



Selection criteria, skill sets and competencies

What is their role in the appointment of vice-chancellors in Australian universities?

Bernard O'Meara

School of Business, University of Ballarat, Ballarat, Australia, and

Stanley Petzall

Formerly of Deakin Business School, Deakin University, Geelong, Australia

Abstract

Purpose – The research presented here attempts to identify and analyse the reported selection criteria used in the appointment of Australian vice-chancellors (VCs) and to contrast this with the selection criteria actually used.

Design/methodology/approach – Contemporary research into the nature, role and purpose of section criteria in appointment processes has chiefly been conducted in the private sector and across various hierarchical levels. The research is based on a PhD entitled “The recruitment and selection of vice-chancellors for Australian universities”. The research for the thesis had ethics approval and involved interviews with former and incumbent chancellors, VCs, consultants, representatives of the Australian Vice-Chancellors Committee and selection panel members. Central to this research was the selection criteria and the skill bases selection criteria attempted to measure. A questionnaire was also sent to those listed above.

Findings – The findings show that a matching of organisational antecedents with candidate attributes does occur. The research also highlights the key selection criteria used to appoint VCs. It also demonstrates how these key criteria are universally applied but in different orders depending upon the various foci of universities. Non-stated, but important, criteria and competencies are also discussed.

Originality/value – No other research exists outlining the skill sets and competencies required by Australian VCs. It is hoped that this research will form the basis for further research and discovery into this field that we know so little about.

Keywords Senior management, Higher education, Recruitment, Selection, Australia

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

The contemporary vice-chancellor (VC) of an Australian university faces a greater range of externally and internally driven forces than ever before. Education has become a commodity, universities have been corporatised, the higher education sector is now a highly competitive market with both domestic and global institutions in direct competition and government funding has rapidly declined (Marginson and Considine, 2000; Maringe, 2005; Winter and Sarros, 2001).

The Bologna process involves 45 European countries and 4,000 institutions undertaking reforms to achieve greater consistency and student mobility. It is expected that these reforms will have direct impact on Australian universities, their international student intakes, and therefore revenue. The inevitable impact upon the



engagement of Australian higher education with the European higher education sector was noted by the Australian Vice-Chancellors Committee's (AVCC's) cautious response to the Australian Government's discussion paper (AVCC, 2006; Bishop, 2006).

The Research Quality Framework will impact heavily on the higher education sector and negatively on some Australian universities. The use of Australian Workplace Agreements (AWAs) has also caused friction between university executives and staff as universities deal with growing industrial relations issues. Modern VCs now lead large and complex international corporations, many with multi-campus and multi-sector operations but all now have similar issues to those in the private sector (DEST, 2005a; NTEU, 2005).

The role of VCs has changed and now resembles that of a private sector chief executive officer (CEO) or president and many VCs, unlike their predecessors, already have these additional titles. VCs are no longer just concerned with traditional academic issues. Instead they oversee substantive financial and resource portfolios, determine strategies to deal with internal and external changes, coordinate the generation of sustainable additional revenue, deal with industrial relations issues and cope with Federal Government policies driven by neo-liberalist philosophies (Coaldrake and Stedman, 1998; O'Meara and Petzall, 2005; Pratt and Poole, 1999, Price, 2005).

While current VCs need to be academics they also need to display strong non-academic leadership, be able to understand and implement strategic actions and take responsibility for human resources and industrial relations areas. They need to source funding from non-traditional areas and be able to successfully interact with both State and Federal Government officials and leaders of the business community. Incumbent VCs now need an array of academic and business competencies that their predecessors did not need (Marginson and Considine, 2000; Gallagher, 1994; Sloper, 1994).

Thus, in order to be effective in the role, VCs must now possess a broad range of business competencies or skill sets as well as be exemplary academics. While the question may arise as to how candidates are identified and appointed to such complex roles, this research focuses on the selection criteria or constructs used to determine actual suitability. Recruitment and selection processes centre on such constructs, also termed skill sets or competencies, and are critical to successful outcomes.

