

# Contract workers at HEIs within a framework of motivational leadership

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## **Abstract**

Most literature sources are based on negative assumptions about contract workers and career success. Despite the growing number of contract workers employed at higher education institutions (HEIs), and the changes it elicits in the work place, there has been little theoretical work conducted about a positive perspective of contract workers in relation to achieving organisational or personal goals. A review of the topic about contract workers has been undertaken from the perspective of motivational leadership, incorporating the theoretical perspectives of the goal setting theory (Locke 1960 in Jooste 2009) and the model of complex man and organisations (Schein 1992 in Jooste 2009).

**Keywords:** contract workers, higher education, nursing, university, motivational leadership

## **INTRODUCTION**

Motivational leadership is the ability to uplift and inspire people to perform at their best (Tracy 2012) and includes a creative element which enables leaders to implement a strategy for influencing people to follow them (Howatt 2003, 2). Motivational leadership is a commitment to develop an environment that enables people to work in a predictable, safe and consistent space allowing autonomy. It incorporates a core concept that great leaders can only provide an opportunity for employees to become motivated. In the end, it is each employee's responsibility and willingness to recognise and utilise his or her motivation (ibid.).

Leadership and motivation are two influences that affect how a person performs in the work situation. Leaders are role models who influence the culture, values, thoughts and actions of the organisation and its people. The leadership style, such as

motivational leadership, practised by an organisation greatly influences performance in the work place. Researchers have been wrestling with the question of the relationship between motivation and job performance for at least 50 years (Buchanan 2006) debating leadership impact on organisational performance (Anonymous 2009). It could be argued that there are many things a leader can do to improve performance that are not linked to motivation, however, such studies are limited. One of the most important impacts of organisational leadership, whether effective or ineffective, is on the motivation of the organisation's employees. These two are positively related in a particular fashion: a happy worker is a good worker (Katzell and Thompson 1990, 144), although 'happiness' may also lead to complacency or lack of motivation to develop or improve. The De Beers Corporation found a significant relationship between the style of leadership demonstrated in a particular situation and the impact it has on the motivation and performance levels of employees in an organisation (Dabula 2008). At both middle and higher managerial levels the leadership approach has an impact on the motivational levels of employees in the organisation.

Employee performance fundamentally depends on many factors, such as performance appraisals, employee motivation, employee satisfaction, compensation, training and development, job security, organisational structure and others (Manzoor 2011, 36). It is also known that the self-motivation of employees is closely linked with their willingness to perform.

This article focuses only on the factor of employee motivation influencing the performance of employees appointed as contract workers. In South Africa, the term 'contract worker' relates to staff employed for a fixed term, one year contract, which may be (but not necessarily) renewed annually. In other countries, however, the term may have a wider remit, and encompass variable lengths of contract, and remits such as research or teaching. These contracts may be used to fulfil surges in demand, or to cover the short-term absence of permanent staff. Contract work is also called non-standard work and provides an alternative to traditional full-time employment (Bryson 2004, 191; Vough, Broschak and Northcraft 2005, 232).

Nursing education's dependence on contract workers is undoubtedly a crucial phenomenon in higher education. The last 10 years have witnessed a trend towards the use of fixed term and part-time contracts internationally in order to reduce labour costs (Coates 2010, 3). In 1994 a third of routine academic work was carried out by staff on fixed-term contracts in universities in the United Kingdom (UK) (Collins 2000, 159), and by 2004 this had risen to 54 per cent (Bryson 2004, 188). In a higher education environment in the Western Cape, South Africa, financial constraints and scarcity of nurses are a reality. One of the largest nursing schools in the Western Cape has no option other than to use contract workers to assist with increased student numbers as required by the Department of Health. This places higher demands on permanent staff members to monitor the quality of education and to coordinate nursing programmes. Reducing educational standards will result in a lower standard of preparation for professional nurses that will impact the quality of nursing services rendered to the community. Motivational leadership in relation to using contract

workers in this context in South Africa is therefore a real issue that needs to be addressed. This could influence teaching and learning positively by using creative approaches, utilising individual talents and abilities, and working as a team.

