



**Employee performance management and control
in Africa: The case of a development
organisation in Uganda**

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Abstract

It is generally agreed that the most widely used management theories originate in the ‘West’, and that the developing world needs to adopt these theories if it is to promote efficient management. But are ‘Western’ approaches being wholly embraced by Africa-based organisations? Some authors claim that ‘Western’ ideologies, a legacy of colonisation, are the main influence on management practice in developing countries. However, others argue that these ideologies are alien to traditional African culture and in fact make operations less efficient. Thus, it has been suggested that organisations should either employ a combination of ‘Western’ and traditional practices, or they should stick with purely indigenous management approaches such as Ubuntu, which implies that communal interests are above those of the individual and that human existence is dependent on interaction with others. These arguments have been developed from research drawing mainly on data generated through surveys and/or interviews with managers in Africa.

This study used a grounded theory approach and applied a combination of ethnographic techniques to contribute to existing literature by exploring employees’ perspectives on what happens in practice in terms of performance management and control. The inquiry adopted an interpretivist and neo-empiricist stance in the belief that this would best allow me to reflexively access and interpret the behaviour of participants.

Generally, the design of the formal guidelines in the case study organisation reflected ‘Western’ ideas, though their implementation was largely dependent on informal relationships that reflected African communitarian values. This discovery helps to elucidate the role that ‘Western management’ approaches played in a development organisation in Uganda. The study also provides methodological insights into the reflexive collection and analysis of data on ‘management in Africa’.

Conference poster and papers arising from the thesis

Natukunda, L., Dibben, P. & Johnson, P. (2013). *Working towards achieving organisational and broader development goals in Africa: Do modes of employee performance management and control matter?* Poster presented to the White Rose Business and Management Doctoral Conference at Leeds University Business School, July 2013.

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Table of contents

| | |
|--|------------|
| Abstract..... | i |
| Conference poster and papers arising from the thesis | ii |
| Acknowledgements..... | iii |
| Table of contents | iv |
| List of tables and figures | vi |
| CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| 1.0 OVERVIEW..... | 1 |
| 1.1 ‘WESTERN’ MANAGEMENT | 2 |
| 1.2 RESEARCH TRENDS ON MANAGEMENT IN AFRICA..... | 2 |
| 1.3 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES | 4 |
| 1.4 RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE | 5 |
| 1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY..... | 6 |
| 1.6 FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION | 7 |
| 1.7 STRUCTURE OF THESIS | 8 |
| CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW..... | 10 |
| 2.0 OVERVIEW | 10 |
| 2.1 DEFINING CONTROL..... | 11 |
| 2.2 THE HISTORICAL TRANSFORMATION OF CONTROL OVER WORKERS.... | 12 |
| 2.3 HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN AFRICA | 40 |
| 2.4 UGANDA: POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CONTEXT..... | 53 |
| 2.5 LIMITATIONS OF EXISTENT HRM IN AFRICA DEBATES | 60 |
| 2.6 SUMMARY | 63 |
| CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY | 65 |
| 3.0 OVERVIEW..... | 65 |
| 3.1 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY: ONTOLOGICAL AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE..... | 65 |
| 3.2 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN | 70 |
| 3.3 CASE STUDY DESIGN..... | 77 |
| 3.4 DATA COLLECTION METHODS | 90 |
| 3.5 DATA ANALYSIS | 100 |
| 3.6 REFLEXIVITY AND METHODOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS..... | 107 |

| | | |
|--|--|------------|
| 3.7 | ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS..... | 119 |
| 3.8 | SUMMARY | 120 |
| CHAPTER 4: EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT IN PRACTICE..... | | 121 |
| 4.0 | OVERVIEW | 121 |
| 4.1 | THE ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXT | 121 |
| 4.2 | WORK ORGANISATION AND DECISION MAKING..... | 126 |
| 4.3 | PERFORMANCE EVALUATION..... | 149 |
| 4.4 | PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT THROUGH RECRUITMENT AND REWARD..... | 160 |
| 4.5 | SUMMARY | 163 |
| CHAPTER 5: THE INFORMAL ORGANISATION | | 165 |
| 5.0 | OVERVIEW | 165 |
| 5.1 | THE INFORMAL ORGANISATION AT PAL | 165 |
| 5.2 | WORK CULTURE AND CULTURAL CONTROLS | 187 |
| 5.3 | SUMMARY | 199 |
| CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS | | 201 |
| 6.0 | OVERVIEW | 201 |
| 6.1 | DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND CONTROL AND EMPLOYEES' RESPONSE | 201 |
| 6.2 | 'WESTERN' APPROACH TO MANAGEMENT AND THE AFRICAN CONTEXT..... | 208 |
| 6.3 | SUMMARY | 215 |
| CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION..... | | 217 |
| 7.0 | OVERVIEW | 217 |
| 7.1 | AIMS AND OBJECTIVES | 217 |
| 7.2 | CONTRIBUTIONS TO KNOWLEDGE | 221 |
| 7.3 | IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE | 223 |
| 7.4 | REFLECTIONS ON METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES | 225 |
| 7.5 | LIMITATIONS ARISING FROM THE THESIS | 225 |
| 7.6 | DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH | 227 |
| REFERENCES..... | | 230 |

List of tables and figures

| | |
|---|-----|
| Table 3.1: Research approach, assumptions and methods | 69 |
| Table 3.2: Research participants..... | 82 |
| Table 3.3: Sensitising concepts for data collection (Blumer, 1954)..... | 97 |
| Table 3.4: Some reflections on original and emergent themes during data collection..... | 102 |
| Figure 2.1: The influences on workplace behaviour..... | 36 |
| Figure 2.2: Effects on work organisation..... | 49 |
| Figure 3.1: The qualitative data analysis process..... | 101 |
| Figure 4.1: PAL organisational structure..... | 122 |
| Figure 4.2: Work organisation at PAL..... | 128 |
| Figure 4.3: Decisions and corresponding responsibility..... | 142 |
| Figure 6.1: The design and implementation of employee performance management and control at PAL..... | 215 |

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

'The traditional worldview and culture of Africa was very different from that of the West today: man was at the centre of a religious universe; time was generally felt to be under the control of man, not the reverse; the belief that the dead are able to influence the living enhanced reverence for the elderly; a belief in collectivism was far stronger than a belief in individualism. Colonialism, the Cold War, and three decades following independence upset the traditional African worldview and created bewildering frictions within the political, economic, and social wellbeing of the continent. For future African leaders, the test will be whether they are able to recognize and sustain the contradictions between the traditional and the modern. Africa's traditional worldview may enable it to make a valuable contribution to the world in the field of human relationships, giving the world a more human face.' (Smith, 2003, p.1)

1.0 OVERVIEW

High-impact research and management scholarship are paramount for Africa since management plays a large role in national development (Zoogah *et al*, 2015). However, human resource management (HRM)-related issues have traditionally been given less attention in Africa than investment and finance, production, marketing and technology (Kamoche, 1992; Kamoche, 2011). Moreover, HRM studies in Africa have focused mainly on multinational companies because their HRM policy has largely been formulated in their 'Western' headquarters (Kamoche, 1992). This concern for the wellbeing of multinationals operating in Africa has persisted, although the focus has now shifted from 'Western' - based firms to multinationals from the emerging economies of China, India, South Africa and Brazil (see, for example, Cooke, Wood and Horwitz, 2015). However, although the number of publications addressing cultural and institutional issues that affect HRM in Africa has grown exponentially in the last few years, leading scholars in this area such as Jackson (2011) and Wood and Horwitz (2015) have called for a deeper

analysis of what happens in the day-to-day life of organisations in Africa where informal rules and conventions may be important. Such analysis is as important for local firms as it is for multinational enterprises. This thesis seeks to address this concern by focusing on what happens in a development organisation in Uganda.

1.1 ‘WESTERN’ MANAGEMENT (*Thesis correction number 4*)

The term ‘Western’ management is used in this thesis to refer to the widely dispersed management theories and techniques that have been designed based on experience and research carried out in the Agro-American countries sometimes designated as liberal market economies of the United Kingdom (UK), Australia and the United States of America (USA). These countries have direct links to Uganda, both in the past through colonisation (in the case of the UK) and in the present through economic partnerships (Wiegratz, 2009). Although ‘the West’ is often used generically to refer to developed countries, research on the varieties of capitalism has shown that these countries (even within Europe) vary in terms of culture and economic systems (Hall and Soskice, 2001; Amable, 2003). Sometimes, within the literature on management in Africa, there is reference to the ‘West’ and this differentiation seems to be made by default rather than explicitly.

Furthermore, the developed world’s influence in Africa varies from country to country depending on who their former colonisers were (Ghebregiorgis and Karsten, 2006). Consequently, most studies on HRM in Africa acknowledge that there will be many differences in management practices across Africa (Gbadamosi, 2003; Jackson, 2002).

1.2 RESEARCH TRENDS ON MANAGEMENT IN AFRICA

In their review of HRM research in Africa in the ten years up until 2012, Kamoche *et al.* (2012, p.1) observe a notable increase in publications on the subject, although the authors admit that high-impact publications publish far less about management and organisational context in Africa than in the ‘West’ and Asia. Those journal articles and books that do cover theory and practice in organisations in Africa highlight that it is a complex subject because of the

diverse societies from which the continent is constituted (Jackson, 2002; Kamoche *et al.*, 2004). The focus has broadly been on the cultural dimensions of managing organisations in Africa and the unsuitability of ‘Western management’ styles to African traditions of organisation and management (Beugre, 2015; Mangaliso, 2001; Harvey, 2002; Arthur Jr *et al.*, 2006; Budhwar and Debra, 2001; Kamoche *et al.*, 2004; Adeleye, 2011). The perceived inappropriateness of ‘Western management’ practices has led researchers to suggest various forms of hybridisation (Azolukwam and Perkins, 2009; Jackson *et al.*, 2008 in Kamoche *et al.*, 2012). The argument is that in the face of globalisation, organisations in Africa should work towards integrating ‘Western’-style practices into their management systems (Adeleye, 2011) and develop hybrid systems for people management. Research is key to seeing what has been successful and what has worked in terms of adaptation (Jackson, 2002). Hybridisation is, however, regarded with caution by some authors. For example, Ghebreorgis and Karsten (2006, p.149) quote a British expatriate manager in Eritrea as saying:

‘I have not seen any area here where we cannot apply Western management practices because of culture or lack of management knowledge. However, we need to strike a balance between quality of work and life. It is not always advisable to do like we do it in London, New York, or Paris. That is what is understood here and that is what we are learning. For an Eritrean the social life is equally as important as his/her work.’

Similarly, Jackson (2002) warns that it is a mistake to try to make the developing world look like the developed one, and that it may not be appropriate to blindly implement foreign HRM systems in organisations in Africa. Instead, some authors suggest that organisations should adopt purely African practices such as Ubuntu (Beugre and Offodile, 2001; Mangaliso, 2001). These debates are discussed further in Chapter 2 of this thesis.

There have also been studies on the effects of national institutional frameworks on HRM in Africa (Horwitz and Budhwar, 2015; Wood, *et al.*, 2012; Kauda, 2010). Some of these studies draw attention to both formal and

informal institutions. This body of literature has been supplemented by a recent book addressing the debate around HRM in emerging markets (Horwitz and Budhwar, 2015). The 47 contributors cover a wide range of people management issues including: 1) international HRM in multinational corporations from the emerging economies of China, South Africa, India and Brazil, 2) HRM functions and systems in emerging markets (excluding employee performance management and control), and 3) comparative assessments of HRM perspectives from China, India, Russia, central Europe, Latin America and Africa.

Although there has been increasing attention paid to management in Africa, there are few empirical studies investigating the practical experiences or perspectives of employees in Africa-based organisations, and little on local firms – instead, the focus has largely been on multinationals (Kamoche *et al.*, 2012). This has been attributed to the difficulties of collecting data in African organisations (Cooke *et al.*, 2015). This thesis helps to address this gap in the literature.

1.3 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES

This study has sought to identify and critique how employee performance management and control was designed and applied on a day-to-day basis in a development organisation in Uganda. PAL is used in this thesis as a synonym for this development organisation. The study also set out to explore the applicability of, and response to, ‘Western’- designed models of employee performance management and control in PAL. The following four specific objectives were set in order to achieve these aims.

- i. Assess existing knowledge on models of employee performance management and control.
- ii. Identify, describe, compare and contrast the espoused forms of employee performance management and control versus theories in use within PAL.
- iii. Describe and explain employee behavioural responses to institutionalised formal models of employee performance

management, taking account of informal processes and the social negotiation of control.

- iv. Critically evaluate the relevance of ‘Western’ models to an African organisational context

The main research question was: Are ‘Western’ ideologies relevant to the management and control of employee performance in an Africa-based organisation?

1.4 RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE

This study is significant for three reasons. First, Africa is attracting growing attention from investors drawn by its abundant natural resources and potentially huge market (Cook *et al.*, 2015). At the moment, however, regional diversity makes managing people in Africa a complex task (Kamoche, 2011). This study aims to help ease this complexity, thus making Africa a less daunting investment proposition. Secondly, although the number of publications addressing HRM in Africa has grown exponentially during the recent past, there are few empirical studies demonstrating specific understanding of employee performance management and control in Africa-based organisations. Despite the fact that researchers have been paying more attention to management in Africa since the 1970s, some authors still describe the subject as under-researched (Kamoche, 2011). Much more attention has been given to economics and foreign trade, perhaps reflecting the most dominant imperatives for a continent in which macro-economic challenges have tended to overshadow the dynamics of managing organisations (Kamoche, 2011 p.1). This study is significant in that it not only contributes to the current efforts to understand HRM in Africa but also focuses more deeply on a single function of HRM.

Finally, despite various challenges, African governments have been focusing on and working towards industrial and economic development using a wide range of mechanisms, for example by investing through parastatal organisations, soliciting foreign aid, facilitating the growth of the private sector and creating employment (Kamoche *et al.*, 2004, p.xv). These goals should be attainable because the African continent is endowed with numerous

natural resources, but it is of key importance that people are managed effectively and efficiently if industrial development is to be achieved. The study focuses on employee performance management and control because of its importance in directing and supporting employees to work effectively in line with the needs of the organisation (Kagaari *et al.*, 2010). Its findings may inform future initiatives that aim to solve the problem of organisational inefficiency in Africa.

1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Exploratory in-depth qualitative research was carried out to understand what happens in the day-to-day life of an Africa-based organisation. The study employed a grounded theory approach and a combination of ethnographic techniques to gather and analyse data. The objective was to capture not only how managers control work processes but also how employees respond in an African organisational setting. Since behaviour is assumed to vary according to the social situation or context in which it takes place (Gill and Johnson, 2010), it was assumed that managers' efforts to regulate work behaviour and employees' responses would be influenced by (and probably reflect) aspects of the African organisational context.

The study of how behaviour and/or processes are influenced by and influence context is, according to Cassell and Symon (2004), best facilitated by adopting a case study research approach. Accordingly, this study focused on a case organisation in Uganda. Case study research is also a feasible option when resources are limited. It was unfortunately technically impossible to cover a wide range of organisations in Africa, or even Uganda for that matter, but the chosen case study organisation conveniently provided multiple sites with diverse features. A detailed description of these features and other characteristics of the case study organisation are provided in Chapter 3 (section 3.3) and Chapter 4 (section 4.1.1).

Methodological triangulation is suggested as a solution to the epistemological challenge of participants providing verbal information that contrasts with their actions (Johnson *et al.*, 2006). Consequently, participant observations were carried out not only to collect data about participants'

behaviours in their naturally occurring context but also to verify information provided in the semi-structured interviews. These data were supplemented by the analysis of formal documents. The documentary analysis also provided background information about the work sites that made up the case study organisation. A review of previous research facilitated the development of sensitising concepts prior to the field work. These sensitising concepts were used to develop a wide range of semi-structured questions for the interviews and participant observations. This approach was adopted following Blumer's (1954) idea that a theoretical pre-understanding may guide the researcher on what to look for during data collection (see Chapter 3, section 3.4.4 for a detailed description of how the sensitising concepts were developed and used).

Since qualitative methods can generate large amounts of data (Anderson, 2004), data analysis was ongoing throughout and after the field work. The analysis process involved the application of grounded theory to inductively, systematically and flexibly develop claims that were grounded in the data. This was carried out with the assistance of NVivo, a computer software package used for analysing qualitative data.

1.6 FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

The formal guidelines for employee performance management and control in the case study organisation reflected what is described in the literature as an attempt to achieve efficiency, calculability, predictability and control over uncertainty (Ritzer, 2004). Top management carried out high level strategy development; designed periodic work plans/objectives; produced performance standards; and created guidelines for reporting, objectively evaluating and rewarding performance (or punishing underperformance). Rules and procedures were also in place to ensure conformity to these pre-set standards. These are characteristics of the so-called bureaucratic approach to management (McAuley, Duberley and Johnson, 2007). However, the day-to-day behaviours of supervisors and employees seemed to be primarily informed by informal, traditional values. Argyris and Schön (1974) differentiate between what people value (which they call espoused theories)

and what they do (or theories in use). What the case study organisation demonstrated was that participants seemed to both value and behave according to African communitarian beliefs. The supervisors seemed to collude with employees in subverting the formal bureaucratic rules, although the formal guidelines were occasionally resorted to when problems arose or when a decision was disputed. There were various ‘what does the manual say?’ incidents when a machine broke down or when an activity was not going well.

This study concludes that ‘Western’- rooted guidelines did not dominate practice at the case study organisation but provided general high level direction for work and employee performance management and control. Day-to-day practices and behaviour were dependent on informal supervisor-employee relationships that were based on traditional African values. These findings contribute to existing literature by adding to our knowledge of how ‘Western’ management ideology and traditional African norms influence the design and implementation of management practice in an Africa-based organisation. They also extend our knowledge of organisational behaviour by providing insights into the employees’ perspectives and their behavioural responses to managers’ prompts. Finally, the study identifies specific contextual factors that other management researchers collecting ethnographic data in Africa may find it useful to consider.

1.7 STRUCTURE OF THESIS

This thesis is presented in seven chapters.

Following this chapter, Chapter 2 reviews relevant literature, including discussions about employee performance management and control in the organisational behaviour and general HRM literature. The chapter also introduces existing theories on HRM in Africa as well as literature on institutions and people management in Uganda.

The third chapter discusses the methodology. It covers the research philosophy, design, methods and the context of the research. This chapter also details the process of developing the sensitising concepts which were used as signposts during the data collection process. The chapter discusses the data

analysis process before reflecting on the methodological implications of the choice of research design and methods applied in this study. The chapter concludes with a summary of the ethical issues that were considered during the research process.

The findings of this study are presented in Chapters 4 and 5. Chapter 4 describes and analyses how employee performance management and control was formally designed and applied in the case study organisation, while Chapter 5 discusses the influence of the informal organisation on the implementation process, including the participants' perspectives and behavioural responses to managers' attempts to control them.

Chapter 6 discusses these findings. It seeks to interpret the findings of the study by reflecting on what drove the design and implementation process of employee performance management and control in the case study organisation. It discusses the informal processes at PAL and the application of 'Western'-designed models of employee performance management and control.

The thesis concludes with Chapter 7, which describes how each of the research objectives was met, how the findings of this study contribute to knowledge and what implications they may have for policy and practice. This chapter also reflects on the methodology of the study, its limitations and finally, possible directions for future research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 OVERVIEW

This chapter firstly identifies and assesses relevant theories and debates on employee performance management and control in relation to how the practice is designed, applied and responded to by employees in an African development organisation within Uganda. Building a theoretical platform on managing employee performance and work behaviour was facilitated by a review, synthesis and critique of existing literature on pre-bureaucratic, bureaucratic and post-bureaucratic models of employee performance management and control. This was done by drawing on organisational behaviour literature to highlight historical as well as contemporary Western rooted debates on managing employee performance and work behaviour. The field of organisational behaviour offers many theories and techniques that facilitate understanding of the complexities of work processes and systems as well as employee behaviour.

The objective of reviewing relevant theories was twofold. First, it aimed to draw attention to existing knowledge and debates and provide a historical background of the models of employee performance management and control. Secondly, the review was aimed at identifying important features of the practice in order that they could be used as sensitising concepts for data collection. Sensitising concepts have been referred to as “those background ideas that inform the overall research problem” (Charmaz, 2003, p.4). Unlike a more positivist approach, where the review of literature aims at facilitating the development of hypotheses for testing, a prior theoretical platform was developed in this study to identify directions in which to look for and develop theory that would be grounded in the data.

Furthermore, this chapter introduces the key theories, issues and debates that shape the general HRM in Africa literature as well as employee performance management and control specifically. This has been concluded by a critical analysis of the literature on institutions and HRM in Uganda

specifically. This background has facilitated critique of the secondary knowledge about the inquiry on employee performance management and control in Africa.

The summary of this chapter highlights and critiques claims in HRM in Africa literature about the influence and relevance of ‘Western’ approaches to employee performance management and control in the continent. The last section of this chapter also presents the gaps in the literature that empirical information from data collection and analysis attempted to cover in this study.

2.1 DEFINING CONTROL

The generic definition of control in organisations often refers to the elements in Martin and Fellenz’s (2010, p.412) definition: “...the function of regulating events, actions, outcomes or other relevant aspects according to preferred standards, plans, objectives, or other chosen referents”. The ‘standard’ is based on a pre-set goal or desired state: usually the worker’s output. The process thus includes the provision of feedback on the state of the controlled, discrepancy detection and corrective action(s) to remedy the situation if need be (Martin and Fellenz, 2010). This could imply that the process may not work well if there are errors along the way, for example if inaccurate goals/standards are set; if feedback is delayed or incorrect, etc. Such a description may portray workers as objects with a nature that does not impact on the process of control. However, control in organisations also deals with the human aspect of employees, beside the mechanical aspects of the labour process. In fact, control may be considered as the process of directing employee work behaviour. For example, Edwards defined control as “the ability of managers to obtain desired work behaviour from workers” (Edwards, 1979, p.17). It then includes the managers’ attempt to decide on and direct employees towards desired work behaviour. This definition guides the understanding of the word “control” within this thesis and covers attempts to formally or informally direct employee behaviour in the work environment towards desired performance levels.

Other descriptions of control that bring out the aspects of control discussed in this thesis include: “where organisational elites develop social

and technical arrangements purposely aimed at influencing the work behaviour of subordinates in desired directions” (McAuley, *et al*, 2007, p.152). Roethlisberger’ (1968) describes informal control in McAuley *et al*, (2007, p.153) as “...directing the practices, values, norms, beliefs, unofficial rules, as well as the complex network of social relations, membership patterns and centre of influence and communication that developed within and between constituent groups of the organisation under the formal arrangements but that were not specified by them”. These definitions represent the range of approaches to employee performance management and control. They vary from hierarchical, technical, and impersonal modes of control to informally shared practices arising spontaneously from everyday relationships between workers and workers and between workers and managers. This variety was valuable in designing sensitising concepts and offering directions in which to look while in the field.

2.2 THE HISTORICAL TRANSFORMATION OF CONTROL OVER WORKERS

This section explains the historical transformation of work organisations and the evolution of work structures that have facilitated the employers’ control over workers’ performance. These approaches, which have been used in organisations, are discussed below as they chronologically evolved from the nineteenth century to the present work environment. The methods used by employers to control worker performance are examined from the early years of organisations to the contemporary twenty-first century to enable understanding of how different forms of control have developed to suit the changing needs of organisations.

Although the literature in this area was largely based on studies conducted in the ‘Western’ world context, the literature on HRM and performance management in Africa is also examined later in this chapter. Focus is then directed more specifically on literature on Uganda where the case study organisation for this study operated.

2.2.1 Pre-bureaucratic systems of managing performance

Unlike today's giant corporations, during the 1800s, nearly all employees worked for small firms, and family members provided almost all of the needed labour (Edwards, 1979). Such a setting may imply that managers could rely on flexible forms of control to direct the behaviour of a small number of workers. A useful explanation of the forms of control used within small firms in the early years can be found in Gouldner's (1954) work. Gouldner (1954) describes a work environment of a gypsum factory in Britain where a specific production unit was characterised by comparatively informal social relations and traditional work practices. This way of working is also described as 'pre-bureaucratic' because of the distinctive difference from the typical formally organised and rationally administered work environment (Gouldner, 1954; see also, Thompson and McHugh, 1995; 2002; Edwards, 1979; for reference to pre-bureaucratic management).

In Gouldner's (1954) study, members of the community, who composed a great majority of workers in the plant, had close relationship ties, exhibiting solidaristic, rather than individualist work behaviours. This informality had a significant influence on the relationships between co-workers and also on their relationships with management. Concerning supervision, there were no constant checks on workers and rules were applied flexibly. Workers, therefore, were able to strengthen control over their working environment. Their area of discretion was enlarged, or at least retained, by minimising the amount of time they were subject to the supervision of others. Community life also did much to mitigate the strains and tensions that arose from daily working problems, easing conflict resolution. For example, workers did not have to wait for special occasions such as a strike, to express their complaints. They instead freely shared their thoughts with supervisors, including grievances. About output management, supervisors did not focus on evaluating workers' output individually, but on how the factory performed collectively. Workers considered this as an appropriate attitude since it made them feel that they were treated like human beings (Gouldner, 1954).

Entrepreneurial control

In addition to small factories such as Gouldner's Gypsum case, the nineteenth century was also characterised by small businesses owned by individuals. These owners have been referred to in the literature as entrepreneurs (Edwards, 1979). The mode of control of work processes within these firms included entrepreneurial control, contracting, craft control and technical control. The typical firm in the nineteenth century was too small to require sophisticated management structures. Instead, a single entrepreneur (owner), alone or perhaps in consent with a few managers, took control of the entire activities of the firm. The entrepreneur exercised full control of the workers by himself to reward performance, hire and fire and punish whenever necessary (Edwards, 1979). Since the workforce was small and the boss was both close and powerful, workers had limited success when they tried to oppose rules. While Edwards (1979, p.34) called these "simple forms of control", Thompson and McHugh (2002, p.22) referred to it as "simple or entrepreneurial control". According to Thompson and McHugh (2002), the entrepreneur relied on the fact that he knew the workers personally to ensure discipline and work performance. The geographical concentration of the firm's operations, with everything in one place, enhanced entrepreneurial or simple control because it was possible for the manager to get involved personally in almost all aspects of production (Thompson and McHugh, 2002). This mode of control, as we will see below, gradually became less effective as firms expanded in operation.

Nineteenth century internal contracting

Edwards (1979) indicates that as firms increased the size of their workforce to include thousands of workers, the distance between entrepreneurs and workers expanded, in turn raising the degree of coordination needed. At this stage, single entrepreneurs could no longer effectively exercise control over direct production. Control was then delegated to hired bosses or contractors. These 'in-between' managers are sometimes termed as foremen, general foremen, supervisors, or superintendents (see for example Littler, 1982; Thompson and McHugh 2002; 2009). According to Littler (1982), the immediate employer and controller of workers in such cases was not the

entrepreneur, but an intermediate, internal contractor who had a contractual relationship with the primary owner of the firm.

While some firms, such as those in the mining industry, had a small number of sub-contractors, others engaged large numbers of skilled workers as sub-contractors who in turn employed a small number of unskilled assistants (Littler, 1982). Although the bosses were expected to re-create a form of control that was similar in form to the entrepreneurial control outlined above, they could not do so because, unlike true entrepreneurs, contractors were not their own bosses (Thompson and McHugh, 2002). The use of skilled workers as contractors to control performance was termed as craft control by Thompson and McHugh (2002, p.23). Informality and socialisation were thus reduced compared to what was observed in Gouldner's factory environment.

Contracting undoubtedly prepared a stage for transition from simple informal, control to hierarchical and more bureaucratic control, as apparent in Edward's technical modes of control reviewed below.

Edwards' technical and early forms of bureaucratic control

Apart from entrepreneurial, contractual and craft control, Edwards (1979) identified two other forms of nineteenth century modes of control: technical and bureaucratic control. Technical control involved control systems being embedded in the physical structure of the labour process. These control systems included programming machinery to direct the labour process and set the pace, thereby reducing the workers to attendants of pre-paced machinery (Edwards, 1979).

According to Edwards (1979), bureaucratic control originated from employers' attempts to subject administrative workers to much stricter control, but its success encouraged firms to apply the system more broadly than just to the management staff. Employers' attempts to contain workers' performance in the workplace thus, as Edwards (1979) asserts, brought three quite different systems for organising and controlling their work: simple control, technical control (with union participation), and bureaucratic control. In a sense, each succeeded the other (Edwards, 1979). It is interesting to note that these pre-bureaucratic modes of control are not confined to earlier years

of organisation but have continually informed managers on how to control the labour process. This argument is explained a little bit more below.

Persistence of pre-bureaucracy

Although the twentieth-century transformation of work organisations came with significant implications for labour control, the ‘new’ employee performance management and control systems can be considered as an extension and modification of the earlier centuries’ ideas. For example, Edwards noted in 1979 that:

“Where once foremen ruled with unconstrained power, there now stands the impersonality (and seemingly invincibility) of the organization. Where once workers had few rights and no protections, there now exists a whole set of claims from job bidding rights to grievance appeals to the possibility of career within the firm. Where once the distinction between workers and bosses was sharp and clear there now are blurred lines of a more stratified and less class-conscious workforce. Yet one future endures: the workplace remains hierarchical, ruled from the top down” (Edwards, 1979, p.vii).

Edwards argues here that pre-bureaucratic modes of control were not only the practice of the nineteenth-century organisation but have continually been reflected in the labour control process even in the later years.

Extension of the nineteenth century labour control systems is also noted by Callaghan and Thompson (2001) in their Telebank case study. The nineteenth century technical and bureaucratic control systems seem to have been blended to create controlled environments in modern call centres and other routine interactive service-providing organisations. Managers in call centres have ultimate power through surveillance technology and workers have no idea of which call is being listened to by management. Control is therefore embedded in technology (Callaghan and Thompson, 2001).

2.2.2 The rise of classical systems of managing employee performance: Bureaucracy

The failure of the nineteenth century employee control systems to cope with a further increase in the size of firms, technological advancements, competition and a more diverse workforce in terms of skill and knowledge, led managers to design more bureaucratic forms of control. Bureaucratic management has been described by Max Weber (cited in Thompson and McHugh, 2002) as a formal system of organisation based on clearly defined hierarchical levels and roles, rules, and mechanisms of formal control of employee behaviour in order to maintain efficiency and effectiveness. The description of bureaucracy by McAuley *et al* (2007, p. 159) as one that “...entails the development of impersonal rules and procedures so as to influence the task transformation element by specifying what operatives should do, how, where and when” is more revealing. This is because it indirectly presents four principles that depict bureaucratic tendencies (McAuley, *et al.*, 2007). These principles are: efficiency, calculability, predictability and control over uncertainty (Ritzer, 2004). Classical organisation theories including Taylor’s scientific management (1909), Max Weber’s arguments (1930) and Henri Fayol’s administrative management (1916), clearly illustrate the bureaucratic tendencies indicated above. These theories have also shaped the twentieth century and contemporary modes of control of employee performance in modern workplaces. For these reasons, they have been given attention in this thesis and are reviewed below.

Taylor’s scientific management

According to Ritzer (2008), scientific management was advocated by Fredrick Taylor in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It was a model of management that popularised management principles that had been ongoing as far back as the 1800s. The ideas played a key role in shaping the work world throughout the 20th century. Taylor promoted a series of principles designed to rationalise work and was hired by a number of large organisations (for example, Bethlehem Steel) to implement those ideas, mostly in their factories (Ritzer, 2008). Scientific management of workers is

described as a system that involves the work of every employee planned out by management with instructions and details of how tasks should be accomplished and means of doing that task (Ritzer, 2008). The task, therefore, specifies not only what is to be done but also how it should be done and the exact time allowed for doing it (Littler, 1982). Taylor's theory was based on his belief that the tendency of workers is to take it easy and left on their own; they cannot develop the best way (scientific way) of doing their job (Littler, 1982).

Workers in such a case, according to Taylor, are also motivated by the pursuit of rational self-interest. Therefore, incentive wages in the form of a differential piece-rate system were the solution to most labour problems. Thomson and McHugh (2002, p.30) summarised Taylor's solution to this labour process problem in the principles he suggested: "Develop a science for each element of work, scientifically select workers, ensure co-operation between management and workers so that the work is done according to the science, and finally, ensure equal division of work and responsibility between management and workers, each side doing what it is best fitted for". Thompson and McHugh (2002) concluded that this was never a science but a control system. This implies that work is standardised with prescription of uniform practices, monitoring systems are created (for example workers filling in job-cards and/or time sheets) and economic rewards take centre stage. The objective is to attain bureaucratic management aspects of efficiency, calculability, predictability and control over uncertainty.

Fordism and standardised mass production

Broadly following scientific management principles, Henry Ford introduced what he thought was an even more efficient way of controlling the labour process by incorporating technology into the control system. According to Ritzer(2008, p.32), Ford designed the automobile assembly line in such a way that "work-related movements were reduced to an absolute minimum, parts needed in the assembly process of cars travelled the least possible distance, electric conveyor belts [rather than human beings] moved cars and car parts, and complex sets of movement were eliminated". Ford's method

therefore involved the quantification of many elements of the production process, and predictability of what each worker did with little or no room for innovativeness. Ritzer (2008 p.32) calls this “a nonhuman technology that permits maximum control over workers”. Using technology to specialise tasks would facilitate use of less workers and machines, e.g. robots. In this way, the manager could ensure predictability of the amount of work done, the amount of time and resources used so as to achieve what was considered an efficient way of controlling employee performance.

Even though Taylor and Ford did not point out the implications of their ideas on employee behaviour, ‘best ways’ of doing a job eventually turned into rules are likely to result into minimum use of discretion and disempowerment of employees.

Weber and administrative theories of management

Weber referred to bureaucracy as,

“...a hierarchy of offices, with continuous and regulated activity within a fully ordered system of super and subordination. Within the chain of command is a division of labour based on defined responsibilities, rights and duties. Calculable rules and regulations, impersonal modes of conduct and a common control system govern the conduct of work with written documentation functioning as a basis of management of the office” (summarised within Thompson and McHugh, 2002, p.35).

From this definition of bureaucracy, Weber seems to suggest that there are four main aspects of bureaucratic control: (1) management takes charge of work organisation with minimal input from workers, (2) means and ends are quantified, (3) monitoring through impersonal rules and procedures is paramount to ensure compliance, and (4) everything is predictable. The application of technology can further enhance performance, but can also lead to rules being even more impersonal (McAuley *et al*, 2007 p.159). We will later see from the critique of bureaucratic management that these aspects of control do minimise ability of employees to use their discretion as they carry out their assignments.

Henri Fayol's management structures and administration

Henri Fayol, although a mining engineer by training, realised from his experience of managing a large coalfield that systems and methods to control workers (such as those suggested by Taylor) were in themselves inefficient without proper administration or management by managers (Wren and Bedeian, 2009). He (Fayol) observed for example that workers were not given sufficient authority to make quick decisions over their assignments without consulting their supervisors. This Fayol realised limited employees from using their intuition in emergencies to solve problems. This thus created delays and sometimes disorder especially when the supervisor was absent from the work station. Responsibility, Fayol advised, should go hand in hand with authority (Wren and Badeian, 2009). In other words, everyone given responsibility should be given authority to carry on that responsibility. He then advanced a list of 14 principles and functions of management which he found most useful in administration of organisation. These principles are outlined in Wren and Badeian (2009, p216-227). Fayol in incense rationalised management structures and administration. He also emphasised the application of skill in carrying out the managerial role of ensuring that systems and methods of employee performance management and control worked as intended.

Bureaucracy in practice

Gouldner argues that there were different patterns of bureaucracy in practice. The three dominant ones are:

“First, mock bureaucracy which involves rules that exist in the organisation but there is an informal agreement between members that nobody will really obey them. These are often rules that are imposed by an external body (which could be headquarters) that insiders agree (implicitly) are unnecessary. An example is that there can be stern rules about health and safety that come from the head office that are explained by managers and employees at the local level as quite impractical. These rules would impede their work, so both parties ignore them. Secondly is representative bureaucracy were all members agree that the rules

governing the organisation are important and significant for the successful operation of the organisation and meet individual as well as group needs. For example in the industrial plant, the safety rules were highly bureaucratized and all members thought that strong adherence to them was important because they had been agreed between the management and the unions in what was felt to be a fair and balanced way. Finally, punishment centred bureaucracy where one party seeks to impose rules on others and where compliance of the other party is based on either the fear of punishment or the expectation of reward for compliance. An example of this is when a union develops strict procedures for health and safety that are irksome to management but are imposed upon them as part of a negotiated deal. In this case management implements the rules because they have to but without a sense of commitment to them” (Gouldner in McAuley *et al*, 2007 p.86).

This system of controlling employee performance, although criticised for being impersonal, could be considered ideal because of the advantages it offers in pursuit of efficiency, calculability, predictability and control over uncertainty; the main aspects of bureaucratic control. Bureaucracy is ideally practiced in keeping track of large numbers of tasks requiring a great deal of paperwork (Ritzer 2008). It is also considered right and ethical practice in workplaces to submit to superiors, following drawn procedures and commitment to the designed purpose of the organisation (Gay, 2000). Moreover, Gay (2000) asserts that the key features of bureaucracy remain as or more essential to the provision of public services today as they did in the twentieth century.

On the other hand, bureaucratic structures are criticised for having no universal rationality; consciously constructed by employers for specific purposes, and not applicable in situations where tasks are very complex and uncertain (Thompson and McHugh, 2002). Humanity is especially creative, asserts Ritzer in McAuley *et al* and “if you develop systems that are constraining and controlling people they can’t be creative, they can’t be human” (McAuley *et al* 2007, p.89).

2.2.3 HRM 'anti-bureaucratic' debates

The human relations movement claims an approach to employee performance management and control that is seemingly anti-bureaucratic. The ideas in this movement look at how to incorporate the fact that workers are human beings and how this affects the process of directing employee behaviour in the organisational setting. Examples of theories that explain the aspect of human behaviour in employee performance management include Abraham Maslow's needs theory (1943), Edwin Locke's goal setting theory (1968), Herzberg's two factor theory (1959), Douglas McGregor theory X and Y (1960) and Elton Mayo's Hawthorne effect theory (1927). Although all of these theories generally inform management practice about employee motivation, each has a distinct contribution. Mayo's theory (1927), for example, developed from a series of experiments on workers involved a supervisor whose role was to advise, note down all that went on and inform the employees under observation about the experiment rather than dictating to them. It therefore highlighted ideas on how employees behave when observed and how social issues, rather than merely monetary rewards, impact on work performance. On the other hand McGregor's theory (1960) was based on the behavioural sciences. It describes assumptions of managers towards employees and how this affects interaction between employers and workers. For these distinctive characteristics, Mayo and McGregor's theories are discussed in this thesis for their contribution to not only employee motivation but also control of employees' work behaviour.

Elton Mayo's work conditions experiments

Based on his belief that society was disorganised and plan less, workers had negative attitudes to employers, and working conditions were unpleasant, Mayo interpreted a series of experiments to examine productivity and work conditions (Schein, 1974). Of interest to this thesis, and to employee performance management, is the fact that workers in the experiment were aware that they were being observed and had a friendly supervisor who constantly interacted with them informally and talked to them of any changes in the experiment. The research found that informal relationships between the

workers and their supervisors positively influenced task accomplishment. Indeed, it was found out that the productivity of individual workers had more to do with group membership and cliques rather than strict formal supervision (Schein, 1974 p.761). Workers created a system, away from management, of accomplishing their assignment such that social interaction and feeling was seen as responsible for the rise in productivity (Schein, 1974). Although Mayo's theory has been subject to criticism methodologically and ethically, it is still a theory considered to be grounded in an understanding that action in organisations is based on the 'humanness of being' (McAuley, *et al.*, 2007). For example, although Mayo was not the first researcher to discover the role of informal groups, he is considered to have provided more evidence from the experiments that workers have the potential to organise themselves and operate against the norms and demands of management in such a way that worker output of the group becomes largely dependent on the informal group relationships (Muldoon, 2012).

Douglas McGregor's theory Y and theory X

Motivational theories suggest that managers should be concerned with understanding the strengths and direction of human behaviour in order to effectively have control over the performance of work-related behaviours (Thompson and McHugh, 2002). As summarised by Schein (2011), McGregor based himself on this idea to developed a theory showing two types of people: (1) those who dislike work and responsibility, focus on economic security and need to be coerced into effort (theory X), and (2) those who like work, will accept responsibility for their own effort and are capable of innovation (Theory Y). McGregor then argued that managers who hold theory X assumptions about workers will always lean toward command and control as the sole solution, while with theory Y, managers will manage in terms task requirements, being either autocratic or participative depending on the situation they are involved in (Schein, 2011).

McGregor's theory is sometimes explained as a continuum of managerial attitudes to workers whereby managers who hold theory X views have assumptions about workers that lead them to use of coercive behaviour, causing employees to actually take up theory X characteristics. Likewise,

theory Y assumptions on the part of the manager will consequently lead to corresponding Y behaviour by both managers and workers (Thompson and McHugh, 2002). For McGregor, employee performance management and control is dependent on the assumptions that management has regarding the attitudes and behaviour of workers. And that workers' behaviour is dependent on how they are treated by their superiors.

Employee motivation theories

Managing employee performance and human behaviour at work is further explained through motivation theories. Theories of motivation have traditionally been categorized into content theories, process theories, and recent additions including Bandura's social-cognitive theory and the self-determination theory (Martin and Fellenz, 2010). Content theories emphasise an assumption that individuals' needs or personal goals direct work behaviour (Martin and Fellenz, 2010). The major theories in this category include Maslow's hierarchy of needs, Alderfer's ERG theory and Herzberg's two factor model. Process theories on the other hand suggest that rather than what comes from within individuals, external variables of the work process drive employee behaviour. For example Vroom's expectancy theory suggests that the expected outcomes of the effort exerted to do an assignment, the likelihood that behaviour will lead to desired outcome and the value of the outcome determine work behaviour (Martin and Fellenz, 2010). Other examples of process theories include Adam's equity theory, and Locke's goal setting theory.

Assumptions on which this research is based relate to arguments advanced by process theories. This study assumes that work behaviour is the result of subjective interpretation of the context in which the workers operate. And therefore, their motivation (or demotivation) would stem from what they value and what happens around them.

In general, human relations theories can be considered as a call to give more attention to humanness of workers. It is a key consideration that managers need to develop means of ensuring that informal human relationships work for them and not against them. Classic management theories on the other hand have been criticised for their failure to take into

account the ability of workers to work and relate as human beings through informal arrangements at work. Both ideas however were concerned with attempts to understand and control the labour process at the beginning of the twentieth century to achieve desired performance levels in organisations. Although the practice is still morally questionable, post-bureaucratic managers have tended to capitalise on the fact that workers are human beings to encourage strong corporate cultures in organisations by shaping norms, instilling beliefs, inculcating values, and generating emotions that can replace formal structures (Kunda, 1992). The debate on informal or culture control in employee performance management and control literature is reviewed below.

2.2.4 Post-bureaucratic approaches to managing employee performance

The increasing complexity and interdependence in tasks as organisations adjust to new competitive pressures have meant that bureaucratic features of assessing individual performance can pose problems. For example, in organisations where tasks are more interdependent, attempts to define individual areas of responsibility for assessment are inherently arbitrary (Heckscher and Donnellon, 1994). It is also evident that twentieth and twenty first century organisations have moved beyond industrial society to a new, post-industrial society with a shift in focus from producing goods to providing services. While the production of goods such as steel and automobiles dominated the ‘Western’ economies of the 19th and early 20th century, today, these economies are dominated by services such as those related to education, computers, health care, and fast food (Ritzer, 2008). The rise of new technologies and the growth in knowledge and information processing is also characteristic of a post-industrial society. Professional, scientists, and technicians have increased in number and importance (Ritzer, 2008).

The twentieth century thus witnessed development of theories that put into consideration the human aspect of workers and possibilities of creating room for flexibility and discretion. Heckscher and Donnellon (1994) describe a post-bureaucratic organisation as one that goes beyond bureaucracy to apply influence rather than power in employee performance management and control. This section is an evaluation of some post-bureaucratic theories and

more contemporary modes of employee performance management such as the use of cultural controls.

Cultural controls

Culture management is described as,

“...an attempt to control the attitudinal and behavioural characteristics of new organisational members or by management attempting to influence the value premises of existing members’ behaviour through trying to restructure their attitudes and beliefs through the use of an array of related human resource management practices. The resultant normative control is based upon establishing intense emotional attachment and the internalisation of clearly enunciated company values” (Kunda, 1992, p.10).

Kunda’s definition suggests that culture management is about HRM practices influencing rather than directing behaviour of employees to desired attitudes, beliefs, values and ultimately actions. The control of organisational culture is, according to Kunda (1992), the latest attempt to achieve whole-hearted commitment of the organisation's members to the pursuit of its objectives.

Cultural control and pre-bureaucracy

Relying on organisational culture for desired work behaviour may not be new. As already noted from Mayo’s experimental results, workers have the ability to act independently of management’s formal boundaries and exercise self-control in the service of objectives to which they are committed (Muldoon, 2012). Cultural control also exhibits some of the characteristics of Gouldner’s pre-bureaucratic work environment such as the encouragement of close relationships between workers and supervisors and adoption of informal work rules. The difference is in what facilitates the achievement of such a culture. It appears from Gouldner’s (1954) perspective that the informal environment in a pre-bureaucratic work environment was as a result of the community ties between workers and the mine in general. It can be said that there were no preconceived ideas on the part of management about the influence of culture on performance in a pre-bureaucratic work environment. Workers lived and worked together in the same community, sharing life both at and away from

work. This might not be the case for organisations operating in urban settings with advanced technology in the twenty first century work environment. Managers in a post-bureaucratic work environment may have to encourage the desired culture in the organisation because contemporary community life has evolved more toward individualism and thus workers may not have such close ties to each other as those who lived during the pre-bureaucratic era. This however, suggests that there exists a positive correlation between society values and norms and corporate organisational life.

Generally, workplace social influence on performance and the power of work groups or teams are ideas discovered in the early years of management studies and only given more emphasis in the 21st century employee performance management and control systems.