Selection criteria are one outcome of the process of job analysis. According to De Cieri and Kramar (2005, p. 177) job analysis is the building block of every human resource activity. Job analysis identifies the knowledge, qualifications, skills, experience, abilities and competencies that a person needs to successfully undertake a specific role. These outcomes of job analysis can then be transformed into essential and ideal selection criteria that can be used as the basis for advertising, recruitment and selection processes, interviewing and the design of questions to ask candidates. Selection criteria are a critical component of success in the appointment process, especially for the role of CEO or VC.

This research attempts to do the following:

- Determine the selection criteria used to appoint Australian VCs.
- Determine the nature/role of these selection criteria.
- Compare the outcomes of private sector research into selection criteria with those used in Australian higher education.

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There is a gap in the knowledge base of human resource practitioners and those who are employed in the higher education sector as to what criteria are actually used in the appointment processes and how effective and sophisticated these are. Given that these criteria are used to determine the appointment of the 39 VCs who oversee assets worth \$30 billion, funding worth \$7.5 billion and administer education courses to 944,977 students, this is definitely considered an area worthy of greater research (DEST, 2005b, c).

This research adds to our knowledge about, and our understanding of, the Australian higher education system and its key players, the VCs. The research could also be used as a basis for international comparative research to determine if similar practices are employed in Europe and the USA in the appointment of VCs. The findings presented here should only be seen as a beginning in a line of research.

Selection criteria

The specific criteria against which candidates are assessed to determine job-, firm- or industry-specific knowledge and abilities have variously been termed selection criteria, competencies, skill sets and knowledge, skills and other attributes (KSAOs). Essentially they allow a selection panel to determine the person(s) best equipped to undertake a specific role. Further, the field of psychology has provided myriad tests and procedures to assist interviewers in measuring underlying constructs as a means to predicting future performance and “fit” between candidates and an organisation (Baron and Kreps, 1999; Cook, 1998; Cooper and Robertson, 1995; Dipboye, 1992).

A clear distinction can be made between those selection criteria that are job-specific and relatively easy to identify and measure, and the person-specific criteria or those relating to the personalities, beliefs and value-systems of candidates. Job-specific criteria are derived from job analysis, where the individual tasks of a role are identified and the competencies leading to success in the role are identified. Candidates can then be assessed to determine if they have the requisite skills and competence required in the role.

Person-specific criteria are in part derived from job analysis but can also be derived from organisational culture and sub-cultures, leadership and management styles as well as organisational philosophy. The ideal person-specific criteria such as attitude, motivation, commitment and personality can also be identified.

Various means are used in recruitment and selection practices to identify relevant characteristics in candidates and to measure these against those desired by an organisation. These can be measured by psychometric means or qualitatively inferred by interviewers (Lievens *et al.*, 2002; Moy and Lam, 2004).

Thus, selection criteria are used to measure candidates against the needs of the role and the organisation. They are critical in determining the successful applicant and where psychometric tests are not conducted the successful outcome depends on the competence of the interviewer(s). However, while this process is taking place interviewees are also assessing the interviewers, the appointment processes employed and the attractiveness of the organisation. These candidate perceptions influence the way they behave in an interview and the emphasis they place on their various attributes (Arnold *et al.*, 2005; Cooper and Robertson, 1995; Peppas, 2002).

While the traditional selection paradigm is based on workplace and job stability, changes in the nature of work, technology and globalisation have impacted upon

selection practices. Selection processes now involve more negotiation and social processes with greater emphasis on the person-specific criteria. Negotiation and social processes are, by nature, two-way mechanisms. Research has also found that candidates attribute preferred personality traits to organisations based upon the reputation of the organisation, the sophistication of the selection processes and the professionalism of the interviewers (Lievens *et al.*, 2002; Slaughter *et al.*, 2001).

