

**Factors that Relate to Job Satisfaction in Canadian Universities:
An Evaluation of Professional and Managerial Staff Relative to the
University of Northern British Columbia's Exempt Employee Group.**

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ABSTRACT

This project was motivated by the paucity of literature currently available regarding the factors that influence job satisfaction among Canadian university professional and managerial staff. In this study, the different variables that were used to test overall job satisfaction were the following: employee acknowledgement and recognition, employee compensation, the university's performance appraisal program, communication, employee autonomy over their work, employee voice and employment structures. The research concluded that employee compensation and acknowledgement had impacts on overall job satisfaction. The ability to resolve conflict was also mildly supported by the results. The most significant means for conflict resolution for professional and managerial university staff was found to be via negotiation. Employee voice also only had a partial impact on job satisfaction. Also, the ability for employees to be involved in the determination of grade levels was found to be the only aspect of employee voice which directly impacted job satisfaction. Being acknowledged as significant members of the university community and effective communication were similarly important to professional and managerial employees.

Finally, performance appraisal and employment structures (union, non-union or individuals) had no impact on job satisfaction.

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INTRODUCTION

There is a paucity of scholarly literature available on job satisfaction of professional and managerial staff in Canadian universities. There is no peer reviewed documentation on university employee professional and managerial staff unions or non-union groups and job satisfaction.

It is assumed that if employees form an association or union, that these types of structures provide voice in numbers and gives members a better opportunity to express their views, ideas, needs and wants to either their direct supervisor or senior administrators and this in turn will increase job satisfaction. In a unionized environment this may certainly be true as employees are not concerned about job security. Unions typically offer job protection from arbitrary managerial activities. This protection may give employees a stronger sense of security and provide them an opportunity to voice discontent against the employer. The assumption is that associations and unions provide structure and rules of engagement for both the employee and the employer. In most circumstances, these organizations also represent the interests of their membership, and therefore, the association or union can present the ideas of the collective to the senior administrators to initiate change or voice concerns. No one individual member is identified as the source of the idea, rather the idea is taken up by the collective of the group.

If senior administrators view employees as valuable contributors to the institution, they need to take an active role in providing employees an opportunity to express ideas. Creating this type of opportunity can potentially improve

employee performance, which in turn, may increase overall job satisfaction. Essentially by providing employees an opportunity to express their ideas, the message conveyed by senior administrators is that employees are important stakeholders in the organization. Intrinsically this type of acknowledgement improves morale which in turn improves productivity and job satisfaction.

While some Canadian universities have non-unionized professional and/or staff associations, these associations still tend to bargain collectively on behalf of their members. Essentially, in these situations, the association has all the characteristics of a union except they are not certified. For example, in British Columbia, the professional and managerial staff in Simon Fraser University (SFU), the University of British Columbia (UBC) and the Thompson Rivers University (TRU) belong to the Association of Administrative and Professional Staff (AAPS). The AAPS is a provincial body that is involved with non-unionized bargaining between employees and employers. The professional and managerial staff at the University of Victoria (UVic) belongs to the Professional Employees Association (PEA). The PEA is a certified union body which represents the interests of its members like any other certified union does.

The focus of this project is on the interactions of the University of Northern British Columbia's Exempt Employee Group (EEG) with senior University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC) administrators, and how UNBC's EEG counterparts in other Canadian universities are structured, what factors provide the greatest level of job satisfaction and how these employees interact with their senior administrators.

The UNBC EEG consists of professional and managerial staff. There were no other universities who identified their staff as being members of an EEG. Instead they were referred to as the professional and managerial staff. For the purposes of this project, the EEG at UNBC and the professional and managerial staff at other universities were considered peers.

The EEG was formed in 1995, and to date, has maintained its same structure and function. The EEG members had not considered altering their current structure until the recent president joined UNBC. Over time, the EEG has evolved into an ad-hoc union. The main problem is that the EEG does not have any legal bargaining rights and entitlement granted to certified unions. For example, when it was time to discuss the EEG handbook or issues relating to wage and benefits, the EEG has had no power to refuse any compensation package presented to them by the senior administrators.

This project is particularly relevant as it has a direct connection and impact on the existing EEG at UNBC. The project was designed to look at “best practices” in other universities and incorporate the principles that made these practices the best. Best practices were identified as they related to overall job satisfaction by the employees at the University.

The research questions of this project are as follows:

1. Are there different structural forms under which professional and managerial employees in Canadian universities are organized?
2. Do these different structural forms result in greater levels of job satisfaction?

3. Is the UNBC structure optimal to produce high job satisfaction?
4. What are the most significant factors that have the greatest impact on overall job satisfaction for Canadian university professional and managerial employees?

The professional and managerial staff of participating universities were divided into three main categories: (1) unionized, (2) non-union group or (3) independent. Most of the professional and managerial staff that were unionized were called an association despite the fact that they were a certified unionized body and recognized as such by their respective provincial government. The professional and managerial staff that were in non-unionized groups had various names defining who the group was. For example, some were organized as The Management Group in their university and others were denoted as the Professional and Managerial Staff Association. The associations, or groups, were not unionized. Professional and managerial individuals designated as independent and were neither unionized nor members of an association, and therefore, they did not have either any formal organizational structure or affiliation with one another.

The University of Northern British Columbia

The University of Northern British Columbia is a small research intensive university situated in Prince George, British Columbia. The university employs approximately 512 staff and faculty. There are four distinct employee groups at UNBC: (1) the Canadian Union of Public Employees (3799), (2) Exempt Employee Group (EEG), (3) the Faculty and the (4) Deans/Directors Group. The

organizational structure of UNBC is steeply hierarchal. The President is at the top of the hierarchy followed by the Provost, Chief Financial Officer, Vice Provost of Research and Graduate Programs, then the Deans or Directors, Chairs or Exempt employees and by the Faculty and CUPE staff. In this case, the faculty report to the Chair of their respective program and the CUPE staff report to the designated Exempt manager and the reporting proceeds upward to the President as required.

Exempt Employee Group (EEG)

The EEG is a formal advisory body that represents the needs, concerns and terms and conditions of employment of those UNBC employees who are exempt from the membership in the Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 3799 and the UNBC Faculty Association. As per the Labour Relations Board of British Columbia, employees who have access to confidential financial information that can be used in bargaining, or they have the responsibility to hire and fire subordinate staff are, by law, unable to form a certified union. In contrast Larios and Kleiner (2003) define exempt employment based on the hours work and whether or not the employees are compensated for the hours worked beyond their specified work week. Typically, an exempt employee is a salaried employee and they are not normally compensated for any overtime worked.

At UNBC, the members of the EEG belong neither to CUPE, nor Faculty, nor the Deans and Directors. The EEG has benefits and responsibilities which distinguish them from the other UNBC employee groups. For example, regarding benefits an EEG is allotted four weeks of holiday in their first five years of

employment. After five years of service the vacation time increases to five weeks per year. Directors are given five weeks in their first five years of service. CUPE have three weeks of vacation entitlement, which increases to four weeks after their five years of service. With respect to responsibilities, both the EEG and the Directors have the authority to hire and dismiss staff. Even though a CUPE member may be in a position to supervise another CUPE member, they are not given the direct responsibility to hire and fire staff. The sentiment among EEG members is that the group is more closely aligned with the UNBC Directors than any other group on campus. In fact in other universities surveyed, the professional and managerial staff and Directors belong to one employee group.

There are EEG members who have access to confidential financial information. The financial information is used by senior administrators when they negotiate new handbooks and pay increases for UNBC employee groups. This situation puts EEG members in a direct conflict of interest because they are being used by both the senior administrators and the EEG "negotiating" team to discuss pay increases that impact the same group to which they belong.

EEG positions that deal with confidential information pertaining to compensation are the Budget Analyst, Treasury Service Manager and the Manager of Finance. Other positions in the EEG that would deal with confidential information are the Human Resource Advisors, the Executive Assistants to the President, Provost and Vice Provost.

The EEG membership also includes middle managers that supervise CUPE staff. The EEG middle management positions are: the Bookstore Manager, the

Risk and Safety Manager, the Financial Manager, the CSAM Operations Manager, Senior Network Administrator, Counseling Centre Coordinator and the Research Services Manager. There are two distinct groups in the Exempt group the middle managers and the office administrators. There are approximately 36 members in this group. When comparing the UNBC EEG to the professional and managerial employees of other universities, in general, the Executive Assistants were not member of this group but rather had their own group structure. In the universities that had no formal group structure for their professional and managerial staff, the Executive Assistants also remained as individuals in the institution without having a formal group representing their needs. For the purpose of this project, when comparing the UNBC EEG to other institutions, the professional and managerial staff was used.