Results of cultural control

Cultural control can encourage a combination of effort and informality, freedom and discipline, work and play (Kunda 1992). Commitment and behaviours are therefore driven from within individual employees. Because employees are expected to be personally driven rather than directed by managers, cultural control is also believed to minimise explicit auditing and evaluation of employee performance (Ouchi and Wilkins, 1985). If all members of the organisation have been exposed to some socialisation period, they are expected to share personal goals that are compatible with the goals of the organisation. In this condition, auditing of performance is unnecessary except for educational purposes, since no member will attempt to depart from organisational goals (Ouchi and Wilkins, 1985).

However cultural control may imply that organisations seek to take over the very selves of individuals (Kunda, 1992). In other words, employers seek to exploit the personalities, social relations, and private interests of individuals to the extent that these may be valuable to the organisation's instrumental concerns. William Whyte (in Kunda, 1992) refers to how managers using cultural controls go for the employee's soul compared to bureaucratic managers who went for worker's sweat. In this view, then, cultural control is seen as a "sophisticated and manipulative form of tyranny

in the workplace, a threat to both freedom and dignity, an unwarranted invasion of privacy” (Kunda, 1992 p.15).

What makes cultural control thrive?

Some questions arise as to whether the social and economic context in which the workers live and work may determine the achievability of using cultural control to manage employee performance. In Gouldner (1954), for example, supervisors and workers grew up together and knew each other for many years and developed personalised, informal relations on the job that reflected their community relations.

Economically, the range of compensation at ‘Tech’ in Kunda’s (1992) research was wide, but the average, by most standards, was well above the comfort zone. The question is whether ‘Tech’ would still successfully develop a normatively controlled workforce if compensation were below the comfort zone and workers considered the outcome of their involvement or reward unsatisfactory. Vroom’s (1964) expectancy theory of motivation indicates that individuals’ anticipation of the value of the outcome of their work behaviour is a major determinant to their motivation (Martin and Fellenz, 2010). In situations where workers have negative or neutral anticipations about their compensation, the process of cultural control may not produce the same results as Kunda’s experiment at Tech.

What about the level of homogeneity of the workers? The description of ‘Tech’ where cultural control was observed suggests a fairly homogeneous workforce; most workers were in their late twenties to mid-thirties, almost all white and except for secretaries, most were males in the same social class (Kunda, 1992). Unlike ‘Tech’, the organisation where Kunda conducted his research, some organisations may have a very diverse workforce in terms of ethnicity, age, education and social class. The application of cultural control and related practices as a mode of employee performance management and control may therefore vary from organisation to organisation.

Form of control within scientific research institutes (Thesis correction number 1)

Various research studies have shown that scientists may react differently to management control than other groups of workers. This is arguably because of the dissonance between their personal characteristics and the ways in which managers seek to control them. In terms of personal characteristics, curiosity and creativity are claimed to be important aspects of being a scientist (Turpin and Deville, 1995), requiring a unique level of professional autonomy and leadership. It has also been argued that people in R&D organisations would normally have graduate training and relatively high aptitude for self-initiative (Jain, Traindis and Weick, 2010; Miller, 1986). Scarpello and Whitten (1991) have further claimed that scientists are very creative people with a preference for working alone.

With regard to how managers may seek to control scientists, a study undertaken in seven UK public sector research science institutes on the purpose and process of science reveals that such establishments are consequently designed to encourage a considerable diversity of task and culture (Cohen, Duberley, and McAuley, 1999: p.243). Studies have also been conducted on how scientists have responded to the pressures faced by public funded research institutes in the UK to become more financially independent and to adopt more business-like principles (Cohen, Duberley, and McAuley, 1999; Mallon, Duberley, and Cohen, 2005). These studies have revealed that whereas previously their work had been driven by scientific interests, such interests were now being circumscribed by the needs and demands of management (Cohen, Duberley, and McAuley, 1999: p.473). This transition is said to have triggered conflict between managerial control and professional autonomy as it threatened to sabotage the scientists' creativity. They (the scientists) viewed imposition of stringent accountability measures associated with commercial contracts as being at odds with their scientific interests (Cohen, Duberley, and McAuley, 1999.p.473).

However, the question is whether this reaction of employees to the commercialisation of activities is unique to scientists or may also apply to social science professionals. It is not clear whether or not the desire for

considerable autonomy and power and resistance may be the case for employees in 'non-scientific' institutions.

One of the reasons put forward for explaining why scientists reject scrutiny and control is their preference for conducting their work according to their own instincts (Cohen, Duberley, and McAuley, 1999; Mallon, Duberley, and Cohen, 2005). However, the desire for autonomy among scientists seems to be at a higher level (strategic autonomy). In other words, they resist changes to institutional structures and organisational focus, and wish to have the freedom to set their own research agenda. This can be contrasted with operational autonomy – the freedom, once a problem has been set, to attack it by means determined by oneself, within given organisational resource constraints (Bailyn, 1984, p.5).

Thus, scientists may resist infringement of their strategic autonomy. However, this resistance to control at a strategic level may not necessarily mean that they also resist control of their day-to-day activities at the operational level. An earlier study of the scientists in central industrial R&D labs in the United States and Britain revealed that the form of autonomy that they seemed to seek was that of choosing the problems on which to work, and to pursue those independently of directives from anywhere, except the precepts of a discipline, and to be free to publish the results (Bailyn, 1984, p.5). However, they seemed to value the participation and guidance of their supervisors in their projects (Bailyn, 1984; Amann and Knorr-Cetina, 1989). Similarly, a study conducted by Duberley, Cohen and Leeson (2007) revealed that scientists were averse to structural changes that threatened their strategic autonomy as opposed to operational autonomy.

Other studies that have focused on scientists and R&D institutes include those that have explored responses to the moving and re-organising of the scientific departments from discipline-based to interdisciplinary approaches for collaboration (Duberley, Cohen and Leeson, 2007). Research has also been carried out which examines the ways in which public sector research scientists make sense of, and seek to develop their careers within, the diverse institutional contexts in which they work (Mallon, Duberley, and Cohen, 2005; Duberley, Cohen and Leeson, 2007). There is, however, limited

coverage of the day-to-day work behaviour of scientists at the operational level and their social negotiation of control with their immediate supervisors.

Managerial control and employee voice: involvement and participation in organisational decision-making

Employee participation seems to be an umbrella term covering all initiatives designed to engage employees (Wilkinson and Dundon, 2010). It is sometimes referred to as involvement, empowerment (Wilkinson, 1998), voice (Budd, Gollan, and Wilkinson, 2010), communication or any form of delegation. Often, it is divided into top down and individualised employee involvement and more collective forms of voice that might benefit from the representation of employees through trade unions (Dibben, Klerck and Wood, 2011). While top down mechanisms tend to be used to ensure that employees follow organisational rules, bottom up processes can arguably lead to the empowerment of employees (Dibben, Klerck and Wood, 2011). At the international level, there is more emphasis on statutory provisions for employee participation through government policy and legislation in European countries than there is in other countries such as the USA or Australia (Dundon and Wilkinson, 2013, p.487). Zhu, *et al.*, (2015) argue that the practice of employee participation is associated with job satisfaction among Chinese employees and that this may resonate across other countries around the globe. It is also believed to provide employees with an opportunity to influence events and have a positive impact on the general organisational performance (Wood, 2010). Management scholarship on Africa is yet to highlight on how employees are engaged and involved in the decision making of individual and corporate activities as well as what this participation means for the organisations.

Market controls

Another way in which workers are, in effect, controlled in a pre-bureaucratic era is through compulsion to perform well in order to keep temporally insecure jobs that are common in the twenty first century organisation. According to Kalleberg (2009), twenty first century work institutions and structures generate precarious work and work insecurity. By “precarious

work,” Kalleberg means “employment that is uncertain, unpredictable, and risky from the point of view of the worker, resulting in distress” (Kalleberg 2009, p.2). In fact, Standing (2011) argues that more and more people across the world are finding themselves in temporary work situations (see also Pfeffer and Baron, 1988; and Beck, 1992; 2000 p.84).

Drivers for temporary work are numerous: faced by competition, companies have outsourced work to lower-wage countries and opened up new labour pools through immigration (Kalleberg, 2009). Other pressures include technological advances, changes in legal and other institutions, minimum standards in the labour market and a decline in union power making “all workers potentially replaceable” (Kalleberg, 2009 p.11). These macro-level changes have led employers to seek greater flexibility in their relations with workers and market forces have played a greater role within the workplace (Kalleberg, 2009). In the light of an increase in nonstandard work arrangements such as contracting and temporary work, employers have needed to create appropriate control systems (Kalleberg, 2009). Yet the development of new systems for such work has proved more difficult than for work that is carried out full-time, will continue indefinitely, and is performed at the employer’s place of business under the employer’s direction (Kalleberg, 2000 p.341). Furthermore, some nonstandard employment relations involve the externalization of administrative control and responsibility. For example, employment agencies organising temporary help are involved in recruiting employees and posting them over multiple job sites. These workers have a range of different bosses and are not working alongside their co-workers (Kalleberg, 2000 p.346).

2.2.5 Contingency approaches

The above discussions imply that existing literature provides vast knowledge of various models of employee performance management and control that have evolved throughout the centuries. A wide range of approaches to this practice is therefore available for managers to adopt. However, employers are likely to employ what Verkerk (1990, p.9) calls “situational control” where no single type of employee performance management control is equally

applicable to all organisations. Nor is there a suggestion that only one model of control can be applied at a time but a combination of two or more may be what works appropriately in a given situation. This suggests that it might be relevant to ask why a particular employee performance management and control system is used, what works best, in what circumstances, where, and when? Choice of control system and organisational effectiveness is therefore dependent on contingent factors such as, fit or match between the type of technology, environmental volatility, the size of the organisation, the features of the organizational structure and its information system (Jesmin and Hui, 2012).

Verkerk (1990) suggests that manager and leader effectiveness depends on intelligence, competence and experience to decide, plan and strategise to direct group behaviour and process towards the organisational goals. The terms decide, plan, and strategise used by Verkerk here suggest the process of identifying what is contextually viable and therefore the style of directing group behaviour is contingent on internal and external factors into which the organisation is operating (Verkerk, 1990). The effectiveness of the solution may depend on the conditions under which the solution is implemented (Ganescu, 2012).

2.2.6 Performance management and performance appraisal

Performance management processes are described as systems through which organisations work out organisational goals, determine performance standards, assign and evaluate work, provide feedback, determine training and development needs and distribute rewards (or effect punishment for underperformance) (Briscoe and Claus, 2008 p.1). The process, however, should be integrated with other organisational policies and practices that relate to the general HRM strategy of the organisation (Gruman and Saks, 2011).

The nature of performance management

The character of performance management is said to vary in relation to the unique organisational culture as well as the institutional and cultural contexts within which the organisation operates (Mckenna, *et al.*, 2011). Goal setting,

for example, takes precedence in situations where goals are critical in directing work and employees need to objectively work towards achieving pre-set plans (Locke and Latham, 1996; Murphy and Cleveland, 1995). On the other hand, the performance management process can take subjective approaches where employees are given the opportunity to let their work evolve through taking into account their individual process and context of their work (Latham, *et al.*, 2005). In other words, it is considered a social/political process that is only effective when carried out with an understanding of the external environment of the organisation, the cultural and legal norms as well as the competitiveness of the country's economy (Murphy and DeNisi, 2008). It is also argued that performance management practices applied by organisations internationalising their operations are dynamic to suit the environment in which their forms operate (Buchelt, 2015). It is on the basis of these arguments that some authors advocate for performance management and evaluation mechanisms that address the local context (Varma, Budhwar and DeNisi 2008; Hainess and St-Onge, 2012). However, the literature on management in Africa generally covers HRM as a whole and rarely focuses on HR specific functions. More importantly, there is limited mention of performance appraisal in Africa-based organisations.

Performance appraisal

Performance appraisal or evaluation is considered as the heart of employee performance management and even though some organisations conduct team appraisals, the practice is commonly focused on an individual (Briscoe and Claus, 2008). It was traditionally linked to the process of employee performance measurement (Budworth and Mann, 2011). Apart from the traditional objectives of performance appraisal such as defining performance expectations, identifying training needs and determining rewards, the process has been considered as an important managerial control tool (Wilkinson and Redman, 2013). The use of pay-performance link, for example, has been identified as one way of inducing higher performance (Bloom, 1999). It has also become common practice to appraise employees not only on objective measures such as productivity, but also on more subjective aspects such as dependability and loyalty (Wilkinson and Redman, 2013). Furthermore, it is

also argued that appraisal systems are designed in such a way as to build employees' trust of managers (Mayer and Davis, 1999). Employee performance management and control therefore seem to be closely linked to performance appraisal.

Performance appraisal is a challenging exercise as the assumption that it could be carried in an objective, rational and accurate manner is far from the realities of manipulation, politics, bias and inaccurate measurers that are identified with the practice (Longnecker, *et al.*, 1987; Murphy and Cleverland, 1995). Evidence has shown that the employees' perceptions of the politics of appraisal as well as interpersonal relationships with their supervisors are traditionally the main sources of bias and inaccurate employee performance evaluation (see for example Shrivastava and Purang, 2011; Dhiman and Maheshwari, 2013; Tsai and Wang, 2013 and Varma, *et al.*, 2005).

Although the link between performance management and the local context, as well as the fact that performance appraisal can be used as a control tool by managers, are aspects raised in some areas of the literature, as yet, there is a lack of specific reference to Africa-based organisations. Existing literature thus fails to show whether the use and challenges of performance appraisal pointed out above would be the same or different in a development organisation in Uganda.

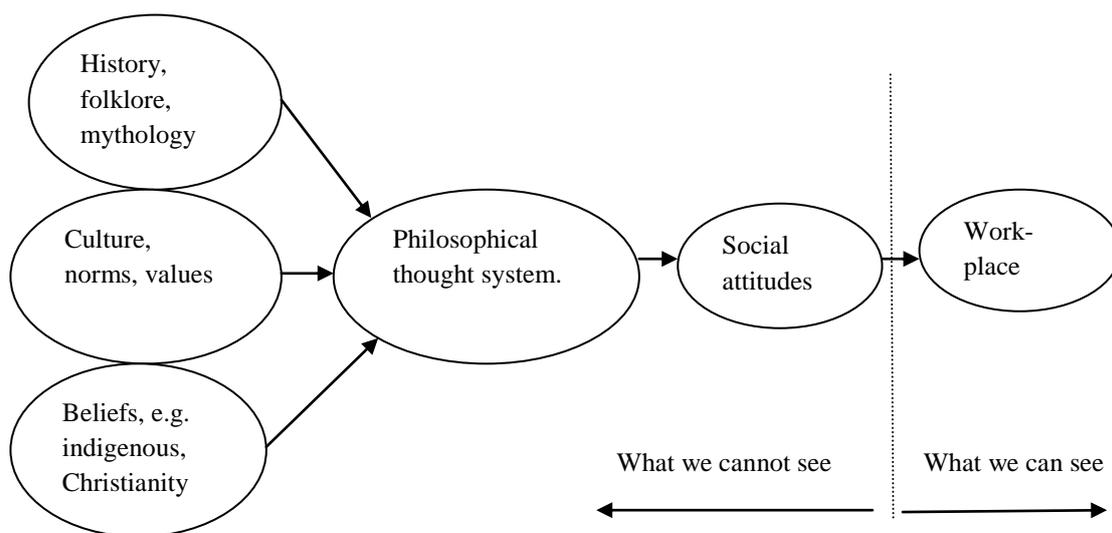
2.2.7 Applicability of 'Western' theories of control to organisations in Africa

The description of workers in Gouldner's (1954) research shows them to be collective in their relationships at work. This is in contrast to Hofstede's (1980) study that implies that workers in Britain are very individualistic. Indeed, Hofstede ranked Britain as third out of 50 on the individualism ranking for countries around the world. However, Hofstede's work was published close to 30 years after Gouldner's and thus the contrast may be a demonstration that societies, as well as approaches to management, change over time even, in a developed society. It would therefore be interesting to explore whether the situation in Uganda mirrors solidaristic community

characteristics in Gouldner’s example, since Africa is generally considered not as developed as the ‘West’. Are organisations in Uganda and Africa in general, practicing pre-bureaucratic models of managing and controlling employee performance because of the probable similarities between Gouldner’s case study of the 1950s and Africa? Would further industrialisation, civilisation and developmental transformation in African society consequently trigger a transition from pre-bureaucratic approaches to management to other forms of management?

Saleh (1985) has provided a helpful discussion on the possible impact of a country’s social and cultural background on the management techniques used within organisations in any given country. Managing organisations may be influenced by internal environmental factors such as technology, organisational size and structure as well top management’s philosophy of management. However, external societal factors such as politics, economics, education as well as cultural, and social environmental factors are claimed to be related to management techniques applied in a given country or region. Such external factors may be described as the ‘what we cannot see’ while the obvious internal factors are considered as the “what we can see” (Mangaliso, 2001). The figure below seeks to represent these factors.

Figure 2.1: The influences on workplace behaviour



Mangaliso, (2001); adapted by author 2015

Traditionally, management and OB discussions commonly cover three different levels of analysing organisations: individual, interpersonal/group, and organisational levels. The process of achieving corporate results is therefore, according to Martin and Fellenz, (2010 p.21), dependent on the management of individuals, interactions, as well as the managing of formal organisational structures. Managing individuals includes managing personalities and individual differences, abilities, skills, perceptions, motivation, and goals. On the other hand, managing interactions would involve taking care of leadership issues, group dynamics, communication and decision making, conflict and negotiation. This also involves directing the social systems including culture, power, influence and politics, relationships and informal networks. Finally, issues at the organisational level include organisational structure, technology, formal control and reward systems, HRM systems and practices. This description may imply that there is a reciprocal impact of all the facets on the operation and effectiveness of organisations. Moreover, it can also imply that management should maintain a certain degree of control over all these aspects, and thus, organisational effectiveness appears to be synonymous with managerial effectiveness.

Even though such explanations of what happens in management and OB appear rational, their universal applicability is always subject to questioning. This is especially the case when considering since their application in contemporary African organisations. For example, little is known about how employees' behavioural responses to the implementation of such theories are influenced by the "what we cannot see" elements of traditional African society.

Some management principles, for example Taylor's scientific management, tend to assume that workers are only interested in the economic aspects of their work. To assume that "self-interest is the ultimate determinant of behaviour and is maximised when employees earn as much as possible from contributing as little as possible" seems to be an underestimation of the complexities involved in human interrelations, attitudes and beliefs at work (Mangaliso, 2001 p.23). Would self-interest and maximum earning be the ultimate determinant of behaviour of workers in Africa? Furthermore, even though motivation theories may enhance the general understanding of human

behaviour, people tend to have complex individual personalities and thus, influences on their work behaviour may vary from one person to another. It has been argued that inter-country differences as well as the domestic multiculturalism within individual countries in Africa make African countries a collection of diverse ethnic tribes (see for example Ghebregiorgis and Karsten 2006; Adeleye 2011; Horwitz *et al*,2002; Gbadamosi 2003; Jackson 2002). Would managers in Africa then adopt the homogeneous concepts of motivation? Research shows that homogenisation of management practices is challenging in Africa (Gbadamosi, 2003). This thesis assumes that organisational effectiveness also depends on employees' behavioural responses to what managers do in an attempt to direct and control individual and group behaviour.

The use of market controls to manage employee performance through compulsion to perform well in order to keep temporary and insecure jobs is a relatively new way of controlling workers (Kalleberg, 2009). Whether managers in organisations based in Africa use market controls, either consciously or subconsciously to control workers is not clear in the literature. However, awareness of such trends may facilitate an understanding of the extent to which modes of employee performance management and control have been (if at all) shaped by precarious work arrangements in Africa. It has also been argued in contingency theories that employers use no single approach of control but adopt what is appropriate in a given situation (Verkerk, 1990). Are managers in African based organisations adopting what they consider to be relevant for managing workers in their organisations?

2.2.8 Summary

The approaches to employee performance management and control discussed above have been regarded as 'Western' management techniques in this thesis for having been developed from research and experiments carried out mainly in the United Kingdom and the United States of America. These 'Western' world rooted concepts seem to suggest that employee performance management and control is generally an objective practice which can be rationally designed and applied by management to control employees' work

behavior. Managers then need to be ‘in charge’ to plan and design appropriate ways of stimulating and directing appropriate employee work behavior to achieve desired individual and team performance. These philosophies are however silent about what the role of employees is in the process of ensuring that the appropriate work behaviour is exhibited for desired performance. There seems to be an implication that managers are solely in charge and employees are mere recipients of managers’ designs, plans and prompts. One of the objectives of this research was to find out what employee behavioral responses (if any) could result from such management prompts to control work behaviour at the case study organisation in Uganda.

Generally, authors of the ‘Western’ management techniques seem to have had certain assumptions about organisational life in common. These assumptions include:

1. The assumptions that the work process can be rationalised and all of the components including employee behaviour objectively managed and controlled to ensure desired employee performance.
2. They also seem to assume that employees are not distinctively different from other organisational resources and their work behaviour is an objective reality that can be control and directed towards management’s desired direction.
3. It also seems to be assumed that employees have open receptors for management’s prompts, are not likely to question attempts to control their work behaviour and that communication about what is required would be easy. Employees are therefore expected to be ‘obedient’ recipients of all strategies to motivate, reward, direct and control their performance.
4. There seems to be an assumption that societal cultural values and norms outside the boundaries of the organisation carry minimum influence on employee work behaviour within the organisation. Even advocates of cultural controls seem to have their discussions focused mainly on desired organisational culture rather than on the general societal culture away from work. The debate on precarious work conditions also seems to be focused on the limited jobs available for the employable population (an issue to do with the organisations’ operations in society) rather than on the general traditional values and norms of society.

5. There also seems to be minimum attention to group and team work and an assumption that individuals do their work on their own with minimum help from fellow workers. It is then assumed that individuals would value personal reward above group reward.

The 'Western' management models seem to generally reflect an objective individualistic, top-down approach to employee performance management and control. It may also be observed that the approaches reviewed above seem to have a stronger inclination to rationality and a tendency that implies that managers need to develop a calculated approach to all aspects of employee performance management and control including employee interpersonal relationships at work. The words 'rationality' and 'calculability' have therefore often been associated with bureaucratic management within the existent literature. Would it be accurate to then generally conclude that the 'Western' rooted approach to employee performance management and control is largely bureaucratic? The 'West' has been blamed for having, during the colonisation era, introduced individualistic and economic oriented bureaucratic methods of managing organisation in Africa - systems that were alien to the African communitarian, humanistic, non-hierarchical and cooperative society (Budhwar and Debrah, 2001; Arthur Jr. *et al.*, 2006; Nzelibe, 1986; Blunt and Jones, 1992). The next section further discusses debates on management in Africa and the role of 'Western' influences on the management of organisations in the continent.

2.3 HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN AFRICA

"Africa remains relatively under-researched in the fields of management, organization studies, human resources and international business. Much more attention has previously evolved around economics and foreign trade, perhaps reflecting the more dominant imperatives for a continent in which macro-economic challenges tend to over-shadow the dynamics of managing organisations" (Ken Kamoche, 2012)

Even though there could still be a wide range of unanswered questions on contemporary human resource management in Africa, a considerable number of studies have over the years been carried out on the topic of managing

organisations in Africa. The literature on managing organisations and society in Africa cuts across a wide range of disciplines, from economics, politics to development studies (Adeleye, 2011). This makes any review of this field, and the study of human resource management specifically, somewhat challenging. It is also generally agreed that debate about management in Africa gets complicated by the complexities and diversity of this continent and its people (Kamoche, *et al.*, 2004).

For the purpose of this thesis, the following sections will focus on two broad areas of literature which management research on Africa has tended (Kamoche, 1992) to draw on. These are the cultural management perspectives, and institutionalist accounts. Culturalist perspectives often point to the possible mismatch between mainstream management theories (and perspectives) rooted in ‘Western’ developed countries and the African culture (Gbadamosi 2003; Adeleye 2011; Jackson *et al* 2008; Budhwar and Debrah, 2001 and Kamoche *et al.*, 2004). Institutional approaches, on the other hand, tend to suggest that the simultaneous study of management at both firm and national level provides a better approach to examining human resource issues in Africa (Kamoche, *et al.* 2012). Ineffectiveness in Africa based organisations has been partly attributed to institutional and structural weaknesses (Kauda, 2010).

The literature review in this section thus discusses (1) culturalist perspectives on management in Africa generally and post-colonial debates, (2) the institutionalist analysis of management in Africa, (3) performance management and performance appraisal in Africa, (4) the historical development of institutions in Uganda, and HRM in Uganda, and finally (5) a summary of the current debates on HRM in Africa.

2.3.1 Culturalist perspectives on management in Africa and the post-colonial debates

Culturalist accounts on management in Africa tend to highlight three debates: the legacy of colonialism, the inefficiencies of organisations in Africa as a result of the importation of ‘Western management’ practices that are not

congruent with the African culture, and the extent of use of indigenous management practices (Dibben, *et al.*, 2013).

The legacy of colonisation

Various authors argue that prior to colonisation by the 'West', African institutions used indigenous methods and procedures for selecting, inducting and training people to work in the traditional institutions (Budhwar and Debrah, 2001). The history of Egyptian civilisation, for example, that led to the construction of great palaces, pyramids and fortified cities through communal efforts is assumed to suggest that management practices in Africa date back to the pre-industrial era (Nzelibe, 1986). The pre-colonial traditional indigenous methods were reportedly characterised by communitarian, humanistic, non-hierarchical and cooperative styles of management (Budhwar and Debrah, 2001; Arthur Jr. *et al.*, 2006; Nzelibe, 1986; Blunt and Jones, 1992). It has also been argued that the colonisation of Africa may have resulted in the introduction of monetisation into traditional economies, importing foreign organisations' systems that were based on bureaucratic principles, and thus changing the way in which people were managed (Budhwar and Debrah, 2001). Colonisation is then held responsible for introduction of bureaucratic, rule based systems that focused on economic gains of organisations at the expense of communitarian relational atmosphere previously valued by the African people (Budhwar and Debrah, 2001; Nzelibe, 1986). However, there is no consensus on the legacy of colonisation in Africa. Moreover there is debate that claims that 'Western' influence due to colonisation has not taken root but has been actively resisted in the contemporary post-colonial era (Prasad, *et al.*, 1997).

Postcolonial theory attempts to debate issues around power, control (of 'Western' countries) and resistance (of non-Western countries) in the period after the end of colonialism: a kind of neo-colonialism influence on non-'Western' countries. Authors of this theory argue that the structures laid by the 'West' for political, military, economic and cultural management of system during colonialism failed to deliver then and after colonisation and thus prompting resistance by non-'Western' countries (Prasad, *et al.*, 1997). The authors of this theory ask "whether (and in what ways and forms) modern

‘Western’ colonialism-and non-‘Western’ resistance to colonialism....may have some important implications for how we choose to manage, think about and work in contemporary formal organisations” (Prasad, 2003, p.4).

Postcolonial theory apparently also brings out claims of continuous ‘colonisation’ and Western influence on non-‘Western’ countries in the contemporary era of independence through the involvement of Western technocrats and entrepreneurs in the affairs of organisations in non-‘Western’ countries (Prasad, 2003). The effect of this continual influence is said to be damaging to non-Western countries that have been reluctant to reform to these influences because of much greater awareness than there used to be when the West officially colonised these countries. It is argued that there is mounting reluctance to conform to for example ideas ‘born in the USA’ concerning the nature of governance, human rights, and systems of macro-economic development (Blunt and Jones, 1997, p 6). Arthur *et al* (1995) however argues that post-colonial and Western continued influence in non-Western countries’ affairs specifically in Africa can only be associated with macro systems of governance. It is argued that the micro systems of organisations in developing countries may actually be interested in replicating ‘Western’ theory and practice in their management rather than resist it (Arthur, *et al.*, 1995). This has been termed as a crude idea that “West is best” (Kauda, 2010, p.10).

While the debate attempts to highlight the realities of continued influence of the West in management of organisations in non-Western countries, it is short of suggestions on ‘decolonisation’; a way of freeing non-Western countries from the influence of the ‘West’, if that would be a solution to ineffective management. Postcolonial theory also fails to explain how institutional practices of colonisers undermine the interests of the colonised. In general, post-colonial theory is limited in provision of insights into what happens around the manager-employee day-to-day relationships in contemporarily African organisations. The call by post-colonial theorists for the colonised to re-claim their culture and resist the ‘Western’ influence (Prasad, 1997) does not provide management in Africa with practical approaches to such a form of ‘liberation’ at the macro and micro level of management in Africa.

Inefficiencies of organisations in Africa

Some authors suggest that uncritical adoption of 'Western management' practices has in many ways contributed to organisational inefficiency and ineffectiveness in organisations in the developing context (Jaeger and Kanungo, 1990,p.1). It is argued that the scientific and industrial practices developed in the 'Western' world and imported to Africa were initially designed under the influence cultures and values of the 'Western' society (Ahiauzu, 1989). It is then assumed that such practices introduced through colonisation appeared strange and foreign and were therefore irrelevant to the African context with a different set of values and beliefs. For example Harvey (2002) argues that "just as Wonderland held many surprises for Alice during her adventure, Africa holds many surprises for 'Western' HRM, not only in the form of the alien nature of the 'rules, regulations and laws'.....but also in the extent to which many African organisations/employees ignore or bend the rules." (Harvey, 2002 p.1119). The African worker is described as one who does not separate their private/family life from his corporate life and considers modern industrial and bureaucratic systems as impersonal and alienating (Nzelibe, 1986; Arthur Jr, *et al.*, 1995). In fact, other authors claim that despite the introduction of foreign styles of managing people, the local culture for example in Nigeria still influences HRM in Africa (Azolukwam and Perkins, 2009). This is because African society is generally characterised by extended family, strong interrelation networks, communalism, mutual obligations and often collective decision-making considerations; characteristics that are the assumed opposite of 'Western' individualistic tendencies (Kamoche, *et al.*, 2004). Kamoche, *et al* (2004) also claim that the African societal values and beliefs often diffuse even into typical indigenous African based organisational life and obligate managers to satisfy many stakeholders including those that do not necessarily directly contribute to the wellbeing of the organisation and its strategic aims. The challenge is therefore the argument that African values and norms are incongruent with 'Western management' practices and models and therefore conclusions drawn suggesting that 'Western' rooted guidelines do not suit the African organisational context (Gbadamosi, 2003; Beugre and Offodile, 2001; Blunt and Jones, 1992).

Although it may be understandable to generally question the universality of management techniques developed and rooted in the ‘Western’ world cultural values and norms, to what extent their incongruence with the African culture can be blamed for organisational ineffectiveness in contemporary African based organisations is not clear. In other words, the existent literature seems to lack empirical evidence for how the colonial legacy and ‘Western’ influences are linked to organisational ineffectiveness in contemporary African based organisations.

The use of indigenous management practices

One of the suggested alternatives to ‘unsuitable foreign practices’ is to endeavour to develop organisational cultures in Africa which reflect indigenous values (Kamoche, *et al.*, 2004; Beugre and Offodile, 2001). The assumption is that indigenous management theories and practices would automatically be congruent with the African external environment of organisations in Africa (Jaeger and Kanungo, 1990). A key feature of indigenous practices includes the concept of Ubuntu (Dibben, *et al.*, 2013), an idea that implies ‘I am because we are’ and that matches society norms and values. Ubuntu appears within the broader cry for an African renaissance that seeks to reclaim the management norms, values and identity of Africans (Makgoba, 1999; Mbeki, 1998; Mudimbe, 1998; Nzelibe, 1986). The word Ubuntu comes from *Umntu* (in isiZulu) which means person or human being and it means the state of being a person or human being or humanity or humaneness (Mangaliso, 2001). However, Mangaliso (2001) goes on to explain that when it is used in Africa, it refers to acts of kindness, gentleness and other noble dealings with other human beings such that when one has a gentle personality and is fond of doing various acts of kindness, they are considered as having Ubuntu.

Since workplace behaviour may not come from a vacuum but may be a result of the general social beliefs, values, attitudes and the philosophical thought system, Ubuntu may be an influence to management and organisational life in Africa (Mbigi and Maree, 1995). The concept is by far the only idea suggested in literature on management in Africa that describes a management related African people’s value system and beliefs that may be

relied upon to explore the use of indigenous management practices in contemporary African based organisations. The theory has its foundation in two long traditional beliefs: firstly, it portrays the idea that communal interests are above those of the individual and, secondly, that human existence is dependent on interaction with others-‘a person is a person because of others.... .people are people through others’ (MacDonald, 2010, p142). Mangaliso (2001) argues that adopting the principles of Ubuntu in management of African based organisations would bring about a competitive advantage because of their assumed positive influence on various aspects of organisational life including: co-worker relationships, respect in the use of language and communication, thoughtfulness in decision making and respect for one’s time and the time of others. Ahiauzu (1989) also claims that such African traditional values are prominent in managing organisations in the purely traditional African societies on village firms and fishing ports, crafts, and traditional trading concerns, while the ‘Western’ foreign bureaucratic styles are applied in ‘modern’ organisations at the continent. Ahiauzu then goes on to claim that African workers were seen to be committed and to be very hard working in tradition workplaces where African traditional values were upheld and the indigenous African work organisational practices were adopted while they (African workers) appeared to feel highly estranged and uncommitted where ‘Western’ rooted management techniques were applied, and consequently not as hardworking as they were normally at a traditional work place (Ahiauzu, 1989, pp. 7&8).

Even though Ubuntu may sound appealing and noble, it has been criticised. It has not only been considered as complex and difficult to translate in English but also considered as lacking theoretical and analytical rigour to be taken as deliberate (McDonald, 2010). In fact McDonald argues that some of it is simply wishful and naïve, and may intensify individualism and inequality (McDonald, 2010, p.140). Some ontological questions about Ubuntu also compound the concept’s complexity. For example the fact that Africa is commonly plagued by political dictatorship and corruption questions the ‘Ubuntu’ of African political leaders. The other problem is that there is still no evidence in academic literature of successful implementation of Ubuntu philosophy in African based organisations and therefore may not be

relied upon to provide a realistic alternative to Western designed modes of employee performance management and control in Africa. This however does not dismiss the potential usefulness of Ubuntu philosophy and absence of its application in academic literature does not serve as a legitimate base to conclude that it cannot offer realistic management principles to managing organisations in Africa. The question that academic literature does not answer is whether the concept is exclusive to South Africa or applies to communities in the other parts of the continent.

Besides, Jackson (2002) also points out that the dynamics of managing organisations in Africa cannot escape interaction with foreign powers through globalisation and corporation because of progress of organisations in Africa as well as exposure to 'Western management' education. Consequently, hybridisation has also been put forward as a potential 'solution. This refers to the application of African management styles and 'Western' models simultaneously (Azolukwam and Perkins, 2009; Jackson, *et al.*, 2008 in Kamoche, *et al.*, 2012). However, these suggestions are based on research that has focused mainly on multinational firms in Africa. Leaving out the locally owned firms may capture only a partial picture of the African organisational context (Kamoche, *et al.*, 2012). As yet, this field of research has also apparently failed to include the use of hybrid forms of management in development organisations. Instead, there is a view that African based organisations adopting 'Western' practices are more efficient and effective and thus unending stream of donor funded management training programmes are delivered to African based organisations by Western consultants (Kauda, 2010, p.10). The problem however, Kauda notes, African managers revert to their pre-training behaviour after participating in several 'Western' oriented training programmes (Kauda, 2010). Insight into what comprises of pre-training behaviour, why they are reverted to, and the implications for organisational performance is required for better understanding of African managers' behaviour.

Again, although the discourse on cultural perspectives on management in Africa gives insight into the debate on managing organisations in Africa, most studies on HRM in Africa warn that practices can be better understood by bearing in mind the inter-country differences that exist in Africa (see for

example Ghebregiorgis and Kirsten 2006; Adeleye 2011; Horwitz *et al.*, 2002; Gbadamosi 2003; and Jackson 2002). This is because Africa is a continent of cultural diversity with these diversities reflecting the European colonisation legacy, the level of economic development, the state of political development, the cultural and ethnic groupings and religious affiliations (Adeleye, 2011). Thus, the homogeneous conceptualisation of African culture may be inappropriate given the inter-country differences as well as the domestic multiculturalism within individual countries making most African countries a collection of diverse ethnic tribes. This complexity about Africa makes it difficult to come up with a homogeneous analysis of the situation or a way forward.

The other problem with the cultural approach to analysing management issues in Africa is that it seems to focus mainly on the issues of cross-cultural management to address the concerns of multinational companies and how they can effectively operate in Africa. Ethnocentric concerns may be just one of the issues that still puzzle management of African based organisations.

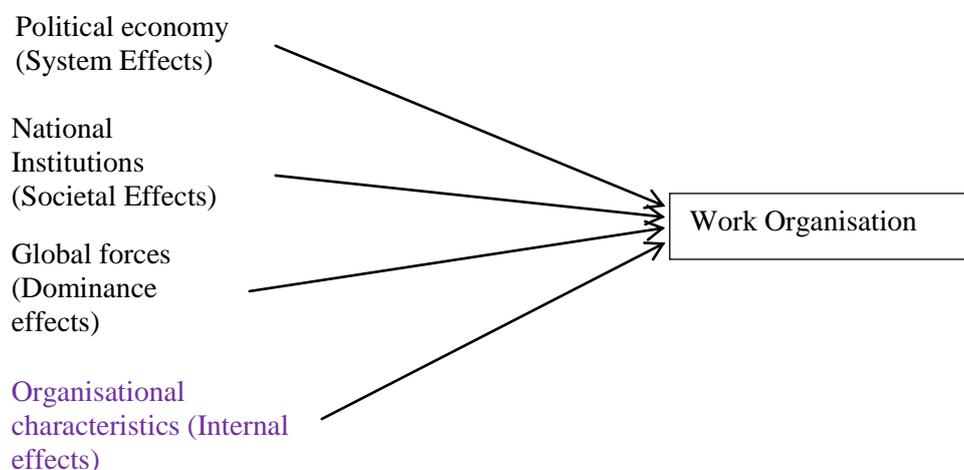
2.3.2. Institutional perspectives on management in Africa

Management in Africa, just like everywhere else in the world, requires strategies to handle both the internal and external environments of the organisation. This implies the management of the distinctive internal organisational processes and employee behaviour within the organisation as well as management of external environmental conditions or institutional traditions. The institutional traditions may include the financial system, the regulatory context, the industrial relations system, macro-economic performance and technology development (Jaeger and Kanungo, 1990; Wood, Dibben, Stride, and Webster, 2011p.32). Thus, as already described above, approaches to studies on management in Africa have been classified as those that either take on a *cultural perspective* or those that engage in *institutional analysis*. As outlined above, cultural perspectives have covered arguments on the legacy of colonisation, the inappropriateness of imported ‘Western management’ practices, suggestions of either blending of indigenous

managerial behaviour with ‘Western’ world rooted guidelines or the promotion of indigenous management practices such as Ubuntu to handle management issues in Africa.

Because of the economic and political changes that have occurred on the continent of Africa during the past two decades, some authors raise doubts about relying on assumptions underlying cultural accounts to understand management in Africa (see for example Dibben, *et al.*, 2013 on the limitations of culturalist perspectives). Kamoche *et al* (2012) has also observed that organisations in Africa have made significant progress in product innovation and service delivery, the creation and application of advanced technology, as well as in the adoption of progressive/innovative HRM practices (Kamoche *et al.*, 2012 p.1). And thus it may make sense that in order to fully understand human resource issues in Africa, it is vital to examine simultaneously governance at both firm and national levels. Smith and Meiskens’ (1995) model (in Thompson and McHugh, 1995 p.100) shows that there are three kinds of effects on work organisation: 1) political economy, 2) national institutions, and 3) global forces. What seems to be missing in this model is a possible fourth element: organisational internal characteristics that include the way in which HRM practices are carried out. This model has been reproduced below in figure 2 with a little modification to include the fourth effect: organisational characteristics.

Figure 2.2: Effects on work organisation



Source: *Smith and Meiskens in Thompson and McHugh, 1995 (Modified by author, 2015)*

(Thesis correction number. 5)

In terms of systems and societal effects, Thompson and McHugh (1995) explain that, externally, organisations operate within parameters set by politics and institutional frameworks in the countries or economic regions within which they operate. The political and institutional influences together comprise the system and societal effects on work organisation.

It is argued that firms tend to conform to the rules and games created by the political economy in which they operate (Thompson and McHugh, 1995). This conformity may be related, for example, to decisions regarding whether it is essential to serve the needs of specific markets or whether the necessity to standardise products and services to serve a wider market creates changes to work organisation.

Much has been written in recent years on institutional factors. External institutional frameworks that influence organisations include: the state; trade unions, collective bargaining, and participation; training and education systems; and security of tenure and social security (Dibben and Williams, 2012, p.571). The distinction between private and public or state enterprises, for example, may have implications on the objectives of the organisation, strategy formulation and implementation. It should also be noted that the socio-legal and political context differs from country to country in Africa with different regulatory systems, collective bargaining institutions and the relative power of stakeholder interests (Horwitz and Mellahi, 2009, p364). Understanding the impact of institutions on people management is considered important because trade unions, labour legislation and other national institutional frameworks may impact on human resources and infrastructural development (Jackson *et al.*, 2013). This consequently influences HRM practices. Approaches to institutional analysis include rational hierarchical approaches, pluralist or stakeholder approaches and employment relations (Wood and Horwitz, 2015). Rational hierarchical approaches describe institutions as providers of incentives and disincentives, viewed in relation to property rights and their protection (Wood *et al.*, 2012). These structures and how they influence the business environment have been covered in mainstream economics journals. Such approaches generally make no assumptions about the relationship between strong property and weak

employee rights (Wood, *et al.*, 2012, pp.27-29). Pluralist or stakeholder approaches to institutional analysis acknowledge both common and differing interests that exist between employees and employers and how these affect people management and employment relations. The argument is that these interests are reconcilable through collective bargaining and negotiated compromise (Wood and Horwitz, 2015). For example, conflict may arise if managers are perceived by employees as being concerned about the interests of the stakeholders than their (employees') interests. Pluralists, however, see such conflict as normal and various interests as subject to regulation by formal legal institutions such as labour courts and employment standards laws (Wood and Horwitz, 2015). The problem with this approach is the assumption that countries in Africa have effective and coherent legal systems. This might not be true for Africa, a continent that has been associated with ineffective institutional systems.

Employment relations are based on institutional analysis and highlight the benefits of meaningful compromises between managers and workers to HRM. These compromises are possible, according to Thelen (2001 in Wood and Horwitz, 2015, p.22), if there is cooperation over the organisation of work, collective bargaining and strong worker voice, continuous skill development and long term career planning. However, Wood and Horwitz (2015) argue that multinational firms operating in emerging markets hire expatriates in key positions, and this can limit the training and career progression of the local workforce. Consequently, it is not necessarily the case that all workers gain from the compromises made.

The third element in the model, Global forces, includes interrelated influences on organisations as a result of the global interconnectedness between countries. For example, international employment law, single currency policies and flexible international labour movement policies often have an effect on work organisation (King and Lawley, 2013).

The fourth element introduced in this model, i.e., organisational characteristics, refers to the internal aspects unique to the organisation on which work organisation depends. They may include the size of the organisation, management philosophy, organisational ethos and values, as well as the nature of the product or service provided. For example, the

management of scientists may require a different leadership style to organisations that are not necessarily involved in R&D (Cohen, Duberley, and McAuley, 1999).

2.3.3 Performance management and performance appraisal in Africa

In general, the literature outlined above has covered ‘management in Africa’, ‘employment relations’, or ‘HRM in Africa’ generally and has rarely focused on specific functions/aspects of HRM. A few attempts, for example Mpabanga in Kamoche *et al* (2004), have been made to specifically study employee performance management in organisations in Africa. But even then, Mpabanga covered just one aspect of employee performance management: performance appraisal. This literature has also focused on multinationals in an attempt to understand how foreign companies can successfully operate in Africa. Siebers and Kamoche’s (2013) unpublished work on cultural values and its impact on management practices in Africa’s private sector, for example, focuses on a foreign Chinese managed company in Kenya.

The literature on performance appraisal in organisations in Africa (one aspect of employee performance management and control) that does exist highlights the traditional bureaucratic top-down nature of activities including job analysis by supervisors to develop appropriate job descriptions through which workers are informed of the expectations and targets of the job, procedures for monitoring performance and review at the end of a predetermined period (Kamoche *et al.*, 2004). According to Mpabanga in Kamoche *et al* (2004, p. 30), for example, performance appraisal in Botswana’s parastatal organisations involves the development of specific job descriptions, performance expectations and appraisal procedures as strict guidelines for performance management and control in various ministries and departments. Employees are then rated using various techniques provided by the directorate. The techniques include rating scale, critical incident analysis, management by objectives, employee competency and employee comparison. The purposes of performance appraisal include assessment of actual performance against set targets, employee development, a guide to new

responsibilities, as well as wages and salary increments (Kamoche *et al.*, 2004).

In terms of performance management and control, it appears from the existing literature that the methods used within some African countries might be conceptualised as ‘bureaucratic’ (Kamoche *et al.*, 2004). Historical participative and communal practices may have been replaced by rule-based bureaucratic practices of employee performance management (Kamoche 1992; Mamdani, 2011: 1973). Yet, knowledge on the extent to which factors such as a move to industrialisation, globalisation pressures, multinational corporation investments and management education have affected the predominant bureaucratic management styles across in some African countries is still limited (Adeleye, 2011). This however is contradicted by other accounts that claim that standard management tools do not work in typical African based organisations because of the extended family influence, patriarchal, and often collective decision-making tendencies in Africa (Kamoche, *et al.*, 2004).

2.4 UGANDA: POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CONTEXT

This research study focuses on a development organisation based within Uganda. It is therefore important to briefly consider the unique country context for this research. Uganda is geographically located in Eastern Africa and shares borders with Kenya, South Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Tanzania. East Africa is part of the African region commonly referred to as Sub-Saharan Africa. Although World Bank data put Uganda’s population at 37.58 million in 2013, Uganda’s population secretariat more current online records indicate a total population of 34.9 million in 2015 (The National Population Secretariat, 2015). The 34.9 million figure was established by the August 2014 housing census by the Uganda bureau of statistics, implying a drop of about 3 percent over a period of 1 year.