The article takes a pragmatic approach to the academic performance of contract workers; this is not an entirely new approach in higher education, as several studies have been undertaken in teaching and learning settings to implement leadership in order to enhance academic performance and research output (Gewirtzman 2008, 1). In the current article, the goal setting theory (Locke 1960 in Jooste 2009) and the model of complex man and organisations (Schein 1992 in Jooste 2009) have been used as the underlying assumptions of a framework for motivational leadership in a tertiary educational environment, such as a university.

The South African Higher Education Act, No. 101 of 1997 regulates higher education and provides for the establishment and functions of a Council on Higher Education (CHE).

According to Section 7, the Minister is required to create regulations to give effect to quality promotion and quality assurance of the CHE, by which a university must abide. According to Section 34 of the Act, the CHE of a public higher education institution (HEI), such as a university, determines the conditions of service, disciplinary provisions, privileges and functions of the employees within that institution, subject to applicable labour law. The Employment of Educators Act, No. 76 of 1998 establishes that a person may be appointed on a special contract for a fixed period or for a particular assignment. In many HEIs emphasis is placed on research output. However, the policies and procedures for measurement of research output at public HEIs in South Africa (DoHE 2003, 4) state that research output emanating from contract workers is not subsidised by the Department of Higher Education (DoHE). However, their appointment for teaching responsibilities does not have a negative influence on government subsidies received. Therefore, a university's agenda should include the use of motivational leadership to positively influence its organisational culture, including the appointment of contract workers, to ensure that funding for both research and teaching functions is maximised. As a result leaders need to have clear strategies for developing relationships, employee motivation, and the general morale and performance (Howatt 2003, 1) of contract workers.

During the past 30 years, many HEIs in South Africa developed a heavy reliance on contract lecturers, with the result that the post-secondary educational system has an organisational dependence on sessional lecturing personnel. At a number of universities, sessional lecturers teach the majority of undergraduate courses in some departments (Findlay 2011, 1).

There has been a dramatic increase in the number of contract workers, or non-standard workers, since the mid-1980s. It remains a persistent trend of employment (Chambel and Sobral 2011, 161; De Cuyper, De Witte and Emmerik 2011, 104), which also pertains to nursing education institutions. The fastest growing segments of non-standard work are in professional, technical, and managerial career positions critical to the proper functioning of an organisation (Vough et al. 2005, 231). The

largest number of these contract workers is found in teaching positions, for example at HEIs (Guest, Oakley, Clinton and Budjanovcanin 2006, 109; Kinnunen et al. 2011, 156).

In the current article, the goal setting theory (Locke 1960 in Jooste 2009) and the model of complex man and organisations (Schein 1992 in Jooste 2009) have been used as the underlying assumptions of a framework for motivational leadership in a tertiary educational environment, such as a university. This implies that needs, inspiration, abilities, the nature of the task, the work setting, the type of group, the organisational culture and the person's past experience and patterns of relating to other people, comprehensively affect the leadership situation.

By utilising motivational leadership in a university setting, contract workers can be influenced to be successful and to build positive relationships (Howatt 2003, 2). Table 1 outlines the theoretical assumptions on which the article has been based. Therefore, it will be assumed that: (1) contract workers are motivated to work with the aim of achieving their goals; and (2) contract workers are in interaction with the organisation that requires motivational leadership.

**Table 1:** Theoretical framework

Goal setting theory (Locke 1960 in Jooste 2009)	Model of complex man and organisations (Schein 1992 in Jooste 2009)	Assumptions of strategic motivational leadership
Goal difficulty encompasses a challenging goal that requires effort.	People are complex and highly variable, with a multitude of reasons for doing things.	Be creative in nature
There are personal characteristics necessary to perform the duties.	Goals may differ in different situations.	Discovery of individuals' resources and needs
Goal specificity is needed for stating the clarity and precision of the goal.	Different leadership actions are required in different situations.	Situation analysis
Goal acceptance is the extent to which a person adopts a goal as his or her own.	People can develop new inspirations, and inspiration can change over time.	Preparation for motivation
Goal commitment is the extent to which a person is personally interested in reaching the goal.	The nature of the task affects people's performance and productivity.	
Organisational support assists or hampers performance.	Leaders must take into account the nature and use of time.	Strategic Action Plan
	Organisation-environment relationships are important.	

