



Exploring the experiences of early career academic nurses as they shape their career journey: A qualitative study



Aileen Wyllie^{a,*}, Tracy Levett-Jones^a, Michelle DiGiacomo^b, Patricia Davidson^{b,c}

^a Faculty of Health, University of Technology Sydney, Australia

^b IMPACCT (Centre for Improving Palliative, Aged and Chronic Care through Clinical Research and Translation), University of Technology Sydney, Australia

^c Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD, United States of America

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Early career academic nurse
Career journey
Thematic analysis
Qualitative descriptive

ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aimed to explore the experiences of early career academic nurses as they shape their career path in one Australian university.

Background: The early years of academic career development can be challenging as individuals learn to adjust to the teaching, research and service mission of universities. Tertiary institutions have an obligation to provide future nursing leaders with relevant and timely support during the formative phase of career development, to be successful in a competitive global environment.

Design: A qualitative descriptive approach was used and data were analysed thematically using Braun and Clarke (2006) six phase process.

Methods: Eleven early career academic nurses who were interviewed, had completed, or were near completion of a doctorate and were within seven years of full-time academic employment.

Results: The four themes that emerged from the analysis were: embarking on the journey; the toil of the journey; fellow travellers on the journey, and strategies for a successful journey.

Conclusions: Findings from this study can be used to inform customised mentorship programs for nurse academics during their initial stage of career employment.

What is already known about this topic?

- The global nursing shortage impacts on the growth of quality academic leaders.
- Nurses entering the academy for a career need support and guidance.
- Support mechanisms for individual successful career building remain 'hit and miss'.

What does this paper add?

- It contributes to the growing literature on novice nurse academics and their support sources.
- The results provide valuable information for planners of orientation and induction programs in faculties where nurse academics are employed.
- For nurses already employed, it can provide reassurance while

developing their journey.

1. Introduction

Globally, the higher education sector is dynamic and complex (Norton and Cakitaki, 2016); performance expectations are high (Dollinger et al., 2018) and support varied (Norton et al., 2013). Early Career Academic Nurses (ECANs) are future leaders and therefore essential to the sustainability of the discipline, yet numbers in many areas remain poor due to attrition and the global shortage of nurses (Halcomb et al., 2014). Non-traditional trajectories into academic life (McDermid et al., 2013) along with a limited understanding of sources and effective supports can also impact on ECAN growth. Additionally, the less structured, open academic environment also presents a challenge to ECANs who are more familiar with highly structured clinical environments. Consequently, an in-depth understanding of the experiences of ECANs is needed to source relevant, appropriate and workable supports

* Corresponding author at: Faculty of Health, University of Technology Sydney, PO Box 123, Jones St, Ultimo, Sydney, NSW 2007, Australia.

E-mail addresses: Aileen.Wyllie@uts.edu.au (A. Wyllie), tracy.levett-jones@uts.edu.au (T. Levett-Jones), Michelle.DiGiacomo@uts.edu.au (M. DiGiacomo), pdavidson@jhu.edu (P. Davidson).

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nedt.2019.01.021>

Received 5 July 2018; Received in revised form 1 January 2019; Accepted 28 January 2019

0260-6917/ © 2019 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

to engender career progression. This paper reports on the findings from a qualitative study that sought to explore the experiences of a group of ECANs employed in one Australian university.

2. Background

Restructuring of universities worldwide has had a profound impact on the relationship between nursing academics, their workplace (McDermid et al., 2016), and career development opportunities (Knights and Clarke, 2014) resulting in academic work becoming increasingly demanding with fewer full-time academics to provide the expected and much needed high quality outcomes (Coates and Goedegebuure, 2012). Nursing academia has been particularly impacted, resulting in severe staffing shortages in some areas (Buchan et al., 2015). This is primarily due to nurses often entering an academic career later in life (Nardi and Gyurko, 2013); the length of time taken to obtain a doctorate: a qualification seen as a necessary for entry to the academy (Jackson et al., 2011), and the aging academic workforce (Buchan et al., 2013). Linear career progression has also declined, along with a loss of academics to the corporate sector (Bexley et al., 2013) leading to increasing calls for the higher education sector to assist novice academics to acclimatise to these changes (Coates and Goedegebuure, 2012) and assist those currently employed to achieve 'personal and professional career growth' (Jackson et al., 2011) thus reducing the 'brain drain' in higher education (Campbell and O'Meara, 2014).