2.4.1 Historical development of institutions in Uganda

The country is a former colony of Britain and obtained independence in 1962. Uganda's economy is said to have been one of the most promising in sub-Saharan Africa between 1962 and 1970 (Kuteesa *et al.*, 2009; Wiegratz, 2006; Bahiigwa, 2003). During these early years of independence, the manufacturing sector was relatively well-developed with inputs from agriculture, the economy was stable and Uganda had the fifth highest GDP per capita (USD 512) in Eastern and Southern Africa, after South Africa, Rhodesia, Mauritius, and Zambia (Kuteesa, *et al.*, 2009).

Economic mismanagement and civil war that followed Idi Amin's coup in 1971, led to the decline of Uganda's economy with a 42 percent per capital decline by 1979 when Amin was overthrown (Kuteesa *et al.*, 2009). The eight years of brutality, war and civil war, had turned one of Africa's most prosperous economies into one of the poorest. The governments that followed Amin's regime (Obote II in 1980-1986 and Museveni's government 1986) inherited a torn apart country with a shattered economy, devastated physical infrastructure, and an exiled professional population (Wiegratz, 2006). Wiegratz (2006) argues that it was not until the early 1990s that the country experienced recovery, and also suggests that this was a consequence of the then government's reforms. These reforms entailed the implementation of the comprehensive Ten-Point programme (1990) and the Poverty Eradication Action Programme (PEAP), drawn up in 1997 and revised twice in 2000 and 2004. The recently drawn National Development Plan (NDP, 2010) seeks to improve social-economic development indicators which include: raising average per capita income levels, improving the labour force distribution in line with sectoral GDP shares, raising the country's human development indicators, and improving the country's competitiveness to levels comparable to middle income countries (Uganda' National Development Plan, 2010). Under the plan, Uganda aims to be a middle income country by 2040.

2.4.2 Overview of the Ugandan economy

Uganda's economy depends on Agriculture, a sector which employs 70 percent of the labour force, accounts for about 40 percent of the total Gross Domestic Product and over 70 percent of total exports (World Bank overview on Uganda, 2015). Most Ugandans live in rural areas and depend mainly on agriculture for their livelihood. The country embarked on liberalisation of the economy in the late 1980s and registered real gross domestic product (GDP) growth average of 7 percent in the 1990s and the 2000s. However this trend slowed down to an average of 5 percent in 2006 onwards because of political instability caused by the civil war in the norther part of the country (World Bank overview on Uganda, 2015). The economy is however expected to grow at a rate of approximately 5.6 percent.

The 2015 PricewaterhouseCoopers Ltd insights and analysis of Uganda's background to the 2014/2015 national budget summaries the recent economic indicators on Uganda as follows:

Exchange rate

The exchange rate, a key determinant of economic competitiveness, had remained stable over the past years with overall marginal appreciation of the Uganda Shilling of about 2.2% against the US Dollar.

(PricewaterhouseCoopers Ltd Economic performance report, 2015)

Inflation

Recent economic indicators include a year-on-year rise of inflation up to 1.6 percent in March 2015 from 1.3 percent 2 months earlier; and an 11.1 percent drop in the Business Tendency Index which measures the perception and expectations of different stakeholders have about doing business in the economy. Inflation fluctuations were attributed to movements in food prices resulting from drops in harvests as a result of prolonged drought periods.

However, the investment climate was still described as stable with the government committing that maintaining low inflation continued to be a key objective in their macroeconomic policy (PricewaterhouseCoopers Ltd Economic performance report, 2015).

Interest rates

Lending rates had been according PricewaterhouseCoopers Ltd analysis unstable over the past years leading to the 2014/2015 national budget. Even though lending rates had dropped from 23.15% in July 2013 to 21.65% in April 2014, the private sector still considered interest rates from commercial banks uncomfortably high (PricewaterhouseCoopers Ltd Economic performance report, 2015).

Proposed changes on the legal aspects of LGBT rights in 2014 led some development partners into reducing or withholding completely their funding budget getting the country into fiscal risks associated with low revenues in the face of reduced aid inflows (PricewaterhouseCoopers Ltd Economic performance report, 2015). Uganda's economy however has great potential because of significant natural resources including the recent discovery of oil and gas reserves.

2.4.3 Recent political context

The World Bank summarised Uganda's most current political context as follows: "Following the promulgation of the 1995 constitution, President Museveni was elected to a first term in 1996. He was re-elected in a contested election in 2001. The constitutional amendments approved by a referendum in July 2005 introduced multi-partyism, and Parliament lifted the two, five-year presidential term limits, which allowed President Museveni to seek a third term in office during the elections in 2006. On February 28, 2011 President Museveni was re-elected to yet another five-year term and his party enjoys an overwhelming majority in the 375-member Parliament. The next elections are scheduled to take place in February 2016" (World Bank overview on Uganda, 2015).

2.4.4 Human capital development initiatives and other structural reforms

Earlier in 1997 Uganda introduced Universal Primary Education (UPE) policy as one of the government's tools to achieve poverty reduction and human development. School fee for primary education was abolished under this

policy and it is reported that, as the result, enrolment rose from 77 percent in 1996 to 137 percent in 1997 (Essama-Nssah, 2008). Human resource development in terms of education is considered crucial in attempt to address challenges of poverty and unstable economic growth (Wiegratz, 2006). However, deficits in skills, capabilities, experience technology use and desirable business practices are according to Wiegratz, (2006) the shortcomings limiting Uganda's progress. It is debatable whether these can be achieved through primary education. Moreover, many challenges of UPE have been identified including overcrowded classrooms, low teacher motivation, reduced parents' participation in the affairs of the school and ultimately increasing drop out levels (Nishimura, *et al.*, 2009). In fact, the 137 percent increase in enrolment reported in 1997 had dropped to 107 percent in 2011 (World Bank Data, 2015). Higher education is considered as a more strategic approach to human capital development and poverty eradication (Bloom, *et al.*, 2006). However, Uganda's priority to basic primary education led to reluctance to finance higher education and introduced fees payment in public higher institutions as a form of cost sharing (Musisi and Nakayiwa-Mayiga, 2010). Moreover, the country loses most of its trained manpower mainly through brain drain (Nishimura, *et al.*, 2009). Some factors that drive Ugandan professionals away from home include a lack of employment opportunities and limited avenues for personal growth (Nishimura, *et al.*, 2009). This trend seem to deprive Uganda of opportunity to generate own human capital to tackle the countries development challenges. There thus seems to still be a need to design and commit to clear cut strategies for human capital development through higher education if Uganda is to realise its objective of significantly improving social economic development indicators outlined in the national development plan. The OECD (2006) report refers to this human capital development as 'country capacity'.

“Adequate country capacity is one of the critical missing factors in the current efforts to meet the Millennium development Goals (MDGs). Development efforts in many of the poorest countries will fail, even if they are supported with substantially increased funding, if the

development of sustainable capacity is not given greater and more careful attention ” (OECD 2006:3)

Other macroeconomic and structural reforms implemented after the economic decline and civil wars of the 1970s and early 1980s include trade liberalisation and privatisation of the economy, inflation control, increased public spending, and establishment of an inspectorate of Government: an independent institution charged with the responsibility of eliminating corruption, abuse of authority and of public office (Reinikka and Collier, 2001). However, like many African countries, Uganda is still plagued by public sector corruption, poor enforcement of contracts, and the deficiencies in the physical infrastructure which undermine performance and service delivery in institutions in Uganda (Uganda’s National Development Plan, 2010). Some authors seem to suggest that political will to actualise the reforms is inadequate (Ramadhan, 2014). However, a serious lack of human resource development is an issue across most African countries and thus the continent’s human capital potential remains largely locked (Kamoche, *et al.*, 2004).

2.4.5 Colonisation and HRM in Uganda

As in many African countries, inherited colonial bureaucracies and authoritarian practices of management replaced the participative and communal practices that originally characterised management styles in Uganda (Mamdani, *From citizen to refugee: Uganda Asians come to Britain*, 1973). It is argued that most public organisations in Africa are as a result of colonial British influence managed through paper based rules and Uganda is not an exception (Kagaari *et al.*, 2010). Mamdani (1973) asserts that colonial rule in Uganda deliberately dismantled the communal highly social patterns in society by creating organisational and social structures that emphasised racial and ethnic supremacy. Society was during colonisation period organised in such a way that the British portrayed themselves as the dominant race. The Asians, who originally came into Uganda under British auspices as soldiers in the imperial army and labourers to work as administrators, build the railways, work on plantations and some as traders were considered to be inferior to the

British but superior to indigenous Ugandans (Mamdani, 1973). Individual Ugandan tribes were also made to believe they were superior/inferior over each other depending on loyalty levels to the colonial masters (Mamdani 1973). This was, according to Mamdani (1973) reflected in segregation of places of residence, conditions of work, institutions for socialisations and social services. To describe the root of Idi Amin's racist act of the Asian expulsion from Uganda, Mamdani (1973, p.15) states that "it was not the era of independence, but that of dependence – of colonialism – that politicised race, tribe and religion in Uganda. This was the kernel of truth in the theory that colonialism rested on the basis of divide and rule." Racial superiority attitudes, class, ethnic discrimination and bureaucratic systems that come with such a divide have persisted in Uganda's public organisational structures as the formally recognised way of administration (Mamdani 1973).

On the other hand, 'old habits die hard', and so organisations in Uganda may still reflect Kamoche *et al.*, (2004) description of African organisations as those that are characterised by extended family, strong interrelation networks, communalism, mutual obligations and often collective decision-making. These however may not constitute the formal organisation or the 'expected' way of behaviour. Uganda's population of about 34 million people is comprised of a diverse and rich cultural heritage, which includes sixty-five indigenous communities with unique characteristics (Kagaari *et al.*, 2010). It is believed that the daily behaviour and conduct of individuals or as groups in Uganda are intrinsically linked to, and determined by their cultures (Kagaari *et al.*, 2010). These cultures impact on the informal structures of organisations as it is believed that the social contexts in which organisations operate facilitate the informal work environment (see section on cultural controls above).

Due to colonial influences, bureaucracy may therefore be the popular mode of management in Uganda and in African public organisations generally. Work practices are formally organised through formal rules, disciplinary measures and hierarchical administration for efficiency. On the other hand Kamoche *et al.*, (2012) argue that African organisations have embraced contemporary human resource practices and technology to cope with globalisation and competition. This study set out to understand how

applicable (true) this claim is at the case study organisation in Uganda, and to what extent bureaucratic styles have been supplemented and/or substituted by more contemporary modes of employee performance management.

The parliament of Uganda is mandated under article 40 of the 1995 constitution of the Republic of Uganda to enact laws governing the rights of persons at work. Some of these rights include the right to work under satisfactory, safe and healthy conditions, to ensure equal payment for equal work without discrimination; and to ensure that every worker is accorded rest and reasonable working hours. However, it was only until 2006, eleven years after the constitution was adopted that the first enabling acts were enacted by parliament. These included the Employment Act (2006); the Labour Unions Act (2006); the workers compensation act (2006); the occupational safety and health act; and the Labour Disputes (arbitration and settlement) Act (2006). In 2008, two other laws, the Public Service (negotiating, consultative and disputes settlement) Act (2008) and the Business, Technical, Vocational and Education Training Act (2008) were enacted. These employment laws do not necessarily provide guidelines or mechanisms for employee participation in decision making save distributive negotiations. Neither do they include a comprehensive law or workplace policy to guide successful management of employees' day-to-day operations. Employment related issues are handled by the ministry of gender, labour and social development.

2.5 LIMITATIONS OF EXISTENT HRM IN AFRICA DEBATES

It is generally agreed that understanding of the complexity of managing people in Africa is paramount as the continent has great prospects and attracts investors because of its abundant natural resources and potential market (Arthur Jr, *et al* 2006). However, even though the number of publications addressing human resource management in Africa has grown exponentially in the last few years, there are few empirical studies demonstrating an understanding, from the employees' perspective, the specifics or practical details of the African people at work in African based organisations.

For instance, most research resulting in the cultural perspective and post-colonial debates that claim incongruence of the African cultural context with 'Western management' practices and models (Gbadamosi, 2003; Harvey,

2002; Blunt and Jones, 1992; Jackson, 2002; Beugre and Offodile, 2001) has methodological limitations. It has also been described as “still poor in theory” (Dibben, Wood and Mellahi, 2013 unpublished conference paper) and provides contradicting alternative management approaches.

Methodologically, this body of research is limited in two ways: firstly, the popular focus on multinational firms as case study organisations and limited study of locally owned private and public organisations may not provide a representative picture of management of people in Africa. The focus on multinationals was (and still is) driven by the arrival of foreign investors. Researchers feel compelled to provide solutions for their various issues around ineffectiveness of African based organisations. In fact, the contemporary drive involves suggestions to refocus management in Africa research from an Africa - Europe model to an Africa - Asia relationship in order to respond to the recent arrival of a new set of investors from Asia (Kamoche, 2011; Kamoche *et al.*, 2012). The recent inflow of Chinese and other eastern countries businesses and development partnerships in Africa seem to drive this research focus. This is a debatable discourse in its own right as the claims of possible similarities in cultural values between Africa and Asia still need to be substantiated with empirical evidence. The emphasis on foreign investors leaves the deep indigenous issues of African organisations not totally researched. Secondly, most research highlighting the cultural perspective of management in Africa focuses on performance of organisations, evaluation of democracy, economic growth, macro-level policies and macro level institutions such as the judiciary, etc. This body of research narrowly focuses around cross-cultural management issues. This loses the element of looking at issues around management or ‘control’ of performance of individual employees and a micro level focus. Again, although most of these studies tend to doubt claims on universal interventions and approaches of employee management in organisations and highlight the importance of context, more emphasis is made on the implications of foreign designed models on management styles and less focus on resultant employee work behaviours.

Again, Kamoche *et al.*, (2012) argue that theoretical sophistication of cultural perspectives to management in Africa have not quite kept pace with

the actual practice of management in Africa. Organisations in Africa have in past decades made significant progress in terms of product innovation and service delivery as well as the creation and application of advanced technology (Kamoche *et al.*, 2012). This could have accelerated adoption of newer and innovative HRM practices; a possibility that requires further research.

The last limitation of the various perspectives on management in Africa is that of provision of contradicting alternative management approaches as solutions for issues pertaining to managing people and performance in Africa based organisations. While a significant body of research on Africa promotes indigenous management practices such as Ubuntu, others promote the fusion of 'Western' with indigenous management practices or hybridisation. While the former advocate for indigenous approaches that are aligned to local norms and values, the later argue that contemporary organisations in Africa are exposed to foreign influence and cooperation and thus need management approaches that are hybrids between 'Western' and African modes of management. Questions about how these propositions may work in practice still remain unanswered. In fact, to say that there is an indigenous technique of managing people in African based organisation contradicts assertions that Africa is a diverse continent with broad regional and country specific difference. Nyambegera (2002) points out that strategy for managing ethnic diversity the multi-ethnic societies of sub-Saharan Africa for example is still lacking. Empirical research on diversity management in Africa may advance knowledge on management in Africa.

Specificity and focus on individual issues of management of people in Africa such as motivation, reward, conflict management, and teamwork may advance the debate to better capture the details of realities of HRM in Africa. Empirical findings in this thesis provide part of this specific information on one of the aspects of HRM: employee performance management and control. The study advances existing management in Africa literature by providing information on: (1) employee behavioural responses to 'imported' models of employee performance management and control, (2) informal processes that facilitate social negotiation of control in the midst of formally designed guidelines rooted in foreign thought and practice, and (3) cultural values

influencing employee work behaviour and responses to 'imported' modes of employee performance management and control. This also was an opportunity to study management in Africa from the employees' perspective rather than the popular focus on the managers' perspective. A major contribution of this study is thus the emphasis of the importance of a clear understanding of the traditional influenced behaviour of both managers and employees in the process of managing and controlling employee performance.

Generally, there is a call for management in Africa research to progress from concerns of cultural difference with the 'West' to possibilities of working with the Africa-Asian apparent similarities as well as suggestions for a greater focus on the institutional debates. Both commitments would be facilitated by a clearer and more deeper understanding of management in Africa from the employees' perspective: their perception of management control, implications of behavioural responses and engagement in the day-to-day work processes, attitudes to work, commitment to peers at work, as well as their role in managing own work performance. This provides specific contextual circumstances on which appropriate theoretical foundations can be built to advance strategies for practice in managing organisations in Africa.

2.6 SUMMARY

Key debates on management in Africa include: 1) discussion on the legacy of colonisation, 2) the incongruence of the African culture with 'Western management' styles, 3) suggestions on alternative approaches to management to those that originated from the 'West' and 4) the recent focus on the Africa-Asia cultural similarities.

Some authors argue that colonialism is responsible for disrupting communitarian, humanistic, non-hierarchical and cooperative pre-colonial indigenous models of management. In other words, indigenous African management practices have been substituted by 'Western' individualistic bureaucratic styles. And thus bureaucratisation of the organisations in Africa is claimed to be due to colonial influence. However, the extent to which this contributes to organisational ineffectiveness in Africa is unclear. Besides, other accounts contradict this debated: There is an impression in literature that standard 'Western' rooted management procedures are not followed in

practice but resisted. Furthermore, others claim a tendency to think that “West is best” (Kauda, 2010, p.10).

Incongruence of the African culture with ‘Western management’ styles also stands out as an issue in the management in Africa debate. It is argued that Africa is characterised by communitarian characteristics and strong informal ties that make attempts to apply ‘Western’ rooted individualistic standard management procedures futile. However, empirical evidence of these claims is limited. There isn’t enough focus on local African owned organisations as case studies and such arguments are yet to draw from studies that focus on the employees’ perspective. This debate also covers a narrow range of cross-cultural management issues. Besides, assumptions underlying the cultural perspective to management in Africa raise doubts given the economic and political changes that have occurred at the continent during the last decades. It is therefore imperative to simultaneously examine management in Africa at both firm and national levels (Kamoche, *et al.*, 2012 p.1).

Suggestions on alternative approaches to management to those that originated from the ‘West’ are centred on the hybridisation vs. use of indigenous tailored management practices debate. There are propositions of either the fusion of ‘Western’ with indigenous management practices, and/or the promotion of indigenous management practices such as Ubuntu to improve the efficiency of African based organisations. However, issues around management in Africa go beyond and are not limited to mere cross-cultural management issues. Besides, promotion of indigenous practices does not provide management with ideas on how to successfully/objectively handle expectations from a range of people that come with close knit ties. These practices are also yet to be scientifically tested.

There is recent focus on the possibility of how the Africa-Asia cultural similarities may offer new prospects for managing organisations in Africa. This is based on the assumption that Asian countries may hold similar cultural values and norms as those held in Africa.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.0 OVERVIEW

This chapter describes firstly the philosophical assumptions underlying this research and the consequent research design and methodological decisions made to address the research questions. It then explains in section 3.2 why and how ethnography and grounded theory, and particular forms of qualitative research approach, was adopted. The chapter then goes on to explain the context of the research including the case study organisation and a brief description the participants (section 3.3). Section 3.4 provides a description of the data collection methods that were used while 3.5 explains the process of data analysis that was undertaken in order to generate the findings. The chapter concludes in section 3.6 with a discussion on reflexivity, pointing out my field role and the implications that this had for data collection and analysis.

3.1 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY: ONTOLOGICAL AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

This study is underpinned by an ontological perspective that can be described as a combination of a realist and, interpretivist approach. Moreover, the epistemological approach is interpretivist, and arguably neo-positivist in that care was taken to provide an audit trail of the research undertaken. Planning and designing a research project involves deciding in the early stages of the project what the research is specifically about, not only in terms of setting the research aim, objectives and research questions but also in clarifying the essence of the inquiry (Mason, 2002). Clarifying the essence of one's research involves outlining the researcher's philosophical position on ontology and epistemology:

1. In terms of ontology, an underlying theme is 'what am I trying to understand'? There are two aspects that are important to consider. One is the researcher's assumptions about whether there independently exists a

social reality for them to discover, or whether 'reality' is created. A second is regarding the assumptions about social action. This includes questions about what derives action and whether behaviour of the actor is (or is not) influenced by their understanding of the context in which they operate (Guba and Lincoln, 1994).

2. Secondly, the researcher clarifies how they can know what does (and does not) constitute knowledge (Johnson and Duberley, 2000 p.4). This involves answering the question of whether they can (and how they can) obtain knowledge about the phenomenon under their inquiry. Answers to these questions constitute the epistemological stance of the researcher.

The aspects above are then expected to provide the essence of the research or inquiry and the basis for crafting the research. In other words, the process of designing a research project is based on the philosophical assumptions of the researcher or their ontological and epistemological positions (Morgan and Smircich, 1980; Cunliffe, 2010). Subjectivists for example view "reality as imagined and therefore a product of the human mind; believe human beings are autonomous, give meanings to their surroundings and are creative [ontological position]; that knowledge is personal and experiential [epistemological position]; and therefore research methods need to explore individual understandings and subjective experiences of the world" (Cunliffe, 2010, p.649). In other words, the researcher may have to be an active participant of the research process to 'get as close as possible' to the reality or phenomenon being studied. On the other hand, objectivists assume that "reality is a concrete given, something that is external to, imposing itself on, and even determining individual behaviour, [ontological position] and that knowledge is similarly "real" in the sense of having observable and measurable regularities, laws, and patterns"[epistemological position] (Cunliffe, 2010, p.649). In such a case, the researcher holds an assumption of an objective reality to be investigated and he/she is detached from such a reality as a passive observer (Cunliffe, 2010)

My position is, broadly speaking, as Alvesson and Skoldberg, (2009) argue, that human activity produces things/knowledge about a social phenomenon. And such actions and behaviour can then be effectively relied on to study and understand management practices in organisations (Alvesson

and Skoldberg, 2010). The process of inquiry in this research was therefore influenced by the following specific philosophical assumptions:

Firstly, in terms of my ontological position, I anticipated that people do what they do because of their subjective interpretation of the environment in which they operate. Laing (1967) argues that there is an ontological discontinuity between human beings and objects. People experience the world, argues Laing (1967: p.53), while objects behave in the world. Human behaviour or actions are therefore meaningful because they can show how different people interpret influences and experiences from their environment or the social situation in which they are located. So would the participants of this study understand the context in which they operated? And would such an understanding and the subjective interpretation of their context drive their work behaviour? The answer for these two ontological questions was a yes. This study therefore took an interpretivist approach with an assumption that behaviour is grounded in actors' interpretations of the social situation in which they are located (Gill and Johnson, 2010 p.155). It was therefore important to gain access to the participants' day-to-day activities to understand how they were making meaning of the influences around them. The other ontological assumption was that the social phenomenon under inquiry independently existed and I could attempt to reflexively discover it and report. A realist approach was therefore taken because of this anticipation (Guba and Lincoln, 1985).

This research was therefore based on an interpretivist ontological position which says that: actions and behaviour by human beings carry meaning of the subjective interpretations of their context. And thus employees' and managers' day-to-day actions and behaviour (assumed to be a result of their interpretation of what was going on around them) were meaningful components of organisational life. Such actions and behaviour could then be relied on to study and understand employee performance management and control at PAL. It was also expected that such actions and behaviours would not necessarily be programmed by another party but flow naturally and could differ from one individual to another. This was the basis for questioning the relevance of 'Western' management practices to an African organisational context since actions and work behaviours may not be universally the same

everywhere. Actions and behaviours studied in this research were thus taken as those ‘flowing naturally’ from the interpretation of the African context in which PAL operated. Also, by covering ‘control’ this research implied that the process of employee performance management would involve an attempt to regulate and direct the employees’ work behaviour. Such an attempt would then trigger some form of response (or resistance) from some people depending on how they interpreted their managers’ attempts to control them. It was assumed that the ‘attempt’ by managers to regulate work behaviour and the ‘response’ by employees at PAL would reflect aspects of the African organisational context and carry meaning for the practice of employee performance management and control at PAL. Human subjectivity, which is often excluded in deductive quantitative methodologies, is recognised in this study as a vital element to understanding: (1) individual employee behavioural responses to employee performance management and control, and (2) informal processes and the social negotiation of control.

Secondly, the epistemological assumption of this study was that I could attempt to control the impact of my presence and identity in this study to collect and analyse data reflexively. An interpretivist stance was therefore taken and assumptions made that understanding and interpretation of participants’ behaviour was possible. Various attempts were also made to consider my field role and minimise (not fully eliminate) my subjective judgements to as much as possible discover and mirror/report what was happening at PAL. A neo-empiricist approach was therefore taken to reflexively gather and analyse data while acknowledging and attempting to minimise my role as a researcher and maintain naturalness (Maanem, 1995). It is also sometimes possible for people to verbally give information about their actions that contrasts with their actual behaviour. Epistemologically, it is suggested that in such cases legitimate knowledge can be obtained through methodological triangulation which includes among other things use of multiple data collection methods (Johnson and Duberley, 2000). Consequently, different data collection methods were used for this study to gain more comprehensive knowledge and insights into the practice of employee performance management and control at PAL.

Unlike positivistic approaches that set out to falsify or challenge competing hypotheses, this study does not attempt to prove or refute prior theories about management in Africa, neither does it claim generalisation or replication of findings over the whole continent. Reducing human experience and behaviour to quantifiable variables is difficult. Therefore, analysing and interpreting meanings of the research participants' behaviour was depended on to describe, critique and explain the practice of employee performance management and control at the case study organisation in Uganda.

Table 3.1: Research approach, assumptions and methods

| Research philosophy | Status | Assumptions | Method of inquiry |
|--|----------------|---|---|
| <i>Ontology:</i> Social phenomena exist independently of the researcher and it can be discovered. And, actions are a result of subjective interpretation of the environment in which the actors operate. Social influences impact the interpretations of the actors. | Realist | The workers' action and behaviour at PAL existed independently of what I thought, and I could discover them. | Qualitative approach for deeper interpretation of findings to obtain detailed explanations. A combination of ethnographic and grounded theory techniques for data collection and analysis. |
| | Interpretivist | Behaviour and actions of workers at PAL resulted from their subjective interpretation and response to the African organisational context in which they worked. | |
| <i>Epistemology:</i> An attempt can be made to minimise (not eliminate completely) the impact of the researcher's influence on the research process to reflexively discover knowledge about a social reality. | Neo-empiricist | Knowledge about managers' and employees' behaviour could be obtained by collecting and analysing data reflexively. An attempt could be made to minimise dangers of ethnocentrism and maintain a balance between insider and yet outsider roles. | |
| | Interpretivist | | |

Source: *Developed by author, 2015*

Unlike pure positivistic approaches that are out to test already existing theories or hypotheses, this study was not about falsifying or challenging prior theories about employee performance management in Africa. This study did

not also go into getting participants examine their own inter-subjective understanding of the practice of employee performance management at their organisation. A social constructionist approach to research would suggest such a level of participants' reflexivity to co-create knowledge with research participants (Charmaz, 2014). Thus, and finally, the study did not aim at enhancing participants' understanding of the practice of employee performance management at their organisation to 'change' anything. Even though I reflected on participants' perception of who I was, there was no attempt to get them reflect on what the aspects of this research meant to them personally, I rather took note of the influence of their perceptions and responses to the research questions.

The research process is also not so linear to religiously follow generic procedures suggested in literature. And, guidelines on inductive approach to research vary considerably depending upon various philosophical assumptions (Johnson and Duberley, 2015). In an attempt to understand, explain and critique the dynamics of design, implementation, and employee behavioural responses to the practice of employee performance management and control, an inductive approach combining some elements from ethnography and grounded theory were applied, using qualitative research.

3.2 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN

The basic explanation of the difference between quantitative and qualitative data is that while the former can be quantified, the latter is based on meanings which are expressed through words and language (Anderson, 2004, p.104). Qualitative studies generally do not involve use of statistical procedures to describe the social reality under investigation. (Gill and Johnson, 2010) argue that qualitative research provides a different way of explaining why people do the things they do in various social context. The objective of explaining and interpreting behaviour is usually derived from a methodological commitment which Gill and Johnson (2010) refer to as *verstehen*. This terminology has been defined as "the assumption that all human action, or behaviour, has an internal logic of its own which must be understood and described in order for researchers to be able to explain that behaviour" (Gill and Johnson, 2010

p.149). Thus a qualitative study in management research has the purpose of generating understanding through making sense of work behaviour of employees (Anderson, 2004). Qualitative studies are therefore expected to explain not only what people do but also the human subjectivity behind why they do the things they do in various social contexts (Gill and Johnson, 2010). Qualitative research is therefore commonly associated with a school known as the interpretivist sociological tradition (Mason, 2000, p.3).

The idea of trying to go beyond merely what individuals do to understand why they do things and what they do can be interesting but also challenging. However, qualitative research designs are used widely and have been associated with studies ranging from, but not limited to psychology, human geography, education, sociology, media and culture as well as health studies. A wide range of philosophical underpinnings leading to various methodological techniques and methodologies are therefore associated with the term 'qualitative research' with different schools operating with distinctive views about "what makes the social world go round, what is important in the social world, what the social world looks like and so on" (Mason 2000, p3). In fact, there seems to be no consensus or unified guidelines on how to for example conduct ethnography or use grounded theory. These two approaches are discussed later in this section.

Nevertheless, there are generally agreed characteristics of qualitative research including the fact that most qualitative studies are grounded in a broadly interpretivist philosophical position, they adopt flexible qualitative data collection methods, and aim to analyse phenomena in such a way that detailed explanations are provided for the complexity of the social reality being studied (Mason, 2000; Cassell and Symon, 2004; Bryman and Bell, 2003; Anderson, 2004; and Gill and Johnson, 2010). Thus, whereas quantitative studies may focus on obtaining patterns, causalities and correlations, qualitative studies aim at finding meanings, explanations or deeper interpretations of the findings and are sensitive to the social context that may provide such interpretations (Cassell and Symon, 2004). Qualitative studies also do sometimes attempt to explain the subjective variations in the actors' behaviour (Bryman and Bell, 2003).

In my study, there was an intention of not only determining how employee performance management and control was designed and implemented at the case study organisation in Uganda, but also the need to analyse the behavioural responses of employees to managers' attempts to control their work behaviour. These work practices of managers and employees in Uganda were also to be critiqued against the guidelines provided in the 'Western' world, and often discussed in OB and HR literature, to understand the complexities of conducting employee performance management and control in an African based organisation. The actions and behaviours were to provide meaning about what the context of the study was like. A quantitative approach through the use of a survey for example would not reveal the subjective views and behaviour of participants as would the use of qualitative methods e.g. participant observation and semi-structured interviews; qualitative methods which were adopted for this study.

Like already mentioned above, some elements (not all) of ethnography and grounded theory, forms of qualitative research, were adopted to access data for answering the research questions of this study. These two approaches and how they were applied in this research are described in more detail below.

Ethnography

According to Gill and Johnson (2010), qualitative studies can be enabled by conducting an ethnographic study which involves use of methods that capture social meanings from everyday practices of people in a given cultural or social context. Ethnography can be defined as:

“the study of people in naturally occurring settings or ‘fields’ by means of methods which capture their social meanings and ordinary activities, involving the researcher participating directly in the setting.....in order to collect data in a systematic manner....” (Brewer, 2000, p.10 in Cassell and Symon, 2004, p.314).

“Ethnography is defined as the art and science of describing a group or culture”. (Fetterman 1989 in Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2009 p.84)

“Ethnography is a written representation of a culture or selected aspects of a culture.” (Van Maanen, 1988, p.1)

This style of research is then assumed to facilitate exploring the social meaning of the phenomenon under study in its naturalistic conditions without tampering with the environment through experimental manipulations (Van Maanen, 1988). Although ethnography derives from traditions in social anthropology where the researcher would spend long periods of time living with exotic people to study their cultures (Gill and Johnson, 2010, p.151) and based on fairly long periods of stay in a local community (Atkinson and Hammersley, 2011), the practice has been also used to study phenomena in management studies; in organisational settings within which the work takes place (Cassell and Symon, 2004; Mayo, 1920). This has not been without the challenges of gaining access into organisations, handling various ethical issues and having to deal with the various field roles of the researcher and their implications for the study (Gill and Johnson, 2010). [The specific experiences with these challenges during this research and their methodological implications have been explained in section 3.6 of this chapter].

Gill and Johnson (2010) usefully provide an extensive discussion and relevant examples of using ethnographic methods in management research. Such organisational studies have been characterised as aiming at: (1) analysing actions, interactions and behaviours of employees, and (2) obtaining knowledge about the social world through participating and experiencing the participants' behaviour and actions within a specific context.

It was assumed in this research that the day-to-day work behaviour of participants as well as their involvement in the informal social activities at and away from work would constitute meaning and knowledge for how employee performance management and control is implemented and responded to by employees at the case study organisation. Therefore because this study was focused mainly on response to as well as implication of employee performance management practices in the African based organisation context, an ethnographic approach was considered a suitable methodology to achieving the research objectives. An ethnographic study was

also expected to facilitate flexibility in discussing, probing and observing events in a naturalistic manner to access and interpret the behaviour of individual participants. Organisations have, after all, been described as structures where social life and behaviour are managed (Cassell and Symon, 2004). Ethnography also was considered a suitable research approach to facilitate flexibility and depth in accessing and interpreting the behaviour of individual participants.

Ethnography involves use of various methods that permit access to people's social meanings and activities to collect qualitative data (Cassell and Symon, 2004). Collecting data in ethnographic studies is thus not limited to actual participation of the researcher but includes a variety of other techniques that can be used to access people's social meanings and activities. These techniques include: in-depth interviews, discourse analysis, use of diaries, and use of visual methods such as video and photography (Mason, 2002). This study applied semi-structured interviews in addition to non-participant observation to collect relevant data.

Although the anthropologists' idea of ethnography involved spending long periods of time (a year or over) in contact with the community being studied, Van Maanen (1988) argues that the range of ethnography styles is quite wide regarding the time spent among participants, involvement, interaction, observation and reporting. A period of four months was spent at the case study organisation in Uganda, during which time observation took place and interviews were conducted. Another original idea of ethnography portrayed by anthropologists is that "it involves the stranger [researcher] stepping out into a culturally alien community to become, for a time and in an unpredictable way, an active part of the face-to-face relationships in that community" (Maanen, 1988 p.13). The pursuit of the ethnographer is then to learn from scratch the culture of the people to understand their "...language, concepts, categories, practices, rules, beliefs, and so forth...." (Maanen, 1988 p.13). This research however does not claim application of this characteristic of ethnography because the case study organisation and participants were not completely 'alien' to me. I had prior experience of the organisation and I explain this further under my identity. This study instead exploited the 'active participation, involvement and interest in the life of the world studied' aspect

of ethnography to carry out participant-observation and in-depth semi-structured interviews. Gill and Johnson have cited Potter's 'pious fraud' to argue that social anthropological research methods were not just used to investigate situations which were ostensibly completely 'foreign' to the researcher" (Gill and Johnson, 2010. p.151). This research was therefore committed to understanding human behaviour grounded in the participants' social situation in which they were located. Therefore, it was crucial that in order to explain behaviour I had to gain access to how managers and employees were making sense of what was going on around them and to consider the social influences that were impacting on their work behaviour (Gill and Johnson, 2010. p.155). This concept of ethnography (and not the study of culture of a community from an alien's point of view) applied to this research. This methodology facilitated a closer access to the informal organisation for a deeper understanding of the participants' work behaviour and the social influences on actions.

There is a considerable overlap between ethnographic data collection methods and grounded theory guidelines for data analysis. The concept of grounded theory and some of its guidelines that were adopted in this research to make sense of the data collected is discussed below.

Grounded theory

Earlier ideas on how to do qualitative research using grounded theory are given by Glaser and Strauss (1967) who were the first to suggest developing theory grounded in data rather than considering existing theories at the start of a research project. The assumption was that there is an objective social reality which the researcher can study as a neutral observer (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Although Strauss maintained aspects of this stance, e.g. the emphasis of the researcher acting as a passive observer in the research process (Strauss and Corbin, 1998), he has since subscribed to the idea of using sensitising concepts from the relevant literature as pointers in the initial data collection stage of the research process. More recent debates on grounded theory, in trying to move away from close to positivistic assumptions in both Glaser's and Strauss and Corbin's versions, have emphasised what researchers and participants bring to the social reality being researched, (for example

researcher's position, privileges, perspective and interactions) and what they do with these. Charmaz's (2000; 2005; 2014) constructivist approach, for example advocates, acknowledgement and engagement of participants' subjectivity and the researcher's involvement in the construction and interpretation of data. Thus, the process of theory construction, it is suggested, should besides having researchers reflexively interrogating their own impact, also involve them in attempting to sensitise participants to how their inter-subjective understandings of a social reality affect the development of alternative understandings of reality (Charmaz, 2008). The researcher is then expected to provide reflexive accounts of co-authorship of the research findings on the social phenomenon, reflecting the voices of both the researcher and the researched. This has been described as a socially constructed inter-subjectivity produced through researcher-researched interaction or social constructionist criteriological commitment (Cunliffe, 2010). And then, critical theorists go beyond description of researchers' and participants' subjectivities to suggest that "the prime aim of the research is to liberate those it studies so that they understand the world in new ways and use this knowledge to change it; participants become able to both understand and change their situation" (Johnson and Duberley, 2015, p.9).

In contrast to earlier explanations of grounded theory, it has also been suggested that grounded theory might involve simultaneous data collection and analysis, as well as development of theory through inductive analysis of data while relating empirical impressions to theoretical arguments in literature (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2013). Thus, empirical material might 'speak for itself', and the findings of the research may emerge from the data as themes in form of categories that are developed in the analysis process. Alvesson and Sandberg (2013) argue that engaging with data in such a manner would increase rigour and facilitates movement of the inquiry from mere description of the social reality to developing explanatory theoretical frameworks of the concepts being studied.

As already mentioned, this study adopted some (but not all) aspects of grounded theory during data collection to rethink unexpected discoveries and devise strategies to clarify them, as well as to inductively analyse data collected after field work. For example, while the principles of grounded

theory theoretically advocate for a delay of literature review about the phenomenon under study, I at the initial stage of field work developed sensitising concepts from organisational behaviour literature which were used to construct a flexible interview schedule. So while I endeavoured to maintain a strong foundation in data, I was informed by literature during data collection and analysis. Other aspects of grounded theory that were adopted in this research include construction of analytical codes from data, advancement of theory development at each stage of data collection and analysis, and memo writing to keep track of the categories' properties, relationships between them and, if any, 'surprises' from data (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). The details of application of grounded theory principles to analyse data in this research have been further presented in section 3.5 below on data analysis.

I have so far discussed that this research adopted a qualitative research design and applied ethnographic and grounded theory methods to collect and analyse the data. These methods are compatible with case study research design; an approach that was adopted for this research to focus on a specific African based organisation. Below I explain what a case study research design is and the rationale for adopting this approach in this research.

3.3 CASE STUDY DESIGN

Case study research involves studying a single or more than one case with a view to revealing important features about its nature (Bryman and Bell, 2003). Furthermore, case study projects are believed to, among other things; end in development of a theory (Yin, 2009). They have also been recommended for detailed investigations of social phenomena based on data that has been collected over a period of time in a given context (Cassell and Simon, 2004; Yin, 2009; 1981). The context of this research was of prime interest because the aim of this study was not only to determine how employee performance management and control was designed and implemented at the case study organisation in Uganda. It was also to understand the work behavioural responses and the social negotiation of control between managers and employees resulting from the informal social processes. It was presumed that such social processes could enlighten aspects of the African values and norms.

Cassell and Symon's description of the principle of the case study research design reflect the intentions of this study:

“The phenomenon is not isolated from its context (as in say, laboratory research) but is of interest precisely because the aim is to understand how behaviour and/or processes are influenced by, and influence context”
(Cassell and Symon, 2004, p323).

A case study research design was therefore adopted for its potential in facilitating the understanding of the context (African based organisation) of this research as an explanatory factor for the behaviour of managers and employees at PAL. A key decision in case study research designs is whether the research would be based on a single case study or multiple cases (Cassell and Symon, 2004, p.325). The choice of a single case for this research was based on the understanding that case study research designs are a feasible option when resources or access to a phenomenon are limited to explore a wider area (Yin, 1981). In this case, even though it would have been interesting to carry out this research in various organisations in Uganda (or arguably, better still in other African countries as well), the resources that were available for this research could facilitate the focus on a single organisation. However, the case study organisation constituted independently run programmes that acted as multiple sites for this research. The characteristics of the case study for this research are explained in further details in section 3.3 below and even deeper in chapter four of this thesis. Section 3.3 also describes how the two major practical steps of conducting case study research (choosing the case study and gaining and maintaining access) were undertaken.

3.3.1 The case study organisation

The case study organisation for this research was one of Uganda's semi-autonomous agricultural research institutes. Uganda is one of the sub-Saharan African countries and is according to the World Bank report a developing

country¹. Detailed country characteristics of Uganda have been described in the previous chapter of this thesis. The country's agricultural research activities are overseen by a statutory established public body referred to as the national agricultural research organisation (NARO). NARO oversees all the various stakeholders involved in the provision of agricultural research services from both the public and private sector. These stakeholders include: agricultural research institutes, universities and colleges, civil society organisations and farmer groups. The case study organisation for this research was therefore one of NARO's agricultural research institutes. It has been termed as PAL (the case study's a pseudonym) in this thesis. The decision to carry out this research at PAL was based on two reasons.

Firstly, PAL constituted five independently managed research units or programmes that conveniently provided multiple sites for a wide range of research responses for this study. While two of the programmes operated under the control of international agricultural research bodies based abroad, the other three programmes had some of their research projects locally controlled and others internationally controlled. 'Control' is used here to mean the source of the mandate, staffing and financing to carry out the research projects and activities within the programme. It was assumed that this difference in the international and local control base would have implications on, and probably be reflected in, the management of the day-to-day activities in the individual research programmes and projects. Again, while most of the projects were conducted under the mandate of the government of Uganda through NARO and therefore considered public projects, some of the projects in one of the programmes were considered as commercial projects. Activities under commercial projects were carried out on order by beneficiaries from the public. Such activities were therefore financed by fees levied on the beneficiaries. So PAL was considered as an ideal case study organisation for having multiple sites with a hybrid operation

¹ The majority of population makes far less income, and has significantly weaker social indicators, than the population in high-income countries...[and] lives on far less money—and often lacks basic public services—than the population in highly-industrialized countries (World Bank overview on Uganda, 2015).

mode as a local organisation, yet somewhat international, and as a public organisation, yet to a certain degree private.

Secondly, it was important (and yet not a straight forward decision) to find an organisation that would permit obtaining and maintaining access to managers' and employees' activities on a day-to-day basis within an African based organisation. PAL was an appropriate choice with the possibility of obtaining and maintaining access because I had been previously employed there and still maintained connections with the institute management. I have described further, in section 3.6 below, my personal experiences including my previous employment at PAL that had a bearing on a number of issues in this research.

3.3.2 Characteristics and selection of participants

Participants of this research included what would be termed as line managers and employees under them. Project leaders within the various research programmes were considered as 'line managers' in this study while research assistants (RAs), research technicians as well as employees in varied support roles were considered as 'employees'. Line managers and employees were specially chosen as research participants for this study because of their direct application, response to, and day-to-day experience with the modes of employee performance management and control at the case study organisation. (Refer to figure 5 for a graphic representation of the organisational structure at PAL). Support staff included HR administrators. Participants had a range of training and formal education including agricultural research scientists, biotechnologists, agricultural economists, food scientists, soil scientists, and others in social science related professions in support roles. The level of training ranged from postgraduate (PhD and Masters Degrees) to basic training held by the lower level employees including cleaners, drivers and field attendants. A further description of the participants in this research is also given in the next chapter of this thesis.

Selection of participants

Although the logic on sampling in qualitative research is not, as in quantitative research, derived from the general laws of statistics and

probability, logical principles and procedures can be followed to choose and gain access to ‘relevant’ participants of a qualitative study (Mason, 2002). Unfortunately, such principles for making decisions about ‘who’ and ‘how many’ participants should be recruited for a qualitative study are often less documented in methods literature. Mason (2002) suggests that the guiding principles should be developed by determining first of all the rationale for requiring a sample, and then the nature of the data required to realise the research aims. In this research, there was a limit to the amount of resources available to conduct the study through the participation of everyone at PAL. Again, some staff at PAL were presumed to have had minimum day-to-day experience with the process of employee performance management and control and thus their participation was considered to be less relevant to this study. So, it was ideal to focus on some and not all staff at the case study organisation given the resources allotted for field work as well as the form of data that was intended to answer the research questions. It was decided for example that top management including the institute director and heads of programme were not relevant participants of the study because of their presumed remote involvement in the day-to-day implementation of employee performance management and control as well as the social processes that were involved. 10 weeks of the total time for field work were also dedicated to interviewing with a maximum of 5 interviews a week considered as a feasible target. A form of strategic sampling (Mason, 2002) was thus applied and:

- i. A staff directory was obtained from each programme office.
- ii. 49 participants (10 research scientists, 10 research assistants, 10 research technicians, 5 nursery and field attendants, the institute HR director, 4 HR administrators, 4 drivers, the institute IT administrator, 4 accountants, as well as 2 cleaners) were selected for interviews.
- iii. Five teams/project groups were chosen for participant observation
- iv. Participants’ consent was individually sought.

(Correction number. 6)

The table below provides a description of the key features of participants of this study.