Exempt Employee Group Structure

The EEG has a President, Vice President and Secretary. These are two year voluntary terms. Despite the fact that the EEG is not unionized, every four years the elected members of the EEG Executive (and other internally appointed delegates) meet with the UNBC Senior Administrators to discuss the terms of their respective handbooks and wage increases. In practice, this is a form of collective bargaining despite the fact that the EEG is not a certified body and has no legal recourse if they disagree with the terms and conditions being presented to them by Senior Administrators. This format of discussion has been problematic in the past because the majority of the EEG executives have reported to the same vice president who was in charge of finalizing the package

for wages, benefits and handbook issues. This caused unease among the EEG and puts them at a disadvantage of having unbiased interactions with the responsible vice president. The ability to discuss issues in good faith is problematic when there are no boundaries established. The primary problem is that Senior UNBC Administrators have inadvertently placed the EEG members in a position where they do not have the option to refuse any offers put forward to them. There is no real purpose to the EEG. The group consists of a mix of employees who are forced together every four years to discuss wages and benefits with the vice president mandated to develop an agreement.

Aside from pseudo-negotiation, there is nothing that ties the group together. This is not to say that members of the group are not collegial with one another. The fact of the matter is that there is not enough cross-over in the day-to-day operations among EEG members to provide group cohesion.

Even in the EEG there is a sentiment that the group membership may need to be re-evaluated. There are two distinct groups, the Executive Assistants and the professional and managerial staff. When it is time to pseudo bargain, the interest of these two groups are not necessarily aligned. For example, the professional and managerial EEG members wished to increase their professional development allocation. The current allocation is \$350 per member, which for some, is not enough money to pay conference dues. In contrast, the Executive Assistants were content with the allocation as it met their needs for any necessary professional development. Some members were willing to accept what ever allocation was provided for professional development while others

were not. This is just one example where the interests of the members are not aligned and the current membership and structure of the EEG may not be able to address these types of inconsistencies. Among the universities interviewed for this project, it was made clear that the Executive Assistants were not considered to be members or a part of the professional and managerial staff.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The following is a review of works that explore some factors which influence employee job satisfaction. The factors were conflict resolution, performance appraisal systems, employee voice, employment structures, compensation, employee rights, employee communication, employee recognition loyalty and autonomy. The theory is that if these factors are present, then employees will have a higher level of job satisfaction possible than if they are not present. For example, if an employer has thorough and fair conflict resolution policies available to professional and managerial staff, these same employees will experience greater levels of job satisfaction knowing that there are fair processes in place.

In order to understand how these factors impact job satisfaction, it is important to first define what is meant by job satisfaction in the context of this paper.

Job Satisfaction

Zellars *et al.* (2001) define job satisfaction as an emotional and cognitive state resulting from evaluating one's task, activity, job or other related experience. Preuss and Lautoch (2002) and Frenkel (2002) conclude that job satisfaction encompasses employee reactions and perception of the nature of their work, pay and promotion and it includes the dynamic of workplace relations in the work environment. In many instances, the work environment is a place where adults can make connections and friendships which add to the fulfillment of their jobs.

Other factors which influence the level of employee job satisfaction were identified by Edgar and Greare's (2005). They found that that job satisfaction was strongly positively correlated with training and development.

Likewise, if employees are able to have greater influence over the direction of their positions and they are requested to contribute in decision-making, these factors also lead to greater job satisfaction (Preuss and Lautoch, 2002). Through the incorporation and implementation of employees' ideas, employees feel as they though are important to the organization. Preuss and Lautoch (2002) also found that when employees' ideas and input was sought, their productivity improved. More satisfied and committed workers are likely to generate better ideas, exert extra effort and ultimately contribute more to firm performance (Preuss and Lautoch, 2002).

Aside from the factors which can positively influence employee job satisfaction, there are also some factors which can negatively impact it. Lack of communication and lack of direction are but a few of these factors. In instances where employees are unsatisfied and have very low job satisfaction, unless the reasons why they feel this way are identified and resolved, the employee is likely to leave the organization or express their displeasure (Janssen *et al.*, 1998). The exit of an employee can be an additional cost to the company as they are then required to train a new employee. The alternative to exit is to provide a work environment where employees are able to express the reasons why they are not satisfied with their jobs. Employee voice is one factor that has a direct impact on job satisfaction.

Employee Voice

Employee voice is a term that is widely used in human resource practice and it originated in Hirschman's 1970 model of exit, voice, neglect and loyalty (Janssen *et al.*, 1998; Dundon *et al.*, 2005). He defined the voice system as any attempt to change an objectionable state of affairs and it generally related to communication from a subordinate towards a supervisor (Janssen *et al.*, 1998). Typically there are two elements that make up employee voice: (1) expression by employees to management regarding their complaints in a work-related context and (2) it involves the employees in the decision-making process and is referred to as participative management (McCabe and Rabil, 2002).

The ways in which employees feel that they can contribute to the employer is a critical factor in determining the effectiveness of employee voice. Luchak (2003) suggests that there are two different types of employee voice: (1) direct voice (which is more flexible and provides the parties with an opportunity to address problems before they escalate into disputes) and (2) representative voice (which is more structural and issue orientated and addresses problems after a dispute has been defined). The notion is that whichever form of voice is utilized, it has a direct impact on job satisfaction. Hagedoorn *et al.* (1999) suggested that the typical employees who use employee voice are those employees who have either negative or positive job satisfaction. In other words, employees want the right to provide their ideas and opinions regardless of job satisfaction. In contrast to Hagedoorn *et al.*'s (1999) findings, Spencer (1986) suggested that if a company had a mechanism for employee voice to be

expressed, production increased due to the fact that job satisfaction is also increased.

Employee voice is needed if employees are considered to be important stakeholders by management and it needs to be viewed as an opportunity to improve the overall organization. If this is the case, management needs to have accurate information about the employees and provide the employees a safe atmosphere to express either negative or positive voice regarding work operations without fear of retribution.

Typically in an effective system, voice is not filtered through layers of management. The objective for representative voice is to create a flatter and more transparent system for employees to express their concerns to those individuals who can make the necessary changes (Dundon *et al.*, 2005).

If senior university administrators are interested in hearing the voice of subordinates, the challenge is to devise a system in which voice can be heard throughout the organization and at the appropriate levels where effective changes can be made. The goal of employee voice is to make an impact and change the existing structure of the work place in order to increase employee job satisfaction.

Hypothesis one: Professional and managerial employees of Canadian universities will have greater job satisfaction if they have an opportunity to voice their opinion, ideas and unhappiness in the organization.

Employee Structures

There are three different kinds of employee structures that will be considered for this project. The three different structures are: unions, non-unions and individuals. Canadian university professional and managerial employees are generally classified into one of these three different employee structures. There was no literature discussing the relationship between job satisfaction and individualization. For the purposes of this project, non-union employee structures are considered associations.

Unions

There are a number of different studies over the past twenty years that have shown that unions reduce job satisfaction (Gordon and Densi, 1995). It is not atypical for union workers to have poorer work environment making union jobs inherently more unpleasant than non-union jobs. Working conditions directly impacts the level of job satisfaction. Gordon and Densi (1995) suggested that if there are improved working conditions then the job satisfaction increased.

Gordon and Densi (1995) also found that union members expressed greater dissatisfaction with their jobs than did non-union workers, but were less inclined to quit those jobs. The reason for this may be that they were unable to find work of comparable salary in a non-unionized environment.

Also, the expression of job dissatisfaction may be correlated with the job security and permit members to readily to speak out against adverse working conditions. In contrast to what Gordon and Densi (1995) reported, Renaud (2002) found that the negative relationship between union status and job satisfaction disappeared when an adequate control for working conditions was

applied. Perhaps the relationship and job satisfaction is more complicated than previously thought and provided that all working conditions are equal between unionized and non-unionized employees there is no difference in job satisfaction and employee structure.

Associations

Associations provide various services (e.g. social and professional) to their members (Viswesvaran and Desphande, 1998). They are a formal non-unionized employee group. Although the literature suggests that employee associations do not bargain (Ichniowski and Zax, 1990), this is not necessarily the case. For example, at UBC and SFU the supervisory staff are represented by an employee association the AAPS. The senior administrators of UBC and SFU have entered into legal agreements that acknowledge the rights of the AAPS to exist. The AAPS covers many different areas similar to a collective agreement such as: grievance procedures and collective bargaining. Due to the confidential nature of their work, neither the SFU nor the UBC AAPS have Executive Administrative staff in its membership. The employee associations at these universities do bargain collectively with senior administrators

Job satisfaction may be due to the fact that employees feel a connection to the larger body and enjoy being a part of an organization. For example, in Ontario, all of the university associations meet once a year for a conference. This provides association members an opportunity to socialize and make connections with peers around the province. At this point in time there has been no impetus for UNBC's EEG to form an association. Employees are already

affiliated with one another through the mere fact that they belong to the same employee group.

Hypothesis two: Professional Canadian university employees who belong to associations will have the greatest amount of job satisfaction, followed by unionized employees and finally individual employees.

Conflict Resolution

There are many different forms of conflict resolution which can be implemented in the work environment. These forms of resolution can be either formal or informal processes. The impact of not dealing with conflict in the work environment can directly decrease the level of job satisfaction and negatively impact employee health (Zellars *et al.*, 2001). The organization as a whole will suffer when there is unresolved conflict. The procedures that are established by the employer need to be viewed as being fair and impartial. If employees know that there is a judicious process in place for them to utilize they are more likely to both use it and have increased satisfaction in their jobs (Virovere *et al.*, 2002).

