University Academics' Psychological Contracts in Australia: A Mixed Method Research Approach

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Abstract: It has been argued that in a workplace environment that is characterised by significant change and uncertainty, the formation and content of the psychological contracts are of increasing importance regarding levels of employee trust, satisfaction, commitment and motivation, and teaching and research outcomes. While research has clearly demonstrated that psychological contracts can have considerable impact upon workplace relations and employee performance, research into the formation, content and effects of psychological contracts between academics and the University has been very limited.

The paper used a sequential multi methods research design to explore the formation and content of psychological contracts established by the academics within an Australian University. The empirical research began with exploratory focus group discussions which were followed by a mail survey. The focus groups were carried first to identify the issues and themes that can subsequently be drawn upon to assist with development of relevant survey questions. Focus groups sought to elicit insights and subjective interpretations of the psychological contracts and the consequences of perceived fulfilment or breach. This, first qualitative phase of research has identified four key foci of academic responsibility that greatly influenced the formation and effects of the psychological contracts that have been formed, and these are: the University, the discipline, society, and students. These four categories were used later on to further develop the questionnaire and carry out exploratory factor analysis (EFA) of a larger survey of the academics. Using exploratory factor analysis of the survey data, eight factors were discovered relating to the University's obligations to its employees and three underlying factors were found in relation to individual academic's obligations to the University. In terms of the University's obligation to the academics, the EFA reinforces the importance of leadership and management, fairness and equity (notably in relation to promotion and provision of opportunities for career development). In terms of the academics' perceived obligations to the university, the EFA points to the importance of role expectations and commitment to the job and student learning.

Keywords: Mixed methods; psychological contracts; academia

1. Introduction

The past two decades have seen enormous change in the number, funding, and focus of Australian universities, and further changes are inevitable in an increasingly global higher education market. Such changes affect the context and conditions of academic work mainly because of the rise of managerialism, increased external and internal accountability, performance management practices, commercialisation of higher education, and tighter funding (Winter & Sarros, 2000). Many of the changes and problems that Australian universities and academics have experienced have also been experienced by UK universities and academics (Newton, 2002).

It is in the context of such change and uncertainty within Australian universities that the following paper addresses the formation, content and effects of academics' psychological contracts. We argue that in this era of diminished funding, greater competition, and heightened hierarchy and accountability, the content and effects of psychological contracts are critically important for academics and universities. Understanding and effectively managing the psychological contracts that develop can help organisations succeed and prosper. These contracts can motivate employees to fulfil commitments made to employers when they are confident that employers will reciprocate and fulfil what employees perceive to be their side of the contracts. It has been argued that perceived obligations within the psychological contract are often more important to job-related attitudes and behaviour, than are the formal and explicit elements of contractual agreements (Thomson & Bunderson, 2003).

The paper commences with a discussion of key features of the psychological contract, and briefly discusses past empirical research conducted within academia. The paper then presents empirical findings from applying a sequential mixed method approach to empirical research on the psychological contracts established by the academics employed by the Faculty of Business, Charles Sturt University, NSW, Australia.

2. Psychological contracts: A brief overview

There are two main conceptualisations of the psychological contract that are discussed in literature. The first addresses the perception that there are two parties in the employment relationship who have mutual obligations to each other: the organisation and the employee (Herriot, Manning, & Kidd, 1997). These mutual obligations may have been explicitly communicated through formal contracts or they may be implied through the expectations of organisations and employees. The second conceptualisation addresses the psychological contract as being formulated only in the mind of the employee. The psychological contract is, therefore, about "*individual beliefs, shaped by the organisation, regarding the terms of an exchange between individuals and their organisation...A key feature of the psychological contract is that the individual voluntarily asserts to make and accept certain promises as he or she understands them*" (Rousseau, 1995; 9-10). For example, the employee may believe that the organisation has agreed to certain commitments, such as providing job security, high pay, promotion, and training in exchange for the employee's hard work and loyalty (Rousseau, 1990).

Beyond the consideration of who is actually party to a psychological contract the difficulties inherent in accurately defining these contracts arise from the fact that they are a subjective and idiosyncratic phenomenon. To begin with, the perceptual and individual nature of psychological contracts makes them distinct from formal written contracts. Further, these contracts are subjective and grounded in the social and cultural contexts where employers and employees believe they have reciprocal obligations and presumably share a common understanding of the nature of these obligations. However, the understanding of the expectations and mutual obligations may not be consistent because the two parties have different and changing perceptions.