Table 3.2: Research participants

| | Participant | Description |
|---|----------------------|---|
| CORE STAFF (SCIENTISTS AND TECHNICIANS INVOLVED IN RESEARCH) | | |
| 1 | Research Scientist 1 | RS 1 oversaw work on a 5 year project that had been running for 2 years. He supervised 3 research assistants, 6 technicians and a field and nursery attendant. He was hired by NARO and had worked at the institute for over 10 years, first as a research assistant and then had later progressed to being a research scientist. |
| 2 | Research Scientist 2 | RS2 had worked at the institute for over 5 years on 2 year contracts. She was above 35 years of age, held a Masters' degree and supervised more than 10 staff. |
| 3 | Research Scientist 3 | RS 3 was a NARO research scientist who worked as the institute economist. He had worked in this position for 3 years on a 4 year contract. He worked for all programmes at the institute with duties involving economic planning and M&E of all projects. He reported directly to the institute director and had no supervisory roles. He held a Masters degree and was above 30 years of age |
| 4 | Research Scientist 4 | RS4 was a research scientist on an internationally funded and controlled project. He had worked with the project for over 5 years. There were 5 other RSs on the project with varied specialisation. RS4 supervised over 5 RAs and over 5 technicians. |
| 5 | Research Scientist 5 | RS5 was a NARO research scientist on a 4 year renewable contract. He had worked with the programme for just over a year. Unlike other RSs, he worked with volunteers as assistants instead of RAs and technicians. He was hired at a time when NARO had reached a ceiling on junior staff recruitment for the programme he works with. |

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| 6 | Research Scientist 6 | Research Scientist 6 supervised a project with 3 RAs, a research officer and 6 technicians. He had worked in this position for the last 7 years. Activities on this project were ordered and paid for by the public. |
| 7 | Research Scientist 7 | RS7 was a senior research scientist (SRS) with 2 RAs and 4 technicians under his supervision. There were only 2 SRSs at the case study organisation. |
| 8 | Research Scientist 8 | RS8 had been a NARO research scientist for more than 10 years and supervised 3 RAs and 4 technicians. He had a 4 year employment contract which had just been renewed. |
| 9 | Research Scientist 9 | RS 9 was hired by NARO 6 years before this study was conducted. He managed a project that he referred to as 'small'. He was working on this project with a research assistant and 2 technicians. The results would contribute to the PhD thesis which he was writing. |
| 10 | Research Scientist 10 | RS10 was a research scientist heading a project. The project activities were implemented in collaboration with an international partner. He was a NARO member of staff on a 3 year contract that had run for 2 years. R10 supervised 2 RAs and 4 technicians. He had worked at the case study organisation for over 10 years. He also supervised the programme's commercial activities. |
| | | |
| 11 | Research Assistant 1 | RA1 was on a 6 year project designed and executed in collaboration with a university abroad. This project was funded by an international funder. She had worked on this project for 3 years on a 2 year contract. Unlike other RAs at the institute, she had no supervisory role and shared the bench work with 4 other RAs. She held a Master's degree and was below 30 years of age. |
| 12 | Research Assistant 2 | RA2 was a Masters' degree holder and had been in the position of RA for over 5 years with a project funded by an international donor and entirely controlled from an international headquarter abroad. |
| 13 | Research Assistant 3 | RA3 was a RA on an internationally funded but locally controlled project. He had worked for 4 years on a 2 |

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| | | <p>year contract. He had an undergraduate degree and was below 25 years of age. He worked with 4 other RAs on the same project in a facility that hosted over 20 technical staff from different research programmes working on various projects. The facility was used for a specialised research activity.</p> |
| 14 | Research Assistant 4 | <p>RA4 had been working as a casual staff member for 6 months. Casual meant she was paid for the specific activities she carried out and she did not have a regular salary. She had recently graduated with a Masters' degree and had the same duties as research assistants. She was less than 30 years old. She previously worked with the same programme as a RA but went away for a 2 year fulltime postgraduate study programme. She intended to remain on casual employment terms until a place fell vacant for which she could apply.</p> |
| 15 | Research Assistant 5 | <p>RA5 was a RA on casual employment terms. She had worked on an internationally funded but locally controlled project for a year. She worked during the first 6 months as a volunteer and was after that appointed to the casual staff position.</p> |
| 16 | Research Assistant 6 | <p>RA6 graduated from University 3 years earlier to the start of this research, and was a RA on one year contract employment terms. She initially worked as a volunteer for six months about 2 years ago.</p> |
| 17 | Research Assistant 7 | <p>RA7 had been a RA with NARO for the last 2 years. He had a contract for 3 years and reported to the head of unit. He was less than 30 years old and this was his first job after graduation. He also worked with the programme as a volunteer for 6 months before he was hired. He was involved with activities that were carried out for a fee from farmers</p> |
| 18 | Research Assistant 8 | <p>RA 8 had been working as a volunteer for the last 5 months. She was looking for a job opening at the institute as her voluntary assignments was to be concluded in a month's time. She worked on a team including 2 other RAs and 3 technicians, supervised by a research scientist.</p> |
| 19 | Research Assistant 9 | <p>RA 9 was hired by NARO 2 years ago on a 3 year</p> |

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| | | contract. He was enrolled at a local university on a postgraduate programme while he worked on an internationally funded project and his work was part of his MSc research project. |
| 20 | Research Assistant 10 | RS 10 worked with a programme that offered agricultural research services to external individuals and groups for a fee. He had been involved in this work for over 5 years and reported to a scientist. |
| | | |
| 21 | Research Technician 1 | RT 1 was on a 5 year research project. Although this project received funds from an international donor, activities were locally controlled. His employment contract was for a year and had been renewed once. He had therefore worked on this project for about 1.5 years. He was a recent graduate, and less than 30 years old. |
| 22 | Research Technician 2 | RT2 is a NARO appointed research technician and has worked in this position for over 5 years. She holds no supervisory role and takes on technical duties for various projects. She is usually under the supervision of a research assistant responsible for the project she works on at a given time. |
| 23 | Research Technician 3 | RT3 was a recent first degree graduate on a 2 year contract. She had worked on an internationally funded and controlled project for about a year, had no supervisory role and was involved in typical practical laboratory research duties. |
| 24 | Research Technician 4 | RT4 was over 30 years old and chief technician with a programme that did research as well as offered commercial consultancy services to farmers. He had been in this position for over 5 years and supervised 7 technicians. He was employed on a 4 year NARO contract. RT4 was in charge of commercialised activities. |
| 25 | Research Technician 5 | RT5 was a senior research technician, a position that had supervisory responsibilities over technicians in a given programme. He had been in this position for the last 5 years on 4 year contracts with NARO |

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| 26 | Research Technician 6 | RT6 was a NARO appointed research technician and had worked in this position for over 5 years. She held no supervisory roles and took on technical duties for various projects. She was usually under the supervision of a research assistant responsible for the project she worked on at a given time. |
| 27 | Research Technician 7 | RT7 was a NARO technician with a diploma in science technology from a local polytechnic. He had worked with the case study organisation for over 7 years on the same activities. He worked with 3 other technicians and a research scientist on a 5 year project that had only run for 2 months. |
| 28 | Research Technician 8 | RT8 was a recent graduate with a BSc degree. He worked as a volunteer and joined the institute 3 months ago. |
| 29 | Research Technician 9 | RT9 was technician with a programme that carried out commercial projects. She had worked with this programme for 2 years under the supervision of a research scientist. |
| 30 | Research Technician 10 | RT10 had been a technician with a programme involved in commercial projects for over 7 years. She was in charge of 5 other technicians and reported to a research scientist. |
| | | |
| 31 | Nursery and field attendant 1 | N&F1 had been a field attendant at this programme for over 5 years. He was a first degree holder and was over 40 years of age. His employment contract run for 2 years and had been renewed more than twice. His work involved establishment and maintenance of field trials and other fields used to source clean materials for experiments. He had over 10 casual field assistants under his supervision who did the manual work in the fields. |
| 32 | Nursery and field attendant 2 | N&F 2 had been programme X's nursery and field attendant of over 15 years. He graduated with a diploma in agriculture "many years ago" and had been working as a NARO staff member since then. He reported to a scientist. |

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| 33 | Nursery and field attendant 3 | N&F 3 had a one year rolling contract with programme Y. She attended to the programme's nurseries and screen houses with the help of 6 assistants. She had been in this position for 3 years. |
| 34 | Nursery and field attendant 4 | N&F 4 had been a nursery attendant with programme R for 1.5 years. She and 3 other assistants cared for nursery plants raised on order by farmers, institutions and other external parties. |
| 35 | Nursery and field attendant 5 | N& F 5 had a one year rolling contract; he had worked with programme H for 5 months. He assisted the main programme field attendant to take care of one of the programme's fields. He worked with 2 colleagues who have been in the same position for over 3 years. |
| SUPPORT STAFF | | |
| 36 | HR Director-Institute | She was the institute HR administration assistant and administrator of an internationally funded programme. She worked in this position for over 5 years on 3 year contracts with NARO. She had a supervisory role over 5 drivers, 2 cleaners and a tea girl |
| 37 | HR administrator - Programme 1 | HR&A1 was a member of support staff for one of the programmes at the case study organisation. She worked as the Programme HR and administration assistant. She had been in this position for over 5 years in charge of physical assets of the programme as well as human resources. |
| 38 | HR administrator - Programme 2 | HR&A2 had for over 5 years worked as an administrator on an externally controlled project. The project was run by an international research body outside the case study organisation. The external research body utilised the case study's premises and facilities. Three programmes at the case study organisation worked in collaboration with the external research body. Although HR&A3 had an office at the case study organisation, she occasionally reported at the external research body's headquarters |
| 39 | HR administrator - Programme 3 | HR&A3 had worked as a programme admin for over 10 years. She shared an office with two colleagues and reported to the institute finance office. She belonged to a group of staff referred to as support staff for they |

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| | | were not involved in the core activities of the institute but offered support services. |
| 40 | HR administrator - Programme 4 | HR&A4 had worked for this programme for over 7 years. She was employed by NARO on a 4 year contract that was expiring in a year's time. The programme ran both local and internationally controlled projects. |
| | | |
| 41 | Accountant 1 | Accountant 1 worked with a programme handling finances for both NARO and externally funded projects. One of the projects was run by an international organisation (BTY) with a national hub in Uganda, 13km from PAL. She occasionally worked at BTY offices in Kampala to update management about the accounts of the project as far as work at PAL was concerned. |
| 42 | Accountant 2 | Accountant 2 worked with a programme that had NARO projects, externally funded projects and commercial projects. |
| | | |
| 43 | Driver 1 | D1 was a driver in one of the programmes. He reported to the programme HR & A3 and had worked at the institute for over 10 years. |
| 44 | Driver 2 | D2 was a driver in one of the programmes. He reported to the programme HR & A2 and had worked at the institute for less than 5 years. |
| 45 | Driver 3 | D3 had been a NARO driver at the institute administration for more than 10 years. He reported to the HR Director. |
| 46 | Driver 4 | D4 was a driver on one of the programmes. He had a one year contract and had worked for 11 months. He reported to the programme HR & A1. |
| | | |
| 47 | Institute IT administrator | IT was the institute ICT manager on a 1 year employment contract. He had worked in this position for over 5 years. Different programmes paid for his salary as directed by the institute director. The institute director was also his immediate supervisor. He was initially a laboratory technician before acquiring a |

| | | |
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| | | postgraduate degree in ICT. |
| | | |
| 48 | Cleaner 1 | C1 had worked on 2 year contracts as a cleaner for over 5 years. Her duties went beyond usual cleaning duties to acting as a messenger between offices and preparing tea for senior scientists. She worked with three other colleagues and they reported to the programme administrative assistant. |
| 49 | Cleaner 2 | C2 had worked as a cleaner for over 5 years. She was a NARO staff member stationed at the institute administration block. Her work involved cleaning offices, preparing tea for the director, the HR and admin, and the staff in accounts and finance office. She and her 4 other colleagues also acted as office messengers. |

Source: Developed by author, 2015

As shown in table 3.2 above, employees at PAL were either hired as NARO or project staff (national vs. international control) and were either involved in core or non-core research activities (scientists vs. support staff). Some were involved in commercial activities, while others carried out non-profit generating activities. Finally, some participants were volunteers while others were full time staff on a payroll. These various categories are described in more detail in section 4.1.2.

However, it is important to note that there were overlaps among the categories. For example, while the HR Director of the Institute was on a 3 year contract with NARO, she also carried out administrative duties for an internationally funded project. There were others such as Research Scientist 3 who worked across all projects, both local and international. The key difference between the participants was that they were either involved in core scientific research activities or working as support staff. Those working on core research activities, i.e. research scientists, research assistants, research technicians and field assistants had science related training while support staff members were management, IT, accounting or finance graduates. Other

support staff, such as drivers and cleaners, had qualifications lower than a college diploma.

In terms of access to participants, although permission to carry out the interviews was officially obtained from top management, participants were approached individually (and not through their supervisor) by making a face-to-face appointment. Information about the research was explained to them verbally after they had read the information sheet and they were then asked to sign the consent form at this initial meeting. The information sheet and consent form also explained the issue of confidentiality in relation to their performance appraisal reports being viewed (as outlined above). Permission from supervisors was also obtained to approach participants individually to seek their consent. Team members of the various teams that were involved in participant observation sessions were also approached individually, given an information sheet, and asked to sign a consent form. In most cases, those who were observed would already have been interviewed, but where this was not the case they were given a separate information sheet and asked to sign a separate consent form. There were no incidences of any team members declining a request to consent to be observed within their team. However, I had planned that in a case where a team member(s) was not willing to be observed, observation of the whole team would be cancelled and another team sought. Participants were met face-to-face having made an appointment and aspects of their involvement clarified. They were then invited to voluntarily sign consent forms during the meeting. This applied to both interview participants and observation. Participants were also assured that they could withdraw their participation anytime as they wished to.

3.4 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Data for this research were collected through use of semi-structured interviews, participant observation and analysis of the case study organisation's formal documents. The rationale for these choices and how these methods were applied are discussed in the next section.

3.4.1 Semi-structured interviews

It is generally agreed that interviewing has, over the years, remained the most common method of generating qualitative data, even though a range of approaches are used in this method. Semi-structured interviewing is sometimes referred to as ‘qualitative’ interviewing (Mason, 2002), ‘exploratory’, (Cassell and Symon, 2004) or ‘in-depth’ interviewing (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). As Denzin and Lincoln (2011, p.533) put it, “the heart of our social and personal being lies in the immediate contact with other humans” i.e. we express who we are through social interaction. The choice of this form of interviewing was thus intended to maximise immediate face-to-face contact for talking, interacting with and if necessary clarifying questions and responses. This form of interviewing was also assumed to facilitate the experience of the workers at PAL in a larger measure than telephone or Skype interviews would do.

Face-to-face interviews were conducted under the guide of sensitising concepts informed by the literature review of employee performance management and control of work processes and organisational behaviour generally. The use of sensitising concepts was illustrated by Blumer (1954) who argued that the researcher’s pre-understanding of theory can be used to a preliminary guide or ‘directions in which to look’ (Blumer, 1954 in Johnson and Duberley, 2015 p.5). Interview questions, although not standardised, were thus based on predetermined sensitising concepts covering theoretical debates on employee performance management and control. Participants were, during the interview, encouraged as much as possible to express themselves in-depth, in terms of their experience and attitudes to the day-to-day practices that influenced their work behaviour. Although an average time of 45 minutes was spent with each participant in a sit down interview , interviewing continued in some ‘informal way’ during observation as a way of following up developments from data already obtained as well as to clarify information obtained earlier in the ‘sit down’ interview .

Unlike telephone or skype interviews, face-to-face interviews involved a real social encounter which had an effect on the process of data collection (Ribbens, 1986; Mason, 2002) and this required me to be reflexive throughout the whole process.

3.4.2 Participant observation

The ontological position of this research assumed that the participants' actions, interactions and views at work would provide meaningful properties of the uniqueness of the approach to the process of employee performance management and control in an African based organisation. In other words, the workers actions and behaviour depended on their interpretation of what was going on around them and I could access this interpretation. It was assumed that the actions, interactions and views of both managers and employees would have been influenced by the African society and environmental context. Epistemologically, it was imagined that verbal responses might need to be confirmed by observing actions as people were likely to say one thing and yet do the other. It was on this basis that a decision was made to carry out participant observations. This method was aimed at collecting data that would facilitate a description and explanation of managers' prompts as well as participants' behavioural responses to, as Mason (2002) argues, derive meaning from ordinary activities.

My identity during observations was that of a participant-as-observer (Gill and Johnson 2010; Cassell and Symon, 2004; p.154) forming relationships and participating in activities of the research participants without keeping the intention to observe a secret. The purpose of being open (overt) was to avoid ethical issues that could arise through covert participation such as observing participants who may otherwise not be willing to be observed or consent to be studied. Participants were therefore informed of the general purpose of my participation although specific themes under observation were not revealed to minimise the possibility of participants adjusting their behaviour while under observation. This form of observation was chosen because of its possibility of providing information about unofficial activities or organisational backstages which Gill and Johnson (2010) argue would be difficult to obtain from formal interviews. It was also assumed that adopting a complete observer role (or non-participant) would make employees more conscious of my presence while standing there merely observing what they did. This would distort their behaviour as people naturally behave differently when they are observed (Cassell and Symon, 2004).

Facilities at the institute were shared among the various projects under the various research programmes. This conveniently facilitated participating in activities of more than one research project at the same time. Therefore, although consent was individually obtained from all project leaders as well as respective employees to participate in their activities, it was not possible to work with employees from a single project at a time. Activities participated in took place at different workstations ranging from plant nurseries, various stations in various laboratories, office areas, study areas, canteens, and finally the field. 16 hours were on average spent in each of the workstations. Although field notes were captured on every spontaneous relevant incident, a list of issues to clarify and/or confirm was developed from interview responses and guided observation. A list of sensitising concepts was earlier developed to guide the data collection process. (See table 3 on sensitising concepts). A typical participant observation session involved carrying out my assigned activity on my own or with other workers. Observation notes were then made during the session noting down aspects ranging from what employees did with specific formal rules to what they informally did with each other in the process of carrying out their work. Some employees were also, where necessary, asked to clarify some information that they earlier offered during the face-to-face interviewing. They were also asked to explain their behaviour especially during incidences when they did not follow clearly stated or sign posted procedures or rules.

It is considered difficult to be a mere neutral data collector in such circumstances (Mason, 2002). Research proves that the process of observing people affects them especially when they are aware that they are being observed (Patton, 2002). However, the process offered an inductive approach to data collection. The information obtained during observation was used to build further links to more information and clarification. For example employees were observed, sometimes, not updating their dairy activity note books. Yet, supervisors apparently depended on such records to know what employees did on a given day. Observation of such incidences prompted and opened ways for further probing into for example the approach to supervision, the employees' attitude to rules and procedures as well as the reasons for such behaviours.

3.4.3 The institute's formal documents

Document analysis was used in combination of interviews and observation as a means of triangulation (Bowen, 2009). Copies of the annual performance evaluation/assessment forms for the different levels of management were obtained to explore the parameters for employee performance evaluation and for further analysis. The general policy guideline on performance management was obtained from the HR manual of the organisation's staff terms and conditions of service.

Although the documents were primarily expected to provide supplementary information to data obtained from interviews and observation, they were also expected to importantly be relied upon to provide valuable background information about the research units and the institute as a whole. Company documents have been identified as a source of rich description for a single case study providing details how the organisation is designed, its organisational structure, work organisation and formal procedures (Yin, 2009). Information from these documents was therefore used during data analysis and at the thesis writing stage to build up a description of the case study organisation, the range and characteristics of participants, and the formal principle guidelines and rules at PAL. This description in turn facilitated the process of assessing potential implications of the findings for practice within the case study organisation and for other organisations within Africa. The process of NVivo assisted analysis these documents is explained in section 3.5.2.

In drawing together each of the above data sources, a plan was drawn to map out what specific method would be appropriate for collecting data relevant for each of the core objectives of this research.

Objective (1) *Evaluate existing knowledge on models of employee performance management and control, and critically evaluate the relevance of 'Western' models to an African context.*

This was done continuously throughout the study through reviewing literature on management in Africa as well as organisational behaviour literature on controlling employee behaviour and work processes.

Objective (2) *Identify, describe, compare and contrast the espoused forms of employee performance management and control versus theories in use within a case study organisation in Uganda.*

A combination of all the methods of data collection applied in this research was used to collect relevant data for describing and assessing the formal guidelines and application of employee performance management and control at PAL. The institution's employee performance management policy, research projects' proposals, employee performance appraisal forms, and project reports were useful secondary data sources in describing how the institute's formal guidelines were designed. Employee performance policy documents and project proposals were also expected to provide information on the 'whats' and 'hows' of management's expectations as far as individual and probably team performance was concerned. Semi-structured interviews were used to capture part of what happens in practice. This data was then supplemented by field notes obtained through observations. Assessing the applied models of employee performance management and control at PAL involved answering various questions including the following:

1. What are the official documented guidelines on performance management and control including assignment, assessment and reward or punishment for good or poor performance?
2. What do managers do in line with (as well as outside) policy guidelines to control employee performance?
3. What is the rationale for their choice of action?

Interviews were conducted to achieve this objective because they are according to Mason (2002, p.63) appropriate for researchers with an ontological position that suggests that "people's knowledge, views, understandings, interpretations, experiences, and interactions are meaningful properties of the social reality which their research questions are designed to explore." The line managers' views and understanding of the policy guidelines, their choice and rationale for action in controlling employees and their experience was sought out in interviews to assess the forms of control they were applying.

Overt participant observations were carried out to further assess the forms of control applied. Mason (2003, p. 85) argues that observation is

adopted as a research method from an epistemological stand point that suggests that “meaningful knowledge cannot be generated without observation because not all knowledge is articulable, recountable or constructable in an interview”. Anderson (2004, p.142) also indicates that the “obvious way of finding out information about people’s behaviours and actions at work is to watch and listen to them.”

Objective (3) *Describe and explain employee behavioural responses to institutionalised formal models of employee performance management, taking account of informal processes and the social negotiation of control*

Employee responses to prompts of managers were expected to facilitate understanding of the impact of the modes of employee performance management and control on employee behaviour. It was assumed that employees’ behaviour would result from their interpretation of the managers’ prompts control them as well as the cultural influences of the context in which PAL operated. This aspect was explored through semi-structured interviews and participant observation. Interview questions to employees for this purpose covered motivation for performance behaviour, the role of co-worker relationships; manager-employee interaction and experiences with the performance management systems. Participant observation was carried out with an intention of accessing what employees actually did as opposed to what management expected them to do. Argyris *et al* (1985) in Gill and Johnson (2010, p.162) calls these “backstages or theories-in-use as opposed to officially sanctioned espoused theories” Participant observation may, also be the only practical way to achieve awareness of common workplace practices (Vinten, 1994).

3.4.4 Developing sensitising concepts

There has been extensive research on employee performance management, organisational behaviour and management in Africa generally and thus existing literature shaped the initial thoughts on the subject and became the basis for sensitising concepts prepared prior to data collection. An informed theoretical pre-understanding was suggested by Blumer (1954) as a guide for

suggestions on what to look for during data collection. Building a theoretical platform on managing employee performance and work behaviour was therefore facilitated by a review, synthesis and critique of existing literature on pre-bureaucratic, bureaucratic and post-bureaucratic modes of employee performance management and control. The characteristics of these three concepts were then used to develop a wide range of questions that guided the data collection process. These questions are presented below in table 3.

Table 3.3: Sensitising concepts for data collection (Blumer, 1954)

| Concept/Indicator | What to ask or observe |
|--|--|
| “Pre-Bureaucracy” | |
| i. Communal, away from work influences of work behaviour <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities with colleagues away from work • Other influences e.g. tribe, religion, and other social group affiliations | 1. What do employees do as a group outside work? And who initiates these activities; management or employees? How important are these activities to employees? Are managers aware; do they take part? What do managers make of these activities? <i>(Information to be obtained largely through interviews)</i> 2. What social values (tribal, religious, political or otherwise) do employees hold? How are these influencing values and attitudes at the workplace? <i>(Information to be obtained largely through observation)</i> |
| ii. ‘Informal organisation’ characteristics at work | 1. What formal rules, policies and guidelines are supposed to guide work behaviour? 2. How are they communicated to employees? Are employees fully aware of them? 3. What is done in practice contrary to the formal rules? What are the perceived reasons for diverting from the expected? Is it deliberate or unintentional? 4. Who is a ‘friend’ of who and why? 5. Do employees ‘help out’ each other? If yes, what motivates them to do this? Are managers aware? Do they (managers) approve of this solidarity? |
| iii. Supervision/control | 1. What is the level of supervision; Strict vs. allows maximum employee discretion? 2. How do employees feel about how their activities are supervised? 3. What reasons do they give for ‘liking’ or ‘not liking’ how they are supervised? 4. What do they do about what they like/what they do not like? |
| “Bureaucracy” | |
| i. Hierarchical levels and roles | 1. How are activities structured within a research project? 2. What is supposed to be done at each level and by who? 3. How important/useful is this arrangement to management/to employees? |

| | |
|---|---|
| ii. Rules and procedures | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is allowed? 2. What is not allowed? 3. What is religiously followed? 4. What is consciously ignored (<i>By employees/by managers/ by both</i>) and why? 5. What is unconsciously ignored (<i>By employees/by managers/ by both</i>) and why 6. How are the 'must be complied to' rules negotiated? How do employees negotiate dropping the rules they do not wish to comply to? |
| iii. Work standardisation and other scientific management characteristics | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Are employees told exactly how they should carry out assigned activities? Are managers looking out that these instructions are complied to? How do they ensure compliance? Do employees carry out the assignment in the exact way they are instructed? If no, why? Are there consequences for diverting from the 'designed way'? 2. Do employees receive incentive wages in the form of a differential piece-rate system? Why is this preferred method of payment? |
| iv. <i>'Management takes charge, workers have minimum input'</i> tendencies | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How are employees involved in deciding what (and how) should be done? What do they think of their involvement or un-involvement? |
| vi. Other mechanisms of formal control of employee behaviour | Anything else managers ensure should happen because it is explicitly stipulated in the guidelines. |
| vi. Mock, representative, or punishment centred bureaucracy? | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Which rules exist with an informal agreement between managers and employees alike that nobody will really obey them? 2. Which rules are considered important and significant for the successful operation of the organisation and meet individual as well as group needs? (Everyone comfortably accepts them) 3. Which rules are imposed on employees (employees are punished or rewarded with level of compliance) |
| vii. Output based controls | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In what form is work measured? 2. Who decides what (and how much) should be done daily, weekly, monthly, annually, etc.? 3. What happens when the target is met (not met)? – performance related pay or penalty? |
| viii. Decision making | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What activities can employees do without consulting their supervisors? How do they feel about the possibility of doing these activities 'their way'? Have they done it before? Did their supervisor later get to know? What was the supervisor's reaction? What do supervisors feel about employees taking a decision without their consent? 2. What activities or processes cant employees alter, modify, revise, or adjust without the consent of their supervisors? Why is this so in such cases? What happens when employees feel a need for adjusting the way something is being done? Have they |

| | |
|--|---|
| | (employees) advocated for change before? What happened? How did the managers feel and respond to employees' suggestions? |
| “Post-Bureaucracy” | |
| i. Group membership and cliques vs. Task accomplishment (Mayo) | Theoretically, informal relationships between the workers and their supervisors positively influence task accomplishment (Schein, 1974) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What shows that there are worker/supervisor informal relationships? 2. What do managers consider as the benefits of these relationships? 3. How do employees feel about these relationships? Do they value them? |
| ii. Managers' assumptions vs. Employee response (McGregor) | For McGregor, control is dependent on the assumptions that management has regarding the attitudes and behaviour of workers and that workers' behaviour is dependent on how they are treated by their superiors. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What do managers generally think about workers' attitudes to work? 2. What do they (managers) do as a result of their perception of their subordinates? 3. Do they think there are differences between individual workers? Is their response then individual focused; in other words do they treat individuals differently? 4. What do workers make of their supervisors' actions towards them as a group or as individuals? |
| iii. Attempts to direct employee behaviour though influencing values and beliefs (Cultural controls) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What values do managers pay attention to and control? 2. What kind of employees (in terms of values, beliefs and attitudes) would managers prefer to recruit on their project? 3. Who is considered a work role model and why? 4. What is the criterion for allocating rewards and status? 5. What do employees consider as the acceptable beliefs, values and attitudes in their project? 6. What is considered unacceptable? 7. What is the importance of propagating the values, attitudes and beliefs managers are considering important? |
| iv. Effects of insecure work arrangements (Market controls) | Literature shows that twenty first century work institutions and structures generate precarious work and work insecurity and that that more and more people across the world are finding themselves in temporary work situations (see Pfeffer and Baron, 1988; Beck ,1992 and 2000; Kalleberg 2009; and Standing, 2011) Workers are therefore compelled to perform well in order to keep temporally insecure jobs (have their contracts renewed) or they may give their work less concentration spend their energies on lookout for their next appointment elsewhere. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What type of contracts do workers and managers hold? |

| | |
|--|---|
| | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. To what extent is their next assignment/employment uncertain? 3. If there is uncertainty what do managers and employees do in response? |
|--|---|

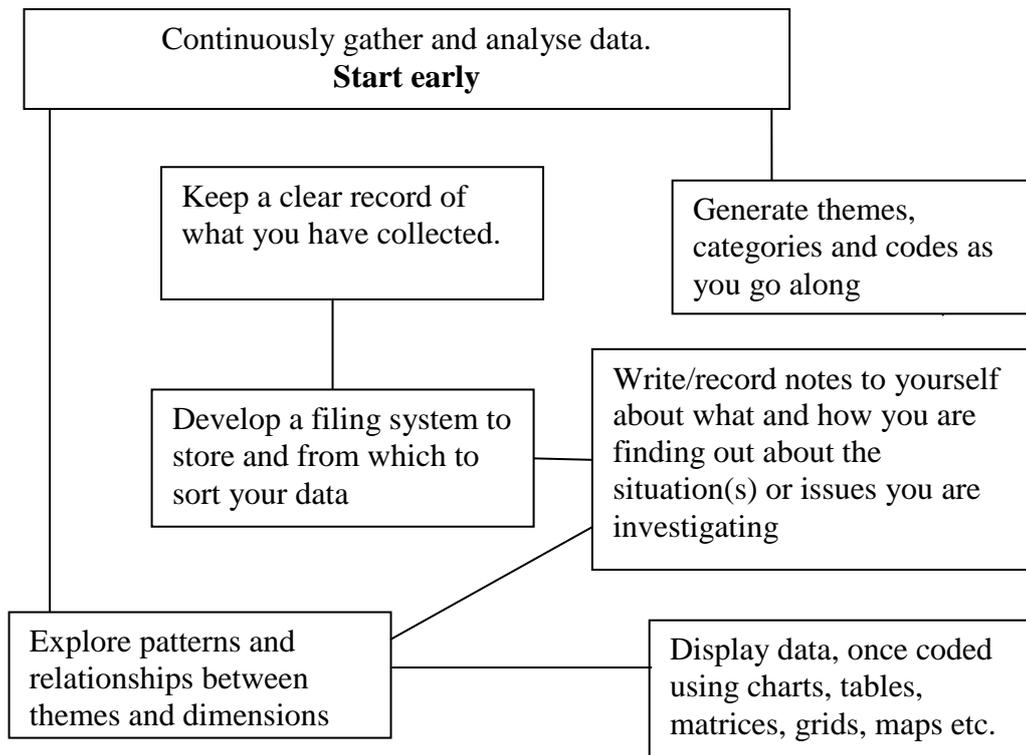
Source: *Developed by author, 2013*

3.5: DATA ANALYSIS

Data for this research were analysed with the application of the basic principles of grounded theory consisting of systematic, flexible and data grounded guidelines for theory development. The method was adopted because it offered detailed guidelines on how to inductively develop theory from data and yet permits flexibility allowing issues to emerge (Glaser, 2001; Charmaz, 2003; Jones and Alony, 2011).

An account of how data was analysed following grounded theory guidelines is presented as it happened in the field during data collection, and after the field in the office. However, the basic guidelines that shaped the initial direction for data management for this research were those provided by Anderson (2004). These guidelines have been presented below in figure 3.1

Figure 3.1: The qualitative data analysis process



Source: *Anderson, 2004, p.127*

3.5.1 Data analysis during data collection

The main challenge of using qualitative data is data overload (Anderson, 2004). To keep this challenge to a minimum, data analysis was started early while data were still being collected to assess responses and situations on an on-going basis. Anderson, (2004) argues that this incremental process facilitates a closer reflection of the reality of what is being investigated. The practice of analysing data on an ongoing basis during data collection is also believed to re-shape the focus of data collection as new aspects of the phenomenon being studied emerge along the way (Mason, 2002). This was a useful technique for it facilitated capitalising on initial impressions from participants to probe further about how the context in which they worked influenced their behaviour.

A journal was kept during field work and daily reflections of the process recorded. Sensitising concepts developed at the start of field work

were revised where necessary, and guidelines for seeking clarification on the issues raised from literature as well as from participants were continuously drawn. Attempts were made to make sense of the data collected by: (1) maintaining an open mind with a willingness to be surprised, (2) comparing responses and different incidences to look out for patterns, (3) periodic stepping back to ‘make sense’ of what concepts were developing, (4) probing further to make sense of the initial behaviour or actions. To illustrate this process, some of the themes of this research that were revised (or freshly emerged) and were reflected upon during the process of data collection are presented in table 3.4 below:

Table 3.4: Some reflections on original and emergent themes during data collection

| Theme | Reflection | Action |
|--|---|---|
| My field role | Is my identity ‘contaminating’ data? For example, my former workmates are commonly using the phrase “you know these things” instead of explaining their response to my questions. Am I not getting all the data? Are they reserving some information-they presume I know. | Find patterns: What is the trend in responses? How do the responses of my former colleagues compare with those from participants who were ‘new’ at PAL? |
| Reward for performance | Two RA have mentioned giving ‘incentives’ to employees under them to motivate them. What are those ‘incentives’ since RAs are not formally involved in administering rewards? | Note ‘reward’ as an emergent theme for discussion later. Clarify what they mean by ‘incentives’ and specific employee behaviour that is encouraged/targeted with incentives. Check literature how this links with cultural control. |
| Adherence to formal rules and guidelines | This week’s diary has many incidences of employees going against formal rules. Do the managers know? Are the employees considering the consequences? Does it actually matter to both parties? Why do they do that? | Watch out what happens in the presence of managers. Write some impressions under the ‘bureaucracy’ heading and note what rules mean for managers and employees. |
| Supervision | Managers have given varied responses on supervision. Are there formal guidelines on what they should do? Personality differences or differences in the form of activities supervised may | Find this out in observation and ask employees what they make of their supervisors’ different styles of supervision. |

| | | |
|---------------------------------|---|--|
| | be the determinants for supervision style. | |
| The informal/social environment | I have always taken for granted the fact that managers get involved in social activities along with their employees; this is making an impression/revealing new light on my research. | Ask managers if they sometimes feel restrained to do what they are formally required to do because of the informal social ties with their employees. Include PAL's social cultural context on the 'possible list of headings for NVivo'. |

Source: *Developed by author, 2014*

Cassell and Symon (2004) suggest that researchers should put down their personal assumptions in writing at the beginning of the study for the purpose of facilitating the process of accounting for the researcher's presence and influence on the nature of the process of research and the knowledge generated. A memo was also kept recording the difference between what was 'expected' and what was experienced in the field. Even though such a list was constructed, at the start, it was reconstructed at each stage of the research process as reflecting on my own experience took place. This has been discussed in further details below in the section on reflexivity.

The process of studying and sorting data was therefore started in the field during data collection to not only understand, clarify and collect more data but to also start the process of making meaning of what was happening. At the end of the field work, a list of themes ('possible list of headings for NVivo') emerging from the field had been developed with descriptive notes. Reflection on the data collection process and ideas from the so far reviewed literature had also been noted down at the end of field work covering issues including: 'my examined emotions', 'who was the familiar participant' and 'list of surprises'. This process of meaning making continued with the assistance of a computer aided software package NVivo once I got back from the field. The next section below explains the process of desktop data analysis that was carried out for this research.

3.5.2 Post field work: Analysis of collected data using NVivo

Grounded theory guidelines were also applied at this stage of data analysis to inductively develop theory from data. The process was conducted in 3 main stages:

Stage one of data analysis after field work involved transcribing interviews² and then, examining in turn all the interview transcripts, field notes and formal documents. These data sources were analysed line by line to develop categories, codes or major themes as they emerged from the data. This first stage involved what Mason (2002, p.109) refers to as “reading the data literally” line by line picking out the kind and form of words used for interpretation. This then was followed by a conceptual ordering or organising of data into separate categories or codes termed as ‘nodes’ in NVivo. A single node comprised of all text from the data that suggested a similar view point or theme. The properties and dimensions of the nodes were thus used to describe the themes that were emerging from the data. This stage has been referred to in literature as open coding (Strauss and Corbin 1998): a process through which themes emerging from the data are identified and data in form of text that identifies with their description attached to them. This process facilitated breaking down and organising of all the data into manageable categories with all the texts with similar properties or related information put in the same place i.e. each category held data from similar phenomena. Examples of initial codes that emerged from the data included ‘the bureaucratic organisation’, ‘decision making’, ‘performance evaluation’, ‘social relationships’ and ‘control through recruitment’. Properties of these codes were also memo-ed. In other words, raw data (information on transcripts, field notes and documents) was at this stage grouped according to the various issues they raised. The data was at this stage examined without excluding any source. I was also interested at this stage to consider what each participant

² 39 of the 49 interviews were transcribed word for word. A decision was made to scan through the rest of the 10 interviews for ‘anything’ new at a point where the process started to prove a certain level of saturation with similar ideas repeated from previous interviews.

said, what all my field notes implied and all the information provided in the documents. This has been encouraged in methodology literature to allow patterns to develop and eventual selection of categories that are most dense and dropping those that are not saturated with enough data or not making any connections with the other categories (Glaser, 2001; Johnson and Duberley, 2015). Categories that fill up more than others have been referred to as core categories (Glaser G. B., 2001).

The next stage involved a further reflection on the concepts that were emerging from core categories. Codes developed in the first stage above were not final but flexible to allow for creation of sub-nodes and moving them around as themes developed and further meaningfulness of different nodes evolved in relation to each other. This process of comparison of the similarities and differences as well as relationships between nodes is theoretically referred to as axial coding (Cunliffe, 2010; Charmaz, 2000: 2005). At this stage, data was no longer viewed in its original context but in the context of what theory it was beginning to portray, given the meaning of the original/main nodes or categories, the emerging sub-nodes, the relationship between the nodes and the logical flow that was developing. The process further involved re-positioning the nodes in such a way as to develop a logical flow between them. This also involved collapsing or merging some sub-nodes that seemed to contain text describing the same concepts. The categories' relationship with each other and their logical flow or systematic linkage was important in guiding the thinking about what the overall theory may be.

The third and last phase referred to as selective coding involved a further integration and refining of the categories and subcategories to form an outline for writing the findings chapter. Categories at this stage were read interpretively with a closer attention to find out what the data meant or represented. Then the categories' description, flow and linkage were compared to literature and some of their terminologies revised to match those commonly used in management. Graphic sketches were drawn to visually display the linkages. Appendix i represents an example of such a sketch. The final result of this process was a theoretical outline on which writing of the findings chapter was based. Linking the categories with literature facilitated

the analysis of where the empirical findings reflected on previous research and where differences existed.

This section on data analysis is concluded below with some reflections on the approach of and guidelines from grounded theory for data analysis.

3.5.3 Reflections on the use of grounded theory approach for data analysis

The idea within some grounded theory texts to reserve the literature review until after data collection and analysis was considered not to be practicable or useful for this research study. Instead, theory shaped the research design and process of data collection. In reality, it may be difficult if not impossible to start out a research project without any sort of influence from previous research. However, grounded theory, as explained by (Grasser and Strauss, 1967), also involves the use of literature in final stages of data analysis to compare the findings with previous research and to illustrate where the research differs from the existing literature. Analytical codes and categories were therefore developed from data rather than from theory. While positivists use theory to test data, the reverse was done for this research; it was interesting to ‘test the data against theory’ instead. A list of ‘what does literature say about this’ was developed during the process of data analysis to carry out a further review of literature, and empirical findings were linked to previous research in writing the findings chapter. This consequently facilitated further development of the theory and explanations.

It was also through this process that the contribution of this research to existing literature was determined. Of particular interest were those findings that deviated from the arguments in literature. For example, empirical data implied that the day-to-day practices of both managers and employees at PAL had minimal dependency on the formal paper guidelines. This was in contrast to some earlier arguments in literature that most organisations in Africa are as a result of colonial influence generally managed through paper based bureaucratic procedures (Kagaari, *et al.*, 2010) and that bureaucratic systems that were introduced by British colonisation in Uganda, specifically, have persisted in the country’s public organisational structures as the way of

administration. Such discrepancies facilitated a further understanding of the uniqueness of employee performance management and control at PAL as an African based organisation. Grounded theory has because of this characteristic been referred to as a “methodology for theory development through encounters between theoretical assumptions and empirical impressions that involve an active search for opportunities to let empirical material inspire rethinking of conventional ideas” (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2013. pp120).

This methodology however has limitations some of which were experienced in this research. Limitations that were experienced included the development of categories that ended up being of limited further use. Some categories that ended up with one or two sentences of text from the data attached to them and had no connection with the other categories were either collapsed or integrated accordingly with others. The process of sorting and collapsing such categories was time consuming and sometimes confusing. The other problem with the use of this form of grounded theory was the discovery of text that could fit in more than one category, making the process of describing and differentiating categories from each a little bit complex. Grounded theory and use of NVivo generally was however very helpful in organising data conceptually and specific concepts could be easily located and retrieved.

3.6 REFLEXIVITY AND METHODOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

I am African by descent, was born and raised in Africa, and had education as well as over 10 years work experience in Uganda. This implies that I went to Africa, and Uganda in particular, to do research not as an alien to the formal and informal social organisational processes there but with an imagination that I was going to the ‘familiar’. Having lived and worked in Africa during most of my life was expected to be advantageous for me in trying to understand the participants’ behaviour. I also expected that my experience in Uganda would enable me engage the participants meaningfully as I had an understanding of the language they used and the culture they lived in. More specifically, I had previously worked for over five years with PAL, first as a

laboratory technician and later as an HR programme administrator until 2008. I therefore personally knew some employees across the organisation and had an idea of the institutional mandate as well as the management culture. Although some changes had taken place at the Institute since I was last there (5 years earlier), my previous involvement was expected to (positively and to some extent negatively) influence this research. On a positive note, I had good working relationship with top management, peers and the rest of the employees which enabled me to attain not only access to the organisation but also willingness and open/sincere participation from the participants. Gaining access to a part of the reality where the phenomenon under study is present is considered a paramount determinant of the quality of a qualitative research project (Stenbacka, 2001). The researcher's pre-understanding of industry and/or the context of the case study is also believed to play a vital role in ensuring the quality aspect of the results (Yin, 2009). I however had preconceived ideas of what the strengths and loopholes could be in the employee performance management and control system and the general 'politics' of the organisation. This previous experience was expected to influence biased collection and interpretation of data.

I was however from the start, through data collection and analysis aware of my field role. I needed to be reflexive about the impact of my prior experience with the case study organisation, participant observation with former workmates and supervisors, as well as my experience of the Ugandan society and Africa generally. (I have provided a discussion on reflexivity in this research process in below).

This research process also revealed two aspects of my identity that were not considered as important at the start of the project yet proved influential in data collection and analysis. These were the fact that I had prior formal management education and had lived out of Africa, in the 'West', for a period of about 3 years. I have discussed later in chapter 7 how these issues played out and proved to have important methodological implications for data collection and analysis of management studies in African based organisations.

There appears to be general agreement in the literature that the identity of qualitative researchers, and their involvement in the research, influences the process of data collection, analysis and consequently knowledge

generation. Most authors on the subject of qualitative research (including Mason, 2002; Bryman and Bell, 2004; and Cassell and Simon, 2004) agree that generating and analysing data qualitatively should involve critical self-scrutiny by the researcher, or active reflexivity to be mindful of their actions and field role in the research process. The qualitative researcher thus needs to account for their being there in the midst of a social phenomenon they are investigating, showing, as it were, the hand of the researcher in the whole process. This critical self-scrutiny by the researcher is what is termed as reflexivity. The practice has multiple names from various authors including 'methodological self-consciousness' or 'narratives of the self' (Finlay, 2002), 'confessional tale' (Van Maanen, 1988), and self-analysis (Patton, 2002). They all however suggest and emphasise that reflexivity, in whichever way it is termed, is a defining feature of qualitative research because of the intersubjective elements that are likely to impact collection and analysis of qualitative data. Some argue that qualitative researchers are able to take on different kinds or modes of reflexivity depending on their philosophical assumptions (Johnson and Duberley, 2003). Sceptical positivists, notes Johnson and Duberley (2003), are likely to engage 'methodological reflexivity' to take care of issues of validity and reliability of their chosen methodology while those involved in participatory and explanatory research take up 'epistemic reflexivity' which involves being aware of the researcher's social location.

Denzin and Lincoln (2011) emphasise the importance of reflexivity, arguing that it facilitates the process of thinking through what was done, how it was done, consequences of particular unforeseen research issue, and the effect of issues such as these on the quality of data generated and information obtained from analysis during the research process. Therefore researchers should, urge Denzin and Lincoln (2011), take care to show something of the process and context of the activities they use to study a phenomenon. Various suggestions therefore are available on how researchers should reflexively evaluate ways in which intersubjective components of their research process (including social relationships, everyday life, discipline, language, cultural values etc.) impact on the planning, execution, analysis and reporting of their projects.

The labels and approaches to reflexivity above generally suggest that being reflexive involves taking care of the impact of: (1) the social context on the social phenomenon studied and (2) who the researcher is (their background, experience, beliefs or values) on the research process to enhance the trustworthiness, transparency and accountability of research results and claims (Finlay, 2002).

The approach which was taken in this research is what may be described as a mode in-between ‘methodological reflexivity’ and ‘epistemic reflexivity’ (See above for Johnson and Duberley, 2003 description of these terms). In other words, although the study largely took an interpretivist approach, looking out for meaning and explanations of participants’ feelings, activities and behavioural responses to managers’ prompts in the context of an African based organisation, prior experience with the social context of the phenomenon studied implied that it was possible to consider strategies to reflexively work with issues that were likely to crop up as the result of the chosen data collection methods. This also means that it was not my objective to demonstrate ‘hard won objectivity’; rather the process of data collection and analysis was flexible, allowing knowledge to emerge from the social context and events noted during the research process. The objective of collecting and analysing data reflexively was thus to minimise (and not to completely eliminate) and acknowledge the effect of my subjective influence on the data collected and the results of analysis. The following guidelines by Cassell and Simon (2004, p.20) were used for reflexive collection and analysis of data:

- i. Putting presuppositions down in writing at the start of the study, and construct this list at each stage of the research process,
- ii. Keeping a research diary in which own feelings about the process are recorded,
- iii. Reflecting on the experience of involvement in the study.