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These candidate perceptions allow applicants to display the attributes they perceive as being most desired by the organisation. These perceptions also allow candidates to determine the level of compatibility between themselves and the organisation. This ultimately impacts on their decision to pursue the employment opportunity or not. If candidates perceive a greater level of compatibility between themselves and the traits they ascribe to an organisation then they are more likely to pursue the opportunity (Lievens and Highhouse, 2002; Lievens *et al.*, 2002; Slaughter *et al.*, 2001).

The attraction-selection-attrition model suggests that both organisations and applicants seek a degree of homogeneity in employment considerations. Thus, the job-specific criteria become initial hurdles in the appointment process and once these hurdles are successfully overcome organisations seek to determine “fit” between themselves and likely candidates based on person-specific criteria. This not only includes personality and value systems, but also quite specific aspects such as age and these criteria can even determine if an internal or external appointment is made depending on Board/Council make-up (Davidson *et al.*, 2006; Schneider, 1987).

The notion of “fit” between an applicant and an organisation becomes important when taken in the context of risk. There is always some degree of risk associated with employing a new CEO or VC. However the risk can be spread over a variety of areas and therefore not readily noticeable. While the cost of a poor selection decision can be quantified, the risk can also cause increased turnover of valued staff, have a negative impact on morale, organisational culture and sub-cultures, strategic focus and productivity. Thus the issue of appropriate fit is critical especially in the appointment of a new CEO or VC. Generally, “fit” is determined by the use of person-specific criteria rather than job-specific criteria (Cascio, 2000; Cook, 1998; Cooper and Robertson, 1995; Guthrie and Datta, 1997; Levinson, 1996).

Borman and Motowidlo (1997) argue that contextual performance (shaping the organisational, social and psychological needs of the organisation) is not only crucial, but it is also gaining in importance. The contextual performance of individuals impacts on the organisation in terms of morale, teamwork, commitment, socialisation, allegiance and determination. Contextual performance was found to have equal weighting with task performance or job-specific criteria. The study found that where contextual performance dimensions were included in the overall selection criteria, the correlation with personality predictors was more likely to be successful.

The inclusion of contextual performance criteria means that organisations can better identify individuals who will do that little bit more than is required, such as volunteer to assist others or undertake additional projects. Such people demonstrate commitment and motivation and potentially inspire others to do likewise. In this way they also cement group and social relationships that can result in more effective organisational allegiances.

Various researchers have produced lists of person-specific criteria that are surprisingly similar. Peppas (2002, p. 3) reflects on the research by Lifson (1996) who

posited that those who are self-confident, creatively intelligent, risk-takers, not rebellious, decisive, honest and reliable, emotionally resilient and optimistic will always be the “stars” who will outperform their peers. Thus, being able to measure these traits and attributes would assist interviewers to identify and measure these criteria in candidates. Such measurement, of course, is necessarily subjective in nature.

Lievens *et al.* (2002) identified extroversion, agreeableness and conscientiousness as commonly used criteria. Peppas (2002) found that, depending on the subculture of the applicant, initiative, motivation and enthusiasm, self-confidence and communication skills were all highly regarded by interviewers. Similar findings have been found by other researchers in the field. It is noteworthy that researchers such as Barrick *et al.* (2000) found that the ability of interviewers to accurately identify and measure such constructs was high. There was also a strong correlation between interviewer judgements regarding candidate attributes and success in the role once candidates were employed (Doyle, 1992; Graves and Karren, 1992; Moy and Lam, 2004; Myszkowski and Sloan, 1991; Siegel, 2000).

Researchers have also found that the level of interview structure impacts upon the constructs being identified and measured. Huffcutt *et al.* (2001) found that in highly structured interviews the focus was predominantly on job knowledge, interpersonal skills, organisational fit and mental skills. Whereas in low-structured interviews the emphasis tended to be on interests, education, training and experience (Lievens *et al.*, 2002; Salgado and Moscoso, 2002).