Hoekstra (2011) has coined the term 'career identity' to illustrate the personal nature of career building. He argues that individuals desiring a career identity must take a proactive approach to achieve timely progression. Of importance is the realisation that a career identity should be both an individual and a shared process which takes context into account (Mikačić and Ovsenik, 2013). It is likened to what Noer (2009) has called a 'personal contract' with the workplace and with self: giving equal responsibility to both. Employees require education with an emphasis on the meaning of career identity and how to self-manage work-life balance (Zhang, 2010). McIlveen et al. (2011) also recommends a shift in career attitudes from the salary driven and objective conditions of a career, and more attention paid to subjective values, such as job satisfaction, resulting from academics exerting more control and being more proactive in their career advancement (Campbell and O'Meara, 2014; Sutherland, 2017). Greater control can then result in what has been described as 'a portable repertoire of competencies' which offer currency and marketability (Hoekstra, 2011). A repertoire that gives rise to an individual's proactive approach to their career marketability through positive attitudes, adaptability and self-management (Zhang, 2010). In other words, career development is more successful when the individual rather than the organisation is in control (Musselin, 2013). To enable effective control for ECANs, their journey requires support, belief in their own abilities and having a positive approach to planning their career needs (Sutherland, 2017). By better understanding the journey, faculties can more effectively support ECANs to shape their development in a timely and productive way.

Research questions:

- What are the experiences of academic nurses on early career development opportunities and support mechanisms used?
- How do early career academic nurses describe their experiences and mechanisms of support when career building?

3. Methodology and methods

3.1. Objective

This study aimed to explore the experiences of early career academic nurses as they shape their career path.

3.2. Design and setting

The paper presents findings of the first phase of a three-phase qualitative descriptive study that used an appreciative inquiry approach to implement a program for early career academic nurses. The study took place in one large metropolitan university in Sydney, Australia.

3.3. Participants

Inclusion criteria for the study were academic nurses:

- employed in a fixed-term ongoing position;
- within seven years of commencing an academic role (allowing for career disruptions); and
- at least one year into, or having completed a doctorate.

3.4. Ethical considerations

Following university ethics approval, fifteen full-time ECANs who met the above criteria were sent an email by a faculty administrator that included an invitation, information statement and consent form. Pseudonyms have been used and careful attention taken to de-identify the quotes used throughout the study.

3.5. Data collection

In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted in a private area located on university premises and convenient to all participants. The interviews were undertaken by the primary author and audio recorded with the participant's permission. An interview protocol included open-ended questions regarding experiences of career development, and factors that have supported or given direction to their progress. Probes and prompts and extra questions were asked as necessary to capture richer data (Bryman, 2008). Each interview lasted between one and a half to 2 h in duration and audio recordings were professionally transcribed and verified by the primary author. Observations and reflections were entered into a journal by the researcher directly following each interview.

3.6. Analysis

Braun and Clarke (2006) six phase approach of thematic analysis was conducted to identify themes. This process provides 'a rich and detailed, yet complex account of data' (Nowell et al., 2017). Transcripts were read multiple times to become familiar with the data and to make notations of career behaviours, values and support strategies in order to form initial ideas. Individual responses to questions were arranged systematically on a spreadsheet with a separate cell for each response. Responses were colour coded to match the individual respondent and new codes recorded as they were identified. Codes were arranged into subthemes and potential overarching themes. Significance was awarded to codes that reflected the research questions and were frequently cited (Bryman, 2008). A thematic map followed, illustrating the connecting subthemes and four major themes. Substantial time was given to re-viewing all transcripts and coding for any missing codes before the four major themes were finalised. To complete the process an analysis was written using key quotes to support the data.

3.7. Rigour

Although outlined as linear, this analysis was an iterative process with increasing immersion and familiarity with the data (Sandelowski and Leeman, 2012). Several techniques were employed in order to establish trustworthiness, including maintaining a journal, review of a selection of transcripts by other members of the team, and discussion of themes at multiple supervisory meetings. Member checking was also

conducted; each participant read their transcripts and a copy of the corresponding themes for feedback on accuracy and authenticity.

