

Thematic Article

Perceptions of effectiveness and performance evaluation in Hungarian higher education in the Carpathian Basin

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Abstract

Several international studies have addressed the quantitative and qualitative changes in higher education participation and the impact of the evaluative state and institutional quality management on higher education societies (Altbach, 2000; Altbach, 2002; Kwiek & Antonowicz, 2015). However, despite the relatively rich research in higher education in our region, the impact of higher education performance evaluation on the views of faculty members has not been investigated. In our study, we investigate the types of performance evaluation that are typical in higher education in the Carpathian Basin and provide a picture of the perceptions of faculty members on performance evaluation. We will examine the differences and similarities in performance evaluation across the different types of performance. Our research questions concern their homogeneity and interrelationships. We conducted a hybrid coding analysis of the transcripts of qualitative focus group interviews with faculty members in one of the most eastern regions of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), using data from 2022 on the impact of the introduction of performance evaluation in higher education. The main findings of the study show that faculty members' views on performance show high diversity. There is a correlation in views on performance evaluation, but they are not exclusive. The points to consider in the context of performance evaluation can provide guidance for decision-makers in higher education.

Keywords: effectiveness; faculty-members; higher education; performance evaluation

Introduction

Higher education in Central and Eastern European countries is undergoing significant changes. One important development in the region is that public institutions are being replaced by foundation-based ones. In addition, various performance evaluation systems and competitive elements are being introduced for faculty members, including different salary models. The present study aims to show how the new system and the changes will affect faculty members in the region and their teaching effectiveness.

Over the past three decades, higher education has undergone major changes. These include the massification of higher education or the large-scale Bologna reform. Soviet-style communist regimes, while proclaiming social equality, prevented widespread social access to higher education. Academic performance (research, publications) rather than 'political credentials' was often the determining factor in the promotion of academics, while there was no professional performance evaluation in higher education. After the collapse of communism, governments came under enormous pressure to expand higher education, so despite the declaration of academic freedom, academics did not return to the close Humboldtian unity of teaching and research. As the millennium approached, there was a rapid increase in the number of higher education students, which was not followed by an improvement in the teaching competences of faculty members or an increase in the number of

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teaching and teaching support staff (Kozma et al., 2017). In addition to the lack of preparation for specific didactic tasks, there was a general lack of competence in training design and management, despite which the range of institutional training was constantly expanding. Parallel with this expansion and the changes in the structure and content of training, various registration systems came into operation, the management of which is a task on the administrative side of the training work. On the other hand, expansion has also raised problems of cost-effectiveness in an increasingly large higher education system. Growing societal demands have led to a focus on higher education as a service, and this has fostered the expansion of the private sector (Slantcheva & Levy, 2007; Curaj et al., 2015).

The Bologna reform in higher education was introduced in the region in the mid-2000s (Slovakia, Romania and Ukraine 2005, Hungary 2006, Serbia 2007) (Curaj et al., 2015; Pusztai & Szabó, 2008; Kovács, 2013; Pallay, 2019; Molnár, 2013; László, 2003). The structure of education was restructured, the principles of credit transfer and quality assurance were adopted, and a system of teacher and student mobility was established, but this did not ultimately lead to the unification of European higher education. In some countries and fields of study, the introduction of multi-cycle training systems was delayed or not introduced at all, and the academic and scientific prestige of higher education institutions remained very different, as did the expectations of academic researchers from their teaching staff. What is common, however, is that the increase in student numbers and the heterogeneous student composition have led to the role of lecturers being expanded to include new tasks, such as student catching up and discipline. The rise of digitalisation has further increased the administrative burden and, in addition to overload, low pay has become a key factor in the professional identity of lecturers (Kozma et al., 2014; Pusztai & Szabó, 2008; Marek, 2019).

The classical model of academic performance evaluation among academics is based on collegial principles, which means that they evaluate each other's work according to peer review principles, for example in research proposals. The importance of peer review is considerable, as academics have access to very limited and selective sources of research funding, and those who do not have access to funding are effectively excluded from academic careers, as they cannot cover the costs of research and publication. As institutions are allocated resources on the basis of their performance, the question of who and what is considered successful and how they respond to this in each institution becomes a key issue in the region covered by this study. The central question of our research is how the faculty members we interviewed perceive the recent emergence of performance evaluation in higher education. The views of academics are key, as they influence their motivation and commitment and can help managers to make decisions about the design of performance appraisal systems. Our research involved interviewing faculty members from large, internationally educated, multi-faculty institutions with tens of thousands of staff, as well as those from smaller institutions. Smaller institutions play an important role in peripheral regions or in Hungarian regions outside Hungary, have a narrower range of training opportunities and do not host large-scale research projects. In our study of faculty members from institutions of different sizes and functions, we explored differences and similarities in terms of teaching effectiveness and performance evaluation.

