach would not be useful to them. Firstly, spending a day or days in a workshop learning about people management is time-consuming and secondly, the subject itself is too complex to learn in a theoretical manner. They indicated that they would prefer a more hands-on approach which can supply practical advice when it is needed. Two HODs expressed this as follows:

*"I can go to a training workshop but I'm not going to remember most of it, what I do need to know is who to phone when the chips are down...and I knew I could phone [HR person]...I don't know if you can train people into these things because they might have to be aware of the bearing on the staff...like somebody at the end of a phone that can coach you through ...I think that will be very helpful."*

*"So that kind of two-day workshop is not very effective unless it's run by an HOD...unless it's also a kind of networking perhaps...If the executive and HR keep their nose out it... and it's run by an HOD group.... I would have preferred to have a mentorship situation...where if you need to call on somebody like that you know where you can pick up and say listen I'm in this situation what would you do... a previous HOD who [would be] willing to put themselves into an advisory role and take calls from others for advice."*

A coaching and mentoring approach will also assist HODs to feel more connected and supported, especially when having to face difficult human interactions, which in this quote below, was referring to the 'fees must fall' student protests:

*"You've got to be able to step back and keep the department moving forward... so you [are] kind of balancing. You [have] got to balance all of that and try not to*

*get too emotionally involved in it because actually you're caught up in a segment of history and we're not going to survive if we don't just disengage with it."*

*"we had fees must fall for three times running and that has been very difficult to manage because ...the rules of the university had been called into question and had to be circumvented to keep the system going and ... I've at times not known quite whether I'm in the wrong or right and as HOD I had to manage the emotion side while at the same time feeling like I had the rug pulled out under my own feet"*

The competencies which staff, on average, saw HODs as not demonstrating but felt were important, were mainly soft skills, relating to being caring and supportive. They were *building positive and co-operative working relationships, adopting an open and approachable leadership style, making sure employees have good working conditions and flexible & understanding of personal needs & offers support when needed*. These are skills which can be learnt through self-development interventions. None of the HODs interviewed indicated a preference for this type of training but this may be due to none of them being aware of their possible skills gaps.

#### **4.4 SUMMARY**

The quantitative and qualitative research findings were presented in this chapter and an analysis was done to verify these findings in relation to the research question "*What factors enable and what factors hinder HODs at UCT in their ability to be effective in people management?*". The questionnaire and interview data revealed the following factors which might enable HODs to be more effective:

- Demonstrating the following competencies: Effective communication skills; Creating a positive/collegial working environment; Showing care and concern for health and well-being of staff; Demonstrating integrity; A clear sense of direction and a strategic vision;
- Prior experience as previous/acting/section/deputy HOD or being an active member of university committees will assist in being able to practice the skills of people management to some extent as well as build the confidence required.

- Having a comprehensive job description is important to ensure role clarity and establish the fundamental tasks, including people management.
- A consultative and competency-based recruitment and selection process, where a clear and structured consultation process with staff as well as skills assessment is mandatory.
- Having manageable spans of control in terms of the amount of staff reporting to HODs so that solid working relationships with subordinates can be developed and departmental goals can be achieved.
- Strong administrative support needs to be supplied to HODs and this will require a review of the departmental structure and the roles with the possible introduction of Departmental Managers and/or Assistant HODs.
- A temporary tenure and the rotation of the HOD role is enabling in that it possibly prevents burn-out.
- Assisting prospective HODs to build research momentum prior to taking on the role so that their research is not too negatively impacted.
- An effective hand-over mechanism needs to be in place when changing HODs so that a smooth transition between the old and the new, and continuity, can occur.
- A hands-on approach to training such as coaching, mentoring and self-development to obtain practical support in a timeous manner and also develop the soft skills required to manage people.

A discussion on these results follow in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study was to first identify which competencies are important to enable the HOD to be more effective in people management, and secondly, to understand the factors which enable and hinder the HOD in achieving this important function of the role. The findings revealed five enabling competencies which were deemed to be most important for effective people management of HODs at UCT. It furthermore surfaced some insights into the factors identified via the literature, as well as other factors which had an impact on the HOD's ability to manage people. This chapter begins with a summary of the findings in relation to the insights identified in a review of the literature. This is followed by a discussion on these insights and in addition, the practical implications on people management by HODs at UCT will be discussed. Lastly, limitations and suggestions for further research are presented, followed by a summary conclusion.

#### 5.2 SUMMARY AND KEY POINTS

The literature review in Chapter 2 identified enabling factors which are deemed important to effectively manage people in academic departments and hindering factors which may make effective people management difficult. These were summarized into seven insights at the end of Chapter 2. Table 7 below provides a summary of the findings presented in the Results Chapter against these seven insights.

**Table 7:** Summary of study findings in relation to the seven insights gained from the literature review (Chapter 2).

Literature Review insights	Study Results
Given the competitive higher education environment, people management competencies are vital for HODs to have (Toor & Ofori, 2008; Moran, 2007).	70% of the comments made by staff indicated how important it was for their HOD to be effective in people management.
The critical enabling factors are 1) effective communication skills; 2) Creating a positive/collegial working environment;	Five of the six competencies identified were also identified as most important by staff, and all five were identified by at least one HOD as most important. The competency which was not identified was

- 3) Showing care and concern for health and well-being of staff;
- 4) Demonstrating integrity;
- 5) A clear sense of direction and a strategic vision; and
- 6) Supporting and rewarding performance growth.