Allen (2011, 197) gives examples of countries, such as Australia and Spain, which employ the highest growing numbers of contract workers. Not only has there been an increase in contract workers during recent years, but the nature and the workforce have changed intrinsically (Chambel and Sobral 2011, 62). Recent statistics show

that in the United States (US) more than half of all undergraduate instruction is contracted to teaching staff to supplement the universities' regular full-time academic staff (Schibik and Harrington 2004, 393).

### **THE CONCEPT OF 'CONTRACT WORK'**

In contract work, different terminology is used to distinguish between different, existing employment arrangements, and reference is made to 'non-standard work'; for example, casual, part time, non-traditional, temporary or short-term employment arrangements, as opposed to 'standard work' which refers to full-time or permanent employment arrangements (Bryson 2004, 191; Wickramasinghe and Chandrasekara 2011, 532). Guest et al. (2006, 107) describe a contract worker as a 'free worker' who is able to choose his or her position in the labour market.

Initially, contract work emerged to fill short-term gaps created by staff absence and temporary vacancies between two successive permanent appointments to meet unexpected, short-term peaks in demand (Hall 2006, 163). Nowadays, about 14 per cent of the European work force is employed through non-permanent contracts (Clinton, Oettel, Rogtti and Jong 2011, 114). This may include agency workers, and the largest groups are found in manufacturing, business services, and health community services (nurses, technicians, and hospital support workers). It has also been more prevalent amongst lower skilled occupations (Hall 2006, 160). However, a similar situation is now emerging in all sectors of the market, even at educational institutions. In organisations where contract workers are a minority group, a negative status may be associated with being (only) a temporary worker, and may have a negative impact on their well-being and job performance (Kinnunen et al. 2011, 156). At nursing educational institutions that are largely dependent on contract workers, negative perceptions might be less of a problem.

The use of contract workers, as a form of employment arrangement should not necessarily be seen as only a strategy, but as a primary way of organising and managing functionality within the organisation (Wickramasinghe and Chandrasekara 2011, 532). The use of contract teaching staff has continued increasing at a pace that surpasses employment growth among full-time teaching members of staff. Furthermore, institutions continue to find more and varied ways of justifying their reliance on contract workers (Schibik and Harrington 2004, 394). For example, permanent part-time workers are externalised by limiting the average number of hours worked per week, even when they are typically under the direct administrative control of the employer and perform their work at the employer's place of service. Contract workers, in comparison, often work full time at an employer's site, but are externalised despite the limits to the duration of their employment (Vough et al. 2005, 233).

## **PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Many workers today are employed under a variety of non-standard work arrangements, such as contract work. There is a growing body of research looking at the use of non-standard work arrangements in organisations (Vough et al. 2005, 232), and more specifically, the academic profession (Bryson 2004, 194). Previous research has shown that the use of non-standard workers can be detrimental to standard workers' attitudes and behaviours, and produces conflict between non-standard and standard employees. However, research has not shown how these workers actually assist themselves and the institution to obtain goals (Vough et al. 2005, 229).

In 1970, only 22 per cent of academic teaching staff was employed in a part time capacity globally (Schibik and Harrington 2004, 394). In Canada, between 40 per cent and 60 per cent of undergraduate teaching is conducted by sessional lecturers working at two or three universities in one term (Findlay 2011, 1). In some nursing schools at universities in South Africa more than 50 per cent of members of staff are contract workers. A recent debate has precipitated the exchange of ideas about ways in which contract work can make a positive contribution to higher education, since this sector has been outsourcing classroom instruction at an increasing rate due to a lack of nurse educators. Furthermore, HEIs have adopted a more business-like approach to cost effectiveness by utilising part time academic personnel to teach courses.

Despite the growing number of contract workers and the changes this elicits in the work place and organisations, there has been little theoretical work or empirical research that addresses the question of how these contract workers can be motivated towards achieving organisational or personal goals. Most literature sources are based on negative assumptions about contract workers and career success (Allen 2011, 197). Most of the existing research has tended to focus on traditional objective measures of career success (pay, promotions) when examining the consequences of temporary forms of employment. In future, it is likely that more individuals will be employed on a casual basis and objective career success will not necessarily translate automatically into subjective career success (*ibid.*, 198). This requires the development of a motivational leadership, with clear goals, in the working environment of contract workers.

The issue addressed in the current article considers the debate regarding implementation of motivational leadership as routine in the operation of an HEI.