Performance evaluation in higher education

From the end of the 20th century, the concept of the evaluative state led to an increasing tendency to monitor and evaluate the performance of educational institutions on the basis of quantitative indicators (Power, 1997). This led to an organisational transformation, the effects of which also reached higher education institutions. Historically, this is a phenomenon alien to the very essence of the system, since the concept of university quality is based on tradition. The reputation of humanist universities was built on the reputation of a renowned professor whose lectures would attract students, and often fellow academics, who would travel halfway across the continent (Grendler, 2004). They did not want to get a degree, they wanted to listen to a great professor for a few semesters, which was an indicator of teaching effectiveness. In the Humboldtian model, academics leading an international research workshop were an attraction and an indicator of the quality of a university (Kwiek, 2008). In the Humboldtian model, research and teaching were united, and students grew up in the professor's research workshop. In the second half of the 20th century, the emergence of mass higher education was accompanied by a multiplicity of institutions and an increase not only in the number of students but also in the number of institutions, teachers and researchers. The institutional network became denser, research and teaching were no longer separate, and the curriculum became standardised. At the same time, the costs of extensive higher education systems have increased significantly and the crisis of the welfare state model has limited the resources available. The maintenance of higher education institutions has become an increasing burden for

public providers. By the end of the 20th century, sharing funding and striving for greater accountability became a popular solution (Neave, 2012). Neoliberal, results-oriented education policies increasingly emphasised the measurement, comparison and standardisation of performance. Further changes in the decades following the neoliberal turn, notably internationalisation and the expansion of the higher education market on a global scale, have made higher education institutions competitive players in a competitive field. The competition between institutions has been reflected in a steady expansion of the role of the lecturer and an increase in expectations, with some authors even talking about the proletarianisation of faculty members (Amaral, 2008).

In many cases, the results of the evaluation are linked to promotions, salaries, support for winning research projects and grants, and the provision of tools to help people work and achieve their ambitions. At the same time, scepticism about evaluation has emerged. The model-sensitivity and bias of popular university rankings has also become a common belief (Vidal & Filliatreau, 2014), with academics identifying power and business considerations behind the criteria for assessment. A common feature of the emerging professional evaluators is that they do their best to market subjective success criteria as objective, and therefore a camp of academics believing in the validity and reliability of evaluation is also emerging. However, all faculty members in higher education are slowly being forced to live up to expectations. In other words, a ritual model of Mertonian conformity is becoming commonplace. In the discourse on the continuous improvement of the quality of higher education, debates have emerged (Enders, 2013), and assessment itself is becoming the subject of research, theoretical models and methodological schools are emerging (Gómez & Valdés, 2019). There are research results questioning the validity of criteria for individual and institutional assessment, and the correlation between quality dimensions (education and research), but also criticisms that performance evaluation primarily encourages productivity, i.e. quantity, rather than quality (Cadez et al., 2015). More recent efforts are moving towards developmentally stimulating, multi-perspective, iterative models of assessment, in which the individual's self-assessment and external assessments enter into dialogue with each other (Rickards & Stitt, 2016; Gómez & Valdés, 2019; Verschueren et al., 2023). The search for new paths is ongoing, as there is no doubt that the development of a realistic performance evaluation system is of particular importance not only for decisions on promotion and remuneration of faculty members, but also for improving the quality of teaching, stimulating research and development activities, and overall enhancing institutional performance.

Methods

The database of our qualitative research is a corpus of 7 focus group interviews with 41 faculty members, averaging 100-150 minutes. The national economic justification of regular physical activity in Hungary for a sustainable and safe environment within the framework of the research project "Social, professional background, institutional characteristics and effectiveness of instructors in the Carpathian Basin", conducted in the summer of 2022 by the research group "Sport Economics Research Group for the Health and Well-being of Instructors of Higher Education Institutions in the Carpathian Basin". The research was carried out in Hungary, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Ukraine. Each country has a Hungarian-language higher education institution, in areas where both Hungarian-language HE institutions exist alongside ones run in the state-recognized language. The core population consisted of faculty members from higher education institutions from all institutional sectors in these countries.