(Bryman, 2007; Jordan, 2012; Croucamp, 2013; Ruiz, Esparza & Hamlin, 2014)

There is incongruence in the values characterising a traditional academic culture and the corporate culture required to be adopted for the role of HOD (Winter, 2009; Bolden, Gosling, O'Brien, Peters, Ryan, Haslam, & Winkleman, 2012).

Conflict is caused due to HODs having to balance different identities, often leading to the HOD's academic career being disadvantaged (Roccas & Brewer, 2002; Albert & Whetten, 2004; Moran, 2007; Floyd & Dimmock, 2011; Bolden et.al, 2012).

The short-term and temporary tenure of the HOD contract is problematic and is a barrier to effective people management (Gmelch, 2004; Bryman, 2007).

HODs do not get the required support from senior management or through coaching or training (Hancock & Hellowell, 2003; Croucamp, 2011; Cilliers & Pienaar, 2014; Seyama & Smith, 2015).

Most HODs are reluctant to do the job and only do so due to the loyalty and commitment to the Department (Oliver-Evans, 2001; Gmelch, 2004; Moran, 2007).

*supporting and rewarding performance growth.*

This incongruence was apparent, but it seemed to be more linked to an insufficient knowledge of people management skills by HODs as opposed to a clash of values.

None of the HODs in this study expressed balancing their different roles as conflicting, although they did require additional hours to manage the workload. One HOD felt their research had suffered.

The study did not find this as a barrier to effective people management but did stress the importance of a handover mechanism.

HODs found much support from senior management such as their Deans but training or coaching was deemed to be lacking.

Three of the four HODs interviewed were enthusiastic and looked forward to the opportunity to contribute to the growth of the department. It needs to be noted that all four had volunteered for the interviews and thus are a select sample and it is possible that among HODs who did not opt to participate in the research, there would have been more reluctance.

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The seven insights from the literature review are discussed in more detail below in light of the findings of this study.

**a) *Insight No. 1: Given the competitive higher education environment, staff see people management competencies as vital for HODs.***

The nature of the feedback in the form of the comments supplied by staff were indicative of the importance of people management competencies, which supports Toor and Ofori's (2008) view that people management capabilities are vital for any organisation to prosper. Given that only 8% of HODs were rated as not displaying management competencies, a large majority of HODs are perceived to be displaying effective people management competencies by their staff. However, it could be that the questionnaire sample was skewed as HODs had to indicate their permission for their staff to participate.

**b) *Insight No. 2: The critical competencies are (1) effective communication skills; (2) Creating a positive/collegial working environment; (3) Showing care and concern for health and well-being of staff; (4) Demonstrating integrity; (5) a clear sense of direction and a strategic vision; and (6) Supporting and rewarding performance growth.***

It is worth noting that other than *supporting and rewarding performance growth*, all of the above competencies identified in the literature (Bryman, 2007; Jordan, 2012; Croucamp, 2013; Ruiz, Esparza & Hamlin, 2014) were also found in this study to be most important. It may be because these competencies all link into each other and to be successful at one, you need competence in the others. In order to create a positive working environment, an HOD would need to have effective communication skills, demonstrate integrity and show care and concern for staff. Although findings indicated that most HODs, on average, were effectively demonstrating these competencies, there was some negative feedback supplied, especially in relation to HODs who did not communicate well or, in some cases, not at all. This is likely due to the key role that effective communication plays across all spheres of people management. Not being listened to, or not being allowed to raise opinions openly, are just two of the negative aspects leading to a lack of trust and feelings of being under-valued. The results from the questionnaire show that effective communication was key, yet only one HOD listed it as important. This could be due to a number of reasons: A lack of understanding of the importance of this competency or a view that other competencies are more important. It could also be a possible blind spot by the HOD in terms of self-

reflection or that staff are not willing or able to give honest feedback on the HODs performance. Staff referred to wanting an inclusive environment and allowing their voices to be heard. Effective communication does not mean that agreement should always be reached, but respectfully listening to other opinions and input is key to building good relationships, especially in a diverse environment such as UCT, which has such differing views.

**c) *Insight No. 3: There is incongruence in the values characterising a traditional academic culture and the corporate culture required to be adopted for the role of HOD.***

The results did indicate that HODs were sometimes too resistant against managerialism in that they often unwisely and inappropriately applied academic collegiality to address misconduct issues which should be dealt with rather via disciplinary action and management. This collegial approach by the HOD, it was felt, often ended up being at the expense of allowing unacceptable behaviour. It is possible that staff feel this way due to the HOD's lack of people management skills to effectively deal with these issues, as opposed to them valuing academic culture more when it comes to people management. Academic and PASS functions should be complementing each other, not making life difficult for each other by pulling in different directions, as referred to by Bolden et.al (2012). This could be a reason for the view by some PASS staff members who felt their HODs treated them less favourably than academic staff.