Research by Judge *et al.* (1999) regarding the use of the five-factor model of personality found that measuring the degree of conscientiousness of candidates allowed interviewers to positively predict both intrinsic and extrinsic career success. Yet similar research by Raymark *et al.* (1997) found that the use of psychometric assessment, at best, allowed the user or interviewer to successfully infer if such instruments were appropriate and if they measured what they were supposed to measure. However, not all interviewers use psychometric tests as part of the selection process.

Barrick *et al.* (2000) investigated the accuracy of interviewer judgements regarding applicant personality. This research found that interviewers can effectively measure aspects of applicant personality such as extraversion, agreeableness and openness to experience. However, constructs such as conscientiousness and emotional stability, which are the traits most closely correlated with job performance, were the two traits most difficult for interviewers to measure.

The need to determine both job-specific and person-specific criteria is essential to any successful appointment, especially for that of a chief executive officer (CEO) or VC. This point was highlighted by Singh and Crocker (1988), who found that managers frequently made their appointments based on person-specific criteria rather than the stated job-specific selection criteria.

In many instances the stated criteria were nothing more than an initial selection hurdle for candidates to address and employers actually used non-stated (informal and subjective) criteria such as attitude, enthusiasm, honesty, dedication and competence to determine suitability for employment. This point was also noted in research by Dika and Janosik (2003) in higher education appointments made by university boards in the USA.

However, as selection criteria form the basis for position advertisements, candidate application responses, interview questions and the determining of a suitable candidate, these must be carefully considered and determined. If the criteria are inaccurate or inappropriate then the subsequent selection processes may yield less than optimum results.

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Research methodology

The sample

A questionnaire and list of interview questions were developed by the researcher in 2000 and ethics approval for these was granted by the relevant University. The AVCC also supported the research. The questionnaire was distributed to all 39 VCs and separate questionnaires forwarded to former VCs, current and former chancellors and members of VC selection panels as outlined in Table I.

The sample only included those, who at that time, held the title of chancellor or VC or those who had previously held such a title at a university established by state legislation. The council secretaries of each university forwarded the questionnaire to selection panel members. The sample excluded institutions such as the Australian Maritime College and the Australian Defence Force Academy.

Data collection and analysis

The questionnaire was pilot tested with incumbent VCs and members of the AVCC prior to distribution in order to ensure that it provided valid and reliable information. No changes were recommended. While the response rate to the questionnaire was low the number of returns was still statistically significant and allowed qualitative analysis that was supported by interviews. The interviews were used to validate the findings of the questionnaire as well as to open up new areas for discussion.

In addition to the questionnaires and the interviews, each university was contacted in order to obtain copies of the following material that was largely public domain in nature:

- position and person specification;
- job advertisements, selection criteria and candidate information packs;

| | Number of questionnaires sent out | Number returned but not completed ^a | Number returned and completed | Number interviewed |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|-------------------------------|--------------------|
| Vice-chancellors | 39 | 6 | 15 | 8 |
| Former VCs | 38 | 6 | 15 | 12 |
| Chancellors | 39 | 3 | 13 | 7 |
| Former chancellors | 37 | 9 | 7 | 2 |
| Selection panel members | 100 | 25 | 23 | 0 |
| Consultants | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| AVCC | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |

Note: ^a A number of universities returned their questionnaires unopened as their councils considered the topic too sensitive

Table I.
Summary of research methodologies involving interviews and questionnaires

- applicant details where these were made public;
- an outline of the processes employed and the composition of the selection panel;
- academic board/senate minutes relating to the appointment;
- the strategic plan/intent of the university; and
- samples of any set questions that were asked during interviews and any other related material.

