

## **Academic Balance Scorecard (ABS): A New Approach to Performance Appraisal of an Academic in the Sri Lankan Context**

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**Abstract:** Performance evaluation of university academics in many parts of the world including Sri Lanka is done mainly through student feedback. A part from student feedback, peer evaluation is also done to review the teaching performance of an academic. However, all these evaluation methods focus on the teaching ability of an academic without considering the training the person has undergone the research that he or she has carried out and the community services that has been undertaken. This shows that there is a timely requirement to perform a comprehensive evaluation covering all the aspects of an academic together with the classroom teaching. This study aims therefore to propose a viable alternative to Sri Lankan higher education's current practice of student feedback. The main reason for carrying out this study is the contrary in opinions that exist with regard to the validity of student ratings as the main appraisal mechanism. Some researchers argue that students' feedback represents a necessary rather than a sufficient source for evaluating the performance of an academic. Consequently, to a more complete evaluation of an academic, this study proposes a multisource and multiple perspective academic balance scorecard. This development is fashioned by the classic balance scorecard developed by Kaplan and Norton in 1992. The academic balance scorecard will provide a comprehensive feedback on an academic beyond the boundaries of his/her classroom teaching performance. The framework proposes to evaluate performance from an institutional perspective, a student perspective, an administrative perspective and a learning and growth perspective. As a result, this will provide both a formative and summative evaluation of an academic. Further this will coherently communicate the standard of a department's academic staff which is the core strength of any academic institute. Finally, this qualitative study conducted through content analysis will be a useful guide for institutional development as well as for academic career development.

**Key words:** Performance evaluation, balance scorecard, student feedback, academic balance scorecard, undertaken

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Education helps in knowledge based enhancement of the nation and therefore, it plays a vital role in shaping the future of nations. Emerging global trends, new economic challenges, the rapid growth of Information Technology (IT) and the requirement for multilingual proficiencies are some of the challenges that developing countries have to face. The role of education in capacity building and management is an important one in coping with these challenges and has been appreciated and has become center of attention of various governments (Gill and Lashine, 2003). Particularly, higher education, being the most important source of knowledgeable and skilled people is well recognized as the significant way of building rich human capital by providing a high quality education and also attending to the pressing problem of the nation.

Academics in a higher educational institute are the key category of employees who are directly involved in fulfilling these expectations. Bowen and Schuster have mentioned that university lecturers occupy a strategically important place in contemporary society as they directly influence the personal development and ideals of a large fraction of each successive generation and they prepare people for a wide range of vocations including virtually all positions of leadership and technical competence in society. Due to its importance, then the evaluation of an academic's performance is essential because the lifeblood of a successful university flows through a competent faculty and staff.

At present, universities adopt a laissez-faire approach to performance management and thus operate on a 'high trust' basis within the ethos that emphasized independence of thought and scholarship, academic freedom and collegiality (Molefe, 2010). This high trust

mode of operations therefore meant that academic staff were not closely monitored or assessed. However, universities and other higher educational institutes are now expected to face economic and social realities and become accountable and more market and consumer responsive to provide 'value for money' to their customers (Molefe, 2010).

These accountabilities directed towards the higher education institutes exerted pressure on the institutes to review their academic resources with the aim of developing and fostering a competent, motivated and capable workforce that could assist in achieving the levels of excellence envisaged by stakeholders. Through developing a proper performance evaluation system it will bolster desired behavior, engender core values and promote performance excellence whilst at the same time reinforcing an ethos of scholarship that upholds the intrinsic nature of these institutions as centers of innovative learning (Molefe, 2010).

The above facts shows that evaluating the performance of academics in the universities are crucial at present and evaluation should be done through multiple perspectives. Therefore, this study is conducted with the aim of fulfilling this need in two ways. Firstly, the study will identify the present evaluation mechanisms adopted by the university administration to assess the performance of academics and evaluate its effectiveness. Secondly, the study will suggest an effective performance evaluation mechanism using the balance scorecard method which will evaluate an academic through multiple perspectives which covers teaching, research and community work expected to be carried out by such an academic. The study will developed a performance evaluation framework based on an institutional perspective, student perspective, administrative perspective and learning and growth perspective. Therefore, through this exploratory study the author's intend to analyze and synthesize the existing body of knowledge in the area of balanced scorecard research and examine the possibilities of applying this technique to performance evaluation of academics in Sri Lankan higher education institutions. This qualitative study will be conducted through content analysis and will use secondary data collected from the publications done by the quality assurance and accreditation council of Sri Lanka and the Sri Lanka higher education corporate plan 2012-2015.