### **The relationship between the contract worker's contract and motivation**

Agency workers are principally employed for their specialist skills (Hall 2006, 169). Bryson (2004, 188) suggests that 96 per cent of research staff at HEIs in the UK are employed on fixed term contracts (FTCs). In the current environment of nursing education, an increasing number of contract workers will be employed in non-traditional work arrangements; particularly on short-term, temporary fixed term

contracts, for example contingent workers (Clark 2003, 40). At our current institution, for instance, only 22 of 88 academic staff have permanent contracts and there has been a phenomenal increase in non-standard contracts, such as clinical supervisors who accompany and track the progress of students at clinical facilities. These contracts do not carry any service benefits such as a 13th cheque, pension or housing allowance which permanent employees are entitled to. The literature indicates that shorter contracts may be viewed as inherently less stable than longer contracts, since short-term contracts typically imply less or no control over continuance.

Studies report that contracts with longer duration enhance the likelihood of employees having control over their employment (Bernhard-Oettel, Sverke and DeWitte 2005). Consequently, longer, temporary contracts can be expected to relate to enhanced job satisfaction and better in-role performance. A positive association between contract length and performance may also be expected, since it is known that employers are more likely to invest in employee training when there are returns on investment before the employment ends (Aronsson 2001). Employment and higher levels of economic uncertainty relate to elevated perceptions of job insecurity. Similarly, perceived job insecurity is related to contract length (Clinton et al. 2011, 117). On the other hand, longer contract durations may relate to increased responsibility and more interesting work (Feldman 2006). Accordingly, workers with shorter contract durations are less likely to receive employer funded training (Forrier and Sels 2003), which may impact employees' skill development and performance negatively (Clinton et al. 2011, 117). Findings have indicated that contract workers with previous experience report greater in-role job performance than those taking up their first temporary contract. This may support the idea that contract workers perhaps develop skills across contracts and improve their performance as a result of accumulated experiences (*ibid.*, 120). Furthermore, previous experience of contract work is not related to reports of job insecurity, job satisfaction or organisational commitment. Additionally, recognition and rewards may motivate the contract worker while other researchers cite personal challenge and reputation of the institutional image within the community. Other factors that might play a major role in South Africa are historical background, for example politics, humanitarian and environmental standing. On the other hand, permanent personnel expect their jobs to be secure as long as they abide by the terms of their contract; specifically, if they continue to perform their jobs satisfactorily (Vough et al. 2005, 241).

### **Contract work in a changing environment**

Among various kinds of employment that have evolved in different countries to circumvent labour laws, contract labour is one of the favoured forms of intervention (Rajeev 2009, 170). Labour law creates adjustment costs in the hiring and firing of personnel. Therefore, the formal sectors, such as HEIs, should be expected to steer clear of permanent labour. This results in reduced regular employment and the development of other labour saving inputs, including capital (*ibid.*, 169). When temporary workers are compared to permanent workers, the choice of employing

temporary workers is preferential, since their employment reduces costs yet fulfils teaching needs. They also offer experiences from outside and access to the world that may not necessarily be available in the department or at the university (Schibik and Harrington 2004, 396).

However, job satisfaction, organisational commitment and consequences of temporary employment may differ due to the context of the particular employment (Allen 2011, 197). Changes to the organisation of work may be perceived by standard workers as a threat to their psychological contract. When work roles are redefined, or when employers increase their expectations of employee contributions to the organisation, or when job security or opportunities for advancement become less certain, standard workers often perceive their employers to have violated the terms of the psychological contract (Vough et al. 2005, 241). However, the responsibility for career management has shifted towards the individual, who has to adopt a more active role in remaining competitive in the labour market (Kinnunen et al. 2011, 140). At the same time, motivational leadership requires lateral thinking skills to implement a model and strategy with the purpose of influencing people to follow them (Howatt 2003, 2).

Motivational leadership by means of goal setting theory and the model of complex man and organisations in the context of contract work

### **Goal specificity and the nature of time**

Motivational leadership is intended to develop the foundation for building healthy and safe relationships (*ibid.*). Goal specification by the employer is a starting point in employment. The use of contract workers can assist an institution with meeting its work deadlines, which may be crucial to the very survival of the institution (Rajeev 2009, 176). Employment arrangements and goal specificity are necessary. These imply that the employer and employee agree on predetermined end results/goals indicated by objective conditions; such as a specific date, the completion of a task, or the return of another employee who has been temporarily replaced (Clinton et al. 2011, 114). At some nursing education institutions, for instance, a lecturer is appointed to a contract position while a permanent lecturer is on sabbatical leave. In other words, the lecturer is appointed for a specific task and period until the permanent employee returns.