However, Patton (2002) argues that no amount of thoughtfulness would guarantee 100% readiness for all the issues the field throws at the researcher. I explain the presumptions I put down at the start of the study in the next section, “preparing for the field”, below. However management training as

well as study and life in developed country effect were unforeseen influences on the data generation process and analysis. These issues were therefore not 'prepared for' prior to field work but emerged during the process and thus there was a need for conscious analysis, or what Johnson and Duberley (2003) call epistemic reflexivity.

Preparing for the field

I worked as a first line employee and line manager at one of the programmes in the case study organisation for five years until 2008. I therefore knew personally some employees across the organisation and had an idea of the institutional mandate as well as the general management culture. Although some changes had taken place in the last five years, my previous involvement was expected to (positively and to some extent negatively) influence data generation and analysis for this study. On a positive note, I had quite good working relationship with top management, peers and the rest of the employees which enabled me attain not only access to the organisation but also practical support, willingness and open/sincere participation from participants.

Having lived and worked in Africa for a greater percentage of my entire life was also expected to play a positive role in this study enriching my analytical understanding of the participants' behaviour and meaningful engagement with them during the study. Gaining access to a part of the reality where the phenomenon under study is present is considered a paramount determinant of the quality of a qualitative research project (Stenbacka, 2001). The researcher's pre-understanding of industry and/or the context of the case study is also believed to play a vital role in ensuring the quality aspect of the results (Yin, 2009). I however had preconceived ideas of what the loopholes could be in the employee performance management and control system and the general 'politics' of the organisation. I was thoughtful and took into account the possibility of my previous experience influencing biased interpretation of participants' responses and analysis of data. An effort was made as much as possible to include, in this study, employees who joined the institute 5 years before the start of this research i.e. those I was not familiar with. It was hoped that this would minimise the possibility of my former

relationships with some employees biasing responses and interpretation. However, I generally kept the need to be reflexive before me during data generation and analysis, and therefore acknowledged my experience with participants I already knew in my interpretation of the findings of the study. Following Cassell and Simon (2004)'s advice above, to put presuppositions down in writing at the start of the study, I developed a list of expectations during field work. Below is a list of some of the issues I anticipated during data collection and analysis. These assumptions were influenced by my prior work experience at the case study organisation.

- i. Since it was a common occurrence for employees in this organisation to engage in discussions about their misgivings on the reward system, most respondents will want to divert the interaction during the interview to air their views on issues to do with pay. It was alright for them to talk about pay but I also wished to probe other aspects of employee performance management and control.
- ii. I worked with some of the current project leaders. Their new staff may view me as their supervisor's 'old friend' and withhold some of the information relevant for this research for fear of the possibility of me passing on what they would rather not have their supervisors know.
- iii. Respondents doubling as my former colleagues may unconsciously withhold some of their views and information with an assumption that I am, from my previous experience, already aware of such information.
- iv. Participants may view me as some sort of "top management's messenger" for the information sheet indicates that official permission to carry out this research had been obtained from the institute director. Responses may therefore be packaged as "messages to top management" and/or withhold some of the information intended to be kept from top management.
- v. I know what responses to expect from some respondents. I have prior knowledge of some of the supervisors' management styles as well as attitudes to control from some employees and therefore have an idea of what to expect from them.

It was thus expected from the start of this study that my prior work experience at PAL would influence how participants would view me. However, I was

aware of the need to be reflexive, and aimed to acknowledge prior knowledge of most of the participants in my interpretation of the findings. There was a tendency, for example, of my former workmates to state that they were sure that I knew “these things” and they seemed to think that they do not have to give further explanation. I therefore in the subsequent interviews gently requested for clarification/a reminder about “these things” to encourage further discussion. At other times such participants referred to real names of personalities or partner institutions in an attempt to link personalities to what happened in practice. I, for example, imagined that statements like “You know H (supervisor’s name) does...” were meant to bias my interpretation of what went on because the participant seemed to take advantage of my prior knowledge of H to describe what was happening in their department. In such situations I tried to tactfully go back to using titles e.g. supervisor, scientist or international partner rather than the names of personalities or institutions. That way, I could distance myself from what the interviewee expected me to know.

Reflexivity during data analysis

I was aware that my prior work experience with some of the respondents would influence my analysis of their responses. Prior knowledge, for example, of some managers’ management style as well as attitudes to control of some employees was likely to bias my interpretation of data obtained from such managers and employees. Two strategies were devised to keep my subjective judgement of such data to a minimum: (1) I looked out for the voice of the ‘familiar participant’ in the interview, checking for what I expected from them and then, (2) memo-ed the difference between what they said and what I expected them to say. I was also constantly checking and asking myself whether I was making up meaning of interview transcripts and field notes or allowing myself to find meaning. It was possible to imagine what information from an interview was ‘meant to mean’ rather listening for what ‘it means’. Even though I cannot claim complete elimination of subjectivity in analysing of such data, and arguably would not want to do this, the level of the influence my prior experience with former employees was minimised by these efforts to be reflexive.

I have mentioned earlier that prior management training, as well as study and living abroad, were unforeseen influences on the data collection and analysis. I describe below how this my identity reflected on the research process of this study, through reference to my pre-existing knowledge of motivational theory.

Textbook theories on 'motivation': useful practice?

The behavioural management or human relations movement looks at how to incorporate the fact that workers are human beings into the process of directing employee behaviour in the organisational setting to achieve desired performance. Examples of theories that explain the aspect of human behaviour in employee performance management include among others Abraham Maslow's needs theory (1943), Edwin Locke's goal setting theory (1968), Herzberg's two factor theory (1959), Douglas McGregor theory X and Y (1960), Elton Mayo's Hawthorne effect theory (1927) and Vroom's expectancy theory (1964). These theories also explain energisation and direction of behaviour or motivation (Deci, 1992).

Motivation is thus a common topic in management textbooks, journal publications and lectures for the insights motivation theories provide about effective management practices as well efficiency in controlling and directing employees' work behaviour (Shapiro, 2004). I therefore got to hear and read about various theories on the subject over and over again during my undergraduate and postgraduate training. I, however, did not realise that repeated exposure to these theories had over time turned me into a believer of some sort of 'universal timeless principles' of motivating employees. Moreover, some research conducted about ten years ago had concluded that for example Herzberg's two-factor theory still had utility nearly 50 years after it had been developed (Jones B. N., 2005). I therefore unconsciously went to the field with presumptions that I was unconsciously unaware of. For example, Herzberg found out that certain aspects of the job cause satisfaction and therefore motivation, while others cause dissatisfaction (Butler and Rose, 2011). Following this theory, I have over the years subscribed to the argument that factors like responsibility, achievement, recognition and promotion are, without exceptions, job satisfiers and therefore motivators. Even though some

process theories like Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory have assumptions that may be culturally specific, Herzberg's job satisfiers appeared as those that would be rationally applicable even in Uganda.

In an attempt to understand what employees were valuing and rewarding, participants were asked about the rewards they were accruing from their work. It had been noted from literature that employers would tend to reward certain values in order to direct the attitudinal and behavioural characteristics of employees towards such values (Kunda, 1992). It was evidently obvious that most of the respondents were not enthusiastic about the rewards obtained from their work and thus rewards may not have been involved in positively directing work behaviour. This was not surprising as most of the participants had identified only pay (a hygiene factor and not a motivator) as the reward they accrued from their work. This however prompted me to find out what motivated employees to work 'hard'. I expected that factors like scholarship opportunities for further studies, recognition and opportunities for personal growth and development would then be identified by respondents as motivators to 'hard work'. This was the argument Fredrick Herzberg put forward that such intrinsic factors at work led to satisfaction or motivation. Even though most supervisors had indicated that they relied on these factors to motivate their employees, unemployment levels in Uganda, relations with colleagues (a factor Fredric Herzberg had identified as hygiene and not a motivator) and contribution to society's wellbeing dominated employees' responses as to why they worked 'hard'. This can be illustrated by considering the following responses from the following interviewees.

“Oh I have never thought about that. But these guys are my colleagues here, why would I not make their life and work as easy as much as I can? And unlike many people who have no jobs, I earn a living in the process of doing just that. I think it is courtesy to your workmates and the institution to be a diligent worker.” (Technician 3)

“I think our work is very encouraging because we have direct contact with farmers, it's great to see our work directly benefiting farmers and

they tell us about the difference our work has made in their lives. This is a great motivator..... The farmers; our clients; they usually come back with feedback and we get to know how much they appreciate our work. It's a nice feeling to know that your work is valued." (Research Assistant 6)

"I think it would be silly not to take your work serious whatever difficulties you may face because there is no bigger problem than losing it because getting another one is a nightmare. Every wise person here is careful about their job." (Research Assistant 4)

Although I noticed the challenge to my prior thinking and philosophy in the responses above, during interviews I endeavoured to resist the temptation to ask leading questions to the expected answers. This was in anticipation that the 'right' answers would come up in subsequent interviews. The same information however emerged from the process of inductive coding of the data later on during analysis. Reflexivity thus goes beyond data generation into analysis, and the more I looked at interviews and extracted information from them inductively, the more I increased the chances of allowing it speak for itself without being 'contaminated' by who I am as a researcher.

African values or 'contaminated' by the West?

While management training influenced my expectation of specific responses from participants, the fact that I lived and studied in a developed country influenced some participants' view of my identity. There exist substantial and undeniable differences between African and 'Western' social, cultural and organisational behaviour (Adeleye, 2011). I noticed during this study that participants consciously checked on whether I still held 'African values' or had been 'contaminated' by experience in the 'West'.

This realisation was specifically made during the process of determining the attitude of supervisors to the informal social activities engaged in by their employees at and away from work. Although research on human resource management in Africa acknowledges that organisations in Africa are more of a social community, various authors urge that managers in Africa may still hold in esteem 'Western management' concepts over African

indigenous management practices (see for example Gbadamosi, 2002; Budhwar and Debrah, 2004; Horwitz *et al*, 2002; Ghebregiorgis and Karsten, 2006; and Kamoche *et al*, 2004). I personally also believed that, as far as managers were concerned, the formal guidelines, which in more case than not, have their background in ‘Western management’ styles, took precedence over the informal structures constructed by employees. In an attempt to confirm this assumption, supervisors were asked first if they were aware of the informal social activities their employees were engaged in. Supervisors were also asked if they thought that such social activities had any impact on employee work performance. Supervisors were aware of what employees engaged in and some mentioned that they approved of that sort of social engagement for it, according to them, among other things facilitated team spirit, aided supervision and boosted work morale. This can be illustrated by the quote below from Research Scientist 2

“I do not know what I would do with a batch of technicians each minding their own business. They need to talk the same language, be free with each other, that’s how we can together pull in the same direction. I have to worry if this doesn’t happen because people here depend on each other a lot to complete the clients’ jobs”. (Research Scientist 2)

However, I noticed that asking whether there was any value in the informal social activities at work portrayed to the participants the possibility that I held foreign work values as a result of studying and living abroad. I was for example asked if I was “now like a *muzungu* (white person)” and had developed individualistic ideas. Here again is Research Scientist 3’s response to the question as to whether informal social activities among employees were valuable:

“Definitely, what is life supposed to be about if people cannot enjoy each other. Do not tell me you have started developing ‘muzungu’ ideas of individualism. I hear you do not even know your neighbour

out there where you study. D has been telling us such stories from her experience in N.” (Research Scientist 3)

Or response from Research Scientist 7:

“I spent 2 months at TUQ (an institution in a developed country; TUQ not its real name) and was shocked at the way people live; they do not even know where their colleagues live. I honestly do not know how they manage life, though they seemed ok with their culture. They have converted you? Haven’t they?” (Research Scientist 7)

Following such comments, I noticed that I needed, in subsequent interviews and interactions, to be careful about making any impression or saying anything that would be linked to my exposure to the ‘West’. I also, from there on, took care that I did not say or do anything that suggested that what is considered ‘Western’ is supreme to indigenous ideas and views. These views were allowed to flow naturally from the conversations and informal comments from the participants as the process of data collection went on. I also discovered that although the question was originally intended to analyse the value of the informal organisation, I was able to take note of the supervisors’ as well as employees’ attitudes towards cultural co-option of what are considered as ‘Western’ values into an African based organisational setting. Although this may require further research, the impressions made during this research suggest that values viewed as ‘Western’ were generally considered ‘unnatural’. This can be evidenced by an employee’s response to what supervisors made of the regular habit of informal sharing of restricted work resources with co-workers on different projects.

“Ahhhhh! Even them (supervisors) if they are in the lab and they find that we do not have pipettes for example, they will tell one of us to run to TC people and see if they have and grab some. It is not a crime, even though it is officially wrong. You well know that life is different here from what happens in TAIC [a pseudonym of an international controlled programme hosted by PAL] for example. There, they try to do their things like ‘bazungu’ but even there, I am telling you, they do

not succeed being strict with things because you cannot work against your nature, can you?”(Technician 3)

The process of reflexivity during this research was therefore not only helpful in minimising subjectivity but also facilitated discovery of new insights about carrying out management research in an African based organisation.

3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The University of Sheffield has a research ethics policy to protect the welfare, dignity and rights of participants in research, including those of the researcher. In line with this policy, the following ethical implications were considered as possible issues that could arise from undertaking the research activities of this study.

- **Sensitivity.** The institute had commercially (and politically) sensitive projects within the research units. Data used in this study was strictly taken from interviews conducted, documents provided and observations made from only those research projects approved by top management even though it was possible to observe the way things were done in ‘sensitive projects’ during the process.
- **Right to privacy.** Some employees may prefer to have their documented performance appraisal information kept between them and their supervisors. All documents were viewed with informed consent from respective employees. Moreover, interviews were undertaken having already secured informed consent.
- **Confidentiality.** It was assumed that the participants could be uncomfortable with me reviewing their individual performance appraisal reports. Due to the potentially sensitive nature of appraisal and performance, participants were assured of confidentiality. To gain their confidence, they were requested to bring along these reports to the interview and go away with them thereafter so they could be sure I did not show them to anyone or copy them. Participants were also assured that they were free to withhold any information on their performance appraisal report or withdraw from the research at any time. Pseudonyms were also

used to protect their privacy. Data was recorded anonymously to ensure confidentiality of personal information, and is still being kept securely.

- Post-field. The institute may have preferences on how information obtained should be disseminated. Publication of the results of this study will be done consciously to respect known PAL institutional preferences.

A detailed ethics approved form by the University of Sheffield has been provided in the appendix.

3.8 SUMMARY

I assumed that the day-to-day activities of managers and employees carried meaning about the organisational life at PAL. So the words, actions and behaviours of participants who were involved in this study were relied upon as meaningful components of the practice of employee performance management and control. However, it was also assumed that obtaining valid knowledge about people is facilitated by relying on more than one attempt or technique to collect data about them. It was anticipated that the participants may for example verbally give information that contrasts with what actually happens during the work.

It was because of these philosophical assumptions that a qualitative research design (and related techniques) was adopted to explore, from participants' actions and behaviours, how employee performance management and control was designed and implemented at PAL.

Some aspects of ethnography and grounded theory were applied to analysing actions, interactions and behaviours of employees and to develop a theory that largely grounded in data. Semi-structured interviews and participant observations were relied upon as the core techniques for data collection. Secondary data was obtained from the institute's formal documents. These data were analysed in a systematic manner following principles from grounded theory of open coding, axial coding and refining the categories to form an outline of the findings for this study. Although this process proved to be complex in terms of having too many categories that were confusing and time consuming, it was helpful in facilitating organisation of data.

CHAPTER 4

EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT IN PRACTICE

4.0 OVERVIEW

This chapter is a presentation of the findings of this study. It starts by covering a deeper description of the case study including its type, mandate, structure and categories of employees. The chapter also explains how employee performance management was managed at PAL on a day-to-day basis, through examining, in turn, 1) work organisation, 2) decision making, 3) supervision, 4) performance evaluation, and 5) performance management through the processes of recruitment and reward.

4.1 THE ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXT

This section covers a description of the organisational context of the case study organisation. The features that describe PAL in terms of operation, structure and type of employees are presented in this section.

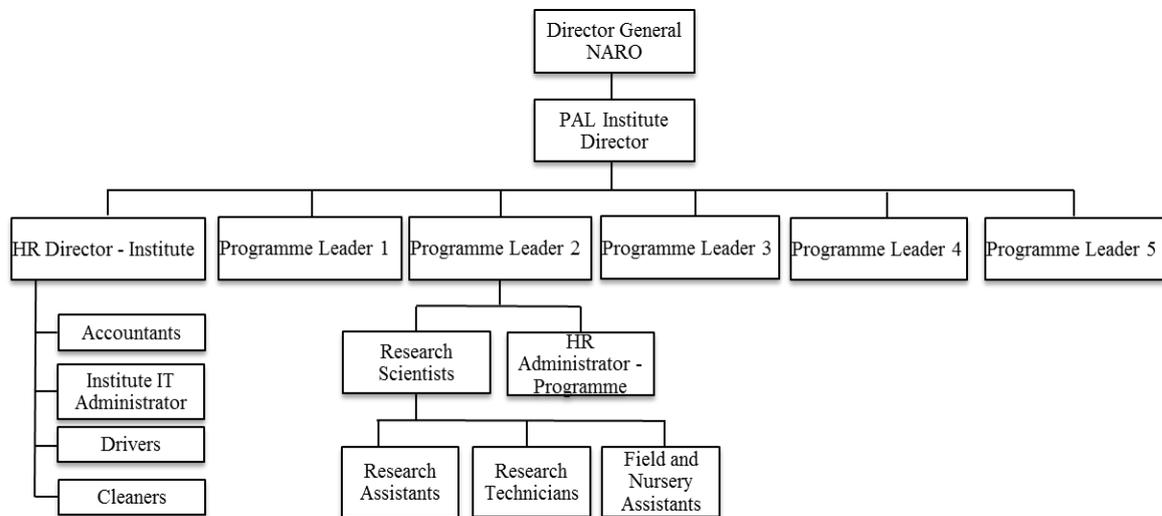
4.1.1 The case study organisation

The case study organisation for this study was one of Uganda's 14 semi-autonomous agricultural research institutes, under the national agricultural research organisation (NARO). Although agricultural research at PAL and at a few other institutes in Uganda dates back to the colonial times in the mid 1930's, NARO was only established in 1992 by an Act of parliament to oversee all agricultural research activities in Uganda. NARO is thus a public institution. The 1992 Act was enacted in 2005 providing for the development of an agricultural research system for Uganda referred to as the National Agricultural Research System (NARS), for the purpose of improving agricultural research services delivery, financing and management (The National Agricultural Research Act, 2005). The NARS is comprised of various NARO stakeholders involved in the provision of agricultural research services from both the public and private sector. These stakeholders included: agricultural research institutes (like PAL), universities and colleges, civil

society organisations and farmer groups. The Director General runs NARO secretariat. Each of the 14 research institutes (including PAL) was headed by an institute director reporting to the Direct General (NARO Act, 1992. p.16).

Within PAL, were five agricultural research programmes or research units mandated to conduct research and provide specific agricultural services. Each research programme was coordinated by a programme leader, reporting to the institute director. Programmes undertook 5-10 research projects simultaneously, each supervised by a project leader who was usually a research scientist. Research scientists, in turn, worked with teams of research assistants and technicians to execute project activities. In total, PAL employed about 300 employees in core research activities as well as supportive roles. The HR director reported to the institute director and headed a team of support staff including accountants, the institute IT administrator, drivers and cleaners. A simple diagram of this structure is provided below:

Figure 4.1: PAL organisational structure



Source: *Developed by author, 2014*

PAL was mandated and financed by Uganda’s ministry of agriculture (through NARO) to generate and promote specific agricultural technologies for the improvement of productivity, value addition, income and food security (Ministry of Agriculture development strategy and investment plan, 2010 p.14). Although all NARO institutes had the same general mandate, individual

institutes provided specific research services to handle specific national agricultural issues. Institutes were also semi-autonomous in their operations relating to the planning and implementation of research programmes, and allocation and management of resources in accordance with annual programmes and budgets. They were semi-autonomous in the sense that even though the operations fell entirely under the general supervision of the institute management through the institute director, plans and budgets required approval by the NARO council (The National Agricultural Research Act, 2005. p.7-8). Consequently, it was explained by interviewees that programmes within PAL had and did use the liberty to plan and execute research projects beyond those assigned and funded by the government of Uganda through NARO (Research Scientist 4; HR Director, Institute; and Accountant 3). All extra projects not funded by the government of Uganda were funded by international donors, referred to as development partners, from the USA, UK and Australia (Research Scientist 4).

It was noted from interviews and observations throughout fieldwork that the way in which performance management was applied at PAL depended on a number of factors. One of these was whether the work was locally funded and controlled or internationally funded. Locally controlled work refers, in this thesis, to activities that were on NARO assigned projects funded by the government of Uganda. Internationally controlled work, on the other hand, refers to activities on projects that were funded by an international donor(s) and were directly or indirectly controlled by the partnering agent (usually an agricultural research institute, a university or an international development funder). Another factor that appeared from observation to be affecting performance management was the type of workers employed at PAL, as outlined below.

4.1.2 Type of workers within PAL

At the time of the fieldwork, workers within PAL included the institute director, 5 programme leaders, and around 30 research scientists each working with a team of 5-10 research assistants and technicians. In addition, each programme had about 5 nursery and field assistants who took care of the nurseries and demonstration field plots. The core research activities were

supported by a team of around 30 support staff including 1) the institute HR Director in charge of administration of PAL's human resource functions as well as the institute's general day-to-day procedures, 2) programme HR administrators through whom the institute HR Director administered her roles to individual programmes 3) Institute accountants, 4) IT administrator, 5) drivers and 6) cleaners. All support staff reported to the Institute HR Director.

Of these, the institute director and programme leaders (PAL's top management) did not participate in this study through interviews and participant observation for they were not directly involved in the day-to-day application of employee performance management. They were, however, helpful in authorising access to the institute's premises, workers and relevant documents. Instead, this research concentrated on lower level management and staff because of their direct application, response to, and day-to-day experience with the modes of employee performance management and control at PAL.

The institute HR Director revealed that PAL staff were divided into various categories: 1) those who were hired as either NARO or project staff, 2) those who were involved in either core or non-core research activities, 3) those who were involved in either commercial or non-profit activities and 4) those who were either volunteers or contract staff on a payroll (HR Director, Institute). As will be seen later, in, for example, the sections on performance evaluation, recruitment and reward, these distinctions affected the ways in which employee performance management played out within PAL. Below is a description of the key differences between these different types of workers.

NARO staff versus project staff

Managers and employees referred to in this thesis were either hired as NARO staff or project staff. NARO staff were at all institutes (including PAL) appointed by the NARO secretariat for a four years' contract, renewable subject to satisfactory performance (HR Manual of NARO Staff Terms and Conditions of Service, 2009 p.2). Project staff, on the other hand, were independently hired on one year rolling contracts by individual programmes to handle activities on projects funded by an international donor(s) or development partner(s) (HR Director, Institute).

Workers involved in core activities versus support staff

As will be shown later, views on some aspects of employee performance management and control varied between workers involved in core research activities and those offering support services. Researchers (those involved in core activities) in this study included research scientists, research assistants, technicians and field assistants. They (core staff) had plant science related training. Support staff on the other hand included the Institute HR Director and programme HR administrators, Accountants, the institute IT administrator, cleaners and drivers. These (support staff) had social science related training.

Workers involved in “commercial” activities versus those in “non-commercial” activities

Although most research activities and services at the case study organisation were carried out using public and donor funds (“non-commercial” activities), some programmes carried out activities termed as “commercial” in this thesis. They (commercial research activities) were ordered and paid for by the general public. In such a case, programmes that offered commercial services to the public generated funds by levying a fee that covered the costs involved in carrying them out, without necessarily generating any profits (Research Scientist 10; Programme HR administrator 2). Individual farmers, groups or institutions who sought out these activities paid the levied fee. Consequently, unlike employees on “non-commercial” activities, employees carrying out “commercial” activities did not have a guaranteed source of funding because their salaries and the money to run activities in their programme came entirely from clients from the general public who sought out their services (Research Scientist 10)

Volunteers vs. confirmed staff

Some of the participants for this study were volunteers who were recent graduates intending to gain experience and possibly employment. ‘Confirmed’ staff, on the other hand, were employees who were hired on one or more years’ contract with a regular salary.

It is against the background of these features of PAL that the following findings emerged.

4.2 WORK ORGANISATION AND DECISION MAKING

PAL's formal policy guidelines, including those on employee performance management, emanated from Uganda's national public service guidelines (HR Director, Institute). For example, all HR decisions were expected to be made on the basis of an HR manual for staff terms and conditions of service developed by the NARO council, with the approval of the minister responsible for agricultural research. This manual was developed to guide the HR function at the individual institutes (HR Director, Institute).

Employee performance management and control at PAL was therefore expected to be tailored towards the achievement of the broader goals and aims of agricultural research activities in Uganda. It was, for example, stated in the manual that "the purpose of managing staff performance is to link employee activities with the organisation's [NARO's] strategic goals" and that "NARO management will review annually the performance of all staff,, so as to monitor staff output in relation and relevance to the expectations of the organization" (HR Manual of NARO Staff Terms and Conditions of Service, 2009, pp.29 & 30). The general formal policy on employee performance management in the manual was a 4 step cycle which included (1) making a performance agreement at the beginning of the annual performance cycle, (2) monitoring and evaluating performance, (3) annual performance evaluation, and (4) managing unacceptable performance. These guidelines were officially drafted in detail and documented by NARO to guide employee performance management and control at all of the institutes (HR Manual of NARO Staff Terms and Conditions of Service, 2009).

However, it was observed that there were numerous situations where an informal agreement was reached by managers and employees not to follow certain formal guidelines or rules that had been imposed by the formal procedures in the above policy (Field notes, February 17th, 18th, and 20th, 2014). For example in nominating the research assistant of the year [an exercise that the research scientists engaged in annually], Research Scientist 2 explained that she and many of her colleagues did not consider scores on their employees' performance appraisal forms because, "the NARO designed parameters used during appraisal do not cover everything our staff do here"

(Research Scientist 2). Thus in adopting this policy, there generally appeared to be elements of what Gouldner refers to as ‘mock bureaucracy’: a situation where managers and employees agree (implicitly) that certain formal guidelines are unnecessary, impractical or impeding work and should be ignored (Gouldner in MacAuley *et al*, 2007). Further probing on this matter with programme HR & admin assistant 1 revealed that although the manual mentioned above was designed to serve as an important reference point for decision making, it included the explanation that “where an unexpected situation might arise, an evaluation and analysis of issues at hand could be undertaken on case-by-case basis” (HR Manual of NARO Staff Terms and Conditions of Service, 2009 p.1). This gave managers and employees the freedom to use their discretion rather than follow guidelines to the letter (HR administrator, programme 1).

The following section explains how performance management was managed at PAL on a day-to-day basis. This was carried out through examining in turn, how the work process was organised, the extent of employees’ involvement in decision making and how supervision was carried out.

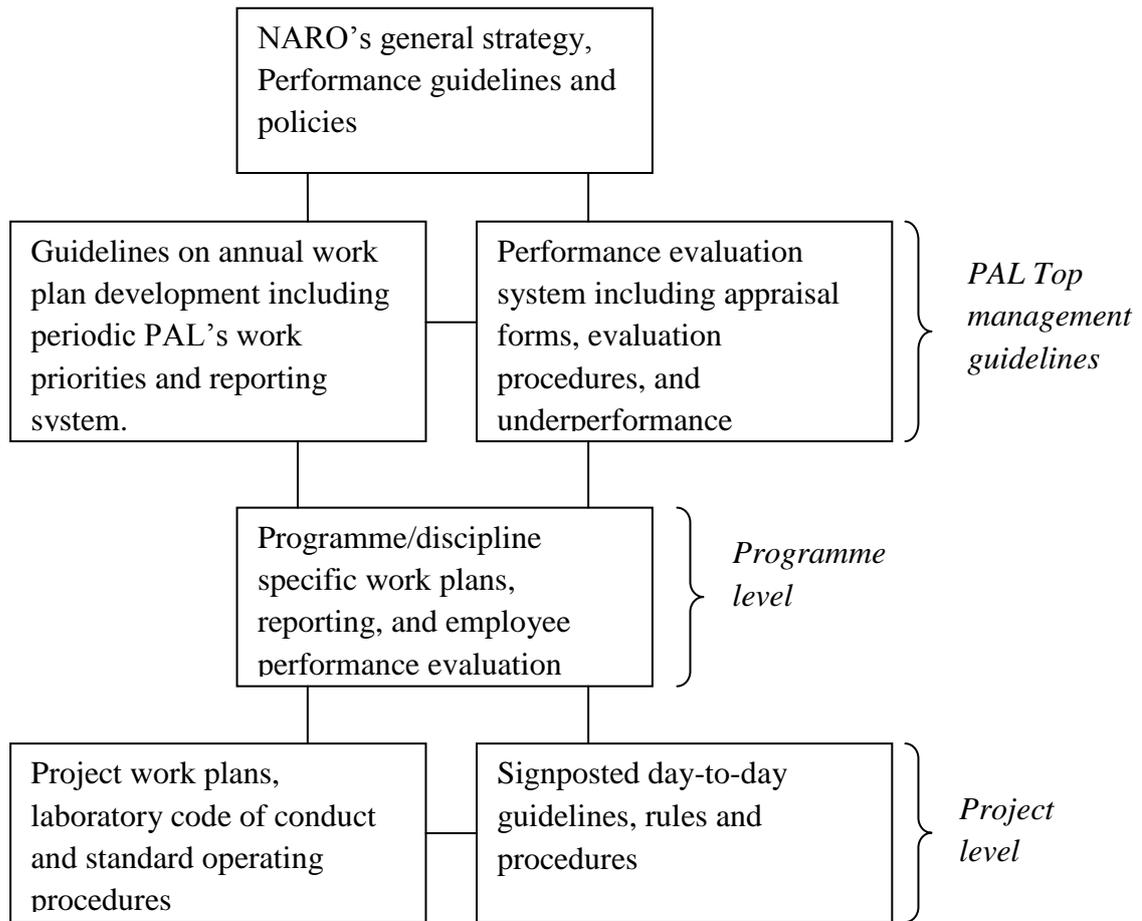
4.2.1 Formal bureaucratic work organisation

As figure 6 below indicates, the work at PAL was formally structured in such a manner that a group of the lowest level employees worked with a project leader or research scientist, described as “*the person over us*” by technician 1. Research scientists were accountable to programme leaders, and programme leaders to the institute director. This form of structure applied to both NARO and project staff.

Top management provided various work/ activity guidelines which were then further broken down into formal rules and procedures on performance. These were produced in the form of various documents at the programme or department/project level. These guidelines included procedures for developing programme annual work plans, reporting, and employee performance evaluation. It can thus be said that top management guidelines on annual work planning were standardised and specific. Research Scientist 2 revealed that it was general practice for each project leader or research

scientist to hold an annual planning session in which annual, mid-term and quarterly plans were drafted in line with the project’s mandate and objectives. The combination of individual project plans constituted the programme plan, and programme plans in turn made up the overall organisational work plan for PAL (Research Scientist 2). The following diagram shows this process:

Figure 4.2: Work organisation at PAL



Source: Developed by author 2014

The above attempt to formally structure the work with clarity on what, who and how activities should be carried out mirrors what has been described as ‘bureaucracy’ in literature. For example, McAuley *et al* (2007, p. 159) describe bureaucratic processes as ones that “...entail the development of impersonal rules and procedures so as to influence the task transformation element by specifying what operatives should do, how, where and when.” Bureaucratic ideas have also been described in other places as those that

suggest a formal system of organisation based on clearly defined hierarchical levels and roles, and mechanisms of formal control of employee behaviour in order to maintain efficiency and effectiveness (Max Weber in Thompson and McHugh, 2002).

Even though formal patterns were clearly set to guide work processes at PAL, some informal practices tolerated by managers and employees alike arose spontaneously in everyday work. It was clear from interviews and observation, for example, that managers and employees were, in practice, not solely working with the institute's and NARO's bureaucratic guidelines provided for structuring work and activities (HR Director, Institute, field notes, January 14th, 2014). What is described below as the 'bottom-up approach' seems to have been embraced by supervisors and employees alike.

Bottom-up rather than top-down implementation

Although top management was meant to provide a general direction and guidelines for work and approved project plans and budgets before implementation, in practice, the planning process of activities was generally a bottom up procedure. For example when Research Scientist 6 was asked how his responsibilities were determined, and how the activities on the project that he oversaw were decided upon, he revealed that these were shaped by him and then fitted into the general programme work plan. He explained the process as follows:

“The programme has a 5 year work plan. I was asked to generate my own activities based on the job description in my employment contract. My activities are then incorporated in the programme's work plan. However, the programme leader can along the way delegate some activities to me that are not necessarily part of what I originally designed to do” (Research Scientist 6).

When asked whether it was therefore entirely up to him to decide on what he did, he replied:

“The programme leader approves my work plan. It must have my core capacities and expertise covered. My activities are also shaped by my colleagues; we meet as a team and discuss our plans, break them into annual and quarterly plans. By the way, all projects I work on are a result of joint proposal development with my team” (Research Scientist 6).

Rather than top management solely deciding and shaping activities to hand down to the research scientist, project proposals were instead developed and activities designed by research scientists with input from research assistants and technicians. Project proposals were presented by the programme leader, “*like he designed them himself*” (Research Scientist 5), to NARO or an external partner for approval and funding. On approval of research proposals, funds were released to implement project plans (Research Scientist 5)

The participative planning process and employees’ communal tendencies in the process of carrying out day-to-day activities can be contrasted with much of the existent literature on HRM in Africa, which seems to emphasise a post-colonial shift from the solidaristic, participative and communal practices that originally characterised management in Africa, to rule-based bureaucratic practices (see for example Mpabanga in Kamoche *et al*, 2004; Kamoche, 1992 and Mamdani, 1973). Colonisation of Africa by the west, it is claimed, may have led to the introduction of the monetisation of traditional economies, importing foreign organisations systems that were based on bureaucratic principles (Budhwar and Debrah, 2001). In other words, it is implied that efforts to achieve economic objectives of organisations were prioritised and solidaristic and communal practices replaced with authoritative bureaucratic tendencies to achieve these economic objectives.

However, communal practices were evident at PAL, as explained later in chapter 5 under “the informal organisation” section. It was learnt from interviews that rather than dictating what should be done to employees, the bottom-up approach was perceived as having the ability to maximally utilise the potential of lower level staff who were deemed to have sufficient expertise and experience to determine what and how activities should be organised and implemented. For example, Research Scientist 9 regarded this approach as an

ideal way to allow him to think through the feasibility of activities at the planning stage by getting information on their practicability from those who had technical experience of the 'real' work (research assistants and technicians):

“I prefer to do it this way because then I am spared the hassle of first of all working it out by myself and then going around telling individuals what they should do. That would be too much and I think it would also limit the potential of our research assistants and technicians. They can plan, they know what works well and what doesn't and it also gives them a chance to internalise what the project is about. Life is easier that way, isn't it?”(Research Scientist 9.)

It seems from the quote above that the bottom up/participative approach was not only aimed at maximising the potential of research assistants and technicians, but seemed to have also been perceived as a means of facilitating them (research assistants and technicians) to become familiarised with the project they worked on and feel able to generate ideas. In other words, it seems to have been a way in which they were allowed to have a degree of autonomy.

Through involving employees, research scientists and top management at PAL generally seemed to mirror the type of managers that McGregor refers as theory Y managers: managers who assume that workers have a willingness to accept responsibility and are capable of innovation. In contrast, X managers assume that workers dislike work generally, focus on economic security and therefore need to be coerced into effort (McGregor, in Schein, 2011). Employees are, as a result of theory Y managers' assumptions given a democratic and participative work environment.

However, it was noted that even though formal guidelines and hierarchy seemed to have been taken lightly, formal procedures were not completely disregarded by managers or employees. Hierarchical relationships appeared as respected channels through which formal procedural requirements such as the authorisation of material purchases or document signing were met. For example, Research Scientist 9 explained how he viewed the supervisory relationship with his research assistants and

technicians as one where even though he would not exert his formal authority over them, he still took responsibility for the team.

“If you are thinking about it in terms of who is the boss of whom, well it doesn’t exactly work like that in day-to-day life. Officially, I know I am responsible for the team, but everyone comes down to the same level as we work. In fact, if you came to our review meetings, you would not know who is who. Even though everyone respects formal procedures, like who signs on what, it would be funny to refer to a particular research assistant, for example, as a boss of the technician they work with” (Research Scientist 9).

This picture was further portrayed very often during periods of participant observations with employees at work. An example where this was demonstrated was in a particular session with Research Scientist 9’s team comprising of a research assistant, 2 nursery attendants and 2 technicians. They at the start of day discussed and decided among themselves the activity that I would do during my observation session with the team. There was no sign of leadership; everyone seemed to be involved in making decisions about the day. One of them mentioned a list of supplies that they would need soon.

T: “Guys do you realise that ... is almost finished, we might need to ask J to buy us more. In fact even those... cannot take us for another month... [She went on to mention other supplies that needed restocking]

Others: “Oh yes,yeah,.... Hmm!.....true..... ”

We later had a break after someone suggested so and the rest agreed. I was told they usually had a break whenever they felt that they needed one, such as when they were tired, hungry, or had completed a task and were about to start another activity. We were all led out for a break by someone who I later realised was a technician, a position that was the lowest on the hierarchy. No one checked what time it was before or after the break. We had a break of about 20 minutes. Someone walked about 200m to buy deep fried cassava, which we had with black tea. She used her money to buy this for all of us. The

talk at break (and during work) covered almost every topic including politics, gossip, etc. and everyone joined in with the conversation.

Me: “So who is the team leader of this group?”

Them: [Laughter]

K: “G failed to live up to her calling so we boss ourselves even over her; sometimes” [this was said in a sarcastic manner, jokingly]

[They joked and laughed about how G was a boss with no ‘privileges’ so she is like them].

G: “The truth is these guys remember my authority when there is trouble. Then they want to send me in front to be fired at, Kale! [Alright!]” (Field notes, 13th March, 2014).

I later discovered that G was the research assistant who was assigned responsibility over the activities of this team and acted as the figurehead for the team on occasions such as signing requisitions for supplies and presenting progress in project meetings.

There were several other incidences of employees ‘disregarding’ hierarchy that were observed during this study. For example, some of the research assistants and technicians from project X were observed agreeing with those from project Y to help in solving a major technical problem that team Y was experiencing. The solution involved the use of some of the supplies that were officially designated for project X and time of up to 3 weeks from 2 team X technicians. I asked a member of project X if they expected any issues with management for deciding to involve themselves in project Y’s activities without the consent of the research scientists in charge of the project. And he just said “*she will be alright, they [the other project members] often help us, and there is no problem with us helping them.*” (Technician 3).

In general, hierarchical relationships at PAL seemed to display a characteristic that Edwards (1979) describes as “blurred lines of a more stratified and less class-conscious workforce” instead of a sharp distinction between workers and managers (Edwards, 1979, p.vii).

Another issue that is broadly related to hierarchy also seemed to characterise work organisation at PAL. This was the use of rules and policies, as described below.

Rules

At PAL, individual programmes had formally drafted and documented guidelines on employee performance in the form of codes of conduct and standard operating procedures. Furthermore, different work stations had rules guiding day-to-day activities that were signposted at various points around the work area. Section 9 of the NARO Staff terms and conditions of service provided the general employee performance management policy.

However, it was generally observed that most employees, including support staff, managers and employees who were involved in core research activities, seemed to consider the rules and guidelines on employee performance as impersonal and detached from the realities of their day-to-day operations and relationships (Field notes, January 14th, March 3rd, 4th and 5th, 2014). Consequently, control was negotiated socially between supervisors and employees through informal agreements. Gouldner's (1954) work on patterns of industrial bureaucracy points out that where solidaristic rather than individualist work behaviours are exhibited, rules are applied flexibly so that workers are able to strengthen control over their working environment. Further detail about how the informal organisation at PAL echoed that of Gouldner's (1950) work will be provided in section 4.5 of this chapter. This later section will also shed further light on the attitudes and responses to rules and guidelines at PAL.

Since rules are, beside hierarchical relations, usually considered to be a major defining aspect of bureaucratic organisations, could the system at PAL then be described as un-bureaucratic? Weber, for example argued that in bureaucratic organisations, monitoring through impersonal rules and procedures is paramount to ensure compliance (Weber, M. in Thompson and McHugh, 2002).

Ensuring compliance

Various formal mechanisms were in place to apparently inform management/supervisors about what employees actually did (or didn't do) on a day-to-day basis. For example, a sign-in register was observed in most departments for employees to indicate, on a daily basis, the time that they arrived and left work. It was also observed in some departments that employees had personal activity notebooks where they were expected to note down activities that they carried out on a daily basis (HR Director, Institute). There however appeared to be awareness among employees that supervisors were not necessarily looking out for who was and who was not complying with these guidelines and therefore gave them minimal attention. A research assistant was for example observed guiding a volunteer who had just joined a project. This exercise was carried out for 2 hours without noting down the activity in his lab notebook (Field notes, 3/3/14). He (research assistant) later mentioned that he used his notebook only for activities whose step-by-step procedures were either long or difficult to memorise (Research Assistant 5). He implied that what he was doing with a volunteer was not difficult and therefore did not have to note it down. This was done even though it was a formal requirement for him to note down everything he did daily. Similar incidences and managers' responses to them are described further in the section below on adherence to formal rules.

Apart from activity note books, 'space leaders' were appointed as one of the mechanisms for ensuring compliance to rules. Research Scientist 1, who also doubled as a lab manager in charge of standard operating procedures at the lab, explained that he had appointed research assistants and technicians from various projects to work as 'space leaders' on various work points in the lab. Space leaders were, according to Research Scientist 1, responsible for ensuring that other employees carefully adhered to the procedures and rules governing the work points that they 'space led' (Research Scientist 1). Although space leaders were conscious of their appointment, they were not observed exerting any form of authority at their 'space led' points. Research Assistant 5 viewed her role as a 'space leader' as that of "an informer of faults with LFHs [devices in the area he space led] to the lab manager whenever they occur" (Research Assistant 5) and nothing more.

There seemed to be implicit agreement among the members of staff at different levels that it was not necessary to comply with rules. For example, a formal procedure had been put in place to inform managers who used a certain gadget, and when it was used. Two technicians were observed negotiating about the use of the gadget (Field notes 4/2/2014). They verbally reached an agreement: one would use it for a given amount of time and then let the other have it. A rota was attached to the gadget requiring employees to note/book when (date and time) they would need to use it. A few names and dates were on the rota. During that day, it was observed that three other people used the same gadget without putting down their names on the rota. Later in the day, Research Scientist 4 was asked what the list of names and time on the gadget implied. He answered,

“...it shows who will be using it and when; people book it by putting down their names and the time they need to use it. It is also supposed to tell the lab manager about who used the machine and when, so he knows who to find information from just in case there is a problem. We are also supposed to cross check with leads like these to confirm what is written in the lab note book as work done on a given day” (Research Scientist 4).

The words “we are also supposed to...” from a supervisor may suggest that managers were also not wholly committing themselves to ensuring compliance to formal guidelines.

Adherence to formal rules, policies and procedures

Workers involved in core activities, as well as support staff, seemed to apply the formal guidelines and rules that were provided to guide work behaviour and performance in a flexible way. For example, a research scientist who also doubled as a lab manager in one of the laboratories considered that the laboratory code of conduct, a document with a set of rules for lab users to follow, was “a mere guideline”. Every new employee was given time of up to 2 hours on their first day at work to sit in the manager’s office to read, internalise and sign a declaration that they had understood and would adhere to the guidelines during their tenure at the laboratory. While the laboratory

manager passed it on to me to have a look, he was quick to caution: “Do not imagine that we are operating a military barracks here. That file is not our basis for day-to-day operations, it’s a mere guideline” (Research Scientist 10). He further explained that scientists and technicians were well trained and equipped with knowledge from their formal university or college education, which enabled them to professionally navigate their way through the laboratory.

In another incidence, a programme HR administrator in charge of the programme’s fleet seemed to be aware of, and condoned a driver’s continual breach of one of the programme’s rules. She had this to say:

“Some things are just difficult or even may be unnecessary to implement. Take an example of our so strict van policy here in TAIC [a pseudonym of an international controlled programme hosted by PAL]. We should never allow people from other programmes to use the staff van mbu [because] they are not insured. But what does the driver do, he goes picking everyone, because how do you expect him to leave them, they are fellow human beings. The difference is that they do not work with TAIC. (HR Administrator Programme 3)

One explanation for this ‘ignoring’ of rules might be the informal relations between employees. This may help to explain why the administrator considered that helping non-TAIC employees was more important than following the rule governing the programme van use.

A further possible explanation for not obeying rules is that most employees seemed to hold an attitude that can be phrased as ‘we do what works here, not what is documented or dictated’. It was common to hear about: edited protocols by research assistants and technicians; communal use of facilities and supplies officially designated for one specific programme or project; inconsistencies in daily activity records meant to give the supervisors an idea of what individual employees do on a daily basis; ignoring of sign posted usage instruction on gadgets; or usage of company vehicles for personal errands. There was also awareness among employees that

supervisors were not necessarily looking out for who was and who was not obeying the rules, as the following quote implies:

“Here, the lab manager sits you down during induction to read a huge manual with the laboratory code of conduct. You then sign somewhere to say you have understood everything. After that he gets you another file with the standard operating procedures which you also read and declare that you have understood and will adhere to everything. Then he physically takes you around telling you the dos and don’ts. But to be sincere, I have none of those rules off my head. I have an idea of a few things everyone follows, for example signing in the attendance book, supposed to wear closed shoes, and official work time. These do not have to be strictly followed and there is no strict supervision to ensure that they are followed. But whenever there is a problem, they go and consult the ‘books’” (Technician 7).