**d) *Insight No. 4: Conflict is caused due to HODs having to balance different identities, often leading to the HOD's academic career being disadvantaged.***

Given that only one of the HODs indicated that their research had suffered during their tenure as HOD, this insight is not necessarily correct at UCT, though it needs to be considered that only four HODs were interviewed in this study. None of the HODs interviewed expressed experiencing conflict between their different roles (Winter, 2009; Bolden et.al, 2012). Both staff and HODs did raise concerns, though, that the high workload makes it impossible to get the work done in the required 40 hours a week. Although there was willingness to put in the extra hours, this is not sustainable

and can lead to burnout. The findings indicate that the gravitas obtained through the HOD role can balance out these disadvantages because the additional academic power can result in more scholarly opportunities. Role clarity was raised as a concern in that there was uncertainty if the HOD role was that of a leader or that of a manager. The two terms are often used interchangeable, but they are two very different functions. The HOD should be displaying both functions, depending on the tasks they need to do. Scholarship and teaching requires academic leadership in terms of knowing which direction to go in and how one gets there requires management skills (Toor & Ofori, 2008). In relation to this study of people management, the HOD's function would be that of a manager.

**e) *Insight No. 5: The short-term and temporary tenure of the HOD contract is problematic and is a barrier to effective people management.***

The study did not find the temporary nature of the HOD role as a barrier to effective people management (Gmelch, 2004; Bryman, 2007). It can, however, impact on the strategy and growth of the department. The temporary nature of the HODship could make it difficult to pursue a longer-term departmental strategy, as noted by one HOD, unless there is a handover mechanism in place to ensure continuity and sound people management skills to facilitate this.

**f) *Insight No. 6: HODs do not get the required support from senior management or through coaching or training.***

The results did not back the view of Hancock and Hellowell (2003) that HODs received insufficient support from senior management. Findings showed that not only was support given by the Deans, further support was also supplied by other HODs as well as from the Departmental Manager, HR and Finance. Staff indicated that they believe more training and development in people management skills was required for the HODs, which are consistent with the findings of Moran (2007) and Cilliers and Pienaar (2014). The findings were also aligned with the literature (Croukamp, 2011; Cilliers & Pienaar, 2014) in that HODs would benefit from mentoring and/or coaching. It is possible that this is preferred over the classroom training method because it allows the HODs to learn as they go about the job. Coaching and mentoring is an effective

tool which has a noteworthy impact on performance and skills development (Theeboom, Beersma, & van Vianen, 2014). It might also be that coaching and mentoring also has a positive effect on the development of soft-skills, which this study identified as important skills to have. This approach is supported by Baron and Morin (2010) who suggests that organisations that want to develop the management skills of their staff, should utilise coaching. Furthermore, given that the administrative load (which included lengthy and paper-based HR processes) was found to be a hinderance, a speculation may be that HODs are not properly equipped to structure their departmental support needs in a way which avoids these administrative loads. Such findings also lead to further speculation that some of the managerial processes at UCT are far too demanding and therefore end up compromising the effectiveness of the skills needed for an effective manager to start with. Findings that the large amount of staff reporting into a single HOD is a hinderance, is possibly due to departments being a social system made up of people and their relationships with each other (Daft, 2010). An unreasonably large staffing component does not allow for the development and managing of effective relationships.

**g) *Insight No. 7: Most HODs are reluctant to do the job and only do so due to the loyalty and commitment to the Department.***

The results of this study did not find that HODs were reluctant to do the job (Oliver-Evans, 2001; Gmelch, 2004; Moran, 2007). This could be selection bias, though, as those who chose to participate in the study may have been those who had an interest in people management and the role of the HOD itself. The same may not be true for HODs who did not express an interest in the study. It might also be that the approach and attitude by academics towards the job has changed since the studies by Oliver-Evans, Gmelch and Moran were done. Another possible reason could be, as indicated by two of the HODs, that the benefits of being able to bring about positive change to the department, outweigh the negatives, such as the high administration required and the and having to manage complex conflict and performance related issues.

### **5.3 IMPLICATIONS FOR HOD PEOPLE MANAGEMENT AT UCT**

From the study findings certain practical recommendations can be drawn. These recommendations might not be suitable for all departments given that there might be different contexts which require different approaches. They therefore should be considered in a broad and principled sense.

#### **a) Onboarding phase**

Prior experience in people management is valuable and can be obtained by providing opportunity within roles such as acting appointments, divisional headships and deputy headships. Those interviewed did not find this previous experience beneficial due to the way these roles were structured and because staff were not possibly aware of the opportunities which these roles could present. Designing these roles to include opportunities for people management, for example, a deputy head being responsible for part of the HR portfolio, would be a useful development strategy for those who wish to develop in people management. This needs to be supported by clear objectives and outputs as well as coaching and formal training (Armstrong, 2006). The opportunity to use this as a stepping stone for developing academics in people management should be seized. Furthermore, it is unlikely to require a substantial extra commitment from academics but instead could assist a more effective fulfilling of the role and furthermore lessen the load of the HOD. The findings of this study showed that there are academic staff who are interested in HOD positions and the opportunities they present to influence. This interest should be encouraged and supported via leadership and management development initiatives such as peer group coaching, which benefits from the knowledge and experience within a small group by using specific tools (McNicoll, 2015). According to Phillips and Gully (2015), employees should be placed in jobs which match their interests and abilities. Identifying those who are interested, and then developing their abilities, will be a positive benefit to UCT.

A comprehensive job description was identified by both the literature (Cilliers & Pienaar, 2014) and by an interviewee to be important. A job description should be developed and drafted to outline the accountabilities, duties, roles and responsibilities of the HOD, including the expectations with regards to people management. A successful work environment is supported by employees who have effective competencies and skills for the work they are required to do (Phillips & Gully, 2015).