Some of the formal ways conflict is resolved is through any one of the following: grievance procedures, arbitration, mediation, negotiation, through the use of an Ombudsman and the establishment of formal procedures and policies contained in employee handbooks, collective agreements or policy manuals (McCabe and Lewin, 1992). Employee wellbeing and overall job satisfaction can be used by senior managers as a measure of the efficacy for the conflict resolution procedures that are in place (Edgar and Geare, 2005).

Colvin (2002) found that job satisfaction in employees increased when there were fair conflict resolution processes available for employees. He also found that greater employee involvement was associated with a decrease in workplace conflict.

The informal conflict processes should not be underestimated. With an open-door policy, the idea is to encourage employees to talk about frustrations in informal settings. The aim is to improve communication between subordinates and supervisors and to resolve employee complaints without damaging the relationship of the employee. In its proper perspective, an open-door policy is one of management's tools for maintaining morale and organizational justice. Open-door policies are standard supervisory procedures that incorporate chain-of-command steps whereby employees complain first to their immediate supervisors, possibly proceeding with one or two hierarchical steps to resolve complaints (Harlos, 2001). A formal process is not always required. The open-door policy provides the informal mechanism to resolve conflicts amicably which can in-turn directly impact the job satisfaction of the employee seeking the resolution.

Hypothesis three: Universities that have conflict resolution procedures will have more satisfied professional and managerial employees.

Compensation

There are direct connections between the level of compensation earned by an employee and the level of job satisfaction they have. Compensation is considered at two different levels: internal and external. Igalens and Roussel

(1999) found that the more employees are satisfied with the internal equity of their pay, the more they tend to be satisfied with their jobs. In the same study, Igalens and Roussel found some interesting information regarding the external pay compensation and job satisfaction among exempt employees. They discovered that the more employees feel that they were treated fairly, compared to other employees outside their organization, the more they are satisfied with regards to their job. This is an interesting concept and begs the questions whether or not the employees are already paid on par with peers externally. The sentiment among most Canadian universities who participated in this study is that their income is below their peers in both other public and private sector organizations.

Igalens and Roussel concluded that compensation, in the form of benefits, neither increased nor decreased overall levels of job satisfaction. They speculated that benefits (insurance coverage, complimentary pension plan, employ welfare programs and recreational opportunities) were considered a right; and therefore, were not considered by employees to be a part of the overall compensation received by the employees. Merit pay, as a part of compensation, is directly linked to performance appraisal and will be considered in the next portion of the literature review.

Hypothesis four: Employees who believe that they are being compensated fairly will have greater job satisfaction than those who do not.

Performance Appraisal

There was mixed findings in the literature regarding the effectiveness of performance appraisal programs and the connection with job satisfaction. Much of the literature suggests that it is not the performance appraisal itself, rather, it is how they are implemented which impacts an employees' level of job satisfaction. For example, Ndambakuwa and Mufundu (2006) found that when the University of Zimbabwe implemented a performance appraisal system, employee (both faculty and staff) levels of job satisfaction and performance decreased by half. Part of the problem was that managers and administrators were not prepared to properly administer the appraisal and the lack of their preparation directly impacted the level of employee job satisfaction. They did find that a successful performance appraisal system does lead to increased job satisfaction among staff as it provides them an opportunity to evaluate and develop both the organization and themselves as individuals.

Pettijohn *et al* (2001), found that employees experience the greatest level of job satisfaction when they understand the criteria used, agree with the criteria and believe that the appraisal process is fair. Having a fair process is particularly important as it relates to merit and the compensation levels of employees. Eskew *et al* (1996) concluded that successfulness of merit pay plan is dependent upon a clearly perceived link between pay and performance and the perceived fairness of the procedures used.

Other criteria that were discovered to be important in the performance appraisal process were the opportunity for the subordinates to participate during their evaluation and be directly involved with career discussions (Nathan *et al*,

1991). Typically, performance appraisals are seen as an opportunity for employees to have input into the direction of their careers and make their supervisors aware of any intended progression in the organization. It is also a chance for supervisors to assist subordinates in attaining these goals.

Hypothesis five: Canadian universities that have a well established performance appraisal process which clearly defines the goals and objectives will have more satisfied employees than employees of universities that do not have such a system in place.

Communication

Baird *et al.*, (1978) have concluded that the single most influential factor in enhancing job satisfaction is superior-subordinate communication. They found that it makes no difference what the supervisor says, so long as he or she says something. If supervisors and subordinates are unable to communicate effectively with each other, it will be very difficult for work objectives to be met and for the supervisor to understand the career goals of the subordinates.

Along the same lines as Baird *et al.*, Ilozor *et al.* (2001) also conclude that reduced communication in the workplace reduced job satisfaction and sometimes leads to employees leaving their jobs out of sheer frustration. They suggested a number of strategies in which management can implement to increase overall job satisfaction among employees are to do the following: clearly communicate job responsibilities, clearly communicate goals and objectives, clearly communicate deadlines and job expectations and speak freely and regularly with employees.

Effective communication can not be underestimated. Employees benefit from having clear direction and being made aware of the expectations that are required of them. Communication, like voice, is an opportunity for conflicts to be resolved, ideas to be explored and direction to be given. Without having effective means to communicate, according to the research the worst case scenario is realized, and that is employee exodus from the organization. In order to avoid such a scenario from occurring, employees need to have a work environment that supports on going dialogue and communication throughout all levels of the organization.

Hypothesis six: Canadian universities with effective communication between supervisors and subordinates will have more satisfied professional and managerial employees than employees of those universities that do not have established communication.

Recognition

Formal recognition programs such as employee of the month and attendance awards no longer work. Nelson (2004) surmises that the days of infrequent recognition by using the types of awards previously mentioned are ineffective and employees need to be recognized on a continuous basis. The recognition does not need to occur through formal processes but is just as effective if it is done sincerely and wholeheartedly. Congratulating an employee and thanking them for the contributions they have made to the workplace is seen by employees as being a more meaningful form of recognition. Kudos can be given in person or through the use of email. The form of recognition, Nelson

suggests, is not as significant as that the acknowledgement is made. The fact that the employees are trusted and respected is the type of recognition they seek in order to improve their job satisfaction (Nelson, 2004).

Other ways to provide employees recognition is by giving them the autonomy and authority to make their own decisions regarding how best to do their work. Autonomy will be discussed in the last part of this section. Supervisors need to permit subordinates to pursue ideas that they might have for improving things at work and giving them a choice of work assignments. Providing employees a choice of work assignments may not be feasible in all situations, or something that can be done all of the time; however, it is viewed by employees as a form of recognition by acknowledging the good work they have done and permitting them to do something of interest.

If however, an employer does decide to implement formal recognition, in order to make it meaningful to employees and increase the job satisfaction, the objectives for the reward need to be clearly stated, the reward needs to be equitable and achievable for everyone and the organization needs to use a quantitative form of evaluation so that each of the criteria can be measured fairly (Gryna, 1992).

Hypothesis seven: Professional and managerial staff who are recognized for their work will have greater job satisfaction than employees who go unrecognized.

Workplace Autonomy

There was little information on autonomy and the impact it has on job satisfaction. However, Daniels and Bailey (1999) did find that individuals who participate in decision-making are able to influence their working environment and had direct benefits of increased job satisfaction. Daniels and Bailey's research finding support the findings by Nelson (2004), in which rewarding employees by giving them more autonomy in their jobs helps to motivate and provide employees with greater satisfaction. The same can be said about enabling employees to participate in the decision-making process. Providing employees an opportunity to voice their opinions and giving them a say in decisions can give employees a positive feeling about their jobs.

Hypothesis eight: Professional and managerial employees who maintain greater autonomy and decision-making power over their work environment will have greater job satisfaction than peers at other universities who do not have the same opportunities.

METHODS

The lack of previous information on the factors that influence job satisfaction among Canadian university professional and managerial staff necessitated an exploratory research design. Individual employee representatives from the professional and managerial staff groups were contacted in each of 49 Canadian universities. Contact information was sought from the universities web page. If information was not readily available on the webpage, or if it was difficult to find, an employee in Human Resources was contacted to provide further direction. A contact name was requested for the specified group of interest which most resembled UNBC's EEG members. A description of the EEG detailing who the group was and the type of positions in the group was provided. In instances where employees were not organized into a distinct group, the Human Resources Director was interviewed on behalf of these employees. Upon identification of an individual contact in the university, the representative was contacted by phone and asked if they would be interested in participating in the study. A future meeting time was set. Prior to the interview the consent form and project description were sent via email. The survey was performed via telephone interview. There were instances when participants requested the survey to be forwarded to them via email. The respondents sent the survey back via facsimile or mail.

The survey focused on nine main factors that influenced overall job satisfaction. The survey is provided in Appendix One. The factors and questions under investigation were conflict resolution, performance appraisal and job

evaluation, employee voice, employment structure, employee compensation, employee rights, communication, recognition and acknowledgement, and autonomy. The questionnaire was designed to provide yes or no answers and gave an opportunity for respondents to further describe details about specific procedures.