The model of complex man states that employers must take into account the nature and use of time of the contract worker (Schein 1992 in Jooste 2009). Also, contract workers' periods of employment are time bound and vary in duration, but have defined start and end points (Clinton et al. 2011, 114). The supply of temporary administrative and clerical workers typically is needed to cover short-term absences, to fill gaps between permanent appointments or to meet the demands of peak workloads (Hall 2006, 160). Time is not just a quantity; the experience of time also relates to the meaning human beings ascribe to the experience and, therefore, it is important not to overlook the role of quality in the context of time (Roberts 2008). Preferences for temporary work are an important indicator of 'quality' of



the experience of temporary working and need to be taken into account in order to fully understand the impact of temporary workers' experiences in past and future expectations.

### **Goal acceptance and highly variable contract workers**

Goal acceptance is a characteristic of signing a contract with contract workers. It refers to the extent to which a person takes ownership of a goal. Contract workers' contracts are compiled with a vision of broader career paths which may include the individual's ambitions and expectations of future steps (Clinton et al. 2011, 114). Motivational leadership requires investing the time to develop a clear strategy for achieving a vision (Howatt 2003, 1). It has been found that the contract of choice is associated with positive outcomes (Guest et al. 2006, 122). Furthermore, it may mean that those who consider themselves as highly employable can concentrate on their current tasks more fully, that is, they do not need to invest their resources (time or energy) in job searching behaviour or in worrying about future employment, since they trust that they can easily find a new job if the need arises. Therefore, they may have a higher performance level (Kinnunen et al. 2011, 142). Currently in South Africa, due to the employment equity quotas, a scenario for some contract workers who are highly employable exists, which creates short lived careers at institutions. Positive outcomes of a contract of choice also depends on the contract level, for instance a National Research Foundation-rated researcher will have more opportunities in the academe than an entry level lecturer who has completed a Master's programme recently and who is still building a research identity.

Whilst there may be a number of people preferring to work in a flexible manner, such as contract work, this does not imply that the employees are always satisfied with the arrangement (Clark 2003, 52). One reason offered for their dissatisfaction is 'underemployment' when limited use is made of employees' knowledge, skills and experience. Contract employment also is less rewarding, due to limited exposure to professional development and promotion opportunities. Subsequently, it may lead to a decrease in job satisfaction and security (Bryson 2004, 192). An increasing number of workers are asserting control of their working lives, and the ones often classified as members of Generation X are less willing to accept what they perceive as unreasonable employer demands (Guest et al. 2006, 108). Employment freedom depends on being in an area of work that requires distinctive knowledge and expertise and for which there is a high demand. Some contract workers start working with the intention of climbing the career ladder. They may desire permanent employment (Clark 2003, 52), however, Bryson's (2004, 202) study shows that especially for research contracts, very few opportunities arise for the transition from temporary to permanent contract.

Motivational leadership aims at discovering individuals' resources and needs. Time, resources, and energy are needed to learn about a contract worker. Based on the principles of knowledge management, the leader asks the questions: 'Who are the pool of contract workers?'; 'What expertise and skills do they have?'; 'What are

their strengths and weaknesses?'; 'What do they want and need to be successful?' and 'What stumbling blocks need to be removed for them to work more effectively?' (Howatt 2003, 3). Answering these questions could assist in letting contract workers accept the goals to be obtained.

### **Goal difficulty and individual abilities and traits**

Goals are often difficult to express in specific terms. Longer contract durations may relate to increased responsibility and more interesting work (Feldman 2006). Temporary employers have complained about constraints in the workplace, such as having little or no control of workplace decisions, its design or implementation of their work task (Guest et al. 2006, 111). However, longer contracts enhance the likelihood of employees having control over their job (Bernhard-Oettel et al. 2005). Consequently, longer temporary contracts can be expected to enhance job satisfaction and better in-role performance. At one of the Schools of Nursing in the Western Cape, annual forward planning is conducted for undergraduate teaching and learning programmes which includes a team approach that involves contract workers. Teams need each and every person to be committed, in order to ensure the implementation of tasks and the proper application of potential (Howatt 2003, 1). However, if a worker is appointed as a contract lecturer for only a year as a result of prior planning, it has been reported that their role performance is poor. Due to a lack of motivation to excel as a result of uncertainty of future appointments, contract workers may anticipate lack of recognition or acknowledgement for their input in the school's activities.