A job description is a document which contains this information and it should include not just the management tasks such as the performance management of staff, but also expectations with regards to the competencies which are necessary to undertake these tasks, such as the ones identified in this study. This will prevent HODs from being tasked with functions which are not appropriate, e.g. certain administrative tasks, as well as clarify the tasks which need to be prioritised but may be overlooked (e.g. the creation of a conducive work environment and how to do so). It will furthermore act as a base to define performance and identify development needs.

An effective selection process is essential to ensure that the important appointment of HODs results in the right kind of leader who is aligned to, and supports, UCT and the department's strategy and vision. The current selection and appointment process used at UCT, which consists of a vague consultation engagement procedure, needs to be vigorously reviewed. This is supported by Cilliers and Pienaar (2014) who found that the HOD recruitment process at a South African university was based on academic expertise and research output, but people management or interpersonal competence were not considered, even though the latter would likely be a more appropriate predictor of success as an HOD than research and academic expertise. A selection committee representative of all stakeholders in the department would need to first establish criteria on which to assess applicants. These should include the people management competencies identified in this study. This is important to address the feelings of exclusion expressed by some staff in the study. Such an assessment would also identify any skill-gaps and what support the successful candidate, or future candidates in terms of succession planning, would require.

#### **b) Management and development phase**

*Creating a positive and collegial working environment* was the most important competency identified by staff and is also in line with UCT's transformation strategy, which sees institutional climate at the heart of all transformation efforts. The findings also identified perceptions of PASS staff members being treated differently from academic staff. Bolden et.al (2012) found that a shared identity, where management practices and academic values can benefit and complement each other needs, should be nurtured and developed. They suggested that a shared identify as a "citizen of

academia” (p.46) builds a sense of community and can, along with performance management, result in staff who are high performers. This is because people perform well when they believe that they are part of a group which is defined as performing well. Building a shared identity might also assist in addressing the perceived differential treatment between PASS and academic staff, a frequent complaint raised by participants of this study. For this approach to be successful, HODs will need to be the custodian of the values identified and which are then shared by both PASS and academic staff.

The finding that a large quantity of staff reporting into one HOD is not conducive to managing working relationships effectively, should be noted. Daft (2010) recommends that managers have small, manageable spans of control so that they can develop strong working relationships with subordinates, and coach and mentor employees. A review should be undertaken of the organisational structure and design of departments in which the span of control is unreasonably high.

### **c) Off-boarding phase**

In this study, mentoring and coaching was indicated as the preferred method of support and development for HODs, and this is supported by the literature (Croukamp, 2011; Cilliers & Pienaar, 2014). Valuable insight and experience is lost if the experiences of prior HODs who were effective, are not harnessed and used as a valuable resource for learning. The interconnection between those who have gone before and those who are to come should be utilised in the form of a network where mentoring and support can be obtained. A fixed-term tenure enables proactive planning to take place so that succession by adequately skilled individuals can be successfully implemented.

## **5.4 LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

This study contributed to understanding the factors which impact UCT HODs' people management. While most of the findings are in line with prior literature, there were some limitations which require highlighting. The first is that to ensure staff could not identify their HODs and the HODs their staff, it was not possible to show which HOD

had presented which interview information. This limited the depth of analysis for the qualitative data in that inter-individual differences between individual HODs and their possible links to different staff responses could not be considered. Another limitation was posed by the limited time and resources available, which meant that only four HODs could be interviewed. These four were randomly chosen to surface the enabling and hindering factors which had been identified in the literature review. This enabled the study to obtain valuable insight on these factors, but it is possible that the four participants are not representative of the 56 HODs at UCT.

There is limited research on this topic in South Africa as the academic manager is unique to higher institutions only. To develop this research further, it is recommended that more HOD opinions be gathered so that a larger sample can result in more conclusive and meaningful data. It is further recommended that in addition to the views obtained from staff who report directly to HODs, perspectives from other key stakeholders such as Unions and Human Resources also be surveyed. This will ensure other viewpoints from a different approach are also considered.

## **5.5 FINAL CONCLUSION**

This study looked to explore the enabling and hindering factors which impacted on HODs at UCT being effective people managers. One key focus of the study was to identify what important competencies staff would like to see their HODs demonstrate and then to determine how well HODs are meeting these needs. The second key focus of the study was to try to understand HODs' views on people management, and whether the enabling and hindering factors which arose from the literature review were indeed factors which impacted the HOD's ability to manage people. Additional factors which were identified but which were not found in the literature review, such as administrative load, the handover of the role from one HOD to the next, spans of control and an effective recruitment and selection process, were also examined.

The findings from this study supported the literature (Moran, 2007; Toor & Ofori, 2008) that being competent in people management skills are vital for HODs. A list of important competencies were identified which were deemed to be needed to effectively manage people. This study and others of its kind (Cilliers & Pienaar, 2014)

found that training and development in people management skills are required and it has been suggested by both the literature (Croukamp, 2011) and the study participants that a hands-on approach, such as mentoring and coaching, will be useful. It furthermore supports the view of Cilliers and Pienaar (2014) that a comprehensive job description be provided to ensure a clear understanding of the job functions. The study did not support previous research (Bryman, 2007; Gmelch, 2004) that a short-term tenure was problematic but rather identified it as a benefit. There was some incongruence found between a traditional academic culture and a more corporate approach required for the role (Bolden et.al, 2012; Winter, 2009) but these were found to be mainly related to an insufficient knowledge of people management skills as opposed to a clash of values.