4. Results

Eleven of the fifteen available full-time ECANs agreed to be interviewed, two males and nine females. Ages ranged from 30 to 55 years of age and all had been in full time employment with the faculty between eleven months to six years. While the eleven nurse academics offered separate and varied accounts of their pathway into a career in academia and were of different ages, this study targeted their early experiences of development in full-time ECAN positions. This allowed for summarising the data into key themes that gave evidence of their experiences of developing as academics and what factors supported that development.

From the interview transcripts it became apparent that the transition to academia reflected a type of journey. The participants described feelings of anticipation and apprehension as they traversed the academic landscape, via routes that were often uncharted. They learned to negotiate unexpected challenges along the way. The four key themes that emerged from the transcripts included:

- Embarking on the journey;
- The toil of the journey;
- Fellow travellers on the journey; and
- Strategies for a successful journey.

4.1. Embarking on the journey

What became evident from the interviews was that the participants' motivations for embarking on an academic career were diverse but immediate supports for the journey were remarkably similar. Only two had made a deliberate decision to pursue an academic career and reasons varied for the other nine. Four had 'put a toe into the water' and decided to 'take a position after a successful interview'. One stated it had been 'serendipitous with no burning desire to be an academic'. Another stated that being an academic was a way of 'giving something back to society'. Two participants had 'a passion for research and this [academic role] would enable them to follow that passion'. These various motivators seemed to strengthen and fortify some of the participants; while those who were more ambivalent about the academic role appeared to struggle, at times, with the challenges that change can bring. Of importance to most during this change was the need to have a 'safe start'. For several this was an understanding of 'the things that you could change and the things that you couldn't change' and a person that they go to, where they felt safe 'to ask those stupid questions', or, 'to have a go and to receive feedback that was not always positive'. As one stated 'as newcomers we need people who can maintain the spirit... we don't have a coach'.

The skills required to support the journey varied depending on previous experiences. Academic skills like research and writing were already in place and just needed honing:

'I think skills in writing which I never kind of really appreciated, even for my PhD ... It's like you have actually got to be good at this, and you have actually got to like it, so if you don't like it you're stuck, because you will do a lot of it.'

[Chris]

Other skills, such as the immediate 'nuts and bolts of the job', or, as one said 'the hidden skills', were a necessity for success in fulfilling the ECAN role and all agreed that although they couldn't learn everything in 'one go', if they had been 'pointed in the right direction early' to those skills that would have helped them to be 'more a part of it', 'to be able to prioritise' and they would have 'worried less about the future and their ability to cope' or, 'enjoy what we do'.

4.2. The toil of the journey

All of the participants recognised that a career in academia required them 'to work long hours' and 'out of hours'; ultimately causing each academic to ask themselves 'how hard do I want to work?' Concerns about workload were illustrated, in part, by the attrition of two of the participants leaving shortly after the first set of interviews. Their thoughts had become clarified as result of the 'all-consuming administration' and decided to take up other job opportunities that gave more time to pursue their passion in clinical research.

During the interviews, many of the participants reflected on what was essential for academic career progress. While most seemed resigned to 'working hard', the topic of work-life balance was a recurring point of discussion, seen as essential for resilience and the need to adapt to the demands of academic life:

'You need to get savvy about managing expectations and I think you need to prioritise your wellbeing ... and that's all part of resilience. Making time for other activities outside of work, builds your resilience. Because resilience is pretty much how you deal with adversity?'

[Adrian]

'I try and keep some work-life balance... I was working seven days a week and that's not healthy ... I'm not very good with 'no' but I've been working on some techniques'.

[Jamie]

The participants described different ways of managing the workload and the multiple demands of the academic role, with some recognising the need to set clear boundaries: particularly in regard to research:

'... in the six months that I've been here ... I have actually thought, no, that will take away from my research and I don't want to not have research ... research is really, really, really pivotal to me and my work'.

[Andy]

These sentiments were echoed by those who had been in the role for a few years with one stating that they must be 'able to say no... at the same time thinking about things in the long term'. Another participant noted that there is a need to 'lock yourself in a room and really be really, really selfish ... set up really clear boundaries and look after yourself'. One of the participants noted that:

'In the end "you have got to enjoy what you do, and actually be interested in what it is that you're researching or teaching in order to develop an increasing depth and sophistication in one's field"'.

