"Internalised trainophobia". This was a term I picked up at a forum on cross-cultural and corporate communication held at the University of International Business and Economics, Beijing, in July 2016. It was uttered by a communication professor, Saul Carliner, from Montreal who said he resisted being labelled an 'instructional scientist'.

Just the day before I had received on my UKZN email a circular on talent management, and three pages of instructions on how to respond to it. But why do I need talent management? I was mandatorily retired from UKZN in 2014 and my obvious talent was headhunted by universities across the world, though I ended up in Johannesburg while retaining my UKZN links. Here at UJ I am explaining to the talent monitor that I don't need to be hounded because my talent (and productivity) speaks for itself. I got to where I am because I learned to manage my own talent, in liaison with my many mentors over my whole career: my lecturers, professors, deans, HODs and students, and the odd VC. I was not academically mentored by administrators, managers and HR officials, many of whom who basically are now required by their institutions to engage in surveillance practices that they beguilingly call performance management (PM).

Carliner[1], a generalist in workplace learning and communication, explained that very often people who lack talent develop terms, methodologies and procedures whereby they try to discover, categorise and then manage people who don't need such management. Some years ago UKZN senior professors were dragged off during a peak marking time to be mentored by a very young HR consultant contracted from the private sector to teach us how to do our jobs. Well, half the seniors failed to pitch and the other half that did gave her marching

orders. Nothing more was heard until PM training became the systematized distraction that now consumes our time[2].

A man after my own heart, Saul offered many similar observations about institutions, PM and the institutional disjunctures to his Chinese business students as have I over all the years that I have been writing this column. The absolutely clear outcome is that nothing has changed.

No result is a result, I guess.

KPAs, KPIs, PM, talent management, and their derivations are all terms that get into the administrative vernacular before they are ready for application, before the software to manage them works, and before the programmes are fully tested. They are constructed by non-academics whose job is to *improve the administrative performance of an institution*, usually one that is top-down in nature. But implementation is done in terms of a cybernetic machine metaphor, rather than considering the university as a dynamic academically-led organism. The latter process-oriented metaphor typifies how academics work as they interact with students, parents, research subjects, curriculum development and a learning environment. The outdated machine metaphor constructs students as clients and academics as factory workers. HR divisions at most universities now want to measure how they think the organisation works, or should work, rather than what actually works, or what works for academics, students, researchers and academic managers.

PM's primary goal is to align expectations of workers and managers - a laudable gaol. But, as Carliner observes, the fundamental purpose of such systems is usually lost, and discussions become pro-forma and, therefore, lose their inherent value. Most significantly, this system was never meant for academics (though it does apply better to administrators and managers). PM measures were primarily devised for industries in which the value of goods and services can be financially quantified, especially in the short term (in particular, a one-year financial statement). They don't work as well in universities, because the faculty is (supposedly) democratically governed and (supposedly) democratically evaluated. Can UKZN claim to be still democratic? What policy-making roles do UKZN's Schools, Colleges, committees have anymore? In the 1980s UKZN was so democratic that faculties got totally out of sync with each other and meetings could go on for two days.

Concludes Carliner, PM and faculty (i.e. lecturer) evaluation are not necessarily compatible theoretically. So proxy measures are quantified and can be easily manipulated.

If I were an HR director, I would enable staff and students to understand what they are doing, why they are doing it, with what objectives and outcomes.

But not everyone on the campus bus does a full day's work. Rather than stressing those who are doing, or designing templates and procedures to force them to list what they do do, just do the right thing - kick those who don't do off the bus. The only document required for effective evaluation is the time-honoured CV. Do not allow administrative justice to become administrative surveillance, a stressful homogenizing policing device that kills initiative and morale. But, ah yes, the passengers are experts at manipulating work-load calculations, out-sourcing their teaching, and subverting PM templates; they know their labour law and what it allows them to get away with. They are happy to sacrifice their promotions, their notch increases, their NRF rating and research funding. The rest of us get stressed just trying to play the game.

The key is not about what to measure but why? Measuring is a value system. Can people do, do they do, and what are they are supposed to do? Are not these the salient questions?

Futurist Alvin Toffler in *Future Shock* (1970), wrongly predicted that adhocracy would replace bureaucracies (like HR, line managers, hierarchicology). In an adhocracy, organisational forms are constantly shifting to address unique, one-of-a-kind organisational formats that evolve to address particular problems. Once solved, the organisations fade away to be replaced by different structures responding to new problems. This is known as management by improvisation, not to be confused with Makgoba's Law of Management by Destabilisation (as described by Chris Merrett, a previous Director of Administration at PMB). At UKZN we inherited Management Destabilised, hopefully re-now stabilising. The new reference should be the *process model*, not the cybernetic model.

When in China, the new academic frontier, I interact with incredibly hard-working academic communities, all being needlessly stressed by increasing neo-liberal measurement procedures. Soon, the Chinese academy will be spending its day also filling in forms to justify the forms that they have to fill in. We are all being trained to be trainaphobic.

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Disclaimer: The views expressed in this column are the author's own.