The HOD is pivotal to the functioning of an effective university in that he or she ensures the academic discipline is well-functioning and successfully operational. An essential requirement to do this is to manage and develop the staff employed to meet these goals. Overall, the study was an attempt to assist UCT to resolve how best to structure and support the HOD role through understanding the above and thereby creating a healthier work environment for both the HODs and the staff who report to them. As such, the study has provided a deeper understanding of the factors which enable and hinder HODs in their role of people managers.

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## ANNEXURES

### ANNEXURE 1: EMAIL TO HODS

Dear Head of Department

UCT's HR department would like to provide stronger support to HODs around the staff management component of their role. In order to do so we need to understand staff's views on this aspect.

For this reason, I request your permission for me to ask your staff to participate in a short survey. I would greatly appreciate if you could let me know via return email by 1 November 2017.

Only if I have obtained permission will I forward an email with a link to an anonymous and confidential survey to the staff who report to you. The questionnaire assesses staff's perceptions of the kind of people management behaviour they see in their HOD. This study has no interest in a specific faculty or individual HOD but rather in the aggregate perceptions of HODs across the university.

I would also like to approach a small number of amenable HODs to participate in a semi-structured one-on-one interview on the topic.

If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me on [sandy.hill@uct.ac.za](mailto:sandy.hill@uct.ac.za).

The study forms part of my MPhil degree in People Management in the Section for Organisational Psychology in the Commerce Faculty. I have acquired research ethics approval for this study from the Commerce Ethics in Research Committee as well as permission from the Executive Director of HR to access staff members for this research project.

Kind regards  
Sandy Hill

## **ANNEXURE 2: INTRODUCTORY EMAIL FOR QUESTIONNAIRE**

UCT's HR department would like to provide stronger support to HODs around the staff management component of their role. In order to do so, we need to gain an understanding of staff's views on this aspect.

Your Head of Department (HOD) has allowed me to ask you to participate in a short, anonymous questionnaire on staff's perceptions of the kind of people management behaviour they see in their HOD. This study has no interest in a specific faculty or individual HOD but rather in the aggregate perceptions of HODs across the university. All data will remain completely confidential.

The questionnaire can be accessed here:

It can be completed on your mobile device, computer or tablet and should take you no longer than 15 minutes to complete. Whether or not you participate is completely up to you. You may also withdraw from the study at any time. You will not be requested to supply any demographic information.

If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me on [sandy.hill@uct.ac.za](mailto:sandy.hill@uct.ac.za).

with thanks and kind regards,

Sandy Hill

## ANNEXURE 3: QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire attempts to understand the challenges which Heads of Department (HODs) at UCT face with regards to people management. There is limited empirical research that identifies the factors which enable or hinder effective people management among HODs of academic units, even though academic departments have been appointing HODs for decades (Gomes & Knowles, 1999). The information will be used to assist UCT's HR Department to identify how best to support the HOD role.

Please note that only staff who report **directly** to an HOD can participate.

The questionnaire should take you no longer than 10 minutes to complete and it is completely voluntary and anonymous. You will not be requested to supply any demographic information. You may withdraw from participation at any time. Participating in the questionnaire will indicate your consent.

### QUESTION 1

The listed enabling competencies (statements) below have been sourced from academic literature and are also applicable to UCT staff.

Please indicate the degree to which your HOD demonstrates the thirty-three enabling statements below, by choosing a corresponding rating for each statement:

My HOD.....

1. creates a positive/collegial work environment
2. proactively advances the profile and needs of the Department
3. Recognises problems and takes necessary action
4. has effective communication skills
5. shows care and concern for health and well-being of staff
6. supports and rewards performance growth
7. builds trust & esteem
8. builds and reinforces high level performance
9. knows how to engage with and retain staff to build a committed team
10. monitors how employees feel and takes pre-emptive before someone leaves or becomes disengaged
11. Has effective recruitment skills to assist a committee in finding the most suitable employees
12. makes sure employees have good working conditions
13. is flexible and understanding of personal needs and offers support when needed
14. cares about employees being trained and prepared
15. actively supports career development of staff
16. initiates activities which lead the staff towards common goals
17. accepts shared responsibility
18. effectively delegates tasks and decisions

19. listens with full attention, using all senses
20. builds positive and co-operative working relationships
21. has a clear sense of direction and a strategic vision
22. Is innovative and creative in producing new ideas to help staff
23. is considerate
24. produces feelings of value in staff by showing an interest in their work
25. treats staff fairly
26. demonstrates integrity
27. adopts an open and approachable leadership style
28. allows staff to participate in key decisions
29. communicates well about the direction in which the department is going
30. acts as a role model
31. has credibility
32. provides feedback on performance, irrespective of whether good or bad
33. adjusts workloads and/or provides resources to stimulate and support departmental goals

## SECTION 2

Out of the thirty-three enabling statements listed below, please choose **FIVE ONLY** which you believe to be the **most important** for effective HODs to perform people management. By using the drag and drop action, please rate what you think is the most important at the top (as 1) and then the next most important as 2 and so forth until you have your 5 most important statements listed in importance from 1 - 5.