As a result of the complex nature of psychological contracts, a diverse range of contract elements have been listed and measured in the literature (Thomas & Anderson, 1998; Kickul & Lester, 2001; Guest & Conway, 2002; Thompson & Bunderson, 2003). A comprehensive review of the various elements listed in the literature (Krivokapic-Skoko, Ivers & O'Neill, 2006) tried to differentiate the contractual elements into different types or sub groups. Thus, employee responsibilities can be categorised into four groups: (a) organisational citizenship behaviours; (b) basic obligations; (c) work environment; and, (d) loyalty. These four categories specified the behaviours and responsibilities that employees were prepared to be accountable for in return for the employer upholding what their employees believe to be their obligations. Employers' responsibilities can be classified into six categories: (a) payment/ benefits; (b) management; (c) work environment; (d) fairness; (e) empowerment; and, (f) personal needs. These six categories covered the payments and benefits that employers were obligated to provide to their employees, the way in which the organisation was managed, and again the day-to-day work environment within the organisation. Further, employees considered that employers were obligated to ensure that that employees were empowered, treated fairly, and that their employee's personal needs were addressed.

A violation of the psychological contract occurs when an employee experiences a discrepancy between the actual fulfilment of obligations by the organisation and the promise perceived regarding these obligations (Rousseau, 1995). Morrison and Robinson (1997) suggest that for contract violation to occur, the individual must perceive an imbalance in the exchange relationship and have an affective response to the perceived breach. It has been argued that violation of the contract leads to feelings of anger, betrayal, and resentment which in turn lead to decreased employee motivation, organisational commitment, loyalty and trust, as well as increased staff turnover (Rousseau, 1995).

The empirical research on psychological contracts has documented the direct effects of contract violations on employee behaviour. More specifically, studies have indicated that violation of employee's beliefs and perceptions of the elements of psychological contracts may influence work outcomes, including job satisfaction, participation in development activities, and intention to remain with the current employer (Cavanaugh & Noe 1999; Freese & Schalk 1996; Dabos & Rousseau, 2004; Coyle-Shapiro & Conway, 2005; Turnley & Feldman, 1999; DelCampo, 2007; Nadin & Cassell, 2007). While empirical research on psychological contracts has developed significantly during the past decade, empirical research on psychological contracts within academia has been very limited. It is represented by the studies of Dabos and Rousseau (2004), Newton (2002), and the work at a New Zealand university initiated in the middle 1990s (Tipples and Krivokapic-Skoko, 1997). Research on the psychological contracts established by scientists/knowledge workers (O'Donohue et al., 2007) can be also discussed within a relatively broadly defined subject area of academia.

Dabos and Rousseau (2004) examined mutuality and reciprocity in psychological contracts by surveying the academics employed by a leading research-oriented school of bioscience in Latin America. Employees and their employers demonstrated convergence in their perception regarding the terms of their psychological contracts. This mutual understanding of the obligations resulted in positive outcomes for both researchers (career advancement and promotion) and the employers (increased research productivity). This is only one of the few empirical studies on psychological contracts which tried to expand beyond the research focusing on the downside of psychological contracts (such as violations, low morale, high turnover) to investigate the positive side of mutually beneficial contracts. In a slightly different context Newton (2002) used the concept of psychological contracts to discuss collegiality, professional accountability, reciprocity and mutual trust at a UK college of higher education. Based on the in-depth empirical research, the author argued that a lack of reward and recognition for academic work as perceived by academics can be explained also by not taking into account the existence of psychological contracts. At the same time, knowledge about the contents and dynamics of the academics' psychological contracts may be very instrumental in maintaining staff morale and commitment.

Similarly, the empirical research done by Tipples and Krivokapic-Skoko (1997) at Lincoln University, New Zealand, indicated that the psychological contracts at that institution were in a very poor state. In terms of the empirical assessment the authors used a number of different approaches to explore the individual psychological contracts at the University. Besides qualitative interviews and the use of documentary sources, the authors conducted a questionnaire survey of academic colleagues to explore the staff members' beliefs and expectations about their relations with the University. While analyzing only the employee's side - academics at the University – the research identified low morale and disappointment amongst the academics. Generally, Lincoln academics were not satisfied with the extent to which the University had met what were perceived as its promised obligations. That dissatisfaction was consequently associated with a low level of job satisfaction.