The rules therefore appeared to have been ignored without fear of possible ‘punishment’ for ‘disobedience’. Indeed, it seemed that managers/supervisors were not keen on ensuring compliance. The quote below about a handbook with rules, procedures and guidelines from a research scientist summarises, in general, the attitude and response to rules and guidelines at PAL:

“Doing everything in there is a different matter. When people work in these labs for a long time, they discover the best way of doing their work and adopt it. When they do that for a long time, new people copy it and it eventually becomes a culture or normal way of doing things. It’s not that the code of conduct is useless, it gives the basics and the initial guide and we can refer to it when we are not sure of what we should do in a given situation. Most of the stuff in there is basic standard operating procedures which people even learn from university or college as they are being trained to work here. So its normal procedure they follow even if it was not stated as a rule” (Research Scientist 6).

It was thus observed that employees negotiated and agreed between themselves and supervisors to ignore some of the formal rules and guidelines during their day-to-day activities.

Shared agreement on breaching written guidelines

Some of the formal rules were part and parcel of everyday activity and were easily adhered to by employees without thinking about them. For example, everyone automatically took off their shoes in the changing room and wore a laboratory coat as soon as they entered the lab. Interview responses about these actions indicated that this was not routinely followed out of fear of the consequences for breaching the guideline, but rather something that occurred naturally. Responses on this issue included statements such as: “This is what we do here.....(technician 4), everyone does it..... (technician 2), I mean, its basic practice we learn from school....,(technician 2), never once did I think it was a rule...(technician 6)”.

However, there were certain rules that employees consciously ignored, and they agreed between themselves to do so. For example, there were frequent incidences when rules relating to procedures and formal protocols for carrying out technical activities were ignored by employees (Field notes 6/2/14; 10/2/14; 13/2/14). A further probing into why such rules were ignored revealed that they seemed unimportant. Most interview responses indicated that the employees’ main focus was on achieving results rather than complying with rules and guidelines (Research Assistant 5; Research Assistant 9; Technician 2). Some rules were also ignored on the basis of their appearance as anti-social. There seemed to prevail a ‘help me, I help you’ agreement amongst employees within and across various projects (Field notes 13/2/14). This is reflected in an interview response below.

“Because the CT is designed for bench work and growth chambers, our supervisors who you may want to call bosses were given offices in B. We are just research assistants and technicians in CT on a daily basis and there is a way we have developed a system on how we work together, for we need each other first as human beings and later as workers” (Technician 6).

Such agreements, in most cases, contradicted most of the formal guidelines. Also, as in the case of TAIC driver above, the value of helping other people seemed to be higher than that of following rules. A similar belief has been identified as one from which Ubuntu theory is derived. Ubuntu theory is derived from a traditional African beliefs human existence is dependent on interaction with others-‘a person is a person because of others.... .people are people through others’ (McDonald, 2010)

Agreements to ignore formal rules were also made between supervisors and employees, especially with regard to the NARO guidelines intended to monitor and control the technical output of employees. Such an agreement was described by Gouldner as Mock bureaucracy. Gouldner indicates that mock bureaucracy (an informal agreement between managers and employees to obey a rule(s) imposed by an external body to them) is usually as a result of a perception of the rule(s) as an impediment to desired work processes that is unnecessary, or quite impractical (Gouldner in MacAuley *et al*, 2007). An example of the ignoring of rules for this reason was a driver’s attitude to the rule “Company vehicles must only be used during 8-5pm work time”. The driver was also consciously aware that the administrator in charge of managing the programme fleet considered this rule to be impractical. He described his attitude about the rules this way:

“But it’s no secret at all; everyone knows that we do not follow those rules to dot. People who made the rules thought that life would be the same every day. But life is not like that you know; unexpected circumstances happen and the rule appears useless. In fact we are told that we cannot drive official cars after office hours, so when you are caught up somewhere in traffic, do you pack the car and walk home? Even M [the admin assistant] herself occasionally sends us to places after 5pm. For example, picking visitors from the airport, dropping home someone who has been working beyond 5pm and things like that” (Driver 1).

In summary, it appeared that the formal guidelines handed down by top management were more of a reference point for occasional decisions rather than guidelines for day-to-day activities. Middle management was allowed discretion on how work processes were controlled. Flexibility regarding the use of rules could have been due to community rather than an individualistic environment, ad hoc systems of performance evaluation and accountability, and backstage employee activities; concepts described in this thesis

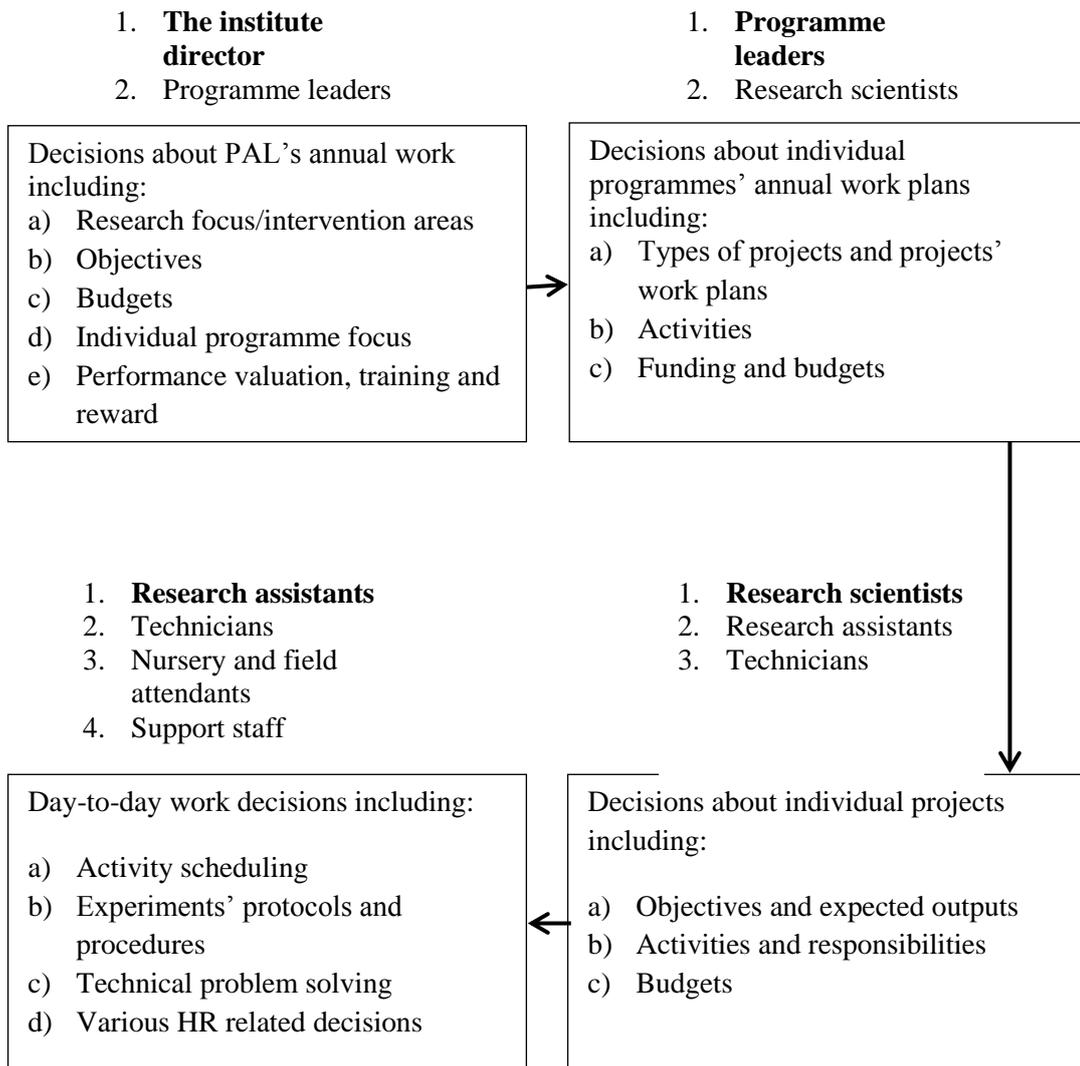
Besides, and related to work organisation, the practice of employee performance management and control at PAL was also influenced by the process of decision making. The next section below describes the type of decisions that were made and who made them.

4.2.2 Employee involvement in decision making

Work and employee performance management decisions that were made at PAL ranged from top management's decisions about the general institute's annual work plan (including priorities, objectives, budgets and activities) to day-to-day decisions by individual employees: for example scheduling one's activities to be carried out on a given day. There seemed to be direct or indirect involvement of employees at different levels of decision making; a practice that had implications for employee performance management as will be described later.

Based on interview responses and documents such as work plans and budgets, the range of work decisions that were made, and who made them, is summarised diagrammatically below. The people who were formally in charge of the various categories of decisions have been highlighted in bold.

Figure 4.3: Decisions and corresponding responsibility



Source: Developed by author 2014

A copy of PAL's annual work plan (drafted 7 months before this study was conducted) was maintained by each research scientist. They (research scientists) indicated that even though they were not physically part of the planning session that made decisions about PAL's 2013/14 research focus, they had indirect input to the final work plan through their programme leaders (Research Scientists 3; 4; 6 and 8). Although the institute's top management (the Institute Director and Programme Leaders) had come up with the annual plan during the traditional planning session, research scientists mentioned they had, prior to the meeting, been requested to summarise and hand in project work plans to their respective programme leaders. Individual research

scientist's plans made up programme plans, which in turn constituted the institute's work plan (Research Scientist 6).

Apart from the annual work plans, each programme had 5 year work plans developed by programme leaders and research scientists. In summary, an environment seemed to have been created for research assistants and technicians to formally have an input into decisions made during project proposal development. However, some supervisors, including Research Scientist 9, seemed noncommittal when asked whether his team of research assistants and technicians played any part in decision-making regarding the projects that they were working on.

“Yes and no to your question. First of all, every technical staff [research assistants and technicians] is invited to participate in proposal development, specifically on the technical section. We want to always be in agreement with our research assistants and technicians on the objectives and activities of the project. Although they rarely give suggestions, they are aware of what should be done, why and how it should be done. They are free to modify protocols, but of course we discuss that with them as well” (Research Scientist 9)

A similar idea seemed to resonate from Research Scientist 4's response when asked about his team members' role in planning for the project.

“The whole team takes part in the planning session for the project. When the project takes shape, I assign each member a portion of what they should do, although they work together; so I guess it's combined effort really” (Research Scientist 4).

He later clarified that ‘when the project takes shape...’ meant the point when he (solely) finished working on the final details of the proposal.

Research scientists who seemed to fully believe in involving their team members in decision-making were asked about their intentions regarding involving their employees in the planning process. The reasons included “... I wouldn't want to be viewed as dictatorial” (Research Scientist 1), “... it [not

involving them] would limit their potential; they can plan, they know what works well and what doesn't", "... it gives them a chance to internalise what the project is about..", "...Life is easier that way." (Research Scientist 9), and "I want to build their confidence, they are our future project leaders" (Research Scientist 4).

However, from interviews with staff, and via observation, it seemed that employees were more comfortable giving their opinion informally rather than during formal meetings. When asked how they passed on their opinion, one interviewee explained,

"We are usually free to say anything during the project meetings but only if K [Research Scientist in charge of the project] does not invite Dr J [programme leader] to make the whole meeting a very serious matter. We can freely express ourselves, complain about anything we think will affect the work on the bench, and generally say our own opinion out of the meetings, because I think K has developed this culture with us" (Research Assistant 2).

A research technician on the same team explained why they were careful not to express their opinion in meetings that the programme leader attended:

"I think we usually feel intimidated by the fact that it is a meeting. You cannot even know what they will make of your opinion. There is a secretary who takes minutes, everything you say goes on paper. They might victimise you if they are not happy with what you say and there is evidence there in black and white that you said it" (Research Technician 7).

Generally, the degree of involvement in decision making at proposal development level and throughout implementation of project activities seemed to be dependent on the individual personalities of employees and supervisors, as well as on their previous experience. Some supervisors were quick to point out that they had, over the years, depended on their employees for a range of contributions including making the right budget estimates,

scheduling activities, designing new experiments and modifying generic protocols. Research Assistants 3, 6, 9 and 10 all admitted that they had, on many occasions, confidently participated in suggesting important aspects of the projects that they worked on. This, they generally attributed to the fact that their supervisor was the type of person who respected their input. Research Assistant 6 confessed:

“J is a type who cares about ideas despite who brings them up. Some other people may think about the fact that I am research assistant before they think about what I am suggesting” (Research Assistant 6).

Technician 3 echoed a similar attitude:

“I make suggestions depending on my previous experience with a supervisor’s personality. Some supervisors do not ask for suggestions, while some ask and listen. I tell what I think to those who listen and mind my opinion. I do not bother about those who may not listen. I wait to do what they tell me” (Technician 3).

In addition to considering work organisation and decision-making, a further examination of how employee performance management was practiced on a day-to-day basis at PAL was carried out through analysing work supervision, and in particular, the style of supervision and its impact on employee work behaviour. These aspects of employee performance management appeared to have been interrelated. In other words, supervisory relationships between supervisors and their employees, as well as employees’ responses to prompts from their supervisors, seemed to have been dependent on what is described above about work organisation and decision making at PAL. Below is a description of the various styles of supervision that supervisors employed, and what employees made of them.

4.2.3 Supervision

Styles employed by supervisors to oversee and control employees’ day-to-day activities ranged from close physical supervision to cases where employees

indicated that they had (and were observed having) maximum discretion over their day-to-day activities (Field notes, February 4th, 5th and 6th 2014). For example, two different research scientists explained how often they interacted with their employees.

“I basically keep track of what goes on. I go to the lab once in a while but in most cases I have been called there to see some interesting result or trouble shoot” (Research Scientist 7).

“First of all, my team meets fortnightly for an hour or two to check on our progress and discuss any issues. I do spontaneous checks on them on the bench, follow up what they are doing, check their lab notebooks and visit growth rooms as regularly as I can ” (Research Scientist 5).

While Research Scientist 7 checked on his team occasionally, research scientist 5 worked more closely with the employees on his team and held formal regular meetings to keep up with what his team was doing.

In various cases, employees were observed working on their own discussing issues concerning their work among themselves and making decisions without the consent of their supervisors (Field notes, February 4th, 5th and 6th 2014). There appeared to be an unconscious mutual understanding between employees and supervisors that employees should carry out their day-to-day activities under minimum supervision. This could have been as a result of the involvement of employees in the initial decision making process about the course of the projects and activities that they undertook and thus they may have taken ownership of these activities.

When asked what they felt about employees exercising autonomy over their activities, most supervisors agreed during interviews that they were comfortable with their employees working on their own, changing generic protocols, redesigning activities, and generally carrying out their day-to-day activities on their own because, as in the words of Research Scientist 4, “it’s their work...they [work activities] initially originated from them [employees] (Research Scientist 4).

Employees’ autonomy could have also been as a result of a minimum regard of hierarchy. Even though studies such as Heckman and Oldham’s

(1979) description of the job design model to motivation reveal that autonomy influences work behaviour positively, there was no indication from this study that supervisors deliberately designed jobs to give their employees freedom and discretion with an objective of motivating them. Instead, some of the reasons for allowing employees autonomy included flexibility about the hierarchical order, the influence of community ties, and employee ownership of the activities that seemed to have enhanced self-discipline. These ideas are expressed in following quotes:

“...even though I take responsibility for our work, I do not feel like a boss or someone with all the information. And they [employees] know that fully well” (Research Scientist 2).

“...they have always done this work and they know what they are doing” (Research Scientist 5).

“I do not have to stand over their shoulders. I am not their boss per se, we are a team” (Research Scientist 7)

“...they had over 90% input in designing our project activities and experiments; they put their heads in there from the start and are aware that if anything fails, they fail with it. I do not have to push them around” (Research Scientist 10).

In one incidence, employees kept their supervisors unaware of the results of an activity. A technician and research assistant were observed, during participant observation, rejoicing over positive preliminary results for an experiment that they had worked on a month ago. The results were then carefully hidden away in a corner of the experiment room in a laboratory. They explained why they did not want their supervisor to find out. She (the supervisor) in the past, according to Technician 3, became too excited when there were preliminary positive results, and made too many suggestions about what the next steps should be. The excitement and suggested next steps consequently led to the loss of the material they were working on:

“If P gets to see this, she will suggest a million things to do with it. That disrupts the process of ‘X’ing [further development of the

sample]. We want it to take its time; we will keep it here until it has taken another good three weeks for Zs [some features] to develop properly” (Technician 3).

Further probing revealed that information was shared freely with some supervisors and not with others. Some major initiatives were undertaken without the consent of the supervisor. If the experiment failed, it was put away and forgotten; if it worked, the supervisor was called in at the stage where the employees felt that it was safe to let out their secret. Employees further explained that they did not have to do that often because most supervisors did not try to exert their authority over their juniors and therefore were open to negotiation about what and how things were supposed to be done (Research Assistant 1, 5 and Technician 3).

Support staff, as well other staff on the lowest level of the hierarchy (nursery and field assistants), were also observed working with minimum supervision from their supervisors. The institute HR director mentioned that drivers’ and cleaners’ jobs were too basic and routine for her to constantly follow up on what they were doing:

“To be honest, I do not keep an eye on them. They do basic jobs and have done this for a long time to require any supervision” (HR Director, Institute).

When asked how she then decided whether or not they were doing a good job, she replied,

“I do not need to know that they are doing a good job, that’s what they are supposed to do. People bring complaints to me when they do not do their job well” (HR Director, Institute).

The number and nature of complaints referred to here is explained in more detail in section 4.3 on performance evaluation below.

In contrast to the above description of loose supervision, some employees believed that they were closely supervised, mentioning various reasons for their supervisors’ close supervision style. Some thought that it was because they were relatively new to the job (Research Assistant 5), others

thought that their supervisors kept a close watch on them during “special activities,” (Research assistant 4, 7 and 10), while others attributed their supervisors’ close supervision to the personality of their individual supervisor (Research Assistant 4, 7 and Technician 9).

“I have had various supervisors and each does it differently: T checks on us frequently and is interested in every detail, while S waits in his office for us to go to him whenever we need him. They are two completely different people” (Technician 9)

Generally, no standard form of work supervision was observed at PAL. Supervisors seemed to control their employees’ work as they saw fit, without much thought about the implications of their styles of supervision. To find out the extent to which supervision influenced what employees did, they were asked during participant observation to explain why they did the activity that they were doing at that particular time. It was assumed that employees would reveal whether or not they did what they did because their supervisors expected them to. Some mentioned that they had read about the idea they were working on in a publication and thought that it was worth trying it (Research Assistant 2 and 10), nursery and field attendant 2 said that he thought the activity was useful, Research Assistant 3 and Technician 4 voluntarily took up an activity to cover up for a colleague who had “problems”, and some mentioned that the activity had been assigned to them during the project planning meeting (Research Assistant 2, 6, 7, Technician 3 and 10). Again, employees did not seem to act differently in the presence of their supervisors, compared to when they (the supervisors) were away. (For example on March 4th - 5th 2014 the team was observed working on their own and on March, 6th and 7th 2014 the team was joined by the supervisor). Supervisors thus generally seemed to play the role of a laid back answerable leader rather than the ‘director’ or ‘controller’ of their teams.

4.3 PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

A further understanding of how employee performance management and control was practiced at PAL was facilitated by looking at how employee performance evaluation was carried out, including the formal performance

evaluation system, what was evaluated, the employees' views about the system and how under performance was managed.

4.3.1 The formal performance evaluation system

The formal guidelines on performance evaluation at PAL were outlined in the HR Manual of NARO Staff Terms and Conditions of Service, 2009. These basically required that employees completed an annual self-assessment of their own performance in the preceding year. This was followed by a meeting between the immediate supervisor and the employee, focusing discussion on areas of performance and performance rating. A performance agreement for the following year would then be developed at the meeting, and signed by the employee and the immediate supervisor. NARO management then reviewed the performance of NARO staff through what was called a job appraisal review and reporting system on the approved form. The same appraisal form was used to appraise project leaders and members of staff who were lower in the hierarchy. (A sample appraisal form is provided in Appendix viii). The form was designed with various objectives as outlined in the preamble and read by employees:

“Staff Performance Appraisal is a management tool for establishing the extent to which set targets within overall goals of an organization are achieved. Through staff appraisal, performance gaps and development needs of individual employees are identified. The staff cannot perform to their full potential unless they are regularly told how well they are doing and are helped to improve performance. The appraisal process therefore offers an opportunity to the Appraisee and Appraiser to dialogue and obtain feedback on performance. It also encourages staff, appraisers and management to continuously and realistically monitor and improve the contribution of staff to the attainment of the organization's goals and objectives” (Form SPA-02: Staff Appraisal form for Research Scientists and below, Annual performance report for the period 2011 - 2012.)

Supervisors were required to complete staff appraisal forms/annual reports for junior members of staff and discuss their observations with the staff

concerned to offer corrective advice. Staff who were assessed as performing satisfactorily were eligible for consideration for an appropriate reward, while those whose performance was assessed as unsatisfactory were to be given a fitting sanction. Rewards included promotion, recognition and sometime monetary awards. Sanctions included lateral transfer, demotion or termination of employment. All staff were expected to be informed of the outcome of their assessment, and given reasons for the action taken (HR Manual of NARO Staff Terms and Conditions of Service, 2009).

Project staff on the other hand had their evaluation reports reviewed by their respective programme leaders, with the assistance of their HR administrators (HR Director, Institute). Even though the performance evaluation procedure for project staff drew principles from NARO's policy guidelines on employee performance evaluation, it generally/in most cases followed unclear procedures (Research Scientist 1; Technician 2; and HR administrator Programme 2). The formal procedure, and the way in which this unclear evaluation system operated are explained in section 4.3.3 below.

4.3.2 What was evaluated?

The measurement indicators covered under the NARO appraisal form included activities that had been performed during the appraisal period versus those that had been planned. Specific aspects of work that were evaluated, and their percentage grade, were (1) Technology Generation (35%), (2) Technology Packages/Publication (10%), (3) Production of Dissemination packages (10%), (4) Technology Dissemination (5%), (5) Capacity Building (5%), (6) Management of Resources/Mobilisation (30%) and (7) Others (5%). (Form SPA-02: Staff Appraisal form for Research Scientists and below, Annual performance report for the period 2011 - 2012).

Other areas covered included the main constraints encountered in accomplishing the planned activities, as well as suggestions on how these constraints could be overcome. The process also included reporting on training and capacity development in order to show what form of training the employee underwent during the period, the knowledge and skills that they had developed, future training that had been planned and its purpose. Individual

appraisees gave a narrative report about these aspects of their performance. The final activity involved making a joint agreement between supervisor and employee on activities for the next assessment period.

4.3.3 Unclear approach to evaluation

Unlike the distinct NARO procedure for evaluating employee performance, the performance evaluation process for project staff seemed not to follow any clear method. Some project staff did not seem to have been made aware of procedures that would be followed in evaluating their performance. For example, Research Assistant 5, who had worked on a project for almost a year, mentioned that even though he informally knew that there was an appraisal form that he had to fill in order to have his one year rolling contract renewed, he confessed that he was not sure how the process worked. He guessed “it would cover aspects like goal accomplishment and information dissemination” (Research Assistant 5). Similarly, Technician 3, who had worked with a project for just over a year, was waiting to go through the process with her supervisor in order that his contract could be renewed. However, she did not know what to expect:

“I am not sure how the form is designed. I just hear people say it was introduced for project staff. But maybe they will be checking how successful I am in generating results or contribution to the success of our project” (Technician 3).

As already mentioned, project staff were not required to follow NARO guidelines on performance evaluation since they were initially hired by the respective programmes and not as NARO staff. Individual programme HR administrators designed the performance evaluation systems, and customised these to the programme and projects that were carried out in the programme in a given period (HR Director Institute).

Informal methods for evaluation

Interviews revealed that there were a number of informal ways in which employees’ performance (and especially that of support staff) was evaluated. Some of the ad-hoc indicators pointed out by supervisors included whether

employees were meticulous while carrying out their work or not: “..... we do not do the usual performance appraisal exercise like the people employed by NARO. Here, if you give the supervisor headache like getting lots of contamination, not finishing your work and delaying the project, they are likely not to recommend renewal of your contract” (Technician 4).

In other instances, ‘results’ were what mattered, as the following quotes suggest:

“Incidentally, we do not have periodic performance appraisals for contract or project staff. With projects you either produce results or perish. Donors usually want reports to release more money so you have to work hard for survival” (HR Administrator, Programme 1).

“There is nothing like that. By the way, there was a suggestion that project staff should also fill in annual performance appraisal forms like NARO staff do, but I do not know where this stopped. Maybe they found that it was not compatible with our system of work. For us, we know we have to produce results for our contracts to be renewed and for lobbying for more funds” (Research Scientist 8).

Further probing revealed that ‘results’ meant the achievement of project goals that had been agreed with all of the stakeholders of the project (Research Scientist 8). Research Scientist 9 echoed this idea:

“It’s basically results on deadlines. We have projects’ life time to work against. Well, sometime we convince donors for extensions but my RAs and technicians know that if they do not deliver, we risk having no funding. So how are we evaluated, survival. If you find us here next year, then you know we are performing” (Research Scientist 9).

For members of staff who offered support services, complaints that had been received (or not received) from other employees about an individual also offered an ad-hoc way in which judgments were made on whether employees performed well. Some examples of the ad hoc nature of the evidence used are found in the following quotations from a range of interviewees:

“The one who does not cooperate with others is definitely a bad worker I get to know bad workers from complaints from their fellow workers or even my personal observation” (Nursery and field attendant 5).

“It depends on people in offices. If they do not complain then J has no problem with us. If they complain, like maybe if we leave dirty cups over the weekend, then you can get a warning” (Cleaner 2).

“I do not go through the process of performance appraisal because I am not a NARO staff. Actually, no formal evaluation is done on my work; the important thing is for people not to complain about me. I think I am doing well since the director has never received any complaints about me from people” (Institute IT administrator).

“Although not formally, I think I get evaluated by everyone. The reason I say this is because we who offer support services have to be careful on feedback about our work. You can fall into trouble if people complain about how you serve them” (Finance & Accounts officer 1).

“I think we depend on what other people say about us. If you are not doing your job well, people will go and complain about you”(Driver 2).

Managers and employees who were hired by NARO (NARO staff) were also aware and conscious of the above informal aspects of performance evaluation that characterised the performance evaluation system for project staff. As the result, employees viewed the project evaluation process as a biased procedure that depended on how their supervisors judged informal feedback, such as complaints from fellow employees and the number of mistakes that they made. As one research assistant explained, “These things [informal evaluations] “are always at the back of the mind of supervisors as they give us scores on our work” (Research Assistant 7).

Another way in which performance evaluation procedures seemed to be biased was when they were considered as carried on the basis of existing informal relationships between employees and their supervisors. One of the

Programme HR administrators, for example, thought it was difficult for research scientists to provide a candid review of their individual team member's performance because according to her, they were close friends. She mentioned that:

“They are friends, they put on paper what they know is required for their RAs and technicians to have their contracts renewed. And sometimes when you catch some talk with them over lunch, they have complaints about some people. But they dare not be seen as bad supervisors responsible for landing any one in trouble.” (HR administrator Programme, 2).

Reluctance to give a bad evaluation

In some instances, the research scientists had misgivings about an individual's performance, but they would still not officially write this down, for fear of being labelled as ‘the bad guy’. All the 4 programme HR & admin assistants interviewed had worked in this position for over 5 years, and none of them had ever dealt with an unsatisfactory performance report that warranted their action. Some supervisors, however, mentioned that they had successfully resolved performance issues of their team members following procedures outlined in section 9.3 of the HR Manual of NARO Staff Terms and Conditions of Service, 2009 without getting to the level where the issue necessitated the intervention of management at a higher level (Research Scientist 4, 7 and 10).

Inappropriate system

Employees thought that the existing appraisal system did not capture everything that they had done during a given period. For example, one research scientist commented:

“Anyway, back to NARO's performance appraisal form, I attach stuff like reports, list of students supervised and stuff like that. The system was recently revised to include more aspects of performance and there is a greater attempt to ensure that it is evidence based. Problem is, I do not find it covering everything I do. Secondly, some stuff that are not

my core activities are given a greater weight than those that are. I am not the only one affected” (Research Scientist 6).

Another explained:

“First of all, it is difficult to get excellent scores; the best we usually get is good, but not excellent. But even then, for us technicians there is nothing much we can expect because in NARO they promote people when they discover something new and publish it. And yet, as a technician, I can’t think of something novel and develop it. I think NARO believes that only research scientist can think of ideas and write research proposals and handle projects. They do not expect a technician to do that unless they do it under a scientist. But even then, the honour goes to the scientist. And even then, when you achieve something academically like getting a degree, it does not help you to get promoted” (Technician 10).

“They are done annually, you fill in a form with your annual story and they score you on output versus set objectives, acquired skills, knowledge application, innovativeness, dissemination of results and many other parameters. There is a monetary reward for outstanding performance which is very difficult to get” (Research Assistant 4).

The fact that both managers and employees considered the performance evaluation system as inappropriate reflects an element similar to mock bureaucracy (Gouldner in MacAuley et al, 2007); an agreement between managers and employees that some guidelines are unsuitable.

The appeal system

Employees thought that the performance evaluation process did not provide for a proper channel through which employees could explain their underperformance. This was especially in incidences when they (employees) thought that their underperformance had resulted from constraints beyond their control. Research Assistant 2 explained this in the quote below:

“The problem with the new appraisal system is that sometimes we do not hit the target not because we did not work hard but because we were not given the necessary resources. When that happens, we are blamed. We cannot fill in the form that the reason for our under performance is because of delayed funds, for example” (Research Assistant 2).

In general, formal and informal performance indicators included project reports results, career advancement, technology generation and dissemination, proof of a reading habit, number of complaints from fellow employees, networks and collaboration built over a given period, amount of funding secured, and number of students successfully supervised.

Literature on performance appraisal in organisations in Africa (one aspect of employee performance management and control) highlights the traditional bureaucratic top-down nature of activities including job analysis by supervisors to develop appropriate job descriptions through which workers are informed of the expectations and targets of the job, procedures for monitoring performance and review at the end of a predetermined period (Kamoche *et al*, 2004). According to Mpabanga in Kamoche *et al* (2004, p. 30), for example, performance appraisal in Botswana’s parastatal organisations involves development of specific job descriptions, performance expectations and appraisal procedures as strict guidelines for performance management and control in various ministries and departments. Employees are then rated using various techniques provided by the directorate. The techniques include rating scale, critical incident, management by objectives, employee competency and employee comparison. The purposes of performance appraisal include assessment of actual performance against set targets, employee development, guide to job changes, as well as wages and salary increments (Kamoche *et al*, 2004).

4.3.4 Managing unacceptable performance

Within the terms and conditions of service, the formal process for managing unacceptable performance was stated thus:

9.3.1 If at any time during the performance cycle the employee is not performing to the required level, the immediate supervisor shall first counsel the employee on the nature of the improvement required and agree a timeframe within which reasonable improvement shall be expected. A record of the meeting shall be kept in the employee's personal file and a copy given to the employee and the supervisor.

9.3.2 After expiry of the agreed period, the immediate supervisor shall review whether or not the required improvement has been made. Where it is established that the employee's performance continues to be unsatisfactory, the supervisor shall make a formal report to the Director General/ Institute Director stating clearly the unsatisfactory aspects of performance, the record of attempts to remedy the problem, and the recommended action. The Director General /Institute Director shall consider the matter and take the final action, which may include staff development, lateral transfer, demotion or termination of employment.

(HR Manual of NARO Staff Terms and Conditions of Service, 2009 section 9.3)

During interviews, supervisors were asked if they had experienced cases of unacceptable performance, and how they managed under-performance. There seemed to be a common tendency for interviewees to avoid referring to any punitive measures, but to instead explain what they had done to mentor their staff. For example, Research Scientist 6, when answering the question "Have you in the past had to go through the stages of managing under performance with any of your staff?" replied: "I talk to my staff basically about improving themselves. In a way I have taken it upon myself to mentor people who go through me. I prefer building to disciplining people" (Research Scientist 6). Research Scientist 4 gave this answer to the same question:

"I think I have managed to direct them in the right direction. Many people do that here otherwise if people under you are stagnant and not producing anything, then you who should be blamed but you? These guys come from high institutions of learning with good degrees and

diplomas, which shows you that they have potential for achieving things and it's up to the supervisor to direct them" (Research Scientist 4).

Was underperformance then overlooked by supervisors? It does seem to be the case that supervisors found it difficult to deal 'harshly' with their underperforming staff because of the informal ties that they held with them. For example, one programme HR administrator explained that,

"It's common to informally hear about underperformance of some people but their appraisal form get to me with no such information. I one time dared to ask one supervisor about it and he told me I should not worry about that; that they would see how to sort it out. And it doesn't have to appear on formal documents like appraisal forms. They are such good friends down there that I don't even think they can be strict with their technicians" (HR administrator, Programme 4).

It also appears that a culture of dealing with underperformance informally prevailed:

"Talking to people is what works here. You have to gently show them that if they do not get serious they will put themselves in trouble and waste their own time. But like I already said, such cases are rare. Team leaders usually groom their RAs and technicians to ensure that such problems do not arise" (Research Scientist 2).

Teams also seemed to bear a collective responsibility for their work. Some supervisors mentioned that they had found it difficult to evaluate the performance of staff whose jobs were dependent on those of their colleagues (Research Scientist 1, 2 and 6). There was team interdependence where one team's results fed into the work of another team, making performance evaluation even more complicated for some team leaders.

4.4 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT THROUGH RECRUITMENT AND REWARD

4.4.1 Recruitment

Although the process of recruitment at PAL was initially not of primary interest to this research, information constantly emerged from interview responses to indicate that supervisors were keenly interested in, and tried to influence decisions about, the kind of employees who joined their teams. There thus appeared to be informal attempts by supervisors to manage employee performance through the process of recruitment.

NARO's recruitment policy required that programme leaders informed the secretariat about staff requirements through their institute director. NARO's HR department were then required to obtain approval from the NARO council, advertising vacancies in the national media, and select, interview and hire employees on behalf of the programmes (HR Manual of NARO Staff Terms and Conditions of Service, 2009 section 2.0). This procedure applied to all other staff apart from technicians, support staff and project staff. A management committee at PAL was responsible for hiring NARO technicians and support staff, while programme leaders and their respective HR & admin assistants hired project staff (HR Director, Institute).

It was common for employees (research assistants and technicians) who initially worked as volunteers for a minimum of six months to be later hired either as NARO or project staff. For example, Research Scientists 5, 6, 8 and 10 and technicians 1, 4,7,8,9 and 10 were all initially volunteers in programmes in which they currently worked. They had originally joined the institute as interns after their graduation from college or university and then moved on to work as volunteers after their internship if they wanted to and if their supervisors recommended them for voluntary assignments (Research Scientists 10). Research scientists were generally expected to flag up any staff gaps on the projects they supervised to programme leaders for the formal process of recruitment to begin. However, they (research scientists) could, if they needed to, persuade the respective appointing authorities to hire the people who they already identified as ideal for their team (Research Scientist 10). The research scientists managed this by asking volunteers who they

worked with to apply for the vacant positions, and then passed their names on to the person in charge of the selection committee for the vacancy.

This information came to light while asking questions such as those relating to how rules were followed. For example, Research Scientist 6 revealed that he did not need to enforce rules because he was sure that his team members were qualified, trained and experienced to know what they should and should not do. During further probing about how he developed such confidence, he mentioned that he had worked with and studied 2 out of 3 research assistants and 5 out of 6 of the technicians on his team as interns and later volunteers.

“I worked with these guys soon after their graduation. Some of their colleagues left to NLG [a pseudonym for a sister research institute] after their internship, while these stuck with us.They were willing to voluntarily participate in some of our project proposal development stages and they turned out to be obvious candidates for the work when it got approval and funding. If you want a project to work, get the right people on it. [How do you do that?]. Ah, the people in HR usually respect our needs.....” (Research Scientist 6)

It was evident that sometimes social ties influenced who was hired. This was especially the case for lower level staff involved in basic manual jobs. A nursery and field attendant gave this explanation for having two brothers on his team

“You know how we do things down there; people tell their friends and relatives when there is a vacancy and if I approve, we just come to R [Programme HR & admin assistant] to ‘formalise’ things. We do not go through that long process of advertising, interviews, etc. That is the process for more educated employees” (Nursery and field attendant 2).

The informal methods used in recruitment appear to be in line with literature on African HRM. African society is according to Kamoche *et al* (2004) generally characterised by extended family, strong interrelation networks, communalism, mutual obligations and often collective decision-making

considerations. This could have translated into the process of recruitment and thus have a bearing on the process of employee performance management.

Related to recruitment, another human resource management practice that emerged from interview responses as an influence on individual employees' performance were rewards. Below is an outline of the various rewards offered to employees at PAL, as well as attitudes and work behavioural responses to these rewards.

4.4.2 The reward system

NARO's terms and condition of service provided a comprehensive section on monetary salary management, outlining procedures on salary payment including pay grades, mandatory deductions, salary reviews and various forms of monetary allowances. A separate section (section 15) described various benefits that employees were entitled to (HR Manual of NARO Staff Terms and Conditions of Service, 2009).

Interview responses however, revealed more about the type of rewards that employees believed they were accruing from their work. These included: complements, contract renewal, formal appointment, scholarships for further studies, recommendation for promotion, and recognition. Employees also considered that although they received a regular salary in monetary form for merely being employed at PAL, the other forms of rewards were dependent on their work behaviour. Behaviour that had been rewarded by managers included: diligence, innovation, precision, publications and other means of dissemination, and self-improvement (Research Assistants 1, 4, 7, 8 and Technicians 3, 4, 5 and 10). Technician 3's response to a question about the kind of technician his supervisor would nominate for the 'technician of the year' award summarises some of these rewards:

“They like people who are careful, making minimum mistakes. If you are also serious about your work and read a lot to see how you can improve your work, they are happy and nominate you or even recommend you for further studies or send you for short courses” (Technician 3).

Interviews expressed varying views about the reward system. Some saw it as fair, while others thought that it was not rigorously applied. Some expressed trust in the reward system, with a view that none of their efforts would go unnoticed. Positive remarks included:

“...but I am not complaining; BTY emphasises professionalism and that has helped me develop my professional skills” (Research Assistant 7)

“You mean how much I am paid? It’s very little. But anyway, the programme leader once in a while recommends for some salary top-ups so I am not complaining. I also have a chance of a full sponsorship for my undergraduate degree” (Technician 3)

The cultural controls debate suggests that managers are able to influence desired employee behaviour through rewarding certain beliefs, values and actions (Kunda 1992). Management at PAL did not however seem to be involved in identifying and preferring specific cultural norms or employee behavioural patterns to deliberately reward. Just as in Gouldner’s (1954), there seemed to be no preconceived ideas on the part of PAL management to influence culture on performance.

4.5 SUMMARY

This chapter has covered: (1) a description of the case study organisation for this research, (2) work organisation, (3) decision making, (4) performance evaluation/appraisal, and (5) performance management through recruitment and reward. These aspects provided insights into the context of this research in terms of the kind of the organisation PAL was, as well as the type of participants that were involved in the study. The five research programmes provided multiple sites with varied operation modes provided multiple sites for this research. The range of participants in this research was also wide in terms of educational training and management level. The findings presented in this chapter also provided an understanding of the design and implementation of employee performance management and control at PAL.

There seemed to be no significant difference in the design and implementation of employee performance management and control systems of the locally managed projects and those managed by the international research partner(s). It appeared as general practice in both cases to have formal paper based procedures designed by top management which were meant to guide planning and organisation of work. These guidelines also provided the formal official processes of performance evaluation, reward management and recruitment. The formal guidelines however seemed to act as a reference point whenever something about the process was not clear. The day-to-day practice appeared as one influenced by what people felt was ideal for the good of their work and for each other. Implementation of employee performance management and control at PAL thus tended to be more influenced by the social setting rather than the formal procedures.

Workplace behaviour, structures and organisation has been described as a product of, among other things, the socio-cultural context in which the organisation operates (Martin and Fellenz, 2010; Mangaliso, 2001; Saleh, 1985). It was thus assumed that the managers' as well as the employees' work behaviour at PAL would reflect something of the context in which the institute operated. The next chapter is therefore a presentation of findings that describe and explain employee behavioural responses to institutionalised formal models of employee performance management and control. This covers the role of the informal processes at PAL and the social negotiation of control between managers and employees.

CHAPTER 5

THE INFORMAL ORGANISATION

5.0 OVERVIEW

In the previous chapter, there was an explanation of how the organisation seeks to manage and control employee performance at PAL. This analysis included identifying, describing, comparing and contrasting the formal designed guidelines with what was practically done on a day-to-day basis and seeking to interpret why this might be the case. There appeared to be elements of diversion from the formal guidelines in all of the six aspects of employee performance management and control that were under consideration: work organisation, decision making, supervision, performance evaluation, recruitment and reward.

In this chapter, a description of the informality at PAL is given highlighting the nature of informal relationships between workers as well as social activities at and away from work. These seemed to shape the culture impacting on performance. An explanation of how managers perceived, handled and utilised the informal dynamics at PAL in employee performance management and control is also provided in this chapter. The chapter finally discusses the apparent influence of market controls on behaviour. This includes a consideration of how employees and managers responded to the pressure of high levels of unemployment in Uganda and the implications that this had for employee performance management and control at PAL.

5.1 THE INFORMAL ORGANISATION AT PAL

The social negotiation of control between managers and employees at PAL appeared to largely depend on the informal relationships at and away from work. This has been elaborated by examining what employees and managers interchangeably referred to as 'team work' or 'team spirit'. This section also explains the impact of the various forms of the day-to-day interactions on employee performance management and control.

5.1.1 Informally organised ‘team work’

Employees at PAL demonstrated a preference to work with an arrangement that they termed as ‘Team Work’ in place of the formal guidelines (Research Assistant 3; technician 1 and accountant 1). This involved a form of collaborative decision making and agreement among team members to carry out activities and conduct themselves in a certain manner. This was most often contrary to the formal guidelines. When asked how formal procedures at PAL were followed, interviewees seemed to express a sense of displeasure with the individualistic tone of the formal guidelines. There was a sense of an attitude that individual employees would be isolated if official guidelines were followed religiously. Instead of following guidelines that were formally prescribed by management, they appeared to follow a form of self-management. The following quotations from interviews reveal how and why employees preferred ‘team work’ to the official formal guidelines. The first refers to BTY’s [pseudonym for one of the programme] formal guidelines on the use of computers in the accounts and finance office:

“...BTY would prefer that we do not share computers in this office for fear of information getting to where it is not supposed to. But we still do share them. You see even though we work for different employers, the principles are the same it’s human to share because we can. And actually, this ‘team work’ is a very good thing” (Accountant 1).

The second response below also reveals the attitude held about the individualised reward system. Employees tended to think that it was impossible for an individual or even a team to accomplish anything on any activity without the input of other people not officially associated with that activity. Thus, a team’s outstanding performance was considered as an achievement of not only that particular team. It was equally considered an achievement of all the other teams the winning team was informally associated with. Research assistant 4 expressed this in the quote below.

“I do not like the parameters they give us to nominate the team of the year. They assume that the paper procedures they hand down to us are

followed to dot. Actually there is a lot of ‘team work’ going on even between teams that when one team is given a ‘goat’ [Annual team of the year prize] they come and share it with the other teams.” (Research Assistant 4).

The third interview excerpt was in response to a question on how employees adhered to rules. Employees seemed not adhere to rules that tended to isolate them as they did their work. The need to be close to colleagues seemed to supersede the importance of following a particular required protocol. Research assistant 3 was aware of the recommendation not to mix work from different activities but still went ahead with doing that for the sake of working closely with others.

“I am glad we have ‘team work’ here; our activities are very stressful for me to keep myself confined in the MB [A workstation’s pseudonym] room. I usually bring my samples here to work with T and the rest of the guys even though it’s not recommended to mix MB work with CSC [A workstation’s pseudonym] work.” (Research Assistant 3).

These quotations suggest that employees tended not to follow official or formal guidelines, but instead adopted ‘team work’ practices. This tendency appears to echo the difference between “espoused theories” in other words, what someone’s values are, and “theories-in-use” meaning what they actually do (Argyris and Schön, 1974). These terms were originally used when analysing professional practitioners’ behaviours. Theory-in-use described what their actual behaviour was, and espoused theory the reasons they gave to explain their behaviour. People’s behaviour is therefore, according to Argyris and Schön, (1974) based on two mental models: (1) the model which people actually use – theory-in-use and (2) the model that people use to describe how they behave – espoused theory- with potential inconsistencies between the two (Argyris and Schön, 1974).

Similarly, at PAL formal guidelines appear as espoused theories and ‘team work’ tendencies as theories in use. There is however a slight difference from Argyris and Schön (1974) description of these two concepts. While,

according to Argyris and Schön (1974), ‘espoused theories’ meant what workers valued rather than what they did; the same concept seemed to mean the formal expectations from management at PAL. Employees at PAL did not necessarily value the formal guidelines but relationships with each other. The ‘theories in use’ concept however described what the employees’ actual behaviour was. In other words, the employees at PAL seemed to both value and do what was contrary to official guidelines rather than valuing one thing and doing the other. As a result, most teams and individuals appeared to make decisions concerning their activities without following formal requirements or being dependent on guidance from their supervisors (Field notes, February 17-19, 24-26 and 13th March, 2014).

This consistency in what was valued and what was done was revealed at PAL in various ways. One way in which this happened was self-managed group control.

5.1.2 Self-managed group control

Research assistants, technicians, field and nursery attendants as well as volunteers in core research positions were, according to the formal structure, expected to make decisions and carry out their work under the supervision of research scientists (HR Manual of NARO Staff Terms and Conditions of Service, 2009). However, there were various incidences where employees were observed either directing activities on their own initiative without supervision, or directing their own activities while supervisors were present. They (employees) appeared to freely make decisions without being told what to do by supervisors (Field notes, February 17-19, 24-26 and 13th March, 2014).

Having observed behaviours that were not in line with the instructions given by the organisations, employees and supervisors were asked why and how this sort of informal self-group management developed and why supervisors were not always involved in the fine details of employees’ day-to-day work activities.

As already mentioned supervisors believed that employees knew the details of their work well enough to be allowed space to make decisions about

what they did and how they carried out their day-to-day activities. For example, Research Scientist 10 explained why, instead of working closely with his team, he gave them a degree of autonomy.