1. creates a positive/collegial work environment
2. proactively advances the profile and needs of the Department
3. Recognises problems and takes necessary action
4. has effective communication skills
5. shows care and concern for health and well-being of staff
6. supports and rewards performance growth
7. builds trust & esteem
8. builds and reinforces high level performance
9. knows how to engage with and retain staff to build a committed team
10. monitors how employees feel and takes pre-emptive before someone leaves or becomes disengaged
11. Has effective recruitment skills to assist a committee in finding the most suitable employees
12. makes sure employees have good working conditions
13. is flexible and understanding of personal needs and offers support when needed
14. cares about employees being trained and prepared
15. actively supports career development of staff
16. initiates activities which lead the staff towards common goals
17. accepts shared responsibility
18. effectively delegates tasks and decisions
19. listens with full attention, using all senses

20. builds positive and co-operative working relationships
21. has a clear sense of direction and a strategic vision
22. Is innovative and creative in producing new ideas to help staff
23. is considerate
24. produces feelings of value in staff by showing an interest in their work
25. treats staff fairly
26. demonstrates integrity
27. adopts an open and approachable leadership style
28. allows staff to participate in key decisions
29. communicates well about the direction in which the department is going
30. acts as a role model
31. has credibility
32. provides feedback on performance, irrespective of whether good or bad
33. adjusts workloads and/or provides resources to stimulate and support departmental goals

### END OF QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire has now been completed. You are reminded that your participation and responses will be kept confidential and anonymous. Thank you for your time and valuable input. Please feel free to add any further comments in the block below.

## ANNEXURE 4: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

### The Questions

1. Please could you begin with a brief overview of how you came to be in your current role as HOD?
2. What is it that you most value about being an HOD and what do you least enjoy having to do?
3. Who and/or what (e.g. systems and processes, formal and informal groups, etc.) provides you with the greatest support in managing staff?
4. What, if anything, do these people/processes do, and/or enable you to do, that are different from other sources of support?
5. How would you say you accomplish managing your staff on a day-to-day basis?
6. In what way would you say your academic priorities have been changed or affected by your HOD duties?
7. What conflict do you experience in having to balance the role of academic with the role of line manager? How do you best mitigate this conflict?
8. If you had to choose five competencies attributes *from the attached list*, which you feel are important to have when managing staff, what would they be?
9. In your experience, is the short-term and temporary tenure of the HOD contract enabling or hindering in having to manage staff and why would you say so?
10. Many HODs are reluctant to do the job and only do so due to the loyalty and commitment to the Department. Would this apply to you, too? If so, do you have any suggestions of how UCT could better structure the HOD role to address this problem?
11. Do you experience incongruence due to a difficulty in finding balance between the values of traditional academic culture (collegiality, freedom of expression, debate) and more “corporate culture” (performance management, disciplinary action) which is required for managing staff? If so, how do you manage this and what could/should provide you with support to do this?
12. What advice would you give to other academics who are considering being HODs, especially about how to manage staff?
13. Do you have any final comments/reflections on the interview process and/or anything important that I may have missed?

## ANNEXURE 5: INTERVIEW INFORMATION SHEET

### Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed as part of my research project which attempts to understand the challenges which Heads of Department (HODs) at UCT face, particularly when undertaking people management. There is limited empirical research that identifies the factors which enable or hinder this aspect of an HOD's work, even though universities have been appointing HODs for decades (Gomes & Knowles, 1999). The information will be used to assist UCT's HR Department to identify how best to support the HOD role.

This study forms part of my MPhil degree in People Management in the Section for Organisational Psychology in the Commerce Faculty UCT.

I have acquired research ethics approval for this study from the Commerce Ethics in Research committee as well as permission from the Executive Director of HR to access staff members for this research project.

In this project, I would like to explore the experiences, expectations and aspirations of HOD's at UCT who perform the function of line managers particularly in relation to how they manage staff. I hope to be able to identify the factors which are *enabling* to HOD's for them to effectively manage staff. I would also like to identify what factors *hinder* HOD's to achieve this core function of their job.

“People management” refers to the “behavioral effectiveness of managers in performing their everyday tasks of managing and leading people” (Ruiz, Hamlin & Esparza, 2014, p. 2).

“Effective people management” is defined by Ruiz et al. (2014) as “behaviours which you wish all managers would adopt if or when faced with a similar circumstance” (p. 5).

### The interview

The interview will last for around 45 minutes to one hour and is an opportunity for you to think through and articulate your perspective. It is fully confidential and all responses are non-attributable. The findings from the interviews will be used to complement an online questionnaire I conducted in which staff expressed their experiences with HODs.

The outcome of the research will be written up as part of my dissertation for submission in July 2018. Once the examination process has been completed, I would be happy to send you a copy if you are interested.

Prior to undertaking this interview, please sign the attached Interview Consent Form to indicate your agreement with the procedure. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me on [sandy.hill@uct.ac.za](mailto:sandy.hill@uct.ac.za).

University of Cape Town

## ANNEXURE 6: INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

**Research project title:** The Academic Role and People Management

**Research investigator:** Ms Sandy Hill

**Research participants name:** \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for reading the interview information sheet and schedule. If you are happy to participate then please complete and sign the form below. Please initial the boxes below to confirm that you agree with each statement:

***Please  
Initial box:***

I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I understand that I am free to contact the researcher with any questions I may have in the future.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline.

I understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential. I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials and will not be identified or identifiable in the report or reports that result from the research. I can request a copy of the transcript of my interview and make edits I feel necessary to ensure the effectiveness of any agreement made about confidentiality

I agree for this interview to be tape-recorded. I understand that the audio recording made of this interview will be used only for analysis and that written extracts from the interview, from which I would not be personally identified, may be used in any conference presentation, report or journal article developed as a result of the research. I understand that no other use will be made of the recording without my written permission, and that no one but the researcher will be allowed access to the original recording.

I agree that my anonymised data will be kept for future research purposes such as publications related to this study after the completion of the study.

I agree to take part in this interview.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of participant                      Date                      signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Principal Investigator                      Date                      Signature

University of Cape Town

## ANNEXURE 7: HOD COMPETENCIES

The listed enabling factors of HOD's below have been sourced from academic literature and are deemed to be important for effective people management.

Please can you indicate which FIVE factors **you** believe to be most important out of the 33 listed Please rate the most important factors as number 1, the next most important factor as number 2 and so forth up until number 5. Please place the numbers in the block aligned to the right of the factor.

1. creates a positive/collegial work environment	
2. proactively advances the profile and needs of the Department	
3. Recognises problems and takes necessary action	
4. has effective communication skills	
5. shows care and concern for health and well-being of staff	
6. supports and rewards performance growth	
7. builds trust & esteem	
8. builds and reinforces high level performance	
9. knows how to engage with and retain staff to build a committed team	
10. monitors how employees feel and takes pre-emptive before someone leaves or becomes disengaged	
11. Has effective recruitment skills to assist a committee in finding the most suitable employees	
12. makes sure employees have good working conditions	
13. is flexible and understanding of personal needs and offers support when needed	
14. cares about employees being trained and prepared	
15. actively supports career development of staff	
16. initiates activities which lead the staff towards common goals	
17. accepts shared responsibility	
18. effectively delegates tasks and decisions	
19. listens with full attention, using all senses	
20. builds positive and co-operative working relationships	
21. has a clear sense of direction and a strategic vision	
22. Is innovative and creative in producing new ideas to help staff	
23. is considerate	
24. produces feelings of value in staff by showing an interest in their work	
25. treats staff fairly	
26. demonstrates integrity	
27. adopts an open and approachable leadership style	
28. allows staff to participate in key decisions	
29. communicates well about the direction in which the department is going	
30. acts as a role model	
31. has credibility	
32. provides feedback on performance, irrespective of whether good or bad	
33. adjusts workloads and/or provides resources to stimulate and support departmental goals	

Name:.....Date:.....

.....

## **ANNEXURE 8: ADDITIONAL COMMENTS FROM PARTICIPANTS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE**

1. Puts needs of troublesome students ahead of staff, teaching and learning, and what is generally good for the department. The XXX also contributes in a negative way when even minor situations arrive at XXX.
2. A true leader knows that the composite role of an academic is more than the sum total of contact hours per week, such a person takes the WHOLE work load into account instead of applying silly mathematical formulae in which relationships between tasks and colleagues are dumbed down without paying attention to the type of lecturing, the preparation necessary and the international networking called for to grow new fields of knowledge.
3. I think management of staff is a big problem in HE. While my HOD is really wonderful and is very good at encouraging collegiality, there are certain behaviours which are not acceptable and sometimes conflict resolutions and collegiality is not the way forward. Academic culture tends to resist managerialism which is generally a good thing. However, when certain staff members demonstrate sexism or other forms of discrimination it's not enough to ask for the two people to be collegial.
4. My HoD rocks, the reason why I stay.
5. I could not ask for a more professional, kind and considerate employer. Their high standards of integrity set an example for all of us. They also have an excellent sense of humour.
6. From my experience, there have been very few HOD's that have a high level of EQ. I strongly feel HOD's should attend management workshops which would assist them with their people skills.
7. Sadly, an HOD without the necessary people skills creates a demotivated department lacking direction.
8. I think a bit more managerial training is necessary for HoDs!
9. My neutral position to many of the questions hinges on the newness of our HOD, and therefore too soon to tell.
10. An HOD should take care not to become too officious- it stifles creativity.
11. My comments above reflect an overall view of how the HOD treats academic and PASS staff. Viewed separately, the Academic staff in my department enjoy rather better sympathies, attention, concerns for advancement, etc than PASS staff.

12. Big issue throughout UCT of HOD's communicating with their Academic Staff BUT NEVER with their PASS staff. Academic meetings happen REGULARLY (understandably), but meetings with EVERYONE NEVER happen. DO PASS STAFF NEVER COUNT ?!?!?!?!?!?!?!?
13. Overall a very good HoD. Takes administrative burden without disempowering staff. Survey arguably ignores most important part of the role. Administrative competence and source of institutional knowledge.
14. A HoD's real source of power is persuasiveness - encouraging staff to support a policy or other intervention.
15. The top five enabling statements are not necessarily the most important, but are among the most important.
16. HOD should not be appointed simply to enable individual to use the position as an Ad Hom promotion tick for leadership. HODs should be appointed from Prof rank to ensure (hopefully) that the focus is on the department and not their own personal promotion plans. HODs need to be held accountable - especially those who pretend to do much but 'delegate' almost everything and do not take ownership of problems.
17. Our HoD is quite new - they were appointed about a year ago - and although they are my direct line-manager, I have only interacted with them a few times. My work is pretty independent (I am self-funded and they are not a co-investigator on my projects) and I've been away on leave for a few months. This explains my 'don't know' response to quite a few questions above.
18. I think we often forget that HOD's are promising academics who have had no management / people training.
19. hard to assess a new HOD.
20. In light of mentorship and succession planning for HODs, UCT should require that all HODs have two elected deputies who are actively involved in decision-making and managing in the Department. The deputies should represent gender and transformation values to ensure that future HODs have training/mentorship prior to becoming and HOD, and to support smoother transitions and continuity when a new HOD takes the lead.
21. leadership of a research team does not necessarily make a good leader of people. Whereas the research project is goal directed within a certain time span, leadership of a Department is about understanding the people you work with and being able