O' Donohue et al. (2007) examined whether or not psychological contracts adequately reflect the knowledge worker's contracts. Their findings indicated that scientists and knowledge workers were concerned more about ideological/societal concepts (scientific contributions and knowledge accumulation within the organisation) within their work than the transactional or relational psychological contracts established with their organisation. Also, the need for the knowledge workers to contribute a piece of work/knowledge is inherent along with the expectation that the organisation will reciprocate equally. Thus, continuous contribution to knowledge along with public access and the furthering of Australia's knowledge base is vitally important to these professionals, forming core elements of their psychological contracts.

3. A mixed method research design

According to Morse (2003, p. 190) mixed method design can be defined as"*the incorporation of various qualitative and quantitative strategies within a single project* ". Similarly, Creswell et al (2003, p. 212) define a mixed method research design at its simplest level as mixing both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and analysis in a single study. They further suggest that a more elaborate definition would include that a mixed method study involves "*the collection or analysis of both quantitative and /or qualitative date in a single study in which the data are collected concurrently or sequentially, are given a priority, and involve the integration of the data at one or more stages in the process of research*" (*Ibidem,* p. 212).

Generally speaking, motivation for combining qualitative and quantitative is to seek 'elaboration, enhancement, illustration, clarification of the results from one method with the results from the other method' (Green, Caracelli & Graham, 1989: 258-259). Following Creswell (1994) there are three ways of combining qualitative and quantitative research methods: dominant-less dominant design, two-phase design and mixed method design which would signify the highest extent of integrating methods. A sequential exploratory strategy is characterised by an initial phase of qualitative data collection and analysis, which is followed by a phase of quantitative data collection and the findings are then integrated during the interpretation phase. As Creswell et al. (2003, p. 216) noted this strategy is useful to explore the phenomenon, and particularly to expand on the qualitative findings. It is also useful when the researcher has to develop a new instrument such as in this case a survey of the psychological contracts established by academics.

Although mixed method designs can leverage the strengths of the both major streams and enrich the fields of organisational behaviour, strategic and human resource management, they were somewhat neglected within these disciplines. As Scandura and Williams (2000) and Currall and Towler (2003) noted increased triangulation might result in a more robust set of findings and a higher external validity of the management

research. The empirical research on the psychological contract is dominated by one type of study- the cross-sectional questionnaire survey (Conway & Briner, 2005). Even more, Taylor and Teklab (2004: 279) argued that because of the dominance of the surveys 'psychological contract research has fallen into a methodological rut'. As a result, some experts on the psychological contract literature have recently strongly indicated the need to use a variety of research techniques (Conway & Briner, 2005), a holistic approach (Pete, 2006) and a triangulation of research methods in order to provide more convincing and reliable results of empirical research (Tipples & Verry, 2006).

4. Empirical results

Using Morgan's (2006) Priority - Sequence Model this research may be categorised as a research design in which a preliminary qualitative study provides (in this case focus groups) the basis for developing the content of the questionnaire (Figure 1). The qualitative methods provide some exploratory work to ensure that the survey covers the important topics and also to provide valuable insights in how to address the issues of the violation of the psychological contracts in this particular context. However, in a slightly different way in this research both QUAL and QUAN methods receive relatively equal priority.
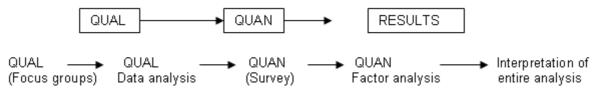

Figure 1: A sequential exploratory design used to analyse psychological contracts established by academics

The empirical data presented in this paper were generated through applying a sequential mixed method research design within the academics employed by the Faculty of Business, Charles Sturt University, NSW. Charles Sturt University is one of the largest non-metropolitan universities in Australia and it is also recognised as a leader in the provision of distance education. The CSU delivers nearly 500 courses to round 35,000 students. Faculty of Business employs more than 200 full time academics teaching and researching in the field of management, economics, finance, marketing, accounting, computing and IT.

Focus group methodology with a semi-structured format was chosen as it is known to be useful in the identification of issues and themes that can subsequently be drawn upon to assist with development of relevant survey questions (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2003; Wolff, Knodel & Sittitrai, 1993).