A total of 14 universities responded by forwarding as much relevant material as they could. Another 16 universities responded by telephone or e-mail and provided as much non-confidential material as was available. This allowed the researcher to identify specific selection criteria and their use. In addition ten advertisements for the position of VC were analysed to determine if selection criteria were included. Seven of these were for Australian universities and one each from the UK, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea.

As mentioned earlier the nature of the research was qualitative and was concerned with discovery. Qualitative research has the following characteristics:

- Qualitative research has the natural setting as the direct data source and the researcher as the key instrument.
- Qualitative research is descriptive. The richness of words and pictures is valued above numerical data.
- Qualitative researchers are concerned with process rather than simply with outcomes or products.
- Qualitative researchers tend to analyse their data inductively.
- “Meaning” is of essential concern to the qualitative approach. There is focus upon participant perspectives (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982).

Findings and discussion

The questionnaire responses and interviews confirmed that job analysis is undertaken and relevant selection criteria are determined. It was also confirmed that the culture, size, shape, level of performance and strategic imperatives also help determine appropriate selection criteria. The “fit” between the successful candidate and the organisation was considered important however, the relationship between the incoming VC and the chancellor was considered critical. As one respondent VC stated “The relationship between the VC and chancellor is crucial and if that relationship is not established, you cannot go further.’ The need for “fit” is supported by studies by Baron and Kreps (1999), Cook (1998), Cooper and Robertson (1995) and Dipboye (1992).

An analysis of the material forwarded by universities showed that the selection criteria varied from very general to quite specific. The criteria were not present in all candidate information packages or in all advertisements. The most commonly listed criteria were the ability to articulate a vision, interpersonal and communication competencies and leadership ability as well as planning and other strategic skills.

A total of 19 selection criteria were identified from the material supplied by universities and the top eight criteria identified by incumbent and former chancellors and selection panel members are listed in Table II. Chancellors and former chancellors were sent the list of criteria as in many instances, as chairs of selection panels, they set

| Chancellors | Former chancellors | Selection panel members | Selection criteria, skill sets and competencies |
|--|--|--|---|
| Ability to set strategic direction Knowledge of strategic management Personal motivation Commitment | Leadership style Management ability Ability to set strategic direction Knowledge of strategic management Academic leadership | Commitment Ability to set strategic direction Personal motivation Knowledge of strategic management Leadership style | |
| Academic leadership Must be a professor Senior academic Communications skills | Personal motivation Commitment Communication skills | Management ability Communication skills Networking ability | |

Table II.
Key selection criteria
according to respondents

the criteria. The selection criteria identified in the material supplied but which were not in the top eight criteria for any group included:

- knowledge of Australian higher education;
- academic reputation;
- general experience;
- personality;
- compatibility with senior staff;
- academic field;
- service on government advisory bodies;
- networking ability and contacts; and
- political adeptness.

The research interviews were used to explore why these were not part of the key selection criteria. There was an expectation that only senior academics would apply for the position of VC and the candidates and their experience and competence would be well known by panellists. Anyone seriously applying for the position of VC would need to be familiar with Australian higher education or its overseas equivalent and understand the need for networking, contacts and political savvy. Thus these were possibly used to cull the initial pool of applicants to determine suitable candidates.

Table II shows there is a relatively even spread of person-specific (contextual) and job-specific criteria across the 11 criteria identified by the three groups. The five criteria common to all three groups are: the ability to set the strategic direction, knowledge of strategic management, personal motivation, commitment and communication skills. The order of the criteria reflects the overall priority and emphasis each group placed on the individual criterion. The two most difficult constructs to measure solely through the interview are commitment and personal motivation, yet they are the foundation upon which other criteria can be based. Without the use of psychometric testing these cannot be accurately measured but only inferred by interviewers.

The question arose as to the different emphases placed on the eight top criteria by each group. Incumbent chancellors believed that the role of the VC was quite different

to the era when the former chancellors appointed VCs five or more years ago, and this was echoed by the former chancellors.