The interview survey explores faculty members' views on well-being, health and performance along 10 dimensions. The interview guide covers the profile of the faculty members, their views on professional effectiveness, the challenges of teaching and research, the culture and climate of their higher education institution.

In this research, we focus on the evaluation of the effectiveness of the faculty members interviewed, based on their discourses. We seek to answer the question of whether different types of faculty members can be distinguished according to their perceptions of effectiveness and performance evaluation. The audio files were converted into text and subjected to text analysis using the ATLAS.ti software. Each section of the text corpus was coded. A deductive procedure was used for coding. By analysing the text corpora associated with the codes, a typology of faculty members effectiveness was created based on faculty members perceptions. In analysing the interviews, the aim of creating the codes was to explore what types of higher education teaching effectiveness emerge and to understand how faculty members perceive performance evaluation.

The ethical permission was granted by the Doctoral School of Education of the University of Debrecen (no: 4/2022). The data were collected anonymously and voluntarily, in compliance with ethical rules. The results were reported honestly, the submitted work is original, and the authorship reflects the consent of the individuals.

Results

Types of effectiveness

Taking into account faculty members' attitudes towards performance evaluation, four different types were identified based on the focus group interviews. These types were identified based on the experiences shared in the interviews and their individual interpretations. The four different types - those who are enthusiastic about research performance, those who are enthusiastic about teaching, those who consider research and publishing as a (superfluous) chore and those who consider teaching as an employee - were linked to job characteristics such as administrative work (department or institution management, student administration, project management, documentation preparation, preparation of accreditation materials, preparation and submission of proposals, teaching organisation, etc.) and the attitude of the faculty members towards performance evaluation. Our results show that although the interviews covered faculty members from different Carpathian Basin countries, the respondents faced similar difficulties in teaching, research and administrative tasks. The introduction of faculty member performance evaluation in the countries surveyed often generates tensions among faculty members. Moreover, in many cases, in addition to teaching and research tasks, administrative work can also be a burden for faculty members. In the following, the types of research that have been generated are described in detail, and for each type we examine whether lecturers perform administrative work and how this affects their performance.

Faculty members who are enthusiastic about research performance put academic activity at the forefront of their work, with research taking precedence over teaching. Most of them consider themselves to be successful when they achieve professional success in the field of scholarship: *"I think it's definitely a success when I hear back that someone recommends a publication of mine to someone because it has something in it that is useful in that science or field. I think that's all an indicator of achievement somewhere"* (Focus Group 1). For this category of faculty members, administrative work is part of their job, but it is often perceived as a burden: *"The teaching and research tasks are closer to me and the administrative tasks are considerably further away, but unfortunately they are becoming more and more of a burden"* (Focus Group 4). *"Administrative work takes time away from the activities we prefer to do in universities. What is detrimental to publications is that we have a lot of administrative work"* (Focus Group 3). Research-enthusiastic faculty members see benchmarking as a positive feature, as they believe that it helps institutional managers to develop an objective and comprehensive picture of academics' academic performance. They also stress the importance of mutual feedback between managers and staff: *"Performance appraisal reflects my publication record, my work with students, my teaching effectiveness, so it shows what I am good at"* (Focus Group 2).

The overwhelming majority of the faculty members surveyed were of the enthusiastic type, who put teaching before research. They perceive it as a problem that they place more emphasis on science metrics than on teaching: *"It is more important than scientific performance evaluation that if I can see in the students that they like my explanations, they are interested in what I am saying, they are not sitting passively in my classes"* (Focus Group 4). They see mentoring, talent management, launching students and preparing them for the OTDK as a priority: *"I'm rather good at mentoring students. So I am more responsible for mentoring tasks, to mentor students a little bit. That involves, from DETEP, from TDK, a lot of things"* (Focus Group 4). Most of those who are enthusiastic about education are in administrative jobs. Several times during the interviews, they noted that they did not find it enjoyable: *"I don't really enjoy administrative work either, although I did graduate, I was a part-time departmental coordinator for 2 years, but I prefer teaching"* (Focus Group 4). Some of the faculty members who are enthusiastic about education are happy to take on administrative work and enjoy it. These faculty members mainly highlighted administrative tasks that are closely related to their teaching activities, such as student affairs: *"I like it very much, it is important for me to be able to develop some level of trust with the students"* (Focus Group 2). Faculty members who are enthusiastic about education have similar views on performance evaluation. They believe that measurement is necessary, but that student feedback should be the primary focus of performance evaluation, rather than academic performance. Some faculty members do not consider academic performance evaluation tools to be objective, as they believe that in higher education the student perspective should be the primary consideration: *"In any case, student feedback is what makes our careers successful"* (Focus Group 3).