RESULTS

As my sample size was small there was a concern that the small size would preclude the statistical program from finding significant differences. As a result, a 90% confidence limit was used for this project with a probability of 0.1 to indicate significant relationships.

There were three distinct structures of professional and management staff in the universities: union, non-union group and individuals (neither union nor group). Table 1 is a summary of the professional and managerial staff structures in each university that participated in the study.

Table 1
Employee structures for each university participant

Employee Structure	Number of universities
Union	6
Non-union Group	23
Individuals (neither union nor grouped).	13

Out of the 42 universities that were included in this study, only 14% of them had unionized professional and managerial staff. Non-unionized groups were the highest affiliation of employees with 55% of the participating universities falling into this category. The final category was individual representation in which there were 31% of the universities had professional and managerial staff.

A Kruskal-Wallis test was used to test the hypotheses in Table 2.

Table 2.
Summary of Hypotheses tested by using the Kruskal-Wallis test and the Pearson Correlation.

Hypothesis Number	Hypothesis Defined
One	Professional and managerial employees of Canadian universities will have greater job satisfaction if they have an opportunity to voice their opinion, ideas and unhappiness in the organization.
Two	Professional Canadian university employees who belong to associations will have the greatest amount of job satisfaction, followed by unionized employees and finally individual employees.
Three	Universities that have conflict resolution procedures will have more satisfied professional and managerial employees.
Four	Employees who believe that they are being compensated fairly will have greater job satisfaction than those who do not.
Five	Canadian universities that have a well established performance appraisal process which clearly defines the goals and objectives will have more satisfied employees than employees of universities that do not have access such a system in place.
Six	Canadian universities with effective communication between supervisors and subordinates will have more satisfied professional and managerial employees than employees of those universities that do not have established communication.

Table 3 is a summary of these results.

Table 3.

Kruskal-Wallis Test Used to Compare Factors and Overall Job Satisfaction among Professional and Managerial Employees of Canadian Universities.

Grouping Variable	Group	N	Mean Rank	Chi Square	df	Asymp. Sig.
1. Negotiate wages and benefits	No	8	16.31	0.320	1	0.572
	Yes	21	14.50			
2. Negotiate rules and working conditions	No	6	13.33	0.353	1	0.552
	Yes	23	15.43			
3. Represent employees regarding complaints	No	13	14.77	0.021	1	0.885
	Yes	16	15.19			
4. Formal document specifying rights of the members	No	3	21.00	2.203	1	0.155
	Yes	26	14.31			
5. Document subject to negotiations	No	7	17.71	1.142	1	0.285
	Yes	22	14.14			
6. Employees represented on influential university committees	No	5	19.70	2.242	1	0.134
	Yes	24	14.02			
7. Have a say in position descriptions	No	12	14.42	0.117	1	0.734
	Yes	17	15.41			
8. Have a say in the grade level of the positions	No	13	11.65	4.431	1	0.035
	Yes	16	17.72			
9. Negotiate performance incentives for these employees	No	9	15.22	0.011	1	0.917
	Yes	20	14.90			
10. Represent employees in any other way	No	8	15.56	0.059	1	0.809
	Yes	21	14.79			
11. Individuals can negotiate salary	No	13	21.85	0.126	1	0.723
	Yes	28	20.61			
12. University has a grievance/complaint procedure	No	14	25.11	2.370	1	0.124
	Yes	28	19.70			
13. Employees have an influence in the job evaluation	No	9	21.39	0.001	1	0.972
	Yes	33	21.53			
14. Performance appraisal for development	No	13	21.31	0.023	1	0.897
	Yes	28	20.86			
15. Performance appraisal for wage increase	No	19	22.82	0.521	1	0.470
	Yes	23	20.41			
16. Internal Pay Equity	No	7	12.57	4.868	1	0.027
	Yes	33	22.18			
17. External Pay Equity	No	20	14.70	5.510	1	0.019
	Yes	14	21.50			
18. Overall wage satisfaction	No	5	11.80	5.840	1	0.016
	Yes	33	20.67			
19. University has effective communication	No	17	15.50	3.942	1	0.047
	Yes	22	23.48			

Table 3. continued
Kruskal-Wallis Test Used to Compare Factors and Overall Job Satisfaction
among Professional and Managerial Employees of Canadian Universities.

Grouping Variable	Group	N	Mean Rank	Chi Square	df	Asymp. Sig.
20. Access to mediation	No	11	21.91	0.000	1	0.987
	Yes	30	20.67			
21. Access to negotiation	No	16	24.66	2.363	1	0.024
	Yes	25	18.66			
22. Access to arbitration	No	27	22.57	1.413	1	0.234
	Yes	14	17.96			
23. Good work is acknowledged	No	12	13.58	1.829	1	0.176
	Yes	20	18.25			
24. University supports career development	No	5	10.60	7.126	1	0.008
	Yes	36	22.44			
25. University supports professional training	No	7	15.57	3.348	1	0.067
	Yes	34	22.12			
26. Overall job satisfaction based on employment structure	Union	6	17.50	1.425	2	0.490
	Non-union	23	21.26			
	individual	13	23.77			

Hypothesis one was tested by considering the difference in job satisfaction between those who said yes and those who said no on variables 6, 7, 8 and 13. Respectively variables 6, 7, 8 and 13 are as follows: employees are represented on influential university committees, group has a say in positions descriptions, group has a say in the grade level of a position and employees have an influence in the evaluation of their job. The ability to represent employees on university committees had no difference on overall job satisfaction ($X^2= 2.24$, $p=0.13$). Likewise questions 7 and 13 had no difference on job satisfaction with the following test results observed respectively (variable 7: $X^2=0.12$, $p=0.73$; variable 13: $X^2= 0.00$, $p= 0.97$).

The final factor tested for hypothesis one was the ability for professional and managerial employees to be involved with determining their grade levels. The results from Table 3 indicate there was a difference in overall job satisfaction for those employees who were permitted to offer feedback and be directly involved in the determination of their grade level ($\chi^2 = 4.431$, $p = 0.035$). Therefore, hypothesis one was partially supported.

Hypothesis two, if employees belong to an association they will have a higher level of job satisfaction, was rejected. Variable 26 tested the types of employee structures, association, union and individual employee representation against job satisfaction. The outcome was that no one type of employee structure was favourable over another ($\chi^2 = 1.425$, $p = 0.490$).

Variables 4 (formal document specifying rights of members; $\chi^2 = 2.203$; $p = 0.155$), 12 (university has a grievance/complaint procedure; $\chi^2 = 2.37$; $p = 0.12$), 20 (access to mediation; $\chi^2 = 0.00$; $p = 0.99$), 21 (access to negotiation, $\chi^2 = 2.36$, $p = 0.02$) and 22 (access to mediation, $\chi^2 = 1.83$, $p = 0.18$) were used to determine whether respondents who answered yes or no had greater levels of job satisfaction or not. Hypothesis three stated that universities that have conflict resolution procedures will have more satisfied professional and managerial employees. According to the results, hypothesis three is only partially supported by employees who have access to negotiation and those employees who do not.

Hypothesis four stated that employees who believe that they are being compensated fairly will have greater job satisfaction than those who do not. Compensation included wages and benefits. Aside from typical benefits one

might consider (e.g. extended health and dental), benefits also included training and career development. Career development was distinguished separately from professional training. Where professional training was defined as the ability to attend conferences or specialty seminars, career development was considered to be degrees, university courses, diplomas or certification. Hypothesis four was tested by considering the difference in job satisfaction between those participants who responded yes and no to the following variables: 1, 9, 11, 16, 17, 18, 24 and 25. Variable 1 was the group negotiates wages and benefits. This did not appear to influence employee job satisfaction ($\chi^2 = 0.32$, $p = 0.57$). Likewise, variables 9 and 11 also did not support the hypothesis. Variable 9, the group can negotiate performance incentives ($\chi^2 = 0.01$, $p = 0.92$), and variable 11, individuals can negotiate their own salary ($\chi^2 = 0.53$, $p = 0.72$) did not have a significant impact on job satisfaction between either the yes or no respondents.

The values for the following variables 16 (internal pay equity; $\chi^2 = 4.87$, $p = 0.03$), 17 (external pay equity; $\chi^2 = 5.51$, $p = 0.02$) and 18 (overall wage satisfaction $\chi^2 = 5.84$; $p = 0.02$) were used to determine whether or not compensation influenced overall job satisfaction. These results support the hypothesis that wage compensation has an overall impact on job satisfaction. Variables 24 (university supports career development) and 25 (university supports professional training) were focused on the potential benefits available for university professional and managerial staff. These two variables were used to measure the difference between yes and no respondents and the impact of having the opportunity to obtain career development or professional training has

on job satisfaction. There was a difference in job satisfaction between the yes and no respondents. Those individuals who had worked at a university that supported career development were generally more satisfied than those who did not have it ($X^2 = 7.126$, $p = 0.008$). Factor 25, the university supports training and professional development, ($X^2 = 3.348$, $p = 0.067$) also resulted in higher job satisfaction in individuals who are able to get this form of compensation. Given these results, hypothesis four, employees who feel they are compensated for fairly will have greater job satisfaction was supported.

