Figure 11.10c. DEMING'S PHILOSOPHY: Performance Assessments 1

Part of Point 12b of Deming's fourteen points is *Abolishment of the annual or merit rating*; the article EM9526 reprinted in this Figure 11.10c bears on this matter and raises some of the measuring issues involved in assessing performance.

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BARGAINING & BENEFITS

Performance Indicators – A Matter for Collective Bargaining

BY GEORGE DE BENEDETTI

RECENTY THE VICE-PRESIDENT Academic at Mount Allison University circulated a document entitled: "Defining Quality and Measuring Excellence: Accountability and Value-Added Indicators for Universities" to all members of the academic senate. In a covering letter, the Vice-President explained that 25 indicators constituting "our guide to excellence" were formulated, based on the Maclean's survey and the Queen's Quality Program, after reviewing Mount Allison University's mission statement.

This document – with the shortened title "Quality Assurance" – was sent to the Board of Regents for approval in principle in May 1995. In his covering letter, the Vice- President asked for input from the Senate before the document is presented for final approval at the October 1995 meeting of the Board of Regents.

That the document was sent to the Senate for feedback gives the appearance of collegiality: yet there is no attempt to engage the faculty association in negoiations on the matter. Also noteworthy is the time-frame for input, over the summer recess period when Senate and Faculty Council do not normally meet.

From the statement made early in the document "for this document to have true value as a management tool ....." – there is no hiding the fact that the indicators are considered as management tools and will be used, as can be gleaned from the context, as a means of evaluating faculty and librarians.

Evaluating the performance of academic staff is covered in most collective agreements. The use of management tools for evaluation of performance should also be subject to the agreement.

If no limitations on the use of performance indicators (PIs) are placed in the collective agreement, then like management rights, they may become residual employer rights. PIs should become a matter of negotiation between the university employer and the faculty association.

Performance Indicators do affect terms and conditions of employment, both in terms of their purpose and their nature. Typically the indicators used for measuring value, productivity, excellence, etc., have an input/output focus. For example, an input indicator, sometimes suggested to measure a professor's accessibility to students, is the number of office hours kept each week by the faculty member. It is easy to see the difficulties with such a measure. Accessibility to students as measured by the number of office hours kept would not capture the professor's attitude toward helping students, which could be one of positive reinforcement for the studen's work, or, conversely, the indicator would not capture the chilly climate a student might well encounter when she or he asks for help.

Further, the number of performances is the output indicator proposed in the Mount Allison document to measure the research output of artists and musicians. This indicator cannot adequately measure the creative activity of a painter in the visual arts department, or that of a composer in the music department.

The document on 'Quality Assurance' speaks of "benchmarks having to be set" against which performance can be judged. Someone will have to establish the benchmark for the number of office hours a professor should keep, etc. Who will determine this? The document does not say. But surely this is a matter for negotiation between the faculty and administration.

How else can performance indicators affect terms and conditions of employment? They can influence tenure and promotion decisions, salaries, progress through the ranks (PTR) increments, departmental or unit budgets, among other things.

For example, in certain regions of the United Kingdom a faculty member in history must have published a minimum of four articles a year before a PTR increment can be considered. What then are the implications of someone publishing three articles a year for three years in a row? Presumably not only would the PTR increments not be granted, but tenure or promotion could be denied, and some form of discipline could follow as well.

In the Mount Allison document, there is a proposal to use 'good' student ratings as an indicator of 'good' teaching. Will the normative term 'good' be defined in each instance? And who will do that? Can the student ratings of professors, which are now done anonymously, be used for evaluation purposes? Such matters and questions clearly impinge on the terms and conditions of employment.

What should CAUT's response be? CAUT could develop its own performance indicators. However, the Collective Bargaining and Economic Benefits Committee would caution against such an approach, because any indicator CAUT might develop could turn out to be as flawed as any produced by governments and administrators. CAUT's efforts could focus on developing guidelines, a policy statement, and a model clause on PIs.

How should local associations respond? If PIs are imposed, guerilla tactics could be employed to discourage their use. For example, at one university, the deparmental library budgets for journals were in part determined by the number of times a particular journal was shelved by staff in the library. A department could protect particular journals from being cut by having members of the department simply pull the journals off the shelves each time members of the department were in the library. But such tactics are only effective in the short term and are at best short-lived solutions. The longer term solution would be to negotiate the nature and use of performance indicators in the collective agreement.

Do not wait to negotiate on the topic of performance indicators.

Some associations like Carleton negotiated the use of student evaluations in their collective agreement many years ago. But PIs go much beyond student evaluations. It is later than you think! PIs have been introduced at some of Canada's largest universities, and if administrators are attempting to impose them at one of Canada's smallest universities in one of Canada's smallest provinces, then no university or faculty association in the country is immune to their introduction. Do not wait until you are at the table for the next round of bargaining. It may then be too late, with PIs already imposed in the absence of a faculty association insistence that performance indicators are a matter for collective bargaining.

(*continued overleaf*)

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The article EM9526 is an edited version of a presentation made by George De Benedetti to CAUT Council in April 1995

1 In the first paragraph of the middle column overleaf on page 11.61 of the article EM9526 reprinted in this Figure 11.10c, one reason is given why an instructor's number of office hours per week might not be a good measure of accessibility to students. Describe briefly *other* possible reasons why office hours may be a poor measure of accessibility to students.

- Can you suggest a *better* measure of accessibility? Indicate briefly why your suggestion is likely to be better.

2 In the third paragraph of the middle column overleaf on page 11.61 of the article EM9526 reprinted in this Figure 11.10c, the setting of *benchmarks* is mentioned. What is the task corresponding to benchmarking when measuring quantities like length and mass? Explain briefly.

- Outline the essential *difference(s)*, if any, between benchmarking in a situation like a professor's office hours and when checking quantities like the length or mass of a manufactured item.

3 In the second-last paragraph of the middle column overleaf on page 11.61, a description is given of a requirement in some British universities for faculty members in history to publish a minimum of four articles a year in order to be considered for a PRT salary increment. Outline, in point form, the advantage(s) and *dis*advantage(s) of number of articles published per year as a performance indicator.

4 Outline the two main *statistical* issues raised by the first two sentences of the paragraph which starts at the bottom of the middle column overleaf on page 11.61: *In the Mount Allison document, there is a proposal to use 'good' student ratings as an indicator of 'good' teaching. Will the normative term 'good' be defined in each instance?*

- Outline, in point form, the advantage(s) and *dis*advantage(s) of using student ratings to measure teaching effectiveness.
- Suggest *other* ways of measuring teaching effectiveness of instructors in undergraduate university courses; if necessary, specify the subject area(s) or discipline(s) to which your suggestions apply.
  - When you have finished your list of suggestions, rank the methods (including use of student ratings) in what you consider to be order of increasing *difficulty of implementation* and also order of increasing *accuracy*; comment briefly on any relationship between the two rankings.

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