“We do the initial planning together; they know a lot about the project and can make any decision about the work without consulting me. So yes, I think it’s because of the level of involvement I have let them get to that makes them familiar with the work and consequently ‘discarding’ me from the day-to-day details of running our activities.”
(Research Scientist 10)

As a result, employees seemed to develop the impression that their supervisors trusted them and thus comfortably took charge of their work. For example, when working with 2 technicians and a research assistant, I was told that their supervisor might arrive at any time and would then be introduced to their newly discovered process of working. The supervisor did not make an appearance on that day. I therefore asked on the second day of working with this newly discovered process whether she was still coming. The response was as follows:

“She might not come; she knows we have been ok with our discoveries in the past. She these days leaves us to carry on with our stuff and catches us along the way” (Technician 3).

Instead of seeking and waiting for approval from their supervisors (the official expected formal norm), supervisors seemed to trust their employees with their work and they (employees) in turn knew that they were trusted to carry out with their day-to-day activities without the involvement of their supervisors (Research Assistant 5, Technician 3 and 6).

The other reason employees gave as to why they took decisions was according to technician 1, because supervisors’ offices were in a separate building and thus they were not directly involved with what was happening physically on the practical bench. According to him (Technician 1), the

formal expectation of him and his colleagues to walk across to another building to talk to their supervisors about their work was a waste of time when they knew what they should be doing (Technician 1).

Some employees could not explain why they tended to manage themselves rather than lean on the leadership of their supervisors. For example, technician 2 mentioned that she thought it occurred naturally, “...*we do not know how it started*” (Technician 2). But familiarity between supervisors and employees resulting from informal relationships may also explain why supervisors did not seem to emphasise their formal authority over their employees.

5.1.3 Responsible autonomy and concertive control

A potentially relevant question to ask was whether the way of working described above was in line with responsible autonomy. Responsible autonomy is a term which was coined by Friedman (1977) to describe a management technique that involved allowing employees more discretion rather than direct control and close supervision of work processes. Pink (2009) describes responsible autonomy as a civilised form of controlling people by giving them control over how they work. Swan (1997) argues that the concept is usually limited to the social technical level of participation or *how* the tasks are done rather than *what* task is done. The idea seems to be intended at controlling the boundaries of employees while seemingly granting them autonomy on how they do their work (Friedman, 1977). Again, responsible autonomy appears to be initiated by conscious and deliberate effort on the part of the managers to allow employees to take charge of the way their work is done (Pink, 2009). Supervisors at PAL however did not seem to only allow employees to decide on how to do their work but also gave them autonomy about what activities they did. Reasons for employees’ autonomy rather included things like the fact that they were trusted and had different workstations from their supervisors and “...*we do not know how it started*” (Technician 2).

The other possible question would be whether employees at PAL undertook self-management because they felt watched by their peers in the self-managed teams, a concept referred to in literature as concertive control.

This concept was advanced by Barker (1993) through an ethnographic account that involved a change of an organisation's control system from generic hierarchical, bureaucratic control to concertive control in the form of self-managing teams (Barker, 1993, p.408). According to Barker, workers came to a consensus on values and normative rules, to guide their work via cultural norms rather than bureaucratic rules. This happened as a result of interactions between each other, and workers consequently took on the responsibilities of their former supervisors. Barker argues that concertive structures, even though intended to ease the tensions of bureaucratic systems, resulted in even tighter control (Barker, 1993). The situation at PAL may have mirrored Barker's description of concertive control as a result of informal interactions. This was in terms of employees building a consensus on how to carry on activities. However, this did not seem to happen within tightly controlled boundaries. This was because the managers did not seem to deliberately design and monitor such boundaries. Rather, group solidaristic attitudes towards work seemed to undermine the aspects of formal control through informal regulation. Similar conditions are described in Gouldner's (1954) research, referred to in chapter 2.

5.1.4 Day-to-day interaction

There appeared to be different levels of interactions between various groups at PAL. These interactions seemed to have implications for employee performance management and control. Employees explained what day-to-day interactions meant to them, and how they felt about interactions between themselves and their supervisors. Interactions between the employees who were involved in core activities and support staff also showed unique characteristics. These interactions depended on the informal relationships at PAL including social activities both at and away from work.

Employees and employees

The nature of work at some work stations allowed more interaction during work between employees than at other work stations. For example one particular section of the MB lab [a laboratory's pseudonym] was supposed to

be strictly kept free of microorganisms like bacteria and fungus. Employees in MB then minimised talking to each other while working there to avoid contamination of their samples (Technician 5). On the other hand, employees working at some other places, for example, the nursery engaged in conversations almost all the time during their work (Field notes, 13th March, 2014). The mid-morning tea and 1 o'clock lunch breaks were also spent in vibrant interaction between employees and sometimes with supervisors as well (Field notes, 18th, 19th, and 20th February, 2014 and 13th March, 2014). What was talked about ranged from non-work to work related issues including the latest news, gossip and developments within and outside individual projects.

Did the level of interaction between employees imply anything for employee performance management and control? Was it ideal (supervisors' vs. employees' perspective), or did the conversation delay and/or disrupt the pace of work? To obtain the employees' perspective on this, they (employees) were asked about what they thought of the conversations that went on between themselves during work and break times. The intention of asking this question was not to portray a negative attitude of the idea of employee-employee frequent chats at work. However, the responses expressed a bit of surprise at the question and a defensive attitude to the idea of frequent conversations with colleagues. Some of the responses included: "we do not do it too much, do we?" (Technician 4), "did we spend a lot of time talking?" (Research assistant 1), and "that's the problem with people, we are naturally like talking machines and it's difficult to stop once we do start" (Research Technician 7). Others described the benefit of frequent interaction with colleague's as a "stress releaser" (Research assistant 2) and "the source of our breakthrough ideas" (Research assistant 1). In other words, the level and frequency interactions, chatting during and between breaks seemed natural, necessary and ideal according to employees.

Employees and supervisors

Some of the supervisors' day-to-day activities required them to constantly work alongside their employees. Other supervisors however, spent most of

their time at PAL in designated research scientists' offices away from the practical activities of their employees. The level of face-to-face interaction between supervisors and employees thus varied from one supervisor to another. This depended on the design and requirements of employees' work activities. The bottom up approach to decision making mentioned in chapter four, for example, describes incidents when supervisors closely worked and interacted with employees in such a way that made it difficult for an observer to distinguish between supervisor and the supervised (Field notes 13th March 2014). In such cases, conversations about work and non-work related issues flowed freely between supervisors and employees. On the other hand, supervisors who spent part of their time in a designated office had limited face-to-face interaction with their employees. The interaction in most (not all) of such cases was more inclined to work related issues including a catch up on progress, inquiries about a complicated procedure and report of 'exciting' results (Field notes, February 4th, 5th and 6th 2014).

Employees seemed to have been more conscious of their supervisors' control when they had limited face-to-face interaction than when they worked alongside their supervisors in their day-to-day activities (Field notes, February 4th, 5th and 6th 2014). It was observed that employees working with their supervisors freely interacted with them about anything. These interactions included making suggestions about their work, deciding when to have a break, discussing re-stocking their supplies and other non-work related issues. On the other hand, employees with supervisors who were stationed in offices in a separate building sort of censored what they interacted with their supervisors about (Field notes, February 4th, 5th and 6th 2014 and March 13th and 14th, 2014).

Employees who worked alongside and interacted with their supervisors more often seemed became so familiar with them that they seemed to "remembered the supervisors' authority only when there was trouble" (Research Scientist 6). This meant that rather than controlling individual employee performance, such supervisors exercised their authority only when they had to execute formal "unavoidable" procedures (Research Scientist 6; Technician 4). Such formal procedures included signing requisitions for supplies or representing progress in project meetings.

The level of employee and supervisor face-to-face interaction formally also depended on the nature of the work. Some activities required supervisors to constantly work with their employees while others did not. Some employees also suggested that the supervisors' personality influenced their tendency to work alongside them. This has been discussed extensively in chapter 4 in the section 4.2.3 on supervision revealing that different supervisors chose different methods of supervision depending on what they personally considered as fit for their team.

Whatever the reason for frequent face-to-face interaction, the level of interaction had influenced the dynamics of employee performance management and control. This resulted in teams exercising (through normative guidelines) autonomy over their activities rather than relying on formal guidance from their supervisors. While Barker's (1993) study about concertive control involved just employees reaching a consensus about normative rules. These rules then got rationalised along the way and employees developed their own means of controlling their performance. Employees at PAL seemed go through this similar process of unconsciously developing own means of controlling performance. But this seemed to be in agreement with their supervisors.

One aspect of PAL's work culture, described below in section 5.2 as that of considering devotion to members of the team as a virtue, may have led to employees watching over their peers in a self-managed team system rather than relying on their supervisors. The frequency of interaction may have also made supervisors look like 'one of them' rather than working with them as authority figures.

Core staff and support staff

Informal interaction between workers involved in core research activities and those offering support services also had implications for employee performance management at PAL. This was in relation specifically to performance evaluation. Researchers (those involved in core activities) in this study included research scientists, research assistants, technicians and field assistants. Support staff on the other hand included the Institute HR Director and programme HR administrators, accountants, the institute IT administrator,

cleaners and drivers. Support staff offered services including HR related functions, procurement, facilities maintenance, cleaning, finances, IT services and transport (Institute HR Director).

Support staff pointed out that the way they interacted with staff involved in PAL's core activities had consequences on their performance evaluation. This was because complaints that had been received (or not received) from other employees about an individual support staff was one of the parameters used to determine whether they were "*good performers*" or not (Institute HR Director). This seemed to imply that support staff were conscious about their day-to-day interaction with workers involved in core research activities taking care that they "*pleased*" them (Institute IT Administrator). The Institute IT administrator went on to explain his interaction experience with other staff at PAL as follows:

"I am the only one doing everything for the whole institute, talking to literally everyone; you can imagine how many demands I get in a single day and everyone wants attention as soon as yesterday.....by the way, I am expected to please all of them" (Institute IT Administrator).

Failure to please them, he further explained, would result in complaints filed against him. This would consequently be followed by questioning from the Institute HR director. Accountants, cleaners and drives also seemed to have this conscious awareness that the way they interacted with workers involved in core research activities was of great significance. They thus took care of it by "*listening to them carefully*" (Driver 2), assuring everyone of careful attention to raised matters even when a solution to the matter seemed impossible (Accountant 1). They also tried and did their best to be 'friendly' to everyone (Cleaner 2).

This seemed to suggest a form of control where one type of employees (core staff) indirectly influences the performance evaluation of another type of employees (support staff). However, even though the practice seemed to have been acceptable, relying on complaints from other workers to evaluate performance may generally be questionable. There was no proper probe

mechanism to ensure that the complaints were true and squarely the responsibility of the employee being evaluated.

Control mechanisms through surveillance, or the belief that they might be in the process of being watched, were identified as a long before the introduction of electronic automated systems of monitoring people's activities (Ragnedda, 2011; Foucault, 1977). Support staff at PAL were aware of a form of 'unintended control' mechanism, not necessarily instituted by management (as in Foucault's (1997) prison example), but by fellow employees. Although managers did not entirely depend on this method to evaluate individual employees' performance, they valued the feedback from employees on their co-workers.

Supervisors and supervisees

Interaction between supervisors was according to Research Scientist 5 important to each supervisor. This was because of the complementary contribution they gave each other resulting from varied skills, training and experience (Research Scientist 5).

“You see because we trained in different fields, we supplement each a lot. We interact a lot because we are constantly seeking out help from each other; we are not in competition against each other” (Research Scientist 5).

But was this interaction limited to exchange of technical ideas about the work or did it involve aspects of managing individual employee performance of employees on the supervisors' teams? Supervisors were asked whether they thought interaction with each other had any significant implications for the control of their employees' performance. It turned out that supervisors once in a while relied on their colleagues to manage one or two aspects of their employees' performance (Research Scientists 2; 3; 6 and 9). Research Scientist 9 for example mentioned that he had recently offered to supervise his colleague's technicians. The technicians were establishing a field trial in one part of the country which his colleague was not familiar with. This arrangement had been made from a casual talk in which his colleague

expressed reservations about going out to work with farmers in this part of the country because of the language difference. Research Scientist 9 had then offered to do it on his behalf (Research Scientist 9).

In general, face-to-face interactions between various groups of employees were significant to employee performance management at PAL. Beside the process being considered as a 'stress releasers' by employees, interaction seemed to some extent influence the way employees were supervised, resulting in facilitating an environment for group self-management. In other instances, supervisors taking on supervisory roles on employees belonging to their colleague's team also appeared significant.

5.1.5 Informal relationships

Similar to interactions between workers at PAL, informal relationships seemed to have been an influence of employee performance and control. There appeared to be various informal links and social activities impacting on work. These informal relationships and social activities at and away from work are described in this section.

A sense of community at PAL

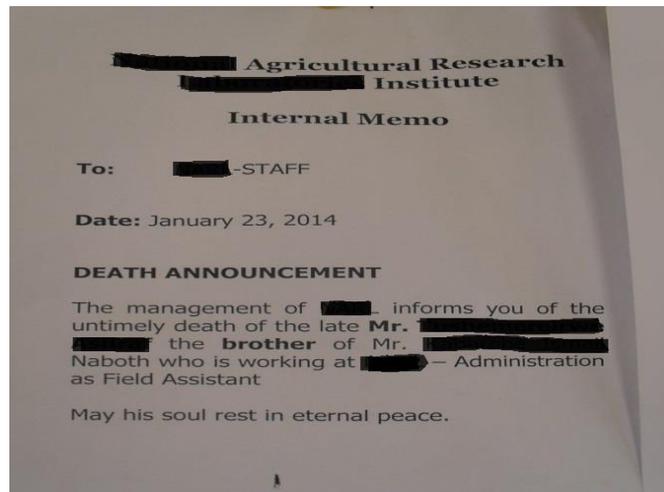
PAL workers expressed a sense of community in various ways with relationships that were unofficially part of the formal system. Some of the community characteristics observed included:

15-20 minutes were usually spent by employees in the reception/tea area in the morning before work resumed in the lab. Everyone received a cordial and detailed greeting during this time (Field notes February and March 2014).

One person usually went around towards break time collecting money and orders of what colleagues wanted to have as *escorts* [a bite] for tea. "Am going to the canteen" that person would go around saying from room to room as people passed on money to him or her for their orders. That individual would then go ahead and do the purchase on behalf of everyone else. Any person, who for one reason or another did not

make an order, still had something to eat offered from others (Field notes January, February and March 2014).

When a worker lost a loved one, a note was put on the noticeboard to announce the death. Some volunteer went around the work stations with a sheet of paper soliciting for monetary contributions towards burial arrangements. Colleagues put down their names and the amount they contributed. Overleaf was space for the names of those who wished to travel to wherever the deceased would be buried to take part in the burial ceremony. During the burial ceremony, a member of staff (most likely the supervisor) handed over the money to the bereaved colleague. The list the names of the contributors was however not passed on to the bereaved (Field notes January 23rd and 27th 2014). The announcement in the picture below about the death of a staff member's brother was intended to alert colleagues to prepare to support the bereaved financially and morally.



One hour lunch time wedding preparations meetings were conducted at the workplace premises weekly for 6 weeks just before the wedding to fundraise and organise a wedding of a colleague. Colleagues also volunteered to take on some roles during the wedding celebrations. Similar arrangements were made for graduation ceremonies of colleagues (HR Director Institute).

Employees occasionally borrowed small amounts of money among themselves for small ‘emergencies’ like transport fare back home, lunch expense, etc. Some employees were once in a while heard say to each other something like "Please help me with [some amount], *I* have not carried any money with me today and there is a guy hawking nice pineapples outside the office." And, "help me" turned out to mean ‘lend to me’. There used to be no agreement about when it would be paid back, “it certainly will be returned” (Technician 3; Field notes 10/2/14).

Everyone seemed to know their colleagues’ children very well. They knew details of for example how they were doing in school, likes and dislikes, recent health issues, etc. It was mentioned in the interviews that most staff kids shared the same school. They used the same van to and from school. They (staff children) referred their parents’ workmates as uncle and aunt and saw other kids as sisters and brothers (Research Scientist 4, 5, 10; Technician 4 and Institute HR Director). While Research Scientist 10 was explaining the relationship between himself and his colleagues he mentioned:

“People here are aunts and uncles for my children. Anyway, it’s not only me; this goes through the whole programme. You see the same van takes our kids to and from school and when I go to the parking yard to pick my kids from the van driver, I occasionally pick more than two kids who are not my own and take them to their homes along with my kids. My kids are also picked by other parents sometimes. They are like cousins and we are all uncles and aunties” (Research Scientist 10).

The community characteristics above demonstrate earlier assertions by Kamoche *et al* (2004) who described African as a society that generally demonstrates strong interrelation networks, communalism, mutual obligations and often collective decision-making. Even though Africa is made up of diverse countries and communities, collectiveness appears to be a common

characteristic across the continent. These characteristics seemed to diffuse into the organisational setting at PAL and worked against individualism.

Such African societal characteristics have been commonly discussed from the perspective of management. The emphasis is mostly put on how African communalism promotes practices of nepotism and favouritism by managers in organisations in Africa (Kamoche *et al*, 2004). A sense of community however, seemed to not merely influence management behaviour at PAL but also influenced employee behaviours that impacted on work in various ways. It was observed from employees' perspective that the informal sense of community at PAL was as important as any other aspect of their organisational life. Social activities at and away from work seemed to have resultant work behaviours that would have implications for employee performance at PAL. These activities are described below.

Social activities at work

Social activities at work included those specifically between employees and their fellow employees and those between employees and supervisors. For example, while employees at one of the biggest work stations at PAL were part of or acknowledged an informal association referred to as 'abataka', supervisors did not belong to this group. Being a 'mutaka' (a recognised member of abataka) basically involved "consciously committing oneself to the good of fellow colleagues, taking care of them, avoiding selfish tendencies and things like that" (Technician 4). Abataka at CT [a pseudonym for a work station] thus tended to go out for lunch at the same time in the same canteen, raise money among them to buy a card and gift for a member's birthday, graduation, wedding, childbirth or any other occasion, and very often go out together for an evening after work (Field notes February 4, 5, 6th and March 13th, 2014). Similar social activities between employees were observed at other work stations including communal tea breaks, on station walks/drives, and various gifts exchange (Field notes, February 17-19 and 24-26, 2014).

Participation (or failure to be part) in these employee social activities at work seemed to significantly contribute to employees' feelings for belonging and acceptance translating into how they did their work. For example to be considered as a member of abataka, new employees set aside

part of their first salary to take abataka out for an evening. This tradition was considered as an official welcome of the new employee into the group; an act that was referred to as “initiation” (Technician 5). Technician 5 explained that even though this practice was not mandatory, failure to get ‘initiated’ could once in a while result in unpleasant treatment from colleagues; for example being teased about it.

“If you don’t, you can be teased about it at work and it makes you feel bad. I will give you an example: if you were not initiated and you want to carry your heavy basket of media into the autoclave and you request a ‘mutaka’ to help you, they will first tease you, pretend that they can’t help and then help you anyway. Even though they seem to be joking, you feel real bad” (Technician 5).

Interpersonal relationship with peers was identified by Herzberg (1959) as a hygiene factor at work. He argued that ensuring proper hygiene factors at work did nothing to increase employee satisfaction and motivation of workers. This was because Herzberg thought that interpersonal relationships along with other extrinsic factors like working conditions, quality of supervision and pay would only cause dissatisfaction if not addressed sufficiently (Herzberg, 1959). Herzberg’s findings that resulted in downplaying the role of interpersonal relationships in employee motivation may have been influenced by the individualist culture that has been associated with the US. (The US was ranked number 1 on the Hofstede, 1997 individualism ranking. The interests of individual citizen interests were considered to override the group’s interest). Thus the findings at PAL generate questions about Herzberg’s psychological universalism. This is because the collective nature of employees at PAL seemed to suggest that interpersonal relationships were more of a motivator rather than a mere hygiene factor.

Managers were studied to determine whether they were consciously aware of informal activities between employees. An attempt was also made to find out if they (managers) in any way relied on such activities to control the performance of individual employees and/or team performance. Another relevant question asked here was whether employees perceived any link

between these social activities and their individual and/or team performance. It seemed from interview responses that even though managers were aware of and approved social activities between employees, they seemed not to have been consciously aware of the role these played in employee performance. Research scientist 9 for example when asked whether he knew how often employees at his work station went out together for an on station field walk and whether this had any effect on individual employees' or team performance explained:

“Well I do not know how often they do but you can be pretty sure that it's very often. These things are also spontaneous, I think they do not have a specific routine, they just decide to celebrate, walk or go out to eat pork together and have a drink. Although I think this may not necessarily get us more SCs, [some form of results] I am glad that they act like any normal group of people would. Moreover, many of them are still young and full of life” (Research Scientist 9).

To understand employees' perceptions of the link between their social activities and individual/team performance, they were asked to imagine what would happen to their performance if these activities were banned at work. Responses to this question seemed to make an impression that employees imagined significant negative effects on their performance. One response summarises most employees' attitude to the informal social activities prohibition at work

“First of all, in reality, such a rule [ban on social activities at work] would never work here. But you have asked me to imagine if it was introduced; and I tell you if that happened and was strictly observed, we would all turn into a bunch of confused people not knowing how to control ourselves to avoid breaking the rule. And how would we do our work in such a situation?” (Research Assistant 7).

It seemed that informal social activities and relationships were more than a mere hygiene factor that would only cause dissatisfaction like Herzberg (1959)

argued. These were instead vitally influencing belonging and moral approval. These in turn was, according to employees, important if one was to carry on their work “*well*” (Technician 2).

Social activities between supervisors and employees

Employees and supervisors often engaged in social activities at work officially organised by programmes or by the institute as a whole. The Institute HR Director for example organised a monthly 2 hour 30 minutes tea and biscuits break. A speaker was always invited from outside PAL to give a motivational talk, or market a service or any other talk to staff about something different from their usual work. One of the external speakers invited for the tea and biscuits break during the course of this study, for example, was the coordinator of parents who were home schooling their children around Kampala the capital city of Uganda. He was invited to talk to staff at PAL about the advantages, challenges and anything he thought people should know about home schooling children (Field notes 4/2/14). A research assistant also regularly organised institute sports tournaments in which programmes competed against each other. Other officially organised social activities for both employees and managers included various kinds of parties at department, programme and institute level.

Managers seemed not to have been consciously aware of their attempt to control performance through these social activities. They revealed that they approved and took part in them because they believed they were a unifying factor that brought everybody together. Unity could have been considered ideal for desired performance as described below by the Institute HR Director.

“We have a research mandate as an institute and it is important that we succeed, we keep united to that focus even though different programmes have different assignments. So these extra things we do away from normal work remind us that we are one.” (HR Director Institute).

Managers did not have social activities among themselves. They instead only participated in social activities officially organised at the institute and department level. They also approved of those between employees. They had mentioned constraints such as time, age and lack of creativity to organising informal activities as reasons for not having social activities with their peers. Research Scientist 10 indicated that they had too many demands “*to play around and we are ‘Zeyis’ [old people]*”. Research scientist 3 was asked what he and 4 other scientist on a project were planning to do for a colleague who had just given birth. The perception that they (supervisors) did not have the creativity to organise informal activities among themselves was reflected in his response

“No, her technicians and research assistants will visit her on our behalf and come up with creative ideas to show her that we care. They [Technicians and research assistants] are good at organising such things amongst themselves” (Research Scientist 3).

Social activities away from work

Apart from social activities at work, supervisors and employees engaged together in a number of activities away from work. These, just like those at work, seemed to have implications on employee’s performance at PAL. Supervisors were asked for example if they perceived any ‘work related value’ of their involvement in employees’ wedding day preparations and celebrations, games, funerals and other related away from work activities. Participation in social activities away from work was not a conscious idea but the “*norm*” (Research scientist 2). Supervisors therefore seemed to have had no intention of using such activities to manage or control the performance of individuals or teams.

However, interview responses seemed to suggest that the general informal organisation at PAL created a sense of community among staff with various ‘benefits’ to supervisors. The benefits of community included ease to have work covered as employees did not need to be told to cover a sick or otherwise absent colleague’s activity (Research Scientist 2). An individual’s activity was considered as a group’s. Other managers thought that social activities were a boost to morale and release of work pressure (Research

Scientist 9). It was also easy to socialise and integrate new staff (Research Scientist 10). Another supervisor thought that conflict resolution was made a lot easier because of the collective behaviour of employees for he believed that “*staff know how to deal with each other*” without, or with minimum supervisors’ interventions (Research Scientist 2). The institute HR director described her view of the social culture at PAL in the following quotes:

“... , this is what life is about and people do not undress their humanity to come to work and then put it on when they get home at 6 o’clock. I have learnt that if you want to maximise productivity of workers, you have to make sure they live as human beings at work and not as machines. In fact you know here that people would resent you if you drove them rather than let them be. Back to the teas, I know people like it because these days I get unsolicited for suggestions about what topics to handle, who to invite and things like that ”(Institute HR Director).

“Actually I bought the idea of regular tea and biscuits break from my friend at the NVT [A pseudonym of a local media house]. She told me about it and I thought it was a good idea to get people from different programmes to talk together more regularly and to keep abreast with the rest of the world out there. Otherwise people may be buried in Agricultural research and not be conversant with the rest of the world. Also with the developments in technology we are starting to lose our closeness. People just talk with each on computers and less face-to-face. It is a dangerous trend which we people in HR and administration should fight as much as we can. They say it is efficient but I believe it will make people superficial and cold and take away the joy of sharing life with each other sincerely” (Institute HR Director).

Beside the emphasis on the importance of collectivism at PAL, The HR director raised a fear of the influence of technology on the organisational life of employees. Ritzer (2004) argues that the Western society is characterised by rationality. And that one of the dimensions of a rationalised society is an

emphasis on substitution of technology for human activities to ensure efficiency, pre-dictability, calculability and certainty (Ritzer, 2004). Technology is then not used by management as a neutral mechanism but is used to control people. This results in the tighter control of employees than what bureaucratic systems are usually considered to build (Ritzer, 2004). Whether this form of control was applied at PAL or not was analysed by looking at how management used (or not used) culture to control work processes. The discussion on culture and cultural control at PAL is given in the next section below.

5.1.6 Process of socialisation in literature

The informal relationships described in section 5.1.5 above can be related to the process of socialisation where people move from conformity based compliance, through to identification and then to the internalisation of norms (Kanter, 1968).

Socialisations into norms or ‘moral career’ involves, according to Cohen (2007), the individuals in first identifying with the desire to commit themselves to others because of the reward that comes with that attachment or the punishment that may result if that initial relationship fails to take off. This is the first stage of socialisation or compliance. The individuals’ acceptance to participate in the initiation exercise (the ‘abataka’ group) might have been on the basis of this desire to establish a rewarding relationship with the rest of the workers at PAL. It could also have been the result of a desire to avoid ‘punishment’, as one employee admitted that “if you don’t, you can be teased about it at work” and “you feel bad” even if the teasing appeared as a joke (Technician 5)

The second stage of socialisation, or identification, represents a psychological state in which workers are committed for the sake of moral approval or belonging (Cohen, 2007). This may explain why the social activities and informal relationships described above were considered as a vital element of the managers’ and employees’ work life. Research Assistant 7 imagined that they would be a “bunch of confused people...” if social activities were banned, since they enhanced belonging.

The last stage, internalisation, refers to the individuals' process of internalising the goals of the organisation and harmonising them with their own goals. However, in PAL, the reverse seems to have happened as management seemed to harmonise its structures and procedures to accommodate individuals' matters that would otherwise appear as personal. For example, some informal and personal aspects of individuals' lives were handled by management as though they were formal. An illustration of this was the example of an internal memo about the death of a staff member's brother. In this case, the manager took up a personal issue of a staff member. This last stage has been identified as a process that is closely related to the length of service in an organisation (Allen and Meyer, 1990). However, this study did not explore the relationship between the participants' length of work at PAL and the extent to which they had harmonised their personal goals with those of the organisation.

5.2 WORK CULTURE AND CULTURAL CONTROLS

In managing employee performance at PAL, some work behaviour was considered by both managers and employees as acceptable while some practices were considered as unacceptable. Consequently managers unconsciously controlled employee performance by encouraging actions that encouraged acceptable work behaviour. They also made some attempts that tended to discourage what was considered unacceptable conduct. This section thus explains what seemed to have been PAL's work culture in terms of what was and what was not acceptable during the work process. This section also shows how the work culture was used by managers to manage and control employee performance.

5.2.1 Mechanisms for cultural control at PAL

Allegiance to peers seemed to have been the virtue that guided common practices, attitudes, work behaviours and values amongst employees at PAL. Interview responses indicated that employees valued cooperation or 'team spirit' with other employees within the same project as well as those on other projects in the same programme. This form of cooperation or devotion to each was described in many ways including: "our culture here ...some sort of

social responsibility to each other ...normal life...team spirit, and our system of togetherness” (Research assistant 3; Research Assistant 7; and technician 4). It involved an expectation to offer various forms of support to colleagues during and away from work. This was done in various ways including: watching over a colleague’s activity as they went out for a break, trouble shooting for a colleague’s failed experiment, proof reading a colleagues data and presentation before a programme seminar as well as attempts to cover each other’s back from what would be considered as ‘trouble’ from management (Field notes, February 4th, 5th and 6th 2014). Away from work, employees’ dedication to each was displayed in various forms ranging from celebrating joyful events to offering help in difficult times. These informal social relationships away from work have been described further above. Acting contrary to this practice, one would be described as a ‘bad’ person as technician 4 explained:

“People care about each other here, everyone looks out for the good of others unless of course if you are ‘bad’ person and not cooperative” (Technician 4).

Contrary behaviour also stood a risk of being interpreted as enmity as it was conceived that “people do not cooperate when they are enemies; but in normal life you have to associate with others” (Technician 1).

Apart from ‘team spirit’, employees also seemed to esteem hard work and commitment to results as acceptable work behaviour. Besides beliefs that work was an opportunity that should not be taken for granted, employees seemed to have been consciously aware that their continuity in the job depended on results they obtained from their work. This was especially important for project staff whose activities were funded by an international donor(s) or development partner(s). The institute HR director for example admitted that the institute did not have a clear performance evaluation system for project staff mentioning that “with projects you either produce results or perish” and that “donors usually want reports to release more money so you have to work hard for survival” (Institute HR Director). As the result, employees mentioned hard work as a virtue they strived for and expected of their teammates (Research Assistant 1, 4, 5, 7 and Technicians 4, 7 and 9).

Volunteers who were recent graduates intending to gain experience and possibly employment after six months of their voluntary service were quick to describe how important commitment to and achievement of results was to their chances of being hired. Research assistant 5 for example who was volunteering on a research project for the last five months described her experience as "...pursuit of acceptance through achievement" (Research Assistant 5). She further described her five months at PAL as:

"It's been a period of trying to prove myself. It's important that the guys at the project want to work with me because P [supervisor] will ask their opinion to recommend me for the job. I should not just be a good person to work with, but be able to convince these guys that I am good at what I do. It's like a pursuit of acceptance through achievement" (Research Assistant 5).

Research assistant 6 was a full time employee but initially worked as a volunteer for six months. She revealed that her colleague, a fellow volunteer, was not hired at the end of their volunteering period because "these guys kept telling G [supervisor] that he was lazy and careless. And indeed he was" (Research assistant 6). Employees who were considered as hard workers, problem solvers or those with a track record of plausible results from their projects had been nicknamed '*kafuru*' (achiever) by their fellow employees. It was evident that they (*kafurus*) beamed with pride whenever they were referred to as such by their colleagues (Field notes, February 4th, 5th and 6th 2014).

The practice of having a consensus on organisational values has been referred to in literature. Barker (1993) for example describes an ethnographic study in which he investigated the effect of the workers' value system on work behaviour. It was discovered that such value-based normative rules controlled the employees' day-to-day actions more than the official formal rules. However, it is argued that even though concertive control resulted from the consensus of workers, it did not necessarily 'free' them from formal control (Barker, 1993). Instead, they were more restrained and controlled as the normative rules became increasingly rationalised. Workers

felt that they were more closely watched by their fellow members compared to their supervisors' control in the formal bureaucratic system.

Although commitment to one another seemed to be a valued virtue between employees at PAL, the culture did not appear as a restraining control mechanism for performance. It had been affectionately referred to as "normal life" (Research Assistant 7). However, hard work seemed to produce a resultant a control effect like the one described in Barker's (1993) research. This was especially reflected by the volunteers' attitudes who thought that their chances of being offered a contact position at PAL depended on the approval of their colleagues. Research Assistant 5 for example confessed that her 5 months volunteering experience was a pursuit of acceptance through achievement.

The managers at PAL did not seem to realise or depend on the employees' self-made norms to control performance. Yet, the description of concertive control in literature seems to suggest that the process of a participative control system is initiated and controlled by management. Barker for example argues that managers do centralise and encourage such more democratic systems of control; apparently to minimise bureaucracy's confining routines and rules (Barker, 1993, p.413). The next section describes how managers used cultural control at PAL to control their employees' performance.

5.2.2 Managers and culture control

Even though managers seemed to have been fully aware of their employees' commitment to each other, it appeared as if this culture was not relied on to manage and control employee performance. The culture was viewed as something that happened naturally and behaving in a way that was contrary to this would result in employees being shunned by colleagues. When Research Scientist 2 was asked if her team members were each solely responsible for a specific assignment, she answered:

"No, definitely no! They are naturally tangled up with each other. I know people for example request their colleagues to complete their

assignment on their behalf when they are off attending to a personal matter” (Research Scientist 2).

Cooperation between employees was however valuable to supervisors as Research Scientist 2 continued to explain about her team:

“I do not know what I would do with a batch of technicians each minding their own business. They need to talk the same language, be free with each other, that is how we can together pull in the same direction. I have to worry if this doesn’t happen because people here depend on each other a lot to complete the clients’ jobs ” (Research Scientist 2)

Thus, even though ‘team spirit’ and cooperation was valued by managers, they seemed to imagine that it would happen naturally and they did not need to inspire this idea in their employees. It appeared as a culture they (managers) took for granted and expected to happen logically.

The managers however described other aspects of the work culture that they thought were important for employee performance. These aspects included work tendencies such as self-initiative, meticulousness, innovativeness and self-development. They then mentioned that they had gone out of their way to “encourage” their employees to adopt these norms that they valued (Research Scientist 4, 6, 7, 8 and 10). Consequently, they (managers) took some practical steps to encourage such values without necessarily forcing them upon the employees (Research Scientist 6). Supervisors, for example, mentioned that they usually recommended employees for postgraduate studies funding attached to their projects only if they were considered as ‘hard working’ employees (Research Scientist 4, 8 and 10). ‘Hard working’ was further explained as: “she just didn’t make mistakes that sometimes mess our experiments and get us to lag behind time” (Research scientist 4), “...those two take charge of the course of our work, identify what is best and go ahead and do it” (Research Scientist 6), “she gets up and down modifying things to find what can maximises our chances of getting good results....” (Research Scientist 7). The supervisor’s judgement in

such a case was then based on the values he or she considered important rather than the formal policy guidelines. The formal policy on training required that the nomination of a trainee to attend a training programme or further their education would be based on criteria. Three considerations would be made: (1) the results of the employee's previous performance evaluations, (2) training needs assessment as well as (3) the principle of merit and equity (Programme HR assistant 2; HR Manual of NARO Staff Terms and Conditions of Service, 2009 p.26). The supervisor's judgment was superior to this paper procedure. They did this to "send out a message that hard work pays" (Research Scientist 10).

Related to 'hard work', supervisors also mentioned that they valued self-development and spurred their employees to this by directly talking to them about the subject. Research Scientist 2 for example, acknowledged that it was difficult to motivate his employees by financial rewards so he talked to them about furthering their studies and possibilities of self-employment in future. This was in an attempt to keep their morale high and hopeful.

"We do not make lots of money to give to them but I usually talk to them as an elder. I tell them about the experience they are acquiring and they can even in future set up personal labs if they wanted to, use the experience and make lots of money. I also point out to them the opportunities for further studies here so I think that also encourages them a lot" (Research Scientist 2).

Other means of encouraging employees to take up values desired by supervisors included passing on information of recent publications to employees to read and keep abreast with research developments in their field. Employees were also given recognition at periodic meetings if they had had developed new ideas (Field notes January 14th, 2014). Some supervisors mentioned that they had used verbal compliments to encourage those who achieved 'excellent' results (Research Scientist 2, 3, 7 and 10).

The employees gave the impression that they were aware of what they supervisors valued even though it was not formally made clear to them. They

(employees) were asked about what they thought their supervisors valued from them. They described values such as self-development, innovation and meticulousness as those which their supervisors considered to be important. The following interview responses from three technicians describe this understanding:

“I think he is happy when we do not stagnate in one place for long. He is always encouraging us to think about the future and move on. He looks out for training opportunities and scholarships for us and gets on our back to see how we are doing with the application process. He inspires us a lot” (Technician 4).

“The people who publish in journals are considered role models here and may be if you are into reading a lot and you do not take things at face value. For example my supervisor usually refers me to D to check if she has read about something we are stuck with and the way he does it, you can see that he is confident concerning her” (Technician 6).

“We do not do the usual performance appraisal exercise like the people employed by NARO. Here, if you give the supervisor headache like getting lots of contamination, not finishing your work and delaying the project, they are likely not to recommend renewal of your contract” (Technician 10).

And finally research assistant 2 concluded that supervisors desired innovation from their employees for he observed that generally people who came up with new ideas were ‘respected’ and honoured for “they constitute the opening remarks of every meeting, people will be giving them compliments everywhere in the lab, canteen ...everywhere, and they stand better chances for scholarships or training opportunities. (Research Assistant 2).

So, were managers’ attempts to spur employees to desired work behaviour effective? Was employee performance in any way influenced by encouragement, compliments, recognition at meetings, and recommendations for further studies? To answer these questions, employees were asked to

explain why they (if at all they did) ‘worked hard.’ Answers to this question suggested that employees were motivated to work hard because they believed that: 1) to work diligently was being courteous to fellow employees, 2) given the unemployment levels, it was a privilege to have a job and “every wise person here is careful about their job” (Technician 4), 3) the work provided a sense of self-worth, and 4) results were important for the renewal of project funding and consequently, employment. In general, there seemed to be no direct association between supervisors’ attempts to motivate employees and what drove them (employees) to work hard.

Aspects of the work process that have been identified in literature as important for employee motivation include the process of goal setting. Locke (1968) argued that higher performance is achieved when goals are challenging, clear, with proper feedback on performance (Locke, 1968). Other theories that explain intrinsic factors to employee motivation include vroom’s expectancy model as well as Adam’s equity theory. The relevance of these theories in managing employee performance as well as their limitations in offering definitive answers to managers on how to best increase levels of performance of their employees in ever changing work places, varied cultures and behaviour dynamic has been discussed in chapter 2 (Literature Review). Supervisors at PAL for example seemed to unconsciously subscribe to Herzberg's two factor theory (1959) which suggests that job factors such as responsibility, achievement, recognition, promotion and growth are, without exceptions, job satisfiers. However, even though most supervisors had indicated that they relied on these factors to motivate their employees, unemployment levels in Uganda, relations with colleagues (a factor Fredric Herzberg had identified as hygiene and not a motivator) and contribution to society’s wellbeing were some of the factors employees perceived as their reasons for ‘working hard’. The influence of unemployment levels in Uganda on employees’ work behaviour is described further in section 5.2.3 below on market controls.

5.2.3. Control of different categories of worker (*Thesis correction number 2*)

The HR Director of the Institute thought that the guidelines in the official HR manual served as a reference point in decision making rather than following them to the letter. She mentioned that the cleaners' and drivers' jobs were "too basic" for her to "keep an eye on them" as required by the formal guidelines. This level of autonomy and use of discretion in decision making and supervision was also identified in the work of scientists. A key difference, however, was that when dealing with all members of staff, including research staff and support staff, scientists were evaluated depending on 'what they did', while support staff were evaluated not only on 'what they did' but also how they conducted themselves with others while they did their work. For example, a driver, when explaining how he was evaluated, mentioned that: "If you are not doing your job well, people will go and complain about you" (Driver 2). A cleaner also mentioned that her evaluation depended on people in offices (scientists). "If they do not complain, then J [HR administrator, programme] has no problem with us. If they complain... then you get a warning" (Cleaner 2). Employee self-consciousness with regard to being watched by peers can be related to the concept of concertive control discussed above in section 5.1.3. Support staff workers seemed to be conscious of other employees' 'supervisory' tendencies and the eventual informal evaluation of their work behaviour that would result in formal consequences such as a warning from their supervisor.

5.2.4. Market controls

The unemployment rate in Uganda was, according to research assistant 4, "very high" and thus having a job considered a great privilege (Research Assistant 4). This was a realisation that supervisors seemed to share with their employees. Employees on commercial projects, for example, were constantly uncertain about their pay; for while other projects received funding from the government of Uganda or other donors, commercial project funding depended on the performance of business in a given period (Programme HR 2). It was believed that such employees did not move on to other organisations for more certain remuneration because "there are no jobs out there" (Research

Scientist 2). Research Scientist 2 was quick to add that even if an employee ever left for another job, it would not be difficult to replace him/her because there were many volunteers at PAL ready to be hired. Other views related to the unemployment rate in Uganda included: “the thing that makes volunteers committed workers” (Research Scientist 8), “the reason we get the best technicians on our project, we usually have a wide lake to fish from” (Research Scientist 1), and “...makes people appreciate their jobs whatever the conditions” (Research Scientist 4).

They (supervisors) appreciated that employees and specifically volunteers worked hard so as to increase their chances of being hired at the end of their volunteering period. Research scientist 5 who worked with just volunteers explained their commitment to the job despite the fact that they were not paid:

“Yes I think they are committed with hope of consequently being employed. There are RA and technicians who started as volunteers and now work with the programme; I guess those are their inspiration. Besides there are very few jobs out there so they know they are better off working hard and being retained here where they have already had the initial entrance into the system” (Research Scientist 5)

The institute HR director had a similar view about volunteers:

“Volunteers work for at most three months; employment terms are then revised and a short term contract of six months is given to them. I must say that the volunteers are very hard working, I think because they are hoping for employment eventually” (HR Director, Institute).

Kalleberg (2009) argues that employers are able to control workers through compulsion to work hard in order to keep temporally insecure jobs that are common in the twenty first century organisation. Employees may, through understanding of the job market, fear job loss hence some feelings of insecurity. Managers then expect calculative compliance from employees to a

degree due to pressures from job markets. This argument mainly focuses on employees in short-term contract employments and other temporary and relatively precarious work arrangements (Pfeffer and Baron, 1988; Kalleberg, 2000, 2009 and Beck, 1992, 2000). This seemed to be the case for volunteers at PAL. There was a definite awareness of the scarce jobs in the market. This awareness led encouraged volunteers do their best to gain approval from other employees and managers. The earlier discussion on the value of ‘hard work’ demonstrated that volunteers actually were conscious of what their fellow employees thought about them. They had described their volunteering experience as “a period of trying to prove myself/pursuit of acceptance through achievement” (Research Assistant 5). Managers also seemed to consciously expect volunteers to work hard for they viewed the scarcity of jobs in Uganda as “the thing that makes [them] committed workers” (Research Scientist 8).

While NARO staff had relatively secure employment terms with 3-5 years contracts, project staff worked on one year rolling contracts. Employees on projects were then asked what they thought about the level of unemployment in Uganda and how they thought it affected them. There was a sense of acknowledgement that they worked diligently out of an appreciation for having a job given the unemployment situation in the country (Technicians 1, 2 and 4, Research Assistants 5, 6 and 9). They were also asked what dependency on satisfactory performance for the renewal of their contract meant to them. Rather than being preoccupied with what would happen if they lost their jobs, employee on projects seemed to have been confident about the security of their next engagement. They seemed to be secure for they thought they were diligent on their current assignment. Employees on projects were then asked if they were involved in active job search for more stable jobs elsewhere. This was aimed at obtaining their attitude on their unstable jobs. Were they thinking of their current jobs as risky? And what were they doing to mitigate such a risk? Interview responses considered included the following:

“Usually the grass on the other side of the fence looks greener so sometimes I think about changing my job. But I am generally confident and disciplined on my job; I am not afraid for example that my contract may not be renewed next year because I perform my duties well and rarely fail to achieve my objectives. The government of Uganda usually gives sufficient funds to NARO so we not closing tomorrow or in the near future” (Research Assistant 10)

“Of course sometimes I check on job adverts in newspapers but I am not actively looking for a job. I am not a mediocre performer and this project has three more years to go. May be I will worry when we have just a year to go; I do not know” (Technician 3).

From the perspective of supervisors, the lack of jobs did not seem to be aspects that they would rely on to compel project employees to perform. Other means, including support for further training, recognition, and personal encouragement were instead used to spur employees on to achieve the desired performance.

In general, it seemed that the labour market conditions in Uganda meant that project employees appreciated having a job, but were not scared of losing it. There seemed to be no compulsion to work hard in order to maintain their jobs. There also seemed to be no signs of “distress” on the part of the employees resulting from their terms of employment - a one year contract in this case. Comments or attitudes of project staff about the one year rolling contract terms compared to NARO’s 3-4 year contracts included: “It’s no big deal..... I think as long as I perform at my work, my supervisors can always recommend me for a new contract” (Research Assistant 6), “.... they put a scaring statement in the contract “This contract will be renewed depending on satisfactory performance and availability of funds” Every project staff has a line like that in their contract ...but, a line in contract is not what I think about every day” (Research Assistant 1) and “..... the programme runs several projects and if one runs out of money, I get listed on another. I work for the whole programme not just the project that pays me” (Technician 10).

Generally, analysis of what was considered as acceptable (and unacceptable) work behaviour at PAL revealed that employees and supervisors shared a conviction that team work or commitment to each other was an important value.