4.1 Focus groups

By their nature, psychological contracts vary significantly across organisations and even across different sections or units of the same organisation. Hence, the literature suggests (Turnley & Feldman 1999; Freese & Schalk 1996; Guzzo & Noonan 1994) that greater use of idiographic methods to assess individuals' psychological contracts would be appropriate in order to access and understand the varied individual experience of the psychological contract. The focus group technique is a method through which dense subjective experience and interpretations can be addressed and discussed. The group interaction provides safety and generates synergistic effects, so that responses can be far more revealing than those obtained from individual interviews.

Focus groups are often used for concept screening and refinement, as well as to inform and develop the questionnaire. The main feature of focus groups is that they provide for relatively free-flowing and spontaneous discussions which can yield information and insights that would otherwise be unattainable. The focus group technique may be very appropriate for use in organisations as a means to deepen understanding of how employees interpret human resource practices. It may provide a way of accessing dense subjective interpretations in which the views of the individual academics are intertwined with the shared perceptions of the group.

The three focus groups were conducted in a conference room familiar to the academics on their home campus. A semi-structured format was developed to guide the focus group discussion. Potential participants were contacted by email and were provided with an information sheet explaining the aims of the study and the function of the focus group in the broader research design. The focus group discussions were moderated by a research assistant experienced with group facilitation so as to allow for an informal atmosphere and to minimise the power imbalance between the facilitator and other participants. While a limitation of focus groups can be the tendency for participants to deviate from their usual thinking and behaviour in order to 'fit-

in' with focus group norms (Kenyon 2004), the researchers were fortunate to be working with a relatively homogenous group of participants who regularly work with each other thereby minimising the effects of this tendency. The size of the groups was small enough to allow for in-depth discussion of key items yet offered diversity and possibilities for the development of ideas. Twenty six academics (excluding the researchers) participated across the three focus groups. Confidentiality can also be an issue affecting the willingness of participants to speak openly in focus group discussions (Bloor et al., 2001). To minimise the risk of loss of privacy, and perceptions of fear associated with focus group participation first names or pseudonyms were used during the discussion as, with the signed consent of the participants, each of the focus group sessions was audio taped and transcribed verbatim.

Within each focus group, the facilitator sought to elicit insights and subjective interpretations of the psychological contracts and the consequences of perceived breach. The focus group questions encouraged the academics to discuss: (a) what they feel they bring to their work that is not explicitly stated in their employment contract; (b) what they believe the university owes them in return; (c) how the University has fulfilled or exceeded expectations; (d) how the University has failed to fulfil expectations; and, (e) responses to perceived psychological contract violation.

The academics spoke to a range of personal qualities as elements of what they bring to their work and the university, frequently noting that their work involves much more than time and effort, including their creativity, integrity, values and experience. Contractual elements presented in earlier studies (see, for example: Thomas and Anderson, 1998; Kickul and Lester, 2001; Guest and Conway, 2002; Thompson and Bunderson, 2003) were exceeded by the elements named by the academics. The breadth of perceived responsibilities and obligations saw them speak to elements that extend well beyond the university.

The empirical research identified four key foci of academic responsibility that greatly influenced the formation and effects of their psychological contracts and these were:
a) the university
b) the discipline
c) society
d) students

Academics join the university with a strong work ethic and this is evidenced by many comments relating to a willingness to work outside 'normal' working hours, to be flexible in taking on various roles and to engage emotionally with their work:

> *'. . .a willingness to work beyond the stated hours and a willingness to take on Faculty and University roles that are not sustained in one's duty statement and that aren't remunerated.'*

The academics feel that the breadth of knowledge they bring to their work is an important contribution to the University. It was consistently stated that disciplinary knowledge, teaching and industry knowledge and experience, and industry contacts and networks, are highly valuable, but are not equally recognised by management. Conscience, personal ethics, integrity and a desire to make society a better place were strong motivators for staff and represented commonly discussed aspects of personal qualities that staff felt they were bringing to their academic work. Motivation and enthusiasm were frequently discussed in terms of 'making a difference', 'making society a better place', and generally expressing a desire to advance social justice and ethics.

These responses demonstrate that it would be limiting to attempt to understand the formation of the psychological contract only in terms of what the academic feels they owe the university. The commitment and concerns of academics are often directed more toward the students and society with the institution providing a means of serving those higher goals. If they are frustrated with unmet expectations and promises, it is likely that these frustrations will occur in areas that impinge upon their ability to fulfil their personal mission of attaining these higher goals.