### **Literature review**

**Performance evaluation:** Performance management is a goal-oriented process and the term is often used interchangeably with performance evaluation,

performance appraisal or performance measurement (Mello, 2006). The conventional wisdom is that to manage performance one has to first be able to measure it. It may be necessary at the outset to discuss the underlying definitions and assumptions of the terms 'evaluation', 'measurement' and 'performance management' since, it is essential to understand the true relationship of these terms in the performance measurement process for lecturers in the higher education environment and also because of the closeness in the meaning of these terms.

To give credence to these views, Airasian (2005) avers that performance evaluation judges the worth of information collected for a specific purpose such as determining effectiveness whilst assessment is concerned with collecting, synthesizing and interpreting the information that will be used in making the evaluation decision. In addition, performance measurement can be defined as:

A process of assessing the performance against pre-determined measures of performance, based on Key Success Factors (KSF) which may include measures of deviation from the norm, tracking past achievements and measures of output and input

Therefore, based on these assertions it is clear that performance measurement monitors and reports how well someone or something is doing. In theory it is a broad term applicable to people, things, situations, activities and organisations whilst performance management is a process that helps organisations to formulate, implement and change their strategy in order to satisfy their shareholders' needs.

Furthermore, if performance measurement simply means the introspection and collection of historical it is very likely that little useful purpose will be served from the point of view of performance management (Williams, 2002). The measurement process should therefore assist in the diagnosis of goal achievement and give some warnings in advance as input to the search for reasons for performance gaps (Williams, 2002). Hence, performance measures should be designed to drive people towards the overall vision of the organization and to focus on the future and not simply on the past.

Hughes and Pate (2012) has divided the purpose of performance evaluation in academics into two parts formative evaluation and summative evaluation. In formative evaluation feedback is received from students, colleagues, administrators and others that may be used to improve teaching effectiveness. The written comments of the students in the feedback forms or the suggestions of

the colleagues are examples of formative evaluation. Summative evaluations of teaching provide an important component of the overall performance evaluations of educators; such evaluations are included in annual performance reviews as well as those triggered by special events such as promotion and tenure decisions. Both formative and summative evaluations are important as the former continuously hones professional skills while the latter necessarily affects the academic's professional career in academe.

Further, Opatha (2003) has identified two purposes of academic performance evaluation. Firstly, it will be helpful for administrative purposes concerning the lecturer's career and this category involves providing a set of needed information to successfully manage lecturers. This includes:

- To create valid and reliable information to make promotion decisions
- To ascertain eligibility for giving salary increments
- To develop a reliable and valid basis to make decisions about extending/terminating/confirming the employment of lecturers
- To validate selection methods of lecturers
- To create and maintain at least a satisfactory level of job performance of lecturers
- To use to defend hiring, promotion, termination etc decisions before the law
- To ensure that tasks, duties and responsibilities being performed or undertaken are consistent with university mission and goals
- To develop skills/competence inventories of lecturers in order to do human power planning

Secondly, it was identified that performance evaluation is helpful to development purposes of individual lecturers and this includes:

- To coach lecturers so as to improve performance
- To identify training needs of lecturers so as to improve current performance and future potential
- To counsel lecturers in respect of professional development
- To motivate lecturers by providing recognition of good performance and support
- To enhance superior-subordinate relationship (head-lecturer relationship)
- To diagnose individual lecturer and university problems in order to improve quality and productivity at individual lecturer level and university level

These performance evaluations are very important in ensuring that the academic staff is working productively and their institutions are ready to handle the changing demands placed upon them by their stakeholders. It may also be important to note that to attract much needed funding, the government and other private donors need to be sufficiently convinced about the institutional success in securing acceptable student numbers and a satisfactory pass rate. These expectations can be reasonably met by empowering staff to deliver through use of an effective performance management system that measures not only performance output in teaching research and service rendering but also in the required competencies of the lecturing staff.