Hypothesis five stated that Canadian universities that have a well established performance appraisal process, which clearly defines the goals and objectives, will have more satisfied employees than employees of universities that do not have such a system. Variable 14 and 15 were used to determine whether or not universities who had an appraisal process had higher levels of satisfied employees. Variable 14 stated that the performance appraisal is for developmental purposes ($X^2 = 0.02$, $p = 0.90$). Variable 15 states that the performance appraisal system is for wage incentives ($X^2 = 0.52$, $p = 0.47$). Given the results of this survey, hypothesis five was not supported by the research findings.

Hypothesis six stated that Canadian universities with effective communication between supervisors and subordinates will have more satisfied professional and managerial employees than employees of those universities that do not have established communication. Variables used to measure this hypothesis were numbers 19 and 23. The results for variables 19 and 23 were

as follows: variable 19, the university has effective communication in place ($\chi^2=3.942$, $p=0.05$) and variable 26 good work is acknowledged ($\chi^2= 1.829$, $p=0.17$). Hypothesis six was partially supported by the data. Respondents indicated that it was hard for them to comment whether or not good work was acknowledged by supervisors. This may be one reason for the discrepancy in the results.

A Pearson correlation test was used to test the overall job satisfaction of professional and managerial staff and their relationship with senior administrators, the autonomy they believe they have in their work environment and their overall ability to influence change in their work environment.

Hypothesis seven stated that professional and managerial staff that are recognized for their work will have greater job satisfaction than employees who go unrecognized.

Hypothesis eight stated that professional and managerial employees who maintain greater autonomy and decision-making power over their work environment will have greater job satisfaction than peers at other universities who do not have the same opportunities.

Both hypothesis seven and eight were supported by the data presented in Table 4.

Table 4
Pearson Correlation of Factors as related to Overall Job Satisfaction among Canadian University Professional and Managerial Employees.

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Overall Job Satisfaction	3.46	.72							
2. Employees believe they have influence in their work.	3.62	.56	0.47**						
3. Employees believe they influence change in the university.	4.48	.62	0.38*	0.48**					
4. Employees believe their work is considered important by senior managers.	3.65	.78	0.31*	0.45**	0.58**				
5. Employees have a strong emotional attachment to the university.	3.12	.77	-0.03	0.09	0.04	-0.06			
6. University's senior administrators recognize the overall contribution of the group.	3.55	.98	0.40**	0.42**	0.24	0.49**	0.13		
7. The group feels recognized by the senior administrators.	3.63	.70	0.56**	0.46**	0.54**	0.62**	-0.11	0.56**	
8. The senior administrators understand the role of the group and who the group is.	3.08	.31	0.28*	0.00	-0.08	-0.04	0.32	0.36*	0.29*

Note: * means $p < .1$, ** means $p < .05$

The above results suggest that there was a medium positive correlation between employees job satisfaction and the influence employees believe that they have in their work ($r=0.47$, $p=0.002$) and employees also have a medium positive correlation in their ability to make changes in the university ($r=0.38$, $p=0.014$).

There were also positive correlations between employees belief that senior administrators recognize the overall contribution of the group ($r=0.40$, $p=0.008$) and the group feels recognized by senior administrators ($r=0.56$, $p<0.000$).

There was a low positive response for the senior administrations ability to understand the role of the group and who the group is ($r=0.28$, $p=0.075$).

There was no correlation between employees' emotional ties to the university and job satisfaction ($r=-0.03$, $p=87$). Meaning employees could have a high attachment to the university and not be satisfied in their jobs.

DISCUSSION

According to the results from this project, variables that were strongly correlated to overall job satisfaction included items that were directly related to the influence professional and managerial staff have in their job, the impact they may have on the university and that they are acknowledged in some form by senior administrators. The ability of professional and managerial staff to make a difference in the workplace is also considered an important factor and it is strongly correlated with job satisfaction.

Employment Structure

The type of employment structure, as it relates to job satisfaction, does not have a significant importance among the professional and managerial staff in Canadian universities. The structures provided by unions and non-unionized groups may limited the opportunity of individual employees to feel recognized for their unique qualities that they bring to the workplace.

Regardless of whether a university was unionized, associated or had individual representation, the fundamental basics of acknowledgement, recognition and an understanding of who the employees were by senior administrators were the critical factors influencing overall job satisfaction.

Comments received by various participants in this study had a range of comments regarding the structure of their structure in their own university. For example, in British Columbia, there were three universities who belonged to the provincial wide organization Association of Administrative and Professional Staff (AAPS). The senior administrators of these institutions have entered into legal

agreements that acknowledge the rights of the AAPS to exist and the AAPS bodies of the institution are treated more like a union than an association. The AAPS has well defined procedures for both grievance complaints and collective bargaining. The employee associations do bargain collectively with the senior administrators of their respective institutions.

Although the UNBC EEG has been approached by members of the other provincial universities to join the AAPS, at this point in time there has been no impetus for UNBC's EEG to form an association. Employees are already affiliated with one another through the mere fact that they belong to the same employee group.

In Ontario there were a number of participating universities that were part of a provincial wide body, similar to those universities in British Columbia. However, the body in Ontario was very active. They have annual meetings and continuous membership feedback through a monthly newsletter. Perhaps the job satisfaction experienced by the members of this association may be due in part to the fact that employees feel a connection to a larger body and enjoy being involved with a larger organization. The annual meeting provides association members an opportunity to socialize and make connections with peers around the province.

Employee Recognition and Autonomy

Acknowledgement and recognition for this particular group is related to the influence they have in their work, the ability to instill positive change in the university and the overall recognition as a group and less on the individual merits. As suggested by Nelson (2004), one of the ways to recognize the abilities of employees is to provide them with greater autonomy and decision-making responsibility. For the Canadian university and professional managerial staff, being acknowledged as an important administrative layer in the university's operations directly relates to their overall job satisfaction.

On a more formal basis, UNBC does have two awards that are given to staff employees annually. The award is open to both union and non-union staff. One is for innovation and the other is for readiness and eagerness to be of assistance to others.

It is important for the senior administrators to recognize the contribution the group makes to the overall success of the university. The recognition of employee contributions needs to fall outside the formal annual recognition awards. The opportunity to provide day-to-day feedback to those members of the EEG who continue to positively contribute to the success of UNBC is important to building job satisfaction among employees.

Employee Voice

An area of employee voice that significantly impacted overall job satisfaction, as related to employee voice was the ability for employees to have a say in the grade level of their positions. The grade level of the job has a direct relation to the wage of an individual. Some universities permitted the employee

and the supervisor to make a presentation to the Job Evaluation Committee regarding the grade level of the position. The opportunity for employees to speak to this issue had a significant impact on employee job satisfaction. The research from this study indicated that there was significant support between compensation and job satisfaction. The grade level of a position determines the remuneration of an employee, and therefore, it is not surprising to see that these two variables are closely linked to job satisfaction.

Despite the fact that Golan (2005) found that compared to other types of employee structures, unionized employee were more inclined to voice their displeasure in the work environment. The ability of unionized employees to exercise voice may be related to the fact that they do not fear retribution by the employer as they are protected by the union. Perhaps employees who view themselves as being unprotected are more likely to keep quiet about situations which have negatively impacted their job satisfaction. In the comments received by the participants of this study, the preferred method of voice was informal. Many of the participating universities believed that subordinates had close working relationships with supervisors that they could express their opinions and ideas to the supervisor on an informal basis without fear of reprisal.

If senior university administrators are interested in hearing the voice of subordinates, the challenge is to devise a system in which voice can be heard at throughout the organization and at the appropriate levels where effective changes can be made. The goal of employee voice is to make an impact and

change the existing structure of the work place in order to increase employee job satisfaction.

As discussed in the next session, conflict resolution, this research concluded that professional and managerial staff prefers to resolve issues in non-confrontational formats, through the means of negotiation. The ability to voice one's opinions through negotiation may give rise to higher levels of job satisfaction. One reason for this may be due to the fact that, as professionals, they are of the opinion that there is an opportunity to resolve conflict amicably. An alternative reason for this finding is that there may be proactive mechanisms in place between senior administrators and professional managerial staff to engage in negotiations as a resolution to conflict in the work environment. This type of dialogue provides an opportunity for parties to discuss potential issues before they become a serious problem.

Conflict Resolution

Despite the fact that whether or not a university had a well established grievance procedure, there was little impact on overall job satisfaction. However, comments were received from participants regarding the ineffective grievance/complaint procedures established by many universities. The main problem indicated by some of the participating universities was that the university's Board of Governors, president or corresponding vice president were the final decision makers on resolving the issue. Senior administration has all of the power in determining the final decision on matters in which they are required

to resolve. Thus, fewer employees brought concerns forward because it was felt that there would not be an unbiased resolution to solving the conflict.