[Alex]

4.3. Fellow travellers on the journey

The initial period of employment as an academic was, for many, a time of adjustment to the demands and expectations of academia and coming to terms with what was often a lonely transition journey. Although one of the participants called this time 'the honeymoon period', most of the others felt alienated some or all of the time, and described not being able to 'find anywhere to fit in' and 'starting the role as a lone ranger'. This contrasted markedly with many of the participants' previous workplace experiences where working as part of a team was more common. While some of the participants described feelings of loneliness, others experienced academic life as being simply 'being alone'. For example, one participant noted that:

'You need to be able to work on your own and be comfortable in your own space because sometimes you do spend long times working on your own.'

[Terry]

Participants recognised the importance of collegial relationships to workplace satisfaction and sense of belonging. Some described the

importance of having a peer group and offices in close proximity, with one suggesting that these strategies ‘helped us settle in and grow together’. Another stated:

‘I think that it is nice if you are employed on the same day ... it just gives you that little starter support. I know for the first few weeks that the four of us were like a little pack ... so it was nice to have familiar faces there when you start’.

[Drew]

For some of the participants the early years of employment as an academic was a process of negotiating a role for themselves within what was often seen as ‘foreign territory’. They often questioned their ‘fit’ within the university context, particularly in regards to the need to be an active researcher. For example, one stated:

‘The first year and a half or two years, I was still settling in, kind of thing. I actually didn’t know the term early career researcher until I had been here for two years. I didn’t know what the heck that was?’

[Jamie]

Some saw relationships with mentors as essential to helping them find their way in the academic environment; they provided inspiration, guidance and the support needed to achieve career success:

‘A mentor is the most important thing ... a leader in your field, someone that you aspire to be’.

[Chris]

‘I have three [mentors] that I talk to on a regular basis about where I want to be and where I want to go to’.

[Dale]

Although the provision of collegial support for newcomers by mentors was considered important, some of the participants felt that this type of ‘goodwill was not valued enough by the faculty’.

4.4. Strategies for a successful journey

One of the strategies viewed by the participants as key to academic career development was adaptability and the ability to ‘bend and adjust’. This was explained in several different ways, for example, one of the participants said: ‘you’ve got to be really flexible’, ‘be willing to take risks and be wrong’ and ‘to keep reinventing things or to be on that continual cycle of regeneration, improvement’. Another participant emphasised the importance of time and perseverance to growth and success: ‘you keep growing and become more competent ... know what works for your career and what doesn’t’.

Even though many of the participants were relatively new to the higher education sector, most had recognised that universities were increasingly adopting a business model that they needed to learn to work within. One noted that ‘universities are corporations, and gone are the days of ivory tower people just floating about doing what they want’. Resource and staffing limitations impacted a number of the participants and they noted that because there was a limited number of full-time academics to ‘answer those pesky questions’ they often needed to rely on ‘corridor talk’ or manage issues and concerns autonomously: Even sessions with their development supervisor could not guarantee the answer, as they often ‘did not know what I was talking about’. Instead one found that:

‘I needed to actively look for the answer. Sometimes you might be lucky and someone knows and helps but it takes time, so I learnt to be able to work as smart as I can or else I wouldn’t have got anything done this year’.

[Jamie]

For many participants, belonging to a research team was critical for success: having a team to say ‘go for that grant, and them having the faith in me to go for it’. Many of them had become strategic in relation to

developing the research collaborations needed for career development:

‘... the days of there being lots of money around for everybody is diminishing ... we have to look at other ways of getting money. ... Get yourself involved with a strong research team ... that can help you develop’.

[Chris]

Working by one’s self and the ability to look ahead was perceived ‘as only getting so far in my progress’. To move forward and develop a research track record, one participant commented that she needed to ‘know the projects to be involved in and who to work with’.