to bring out the best in them. While UCT places a lot of emphasis on research success, there is little recognition for successfully running a department where staff feel heard and valued and it flows from this that they would give of their best.

22. I think at such a time of austerity, HOD's at UCT should recognise and value mentoring, training and development of young black academics. On paper they do, but it is clear that they still bypass equity statements to employ fellow senior white colleagues. The black junior members of staff then end up doing the lappy work with no formal mentoring and eventually leave to find growth elsewhere. Departments and divisions with high exit rates of black staff should be scrutinized.
23. In XXX we tend to work independently of our HOD. The XXX divisions tend to work together in a "federal" system rather than one department.
24. Trust: One has to trust the HoD (to make the right decisions for the Department and direction it goes in.)
25. Personally, I have little confidence the UCT HR Department can contribute to any of the above matters. It is built of clerks (who record useless information) whereas what's needed are active accountable drivers of programmes and directed support.
26. The HOD has transformed the culture in the department and created an improved work atmosphere. Needs to focus on the longer-term strategy of the department and delegate responsibilities to a greater degree.
27. HOD selection process needs review and less "interference" from Dean.
28. They could have handled the issue of PASS staff positions being reorganised in a more sensitive manner than they did.
29. I do believe that HODs are completely overworked and have such limited resources that it is close to impossible to do a good job as a manager and a leader. It is unclear if an HOD is meant to be a leader or a manager - which are two very different things. In the context of managing academics, HODs seem to receive little or no support from HR. HR seems to be more trained to support the management of PASS staff than the management of academics.
30. Effective communication, trust, relationship building and creating a supportive work environment should be the fundamental actions of any line manager. In return the manager will gain loyalty and commitment from staff, ultimately retaining happy staff.

31. The current adhom system means that supporting and rewarding performance growth is not under the control of a HOD. The HOD is powerless in managing good researchers who are poor teachers and administrators.
32. Good luck with your study. I am fortunate that I have a really good HoD that I can respect and trust. I know the survey is anonymous, but the HoD is XXX at the XXX.
33. my sole concern is that the emphasis on new PASS staff having a degree will lower the quality of our admin team. We have some outstanding PASS staff, and this shift in emphasis is making them feel like second class citizens. More problematic, we are likely to end up getting third class graduates doing office work, when we have outstanding, but un-degreed, people former temps who have demonstrated their worth. An HoD should be able to reverse this sort of bizarre emphasis on the part of HR.
34. difficult to do the drag and drop action in the second part of the questionnaire. Very important study at this point when academic staff are feeling completely undervalued at UCT - thank you for conducting it.
35. Our head of department is clearly out of their depth. They are ruining the department and have created a divisive, unwelcoming and toxic work environment. This can clearly be seen by the number of resignations and early retirements in the department. The communication with staff is shocking. I have never seen a department run so badly and the deterioration of the department under their 'leadership' has been noticeable.
36. There should be workshops to TEACH/TRAIN academics how to manage staff. It does not come naturally to most academics.
37. The importance of an inclusive, consultative and fair head of department cannot be overestimated. 360-degree feedback is essential to ensure that potential problems are identified before they cause divisiveness.
38. It would be more beneficial for this questionnaire to be on a department basis so as HODs may run these differently.
39. The breakdown in trust and communication with the current Head of the XXX has been a concern for some time now. Of more concern is the lack of direction and leadership, and urge to control everything.
40. I think the key is our HOD delegates and asks us to do what they want. They say they listen however what we say is never really taken into account, we are generally told we do not understand and we must adjust to their thinking. There is no clear

vision what we are attempting to achieve in the XXX. Also, a large portion of staff are made to feel like they should leave. There is no regard with subject specific knowledge and we are treated as replaceable.

41. A HoD should not (which is all happening in XXX): Make staff cry in meetings Make staff feel unwelcome in the department Ignore staff in the corridor (a simple hello would suffice) Force jobs onto people who are clearly not ready for them, and not provide support Force conveners to push marks for no valid academic reason Disallow staff to express their opinions in staff meetings Remain silent as to the vision and direction they're taking.
42. I have no trust in my HOD. Lots of nepotism here. The way issues are handled it appears they has some secret discussions with his favourites which resolves issues in their favour. The other party gets to hear about this resolution "somewhere down the line" and "by the way". Very disturbing. I believe they have no intention of meaningful transformation in our department. Senior white students get all high paid meaningful roles. Not a single black student. I have more to say, no space left.
43. My HOD has a clique and only people in their circle gets away with murder, do not have to complete leave forms, do not have to be accountable for their actions and can do and say what they like even call their colleagues kaffirs in conversations.
44. Please ignore the last question, I found it too cumbersome to complete.