**Balanced scorecard and performance evaluation:**

The Balanced Scorecard (BSC) enables business to transform its overall organizational strategy into effective management. The BSC is a performance-measurement system (Kaplan and Norton, 2001a, c; Niven, 2002), a strategic-management system (Kaplan and Norton, 1996) and a communication tool.

The BSC provides a "balance" between short-term and long-term objectives, financial and non financial measures and lagging and leading indicators. The BSC has four measurement perspectives. These are the financial perspective, customer perspective, internal process perspective and learning and growth perspective and through these four perspectives performance can be triangulated (Huges and Pate 2013). Since, this study focuses on developing an academic balance scorecard to evaluate the overall performance of an academic taking into account teaching, research and services the researcher can use the BSC as a framework for measurement rather than using management as a framework.

BSC has already been widely employed in manufacturing and service industries, non-profit and government organizations, etc. with excellent effects (Kaplan and Norton, 2001b). Although, the BSC has gained a substantial following its application to higher education have been limited, focusing primarily on evaluating performance at the organizational level. Only one study today has suggested that the BSC might be used to evaluate performance at the individual faculty member level (Chang and Chow, 1999). However, that study has limited its focus to the accounting discipline rather than concentrating on evaluating academics in general. By modifying classic BSC to an instrument capable of more completely describing teaching, research and services undertaken by an academic, the researcher presents a new framework for evaluating performance effectively.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The study is an exploratory work that involves analyzing and synthesizing the existing body of knowledge in the area of BSC and examining the possibilities of applying it to develop an Academic Balance Scorecard (ABS) to evaluate an academic. It is a qualitative study and when developing the framework the study has used a qualitative content analysis. This is because Braman states that qualitative content analysis is “probably the most prevalent approach to the qualitative analysis of documents and it comprises a searching out of underlying themes in the materials being analyzed”. The research was done using the secondary data collected from the ‘code of practice on ethics and academic accountability for academic staff in the Sri Lankan university’ published by the quality assurance and Accreditation council of Sri Lanka, the Sri Lanka higher education corporate plan 2012-2015 and research articles published on academic performance evaluation on high ranked journals.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Current academic performance evaluation methods and their effectiveness:** The evaluation of academic performance is mostly conducted through student ratings or student feedback. This method usually encompasses the administration of a locally generated questionnaire or survey. The survey instrument is intended by design to evaluate teaching performance at the classroom level and is distributed to anonymous student respondents near the end of each academic term. Student-generated rating data, usually in the form of numerical summaries accompanied by open-ended comments are then collected and aggregated by academic administrators for summative purposes. Because student ratings data are “quantifiable”, this information may appear more objective and therefore, more credible than its underlying constructs. Student ratings forms, aggregated by course and section are eventually provided to student-rated faculty members as an informational source for formative evaluation.

Within the faculties, opinion varies greatly as to the validity and usefulness of student ratings in evaluating teaching performance. While some extremists believe that student ratings should be “outlawed” (Glenn, 2010) whereas others find that student ratings may be useful for formative evaluation, especially, the open-ended student comments included on most ratings forms. Further, Seldin notes that because of the mixed results of these numerous student rating studies, one can find empirical support for any common allegation pertaining to student ratings.

A control/evaluation/assessment system such as the student rating process should promote goal congruence (Simons, 2000), enhancing teaching effectiveness and thereby student learning. However, the extensive use of student ratings for administrative evaluation of an instructor’s classroom performance (Davies *et al.*, 2007) may adversely affect student learning as manifested in reduced coursework rigor (Bok, 2003) and in grade inflation (Pressman, 2007; Germain and Scandura, 2005; Eiszler, 2002). In particular, untenured faculty may be seduced into pandering to students in expectations of gaining higher ratings (Zimmerman, 2002). Fellingham (2007) worries that non-academic measures such as student evaluations and school rankings are increasingly being used to decide who teaches and what is taught. While some faculty members have alleged a multitude of flaws in the student ratings process, others have found research evidence to the contrary. Braskamp and Ory (1994) and Aleamoni (1999) found little empirical evidence to substantiate faculty complaints regarding student ratings and their uses. Others have found that: grades do not bias student ratings, ratings are not biased by the gender of the students or the instructor, student ratings are not popularity contests (Cohen, 1981; Feldman, 1989) and students can make consistent judgments (Feldman, 1977).