A positive association between contract length and performance may be expected, as employers are more likely to invest in employee training if there has been a return on investment before the employment ends (Aronsson 2001). Numerous reasons exist as to why organisations choose non-standard forms of employment (Hall 2006, 163). Certain individual abilities and traits make it attractive for organisations to employ contract workers. These abilities refer to the personal characteristics necessary to perform particular duties. Contract workers are valuable to organisations as a result of experiences may have developed while working in other organisational contexts (Clinton et al. 2011, 116). Reports indicate that contract workers with previous experience seem to be more efficient and more likely to be productive than those lacking experience. Non-permanent employment allows employees to develop useful knowledge and skills, resulting in an expectation that their ability to perform will increase (*ibid.*, 117). Contract workers generally have to possess skills, knowledge, or expertise that is greater than, or complementary to, standard workers, including pivotal skills not internally available at an organisation (Vough et al. 2005, 234). This may lead to conflict due to standard workers feeling threatened by the job satisfaction and organisational commitment of non-standard workers (De Cuyper and De Witte 2007, 75). However, it seems that their skills and abilities are not used optimally (Bryson 2004, 192; Hall 2006, 169).

## **Goal achievement of complex organisations and people**

People are complex and highly variable, and organisations are changing environments. There are multiple reasons for doing things and may vary from person to person, and from organisation to organisation (Bezuidenhout in Jooste 2009). Many organisations need flexibility in their workforce due to essential work factors such as efficiency and competitiveness. (Hall 2006, 163). Organisations are experiencing a need for increased flexibility within their workforce to promote efficiency and competitiveness considered necessary in the global marketplace (Wickramasinghe and Chandrasekara 2011, 532). On the other hand, contract work enables workers to work according to more flexible arrangements, which often suits the personal circumstances of women and students returning to the labour market and people who might prefer part time hours and short-term engagements (Bryson 2004, 191; Hall 2006, 162). Looking at the continual pattern of the contract part time working issue, and contract workers have become an irreversible part of human resource management (Hall 2006, 158). Contract employment offers and facilitates greater freedom. It has become a function of society which offers flexibility, adaptability and diversity proactively sought by individuals rather than it being imposed by government and businesses (ibid., 162). The nature of contract work and the contract work force have gradually changed (Chambel and Sobral 2011, 162). Contract workers report lower levels of work-related stress and work-life conflict than those in full-time employment but they also report lower levels of control over their work and working arrangements (Guest et al. 2006, 110). These authors found that temporary workers report lower job satisfaction and a somewhat lower commitment than permanent workers. Factors reported as important include the way temporary workers are treated (ibid.). However, most studies have found that permanent workers experience less job satisfaction and organisational commitment than temporary workers (De Cuyper and De Witte 2006; De Cuyper and De Witte 2007, 79; De Witte and Naswall 2003; Mauno, Kinninen, Makikangas and Natti 2005).

The goal-setting theory of motivation assumes that behaviour is a result of conscious goals and intentions. By setting goals for employees, a manager should be able to influence their behaviour (Bezuidenhout 1998). In practice, experiences of academic personnel have revealed that better results are achieved when employees are consulted to discuss the goals' rationale. As a result, contract personnel seem to be more motivated to improve their productivity. With regard to institutional objectives, the implementation of non-standard employment arrangements reflects managerial desire to increase the alignment between labour resources and the needs of the organisation. Their mission is to enhance workers' performance. Therefore, it is necessary to use non-standard employment arrangements to meet global demands in their market fields (Wickramasinghe and Chandrasekara 2011, 538). At educational institutions educators are appointed to contract positions and deliver a productive input to the institution's results while working to achieve its goals and missions (Schibik and Harrington 2004, 395).

In motivational leadership, there should be an understanding of and a focus on the contract person's motivation, morale and accountability. The following questions should be answered: 'What is the level of motivation of the worker?', 'How is present morale and why is it this way?' and 'How are contract workers being held accountable and what are the consequences of not performing?' (Howatt 2003, 3).

