

ENHANCING LECTURER PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION: A CONCEPTUAL MODEL USING SOFT SYSTEMS METHODOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

The quality of higher education is closely tied to the performance of its faculty members. This study addresses the challenges of managing lecturer performance at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education at Universitas Lampung, Indonesia, by proposing a conceptual model using Soft Systems Methodology (SSM). Data were collected through direct observation, structured interviews, questionnaires, and stakeholder discussions. The analysis revealed key issues such as heavy workload, inadequate remuneration, and complex data verification processes. The proposed model includes performance contracts, realistic targets, transparent evaluations, streamlined data verification, fair remuneration, and continuous professional development. The study underscores the importance of effective communication, leadership commitment, and periodic assessments for successful implementation. The findings contribute to the theoretical understanding of performance management in higher education and provide a framework for developing holistic and participatory performance management systems.

Keywords: *Soft Systems Methodology, Lecturer Performance, Higher Education, Remuneration, Professional Development*

Introduction

The quality of higher education is intrinsically linked to the performance of its faculty members, who play a critical role in shaping not only the academic but also the broader developmental outcomes of educational institutions (Massy et al., 2013; Shankar et al., 2020; Varouchas et al., 2018). In Indonesia, lecturers are key agents in driving educational progress, particularly in aligning with the nation's commitment to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and adapting to rapid technological advancements (Indrawati & Kuncoro, 2021; Redaputri & Yusuf S Barusman, 2021; Rulandari, 2021; Thamrin, 2020). As the landscape of higher education evolves, so does the need for effective performance management systems that ensure lecturers are not only meeting academic standards but are also contributing to the institution's strategic objectives (Ball & Halwachi, 1987; Gong, 2021; Lonsdale, 1998; Lowry et al., 1951).

Despite the critical importance of lecturer performance, higher education institutions in Indonesia face substantial challenges in managing and evaluating this performance effectively (Kemal et al., 2019; Palupi et al., 2018). For instance, Universitas Lampung reported a dropout rate of 4.42% in 2020, raising concerns about the overall quality of education and underscoring the need for more robust performance management systems that can enhance lecturer effectiveness and student outcomes. This statistic is symptomatic of broader issues within the higher education system, where traditional performance management practices may not fully address the complex and dynamic nature of academic work (Barrett*, 1993; Kairuz et al., 2016; Lonsdale, 1998).

Current literature on performance management in higher education predominantly emphasizes quantitative metrics, such as publication counts, student evaluations, and other standardized evaluation processes (Angiola et al., 2018; Gong, 2021; Kenno et al., 2021; Lonsdale, 1998). While these metrics provide valuable insights, they often fail to capture the full spectrum of lecturer activities and the contextual nuances that influence academic performance (Barusman & Cahyani, 2024; Paulsen, 2002; Shao et al., 2007). The reliance on such metrics can lead to an oversimplified understanding of performance, neglecting the broader contributions of

lecturers, such as mentoring, community engagement, and the development of innovative teaching practices (Clark et al., 2011; Fenwick, 2001; Wimshurst et al., 2006).

There is a notable gap in the literature regarding the application of holistic and participatory methodologies that can address these limitations. Specifically, the use of Soft Systems Methodology (SSM) in the context of lecturer performance management has not been thoroughly explored. SSM offers a framework for understanding and addressing complex, human-centered problems by incorporating multiple perspectives and fostering collaboration among stakeholders (Cezarino et al., 2016; Chujo & Kijima, 2006; Small et al., 2008; F.-K. Wang & Chen, 2012; Yeo, 1993). This approach is particularly relevant in academic environments, where the challenges of performance management are often intertwined with issues of motivation, professional development, and institutional culture (Barrett*, 1993; Lonsdale, 1998; McAfee & Champagne, 1993; Ryan Pratama & Defrizal, 2024).

This study aims to address this gap by proposing a conceptual model for managing lecturer performance at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education at Universitas Lampung, utilizing SSM to ensure a comprehensive and context-sensitive approach. By applying SSM, this study seeks to develop a performance management model that not only evaluates but also enhances lecturer performance in a way that aligns with both institutional goals and the broader educational objectives of the nation. This model will serve as a tool for higher education institutions to better understand and improve the performance of their lecturers, ultimately contributing to the quality and sustainability of higher education in Indonesia.

Methodology

This study employs Soft Systems Methodology (SSM) as the primary research approach, chosen for its effectiveness in addressing unstructured problems and complex systems, particularly within higher education performance management. SSM facilitates an iterative process of problem identification, model building, and real-world comparison, enabling continuous refinement and active stakeholder involvement (Lembcke, 1994; Z. Wang et al., 2018; Woodard Jr. et al., 2000)

Data were collected through direct observation, structured interviews, questionnaires, and stakeholder discussions. Observations in classrooms and faculty meetings provided insights into educational practices, lecturer-student interactions, and management processes. Structured interviews with lecturers, administrators, and students offered diverse perspectives on job performance, satisfaction, and management practices (Anderson et al., 2000; Asare & Adzrolo, 2013; Solmon & Tierney, 1977; Vazzana et al., 2000; Zhang & Bhattacharyya, 2008). Complementing these qualitative insights, questionnaires were distributed to lecturers to gather quantitative data on performance metrics and perceived challenges. Stakeholder discussions further enriched the data, allowing for collaborative analysis and deeper understanding of the relationships within educational management (Heinicke & Guenther, 2020; Hwa & Leaver, 2021; Ogunnaikie et al., 2018; Parast & Safari, 2023; Varouchas et al., 2018)

The analysis involved triangulation techniques to ensure credibility, with SSM guiding the development of a conceptual model. This process began with the creation of a "Rich Picture" to visually represent the current performance management system, followed by the "Root Definition" stage, where the core purpose and components of the system were defined. A conceptual model was then constructed, outlining key activities and necessary improvements (Hutt, 1994; Najmi et al., 2005; Wedman, 2009). Finally, the model was compared with real-world conditions and refined based on stakeholder feedback, ensuring its relevance and applicability to the higher education context (Habiburrahman et al., 2022).