5. Discussion

The work by [Inkson and Arthur \(2001\)](#) provides a platform for the discussion. They argued that successful organisations are created through securing and supporting successful employees: making it an advantage to invest in the new employee and focus on the individual as an asset. In the early stages of employment transition, employees should be encouraged to belong, know the work, be self-orientated to finding out and getting to ‘know’ the ‘why’ (the purpose of the work) ‘how to do’ and ‘whom to know’ in the organisation and this will allow them to have ‘purpose, motivation and identification’ ([Inkson and Arthur, 2001](#)). The assumption is that these factors will aid the employees to find opportunities that allow them to gain direction, aid the employees to find opportunities that allow them to develop as academics and thrive within the environment. In reciprocation, the employee will bring energy, skills and experience which if captured, enhances the organisation’s reputation, allowing both the employee and organisation to thrive in a competitive environment.

If we apply the above sentiments to the participants, we can see that the ECANs had made inroads into a career in academia through a journey of ‘working hard’, finding their ‘fit’, making tentative future plans and have importantly, recognised who was the best equipped to be supportive to their advancement, but at a heavy cost to their energy, commitment and enjoyment. Progression was perceived to be an ‘expectation of the role’ but some talked of a disconnect between what the ECANs perceived as progress and what their supervisors valued. The academics noted that factors leading to progress were: embracing hard work, being able to adjust, becoming ‘savvy’ with their everyday workload and learning to work smart by prioritising life and work commitments. These however also took a toll on the workers as they shaped their career path and misdirection was common. It is clear from the participants’ conversations that early support was significant to their development, opportunities and progress. This support took different forms at different times, depending on the individual’s needs. For example, participants’ discussed support given as a result of corridor conversations, or working closely with formal teams while for others, mentors (a few from earlier doctorate experiences or work places) had been essential for ‘settling in’, role modelling and providing corporate knowledge. There are also strong indications in the data that to be a success, you have to feel comfortable in what you do, that hard work alone is not enough, be a credible writer, move in the right circles to advance your work, be a responsible academic and have leadership qualities. For continued progression as one participant stated, you also need ‘organic’ assistance in the form of a mentor who has faith in your abilities, who will give sound advice regarding your work and confidence to pursue your career.

Although mentors, supervisors and other resources can be key to early career academics, if there is to be success for the individual, direction or guidance should be fostered in a safe and early environment in order to be of benefit for academic opportunities. Those in the study who had the opportunity for early effective direction gave evidence of having adjusted more quickly and exuded more self-confidence in their decisions, outcomes and where they were heading, both inside and outside the organisation. The process of how early career academic

nurses view their journey is described in the four themes. It was tentative when participants embarked on their journey. Their career gained momentum with hard work, a realisation that the responsibility for career management was theirs: but well-chosen fellow travellers made their journey more focussed. Success became possible as they gained purpose and identity and once engaged with personal strategies and flexibility they had found a new maturity: beginning to look beyond the faculty for new contacts and projects to strengthen their career.

While it is acknowledged that the findings of this study were limited to one Faculty with nurse academics, they are a valuable contribution to the growing literature and in planning for future programs. Furthermore, generalisability of the results to other academics might be limited given that only early career academic nurse were included.

6. Conclusion

This study gives voice to a group of nurses who are building a career in academia. Previous studies show that the workplace can be a challenging one. Early career academic nurses belong to a discipline that is still relatively new to academe, however once employed the institution can assist them on their journey. As individuals, each person makes the journey into academia by different routes and at a different pace. What is needed is assistance in attainment of the 'right' support at the 'right' time to succeed in shaping their development. Urgent strategies are required to assist the individual take hold of their career. Strategies crucial to progressing their journey are: early faculty support; opportunities for connections and collaboration with fellow travellers, guidance from experienced academics and skills that foster belief in self as a manager. These are important for strengthening all aspects of their career development; not just in the 'objective' measure of success, such as research productivity. Making timely connections, engagement and networks to sustain a career are just too important to be left to chance. The Nursing Discipline needs to support these future leaders by providing customised evidence-based mentorship programs during the initial stage of early career academic nurses' employment for a successful start to an ECAN's career journey.

Funding and conflict of interest

None declared.