### **Goal acceptance in relation to goals that differ due to different situations**

Goal acceptance (goal setting theory) can be promoted by participating in the goal-setting process, setting challenging goals, and believing that goal achievement will lead to the acquisition of rewards (Bezuidenhout in Jooste 2009). Experienced contract workers learn what level of performance is expected from them and become more confident in achieving that level (Clinton et al. 2011, 131). At HEIs, the process of performance management contributes to contract workers who are improving their performance and meeting expectations. For instance, if one of their research goals was publishing at least one article in a biannual cycle, they would be motivated by the clearly expressed goal, and by their accountability to the institution with regard to output. Motivational leadership is related to peak performing universities that have developed clear accountability with challenging and rewarding goals (Howatt 2003, 1).

Goals for employing contract workers may differ due to different situations (model of complex man). Some organisations may believe that it is beneficial and protects their interests to use non-standard arrangements as a form of employment, to reduce and control operational costs, to advance the focus of the organisation, to allow the organisation to gain access to global standard capabilities and to make internal resources available for optional use and to gain access to resources not internally available (Schibik and Harrington 2004, 396). With the purpose of minimising costs, HEIs have gradually adopted the trend of utilising contract workers with agreements satisfactory to both parties (ibid., 395). Most contract workers freely choose this form of work and are, therefore, unlikely to be dissatisfied with the lower level of security it offers (Hall 2006, 169). However, due to possible job insecurity inherent to temporary employment, it has been argued that perceived employability and their well-being while working during temporary contracts are more important to those individuals than permanent contracts (Kinnunen et al. 2011, 141).

### **Goal commitment in relation to purposes that change over time**

Goal commitment is the extent to which a person is personally interested in reaching the goal. Rajeev (2009, 179) establishes that contract workers work more than eight hours daily despite knowledge of usual working hours, and more often than not they do not receive extra payment for doing so. This scenario is found in an environment where the workers are not sure whether their remuneration conforms to wage norms or whether they are employed on an ad hoc basis. Motivational leadership therefore

requires leaders who are personal; have great integrity; and act in a manner that is fair, firm, and consistent (Howatt 2003, 2).

People and organisations can develop new inspirations, and inspiration can change over time. Although the implementation of non-standard employment arrangements is a strategy on its own, it must be considered as part of the comprehensive approach an organisation takes to its people management (Standing 2008; Wickramasinghe and Chandrasekara 2011, 532). An organisation may wish to retain a temporary worker's skills and, therefore, recognise the individual's contribution and consider it beneficial to invest in the worker further. All these factors are known to enhance job satisfaction (Clinton et al. 2011, 118). Roles and responsibility once thought as the sole purview of permanent academic personnel are now being increasingly assigned to part-time temporary personnel (Schibik and Harrington 2004, 394). In nursing education settings, for instance, contract workers may be assigned the duties of coordinating a programme or part of it.

### **Goal setting and performance**

The nature of the task affects people's performance and productivity.

With regard to work performance, the aim of many management practices is to enhance worker and ultimately organisational performance. Performance implicitly means doing better or worse in comparison to other people or a standard. Generally, self-assessment measures of individual performance are considered to be appropriate because the individual is uniquely aware of the elements of high performance, and the focus falls on the perspective of the individual employee (Wickramasinghe and Chandrasekara 2011, 533).

Based on factors such as job insecurity and uncertainty there are dominant views of contract workers who may feel strained and precarious. This may inhibit their performance at full potential; unlike the permanent workers who are more secure and less stressed about their work position. However, there is no evidence to support this notion. Instead, studies have shown higher levels of poor well-being amongst permanent workers compared to temporary workers (Allen 2011, 105). In the case of contract work, a key factor guiding how contracted time is spent or experienced is the degree to which temporary work is undertaken voluntarily (Clinton et al. 2011, 119). Findings have indicated that those employees who have voluntarily chosen to perform contract work are more satisfied than the employees to whom it is an involuntary employment contract (Guest et al. 2006, 111). On the other hand, involuntary contract workers are highly motivated to gain permanent employment, and such motivation drives high levels of performance (Kinnunen et al. 2011, 144).