On the other hand, in universities where the senior administrators were not the final decision-makers, the ability to negotiate a resolution to a problem had a positive impact on employee job satisfaction. One of the reasons this may be the case is that negotiation requires both parties to come to a resolution together. In an effective negotiation the distribution of power is equal between all parties involved. The final decision maker in this instance was both parties. In instances where resolution could not be achieved through negotiation, many universities opted for an arbitrator to decide the final outcome of the conflict. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why the professional and managerial staff who were at institutions where senior administrators did not have the final say were more satisfied with this process. The final decision was not left to a third party and there was more autonomy over the solution outcome.

Comments received by most of the participants indicated that almost all of the universities had a Human Rights Harassment office of some form. The mandate of this office was to deal strictly with human rights issues. The types of conflict discussed with participants was not related to human rights issues, rather it was the subtle forms of conflict that exist in many work environments; therefore, the Human Right Harassment Officer was unable to resolve workplace conflict that did not fall under the human rights code.

In order to deal with this type of conflict, some universities had an ombudsperson, or conflict resolution officer, employed on campus. They were

charged in facilitating conflict resolution and acted more as a mediator and facilitator between parties.

Part of the connection to job satisfaction is providing employees a voice to express dissatisfaction in the work environment. Aside from the Harassment Committee, at UNBC, there are no official avenues for non-unionized to lodge complaints against the employer. The mandate of the UNBC Harassment Committee is to resolve sexual and racial discrimination issues not necessarily issues related to the work environment. There is an opportunity for UNBC, if it so desires, to expand on the EEG employee handbook to provide further voice mechanisms to employees.

In other universities, human resources assisted in resolving the conflict, especially when there were no formal procedures in place. Generally, individuals are self represented in these situations. According to the comments provided by participants, even if there is a well defined complaint or grievance procedure in place, the preferred method to resolve the conflict is by negotiation. Examples of the types of negotiations that have occurred with participating universities had to do with disagreements between a supervisor and subordinate on job-related matters. Many universities had an informal process that was often used as a mechanism to resolve conflicts without the formal structures.

For non-union employees', alternative dispute resolution mechanisms may involve the use of an Ombudsman, mediation, arbitration, internal tribunals or peer reviews (McCabe and Lewin, 1992). Opportunities to explore the most desirable mechanism for dealing with issues could be explored through an

employee voice option. Employee well-being can be used as a measure of effectiveness for senior managers (Edgar and Geare, 2005)

Non-union workers rarely take any cases other than wrongful dismissal to court and it is quite evident that most litigants come from managerial ranks (Taras, 2002). Mistreated or terminated employees who cannot afford lawyers, or lack the personal efficacy necessary to take on their employers in great numbers, simply “move-on”. In the non-unionized sector, the law does not require a grievance procedure or other appeal procedure within the enterprise, not even in jurisdictions with unjust dismissal statutes (Adell, 1993). However, many non-unionized employers provide an internal channel for employee complaints.

Non-union employee grievance procedures are more likely to have stronger due process protection with more independent decision makers (Colvin, 2004). Despite the fact that this is what was found, this particular study found that informal discussions and negotiations were the preferred methods to resolve conflict. Neither of these two methods have a strong due process. In fact they are much more flexible forms of conflict resolution than they are rigid.

Due process is becoming more important in the non-union grievance procedures. The emphasis is on “fair and orderly” procedures in matters affecting employees’ lives and with their airing of their concerns and complaints without fear of reprisal (McCabe and Rabil 2002). Organizational due process is fair and less costly means of resolving disputes than litigation (Arman and Salpante, 1981). It is important that all complaints be handled quickly otherwise

the effectiveness and viability of the procedures are harmed (McCabe and Rabil, 2002).

A complaint procedure makes an important contribution to harmonious employee relations and can boost the morale and efficiency of the entire organization (Giles 2005).

Davis (1957) identifies four principal elements of satisfactorily handling complaints:

- a. Complaint systems which are both workable and equitable including absolute protection against retribution as well as the right of appeal.
- b. Communication in order to understand each other's problem
- c. Policies and organizational rules which are workable and acceptable to both employees and employers.
- d. Attitudes of mutual interest problem-solving.

Although the participants of this study did not elaborate in detail how the negotiations or informal discussion occurred in their institutions, participants concurred that the overall desire was to mutually resolve conflict and this desire was a fundamental tenant driving the process. It appeared from the verbal comments provided that, in most cases, the professional and managerial staff were engaged in finding a resolution to a particular problem.

As part of the steps involved in moving forward with an endorsed plan by the Senior Administrators, potential language about the handling of disputes may be considered to be included in future Exempt handbooks iteration. If the tradition is for non-unionized employees to have the handbook essentially

outlining the procedures and work conditions in which they were hired, this is an obvious piece of information that is not included in the existing book. This would of course be one essential component of employee voice and it may have a direct impact on job satisfaction of UNBC Exempt Employees.

Although established and well defined in other universities, at UNBC there is no complaint or grievance process for EEG staff. For professional and managerial staff, conflicts tend to be resolved via informal processes. The open-door policy is used by the EEG with both their staff and with their supervisors as a mechanism for informal communication.

Effective Communication

As suggested by Baird *et al*, (1978) the single most influencing factor on job satisfaction is superior-subordinate communication. This research concurs with these findings.

Despite the fact that there was a significant difference among those universities who had effective communication in place and job satisfaction, for one university it had such a negative impact that they formed an association. They felt that by forming an association this would be an effective means to increase the communication between employees and senior administrators.

Other universities recently had new senior administrators hired on at the university. The sentiment expressed was that things could not be worse than what they had been and there was hope that communication would only improve over time.

One university's president has an open door policy. Despite the fact that employees do not actively take advantage of this gesture, the president is willing and able to communicate with employees whenever they wish. A different university has a professional development conference chaired by the university president. The purpose of the workshop is to explore ideas from bringing the university from a status of good to great. At this workshop the university president facilitates a discussion and action plan with the professional and managerial staff of the institution. The president has provided an opportunity for employees to contribute to the overall change and positively impact the overarching university activities.

Another university had completed a campus wide employee survey on a variety of issues. One of the glaring points was that there was no communication in place between senior administrators and professional and managerial staff. In order to rectify the situation, the management group now has monthly standing meetings with the president to discuss a variety of issues. There are a few other universities that have adapted this form of communication. The benefit is that it gives direct access to the president who can, in turn, enact upon employee concerns.

Compensation

For the purposes of this discussion, compensation takes into account both the wages and benefits to employees.

Benefits

As observed by Edgar and Greer (2005), career development and professional training are positively correlated with job satisfaction. Of the participating universities, 88% received career development and 81% received some form of professional training. Despite the fact that career development and professional training were supported in principle, sometimes there were budgetary constraints which restricted access to it. Regardless, the professional and managerial staff saw it as an investment in their future and dedication from the university validating their skills and valuing them as employees in the institution.

Universities that do not provide career development or professional training do not have an official procedure in place for employees to request it. In other words, it does not mean that career development or professional development are not entirely unavailable; rather, it is that staff may not know how to request it or that there is formal way it is granted. For one university, career development was not available until the employee reached the management level.

Grade levels

The grade level of a position directly impacts the wage an employee will make. Determining a grade level is linked to a job evaluation process. As indicated by a number of participants, the employee wrote the position description which determines the grade level of the position. Enabling the employee to write their position description gives them direct influence in the outcome of the grade level evaluation. Without a doubt it makes sense for the

employee to write the description since they are the ones that best know their responsibilities. They are also the ones who have an interest in updating their duties.

In addition, for those universities that have a group of professional and managerial employees, there are representatives of this group that sit on the Joint Evaluation Committee (JEC). The mandate of the JEC is to determine the grade level of jobs in the specific employee group. If an employee was not satisfied with the grade they received, most universities had an appeal procedure established. Typically, it involved setting up an independent committee and reviewing the decision of the first JEC. In some universities, the supervisor and the employee were permitted to make oral and written submissions to the appeals committee. Likewise, the outcome of the appeals committee was accepted as the final decision.

There are a variety of different systems used in Canadian universities for classifying jobs. For example, the most common types of methods used for classifying jobs were: the Hay job classification system, job families (four or five distinct job families in the university e.g. information technology family) and the Aiken system.

Providing professional and managerial staff the opportunity to provide input into a significant portion of their livelihood is important to these employees. They maintain some autonomy over the outcome which has a significant impact on their livelihood and earning power, which is directly related to wages.

Wages

Pay Equity

For the purposes of this paper, pay equity means equal pay for equal work. In the universities from these two provinces, wages were less significant than in the others. When discussing pay equity issues with universities from these two provinces, the participants had gone through drastic changes to ensure that the jobs were reclassified according to the new pay equity guidelines set-up by each provincial government.

Internal Pay Equity

Of the responding universities, 83% felt that they were paid equitably internally to each other. The other responding universities that did not feel that they had internal equitable pay provided a number of different reasons why this was the case. Some university employees perceived that there were pay anomalies, especially between programs. For example, the perception was that employees in medicine and engineering made more than the staff in central administration. Another university was currently reviewing the internal pay equity issue with their president, as the gap between the unionized staff and the professional and managerial staff seems to be close. This university was attempting to rectify the situation that had inadvertently been created among the professional and managerial staff.