Building upon perceived promises of mutual exchange the academics spoke at length regarding what they were expecting of the University in return for what they bring to their job. A common theme that emerged from the statements is that academics want to be recognised and treated as professionals. Much of the discussion centred on the expectations of leadership, fairness and transparency in promotion and recognition of one's personal commitment to the profession, the university and the students.

Beyond the more tangible benefits that would normally be associated with employer responsibilities, employees expect good leadership and sound management skills. Issues related to leadership such as trust, clear and honest communication, transparency, advocacy, individual consideration and respect were prominent throughout the conversations. Generally, there was a realistic acceptance of the constraints within which management must make decisions, and that such constraints can lead to broken promises and failure to meet expectations from staff. What was not accepted, and this raised considerable emotion, was failure to address such situations in an honest manner and communicate outcomes effectively:

> *'Part of the transparency is the explanation for decisions that are made, clear justification and reasons why the decision was made rather than 'this is the decision' and nothing else.'*

Commitment to teaching and the desire to contribute to society provide powerful motivators for academic staff and the need for academic freedom and job discretion were linked to these motivations. Staff expressed a strong expectation of autonomy, job discretion and inclusion in decision making and this was related to their professional identity:

> *'There's an expectation that our professionalism will be respected, that we're not going to be treated as if we've got nothing to add and that we're just automatons in the machine'*

'Fairness in all things' was an expectation consistently expressed by the academics, which included: equitable pay, impartiality, fairness in promotion, consistency in applying rules, acceptance of union involvement, reciprocity, and an expectation that family and outside commitments should not cause disadvantage.

The academics also perceived their role as being equally involved in teaching, researching and administration and expect to be rewarded accordingly. This expectation of recognition for effort and achievement goes beyond the desire for a fair promotion and remuneration system, and addresses a basic need to be affirmed, appreciated and acknowledged by others:

> *'Recognition and acknowledgement particularly when you go beyond …the normal call of duty which I think we do frequently'.*

Key areas where the University was considered to have fulfilled or exceeded its implicit promises of employment included support in such areas as research, outside activities, training and development and with regard to personal and emotional issues. While the support was appreciated, staff recognised that it was a reciprocal relationship:

> *'I think it's a recognition that they are willing to do something for you to help you out, that you will pay them back [agreement from group] tenfold down the track . . . it makes it sound like an exchange relationship but still I think it is more than just that '*

Although many examples of where the university had fulfilled or exceeded expectations were reported, it was obvious that this was not the complete picture. Even the groups who spoke more positively about their psychological contracts had much that they wanted to speak about with regard to when these contracts had been violated. The most striking consistency across the three focus groups of academics carried out for this research was the unprompted repetition of the phrase 'changing the goalposts' at each of the focus groups. There were also many references to dysfunctional aspects of the organisational culture such as: competitiveness, bureaucratic centralised control, short-term focus, and lack of customer (i.e. student) focus.

> *'We have talked about who are our customers and who we are building relationships with. I have seen [the university] do this and once again I expect it happens at other institutions that the student are not the main focus and I think it's a pity.'*

Administrative rules and regulations constituted one of the two key issues that were at the heart of most of the reports of psychological contract violation. Many academics perceived an encroachment of administrative systems stressing compliance, conformity, rationality and efficiency upon their practice as academic professionals who require flexibility, personal discretion and autonomy.

More broadly, the negative effects of the psychological contract violation were shown to be mediated by the nature of the academic work that involved a commitment to the students even when frustration with the institution was high:

> *'there is that third dimension which plays a huge part in [the] psychological contract with the students. . . our responsibility and caring for the students that locks us into that contract …'*

The most frequently cited responses to psychological contract violation were loss of loyalty and neglect behaviours. Some said that the decreased loyalty was resulting in their 'giving up' and feeling helpless. Others referred to behaviour that saw them less likely to engage in extra-role behaviour:

> 'You concentrate more on your own interests instead of the broader interests than you have in the past.'

Increased neglect, particularly decreased attention to teaching quality, was a prominent topic of discussion:

> 'It goes back to equity theory of motivation . . . You'll do one of two things. You'll either withdraw your labour totally . . . or you will slow down …'

However, for some academics the violation event gave them impetus to adapt to the new system and even enjoyment of the opportunities it offered. These adaptations to the new priorities and demands of the University showed that internal and external catalysts during an organisational restructure lead to renegotiations in which the contract evolves. The adaptation response was also related to the professionalism of the academic in that when loyalty to the institution was slipping, loyalty to the discipline and the commitment to students seems to take effect:

> '. . . very few academics slacken off because of their commitment to the students and because of their professionalism [agreement from group] so it doesn't matter how badly they're treated, they will still perform close to their optimal level and if they can't do this they then leave.'