From the interview transcripts, it is clear that the most successful faculty members are those who are enthusiastic about both teaching and research performance. They believe that teaching and research are interlinked and that teaching involves research. The best way to provide up-to-date information is to be up-to-

date with the latest research findings. Faculty members who are enthusiastic about both research and teaching were the most positive about the introduction of performance evaluation in higher education institutions. They believe that benchmarking helps them to quantify their achievements and thus gain greater appreciation within the institution. They also believe that it is possible to meet the requirements without having to put in a lot of effort: *“If you do your job, you will get the points you need to get anyway”* (Focus Group 4). The results of the interviews showed that many of the faculty members, who are enthusiastic about both teaching and research, also take on administrative tasks. The vast majority of interviewees feel that administrative work takes time away from research and preparing for classes and is therefore seen as a hindrance: *“What I enjoy is teaching and research, and what I don't like so much but unfortunately have to do are administrative activities”* (Focus Group 1). The results of the interviews reveal that those who take on an administrative role in addition to teaching and research are considered to be more effective in both teaching and research. This may be due to the fact that these faculty members are more able to work under pressure and meet the expected standards, and are often assigned administrative tasks by their employers. These results suggest that administrative work, although time-consuming and sometimes demanding, does not in itself change the effectiveness of the faculty members. A further explanation could be that administrative work can also act as a gatekeeper and/or provide benefits in collegial assessment. Faculty members who are better embedded in the structure of the institution may be more easily promoted in a system where service to the institution and teaching/research quality are more closely intertwined.

In the third type, we have included faculty members who consider research and publication a (superfluous) nuisance. In several interviews it was mentioned that faculty members in this category believe that the academic demands of performance appraisal often overshadow their teaching work. As a result, teaching and students are overshadowed and lecturers tend to focus on meeting academic requirements. Many highlighted that the evaluation system does not provide realistic information about their work and that tensions between colleagues have increased significantly since its introduction. Only one faculty member among those who consider research and publication an unnecessary burden takes on administrative tasks. She says that it is in administrative work that she can fulfil her potential: *“This is what I find interesting and what I like to do. It is the organisation of education itself that attracts me”* (Focus Group 3). Those who see research and publishing as a superfluous chore mostly prefer teaching, but are not really committed to either field.

The fourth type identified was those who completed education as employees. Of the faculty members surveyed, this category includes the fewest. The faculty members classified as this type are less motivated to teach and less enthusiastic about research tasks. None of them have administrative responsibilities. They have a negative view of performance evaluation: they do not consider research performance or student feedback objective: *“If a student gets a C, then good, I will give the lecturer a C in everything”* (Focus Group 7).

Perceptions of performance evaluation

In the analysis, we found that different perceptions of performance evaluation dominate in each type of performance. Those who are enthusiastic about research and education have the most positive views of the teacher evaluating system. Those who have completed their education as employees are the least objective about performance evaluation. However, there are some views on performance appraisal that all faculty members agreed with, regardless of the type of performance they belong to. Almost all types of trainers mentioned that performance appraisal creates tensions in the workplace community. Interviewees highlighted that the appraisal system often leads to rivalry or dissatisfaction between trainers. Different interpretations of the criteria and flaws in the systems can also lead to tensions. It was clear from the interviews that performance evaluation has a negative impact on the relationship between faculty members. This is supported by the following interview excerpt: *“There are tense situations between colleagues. Obviously, some people feel that they might be on the receiving end of a bar, and they might not be so happy about the success of others”* (Focus Group 6).

There is further agreement among the faculty members interviewed that performance evaluation is a stress factor. Both research and teaching enthusiasts, most of whom were positive about the evaluation of faculty members, also highlighted that evaluation puts pressure on faculty members: *“Performance or other such requirements can create stress, fatigue and pressure or just that kind of stressful situation”* (Focus Group 6). *“And as a stress factor, there is what is called the twenty-point table”*⁴ (Focus Group 3).