External Pay Equity

According to some of the participating universities in smaller communities, employees of the university were considered privileged by community members to be working at the university. The university employees were earning a higher wage than other citizens of the community. The employees at the university make a good wage and have considerable benefits when compared to alternative employers in the region. Other universities were predominantly located in government towns and because of other economic drivers in the community; the overall sentiment was that the university employees were making comparable salaries to other public sector employees.

Despite the fact that some of the participating universities did not feel that the salaries were comparable to the market, there were bigger issues impacting the overall circumstances. One university was located in a province where the overall wages of the province were typically lower than the rest of Canada. Therefore, the wages earned were compared relative to the potential earning power of provincial employees. Despite the fact that they were making lower wages than they would for the same work elsewhere in Canada, they were relatively similar to other provincial positions.

However, in other communities, with a more diverse economy and greater job opportunities, this was not necessarily the case. Universities in diverse economies had to use innovative solutions to keep professional and managerial staff satisfied with their wages. These universities were proactive regarding wage compensation. They regularly do market surveys and make annual wage adjustments in order to be on par with the prevailing job market. Some

universities aim for the top 75th percentile of what the individual would be making in other provincial universities, or the public or private sectors. This tactic may not be feasible for all universities, especially smaller ones that do not have as big a budget as the larger institutes.

One university compared the staff turnover rates, the ability to recruit and the salary range of the positions. If there was limited turnover and no problems recruiting staff, it was interpreted to mean that the professional and managerial staff were satisfied with their remuneration. Other universities have chosen to deal with wages on a case-by-case basis and, if necessary, pay a market differential in order to retain the employee.

Overall Wage Satisfaction

Many universities felt that the overall wage was tied into the balance of professional and personal lifestyle. Employees were willing to forgo higher wages because there were benefits that were offered by the university that may not be granted in other sectors. For example, during Christmas and New Year, most academic institutions are closed. Employees do not have to use this as part of their own holidays rather it is "time off" provided by the university. There were also other days the university was closed to celebrate special heritage days.

Other universities have free tuition for staff and employee family members. Some enjoyed the laid back work environment and viewed working at the university as a lifestyle choice. They were willing to earn less just because working at the university fit with their personal life.

The participants that were unsatisfied with the overall wage were expressing their discontent based on the economic circumstances of the community, region and province. These circumstances were beyond the scope of the university's ability to pay a comparable wage; however, they were still important factors influencing the overall dissatisfaction in wages earned by professional and managerial employees.

Performance Appraisal

The results of the study indicate that performance appraisals were not significant structures for feedback. Therefore, this is not the type of acknowledgement and recognition sought by this group of employees. When referring to acknowledgement, comments received by participants implied that is was not necessarily the individuals' kudos that they sought, rather they were interested in the overarching recognition of professional and managerial staff.

According to the descriptive information provided by the participants, many of the universities had either gone away from using a performance appraisal process or did not have one in place. The biggest problem expressed with performance appraisals was the difficulty in administering them fairly and the inconsistency of them even being completed.

Despite the fact that, in most cases, the Human Resource Department had a procedure in place to complete the performance appraisals, the managers were not trained how to uniformly complete reviews for staff. It was the opinion of the interviewees that some managers were lax in the completion of the appraisal and the supervisors were inclined to give poor performers higher

ratings than they should receive. Part of the problem was related to the time and effort it took to thoroughly conduct the review, fill out the information, provide feedback to the employee and forward the information to the Human Resources department. Given individual workloads, this process was viewed as a less important task to complete. Based on comments that were received, it appears that the perception is supervisors fail to provide objective performance appraisals when there is merit attached to the appraisal. The supervisor of the professional and managerial staff did not want to jeopardize potential salary increases, especially if this was the only venue for annual incremental increases. Perhaps this is one reason with there were no significance differences between the 'yes' and 'no' respondents and job satisfaction. Inherently, the system is not viewed as a meaningful form of feedback to increase overall job satisfaction.

UNBC does not have a performance appraisal process in place for staff members. Although currently, senior administrators and the EEG are in the process of developing a performance appraisal system, nothing has been implemented to date. Part of the problem is that the performance appraisal remuneration is based on a specified amount of dollars for a targeted number of individuals. In order to fairly distribute the money, the individuals responsible for completing the appraisal on behalf of the EEG will require training to ensure that all responsible persons are filling out the appraisal system fairly.

As suggested by Pettijohn *et al* (2001), those universities that found the performance appraisal as an effective tool for communicating work performance has clearly defined criteria, the goals that were set were both measurable and

attainable and employees were involved in all facet of the performance appraisal process from setting goals to developing criteria.

Among the participants there was mixed reviews whether or not the performance appraisal should be tied to a merit incentive program. The reason for the opposing view to have the merit tied to performance was the belief that supervisors would give merit regardless of employee performance. The supervisor did not want to be seen as restricting the salary increase of an employee, especially since in some universities, the merit pay was the only way an increase in salary could be obtained.

Research Limitations

The project was limited by the number of people interviewed. Instead of being able to contact each professional and managerial employee, a contact person was used to provide feedback on behalf of the entire group of employees. The answers they have provided are their perception of the group based on information they have directly received from the members. For example, some universities had completed a workplace environment survey and they were comfortable in providing answers based on the feedback they had received from the survey. Other participants responded on their individual knowledge and understanding of the group; however, in instances where the interviewee was unsure of the answer none was given.

With respect to the data collection, instead of having "yes" and "no" responses, the use of a Likert scale would delineate the differences in response. For example, when individuals were asked if the employees were satisfied with a procedure, a Likert scale would have been a more appropriate test to use discrete one. A discrete response was chosen not knowing that participants would elaborate on most of the questions despite the fact "yes" or "no" were the only choices provided to the respondent.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations provided herein are specific to UNBC since it was the basis for this research; however, they may be applicable to other institutions as well.

The areas which had a significant impact on job satisfaction were the following: grade level, internal pay equity, external pay equity, overall wage satisfaction, university has effective communication, university gives access to negotiation, university provides career development and the university has professional training.

At UNBC, unless they are brand new positions, the position description is typically written by the employee in the position. They are the individual who knows the duties and responsibilities for the position. Once the position description is completed, it is forwarded to the job evaluation committee. For the UNBC EEG, the job evaluation committee is made up of the EEG president, an EEG employee volunteer who is trained in evaluating jobs and the director of Human Resources. Once the job evaluation committee has completed assessing the position and determined the grade, if the EEG member wishes to appeal the grade level assigned, they must do so formally in writing. The appeals committee is generally made up of the same individuals with an additional alternate from the EEG brought in on the final decision.

In other universities, there were a few steps undertaken that are not implemented at UNBC. First, the appeals committee was made up of entirely new people. The rationale is that the new committee could look at the

assessment with fresh eyes and determine whether or not the grade level is appropriate. Second, the supervisor of the employee in question can make a formal presentation to the appeals committee regarding why they think the grade level should be higher for the position. Third, the employee themselves can make a presentation to the appeals committee stating their rationale why the job deserves a higher grade level. Comments received by participants indicated that they felt this was a fair process and provided ample opportunity for the appeals committee to understand why a different grade level was more appropriate.

With respect to compensation, a large number of participants were unsatisfied with the levels of pay equity received. There are some excellent practices being done by some universities such as external market comparisons. Some of the universities realize that they are in the unfortunate position of losing skilled workers to the private sector. In provinces where there are ample jobs (e.g. Alberta), one of the ways they have tried to combat good staff from leaving is to provide competitive salaries. In areas where they are unable to meet the salary demand, the benefits such as vacation are increased to manage the shortfall in earnings. This may be one approach that needs to be considered by senior UNBC administrators.

Effective communication was also an area that had a direct impact on job satisfaction. The UNBC president may wish to consider having regularly scheduled monthly meetings with the EEG executive. This will provide an opportunity for a more open and regular dialogue to occur and assist in enabling effective communication. Understanding the values of the EEG is paramount.

One important factor that this group values, is the opportunity to contribute to the university. This can be enhanced via continued communication and providing either informal or formal forums to acknowledge the contributions this group makes in the activities of the university. The senior administrators need to spearhead a way to improve the overall job satisfaction of these employees in order to reap the benefits of increased productivity.

Other universities have managed to engage their professional and managerial employees in meaningful discussions that have influenced how the university operates. The ability to contribute to important decisions is directly related to the overall job satisfaction of these employees. The senior administrators therefore need to understand what is important to the group and maximize on these values.

There are a number of different structures that UNBC may create to engage the EEG in meaningful discussions. As suggested by Taras (1999), Joint Industrial Councils (JIC) are one way for non-union employees and management to work together. Senior management still maintains the right to manage and has the authority to make all of the final decisions; however, the employees are engaged in meaningful discussions and requested to provide input into decisions.

The establishment of non-union grievance procedures or complaint procedure process may provide EEG members with a venue to express dissatisfaction in the workplace. McCabe and Lewin (1992) comments on the positive impacts such a procedure has on the workplace environment. As suggested by many participants in this study, despite the fact that the grievance

or complaint procedures were rarely used, there was satisfaction on behalf of the employee knowing this tool was available to them if they ever needed to engage in bringing forth a complaint.