4.2 Survey

In the second phase of this research we administrated a survey of the full time academics employed by the Faculty of Business, Charles Sturt University. A standard Dillman approach was used to contact the target population and in the end we achieved a response rate of 50.0% with the final sample size of 117 academics. As this is a pilot investigative study, no non-response bias testing was completed. The items used in the factor analysis were generated from the psychological contract literature and the focus groups. Existing items were adopted from Janssens, Sels and Van den Barnde (2003), de Vos, Buyens and Schalk (2003) and somewhat altered to reflect the university context of the research.

In total, 31 items were included to measure University obligations, while 13 were included to measure the obligations of the academic to the university. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and principle component analysis (PCA) were used to analyse the data (Hair et al., 2006; Malhotra et al., 2002). Two factor analysis tests were conducted. The first was on the universities obligations and the second on the staff member's obligation to the university. Existing theoretical frameworks, cumulative explanation, screen plot and eigenvalues all indicated that an eight factor solution for the University's obligations and a three factor solution for the academics were appropriate.

Hair et al. (2006) argued that for the item to be significant in a sample size of 60 that the factor loadings need to be over 0.70. In some cases in both the University obligations and the academics' obligations there were cases where factor loadings were marginally below 0.70. However, due to the exploratory nature of this research the slightly lower loadings are not considered an issue.

The first factor analysis was conducted to determine underlying constructs regarding the University's obligation to the academics. Eight underlying factors were found and are displayed in Table 1.

The first factor analysis was deemed appropriate. The KMO was 0.627 above the general accepted minimum of 0.60 (Hair et al., 2006). The Bartlett's test was also significant at 0.00, considering that there was only 1.9 cases per variable in the Bartlett's test was appropriate. There were also some correlations in the correlation matrix that were greater than 0.30. As can be seen in Table 1 there is one variable which did not load significantly into a particular factor.

4.2.1 Factor 1: Fair treatment in promotion

This factor summarised the universities obligations to promotion. The two highest loading variables explicitly noted promotion, while the other two variables focused on the workplaces treatment and acknowledgement of the academics.

4.2.2 Factor 2: Staff development and support

The items in this factor were similar to that of factor one. However, the emphasis of this factor is on the work environment, specifically, career and professional development.

4.2.3 Factor 3: Good management and leadership

This factor directly refers to leadership and management with the new concern of growing bureaucracy.

4.2.4 Factor 4: Academic life

The fourth factor contained the traditional areas of academic research life. With the exception of the item that regards communication, the other items all indicate research and lifestyle balance.

Table 1: University's obligations to the academics: Exploratory factor analysis

Items	Loading							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Provide clear and consistent requirements for promotion	0.85							
Treat you fairly and equitably with regards to promotion	0.82							
Be fair and equitable in its treatment of academics	0.74							
Include you in decision-making that directly affects you								
Provide opportunities for career development		0.76						
Support ongoing professional development		0.73						
Provide opportunities promotion		0.69						
Provide remuneration that is comparable to other universities		0.61						
Provide a safe and comfortable work environment	0.52	0.60						
Ensure that staff act collegially		0.51						
Provide good management			0.76					
Provide good leadership			0.75					
Minimise the impact of red tape			0.72					
Provide security of ongoing employment				0.68				
Allow you autonomy to act as a professional academic				0.66				
Maintain academic freedom				0.62				
Respect the demands of family/personal relationships				0.62				
Communicate important information to you				0.56				
Acknowledge the long hours you devote to work					0.83			
Act ethically					0.79			
Manage the pace of change so that it does not adversely affect you					0.57			
Provide remuneration that is similar to the private sector						0.84		
Provide remuneration that is similar to the public sector						0.81		
Recognise your non-university experience						0.56		
Reward excellence in teaching through the promotion system							0.79	
Reward excellence in research through the promotion system							0.62	
Reward excellence in admin/management through the promotion system						0.53	0.56	
Be honest in its communications with you								
Offer flexibility regarding working from home								0.86
Respect the role of academic unions in the workplace								0.62

4.2.5 Factor 5: Fairness and equity

In factor five the common theme is fair treatment. Workplace ethics and respect for the work that academics complete are the key areas.