With respect to selection panel members it was pointed out that these consisted of elected staff representatives, and sometimes student representatives, as well as external members of council and the community. Thus, each brought a different perspective to the appointment process and in the case of internally elected staff they also, on occasions, brought their own agendas that influenced their interpretation of the selection criteria and applicant responses to them.

The argument put forward by Borman and Motowidlo (1997) would appear to apply in the appointment of a new VC. The inclusion of contextual criteria allows the selection panel to better understand the nature of the applicants and how they would act within the role. Given the complexity of the role of VC and the breadth of issues the incumbent needs to deal with, selection panellists would need to predict the level of motivation and commitment that each candidate would bring to the role. This was achieved by inter-chancellor consultation prior to interviews rather than by reference checks.

While job analysis was undertaken to determine selection criteria no university used psychometric testing as part of the selection process and structured interviews lasted no more than one hour. This is consistent with the findings of De Cieri and Kramar (2005) and in some cases the selection criteria, derived from job analysis by university staff, were developed between 12-18 months prior to the departure of the outgoing VC. At this point universities decided to seek a new VC who could determine and articulate a vision and strategic direction or one who could implement one decided on by council (Arnold *et al.*, 2005; Cooper and Robertson, 1995; Peppas, 2002)

The fact that psychometric tests were not used in the selection process means that interviewers had to rely on subjective interpretation of the personality and person-specific traits and characteristics of applicants. While this approach is not uncommon it means that the most important traits and applicant characteristics can only be inferred from the interviews and/or from previous encounters between interviewers and applicants. Selection panels use other methods including networking to measure constructs such as conscientiousness and emotional stability.

The use of networking by chancellors filled this gap, as it was not uncommon for chancellors to contact their counterparts and VCs to determine if there were suitable candidates who could be “invited” to apply for the position of VC. This networking was used as a means to identify the “stars” who were most likely to be successful in the role. Inter-chancellor communications would alert selection panels to possible areas of concern with candidates so these could be considered prior to inviting applicants to an interview. Certainly a variety of mechanisms are utilised in the appointment of a new VC (Lievens *et al.*, 2002; Moy and Lam, 2004).

One VC noted an unexpected aspect of networking by chancellors and university executives when seeking to appoint a new VC. This saw VCs giving excellent references, to chancellors of other universities, for their own deputies in order to move them out of their university. The comment was made that such deputies would not be considered for the role of VC by their current employers. This appears to be a relatively common practice in universities, as it probably is in the private sector.

The interviews conducted for the role of VC were structured and it was common for set questions, developed around specific selection criteria, to be asked of each

candidate. During the research interviews this was confirmed by former and incumbent VCs. The exception to this was when “informal” discussions were held between chancellors and highly regarded applicants and was in addition to the formal interview with the selection panel. These discussions tended to be very social and both incumbent and former chancellors and VCs commented that this was a time to see if there was compatibility or “fit” between the two and if they shared common values and visions. Thus most of the decisions about applicant suitability were made outside of, and prior to, the formal interview as is the case elsewhere (Cascio, 2000; Cook, 1998; Cooper and Robertson, 1995; Guthrie and Datta, 1997; Levinson, 1996; Lievens *et al.*, 2002; Slaughter *et al.*, 2001).

VCs commented that the selection panellists asked both behavioural questions (how have you dealt with specific issues?) and situational-based questions (“What would you do if ...?”) to get a flavour for the applicant’s mental processes and preferred behavioural characteristics. These findings are consistent with those of other researchers (Huffcutt *et al.*, 2001; Lievens *et al.*, 2002; Salgado and Moscoso, 2002).