5.3 SUMMARY

This chapter covered the informal and social dynamics at PAL as well as their implications for employee performance management and control. Employees seemed to exhibit close-knit relationships that resulted in what they termed as 'team spirit'. This led to a culture of self-managed groups in which employees worked under minimum supervision from their managers. This situation appeared as what Friedman (1977) referred to as responsible autonomy. Employees at PAL seemed to be working under this form of control; a management technique that involved allowing employees more discretion rather than direct control and close supervision. The other concept that seems to have been reflected from the informal group performance at PAL was that of concertive control. Employees quite often came to a consensus on values and normative rules, to guide their work via cultural norms rather than bureaucratic rules. However, responsible autonomy and concertive control seemed to evolve naturally rather than through conscious and deliberate effort on the part of the managers.

The chapter also covered the influence of uncertain and unpredictable work arrangements on employee behaviour. Unemployment in Uganda seemed to compel volunteers to work hard to impress their colleagues and managers. Managers were also aware of the fact that volunteers worked hard hoping for eventual employment at PAL. Managers also seemed to rely on the influence of market forces to control employees engaged in commercial activities. The managers assumed that because there were limited jobs in the job market, employees would not seek more secure work. The other group of employees that was expected to be influenced by scarce jobs was employees working with projects. The one year rolling contract arrangements, however, were made by management for reasons other than to put employees under pressure to work hard. The temporary nature of these arrangements was instead as a result of the terms set by the funding partners. They (temporary

contracts) were therefore not used by managers to encourage ‘good’ behaviour as market controls approaches would suggest. (See for example Pfeffer and Baron, 1988; Beck, 1992; 2000 and Kalleberg, 2009)

(Correction number 2)

The elements of EPM and control that have been examined in this thesis are: 1) work organisation, 2) decision making, 3) supervision, 4) performance evaluation, and 5) performance management through recruitment. As explained in the methods chapter (table 3.2), employees were hired as NARO or project staff (national vs. international control) and were either involved in core or non-core research activities (scientists vs. support staff). Some were involved in commercial activities, while others carried out non-profit generating activities. Finally, some participants were volunteers while others were full time staff on a payroll. Most staff belonged to multiple categories, and therefore, consideration of the differences in EPM and control among the various groups has focused on scientists vs. support staff. The interviews and observations reveal that apart from performance evaluation, there seemed to be minimal differences between the two groups in the approaches to EPM and control and in employee behavioural responses. One of the key differences was that while both categories of employee seemed to have autonomy in decision making with regard to their day-to-day activities, performance evaluation for support staff seemed to depend on informal factors such as the number of complaints received about them from scientists, and led to a form of self-consciousness and arguably, concertive control. More generally, however, there seemed to be minimal differences in how the various aspects of EPM and control were carried out among the various categories of workers.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

6.0 OVERVIEW

This chapter seeks to interpret the findings of this study through reference to the existing literature. It covers: 1) reflection on how employee performance management and control mechanisms were designed and applied in the case organisation, and how employees responded; 2) the informal processes that influenced the implementation of institutionalised, formal modes of employee performance management and control, and how control was socially negotiated between managers and employees; and (3) the issues surrounding the application of 'Western' models of employee performance management and control to an African context, and how these models influenced practice and behaviour at PAL.

(Correction number. 4)

The term 'Western management' as noted earlier in chapter 1 (section 1.1) refers to management theories and techniques based on experience and research carried out in the United Kingdom (UK), Australia and the United States of America (USA). Although the West is often used generically to refer to developed countries, these countries (even within Europe) vary in terms of culture and economic systems (Hall and Soskice, 2001). The UK, Australia and USA have direct links to Uganda through colonisation and economic partnerships. Furthermore, most international development partners in Uganda have their bases in the UK and the USA, and apply similar models of management training and human resource development, and this study is focused on exploring EPM & control in an international development organisation.

6.1 DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND CONTROL AND EMPLOYEES' RESPONSE

PAL's official guidelines on employee performance management and control revealed a bureaucratic, top-down system. The system was designed in such a

way as to reflect PAL's work guidelines including: high level strategy development, periodic work plans/objectives, performance standards, reporting, objective performance evaluation and reward (or punishment of underperformance). The focus on specifying what should be done, when it should be done and who should do it suggested the pursuit of predictability, which is characteristic of bureaucratic systems (McAuley *et al.*, 2007). The other feature of bureaucracy is calculability (Ritzer, 2004). This was evident in the setting of standard time scales and budgets for projects. Bureaucratic systems also tend to enforce conformity to pre-set standards through the use of impersonal rules and procedures (McAuley *et al.*, 2007). Thus; most of the guidelines were translated into rules or standard operating procedures which employees were expected to follow if PAL was to achieve its institutional goals and objectives.

However, there were differences between the guidelines and the actual implementation process. The interviews with managers and employees and the participant observation sessions revealed a bottom-up rather than a top-down approach to implementation. The dynamics of these two seemingly contradictory approaches to design and implementation are discussed below. This section also discusses employees' involvement and how the social negotiation of control was influenced by the informal social processes at PAL.

6.1.1 Espoused guidelines versus theories in use

The literature usually portrays managers as the leaders of and sole decision makers in the performance management and control process (Thomson and McHugh, 1995; Cherrington, 1994; Armstrong, 2006). The formal guidelines at PAL reflected this kind of top-down approach to management. The formal employee performance management cycle was expected to be followed within an agreed framework of planned goals and standards, in a similar way to that outlined by Armstrong (2006). In this approach, employee performance management is seen as a rational, step by step procedure designed by management (Cherrington, 1994). These steps include setting the organisation's objectives, translating these into clear individual goals and reviewing these goals regularly to provide performance feedback. The process also involves determining employee training and development needs and

distributing rewards (Armstrong, 2006). This was the process followed by top management at PAL when it designed its official guidelines on employee performance management and control.

A number of authors have argued that most organisations in Africa continue to be influenced by their colonial past in the way that they manage themselves using paper-based bureaucratic procedures (Kagaari *et al.*, 2010). Mamdani (2011) indicates that racial superiority attitudes, class and ethnic discrimination and the bureaucratic systems that were introduced by British colonisers in Uganda have persisted in the country's public organisational structures administration. (It is less clear how colonial influences or Western ideologies continue to shape the informal, day-to-day work life of employees.) This inclination to 'Western' practices may explain the foundation of what was formally recognised as the official structure of employee performance management and control at PAL. The formal, paper-based guidelines emanated from the top national organisation's strategy (NARO strategy). These were broken down into institute guidelines, then into programme guidelines and even further into project guidelines. The guidelines stipulated the institute's mandate, the research focus of each programme, its annual work plans and its activities. The formal policies on performance evaluation, training and reward were also stated in these guidelines (HR Manual of NARO Staff Terms and Conditions of Service, 2009). This breakdown is illustrated in Figure 6 in section 4.2.1.

Critics of the persistence of colonial bureaucratic systems in Africa claim that these formal procedures not only dictate the design of management procedures but also dominate practice (Kagaari *et al.*, 2010; Mamdani, 2011; Arthur Jr *et al.*, 2006), and that 'Western management' ideology is considered superior to the traditional approach (Kauda, 2010). However, the findings from PAL suggest that the word 'influence' might be more appropriate than 'dominate' to describe the day-to-day practice of employees and their supervisors. Formal bureaucratic guidelines may have been designed by top management at NARO and PAL to provide direction for the design of work organisation and management procedures, but these guidelines did not seem to dominate everyday practice. Other factors also influenced employee performance management and control. The formal planning process produced

annual work plans and activities, and the standard performance appraisal system was used as the benchmark for performance evaluation. The formal guidelines were also used as reference points for decision making, especially when problems arose. However, there was no evidence of dutiful adherence to the formal performance management cycle. The term ‘employee performance management’ may in itself suggest employee submission rather than active involvement, but PAL’s employees seemed to be involved in the day-to-day aspects of the work process. The picture of an authoritarian, top-down management approach and dependency on objective, paper-based guidelines and rules (espoused theories) is far from the description given by one manager at PAL: ‘...they had over 90% input in designing our project activities and experiments; they put their heads in there from the start and are aware that if anything fails, they fail with it...’ (Research Scientist 10). Another manager revealed that: ‘...people here would resent you if you drove them rather than let them be...’ (Institute HR Director). The word drive was taken to mean ‘tell what to do’ or ‘control’. This participation was not spelt out in any document but was the result of a tacit understanding between managers and employees.

Kunda (1992) has suggested that post-bureaucratic approaches to managing employee work behaviour through cultural control involve attempting to foster employee attachment to company values. Managers in such cases, Kunda argues, influence rather than direct behaviour through some form of normative control. The managers at PAL were aware of the possible resistance to control if rule-based guidelines or boundaries were imposed on employees; hence the ‘people will resent you if you drive them’ attitude. But did managers then consciously do anything to influence the employees’ attitudes, beliefs and subsequent active participation, as Kunda (1992) suggests? It was important to understand what drove/influenced the employees’ behaviour and why they acted the way they did. The next section discusses how the employees’ subjective interpretation of their managers’ prompts, as well as the organisational social context in which they worked, influenced their active participation.

6.1.2 Employees' active participation

The findings of this study reveal that the management at PAL provided an environment where employees could actively involve themselves in work organisation, decision making, supervision, performance evaluation, recruitment and reward (see Chapter 4). Managers used their management experience and authority to flexibly guide rather than drive or control employee work behaviour. Employees worked hand in hand with the managers to plan for activities, adopted collectively agreed upon work behaviour, and were eager to bear responsibility for their performance as a group. The employee performance management and control process at PAL thus tended to provide employees with an opportunity to be actively involved rather than having their work behaviour driven.

'Western management' techniques are based on the assumption that employee performance management and control can be designed as an objective system (Armstrong, 2006; Cherrington, 1994). The problem with this assumption is that it underestimates employees' ability to be involved in and influence the process, and risks alienating them. Managers appear to be in charge and employees have little or nothing to do with the process other than executing their individual assignment: they are the managed rather than active participants. However, employees are not machines that can be programmed to perform exactly as required; they are human beings with the physical, psychological and emotional abilities to respond to managers' prompts and attempts to direct their behaviour. A manager at PAL acknowledged this fact when she stated that: '...people do not undress their humanity to come to work and then put it on when they get home at 6 o'clock' (HR Director, Institute). The same realisation prompted some motivational theorists to consider issues such as the motivational effects of goal setting on employees (Locke and Latham, 1990). However, such theories have been criticised as sharing the same primary objective as classical management theories (Martin and Fellenz, 2010); that is, to help managers control employees and the labour process while excluding employees from any form of decision making.

The managers at PAL seemed to consider their employees as those who were keen at taking responsibility and capable of participating in

decision making. A similar approach to managing employee behaviour was theorised by Douglas McGregor (1960), who claimed that how managers manage employee performance will depend on what assumptions they have about their employees (see McGregor's Theory Y and Theory X, section 2.2.3). Their non-coercive approach to employee performance management and control suggests that managers at PAL were more inclined to subscribe to McGregor's Theory Y.

The other likely theoretical basis for practice at PAL may be responsible autonomy. This was discussed in the previous chapter (section 5.1.3) as a technique that involves controlling people by giving them control over how they work. Although responsible autonomy may appear a more democratic approach to managing employee performance, employees are only given discretion to act within certain controlled boundaries (Swaan, 1988). The process is thus initiated and owned by managers. The situation at PAL was different in that employees seemed to act as co-workers with the managers in the process of performance management. There seemed to be no deliberate attempt by managers to utilise the discretion allowed to employees as a means of controlling their performance. Rather, managers saw employees as intelligent individuals who were capable of understanding the purpose of their work and who would probably resent attempts to drive their work behaviour.

The third concept in the literature that appears relevant to employee participation at PAL is that of concertive control (Barker, 1993). This concept was also discussed in the previous chapter as one that involves employees watching over their peers in self-managed teams. For example, volunteers at PAL were conscious of the need to perform at a level acceptable to their colleagues if they were to stand a chance of eventually getting a full-time job. One volunteer confessed that her volunteering experience had been nothing but an attempt to gain acceptance from teammates. Employees in support roles, for example drivers and cleaners, also expressed an awareness of the impact of other employees' attitudes on their performance evaluation. Complaints from other employees could result in them (support staff) being challenged by managers during the performance evaluation. However, concertive structures are initiated and steered by managers, and as Baker

(1993) argues, this leads in the end to even tighter control measures than generic bureaucratic controls. This kind of approach – which only appears to avoid bureaucratic top-down methods to managing employee behaviour – has been labelled ‘soft bureaucracy’ because it ultimately tends to reinforce bureaucratic systems (Courpasson, 2000 in Courpasson and Clegg, 2006, p.319). Indeed, Courpasson and Clegg (2006) argue that the introduction of such approaches allows top management to retain control and eventually erodes the supposed autonomy of employees. However, this did not appear to be the case at PAL; allowing employees to participate in managing their performance was not a mechanism for controlling core full-time staff, nor was it a way for management to manipulate employee trust or these control mechanisms, as Castells (1996 in Courpasson and Clegg, 2006, p.325) would claim. The actions and behaviour of employees and their supervisors were rather influenced by the social values and beliefs that workers at PAL held; these values and beliefs about each other were why they acted the way they did. Again, while literature on employee participation seem to indicate that the practice is facilitated by management to enhance employee job satisfaction and consequently corporate performance (Zhu *et al.*, 2015), the managers at PAL seemed to have involved employees in decision making because they ‘respected’ and ‘trusted’ them (employees).

6.1.3 Informal processes as the drivers of the social negotiation of control

Chapter 5 explained how managers and employees frequently interacted informally, and how these informal relationships had implications for employee performance management and control. The interactions included informal conversations during lunch breaks and informal compliments (or complaints) from employees – the latter were considered important aspects of support staff performance evaluation. Such relationships influenced the social negotiation of control. They were perceived, for example, as the reason why some employees were graded inaccurately in their formal performance appraisal. One of the HR programme administrators explained that supervisors sometimes negotiated the content of appraisal reports with employees as if they were ‘*close friends*’ (HR administrator, Programme 2).

The social ties between supervisors and employees may have fostered a culture of dealing with underperformance informally, but they also gave managers ways of motivating staff to produce the desired performance. For instance, the informal collective transport of managers' and employees' children to and from school fostered social relationships outside work (see section 5.1.3). These children referred to their parents' workmates as uncles and aunts and took each other as brothers and sisters. Consequently, some supervisors were perceived (and thought of themselves) as 'elders' or older, respected brothers/sisters. They explained that they were not giving 'orders' to their employees but 'talked to them as elders' to in effect control/influence their behaviour at work (Research Scientist 2). This is described further in section 5.2.2.

Thus, while the design of the employee performance management and control system at PAL was based on formal bureaucratic concepts, managers allowed employees to participate in making decisions regarding its day-to-day implementation. Control was socially negotiated between managers and employees. This negotiation was facilitated by the close, informal ties that existed between employees and their supervisors. In contrast to 'Western management' guidelines, which seem to assume that managers and employees occupy distinct work environments, the situation at PAL revealed an entwining of the two through informal processes.

6.2 WESTERN APPROACH TO MANAGEMENT AND THE AFRICAN CONTEXT

As noted above, Western-rooted guidelines seem to have provided the framework for the formal design of the employee performance management system, but informal interpersonal relationships and African societal/communitarian characteristics influenced the way in which the system was applied in day-to-day practice. This section discusses the application of 'Western' models of employee performance management and control and the key role of interpersonal relationships in the implementation process. In PAL, these relationships seemed to mirror the African societal/communitarian characteristics described in the literature. Section 6.2.3 describes these characteristics.

6.2.1 ‘Western’-based guidelines and models of management

Literature on management in Africa makes a distinction between ‘Western management’ styles and those indigenous to Africa (Nzelibe, 1986; Kamoche, 2000; Horwitz *et al.*, 2002; Jackson, 2011; Kagaari *et al.*, 2010). ‘Western management’ styles are generally characterised as top-down, bureaucratic, rule-based and economics-focused (Nzelibe, 1986), while traditional African methods are characterised as communitarian, humanistic, non-hierarchical and cooperative (Jackson, 2011; Budhwar and Debrah, 2001; Arthur Jr *et al.*, 2006; Blunt and Jones, 1992). It is then argued that ‘Western’ practice and the African culture are not necessarily compatible, as explained in chapter 2. The argument is that the ‘Western’ world theories incorporated attitudes and values from the ‘Western’ industrialised society into a non-industrialised African context (Jackson, 2011) These principles appeared strange to African workers who held a quite different set of values derived from a completely different society that was more communitarian in approach (Nzelibe, 1986). It is not surprising then that it has long been claimed that ‘Western’-designed modes of management are incompatible with the African culture. Harvey (2002, p.1119) asserts that:

‘Just as Wonderland held many surprises for Alice during her adventure, Africa holds many surprises for Western HRM, not only in the form of the alien nature of the “rules, regulations and laws”.... but also in the extent to which many African organisations/employees ignore or bend the rules.’

Some authors have even gone to the extent of attributing organisational inefficiency and ineffectiveness in Africa to the uncritical adoption of ‘Western management’ practices (Jaeger and Kanungo, 1990). In fact, it is now being suggested that the debate should shift from the suitability of ‘Western management’ practices in Africa to the suitability of those being brought to the continent from Asian countries (Kamoche *et al.*, 2012).

This is not to say that ‘Western’-designed modes of management are entirely irrelevant to management practice in contemporary Africa-based organisations. As Chapter 2 points out, the dynamics of managing contemporary organisations in Africa may not be able to escape interaction with ‘Western’ corporations, partnerships and education systems (Jackson, 2002). It has been suggested that hybridisation, that is, the simultaneous application of African management styles and ‘Western’ modes may be a potential solution to management problems in Africa, but so far, no one has clearly demonstrated the specific role of ‘Western management’ models in Africa or what the practicalities of hybridisation entail. For example, although Mangaliso (2001) outlines how organisations in South Africa can build a competitive advantage by incorporating Ubuntu principles into some (not all) aspects of their organisational management practice, he does not clarify the respective roles played by African traditional values and ‘Western management’ principles. Mangaliso (2001) also cautions against unquestionable implementation of Ubuntu in companies in South Africa. The findings of this thesis are helpful in pointing out the practical influence of ‘Western’ modes of management on a specific management function (employee performance management and control) in an Africa-based organisation.

There are also still unanswered questions about what is likely to happen in future if most African countries transform into more developed societies. Would such a transformation result in Africans embracing similar social values to the ‘West’ and adopting ‘Western’-rooted models of management? For example, what would happen if managers in Africa sought to avoid the traditional cultural influence on work behaviour and attempted to separate employees’ work and personal lives? The attitude at PAL was that:

‘...people do not undress their humanity to come to work and then put it on when they get home at 6 o’clock. I have learnt that if you want to maximise productivity of workers, you have to make sure they live as human beings at work and not machines....’ (HR Director, Institute)

If these managers' values changed, would their strategies for encouraging employee productivity also change? As explained in section 6.1, formal, and 'Western'-based guidelines informed the design of the employee performance management and control process at the case study organisation. These guidelines were translated into rules or standard operating procedures which, even though they were not religiously adhered to, provided a framework and reference points for what happened in practice. More integral to the performance management and control process, however, were the interpersonal relationships between employees and managers. This was especially true at the implementation stage.

6.2.2 The role of informal interpersonal relationships in employee performance management and control

Section 6.1.3 discusses the general role of informal processes in driving the social negotiation of control at PAL. One aspect of these informal processes was the interpersonal relationships between managers and employees, which played a key role in the implementation of employee performance management and control. The research scientists, for example, explained that although their formal job descriptions required them to design projects and draw up work plans, all of their projects had in fact been developed jointly with their 'teams'. The word team was used to refer to colleagues, friends, subordinates and anyone working on the same project. This form of informal cooperation was sometimes termed 'team spirit'.

The fact that this cooperation was not recognised officially had implications for performance evaluation. For example, a supervisor's appraisal grade might be influenced by activities they did not do on their own but which they were expected to do by themselves without the input of employees under them. Conversely, employees carried out activities that were never evaluated or referred to during their formal performance appraisal. The performance evaluations of support staff (e.g. drivers, accountants, the IT administrator and cleaners) were also affected by their informal relationships with core staff; comments or complaints from the latter offered an ad-hoc way of judging the performance of the former.

Apart from influencing the parameters of performance evaluation, interpersonal relationships also influenced the objectivity of the performance appraisal process. Managers were in some instances reluctant to give a negative evaluation report on their employees' performance for fear of being labelled 'the bad guy'. An HR programme administrator mentioned she had over the years observed that it was quite difficult for research assistants to provide a candid review of individual team members' performance. This was because: 'They are friends. They put on paper what they know is required for their RAs and technicians to have their contracts renewed' (HR administrator, Programme 2).

Interpersonal relationships also influenced performance evaluation and reward for individual employees. The problems identified with the process of performance evaluation at PAL have also been covered in previous literature. Evidence has shown that performance appraisal is more of a political process than a rational objective one and is affected by the local cultural norms, employees' perceptions and interrelationships with their supervisors (Dhiman and Maheshwari, 2013; Shrivastava and Purang, 2011; Varma, *et al.*, 2005; Buchelt, 2015). The main challenge at PAL was that of supervisors providing inaccurate information about some employees' underperformance because of the relationships that they had with them. However, even though the formal procedure of dealing with underperformance could not be carried out in such circumstances, the supervisors dealt with such cases through informal means, for example, talking to the underperformer "*as an elder*" (Research Scientist 2) or giving them "*incentives*" (Research Scientist 9) to improve their performance.

Again, since individuals and teams were constantly 'helping' each other informally to work on activities, individual employees were sometimes credited for performance results that were not entirely the result of their individual input. PAL also tended more to a culture of team rewards rather than individual rewards when outstanding performance was being recognised. Even then, members of the annual prize-winning team found it difficult to celebrate on their own; the members of other teams were always invited by the winning team to the 'goat roasting' celebration held annually for the team of the year.

Finally, interpersonal relationships sometimes influenced who was hired into vacant positions. This was especially applicable in the lower level positions. A nursery and field attendant, for example, explained that they had filled vacant positions with friends and relatives (Nursery and field attendant 2). This is in contrast to the principles of strategic HRM suggested by most authors on performance management (Huselid, 1995; Becker and Huselid, 1998; Guest *et al.*, 2000), who advise focused recruitment activities in line with the purpose of the organisation.

6.2.3 African societal/communitarian characteristics

The discussions above has developed a claim that ‘Western’-rooted guidelines provided a framework for the design of formal employee performance management and control guidelines, while interpersonal relationships and African societal/communitarian characteristics influenced the implementation of managers’ intentions at PAL. The communitarian characteristics identified at PAL and described in this thesis have been previously described in the literature on management in Africa (see, for example, Kamoche *et al.*, 2004). Although Africa is a continent of over fifty countries, each with diverse cultures, some of these characteristics reappear repeatedly, especially in studies conducted in sub-Saharan Africa (Kagaari *et al.*, 2010; Munene, 1991). One feature of African culture that is often discussed is Ubuntu (see Chapter 2), a central tenet of which is that *umntu ngumntu ngabanye* [a person is a person through others]. In this philosophy, the unity of the whole is more important than the distinction of the individual (Mangaliso, 2001 p.24). In other words, while it is argued that ‘Western’ cultures are essentially individualistic and competitive, African society is described as that which tends to uphold communitarian values.

The *umntu ngumntu ngabanye* [a person is a person through others] attitude may explain why employees and managers alike at PAL would spend what may appear to be valuable company time in a wide range of informal/social non-work related activities. Activities such as a colleague’s wedding preparations and the funeral of a teammate’s distant relative were as important to colleagues as they were to the individual directly involved. Communitarian values may also explain why employees found certain formal

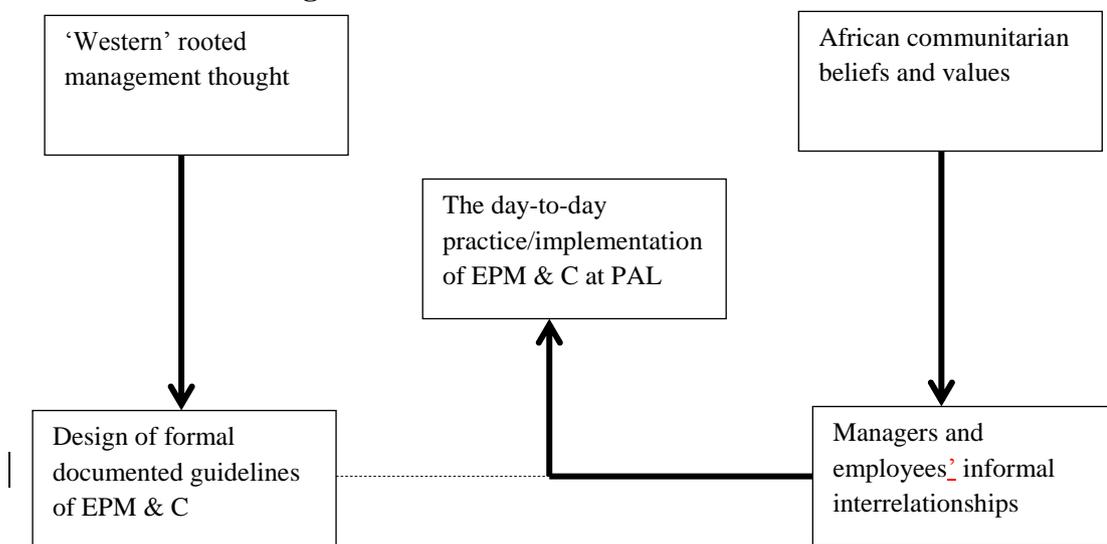
rules and policies difficult (and sometimes unnecessary) to adhere to. Managers also confessed that they found it challenging to enforce certain rules because of their alienating nature. Consequently, some managers condoned even repeated breaches of certain institute and programme rules. One of the HR administrators, for example, explained that it was difficult to implement a strict van policy. The policy restricted the driver to making sure that the van was used by staff from Programme X only. Although staff from other programmes used the van anyway, the driver was not disciplined. The HR administrator was fully aware of what was happening but overlooked the driver's continual breach of the policy. She reasoned that it was not possible for the driver to leave 'fellow human beings' on the road side just because they were not working with Programme X (HR administrator, Programme 3). This kind of informal agreement between managers and employees to ignore certain formal rules or procedures is an example of what Gouldner (1954) terms mock bureaucracy. Managers and employees agreed implicitly that such rules were unnecessary and impractical given the social values held by both parties, and employees were aware that they could connive with managers to bypass top management's expectations once they were away from formal settings (e.g. meetings attended by the programme leader). Although some of the supervisors were perceived as not open to negotiation with their employees, most were.

The culture of 'team spirit' valued by managers and employees at PAL and reflecting Ubuntu principles also affected the day-to-day work on the bench. For example, most employees indicated that they were glad that they were allowed to carry their samples from one work station to another to be close to their colleagues, even though this was theoretically forbidden. This practice helped to alleviate the stress that would have occurred if they had been confined to one place away from colleagues. Managers also implied that they perceived the tendency to seek each other out as 'normal' (Research Scientist 9). The decision to do something was commonly based on how other people would feel about it rather than what the formal guideline said.

6.3 SUMMARY

As explained above, generally, the framework that was used by top-management in the design of formal guidelines for employee performance management and control at PAL reflected ‘Western’-rooted management values and beliefs. On the other hand, the day-to-day implementation was largely dependent on managers’ and employees’ informal relationships, and these stemmed from African communitarian attitudes and beliefs. Figure 7 demonstrates how these concepts were interlinked.

Figure 6.1: The design and implementation of employee performance management and control at PAL



Source: *Developed by author, 2015*

The dotted line in the figure demonstrates the minimal influence that formally designed guidelines had on day-to-day practice, while the downward arrow on the left demonstrates that these formal guidelines were founded on ‘Western’ management theory. On the other hand, the bold upward arrow shows the significant influence of manager-employee informal relationships on the practice of employee performance management and control. These relationships were founded on shared African communitarian beliefs and values.

The influence of informal community characteristics like those observed at PAL may make understanding and applying ‘textbook’ and formal principles of employee performance management and control more

difficult. The social behaviours and informal conduct of individuals and groups at work all seemed to impact the work structures, organisation and general work environment at PAL. However, although HRM principles are intended to produce a positive working climate (Armstrong, 2006), a number of authors (e.g. Kamoche, 1992; Munene, 1991; Gbadamosi, 2003) have suggested that most HRM models tend to focus on individualistic rather than collective practice.

One reflection might be that although 'Western'-rooted management thought would regard the workers in PAL as subverting the rules, the collusion between colleagues and supervisors to allow 'team spirit' to influence practice actually enabled employees to perform better. This might have implications for practice, as will be discussed in Chapter 7. These findings also relate to post-bureaucratic management literature (Whyte in Kunda, 1992; Johnson and Duberley, 2011), which critiques the assumption that 'expert' regulation of culture management practices provides a more efficient alternative to the limitations of bureaucratic work. This research reveals that managerial attempts to regulate culture alone may not be enough to improve organisational efficiency in Africa-based organisations, given that managers' and employees' work behaviour is likely to be determined by social values and beliefs that do not necessarily align with the organisation's formal, recognised values.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

7.0 OVERVIEW

This chapter summarises the aims and objectives of this study and explains how they have been met. It then shows how the findings advance our knowledge in the field of organisational behaviour, and how the study contributes to our understanding of the issues surrounding management research in Africa. It discusses how the study's findings might be applied to other social settings and how they might inform the practice of employee performance management and control at PAL and similar organisations. The chapter then reflects on the research process and acknowledges some of the limitations arising from the study design. The last section describes how this research could be developed and extended further.

7.1 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The overall aim of this study was to identify and critique how employee performance management and control is designed and applied in a development organisation in Uganda, and how employees respond. To achieve this, four specific objectives were set out.

Firstly, the study aimed assessing existing knowledge on models of employee performance management and control: 1) to provide the historical background to the topic, 2) to highlight relevant theories about controlling employee work behaviour and 3) to draw attention to contemporary debates on management in Africa.

The review of organisational behaviour literature revealed a wide range of theories on the management of work processes and employee behaviour. Gouldner (1954) and Edward (1979) provide useful explanations of the forms of control used within British small firms in the early years. These generally depended on informal social relations and traditional work practices, though they varied in approach from those that sought objective, orderly, predictable and efficient ways of controlling people (Taylor, 1911;

Fayol, 1916; Ford, the 1920s; Weber, 1930; Edwards, 1979; Littler, 1982; Ritzer, 2004) to those that took account of the ‘humanness’ of employees and the subjective social influences on employee work behaviour and performance (Mayo, 1927; Maslow, 1943; McGregor, 1960; Vroom, 1964). More recent literature specifically highlights that managers need to make use of the external labour market trends and also be able to take charge of the organisation’s internal social systems, including organisational culture in order to manage employee performance (Verkerk, 1990; Kunda, 1992; Kalleberg, 2000; 2009).

The debates in the ‘Western’-rooted body of literature seem to imply that managers are in sole charge and should steer and control all aspects of organisational behaviour, while employees merely submit to being managed. This study found that employees’ dynamic and informal relationships with their colleagues and managers at PAL made them active participants, rather than a resource whose work behaviour needed to be managed or controlled. The values and norms that drove this work behaviour were not dictated by management but arose naturally out of the informal solidaristic and communitarian social values held generally by managers and employees.

The study provides further confirmation that current theories on organisational behaviour are misguided in their assumption that they are universally applicable, despite being largely based on ‘Western’ organisations and contexts. This criticism has prompted a number of studies on management in Africa, which have sought to understand organisational processes and people management in contemporary Africa-based organisations. This body of literature has laboured to point out the unsuitability of ‘Western management’ thought to the African context (Nzelibe, 1986; Mamdani, 2011; Kamoche *et al.*, 2004), but it has not attempted to explore what contribution (if any) Western-designed models are making to the management of contemporary organisations in Africa, or what other options are available. Neither hybridisation nor use of purely indigenous approaches has been tested empirically. The unsuitability problem could be resolved by acknowledging the role that each management approach plays in the day-to-day running of an Africa-based organisation. Commitment to doing it one way (Western or African) may not provide the desired level of

organisational efficiency, but this is not the main argument of those advocating hybridisation (e.g. Nyambegera, 2002). These authors, who are continuing the discussion about what management should do, advocate designing management systems that incorporate African approaches into 'Western' styles of management. However, this study found that in PAL, the two approaches remained distinct rather than being fully integrated; while the 'Western'-rooted guidelines were applied at the design stage, African communitarian values influenced the implementation stage.

The second objective was to describe, compare and contrast the espoused forms of employee performance management and control and the theories in use within PAL. This was intended to give an understanding of the unique processes surrounding the design and application of employee performance management and control in an African organisational context. The study revealed that the design of formal, paper-based guidelines and rules reflected bureaucratic approaches to planning, organising, controlling and leading organisations. Such structured and predictable processes are associated with 'Western management' thought in this thesis. The literature on management in Africa posits that these ideas were imported into Africa through Western colonial influence (Budhwar and Debrah, 2001; Arthur Jr *et al.*, 2003), and that the West continues to exert an influence through the education system and political partnerships (Prasad, 2003; Kanungo and Jaeger, 1990; Mamdani, 2011). However, although this study found evidence of the influence of 'Western management' thought on the management approach at PAL, it also found that bureaucratic, formal guidelines did not necessarily dominate day-to-day practice (see Figure 8 above on the influences of the design and implementation of employee performance management and control at PAL). The actions and attitudes of both managers and employees in day-to-day practice were instead dependent on their informal relationships. There was a greater inclination to do what workers (rather than formal systems or structures) supported and valued.

Thirdly, this study set out to describe and explain employee behavioural responses to institutionalised, formal models of employee performance management and control, taking account of informal processes and the social negotiation of control. This was intended to give an

understanding of employees' perspectives, how they respond to managers' attempts to control their work behaviour, and how African culture shapes these perspectives and behavioural responses.

(Thesis correction number 4)

This objective was set against the background of evidence that has suggested that the nature of the work and institutions can influence an employee's behavioural responses to management's attempts to control employee performance (Thompson and McHugh, 1995). More specifically, some studies have asserted that due to the nature of scientists' work, they are reluctant to accept management's scrutiny and control at a strategic level (Cohen, Duberley, and McAuley, 1999; Mallon, Duberley, and Cohen, 2005). This study moves this body of knowledge further forward since it sheds light on employees' behavioural responses to management's attempts to control their day-to-day activities at a micro-level, irrespective of whether their work is public or commercial.

The findings of this study have also shown that day-to-day work behaviour at PAL was influenced by traditional African values and beliefs as well as formal 'Western'-rooted guidelines and rules. For example, collectivism and informal interpersonal relationships between managers and employees influenced the processes of day-to-day planning, implementation, evaluation and reward for outstanding performance. Although the employees acknowledged that there was a formal process that was meant to guide their work behaviour, there was no evidence of dutiful adherence to this formal structure in the day-to-day execution of their activities. Instead, there was a conscious commitment among managers and employees to remain loyal to the belief that *umntu ngumntu ngabanye* [a person is a person through others]. The relationships between managers and employees were characterised by mutual respect. This also meant that managers were willing to condone behaviour that was rule breaking as long as it appeared 'acceptable'. In other words, long established informal norms were not contravened to comply with formal guidelines. Gouldner's (1945) study in Britain revealed similar tendencies of worker-manager close informal ties that led to a situation where mutual agreements were made between workers and supervisors not to follow certain formal rules. PAL however was different from the small gypsum

factory where Gouldner carried out his research, in terms of size and operation and context.

Although African collectivism influenced the day-to-day actions of both employees and managers at PAL, these actions were also guided by 'Western'-based formal guidelines which were used as reference points, particularly when a decision was disputed or when technical problems arose. 'Western' management thought was thus the foundation of the formal, paper-based guidelines for employee performance management and control at PAL, but was influenced by collective norms. Thus, the organisation did not only use indigenous management practices. Therefore, this study provides a more nuanced understanding of how 'Western' guidelines influenced management practice.

7.2 CONTRIBUTIONS TO KNOWLEDGE

This research contributes to management in Africa research in three ways. Firstly, it reveals that the formal process of designing employee performance management and control guidelines is driven by factors different from those that drive their day-to-day implementation. Secondly, it highlights the value managers and employees put on each other as human beings, with the result that work behaviour is dependent on informal social relationships. The last contribution is methodological. These issues are explained further below.

Firstly, the empirical findings in this study give new insights into how work processes are managed and employee behaviour is directed in an Africa-based organisation. The thesis advances knowledge by showing the difference between how guidelines for controlling and directing employee behaviour are designed and how they are implemented. 'Western' management models generally take an objective, individualistic, top-down approach to controlling and guiding employee work performance (Armstrong, 2006) and tend to place a premium on rationality and efficiency (Ritzer, 2004; 2008). The literature suggests that organisational efficiency depends on managers' ability to develop a calculated approach to all aspects of employee performance management, including directing employee interpersonal relationships, work culture and motivation at work (Kunda, 1992). Some authors have also argued

that managers can utilise precarious work conditions and uncertainty in the labour market to control and direct employees' work behaviour (Kalleberg, 2000; 2009). Although Africa-based organisations may find such approaches to management useful when designing performance management guidelines, they will find that traditional communitarian values supersede these formal guidelines in day-to-day practice. 'Western'-based ideologies were helpful and followed at PAL during periodic planning and in the performance evaluation of individual employees. The formal guidelines were also a reference point when there was uncertainty or when decisions were being disputed. However, the day-to-day practice and actions (i.e. implementation) were based on the traditional values and beliefs shared by managers and employees. This research thus clarifies the two distinct influences of 'Western' management theory and traditional African norms on the design and implementation of management practice in an Africa-based organisation.

This research also extends our knowledge of organisational behaviour by providing insights into the employees' perspectives and their behavioural responses to managers' attempts to control their work behaviour. McGregor (1960) suggests that managers' assumptions about workers determine their choice of management approach and consequent employee behaviour. Elaborating on McGregor's theory, Thompson and McHugh (2009) explain that managers who hold Theory X views hold assumptions about workers that lead them to use coercive behaviour, causing employees to actually take on Theory X characteristics. Likewise, Theory Y assumptions on the part of the manager will produce Y-type behaviour in both managers and workers. However, this research shows that besides managers' assumptions about employees, the workers' behavioural responses resulted from the value they put on their informal relationships with each other, and not merely what managers assumed about them.

Finally, this study provides insights into the process of collecting and analysing management in Africa data reflexively. Qualitative methodology literature helpfully brings to the attention of ethnography researchers the inevitability of reactivity (Gill and Johnson, 2010; Johnson and Duberley, 2003), warning that the character of data may be affected by factors such as the sensitivity of the research participants, the researcher's own personality

and attitudes and the quality of researcher-participant interaction. Some studies also provide helpful guidelines and cautions about collecting and analysing data from less developed countries; Scott *et al.* (2006) and Bennett (1986), for example, provide information on the various intercultural and ethical aspects as well as dilemmas (Lunn, 2014) involved in doing research in less developed countries. However, no one has yet identified the specific contextual issues that affect the quality of ethnographic data collected in Africa-based organisations. The methodological contribution made by this study is that it highlights that:

1. Management academics and students embarking on management research in Africa may find the quality of their data tainted by theoretical philosophies acquired from formal, Western-rooted management training and education acquired in Africa or abroad.
2. Research participants in Africa-based organisations may respond suspiciously to researchers (native Africans or ‘Western’ nationals) who have lived outside of Africa for a significant period of time.

The management theory I learned in my formal education at graduate and postgraduate levels influenced the collection and analysis of data in this research in unexpected ways. Participants’ reactions to the fact that I had lived in Europe for a reasonable amount of time was beyond the generic theoretical anticipations of activities associated with ethnography. The details of this contribution to methodology are elaborated further in section 7.5.

7.3 IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

PAL and NARO managers generally created an enabling environment for employees to participate in decision making, giving them autonomy to decide not only how tasks were done but also what should be done. However, these institutions may still draw lessons from this research about the significance of traditional values and beliefs in determining individual, group or even organisational processes and work behaviour. Top management at PAL expressed the view that its research scientists (who were required to lead project teams) needed formal management training in order to enhance their project management skills. Indeed, some had already been enrolled on part-

time postgraduate short courses in management at the Uganda Management Institute. This may be helpful in enhancing the management skills of PAL's scientists, most of whom have had no formal management training, but as Wiegratz (2009) points out, management training in Uganda is largely based on a 'Western' curriculum. This means that the scientists are likely to be exposed to 'Western' ideologies and literature on project management. And yet, as this research shows, traditional values and beliefs were the drivers of day-to-day decisions at PAL, not 'Western' management principles. The findings of this study may make managers at PAL (and similar organisations) more aware of the potential problems that can be caused by assuming that: 'It is the best because it originates from the West' and make them think twice about dismissing indigenous values that may foster corporate wellbeing.

The second implication of the research is educational. The government of Uganda has over the years made various attempts to overcome the challenges of poverty and unstable economic growth. The focus has primarily been on high-level approaches including macro-economic structural reforms such as trade liberalisation, privatisation, increased public spending and the establishment of an Inspectorate of Government to check corruption and the abuse of public office (The National Development Plan, 2010). However, this study addresses an often ignored, yet equally important, factor in Uganda's national development: how employee performance is managed and controlled on a day-to-day basis. Uganda's National Planning Authority may consider adopting strategies to raise awareness and understanding of the role played by traditional values and beliefs in the performance of development organisations within Uganda. This may have implications for curriculum development in the area of human resource management. Uganda's education system has for centuries been dominated by ideas from the colonial era at the expense of traditional ideas (Wiegratz, 2009). There are several reasons why Africa remains one of the world's poorest continents, but an education system that does not serve the needs of society could be one of them (Wiegratz, 2009). It might be helpful to revise the education structures that were designed by colonialists from a different cultural background. Formal management education should be revised to acknowledge the relevance of traditional

values and beliefs, and ‘Western’ practitioners in Africa should be trained to see the importance and benefit of African values.

7.4 REFLECTIONS ON METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

Conducting research in a developing African country is not easy. How does the researcher’s presence affect the character of the data generated, given the highly communal and hospitable nature of the African people? Does he or she fully become ‘one of them’, or fight the temptation and remain an independent researcher? The researcher must address this dilemma whether they are from an advanced economy or from the African country itself.

Two of the most important methodological issues to emerge in this research are mentioned in section 7.2. The conclusion that management researchers in Africa may find the quality of their data tainted by theoretical philosophies acquired from formal ‘Western’ training was the result of my realising that I had unwittingly made assumptions about what motivates employees. At the same time, their responses were influenced by their view of me. (I explain in Chapter 3 the reflexive process that led to this discovery.) These two realisations had implications for the data collection and analysis. Most studies on management in Africa draw on data collected through surveys or interviews conducted with managers. By adopting ethnographic techniques, it was possible to identify what employees thought of me as the researcher, and my own preconceived ideas about their behaviours. I was then able to refine the questions posed to managers and employees during the participant-observation sessions to clarify the participants’ views. Realising that I had brought my own values to the research, I had to guard against any tendency during the data analysis to listen only to what I was expecting to hear; it was important that I listened to what the data were telling me rather than what I was expecting them to tell me.

7.5 LIMITATIONS ARISING FROM THE THESIS

There are potential limitations within this thesis that arise from three aspects of the study design: the characteristics of participants, the case study approach and time frame.

7.5.1 Limitations arising from the type of participants

Although this study explores a social science-related topic, the majority of the participants were agricultural and biological scientists without any management or social science-related training/education. It was assumed that the participants' interpretation of the influences around them determined their actions and behaviour. Arguably, this interpretation, and consequently the findings, may have been significantly different if the participants (especially the managers) were social scientists with management training and had some familiarity with theories on work behaviour. Within the organisation, however, the findings were generally consistent, with the exception of some small differences in how non-scientists were evaluated on their 'conformist' behaviours as well as their actions. The study also involved a few support staff and staff from the human resource department who did have management training and, when the data collected from the core staff were compared to these responses, similar values and beliefs were expressed.

7.5.2 The case study approach

Although this research provides an understanding of the practice of employee performance management and control in an African context, it is not possible to generalise the conclusions drawn from a single case study to other organisations in Uganda and more broadly in Africa. Some aspects of this research, however, resonate with studies carried out elsewhere in Africa. For example, the association between collectivism and African culture has been highlighted in a number of studies carried out in sub-Saharan Africa, and it was evident that employees at PAL valued the group above the individual. Even though the findings of this study may not be generalisable to the management of all Africa-based organisations, it was interesting to note in an East African country aspects of a management concept (Ubuntu) that is commonly associated in the literature with Southern African culture. The findings of this study could thus be transferable to similar social contexts in development organisations in Uganda and elsewhere in Africa.

7.5.3 The time frame

There is no standard or generally agreed period of time that the researcher must spend in the field in order for the study to qualify as an ethnographic study. The question of whether this study counts as an example of ethnographic data collection has been raised at a few academic conferences where this work has been presented. The argument has often been that four months in the field is too short to qualify it as an ethnographic study, and indeed, a longer period of time at PAL would probably have facilitated deeper revelations about the subject.

Nevertheless, most debates on management in Africa have been developed from studies conducted through surveys and interviews with managers. This research is different in that data were collected through participant-observation and interviews to access behavioural data from employees that would have been impossible to capture in a survey. Participant-observation was the main aspect of ethnography during this research.

7.6 DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This research shows that even though Western-rooted management thought provided the framework on which PAL's employee performance management and control guidelines were designed, traditional values and beliefs influenced how these formal guidelines were implemented. Employee performance management and control is a vital facet of management in Africa-based organisations, but similar empirical studies investigating how 'Western management' thought influences other aspects of people management (e.g. recruitment, training, reward, industrial relations and motivation) are also necessary if we are to build a body of theory on management in Africa. More generally, understanding of management in Africa may be enhanced by conducting further empirical studies to explore more deeply the hidden aspects of organisational life.

While reflecting on the applicability of 'Western' management practice, this thesis also raises questions regarding what would happen if 'African' society attained higher levels of economic development and

overcame problems of poverty and inefficient institutions. Would the values of managers and employees in Africa-based organisations change? Studies such as those by Gouldner (1954) show that some organisations in the 'West' exhibited solidaristic, rather than individualistic, work behaviours during the industrial era. What caused the shift to individualism noted by Hofstede, (1980) and subsequent studies? What are the problems that spring from the decline of solidarity in the 'West' and what can Africa learn from this experience? It may be helpful to study the process of change in Africa including the forces and effects of such changes on people management.

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