Also, as suggested by the findings in this study, the professional and managerial employees are more than amicable to negotiate. Continued encouragements of providing non adversarial dispute resolution processes are important. In order to give the process clout, it may be advisable to have an ombudsperson, or conflict resolution officer assist in facilitating the negotiation. An unpopular decision among the professional and managerial staff is when the university's senior administrative bodies such as the Board of Governors, President or Vice Presidents have the final decision in the resolution of a conflict.

If an institution can avoid inadvertently creating frustrated employees, they would be wise to do so. In the worst case scenario, frustrated employees leave the university, the fact that an employee leaves is an added cost to re-hire, retrain and familiarize a new staff member into the day-to-day operations of the institution. Perhaps making small changes in the university's operations may assist in deterring people from either considering or actually leaving.

The important challenge for senior administrators is to engage and use the knowledge held by these employees and create an opportunities to further the operations of the university.

Recommendation for Further Research

Future research considerations should include also surveying all of the professional and managerial employees in each university. By doing this, a more accurate representation of individual perceptions will be realized. Instead of having one individual respond on behalf of a group, individuals will be able to provide their own comments.

Another aspect of the project that would need to be changed for future study would be the scale of responses. Individuals who participated in this study preferred to give a range of answers. Even if the choice was only, yes or no, a verbal adage was given if the respondent felt that they needed to provide further clarification for their answer.

Breaking out the yes and no respondents into employment structure as they related to the different variables would also be interesting to determine if there were differences in the employee structures and job satisfaction as it pertained to the specific variables questioned.

Comparing university professional and managerial staff to other public or private sector employers would be one way of gaining an overall picture of these employees. The university employees who were surveyed in this survey often compared themselves to what they believed the private sector employees had. This does not mean that their comments were not valid; however, being able to validate their observations or impressions would be additional valuable research.

CONCLUSION

The impetus of this project was due to the strained relationship between the EEG and the UNBC senior administrators. However, all is not lost; with the incumbent senior administrators at UNBC still have an opportunity to influence positive change in their interactions with this particular employee group. According to this study, there are certain structures that are important factors contributing to overall job satisfaction of university professional and managerial employees. If UNBC, or any university, is interested in increasing the job satisfaction of the professional and managerial staff, providing them with autonomy in their decision making and recognizing the contributions they make to the overall success of the university are important constructs. Effective communication and acknowledgement of the staff are also important. Regardless of employment structure, unionized, group or no affiliation, wage is an underlying factor that impacts overall job satisfaction.

There were few constructs that impact the overall job satisfaction of the professional and managerial employees. The variables which are important to these employees have more to do with communication and wages than anything else.

The professional and managerial employees take pride in their work and are driven by the ability to positively contribute to the university. This type of dedication should be fostered. The myriad of literature as well as this project supports the notion that individuals who are supported in their work have increased job satisfaction and in turn have increased productivity.

Particularly in unionized university settings, it is easier to give more attention to the unionized employees than the non-unionized ones. The challenge for senior administrators is to maintain the balance and focus on the positive contributions the professional and managerial staff gives to the university community.

APPENDICES

Appendix One

Preamble

Thank you for taking the time to complete the questionnaire. You have been contacted to complete the survey below in order to provide information on employees who would fit into a similar category as those in the UNBC Exempt Employee group. Exempt employees are those in administrative or supervisor positions that are not paid for overtime. For your reference, current Membership of the UNBC Exempt Employee group includes the following types of positions:

- Human Resource Advisors
- Executive Assistants (to senior executives)
- Operations Manager for the College of Science and Management (supervise the Administrative Assistants and the technical staff in the field applied sciences).
- Operations Coordinator (oversees projects that are the responsibility of the Vice President of Administration and Finance).
- Risk and Safety Manager (supervision of the mailroom and safety staff)
- Manager of Finance (supervise accounts payable and accounts receivable staff).
- Manager of Animal Care Facility
- Budget Analyst
- Treasury Manager

When completing the questionnaire, please complete the answers as they relate to staff at your university who may be in comparable job positions as those mentioned above.

Name of University		
Please indicate your current position category with an X.	Manager/Supervisor	
	Technical	
	Professional	
	Non-managerial	
For the following questions indicate either Yes or No		Yes
1. Do these employees belong to a union? If yes, please specify the name of the union?		No
2. Do these employees belong to a formal non-union group? If yes, please specify the name of the group.		
If you have answered no to 1 or 2 above, please jump to question # 12. If you		

have answered yes to 1 or 2 above, please indicate in the following what the union/union does for these employees.		
3. Does the union/group negotiate wages and benefits for these employees?		
4. Does the union/group negotiate rules and other working conditions for these employees?		
5. Does the union/group represent these employees to management regarding grievances or complaints?		
6. Is there a formal document specifying the rights of the members of this group?		
6a. If yes, is this document subject to negotiations by the union/group?		
7. Does an employee representative from the union/group sit on university committees which influence the university's operations?		
7a. If yes, which committee(s)?		
8. Does the union/group negotiate or otherwise have a say in position descriptions?		
9. Does the union/group negotiate or otherwise have a say in grade level of positions?		
10. Does the union/group negotiate performance incentives for these employees?		
11. Does the union/group represent these employees' interests in any other way?		
11a. If yes, please describe what are they?		
If questions 1 and 2 were answered no, please indicate the rights of these employees as individuals in the following questions.		
12. Can these employees negotiate their own salaries?		

12a. If yes, please describe the procedure in further detail		
13. Do individual employees have access to a grievance or complaint procedure?		
13a. If yes, please describe the procedure in further detail		
13b. Are these employees generally satisfied with this procedure?		
14. Do these employees have a reasonable amount of influence in the evaluation of their jobs?		
14a. Are these employees generally satisfied with the job evaluation system?		
The following questions apply to employees whether or not they are in a formal group.		
15. Are these employees provided with a performance appraisal that is intended for developmental purposes?		
16. Are these employees provided with a performance appraisal that is intended for salary purposes?		
17. Are these employees generally satisfied with the performance appraisal system?		
Please describe the appraisal system in further detail.		
18. In general, do these employees feel that they are paid equitably to peers in their respective professions internally ?		
19. In general, do these employees feel that they are paid equitably to peers in their respective professions externally ?		
20. Are these employees generally satisfied with their overall wage?		
21. Do employees think that the university has effective		

communication in place to listen and enact upon employee concerns?					
22. If needed, do employees have an opportunity to engage in one of the following processes?					
Mediation					
Negotiation					
Arbitration					
23. Do the supervisors of these employees general acknowledge good work?					
24. Does your university support career development for these employees?					
25. Does your university provide training or professional development for these employees?					
For the following questions, please answer 1=not at all to 5=very much	1	2	3	4	5
26. In general, do these employees believe they have influence in their work?					
27. In general, do these employees believe they influence change in the university?					
28. In general, do these employees believe their work is considered important by senior management?					
29. In general, what is the overall job satisfaction of these employees?					
30. In general, do these employees have a strong emotional attachment to the university?					
31. In general, do you feel that the University's Senior administrators recognize the overall contribution the Group makes to the university's success and operations?					
32. In general, does the Group feel recognized by the Senior Administrators?					
33. In general, do the Senior Administrators understand the role of the Group and who the Group is?					

34. Please add any other comments:

Appendix two

Participating University	Location
British Columbia	
University of British Columbia	Vancouver
Simon Fraser University	Vancouver
University of Victoria	Victoria
Thompson Rivers University	Kamloops
Royal Roads University	Victoria
University of Northern British Columbia	Prince George
	Alberta
Alberta	
Athabasca University	Athabasca
University of Alberta	Edmonton
University of Calgary	Calgary
University of Lethbridge	Lethbridge
Saskatchewan	
University of Saskatchewan	Saskatoon
University of Regina	Regina
Manitoba	
University of Winnipeg	Winnipeg
University of Brandon	Brandon
University of Manitoba	Winnipeg
New Brunswick	
Mt. Allison University	Sackville
New Brunswick University	St. John
Newfoundland	
Memorial University	St. Johns
Nova Scotia	
Acadia University	Wolfville
Dalhousie University	Halifax
Mount St. Vincent University	Halifax
St. Mary's University	Halifax
St. Francis Xavier	Antigonish
Prince Edward Island	
University of Prince Edward Island	Charlottetown
Ontario	
Brock University	St. Catharines
Carleton University	Ottawa
Guelph University	Guelph
Lakeland University	Thunder Bay
Laurentian University	Sudbury
McMaster University	Hamilton
Ottawa University	Ottawa
Queen's University	Kingston
Ryerson University	Toronto
St. Paul's University	Ottawa
Waterloo University	Waterloo
The University of Western Ontario	London
Wilfrid Laurier University	Waterloo
University of Windsor	Windsor
York University	Toronto

Quebec	
Concordia University	Montreal
Laval University	Quebec City
McGill University	Montreal
Quebec University	Montreal
Sherbrooke University	Sherbrooke

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