Result and Discussion

a. Result

The study identified several significant challenges in the current performance management system at Universitas Lampung, which impact the overall effectiveness and well-being of lecturers. Firstly, lecturers face a heavy workload that encompasses teaching, research, and administrative duties, leading to burnout and diminished job satisfaction. The extensive responsibilities placed on lecturers not only strain their capacity to perform effectively but also reduce the time available for professional development and innovative teaching practices. Secondly, issues related to remuneration were found to be a major concern, with many lecturers perceiving the current system as inadequate and inequitable. This perception of unfair compensation has a direct impact on motivation and job performance, as lecturers feel that their efforts are not appropriately rewarded.

Another critical challenge identified is the complexity and time-consuming nature of the data verification process for performance assessments. The current system often leads to delays and inaccuracies, undermining the

reliability of performance evaluations. Moreover, the study found that lecturers have limited opportunities for additional income through avenues such as research grants or consultancy work. This limitation exacerbates financial pressures and further diminishes job satisfaction, as lecturers struggle to balance their workload with financial stability.

To address these challenges, a conceptual model for lecturer performance management was developed using Soft Systems Methodology (SSM). The model introduces several key components designed to enhance the performance management system at Universitas Lampung. These include drafting performance contracts that clearly outline expectations, targets, and evaluation criteria for lecturers, and developing realistic and achievable performance targets in consultation with lecturers to ensure alignment with institutional goals. The model also emphasizes the importance of implementing regular and transparent performance evaluations that incorporate both quantitative metrics and qualitative feedback. Furthermore, the model proposes streamlining the data verification process to improve accuracy and timeliness, and revising the remuneration system to offer fair and competitive compensation, including performance-based incentives and opportunities for additional income. Finally, the model advocates for continuous professional development through tailored training programs, workshops, and mentorship opportunities.

b. Discussion

The findings from this study significantly enhance the understanding of lecturer performance management in higher education, particularly within the Indonesian context. The identified challenges underscore the necessity for a more holistic and context-sensitive approach, as traditional methods that rely solely on quantitative metrics do not adequately capture the complexities of academic work (Angiola et al., 2018; Kenno et al., 2021). By integrating Soft Systems Methodology (SSM) into the development of the conceptual model, this study demonstrates the value of a participatory and iterative approach that actively involves stakeholders in the design and implementation of performance management systems (Cezarino et al., 2016; Yeo, 1993).

The proposed conceptual model addresses critical issues by offering solutions that are both practical and adaptable to the specific needs of Universitas Lampung. For instance, the inclusion of performance contracts and realistic targets provides clarity and direction for lecturers, ensuring that their efforts align with the institution's strategic goals (Ball & Halwachi, 1987; Lowry et al., 1951). The emphasis on transparent evaluations and improved data verification processes addresses concerns about accuracy and fairness, which are essential for maintaining trust and motivation among lecturers (Barrett*, 1993; Lonsdale, 1998). Additionally, the revised remuneration system and opportunities for continuous learning highlight the importance of recognizing and rewarding lecturers' contributions while supporting their ongoing professional growth (Fenwick, 2001; Wimshurst et al., 2006).

The comparison of the conceptual model with real-world conditions at Universitas Lampung revealed the importance of effective communication and leadership commitment in successfully implementing the performance management system (McAfee & Champagne, 1993; Palupi et al., 2018). Regular meetings and feedback sessions between lecturers and administrators were identified as crucial for ensuring clarity and alignment, while strong leadership support was deemed essential for driving the necessary changes and sustaining the system over time (Shankar et al., 2020; Varouchas et al., 2018). Moreover, the need for periodic assessments and reviews was highlighted, as these would allow for the identification of gaps and the continuous improvement of the performance management system (Paulsen, 2002; Shao et al., 2007).

The theoretical implications of this study extend beyond Universitas Lampung, offering valuable insights for other higher education institutions facing similar challenges. The successful application of SSM in this context demonstrates its potential as a framework for developing comprehensive and context-sensitive performance management systems that address both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of academic work (Cezarino et al., 2016; Small et al., 2008). By advancing the understanding of the research problem, this study contributes to the broader discourse on performance management in higher education, advocating for approaches that are inclusive and adaptable to the unique dynamics of academic environments (Gong, 2021; Indrawati & Kuncoro, 2021).

Conclusion

This study has proposed a conceptual model for managing lecturer performance at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education at Universitas Lampung, utilizing Soft Systems Methodology (SSM). The model addresses key challenges in the current performance management system, including heavy workload, remuneration issues, data verification complexities, and lack of additional income opportunities. By incorporating performance

contracts, realistic targets, transparent evaluations, streamlined data verification, fair remuneration, and continuous professional development, the model aims to enhance lecturer performance and job satisfaction.

The study highlights the importance of effective communication, leadership commitment, and periodic assessments in the successful implementation of the performance management system. The theoretical implications of this research demonstrate the applicability of SSM in higher education, providing a framework for developing holistic and participatory performance management models.

Future research should focus on the long-term impact of the proposed model on lecturer performance and educational quality, as well as its applicability in different higher education contexts. Additionally, further exploration of the role of technology in streamlining performance management processes and enhancing data accuracy is recommended.

In conclusion, this study underscores the significance of a comprehensive and context-sensitive approach to lecturer performance management, contributing to the broader goal of improving the quality of higher education in Indonesia and beyond.

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