References

- Bexley, E., Arkoudis, S., James, R., 2013. The motivations, values and future plans of Australian academics. *High. Educ.* 65 (3), 385–400.
- Braun, V., Clarke, V., 2006. Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qual. Res. Psychol.* 3 (2), 77–101.
- Bryman, A., 2008. *Social Science Methods*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Buchan, J., O'May, F., Dussault, G., 2013. Nursing workforce policy and the economic crisis: a global overview. *J. Nurs. Scholarsh.* 45 (3), 298–307.
- Buchan, J., Twigg, D., Dussault, G., Duffield, C., Stone, P., 2015. Policies to sustain the nursing workforce: an international perspective. *Int. Nurs. Rev.* 62 (2), 162–170.
- Campbell, C.M., O'Meara, K., 2014. Faculty agency: departmental contexts that matter in faculty careers. *Res. High. Educ.* 55 (1), 49–74.
- Coates, H., Goedegebuure, L., 2012. Recasting the academic workforce: why the attractiveness of the academic profession needs to be increased and eight possible strategies for how to go about this from an Australian perspective. *High. Educ.* 64 (6), 875–889.
- Dollinger, M., Coates, H., Bexley, E., Croucher, G., Naylor, R., 2018. Framing international approaches to university–industry collaboration. *Policy Rev. High. Educ.* 2 (1), 105–127.
- Halcomb, E., Andrew, S., Peters, K., Salamonson, Y., Daly, J., Jackson, D., Gray, J., 2014. Supporting Career Progression Through Academic Mentorship (STREAM): Final Report of the Project Developing and Implementing a Leadership Capacity Building Program for Teaching and Learning in Nursing.
- Hoekstra, H.A., 2011. A career roles model of career development. *J. Vocat. Behav.* 78 (2), 159–173.
- Inkson, K., Arthur, M.B., 2001. How to be a successful career capitalist. *Organ. Dyn.* 30 (1), 48–61.
- Jackson, D., Peters, K., Andrew, S., Salamonson, Y., Halcomb, E.J., 2011. "If you haven't got a PhD, you're not going to get a job": the PhD as a hurdle to continuing academic employment in nursing. *Nurse Educ. Today* 31 (4), 340–344.
- Knights, D., Clarke, C.A., 2014. It's a bittersweet symphony, this life: fragile academic selves and insecure identities at work. *Organ. Stud.* 35 (3), 335–357.
- McDermid, F., Peters, K., Daly, J., Jackson, D., 2013. 'I thought I was just going to teach': stories of new nurse academics on transitioning from sessional teaching to continuing academic positions. *Contemp. Nurse* 45 (1), 46–55.
- McDermid, F., Peters, K., Daly, J., Jackson, D., 2016. Developing resilience: stories from novice nurse academics. *Nurse Educ. Today* 38, 29–35.
- McIlveen, P., Brooks, S., Lichtenberg, A., Smith, M., Torjul, P., Tyler, J., 2011. Career development learning frameworks for work-integrated learning. In: *Developing Learning Professionals*. Springer, pp. 149–165.
- Mikačić, M.T., Ovsenik, M., 2013. Career planning as a building block for personal excellence. *Organizacija* 46 (6), 235–252.
- Musselin, C., 2013. Redefinition of the relationships between academics and their university. *High. Educ.* 65 (1), 25–37.
- Nardi, D.A., Gyurko, C.C., 2013. The global nursing faculty shortage: status and solutions for change. *J. Nurs. Scholarsh.* 45 (3), 317–326.
- Noer, D.M., 2009. *Healing the Wounds: Overcoming the Trauma of Layoffs and Revitalizing Downsized Organizations*. John Wiley and Sons.
- Norton, A., Cakitaki, B., 2016. *Mapping Australian Higher Education 2016*. vol. 7 Grattan Institute.
- Norton, A., Sonnemann, J., Cherastidham, I., 2013. *Taking University Teaching Seriously*. Grattan Institute, Melbourne, VIC.
- Nowell, L.S., Norris, J.M., White, D.E., Moules, N.J., 2017. Thematic analysis: striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. *Int. J. Qual. Methods* 16 (1), 1609406917733847.
- Sandelowski, M., Leeman, J., 2012. Writing usable qualitative health research findings. *Qual. Health Res.* 22 (10), 1404–1413.
- Sutherland, K.A., 2017. Constructions of success in academia: an early career perspective. *Stud. High. Educ.* 42 (4), 743–759.
- Zhang, Y., 2010. *Recent Tertiary Graduates' Career Attitudes, Career Adaptability and Career Self-management Behaviours: Focus on Continuity in a Fragmented Employment Context: A Thesis Presented in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Management in Human Resource Management at Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand*. Massey University.