⁴ In Ukraine, a twenty-point performance evaluation table is used in higher education, in which a minimum of four points must be met.

A further factor for consideration in relation to performance evaluation, highlighted by the faculty members in the research, is that in the assessment process, the main criterion is research performance, with teaching outcomes being less important. In their opinion, the achievements with students should be given the same emphasis as research performance: *"I feel that there is a predominance of both the publication and impact factor. I think there is an overemphasis on impact and imputation. It would be best if there was perhaps a balance between the three. I have not heard of anyone not getting tenure because they have not worked with students or have too low a rating from students, but if there is not enough impact factor work it's clear that it's a stop to tenure"* (Focus Group 2). *"Don't just score the academic part of the faculty members, score how many graduates we had, how many PhDs we had, whether we introduced new subjects, whether we worked on new subjects"* (Focus Group 7).

The perceptions of performance evaluation in different types of performance show that performance evaluation can have both positive and negative effects on teamwork and collaboration between faculty members. Overly research-oriented evaluation and differentiated pay can lead to rivalry, which negatively affects community cohesion and cooperation: *"Before the introduction of the indicator system, colleagues were very happy if a faculty member had achieved some success, whether it was in academia or in any kind of student success. However, since then, since the introduction of indicators and differentiated pay, I feel that colleagues have become a bit isolated from each other"* (Focus Group 6). However, the performance evaluation process can also have a positive impact on collaboration between faculty members. The desire for better performance can encourage faculty members within a faculty or department to initiate joint studies, joint research projects: *"I would like to give an excellent example of this: faculty members of different languages are setting up a research project. This is not done through a grant, but through our own resources and we work together on research in our fields of specialisation. We complement and help each other. We can write papers together, it is easier to succeed together and there is a good atmosphere"* (Focus Group 4). *"This is absolutely the case for us too. We refer each other to conferences when we hear about an opportunity in a colleague's field of expertise. If we write a paper that is a colleague's area of expertise, we refer to it. It works back and forth to some extent"* (Focus Group 3).

Enthusiasts for both education and research stressed that faculty members who are good at research and follow up on new findings can deliver better, more up-to-date teaching: *"Some faculty members are better at teaching and more passionate about research, others are more research-oriented. Obviously, the two cannot and should not be separated because we work in the same university"* (Focus Group 1). However, the question of whether excellence in science has a positive impact on education was raised by those who are enthusiastic about education. They believe that "scoring is far from the truth" and that it is not necessarily more effective in education to have many publications: *"Some faculty members have dedicated their lives to research and deliver education with minimal investment"* (Focus Group 1).

It is clear from the responses of the faculty members surveyed that studies published in foreign indexed journals are given too much weight in the evaluation of higher education performance both in Hungary and abroad. They see it as a problem that a study published in a prestigious Hungarian journal is not considered as an indicator of achievement: *"Recently, the index factor of published works has increasingly been considered as some kind of ranking factor in science. For me, it is a much greater achievement if my article is published in a prestigious Hungarian journal that does not correspond to the category it should be in professionally"* (Focus Group 2).

During performance evaluation, the faculty members interviewed often feel under pressure to publish and to prove their academic activity. As a consequence, they may sometimes focus on the volume of research work. During the interviews, it was often mentioned that quality is at the expense of quantity because of quality assurance. Faculty members want to meet quantitative requirements, so they spend more time on research and publishing. As a consequence, they can fall into the trap of placing less emphasis on teaching or publishing less quality work in the pursuit of quantity: *"Often the primary criteria for a project proposal or university promotion is the number of papers published in which journals. Sure, you need to do such things to get tenure, but in many cases it is not the real scientific value that is being produced. There is some very valuable work here, but I see a lot of problems with it"* (Focus Group 2).

Regardless of the type of effectiveness, the faculty members who participated in the research highlighted that it is the students who directly experience the work of the faculty members. As a consequence, more emphasis should be placed on teaching performance and student feedback in order to ensure quality: *"I do not see any real form of someone as a faculty member doing good quality work, giving good lessons, and that being*

reflected in any form of evaluation” (Focus Group 6). *“I would perceive more value or weight or would like to see more student satisfaction”* (Focus Group 3).