Further, some argue about the reliability of the instrument used for student ratings. In particular, several significant limitations in using student survey information have been noted. In a content analysis study of student rating instruments used in academic departments, Green found that many departments included items that students could not assess. But even if one uses a well-designed student rating instrument that controls the limitations described above, researchers find that several factors exist that affect teaching effectiveness for which students are unqualified to provide valid assessments. Cashin proposes an expanded definition of teaching and lists seven specific areas to be considered when evaluating teaching performance; he observes that student ratings cover at most, only three of these areas.

Berk (2005) states that “student ratings is a necessary source of evidence of teaching effectiveness for both formative and summative decisions but not a sufficient source for the latter”. Whereas educational researchers have differed widely in their assessments of the validity of student ratings there is one point about which there has been universal agreement: use multiple sources of data about a faculty member’s teaching if one is serious about accurately evaluating or improving teaching performance (Cashin, 1999). One multisource instrument for evaluating teaching that has been available for decades is the teaching portfolio.

A well-known multisource alternative to a summative teaching metric derived from student ratings is the teaching portfolio. In general terms, “a teaching portfolio is a collection of materials that documents teaching performance”. The portfolio is designed to highlight a faculty member’s uniquely designed teaching contribution that holistically determines her/his teaching effectiveness. Collaboration is recommended in completing a teaching portfolio as a mentor can provide the necessary feedback on clarity of materials, connectivity of teaching philosophy and course activities, and suggestions for supporting evidence.

The teaching portfolio has further evolved into a document that, in addition to teaching also encompasses research and service: the “professional portfolio.” Most academics are familiar with a variant of the professional portfolio, commonly called the “tenure package” and its importance in providing documentary evidence in support of the promotion and tenure decision.

While few would argue with the effectiveness of the teaching portfolio as a multisource instrument for documenting teaching performance, one could question the administrative efficiency in using this instrument to document teaching for routine annual performance reviews. The time required to construct and maintain a teaching portfolio by faculty, along with the time required by academic administrators to evaluate a number of these personalized portraits of teaching performance, tend to limit the widespread use of this alternative as an annual evaluation tool.

However, both of these mechanisms focus on evaluating the teaching effectiveness of an academic. Though, it is the most important component of a lecturer an academic needs to be evaluated through the contribution he or she makes to a body of research and to the university and to his/her social contribution (services) as well. However in some countries, the performance of an academic is evaluated based mainly on the research publications that have been done during an academic year. This situation in universities tempts many teachers to neglect teaching and take up some sort of research mostly of the uneconomical, unproductive, outdated and repetitive type and venture into the business of publishing substandard research articles. The system normally recognizes quantity like the number of PhD students guided, the number of papers published, etc. rather than the quality of the research and publications. Unfortunately, no concrete method has been developed so, far to judge the teaching and research aptitude of university teachers. Some academicians argue that both teaching and research cannot be done at the same time. However, it is generally accepted that education and

research should coexist to complement each other. Special emphasis on assessment-oriented teaching and research will impart a new dimension to the role of the teacher.

**Academic balance scorecard framework for performance evaluation:**

The present framework has been developed mainly considering the ‘code of practice on ethics and academic accountability for academic staff in the Sri Lankan university system’ issued by the quality assurance and accreditation council of Sri Lanka. In the document has been recognized that it is important that academics are permitted and nurtured to pursue activities that enhance their intellect and be open and flexible in their academic activities in other words the academic freedom which is crucial for the individual’s as well as the university’s academic advancement. However, while appreciating the academic freedom enjoyed by the academic community, it is necessary for an academic to recognize and accept certain duties and responsibilities that have to be fulfilled. While some of these activities are essential others are voluntary on the part of the teacher. Nevertheless, the latter is crucial for the well-being of all stakeholders of the university community. Thus, it is imperative that university academics take up these activities and when they do so that they are recognized and appreciated in some manner.

By considering the above factors, the study has developed the framework by renaming the original balance scorecard perspectives as the institutional perspective, the student perspective, the departmental/administrative perspective and the learning and growth perspectives to make it suited to the academic environment and has developed the performance evaluation indicators and grouped them under teaching, research and services (Table 1). The institutional perspective includes the contribution that an academic has provided for to university as a whole through teaching, research and university and community development (services).