VCs also confirmed that they tried to “read” the personalities of the selection panellists and determine their position on issues under discussion. This allowed applicants to emphasise certain of their qualities over others as well as assisting them to carefully respond to more contentious questions. Again, this is consistent with previous research into recruitment and selection (Davidson *et al.*, 2006; Lievens and Highhouse, 2002; Lievens *et al.*, 2002; Schneider, 1987; Slaughter *et al.*, 2001)

When incumbent and former chancellors were asked about the effectiveness of the processes used to appoint VCs, there was almost unanimous agreement that the outcomes indicated the processes were appropriate, despite few panellists having experience in executive recruitment and selection. While it was acknowledged that not every appointment was totally successful it was agreed that it took time for differences to emerge as both the VC and chancellor, university council and staff learned more about each other. These comments supported the research of Judge *et al.* (1999) into recruitment and selection, Raymark *et al.* (1997) and Barrick *et al.* (2000).

Incumbent and former chancellors, VCs and selection panellists were asked what criteria they used to make the final decision about who to appoint as VC. One respondent chancellor commented:

I like to think about how the applicant would look on television or how they would sound on the radio.

Another chancellor commented:

I liked him, I took him home for an evening meal, my wife liked him so I sold him to council.

Similar comments regarding personality and person-specific or contextually-based criteria were put forward by incumbent and former chancellors. Yet clearly the criteria used to make the final decision were not listed in job advertisements, candidate information packages or in the publicly stated criteria.

These unlisted or “informal” criteria were usually developed during the appointment and interview process rather than prior to it. Upon further investigation it was found that this was a common practice and those who rigorously held to the publicly stated criteria were in the minority. The informal criteria were very significant in determining the successful applicant.

The VCs who were interviewed reported that early in the interview the panel would establish the academic credibility, leadership and management competencies of candidates. However, later or in subsequent interviews the focus tended to shift towards personal attributes, beliefs and value systems.

Chancellors reported that they wanted to envisage how a candidate would appear on television or in the print media. They also delved into personality, diplomacy skills, ability to work with others, personal philosophy, longer term ambitions, industrial and public relations skills. Other aspects included the degree of democracy allowed subordinates in their leadership, how they would gain acceptance, strength of character, moral leadership and resilience. Quite often these were not listed as stated selection criteria or, if listed, were alluded to in vague and ambiguous statements.

Conclusion

Each university has its own specific needs, strategic focus, pedagogical emphasis, culture, history, philosophy, funding restrictions, size, shape, student cohort mix and local community imperatives. It is expected that different universities will therefore have different selection criteria when appointing a new VC.

However, the bulk of the criteria are similar overall, it is the order or priority of the selection criteria that changes as shown in Table II. The matching of organisational antecedents with applicant attributes does occur, yet the job analysis for the role can be undertaken by a university human resource management executive, by the chancellor or the selection panel. Thus while these activities occur very little evidence could be found as to how effectively the criteria were determined or the competence knowledge and experience of those undertaking the job analysis.

There was evidence that the selection criteria were used as the basis for the questions asked by the selection panel and the interviews were structured but tended to last no more than one hour. This raises the question of how much could be gleaned by panellists of candidates in this amount of time.

It emerges that most of the decisions about applicant suitability are made outside of the interview and using an entirely different set of criteria to those listed in public domain material. In order to make such decisions, universities rely on proactive activities such as networking by chancellors to gather as much material about candidates as possible. This allows the panel to compare candidate profiles to the selection criteria prior to the main interview with the selection panel.

The stated selection criteria are used as an initial hurdle that candidates must pass in order to move to the next level. Concurrent with this, more data is then gathered about the remaining candidates. The selection criteria are not sophisticated and the outcomes of a comparison of these with candidate attributes is based on subjective interpretation and inference, generally by panellists with little or no expertise in recruitment and selection. Cynics might suggest that the system works in spite of itself.

Clearly much more research needs to be undertaken into this area and it is surprising to note that the AVCC does not play a major role in the appointment of VCs. Nor does the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) involve itself greatly in determining more sophisticated appointment processes for a role that involves expenditure of large amounts of public monies.

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Corresponding author

Bernard O'Meara can be contacted at: b.omeara@ballarat.edu.au

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