However, contract co-workers may inadvertently put pressure on standard workers, increasing work intensity and time spent working. Employing contract workers sometimes relieves standard workers of the more mundane requirements of their jobs, and allows them to develop additional skill sets. Therefore, a division of labour between standard and non-standard workers affords standard workers, under

some circumstances, opportunities to develop skills that ultimately enhances group performance (Vough et al. 2005, 239).

### **ORGANISATIONAL SUPPORT IN RELATION TO THE NATURE OF TASKS SUCH AS TRAINING**

Organisational support encompasses the processes of an organisation to either assist or hinder contract workers' performance while attempting to achieve set goals. Positive support might include providing adequate personnel, and apparatus and supplies; negative support might include failing to repair damaged equipment and insufficient personnel for the workload. When standard workers are asked to facilitate the training of contract workers, they need to be reassured that they are not merely training their own 'replacements' (Vough et al. 2005, 241). It has been found that contract workers, as a result of their more peripheral position in organisations, receive significantly fewer training and professional development opportunities (Allen 2011, 200) and are less likely to receive employer funded training (Forrier and Sels 2003). This might impact negatively on employees' skills development and performance (Clinton et al. 2011, 117). Employers avoid training contract workers for two reasons. Firstly, the limited duration of the employment arrangement makes it difficult to recover any return from investing in training. Secondly, employers can be held fiscally and legally liable as 'co-employers' should they fail to differentiate between the treatment of permanent personnel and contract workers; for example by offering training or other 'permanent employee' benefits to these 'non-employees' (Vough et al. 2005, 234). Negative consequences may arise when valued employees, especially research assistants, leave the institution for better contracts.

### **ORGANISATIONAL SUPPORT IN RELATION TO ORGANISATION-ENVIRONMENT RELATIONSHIPS**

There are two general ways of organising the non-standard workforce. One way is to place contract workers in jobs with little contact with permanent staff, that is, they are socially and physically isolated. A more common approach is to incorporate them in work groups with permanent members of staff (Vough et al. 2005, 235). However, the use of contract workers working in collaboration with permanent personnel, may generate conflict and tension in the work environment (ibid., 237).

Good relationships can be encouraged by building a network with other individuals from whom they can seek advice and support (Allen 2011, 209). Contract workers may fill short-term gaps created by staff shortages and thereby meet unexpected, short-term peaks in demand (Hall 2006, 163). Previously, contract workers were younger and less experienced (Clark 2003, 47). In contrast, in South Africa currently, retired nurses are serving as mentors or part-time lecturers at universities.

In managing contract workers, the duration of the employment relationship may be important, since employees with shorter contracts may have lower levels of commitment and identification with the organisation. Clinton et al. (2011,117) for

instance, report that some contract workers felt more integrated in the organisation after being provided with a longer-term contract. On the other hand, a preference for contract work may become more essential for those who already have a history of contract work. These contract workers are less likely to require strong organisational attachments to fulfil their employment needs and expectations, since sequential variables form part of the broader progressive context of non-permanent work (De Cuyper et al. 2011).

Contract workers often receive little formal supervision from managers at an organisation beyond specifications necessary for completing the work. Typically, contract workers receive little or no training from employers and instead are largely responsible for developing their own skills (Vough et al. 2005, 234). Permanent employees frequently find themselves supervising and correcting contract co-workers' work. These peer-to-peer responsibilities might threaten standard workers' ability to maintain their own level of performance, particularly with a high turnover of contract workers (ibid., 239). On the other hand, experienced contract workers may be able to adapt to different organisations, supervisors and colleagues (Clinton et al. 2011, 120).

## **CONCLUSION**

Studies relating the outcomes of temporary employment compared to permanent employment show mixed results. The reasons for this include shortcomings in research design which have focussed mainly on examining direct links between temporary work and outcomes (Kinnunen et al. 2011, 142). Unlike other workers, who are employed in a two-way relationship with the employers they are working for, contract workers are characterised by a triangular relationship between job satisfaction, organised commitment and worker relationship (Biggs and Swailes 2005, 130). Successful outsourcing relationships are built on communication, a shared vision and an inclusive arrangement between the contracting organisation (the university) and its external contractors (part time academic teaching personnel) (Schibik and Harrington 2004, 399). Motivational leadership focuses on being sensitive to the needs of all employees, where everyone has a clear understanding of the core values and mission of the institution, on a need for strategic communication, and on a process of monitoring the effectiveness of general communication in the institution (Howatt 2003, 1).

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