Summary

Our qualitative exploratory interview research compared the views of the interviewed faculty members on effectiveness and performance evaluation. We concluded that those who consider themselves primarily as researchers tend to have a more positive attitude towards performance evaluation. This is firstly due to the need for positive feedback and recognition. Those who identify themselves first and foremost as academics tend to place more emphasis on teaching and talent management in higher education institutions. They believe that more emphasis should be placed on the measurement of educational outcomes in performance evaluation. Nevertheless, our research also found faculty members who belong to a combination of the two groups mentioned above. They have a positive attitude towards performance appraisal, believing that it provides an opportunity to evaluate their work in both research and teaching and, as a result, to gain greater appreciation for the work they do, but they also see it as a stress factor.

The third and fourth interpretations of effectiveness can be grasped practically by their negatives, since academics who find research and publication a nuisance are not only sceptical about the validity of benchmarking. They see it as a dangerous phenomenon that upsets the status quo within the organisation, and predict an increase in conflict and even hostility, i.e. they have only negative expectations. Like the former, the fourth perception of teaching effectiveness is characterised by the fact that the faculty members identifies himself or herself here by failure, as being unsuccessful or burnt out in teaching. This type also does not believe in the validity of performance evaluation results, especially in student evaluation, as if to anticipate an explanation for any expected poorer results.

Finally, we looked at the perceptions of performance appraisal across all types of performance and the factors that should be considered carefully when considering performance appraisal. According to the interviewees, the appraisal model risks creating tension among colleagues, so performance appraisal is perceived as a workplace stress factor. Institutions have a responsibility to carefully design the appraisal process, not just the indicators, and to ensure that it is fair and transparent in order to minimise potential tensions and conflicts. Our qualitative research findings have highlighted that faculty members perceive that research achievements and international publications carry more weight in evaluation. However, measuring teaching effectiveness is more complex, as teaching and student development depend on the overall performance of the faculty members, and it is therefore more difficult to isolate individual performance in this area. The criticism of the massification of higher education has been primarily the negative impact of quantitative expectations on quality, but the same is now being made of performance evaluation. In addition, it is worth paying attention to the opinion of faculty members that performance evaluation can have both positive and negative effects on teamwork and team building. In addition to individual-level evaluation, team-level evaluation of teaching teams and research groups would be more motivating and supportive of the institution's effectiveness. There is a very strong tension between teaching-centred and research-centred teaching values in the opinions of the teaching staff. Further research is needed to identify the explanatory factors behind this.

Conclusion

The diversity of faculty members' views on effectiveness reflects the diversity of their perceptions of their profession, which can also be interpreted as a sign of the deprofessionalisation of the higher education profession. Although the vast majority of respondents consider teaching to be their main activity, their views on performance evaluation reflect the fact that there are some faculty members who do not feel at home in either role and who are also afraid of performance evaluation. At the same time, in a context of loss of identity for the profession, a well-designed and stimulating performance evaluation can be seen as an attempt to redefine professional standards. At the time of our research, it was not possible to examine the outcome of this process. Further limitations of our research arise from the specificities of the focus group interview method.

On the one hand, because the number of respondents is small compared to the population, on the other hand, it reflects the composition of the faculty member population in only a few respects, and the impact of respondent interaction and silence in the interviews must be taken into account in this type of data collection. In the present research, the respondents reflect the organisational and national diversity of the institutional palette in the region, and also represent the institutions by gender and discipline, but in this case there were also some faculty members who were invited respondents according to the research design but declined to

participate, so in practice there may be additional academics' opinions and views. Although respondents appeared to openly espouse even conflicting views during the data collection, the lack of teaching or research-publication output can still be stigmatising in this medium, and it is therefore possible that the self-assessments expressed in this regard were not entirely reliable. We believe that the focus group interview was nevertheless an appropriate method for the exploratory research phase, and that we were able to uncover a wide range of perceptions of effectiveness and performance evaluation. As a continuation of the research, we will use a quantitative data collection tool developed on the basis of the perceptions revealed in this research, whereby anonymous responses will allow us to better reveal the hidden perceptions.

The policy use of the results can be useful already at this stage, as the institutions under study are in the process of improving their performance evaluation systems and, more importantly, the managers of the institutions are in a position to make decisions based on the data. Managers may decide to challenge the reality of the performance gaps identified in order to maintain the traditional hierarchy and system of recognition. At the same time, this approach can create tension and disillusionment for those who expect recognition for their efforts and achievements from performance evaluation.

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