The student perspective includes performance indicators that show the interaction of students with an academic. Since, students are the key stakeholder category in higher education, evaluating academic performance from their view point provides a valuable contribution to performance evaluation and improvement. The third perspective of the departmental/administrative perspective tends to evaluate academic contribution and cooperation to the respective departmental activities. Finally, it tends to evaluate how an academic should continue to improve and create value in teaching, research and services through learning and growth perspective. The framework developed is a useful tool to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of an academic annually and

Table 1: Academic Balance Scorecard (ABS)

| Perspectives                            | Teaching   | Research   | Services   |
|---|--|--|--|
| Institutional wellperspective           | Level of courses taught and no of students<br>No of on-line courses taught<br>No of times teaching honors received<br>No of foreign teaching assignments undertaken  | No of presidential/university/international awards received for research done<br>No of research projects (local/foreign) undertaken and grants received<br>No of patents taken/new product developed/innovations done<br>Positions held (editor, associate editor, member of the editorial board) of reputed journals and proceedings<br>Organization of international research symposia and conferences<br>No of invitations received as the key note speaker at international conferences  | No of public lecturers conducted for the being of the community university<br>No of community development projects undertaken<br>Positions held inside the university<br>Positions held outside the university<br>Resource person at curriculum development workshops and training programs<br>Contribution to student advisory boards, disciplinary inquiry boards<br>Country representatives of regional/international |
| Student perspective                     | Different courses conducted and students ratings<br>Syllabus completeness and learning expectations<br>Out-of-classroom contact hours<br>Classroom assessments done<br>No of student complaints<br>Letters of references requested   | No of undergraduate/masters/MPhil/PhD theses supervised<br>No of research methodology courses conducted<br>Student feedback on research supervision and teaching<br>No of collaborative research projects done with students<br>No of publications done with students<br>No of student complaints with regards to research supervision   | No of community development projects done with students<br>No of entrepreneurial activities done with students   |
| Departmental/administration perspective | No of teaching hours and practical hours per course conduct<br>Teach courses out of routine teaching cycle when required<br>Teaching at multiple locations<br>Participate in programme outcome<br>Issuing of results on time<br>Web-based course management<br>No of subject related workshops conducted and field visits organizes<br>Peer reviews conducted<br>Contribution to the external degree programmes conducted by the department<br>Contribution to diploma/higher diploma programmes conducted by the department | No of research articles published in the indexed journals/refereed journals and non-refereed journals<br>Positions hold with regard to research programmes<br>No of research proposals and articles for publication reviews<br>Membership held in multidisciplinary research teams, institutional linkages<br>No of books or chapters in books (international/national publisher) authored<br>No of monographs authored<br>No of policy papers and consultancy reports authored<br>No of software development and media projects and products done<br>No of translations and publications of books and scholarly work done<br>No of student conferences and discipline related conferences organized | Senior treasurer of student societies<br>Positions of coordinators of faculty/university units<br>Memberships of boards of study<br>No of outside consultancies done<br>Offices of professional bodies/societies<br>Members of formalized links in outreach activities with private organizations<br>Contribution to the advanced level examinations conducted<br>No of inter-university activities organized            |
| Learning and growth Perspective         | No of professional development conferences or workshops attended<br>Use of technology when conducting lectures<br>Innovative pedagogy<br>Use of pedagogical journal articles when teaching   | No of international/local conferences attended<br>No of research methodology workshop attended<br>Use of modern techniques/software used when conducting research<br>No of times high-ranked research articles downloaded<br>No of research related books and publications taken from the library  | Contribution to staff development<br>Contribution to personal professional development<br>Contribution to advancement of the profession  |

the ABS will be very effective in aligning a faculty member's and the department's objective towards the university's corporate plan. Further, a different version of ABS can also be implemented if each department is able to select those measures that most completely reflect teaching and research in that department's particular discipline.

## CONCLUSION

The framework developed based on the BSC offers a conceptually sound and pragmatically viable instrument for educators who desire to move beyond evaluating only teaching performance especially within the context of annual evaluation. In order to make the framework more

suited to evaluating the performance of an academic the four perspectives has been renamed as the institutional perspective, the student perspective, the departmental administrative perspective and the learning and growth perspectives. Through using this multi-perspective, the ABS enables administrators to expand their conceptual view of the overall performance of an academic and can coherently communicate the department's intellectual efficiency to the faculty, the university and to the higher education authorities.

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