4.2.6 Factor 6: Appropriate remuneration

This factor group mainly refers to comparable levels of pay to private and the public sector.

4.2.7 Factor 7: Reward performance

This factor groups the themes of rewarding excellence in teaching, researching and administration.

4.2.8 Factor 8: Good workplace relations

The final factor contained the items related to workplace relations, in particularly the role of unions and the right to work at home.

The second factor analysis was conducted to determine underlying constructs regarding an individual's obligation to the university (Table 2). Three underlying factors were found and are referred to as meet 'academic expectations', 'commitment' and finally 'above and beyond'. Again the factor analysis was satisfactory, with a KMO of 0.765 and a Bartlett's of 0.00. The eigenvalues indicated that a three factor model was present. Equally, the variance explained was 58%, whilst generally 60% is required, which means the figure is near enough to suggest a three factor model. Some of the colorations in the coloration matrix were also greater than 0.30. Hence, factor analysis is deemed appropriate for use.

Table 2: Academics' obligations to the university: Exploratory factor analysis

Item	Loading		
	1	2	3
Comply with university rules and regulations	0.74		
Act ethically at work	0.65	0.40	
Advance your discipline	0.62	0.58	
Publish scholarly research	0.58		
Work effectively and efficiently	0.57	0.45	
Stay employed by the university for the next 2 years		0.77	
Travel for work		0.73	
Act collegially		0.61	
Work long hours to complete tasks		0.52	0.51
Complete tasks that are not strictly part of your job			0.78
Complete tasks that are asked of you			0.66
Provide teaching quality	0.52		0.61
Enhance student development	0.58		0.59

One issue with the second factor analysis was the number of cross loading variables. Again, this may be attributed to the small sample size. Another issues was that some of the commonalities were below the desired 0.60 (Hair et al., 2006).

4.2.9 Factor 1: Meet Academic Expectations

The first factor includes aspects that are regarded as the typical view of an academics job description.

4.2.10 Factor 2: Commitment

The second factor involves more obligations that are part of an academic job. Basically, this factor looked more at commitment to the job. The key items included a two year commitment to the job, travel and a collegial attitude.

4.2.11 Factor 3: Above and beyond

The third factor focused on the students, with teaching quality and student development. This area is beyond the normal expectations covered particularly in factor one.

5. Concluding comments

This research focuses on exploring the formation and content of psychological contracts established by the academics within an Australian University. The psychological contracts are considered here as the perceived exchange relationship that exists between employee and employer. The qualitative phase of the research provided in-depth and rich information about academics' views and understanding of the psychological contracts. The focus groups provided a way of accessing dense subjective interpretations in which the views of the individual academics were intertwined with the shared perceptions of the group. The survey and factor

analysis were used sequentially to unpack and cluster different types of the academics' perception of the psychological contracts and the responses to the violation of the contracts.

Our empirical research has shown that the professional aspects of commitment to making a contribution to society, their discipline, and student learning frequently play a prominent part in the development, and moderation of the academics' psychological contracts. The academics very strongly indicated that they have a professional responsibility and spoke to a significant social role which effectively extends beyond the boundaries of the psychological contracts they establish with the university. It is critical for the University and the academics to be sensitive to possible differences in expectations, since unrealised expectations may result in de-motivation, decreased commitment, increased turnover, and loss of trust in the organisation. These contracts motivate employees to fulfil commitments made to employers when they are confident that employers will reciprocate and fulfil their side of the contracts.

Using exploratory factor analysis (EFA) of the survey data, eight factors were identified in relation to the University's obligations to the academics and three underlying factors were found in relation to individual academic's obligations to the University. In terms of the University's obligation to the academics the EFA reinforce the concepts of leadership and management, fairness and equity, notably in relation to promotion and provision of opportunities for career development. The three underlying factors referred to as meet 'academic expectations', 'commitment' and finally 'above and beyond' were primary constructs explaining academics' obligations to the University. Since this is still research in progress, the development and understanding of these underlying factors will serve as a basis for further investigation analysis using cluster analysis and structural equation modelling. Obviously, some of the weaknesses of the questionnaire surveys impact the validity of the findings. The survey was based on the respondents from a single organisation and used self-reporting questionnaires to assess the variables which were framed in terms of promises and obligations. Since this research has focused only on employees' perspectives it was not able to capture the exchange process involved in the psychological contract. Further research should take into account both the University's and academics' perceptions in framing psychological contracts.

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